CHAPTER THREE

Shakespeare

Treatment of Love, Time and Mutability in his works

And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

P.B. Shelley, "Prometheus Unbound"

The greatness Shakespeare has achieved as a poet and dramatist has often been attributed to his universal sensibility which shows itself through his treatment of human nature. It is impossible not to see the genial humour of Shakespeare in treating human frailties as a sharp contrast to Chaucer or Jonson, whose sense of humour may seem to have more edge. Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims may have represented the medieval social strata outwardly: each imperfect individual perfectly filling his niche. When Shakespeare wrote his plays he had a much more difficult task in moulding his characters, not only because the feudal social framework had already dissipated. The cosmopolitan nature of Eliza-
bathian England with its rich intellectual and philosophi-
cal background should have made his work of "holding the
mirror up to nature" as boundless and limitless as nature
has in store. It is therefore a matter of great credit to
Shakespeare that his works have universal and timeless ap-
peal among people of all classes and climes.

This poses a persistent question: what makes Shakesp-
ere's men and women so real and authentic? Dryden's intro-
spective Shakespeare and Mrs. Lang's Arcadian boy-Shapeare need not have been examples of singular temperaments in Eli-
zabethan England. For the 'current of ideas' was flowing
fairly in society, needing only nature to select her medium.
Keats may have given the nearest approximation of the key to
Shakespeare's genius in his psycho-analysis of the poetical
character: that

It has no character - it enjoys light and shade; it
lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low,
rich or poor, mean or elevated - It has as much de-
light in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks
the virtuous philosopher, delights the chameleon
Poet.

Prof. S. Homchauhdhuri points out the existential affinity of
Shakespeare and Keats with the ancient Greeks in their in-
voluntary awareness of "the twin strains of ecstasy and
agony". And indeed it cannot be anything short of such
magnanimity of self-annihilating awareness of humanity
which informs the genius of Shakespeare to create his immortal characters.

Though it is customary to put Shakespeare after Spenser and Marlowe in literary history, the fact must not be forgotten that they were historically contemporaneous, living and writing within the same political, cultural and literary milieu. Not only they, but Donne and Jonson, besides a host of less prominent writers, produced their significant works which mark the period (roughly from Spenser's Shepheardes Calender, 1579 to Raleigh's History of the World, 1614) as the Elizabethan Literary Renaissance. The literary career of Shakespeare spanning roughly twenty-five years witnessed the making of perhaps the richest literary epoch in the history of a nation; the more significant for it being a period of political and religious turmoil. The varied nature of literary products this age produced is itself convincing indication of hectic changes of ideas and ways of life. To read such works as The Faerie Queene (1590-96), The Spanish Tragedy (1594), and Richard III (1592), and to see them as the products of the same decade must tax the imagination of a twentieth century reader not well informed about the socio-political character of the age. In a certain way Spenser's Faerie Queene may be seen as the epic of English humanism in its earthly ideal, if we understand Humanism as "part of a general movement of secularization" which "sought to turn reli-
gious ideals and energies towards the amelioration of life in this world and to achieve an order in this life corresponding to the religious vision of man's worth." Yet, sad to say, as already pointed out earlier, the 'strong necessity of time' cannot accommodate the negation of grosser individual needs for such disinterested ideal. Hence, the general tone of popular Elizabethan literature is that of conflict between the concept of universal organic unity and rising individualism.

Shakespeare is the most powerful exponent of this crisis in humanism. Indeed, we may even think of him as sounding the depth of humanism to see whether it can really provide a solution to life's problems which is satisfying to man. The crises and conflicts Shakespeare dramatized did not, however, take occasions from just the contemporary break-up of moral order and the increasing emphasis on wealth as instrument for power. He had a rich source of the story of human depravity and lust for power, and also of human dignity and capacity for good in the history of his own country and in the writings of other nations. But if there is any single point on which the works of Shakespeare and those of his contemporaries concur it is in their attitude to Time as the enemy and celebration of Love as the highest values man can oppose against the bitterness of ill fortune and death.
There ends the similarity. At the same time when conventional treatment of Love has rejected the excesses of Petrarch and Ovid in favour of the neo-platonic ideal seasoned with Christian humanistic demand for chastity, Shakespeare brought his intensely searching mind to examine the mysteries of Love at grass-roots level dispelling myths and taboos from the temple of Love. So zealous is Shakespeare indeed in his dissection of human nature, which Sir Edmund Chambers has called "remorseless analysis" probing "the inmost being of man, and strip him naked", the "temper of the inquisitor" one should shudder at, that there hangs a certain serious sense of gloom over his dramatic world which not even the most jovial clownage can relieve. In fact, whatever happiness and joy that exist in his works appear but as a little evanescent private world inside a hostile universe which is to annihilate it eventually as if it has never been. Such moments - parenthesis in time - are extremely vulnerable and delicately and precariously balanced on the wheel of fortune. The world of lovers or the world where love operates is antithetical to the law that rules the external world, for they are mutually eternally opposed so that the existence of the one preclude the existence of the other. Shakespeare's picture of the external world is one that has gone 'awry'!
wherein 'the time is out of joint' and 'there is nothing good or bad, but thinking made it so', a savage world of 'strange mutations' in which

Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep.

(King Lear 4.2.48)

unless there is supernatural intervention. Shakespeare's vision of history, which the present study is anxious to defend from being called pessimistic, is the vision of every sensitive soul in every age and clime. This is the same vision of anarchy as heralded by the Fool in King Lear:

When priests are more in word than matter;
When brewers mar their malt with water;
When nobles are their tailors' tutors;
No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors;
When every case in law is right;
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
When slanders do not live in tongues;
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;
When usurers tell their gold i'th'field;
And bawds and whores do churches build —
Then shall the realm of Albion
Come to great confusion. (3.2.81-92)

In a world, not suddenly turned upside down, but which is the natural order of disorder, the vision of Yeats in his The Second Coming,

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Where anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The Ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

has been the watch-word of poets who look for something better in man. In a very typical humanist moment quite out of his nature, Hamlet feels that it is his duty to set the disjointed world aright:

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right!

(1.5.190)

His twin view of man — the humanistic ideal and what he finds around him — cannot meet in him, until he realizes that

Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw,
When honour's at the stake.

(4.4.53-56)

Is Hamlet's ideal of man vindicated by his subsequent 'bloody' action, or has he merely compromised it by justifying his cause against Fortinbras's campaign? The words 'ideal' and 'honour' too are subjected to severe examination. In Troilus and Cressida the ideal is presented as corrupt and false, and honour in the face of war turns to dust. An ideal must have a living purpose and honour too is empty vaunt without the seal of victory which the villain's poison can steal away. Troilus and Cressida ultimately
strips humanity bare of the values and hopes that sustain the will to life, and further "denies the presence of virtuous power in man". 9

By creating a human situation in which man finds himself alone in an indifferent universe ignorant of his presence, whatever meaning or purpose in life that he cherishes crumbling in his grasp, Shakespeare has skilfully cornered his client into admission of his impotence to rise above the tempestuous sea of his fitful existence. It needed the murder of his father and the dishonour of his mother to make Hamlet see through the beauty of man the "quintessence of dust". Lear had first to be stripped of his royal power before he learnt the nature of true love. The virtue of this stripping is that man, instead of looking towards the vast empty space from whence no help is coming in his direst need, when faith, hope and ideals are only painful reminders of his suffering, has only to turn to himself and humanity, which is the only reality that he knows and needs to know. Call it existentialism or the like, Shakespeare is vindicating life in this material universe, as it is the only thing man is certain about.

But mankind cannot stand too much reality. His pride and his fear would not let him see that he is subject to his own imperfect nature and the external law of mutability.
Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, by a jealousy born of the lack of trust which is one of the attributes of true love, lets loose a bitter winter for his love. But *Othello* is the cruellest love story: with none to benefit from the needless suffering. But that insistence too is unjustified against Shakespeare's 'purpose of playing, whose end' is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

*(Hamlet 3.2.20-22)*

We may shudder at the thought of Desdemona, whose innocence embodies our image of ideal love, sacrificed by a witless glob of a husband. Yet in the light of Helen Gardner's able defence of the heroic Moor we cannot but empathize with him, as much as we do with Gloucester, or Richard II, or Henry VI, as a victim of an alien adversary whose motive and stratagem it is beyond his nature to anticipate, or even when it is all over, understand.

It has become critical commonplace to take *Romeo and Juliet* as showing the vulnerability of love in a world where love is reduced to mere appetite and social convenience. More has to be said of the sacrifice of innocent children for a belated "glooming peace" and statues in gold which are indeed "poor sacrifices"! But there is no "concessions to sentimentality" in Shakespeare, for that, as
much as a strong faith, robs tragedy of its sting. A man of faith not only endures, but bears it beyond the edge of doom with a cry of victory over that ultimate foe, Death. The essence of tragedy is what a man finds to be truth but cannot accept — truth in the unphilosophic term referring to the experience of mortal flesh and blood.

Johnson's criticism of Shakespeare, in view of the innumerable responses it receives, remains a good starting point for the sensitive question it poses. When he says that Shakespeare often 'sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose', he seems to forget that Shakespeare was first an artist, and then an aspiring professional player-dramatist whose sole need was that people should like his plays. Another failure of Johnson is his insensitivity to the deep moral questions that pervade most of Shakespeare's works. 'Poets and pigs are not appreciated until they are dead', goes one cynical remark. That Shakespeare enjoyed popularity in life and death is the most authoritative judgement on the value and relevance of his work to human life. He has vindicated his claim in the Sonnets to transfix the beauty of his Friend in his "eternal lines".

It is Shakespeare's consistent response to the human
Shakespeare

predicament revealed in extreme situations: that Love and Beauty (almost always synonymous in Shakespeare) are the only values that can give man happiness. Men tortured by evil they have not anticipated, nor think is the consequence of their own actions, cry to superior powers for revelation of meaning. Job in the Bible was rewarded for his faith in his God. The gods of Shakespeare's characters do not reveal themselves; and to all palpability do not exist at all. The silence of the gods affect man in two significant ways. To one who has burned his boats, for whom life would never be welcome again even if one were to begin li anew, a man like Macbeth, death holds no terror. Eternal extinction, were it possible, is a welcome relief from the painful jabs of conscience and the hate of other men. Oth were he to be forgiven a thousand times by the Venetian's will never forgive himself. And to live such a self-condemned life would be a living hell. T.S. Eliot is unreserved in his opinion:

I have never read a more terrible exposure of human weakness - of universal human weakness - than the last great speech of Othello.

What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this speech is cheering himself up. He is endeavouring to escape reality. 12

Having seen and possessed the very embodiment of beauty and perfection, and then to part with it for ever is a terrib
thing for any one, and more so for a tragic hero that Othello is meant to be.

But I do love thee; and when I love thee not
Chaos is come again. (3.3.92–3)

Desdemona had meant for Othello a harbour to his ever wandering life, order in his hitherto adventurous life. And now he has deprived himself like a fool burning his own house of his only heaven. When Antony is told that Cleopatra had taken her own life, his immediate response is, not shock, or surprise, or grief, but the close of an Act in a play or the end of one stage in life.

Unarm, Eros; the long day's task is done,
And we must sleep. (4.14.35)

Antony looks forward to another life of love in another life-dimension. Othello has no such expectation because he has just destroyed his heaven here in life. For Antony, life holds nothing but shame unless he can find a corner of earth where he and Cleopatra may live their love in spite of kingdoms and thrones. His only purpose in living or dying is Love. Like the ever-changing shape of the unstable cloud, his fortune suffers ups and downs. But when he saw Cleopatra desert him in the naval battle, that is when he really felt fear. His despairing cry,

O sun, thy uprise shall I see no more! (4.12.17)
also knells the setting of the sun of love. It is love,
and not dreams of empire any more, which gives him the strength for battle. When, therefore, Cleopatra deserts him, when Cleopatra reportedly has taken her own life, when she sent him word that she lives; indeed Antony's life now hangs on the name of Cleopatra. She has become his life, and his life is not complete without her. But there is no more time for their love in Caesar's world. The feeling of futility and insecurity for the lovers seems to overwhelm the poet too. Sonnets 64 and 66 sweep up a vast canvas of human history marred by perpetual injustice and Time's destructions robbing the viewer of the will to life. In all these cosmic rubble only one bright gem shines temptingly — Love. And for this gem only, which is not found in Beckett's bare platform, life is asserted and given a meaning and a purpose. It is not for some unattainable philosophical ideal that St. Paul urges the worldly Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 13:

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. . . . 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

The other way in which the gods' silence and indifference affects man in Shakespeare is decided not so much by external compulsion as by the inherent quality of an individual's
personality which reveals itself in a remarkable adaptability to varying circumstances without compromising any values. Of course, the ambiguity in the word 'adaptability' has to be taken seriously. For there are more ways to adapt oneself to circumstances than one. Shakespeare's characters are rarely 'types', yet they may conveniently be identified in groups by the way they respond to their circumstances. At the lowest scale are the functional characters who merely owe their presence to the dramatist's need to put on the semblance of life - the soldiers, servants, attending lords and ladies. Not incidentally, however, they serve as touchstones for certain insights into the plot and the characters, and also as choruses. These are not personally involved in the making of the plot. They are more or less bystanders who grieve and rejoice with the main incidents. The Fools who serve the whims of their overlords play more significant roles. They enjoy exceptional immunity against the displeasure of their superiors by virtue of their office. Turning this to advantage, Shakespeare uses these licensed Fools as the voice of reason or as the conscience of the hero or heroine. They are 'Fools' in the sense that they speak and act with no respect to conventions of social decorum, shooting witty disarming remarks full of commonsense at the destructive pas-
sions displayed by their masters and mistresses. They pro-
vide the safety valve in such critical situations in the
play which threaten to blow up before the characters are
ripe for the catastrophe or are come to self-realization.
They are dispensable when the dramatist's work of perfect-
ing his leading roles is done. Feste in *Twelfth Night* over-
stays his time only because he plays more than a Fool's
part. The wisdom latent in Lear's Fool, the down-to-earth
unromanticism of Touchstone, the verbal dexterity of Feste,
do more than relieve tension, but in their own way suggest
a code of simple ethics which have a *primeval* quality about
it.

Then there are the sharks of Machiavellian breed, who
prey singlemindedly on unsuspecting victims. It is possible
that a bit of Machiavelli actually goes into the making of
Edmund and Iago. But the true Machiavellian thoroughbred
appear in Bolingbroke and Octavius Caesar. These worldly-
wise men can turn almost any situation to their advantage.
The taciturn Octavius is true to his conquering spirit as
here:

Ant. Octavius, lead your battle softly on,
    Upon the left hand of the even field.
Oct. Upon the right hand I: keep thou the left.
Ant. Why do you cross me in this exegent?
Oct. I do not cross you; but I will do so.

(*Julius Caesar* 5.1.16-20)

Born to rule and dominate, Octavius takes no second place
to anyone. He and Bolingbroke are purely children of situations, the strong necessity of political exigency their licence. They are pillars of strength in their mastery of the game. They play to win, not for the pleasure of the game. They are close-mouthed, not trusting anyone except their own thoughts. But we do not know their thoughts, as they never soliloquize. We do not know whether Henry IV's plan to go on a Crusade to the holy land stems from true penitence or from his policy of pulling wool over his subjects' eyes. Yet he and Octavius are no villains. In Machiavelli's book actions are justified by a good, strong rule. The difference between Bolingbroke, whose long reign was spent in crushing rebellions, and Octavius, who won the highest title 'Augustus', apart from the difference between the English and the Roman people, is that the former comes to power with the help of nobles, about which Machiavelli cautions 'the prince', while the latter enjoys popular public support in the wake of brutal assassination of their hero. These are Machiavelli's words:

A man who becomes prince with the help of the nobles finds it more difficult to maintain his position than one who does so with the help of the people.  

In the light of this astute realism King John's desperate cry,
Withhold thy speed, dreadful occasion!  
O, make a league with me, till I have pleas'd  
My discontented peers!  

(King John 4.2.125 f.)

and Richard II's repentant admission of blame:

I wasted time, and now doth time waste me;  
For now hath time made me his numb'ring clock:  
My thoughts are minutes; and with sighs they jar  

(5.5.49 f.)

fall on the ears like the sound of the Judge's hammer. If one plays a game, one plays to win, or suffer the consequence of being a loser. In this power game, it is a fight to the bitter end; and no prerogative of blood or right will stand unless backed by sufficient strength and resourcefulness. For all his saintliness Henry VI could not turn the tide of politics, having developed a snail-like attitude of hiding from the cruelty of his time and his court. What a contrast he is to his father, Henry V, whose devotion in battle shows him an ideal Christian king! This king who turns despair to hope by an act of the will:

There is some soul of goodness in things evil,  
Would men observingly distil it out.  

(4.1.4)

Place beside this Helena's

Our remedies oft in ourselves do, lie,  
Which we ascribe to heaven.  

(All's Well... 1.1.202)
and we almost distil the essence of Renaissance humanism in its assertion of confidence in the power of man to mould his circumstances. But if we go further and take Edmund's self-legitimizing

Are as the time is; to be tender-minded
Does not become a sword.

(King Lear 5.3.32)

we have a totally opposite type of heroism Richard III displays in his last battle:

Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe.
Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law.
March on, join bravely, let us to it pell-mell;
If not to heaven, then hand in hand in band to hell.

(5.3.309 f.)

Or Macbeth's, "tir'd with all these":

I gin to be aweary of the sun,
And wish th' estate o' th' world were now undone.
Ring the alarum bell. Blow wind, come wrack;
At least we'll die with harness on our back.

(5.5.49 f.)

Macbeth confesses his insensitivity to any horror, having had too much of it; and Edgar admits his ignorance of the limit to endurance when he meets his blinded father. Macbeth, like Claudius, bars himself from repentance with the fruit of his crime. Others like Gloucester, Lear, Leontes and the Capulets and the Montagues, even the Duke in As You Like It,
learn wisdom through suffering the consequences of their old nature. Lear's self-pity ("a man more sinn'd against than sinning") soon gives way to a deeper realization of others' pitiable conditions with a cry:

O, I have ta'en
Too little of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just. (3.4. 32)

Love in its native hue is discovered to be the centre of the new order. It would be sheer folly to destroy or renounce it for the old destructive order. So the poet in Sonnet 66 testifies for love:

Tir'd with all these for restful death I cry,-
As to behold Desert a beggar born,
And needy Nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest Faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded Honour shamefully misplac'd,
And maiden Virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right Perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
And Strength by limping Sway disabled,
And Art made tongue-tied by Authority,
And Folly, Doctor-like, controlling Skill,
And simple Truth miscall'd Simplicity,
And captive Good attending captain ill:
Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone -
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

What, then, is the nature of Love whose life and essence
Shakespeare takes such pains to infuse and distil in his poems and plays? He gives us a vision of the world which is relatively darkened or brightened not so much by an independently motivated external mutability as by the inward possession of illumination by the light of love or by its deprivation or rejection. The storm in *King Lear* assumes cataclysmic proportion in respect to the inner storms suffered by the characters exposed to it. 'The poor naked wretches' whom Lear invokes suffer more in Lear's new-gained empathy than they normally do in their perpetual natural state of poverty, having had nothing better to compare their present life with. Richard III merely contradicts himself when he rationalized that the sour sky on the morning of his battle with Richmond also lours upon his opponent. He is awakened by his guilt whereas Richmond is strong in his innocence. The world of tragedy and political competition provide little scope for the growth and exercise of the gentler attribute of humanity that Shakespeare exploits masterfully in the Comedies and Poems. When Love is reduced to mere appetite and political advantage lovers become selfish, cruel, untrustworthy, self-defeating. Egypt and Rome are antithetical and tend to annihilate each other. The meddling Olympian deities are dismissed in Shakespeare's *Troy*, and human actions are seen and judged in relation to their
immediate efficacy to satisfy individual need. The values held dear by Hector is self-destructive; the 'truth' sworn by Troilus and Cressida fail to stand the test of situation. Measured against such degenerative moral standard the nature of love asserted by the poet in his Sonnets seem but idealism characteristic of literary conventions. Against such love that demands proof of sincerity — from Cressida by Troilus, from Hermione by Leontes, from his daughters by Lear — Sonnet 116 posits an ideal love

Which alters |not| when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove.

This is 'idealistic' from the viewpoint of the world where love depends for its birth and sustenance on the appearance of beauty, and the word is given the quality of a commodity for bargain wherein its value is estimated on a one way traffic basis. Love and marriage, considered as social institutions, usually carry price tags which both sides of the parties continually wave at each other. Such institutionalized love and marriage more often than not fail to elicit adequate response to the spirit of love. Social morality, viewed independently of an external order bearing upon human existence, may also be reduced essentially to an instinctive revolt against man's innate tendency to destructive self-indulgence. Hence the persistent feeling that Shakespeare is highly sceptical of the stability of human virtues
when subjected to the contrary demands of existential cir-
cumstances. It therefore seems no easy task to formulate a
clear-cut Shakespearean attitude to love when there is an-
tithesis between the imaginative ideal and what people do.
Neither is it simple to ascertain how many of his lines
are written as conventional exercise and how many from
philosophical convictions. That Shakespeare achieves mastery
of his art through constant practice has been argued con-
vincingly by several critics who have made comparative stu-
dies of Elizabethan poets and dramatists. In his discus-
sion on Hero and Leander by Marlowe, C.S.Lewis makes a tell-
ing comparison between it and Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis,
works which appeared in the same year, i.e. 1593, in which
Shakespeare emerges poorer in portraiture of sensual love
for the commendable reason that Shakespeare is out of his
element when describing erotic situations. In the same
context, Shakespeare's imaginative bias seems better express-
ed by Cressida, when she, "A woman of quick sense", finds
herself so adaptive to fortune:

Troilus, farewell! One eye yet looks on thee;
But with my heart the other eye doth see.
Ah, poor our sex! this fault in us I find,
The error of our eye directs our mind.
What error leads must err; O, then conclude,
Minds sway'd by eyes are full of turpitude.

(5.2.105-110)
Which Thersites paraphrases as "mind ... turn'd whore".

Shakespeare's observation of life is too well informed to treat love in his works in an Ovidian abandon to the 'carpe diem' and 'carpe florem' attitude of obsession with the pleasures of love. When Shakespeare comes to grips with the passions of love inspired by sexual attraction his reaction is downright rebellion against his grosser senses. The Sonnets dealing with the Dark Lady mirror a more than conventional revulsion from what is to be understood in the poems as the abuse of love, "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame", a mere "uncertain sickly appetite". As Cressida has done, the poet now imputes the sin to the eyes that "see not what they see" "by over-partial looks". Sonnet 137 is a fitting commentary on the love that thrives on looks such as Cressida's, a connection also made by Kenneth Muir as well with Doll Tearsheet:

Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine
That they behold, and see not what they see?
They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
Yet what the best is take the worst to be.

This rebellion of the flesh against the will or reason, not unlike what Wordsworth feels in a different context,

The eye - it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.
naturally leads judgement to error, and

We are led to Believe a Lie

When we see not Thro the Eye.\(^{19}\)

It has been said as much in the Scripture:

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matt 6:21)

The poet's treasure, his 'better angel' is now become, like Antony, "the bellows and the fan/ To cool" a woman's fiery love, and the poet appears to be drawn along.

So, now I have confess'd that he is thine,
And I myself am mortgag'd to thy will,
My self I'll forfeit, so that other mine
Thou wilt restore to be my comfort still.

(Sonnet 134)

A rather far-fetched implication is that the poet offers himself at this sensual altar in the hope of saving his friend from suffering the infamy of a harlot's curse.

To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
But being both from me, both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell:
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

(Sonnet 144)

Yet it seems more than a voluntary surrender when we read
Sonnet 141:

In faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes,
For they in thee a thousand errors note;
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,
Who in despite of view is pleas'd to dote.
Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune delight'd;
Nor tender feeling to base touches prone,
Nor taste nor smell desire to be invited
To any sensual feast with thee alone;
But my five wits nor my five senses can
Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,
Who leaves unsway'd the likeness of a man,
Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be.
Only my plague thus far I count my gain,
That she that makes me sin awards me pain.

Cressida's heart went with her other eye to Diomed, and
"All's done" for Troilus. When the mind plays pander to
the eye - the eye which feeds on external beauty, that
beauty becomes prey to desire. Thus in Sonnet 147,

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease;
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
Th' uncertain sickly appetite to please.

Such seems to be the love of Gertrude for the elder Hamlet,
the love inspired by Cleopatra. The sum of Shakespeare's
attitude to love between man and woman in which sex is un-
derstood to be the 'prize' or the natural consummation of
love becomes unmistakably clear. And it is here that we
find Shakespeare treating love in the Ovidian tradition of

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portraying love as a cruel god. But Shakespeare never seems to take his eyes off the stark reality of the feeling of guilt and emptiness that follows the pleasure of love, unless when love is enshrined in the sanctity of the marriage vow. But marital love, apart from "the marriage of true minds", is not the subject of poetry.

We have seen the nature of love as practised in the medieval tradition of courtly love. The Elizabethan court crowded with handsome lords and ladies would have presented the watchful eyes of the poet innumerable examples of interesting affairs with dire results. One such affair leading to the murder of one Sir Thomas Overbury is recounted by Ivor Brown. Another interesting anecdote of the irresponsible amour of Sir Walter Raleigh is recorded by Sutherland both of which give us a glimpse of the leisurely pastime of Elizabethan court romance. It therefore is no small hazard that Shakespeare takes in throwing a dismal light on the levity of the courtly romantic affairs. And it is difficult not to regard the licence of courtly romance as the survival of medieval courtly love stripped bare of its religious camouflage.

It has been shown by some critics that in Sonnet 144 the poet is talking not about two people of opposite qualities, but of two kinds of love. One of them, Kenneth Muir, wisely distinguishes the Poet of the Sonnets from Shakespeare
the man, presumably with the object of saving the latter from a dubious reputation were he in any way identified with the imaginative self of the former — a distinction so vital to keep himself from involving in popular controversy. And neither is it impossible to distil out the essence of Shakespeare's concern with love without tracing the biographical relationship between the Sonnets and their author.

When Shakespeare begins writing on the conventional theme of love he takes the popular story of the amorous love of the goddess Venus for the uninitiated youth Adonis. The entire 1194 lines of the poem Venus and Adonis (first published in 1593) tell the story of a very unOlympian goddess falling head over heels in love with a fair youth who turns cold at her very touch. The main arguments of the poem have been given two divergent interpretations. While traditional view regards Venus as sensual love and Adonis as reason in such enthusiastic enunciation as

All the pent-up anger of reason in love then burst forth against lust:

"Call it not love, for Love to heaven is fled,
Since sweating Lust on earth usurp'd his name;
Under whose simple semblance he hath fed
Upon fresh beauty, blotting it with blame;"

An like a cooling shower in the heat of summer,
Came the following words:

"Love comforteth like sunshine after rain,
But Lust's effect is tempest after sun;"

So Venus is shown as the destructive agent of sensu­al love; Adonis, as reason in love, a contrary view is expressed by Alur Janaki Ram. Drawing his inference from neo-­platonic views of love which is essentially permissive of sex as procreation, he defends the goddess as reasoned love and imputes the coldness of Adonis to "self-negatory Narcissistic love". He says,

"It is in this role as a pacifier of the martial spirit that she tenders her advice to the young Adonis to hunt milder animals like the hare and the deer rather than the dangerous ones like the boar. Moreover, Adonis's absorption in the hunt of the boar to the neglect of the soft hunt (love) only reveals the lack of co-­ordination in him between the amatory and martial elements.

In a singular approach to Shakespeare's plays Marilyn French examines with great clarity the nature of sexual relationships in Shakespeare, using what she calls 'the Gender Principles'. She identifies as 'masculine' the human will to positive assertiveness, independence, establishment of law and order, the aspiration for permanence, the ultimate goal to transcend nature and ensure the continuation of the human race and its felicity.

The masculine principle is thus profoundly threatened by and antagonistic to impulses towards acceptance of simple continuation, of present pleasure,
of surrender to mortality. These impulses are associated with the feminine principle, which is identified with nature. Defying the power of nature, the masculine principle is the standard of hu(man-kind), and identifies the human with the male. 29

This feminine principle is further split into 'outlaw' and 'inlaw' aspects. The outlaw claims both the masculine and feminine dynamism of killing and of giving birth, and is opposed to the masculine sexuality of possession and rape. It tends to disintegrate and annihilate the masculine structure of order and harmony, and "sees the end of life as pleasure".

Pleasure of all sorts, but especially sexual pleasure, is a threat to the masculine principle, the energies of which must be directed towards transcendent goals. 30

It then appears that Shakespeare, in order to give us a wholesome picture of love, must find a synthesis of 'the amatory and martial elements' in love.

The primacy of reason in the inner hierarchy of the soul, which underlines the neo-platonic idea of man as the image of God, has strongly decided Shakespeare's interpretation of love, so much so that passionate love at the expense of reason is seen as evil by Shakespeare.

My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
Desire is death, which physic did except.
Past cure I am now reason is past care.

(Sonnet 147)

When love has for its object the opposite sex whose beauty and use craves possession as the fulfilment of love, reason is assailed and it becomes

... the bawd to lust's abuse!

(Venus and Adonis, 1.792)

The feeling is universal. The granting of the body's use is taken for granted as the surrender of love and reason, 'the expense of spirit'. Iago could never have made Othello doubt Desdemona's fidelity except by the sexual innuendos with which he conjures up a mental picture of adultery, and Othello swallowed the bait, hook, line and sinker, as if the sexual act is all that there is in his knowledge of love. Hamlet's world is so infected with this sin that he advises Ophelia not to let her beauty abuse her honesty, and to avoid love altogether,

for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness.

This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof.

(3.1.111-115)

The frustration of the poet of the Dark Lady Sonnets can be understood on the plane of a deceptive ideal in this, popular Christian hymn which alludes to the ordeal of Tantalus:
I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,
But ah, the waters failed;
E'en as I stoop'd to drink they fled,
And mock'd me as I wailed.

Love has opened the poet's eyes to a vision of beauty the possession of which in sensual terms often proves to be illusory, bringing into the civic personality a kind of civil war in which, — to use Brutus's words,

the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.

(Julius Caesar 2.1.67)

And since it is in the nature of an insurrection to reject the voice of the higher faculties of man's god-like reason in favour of the coarser and more tangible voice of the lower faculties of man's sensual nature, the poet's pilgrim-love thirsting for a spiritual and physical satisfaction finds itself betrayed of its sweet and satisfying prize. One cannot help giving superlative encomium to our poet for his uncanny insight into the mystery of man's unique personality, especially the indivisible nature of physical and spiritual essences which no other writer seems to grasp as honestly as Shakespeare. This difficulty of separating the dual identities of man eventually results with our poet in a decentralization of the self, as observed by Waller:
the 'I' of Shakespeare's sonnets is never stable. It is not the Wordsworthian egotistical sublime or the collective 'I' of medieval hymn or Anglo-Saxon elegy. It is a shattered, decentred voice that searches in vain for stability, as in Sonnet 75. The 'I' is aware only of a lack, which has set desire in motion; it articulates this lack by inserting itself in language, which serves only as a further decentring, as it moves along an endless chain of signification, unable to capture the derived plenitude of significance it attributes to the object of desire. The Cartesian ego, fifty years later, would try desperately to pin down some unassailable centre to the experience of 'I'. Shakespeare's sonnets, like Donne's, show the futility of the attempt. The 'I' strives to constitute itself a basis for identify[sic], coherent, and primordial, as a source of order and control, and finds itself always already a function of an endlessly frustrating plethora of differences while producing the illusion of autonomy and control.

The crux of the situation lies in the incompatibility between the two natures of man in whom the harmony of organic unity between the 'various elements' has been jarred out of tune. It is a long and tortuous path full of briars and thorns from the opposite ideals of love and lust to the harmony of all the elements the humble and humbled characters attain in the final plays.

What, then, is the flaw in the love which looks for its
consummation in the sensible experience of the sexual act which in itself constitutes the ultimate, the climax, the purest joy that flesh can attain short of spiritual ecstasy transcending consciousness of physical existence? In Shakespeare and Donne the rejection of love on the plane of sanguinary experience comes not so much from moral considerations of Christian humanism, nor from the neo-platonic refinement of the concept of love as ideal beauty. Theirs is an independent, down to earth, examination of the intrinsic quality of the love-life of men and women in the natural pattern in terms of its efficacy to give the highest possible happiness to man. And we all know, but know still better with Sonnet 129 that sexual orgasm as an end of loving is a big lie. Man as male, woman as female, fail utterly to satisfy the longing and desire of the partner. The best of them could only but make more hungry,

As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on. (Hamlet 1.2.

The question of Shakespeare's assimilation of the ideas of Plato concerning love remain a critical contention. And it would be futile to look for absolute arbitrament in terms of total assimilation or total rejection. The following points from Plato's Symposium may be set up by which Shakespeare's indebtedness or otherwise can be measured.
1 It is Love who creates Peace among men, and calm upon the sea, Rest for the winds from strife, and sleep in sorrow. (p.71)

2 It is Love who empties us of the spirit of estrangement and fills us with the spirit of kinship. (p.71)

3 Love is in love with what he lacks and does not possess. (p.78)

4 Love is a great spirit whose function, as any spirit's is, is to interpret and convey messages to the gods from men and to men from the gods. (p.81)

5 Love must be distinguished from the object of love which is beauty, by which is implied that Love needs not be necessarily beautiful externally. (p.83)

6 Love is a desire for the perpetual possession of the good. (p.86)

7 The object of love is not beauty, but to bring forth in beauty since procreation is the nearest thing to perpetuity and immortality that a mortal being can attain. (p.87). It is in order to secure immortality that each individual is haunted by this eager desire and love. (p. 89)

8 Love progresses from the love of physical beauty in the person of a human being and beget noble sentiments. But this leads to universalization, and the desire to possess a particular person cannot remain constant, leading to infidelity. But love of a particular person leads to the discovery that beauty of soul is more valuable than beauty of body. When the eye of Love is opened at last to the beauty of inner harmony, the entire world of science becomes a worthy object of love. It is
by such steps of examples of beauty that Love finally
discovers eternal and absolute beauty which is not
beautiful in parts but as a whole. (p.92-94)
The will to individual perpetuation through procreation
with its propensity for epicurean indulgence often defeats
itself and robs itself of the happiness to be derived from
the noble act. The urge to possess the beautiful forever
may be noble on the philosophical plane, but hardly ever so
on the plane of carnal sexuality. That Plato refuses to
look on love as sensual and his praise of Socrates's self-
control may imply a negative attitude to the epicurean
aspect of love. But Plato may be less concerned with the
sociological value of love than he is with it as a philo-
sophical concept. Shakespeare's concern with love is no-
thing if not sociological. Whereas Plato dismisses sensual
love as not worth the thought - at most the enemy to phil-
osophical pursuit - Shakespeare takes it seriously, explores
it, suffers traumatically the emotional and intellectual
pressures created by conscience and disillusionment of an
ideal. The Poet of the Sonnets feels like a baited animal
trapped by a false fairy, a 'Dame sans Merci', the femme
fatale, the female spider and the Platonic antagonist. The
poet feels himself compromising his ideals of love because
his eyes have been blinded by Love to love what his reason
finds unworthy of it. The final numbers of the Sonnets are
sad records of the poet's admission, that philosophical ideals cannot stand the assault of the body's urge to possess and annihilate the passions.

Any attempt to interpret the Sonnets presupposes the original order of their composition, which in the absence of sufficient biographical details inevitably becomes an open critical hunting ground. Whether Shakespeare 'unlocked heart' in these Sonnets or he was writing in a highly developed conventional mode on a popular subject is still a matter of subjective enquiry of the internal evidence. The present study does not open itself to either view, but finds it worthwhile to distil out the essence of each Sonnet dealing with the topic under study, and to present as originally as possible the poet's responses to the experience of love in the context of life, time and society.

In *The Symposium* Plato recounts a half ludicrous anecdote through the mouth of Alcibiades concerning Socrates: The Socrates whom you see has a tendency to fall in love with good-looking young men, and is always in their society and in an ecstasy about them. (Besides, he is, to all appearances, universally ignorant and knows nothing). But this is exactly the point in which he resembles Silenus; he wears these characteristics superficially, like the carved figure, but once you see beneath the surface you will discover a degree of self-control of which you can hardly form a notion, gentlemen.
Alcibiades goes on to disclose the unsuccessful trial he made on Socrates to break this self-control, proving him a real philosophical lover of beauty. Such love of beauty (if one may side-step the controversial biographical implication of Shakespeare's wooing of patronage on the conventional level) and the desire to have it undiminished by age or by change of affection we find in the Sonnets concerning a Youth whom the poet has befriended inspite of difference in social status. Since Love inspired by woman cannot always maintain its purity and pitch, and is eventually doomed to decline with the waning of physical beauty and familiarity, it comes short of the ideal of perfect love which does not alter with age nor

... bends with the remover to remove.

Yet this scepticism about heterosexual relationship does not extend to marital relationship and man-woman relationship in preparation or anticipation of marriage which is the ideal consummation of human love in order to achieve its end. The sanctity of marriage always appears in Shakespeare as security in love, a symbol of permanence (in the assurance of procreation), the fulfilment of nature's law. Thus, whenever Shakespeare brings lovers together, except for occasional use of bawdy, their relationship never needs to 'go to their bodies' to prove their love: for that is assured by the strength of their love which is strong enough to sustain
even to the edge of doom.
Throughout his works Shakespeare never elevates the sexual act to the equivalence of love, nor does he make it a necessary complement to 'the marriage of true minds'. Yet to say that Shakespeare is advocating the sterile philosophical 'love' of Plato is to misunderstand Shakespeare's idea of love altogether. The highest blessing that is bestowed to lovers in Shakespeare is the promise of issue. Reference to lovers' desire to be with each other by sexual innuendos usually come from shallower characters like Juliet's Nurse, Iago, Touchstone, and of course the ultimate cynic, Thersites. The nuptial bed is sacred and is purchased with no less price than the total sacrifice of self in love to the beloved.

Shakespeare comes nearest to Plato's Love in the Beau­teous Youth Sonnets on the point of the need to propagate beauty. But even here the thought of love's failure to achieve constancy and permanence gets the better of the poet, so that much of the force of the Sonnets is spent on the desper­ate attempt to arrest the passage of Time - the dreaded annihilator of temporal realities. The acuteness of the poet's vision never allows him to lose sight for a moment of the constant passing of time. And when the passage of time is mentioned it is always in relation to its function as the remover and the agent of change and interchange of states of things, and not simply in terms of lost opportunity or
the movement of the dial's hands. Sonnet 15, 30, 60, 64, 65 and 73 share with the sceptical utterance of Prospero on the insubstantial pageant of spirits a discomforting vision of a naturalistic universe which does not take man into account. The vision is pervasive, and the poet's felt need to find a centre equally urgent.

When I consider every thing that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment,
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment.

(Sonnet 15)

And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth;
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.

(Sonnet 60)

Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate -
That time will come and take my love away.
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

(Sonnet 64)

Only a sensitive soul that looks beyond the glitter of mundane existence such as the poet's can feel the full implications of an amoral existence in an indifferent universe, which Stephen Crane makes to deny any sense of obligation to man. Was Mark Antony, taunted so by Cleopatra to hear the messengers from Rome, sufficiently aware of what he says?
Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.
Kingdoms are clay; our dungy earth alike
Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life
Is to do thus. |embracing|

(1.1.33)

The situation is not fitting for the metaphysical implications of his words, which may be compared to Prospero's insubstantial pageant speech in the isolation of its inspiration. Yet Antony could not have put their situation in a better light nor could there be a better situation to pit his love-life against the base necessity of temporality. By love, and only by love, man transcends the monotonous necessity of feeding on the decaying rubbish of materialism. King Henry IV has run the gauntlet of this game, and finds the prize not worth the struggle:

The happiest youth, viewing his progress through,
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
Would shut the book and sit him down and die.

(Henry IV,Pt.2, 3.1.54-56)

So bleak and forbidding is this vision without the light of love! The same unrelieved prospect is the landscape of Sonnet 66: a vision of society whose order is turned upside down by corruption. It is a chronicle of ungilded human society envisioned by Lear's Fool already mentioned. Bitterly the poet utters his premonition of impending danger to his love:
Against that time (if ever that time come)
When I shall see thee frown on my defects,
When love converted from the thing it was
Shall reasons fond of settled gravity:
To leave poor me thou hast the strength of laws.

(Sonnet 49)

In an essay, Love's Confined Doom, M.M. Mahood points out the interesting parallel between this Sonnet and the repudiation of Falstaff by Hal in Henry IV Pt 2. Others think that the Sonnet reveal the failure of love on the level of patronage relationship. In fact, in life the fear is natural, since patrons are not obliged to be true to their admirers as much as the admirer is to the patron. To dismiss the relevance of the poem as a conventional piece is to tear down the very fabric of the essence of literature, as so much of the matter of literature is dependent on conventions.

Again it is Hamlet's question whether 'to be or not to be' that is expressed in the Sonnets. Life does not offer sufficient incentive to the poet for going on towards a 'dishonourable graves' except for the thin margin of what little beauty and love there is in the silver lining. When this frail hope vanishes,

Let me not think on't.      (Hamlet 1.2.146)
But Hamlet cannot but 'think on't', and it makes him half-mad. Man needs a system of values, a philosophy of life, a religion or a religion-surrogate to live by and understand by, in about the same sense that he needs sunlight, calcium or love.

We need a validated, usable system of human values that we can believe in and devote ourselves to (be willing to die for), because they are true rather than because we are exhorted to 'believe and have faith.'

As much as the poet idealizes on love as in Sonnet 116:

> it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

the innocent loyalty of Desdemona, the generosity of Hermione and Cordelia in their forgiving love, the sturdy faith and loyalty of Paulina remain something of unrealized ideals in our work-a-day world, saving a few saints.

Shakespeare might have begun the Beauteous Youth Sonnets in a Platonic spirit of looking at love philosophically and in a disinterested enjoyment of the young man's physical beauty as an artist enjoys himself with the beauty of a work of art. The exhortation to marry and beget copies of his beauuteous self comes naturally. Gradually the ambiguity of love begins to make itself felt in the relationship. Love depends on beauty for its awakening; hence is dependent for its continuance on the stability of beauty. Secondly love seeks to
possess. It must be reciprocated with love. Otherwise, it sulks and suffers and infects the very air with complaint. For the poet, sight of beauty satisfies hunger in love. And the perpetuity of this sight is all that is demanded. On the second plane we may interpret Venus as love seeking desperately for an expression through love made whole by reciprocating love from Adonis. At this point the Beauteous Youth resembles Adonis in his coldness towards love, turning waywardly against the warning of the poet to 'hunt the boar'—the killer of beauty.

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
Which like a canker in the fragrant rose
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!
Oh, in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!

(Sonnet 95)

Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

(Sonnet 94)

How amazingly does nature provide commentary on human life! Ultimately we find the poet and the Youth like a drowning man and his rescuer in the flood, rationalizing their situation as best as they can.

So shall I live supposing thou art true
Like a deceived husband; so love's face
May still seem love to me, though alter'd new—
Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place.

(Sonnet 93)
Another Sonnet bewails the loss of love in a manner that shows absolute loyalty, clearly implying that his life is inextricably united with the young man's:

When thou shalt be dispos'd to set me light,
And place my merit in the eye of scorn,
Upon thy side against myself I'll fight,
And prove thee virtuous, though thou art forforsworn.

(Sonnet 88)

This feeling is again and again echoed in the plays:

It is my soul that calls upon my name.

(Romeo and Juliet 2.2.165)

Make me a willow cabin at your gate,

And call upon my soul within the house.

(Twelfth Night 1.5.252)

There can be wide differences in interpretation of the Sonnets considered as a unity, as a growth, or as unrelated episodes. That is to consider Shakespeare as having a stable philosophy, or as searching for one, or without one. And as scholarship has not exhausted possibilities of fresh insight, it appears critically reasonable to build upon the unitarian concept. Then only is it possible to bring one part of his work to bear upon another, irrespective of chronological sequence.

A third face of Love's ambiguity reveals itself in the poet's insistence on the independence of his love of exter-
nal change, and its sufficiency in meeting the forces of time. It is not the visible changes that time leaves in its wake which is now the greatest enemy of love, but the change of heart. G.F. Waller is not as convincing as usual to read the poet's assertion against Time in Sonnet 116 as a deliberate and fearful repression, an unwillingness to acknowledge that Love is not able to overcome Time.\(^3^8\),
suggesting that the poet IS CONSCIOUS of the failure even of LOVE to conquer Time. It is true that the poet acknowledges Time's supremacy over all that is mortal in love, including that love whose basic motive is utilitarian.

If my dear love were but the child of state,  
It might for Fortune's bastard be unfather'd,  
As subject to Time's love or to Time's hate,  
Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers gather'd.

No, it was builded far from accident;  
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls  
Under the blow of thralled discontent,  
Whereo th'inviting time our fashion calls.  
It fears not Policy, that heretic,  
Which works on leases of short-numb'red hours,  
But all alone stands hugely politic,  
That it nor grows with heat nor drowns with show'rs.

To this I witness call the fools of time,  
Which die for goodness, who have liv'd for crime. \(\text{Sonnet 124}\)
The testimony of Time and its power is overwhelming indeed, and love makes no compare in like strength:

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty held a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

The beauty of a flower is magnificent beyond imagination, and to think of its short lease in relation to "rocks impregnable" and "gates of steel" (even which time decays) is truly "fearful meditation". Love becomes a fugitive of Time, a jewel stolen from the lair of a dragon:

Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.  
(Sonnet 65)

Beauty fails, love fails to withstand death and separation, bodily love leads but to hell. Still the poet asserts his love, though he knows that love too will die with him, unless a kind of transcendence is found.

But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.  
(Sonnet 18)
Yet, do thy worst, old Time. Despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young.

(Sonnet 19)

First the poet brings the power of procreation against the power of Time. Now it is humble black ink that he brings to the van in his war against Time. What better immortality can be assured to things mortal than to live 'so long as men can breathe'?

"The foundation of Shakespeare's comedy and tragedy," says Helen Gardner, "is the conception of man as finding his fulfilment in love, and therefore as not self-sufficient, but dependent upon others." 39 The Sonnets do not offer sufficient scope for a fuller and more diversified treatment of love, time and mutability as the plays have done. It is in the tragedies and the comedies that Shakespeare finally vindicates romantic love (by which is understood the love between man and woman which is not dependent on sexual relationship, though not rejected). The spirit of love in the plays, in fact, spreads its bright influence beyond the circle of lovers, sowing seeds of goodwill and forgiveness, establishing a new foundation of hope for a better society. The love of the poet of the Sonnets has triumphed over the power of Time not so much by constancy (which is subject to time) as by finding a vehicle for his love which
can race with Time. However, the love which is the preoccu-
pation of the Sonnets has little or no sociological value, and is more or less of the nature of a young poet's exer-
cise on a popular theme and convention, though by this it is not at all implied that the poet's feelings are imaginary and have no real base. What is suggested is that, apart from the richer treatment of love in the plays the Sonnets by themselves provide insufficient basis for a comprehensive view of love. Neither do they provide adequate insight into the unique relationship between the opposite sexes which normal experience would expect them to corroborate. Instead, the Sonnets regard such love as too fraught with dangers, if not altogether destructive. The plays, however, seem to treat of love in a manner which is felt along the blood. The antithesis between the sensual and rational love is not resolved without the characters involved undergoing signifi-
cant changes in their attitudes to and opinions of others and the world and life at large. The stronger one asserts will and individualism the lesson to be learnt proves harder. There are a few characters who have a sort of built-in personalities which enables them to respond without friction to the unkindness of Fortune; and they represent the ideal in flesh and blood of true love which 'fallen' man is truly capable of in an uncompromising universe under the sovereign-
ty of silent gods - that is, in so far as man expects them
to act.

The tenor of romantic love in Shakespeare's Comedies is love at first sight, and fulfils to some extent the Petrarchan masochistic love-pangs of unrequited love. So in Love's Labour's Lost the King and his lords found their resolutions powerless against the flaming arrows of female charms and each felt the "bird-bolt under the left pap", inspiring him to write odes to his mistress's praise. Berowne denounces their former vows to studious celibacy as "flat treason 'gainst the kingly state of youth", and breaks into seventy lines of discourse on Love, which speaks for them all. His theme is

But love, first learned in a lady's eyes,
Lives not alone immured in the brain,
But with the motion of all elements
Courses as swift as thought in every power,
And gives to every power a double power,
Above their functions and their offices.

And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods
Make heaven drowsy with the harmony.
Never durst poet touch a pen to write
Until his ink were temp'red with Love's sighs;
O, then his lines would ravish savage ears,
And plant in tyrants mild humility.

which inspiration he attributes to the charms of women, showering them with apotheosizing accolades:
They are the books, the arts, the academes,
That show, contain, and nourish, all the world.

(4.3.348–49)

This is of a different tune from the Ovidian treatment of "my mistress' eyes" in the Sonnets:

But at my mistress' eye Love's brand new fir'd,
The boy for trial needs would touch my breast.

(Sonnet 153)

Donne achieves a calm religiousness in

So must pure lovers soules descend
T'affections, and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great Prince in prison lies.
To'our bodies turne wee then, that so
Weake men on love reveal'd may looke;
Loves mysteries in soules doe grow,
But yet the body is his booke.

(The Extasie)

as a matter-of-fact routine of any love worth the name,
whereas Shakespeare's unquenchable moral instinct cannot
but see the same situation as a surrender to inevitability:

but I, my mistress' thrall,
Came there for cure; and this but I prove:
Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.

(Sonnet 154)

In a comic irony, however, the objects of the heady passions of the King of Navarre and his lords, the French
Princess and her ladies prove more rational than to trust the untutored victims of Cupid's darts, and put them on probation of twelve months' penance. And who can say that Love's labour is lost? But that's too long for a play".

The real love's labour lost is Romeo's pining love for Rosaline, or of Orsino's for Olivia. In contrast to Berowne's Love's feeling is more soft and sensible
Than are the tender horns of cockled snails;

Romeo's

Is love a tender thing? It is too rough,
Too rude, too boist'rous, and it pricks like thorn.

presents youthful love in the Ovidian mode. Such youthful melancholy love, of which Laertes warns Ophelia against Hamlet, and which Duke Orsino indulges in, is the worse in comparison with the love which "feeds on the air" and makes Valentine forgets dinner, lending Romeo "love's light wings" to "o'erperch" Capulet's high walls - he who even now has been unable "To soar with his light feathers . . . above dull woe". Proteus' love for Julia in The Two Gentlemen of Verona lacks the true spirit of Valentines's love which is capable of sacrificing his own happiness for his friend - which seems absurd to Emily Pearson. After a due penitence for his mercenary concept of love which respects no friend, Proteus discovers that true love is not so much a matter of
looks as it is a matter of mind:

What is in Silvia's face but I may spy
More fresh in Julia's with a constant eye?

(5.4.114-5)

thereby qualifying Julia's self-evaluation:

What should it be that he respects in her
But I can make respective in myself . . . ?

(4.4.190)

Having seen the stuff that he is made of, and knowing the meaning his name 'Proteus' carries, it is only to be mentioned that Proteus does not give us the kind of true conviction of his reformation. It seems exactly by the same protean facility that he utters the words just quoted, and Julia's future happiness seems less assured than that of Silvia.

The cowardly courtship of Thurio who flatly refuses to "endanger his body for a girl that loves him not", while very sensible (perhaps more so than Aguecheek's decision to go home after despairing of Olivia's favour), puts us in mind of reckless risks taken by true lovers for the sake of love. True love, in Shakespeare, has a price which only love can pay. Julia, Imogen, Viola, Rosalind, every one of them women of good breeding, dons a boy's garb, sets out to solve her own problems without as much a prayer for supernatural intervention as the situation demands. Disguise
in fact has significant dramatic effect apart from its service to exigency, inspiring a number of essays on the theme of appearance and reality. But here disguise is a means to safeguard the chastity of the heroines only by which the fidelity of their love is assured. The problem of feminine chastity as a symbol of truth in love recurs in Shakespeare more than once. Initially The Rape of Lucrece (1594) deals with the self-condemnation of Lucrece for the "forced stain" on her chastity. The fact that her mind is untainted with the rape does not undo her physical violation. What is of paramount significance in Lucrece's estimate of her misfortune is that she is incapable of divorcing the body from the mind — a dichotomy modern man has no difficulty in assuming.

The same problem is treated in Cymbeline in which the main event is centred in the mind of the husband while the wife is saved the real dishonour. Shakespeare's art of dramatizing 'real' events psychologically has matured considerably.

The course of love is not easy. Only a true lover may come unscathed through the flames of love's altar. No sacrifice less than self-hood appeases the god of love. Consciously or unconsciously, a lover in Shakespeare braves dangers and eventualities to the extent of recklessness or self-abandon. Romeo has some uneasy foreboding of danger; yet it does not deter him in his progress towards love:

... . . . . . . my mind misgives
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels and expire the term
Of a despised life clos'd in my breast,
By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
But he that hath the steerage of my course
Direct my sail!

(1.4.106-113)

Recklessness and faith combined, indeed! The rest of the story is about love bargained with danger and death.

The wild country of Wales is no Arden for Imogen. But she does not count the dangers, but the love of her banished husband who is not coming but has ordered her 'execution' for alleged infidelity. And the name she has assumed in the boy's shape is, ironically, Fidele. One is struck by the severity of lovers' punishment for infidelity in Shakespeare, which is usually no less than the removal of the offending individual from existence altogether, without a trace, if possible. The world is too good for such who trample on holy love.

For Viola, disguise is a means not merely for safety, but to stay within the bounds of civilized order, which alone can provide the survival she needs as a virtuous woman of noble birth. Her own brother vouchsafes that "she bore a mind that envy could not but call fair", accounting her beautiful in other peoples' eyes. Her mental maturity
revealed in extreme situation is indicative of her good breeding. Her parentage has to be kept secret till such time as due recognition and restitution are assured. Before that her situation is desperate, and she knows that exposure to the world in her true identity may even endanger her life. Self confident and self provident, she possesses a strong faith where her quick brain and her situation are at their wits' end. Then her text is,

What else may hap, to time I will commit.  
(1.3.60)

And she can really let go, and trust providence. Lear almost achieve this when he finds that self-pity of thinking on his daughters' unkindness was robbing him of his reason:

O, that way madness lies; let me shun that.  
(3.3.21)

Viola discovers that her efficiency as the Duke's love-bearer has ended up in a closed triangle of unrequitting love, which only the appearance of Sebastian as the complementing alter ego of Viola's double role as lover and loved can open to make a double pair of mutual lovers. In an interesting development of Shakespeare's attitude to Time and mutability, Twelfth Night depends on time for the solution of the problems of life and of love. This is a significant departure from the typical attitude of hosti-
lity towards Time that we have seen in the Sonnets and some of the plays. This shows that Time is felt in exact relation to its effect on a person's life. St. Augustine tried to understand the mystery of Time, seeing it as a subjective concept, and "is in the human mind". Rosalind in As You Like It says as much:

> Time travels in divers paces with divers persons. (3.2.302).

Lovers' time is measured by the sighs and groans. It is too lazy-footed to bring lovers to their happiness; but too swift-footed to depart when that is got. Juliet chafes at her Nurse's delay in bringing news from Romeo about their marriage:

> Love's heralds should be thoughts Which ten times faster glides than the sun's beams Driving back shadows over lowering hills. (2.5.4-6)

She chides the "fiery-footed steeds" of Phoebus for their unhurry in her haste for "gentle night" to give her her Romeo. But the events that fill Time between her expectation and her consummation makes the morning lark sing too soon! The sense of Time's betrayal of love in this play is overpowering: the happiness of the too too young lovers seems like theft of a jewel from the womb of Time.
Paradoxically Proteus, notwithstanding the immaturity of his love for Julia, has shown his love as dependent on time and thus doomed to extinction:

O, how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day,
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by and by a cloud takes all away!

(T.G.V. 1.3.84-87)

The heat, while it lasts, may have equal intensity with Julia's love for him; yet the difference is measured by the standard of Sonnet 116, whose constant and enduring quality judges Proteus's love as 'Guilty', whereas Julia's love deserves highest honour for being constant against inconstancy, and bearing "it out even to the edge of doom".

Psychological studies of love and the power of loving throw favourable light on Shakespeare's treatment of love in his later plays. Psychologically healthy persons, or "self-actualized" persons have a heightened appreciation for life, others and themselves, a detachment from the conforming aspects of culture, and an originality or creativity that ranks them far above the level of their fellows.

They possess a quality that may be called "humility" of a certain type. While they are well aware of their own worth, there is no humbleness of the cringing or designing type. Against the conventional view of love as a deficit need, an
emptiness which has to be filled, Abraham H. Maslow holds the view that psychologically healthy persons need less love than they can give to others. According to him, self-actualized persons tend toward an increasing spontaneity, resulting in the dropping of pretenses, roles and strivings in the love relationship. In such a union, it is not necessary to impress, suppress or repress. They can be themselves without feeling there are demands or expectations placed upon them. Such persons usually possess the ability to love and to be loved....Such people do not need sensuality, but they enjoy it wholeheartedly.... Erotic and agapean love merge in the healthiest people. While in the general public, they appear to be at opposite poles, in self-actualized people the dichotomies are resolved; they are at the same time selfish and unselfish, active and passive, masculine and feminine, etc.

These self-actualized persons experience "need identification"; they feel others' needs as if they were their own.....their love is a spontaneous admiration, a sort of receptive and undemanding awe and enjoyment such as that experienced when one is "struck" by a fine painting.  

There can hardly be another psycho-analysis of Shakespeare's lovers which comes nearer the actual than this. Shelley, too, has defined love as

a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action or person, not our own.  


But Keats has supplied the link of sympathy between nineteen-century Romantic spirit and the Shakespearean synthesis of mind and body, ideal and mundane, dream and reality by realizing the need to participate in the actual conditions of human life if the ideal of beauty were to be achieved. Graham Hough has rendered concisely the Keatsian synthesis by which Shakespeare ideal of love is thrown in relief:

the attempt to reconcile the loveliness of the world with its transience, its pleasures with its pain, the longing to enjoy the beautiful with the suspicion that it cannot be long enjoyed unless much that is not beautiful is faced.  

And Keats has observed this faculty operating almost as second nature in a number of Shakespeare's characters. Perhaps it is this revelation of human sympathy that Keats has identified in Shakespeare as 'Negative Capability': not just an artistic detachment but a deep-rooted feeling of unity with the rest of creation, which may not be unlike what we see in Donne when he says:

Any Mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind.  

It is impossible for a reader of Shakespeare who possesses a normal degree of human sympathy not to appreciate the feeling of confidence and security as well as the innate will to good towards others exuding from the 'good' characters
in his plays. Truly, Shakespeare's concept of Love in its final development transcends both the Platonic cult of Beauty and the depressing consciousness of Time's tyranny. Ultimately, it does not seem to matter whether man finds a way to beat time or whether he has found a way to arrest mutability. Shakespeare has opened the book of human nature for us to see our situation in respect of space-time existence and the timeless internal world of consciousness.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men. He brings to us the only possible choice of existence, not in spite of the ruthless of indomitable forces beyond our power to control, but on the condition of a duty to perform. Portia of Belmont and Viola of Messaline have made the wise choice in building a candle light of love's world to shine in "a naughty world". The Biblical injunction that "It is more blessed to give than to receive" is the underlying principle of the Love which brightens the world, which, like Venice, has been darkened by the Shylocks, the Iagos, the Angelos, the Malvolios, and the darkest of them who give opportunity to these enemies of love: Time and its attendant Mutability.

How far that little candle throws his beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world.
(M.V.5.1.90)
It is just a candle light: but it is enough to show what Love is, and what it is capable of achieving in the transformation of life. So shines Antonio's many good deeds in Venice. His hard anti-Semitism quite out of tune with his gentle bearing does not mar the light of his self-sacrificing love.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his own life for his friends. (St John 15:13)

Against the actuality of Antonio's sufferings for the happiness of his friend even Bassanio's protestation of his willingness to lose all for love seems more called for by the need of the situation, and does not convince as strongly, seeing it comes from one who has just now desired the judge to

Wrest once the law to your authority;
To do a great right do a little wrong,
And curb this cruel devil of his will.

(M.V.4.1.210 f)

Love should be made of sterner stuff, the stuff that would rather not possess than possess at the loss of virtue, the very essence of love. Without the sanctity of virtue love becomes a mere object of Venetian bargaining. The place of virtue in love is therefore not equated with maidenhead, but it is in the heart.
Love as the capacity to give and to forgive, to receive graciously, even to lose magnanimously where no gratitude is coming, is the subject of John Russel Brown's study of The Merchant of Venice, 'Love's Wealth and Judgment of The Merchant of Venice'. The rich oriental glitter of Venice has its appropriate image of wealth to illustrate the essential philanthropic nature of love. The only exception to Antonio's grace - his hatred of Shylock and his unbiblical usury - is quite legitimate in the contemporary Christian revulsion against the tribe of Judas Iscariot. Caricaturing the lucrative propensity of Jews seems to be an Elizabethan dramatic stock in trade. Shakespeare, however, shows his greater sympathy for the common human spirit not excluding a Jew by portraying Shylock as the victim of historical aberration of Christianity. In that context Antonio would have been merely unchristian had he been less vindictive; as if he did not take part in the divine displeasure against the race which rejected the Messiah. On the other hand Antonio's ordeal might not have been altogether undeserved. Religious dogmatism apart, it is no gentlemanly action to spit on a person, to spurn and call him dog. What Antonio had done to Shylock and is doing and says he will do amounts to a hubris which turns the whirligig of time with its revenges primed and timed.
The usury of the lovers, on the other hand, is of the giving kind. Antonio "lends out money gratis and brings down/ The rate of usance here with us in Venice", says Shylock. The law of grace and the law of usury are mutually opposed to each other. When Antonio outsteps his rule of grace and borrows after the law of Shylock's usury, he must necessarily pay according to the interest laid down in the reckless bond. And no law but mercy alone can deliver him from the forfeit of that bond he has signed in superfluous confidence on fickle fortune. Portia despaired of mercy and allows the law to take its course, and by the law is Shylock beaten at his own game. Any other judge, even the real Bellario, could never have seen the flaw in the bond, but Portia whose sense of justice and truth is never altered by her personal interest in the case. She has been faithful to her father's will, and in the court would rather lose the case and her husband's happiness in allowing the law declare Antonio guilty than save him by "wresting" the law from its true bent. It is the story of Abraham's sacrifice of his only son Isaac all over again: the gift of the ram as Isaac's substitute is repeated in the discovery of the flaw in the bond as a reward for faith and integrity. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these shall be added unto you" cannot be fulfilled more honourably. In Shakespeare, love is given freely, often entail-
ing the need to let go of the very happiness strived for. This is not just a sort of some metaphysical certainty; but the very essence which makes love so valuable that it becomes a power. The suspense of Portia's waiting for the choice of the caskets made by Bassanio is so real and the possibility of losing him so much that the exuberance of her joy at his choosing rightly comes as a sudden release of pent up tension of fear and foreboding of love's doom. Her joy is no less than the joy Romeo would have felt had he come a minute later. It is the joy of a resurrection. Love has been born, but now its stay and increase with time is assured.

In Shakespeare's Romances we find implicit in the unfailing reward of self-sacrificing love and unconditional forgiveness and repentance the existence of intrinsic moral order in the collective conscience of humanity. The gods who refuse to intervene make their will perceived in the infinite will of man to find goodness even in things evil, provided that man would care enough to seek it with all his heart. This is what Duke Senior in As You Like It has come to learn in the Forest of Arden:

Sweet are the uses of adversity;
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

(2.1.12-17)

For a humanist, this constitutes salvation - salvation from external circumstances, salvation from self.

And thus the pageant of Shakespeare's insubstantial world objectifies for us our essential humanity which our conventionality and drudgery often do not allow us to see. We are so very often prevented from living our lives alone to discover the stuff we are made of. We hide behind the facade of society, and sit safe in its accumulated strength like the old builders of Babel, unconscious of our innate strength. Shakespeare turns the facets of our intellectual and emotional being against the light of an impartial reason as aonly a "chameleon poet" can do without taking part in the drama and yet not insensitive to it. Does it really differ essentially to put Shakespeare's portrayal of love besides that of St Paul, so long as the affinity between the two are evident and their theses capable of being realized on this side of the grave, even if "the rest is" as yet "silence"?

Time and the shifts it brings are relevant only so long as man considers externals which are subject to time, like physical beauty and love which feeds on "nature's rarities".
As long as the Poet in the Sonnets bases his love on the physical beauty of his Friend it is inevitable that his love suffers continual fears:

For never-resting time leads summer on
To hideous winter and confounds him there;

so that,

Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date.

(Sonnet 5)

Physical beauty lives on by generation only:

And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence

Save breed to brave him when he takes thee hence.

(Sonnet 12)

It is therefore inspite of Time's toll on external beauty that the Poet in Sonnet 108 asserts the unaided constancy of his 'eternal' love:

So that eternal love in love's fresh case
Weighs not the dust and injury of age,
Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,
But makes antiquity for aye his page;
Finding the first conceit of love there bred
Where time and outward form would show it dead.

With this 'internalization' of love where Time cannot touch and is forgotten, the Poet can finally celebrate in Sonnet 116 the true essence of Love which does not depend on the external food of love:
Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

And it is on the basis of this 'eternal' (in the sense, not of duration, but of absence or unconsciousness of time) nature of his love that the Poet in Sonnet 123 challenges Time:

No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change.
Thy pyramids built up with newer might
To me are nothing novel, nothing strange;
They are but dressings of a former sight.

Time's permanence is by continual renewal and recycling; nothing is new, history repeats itself, finding fault with the past, not content with the present, the future unguaranteed. But "Love alters not" with time, and working with it, endures "even to the edge of doom", whatever that is.
Whether the end is a physical death only by which "star-crossed lovers" find the union they desire, or the assurance of a new regenerated love born of severe trials, the plays of Shakespeare express in unison the power of Love to mould the entire intellectual and emotional framework of man. Time and mutability, which overshadow the literary landscape of Elizabethan England, not excluding the works of Shakespeare, come to assume a more relative aspect with the growth of Shakespeare's dramatic imagination.

There is no victory over Time in the sense of direct conquest and defeat; love does not make man immortal any more than any man has been killed by it. Neither can lovers kill with frowns any more than resurrect the dead with love. Time rolls Lucy in the diurnal course of nature; golden lads and golden girls come to dust for no fault of their own; all must consign to elemental essence in their due time. Marcus Aurelius had taught harmony with time:

Life in harmony with the universe is what is good; and harmony with the universe is the same thing as obedience to the will of God.50

Time, according to St Augustine, is subjective; a mode of human response to change. He identifies three times:

a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future51,

that is, memory, sight, and expectation. The relativity of
time in Shakespeare's plays, too, derives from the individual response to time in a given situation. T.S. Eliot relates time to human consciousness:

    Time past and time future
    Allow but a little consciousness.
    To be conscious is not to be in time. 52

And Love is a consciousness. First of a need to be made whole by addition of and union with another; secondly of the need to make another whole and happy. Time and duration are measured in terms of the presence of this consciousness. The lark and the nightingale mutually change identities in relation to the lovers' changing consciousness of love and the intrusion of time in Romeo and Juliet.

In his essay, 'King Lear and the Great Tragedies,' 53 L.C. Knight places the conflict between the two time-worlds of the public world and the world of intense subjective experience in a question, asking whether the consciousness of love as a higher value has any tenability in the context of Time and Mutability. The Antony-Cleopatra relationship, so much subject and so allergic to the necessity of living double lives, has no authentic reality until the moment of death, and the necessity of it to validate it.

    Morally there is not much to choose between Rome and Egypt; in matters of the heart and of the imagination, however, they are polar opposites." 54
It is only when their dreams of power and glory have been trodden into the dust that Antony and Cleopatra find their love for each other strong enough to endure the limit of human despair. They are, as it were, driven towards the warm embrace of the 'mutual flame' of their love. Notwithstanding the rather moralistic opposition of the values of love and duty, S.L.Bethell's essay on Antony and Cleopatra treats the last scene of the play with an uncommon sensitivity:

Earthly defeat is the providential instrument of eternal triumph; it comes undesired, but when it comes, is freely accepted, and so converted into a process of necessary cleansing.55

The strength to accept death, not in the Roman stoical principle of saving one's honour, but in the spirit of Faith in the power of love to transcend temporality, implies Faith in a transcendental order. And the operation of a temporal moral order is implied too in the willing suspension of action where no action avails and one is left with no alternative but to trust in time and mutability. Death has no more horror for the lovers as it is the only means by which absolute spiritual union can be attained. This is not an escapist attitude, but the way, the only way to overcome the enemies of true love. And by death alone is love capable of immortality. And that is
equivelent to and is meaningless without an assertion of another order of existence

Where souls do couch on flowers.

The Phoenix and the Turtle cannot be but find union in the mutual flame of the spirit that must fly from hence. The transcendental love of Antony and Cleopatra does not negate the possibility of be-ing in a time-bound sober exis-istence while still asserting the power of love to lift one above the tempests of life. But the time-world of the tragedies is inimical to the growth of love because of the difference of values they entertain. The world of Antony and Cleopatra, with its martial and historical necessity, cannot accommodate a royal romance any more than the world of besieged Troy can consider the love of Troilus and Cre-ssida.

... in a war-dominated world, love is seen only in terms of appetite, exploitation, disease or battle.

The real tragedy of love is when it is found powerless to transcend the situation in which it is placed, as in Troi-lus and Cressida. But even the cruellest twist of fate by the hands of Time in the robbing of lovers' earthly happi-ness fails to yield a true tragic feeling for the fact that love is fulfilled, albeit like a star that is gone to ano-ther universe.
The world of Macbeth where Time becomes Ambition's captive has no place for love. Time for Macbeth becomes a commodity whose value may be calculated in terms of crowns and castles:

And nothing is but what is not. (1.3.141)

By usurping time Macbeth desecrate Nature and the entire story reads like a gory nightmarish tale of unnatural events. Macbeth's crime has the nature of original sin in that he is egged on by his wife who even desires herself 'unsexed' and filled with 'direst cruelty'. Love and its attributes of faith and forgiveness are not the elements of Macbeth, a fact ominously anticipated early in the play by Duncan's misplaced trust in Cawdor and the safety of Macbeth's castle. It is a world where even the innocence of a child becomes seasoned cynicism:

Then the liars and swearers are fools; for there are liars and swearers enow to beat the honest men and hang up them. (4.2.55)

Macbeth and Richard III would desire no heaven of justice but an extinction of their being, for they too, like Lear, had been stretched upon the 'rack of this tough world' without having learnt to bear the affliction of their own consciences. Their death release the time for others to live.

In the earlier plays character seems to play a significant role in working out the destiny of people. Inspite
of apparently resigned dependence on the wheel of chance. The characters do move the wheel by their actions and when it comes full circle each gets the fruit of what one sowed, and time may appear to be less of a living force rolling men and women in its cosmic mill. The humanist in Shakespeare has now asserted himself in the full face of the universe and whatever horror may be lurking in its inscrutable depths. Though humanism is not a substitute for religion, its claim for the human spirit grows and decreases in directly opposite proportion to the claim of religious faith in an external moral order. It appears, however, that it is his weakness and not his strength that makes man seek salvation in himself: weakness in being unable to admit the truth of his nature. Faith and reliance on unseen forces is possible only when one clearly understands the alternative viewpoint; when he realizes that there is no alternative at all:

If I should cast off this tattered coat,
And go free into the mighty sky;
If I should find nothing there
But a vast blue,
Echoless, ignorant ——
What then? 57

There hardly is anything more poignant in literature than Lear's final realization that moral good in the person of Cordelia is not necessarily blessed over the forces of evil:
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more.

(5.3.506)

Lear's heart cracks, sending an endless echo that reverberates through and through the hollow universe.

The final plays strike a note of fresh faith in life where the storms of human passions have left death and despair. It is the mature Shakespeare who has learnt how to unify tragedy and comedy as common ingredients of life. No wonder the final plays are named 'Tragi-comedies'. The elements of tragedy are still potent, and human weaknesses still have repercussions in ways that bring truly tragic feelings. Man, without a redeeming quality, can still be lost. But, as Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri points out, there is more freedom for external forces to bring results.

In the last plays, substantially more than in Shakespeare's earlier work, effects far exceed the cause or occur entirely without cause; coincidences, improbable in themselves, occur in still more improbable succession; and fantastic if not openly supernatural events provide crucial turning points in the action.

The effect of this freer structure is to loosen the link between human action and human destiny. In Lear, Macbeth, and Antony and Cleopatra, man had found the motive force of his being within himself; it is now transferred back to an external necessity.
Shakespeare equates Love with cosmic order in *Othello* and it is the loss of Love as he thinks which destroys Othello's universe. The role of chastity as a guarantee of love cannot be overemphasized in these last plays; for the entire drama seems to be erected on this bedrock in each of these plays.

These plays open on a world disrupted by certain abuses of love. *Pericles* opens on the unimaginable parody of love by father and daughter living in incest without serious moral compunction. In *The Winter's Tale* the incredible jealousy of Leontes brings a cruel winter into his domain. True love in *Cymbeline* suffers from the traditional concept of aristocratic marriage. And *The Tempest* is an inevitable sequel to past offence against brotherly love. Thus the underlying concern in these plays appears to be the fundamental need for love to rejuvenate a degenerate society. But love in these plays is not more crucial for the young lovers as builders of tomorrow than for the old whose present actions have the power to make or mar their children's world.

And since the actions in these plays usually involve two generations the relevance of Time becomes more significant. Time has to act as the vital link between the two generations while the interval of waiting becomes a cold
winter of brooding melancholia. Time seems to sleep, and no action appears significant. But when Time wakes up it ushers in the light of love as a breath of life blows into a vault of dead souls, working towards a cathartic purification, a togetherness, understanding and forgiveness in the wider world. While lovers are swept into each other's arms, enmities and misunderstanding are dissolved, and nature smiles again as it may do in a post-apocalyptic world of universal purification.

Unlike the other romances *Pericles* presents the entire story of a noble Prince whose education in the school of Love begins from the most loathsome picture to the most divine experience accompanied by 'music from the spheres'. That being a noble, generous, virtuous and loving Prince does not necessarily mark him out as Fortune's favourite is evident; yet there seems to be insufficient evidence that Pericles has any influence on the events which rain happiness on him in the end. His only counterpart in literature seems to be Homer's Ulysses. The preservation of his wife and daughter as well as the latter's winsome virtues are more the work of independent forces than they are the consequences of Pericles actions. And perhaps this is what Shakespeare wants us to see: that forces beyond human will operate in the space-time dimension in a way
human beings can respond to according to individual attitudes. Though Pericles has no way of knowing and preparing himself for his providence, there are countless possibilities and might-have-beens by which he may miss the opportunity that leads him to the right port. But again, he could not be mistaken so long as his life becomes a pilgrimage of love for his wife and child. It is Love that impels him, and Diana, the goddess of chastity whom Marina invokes, who guides him by a vision, directing him away from a bloody course of revenge to the most happy reunion of triune lovers. What greater happiness can heaven give than this moment which flesh is inadequate to express!

This, this! No more, you gods! Your present kindness
Makes my past miseries sports. You shall do well
That on the touching of her lips I may
Melt and no more be seen. (5.3.41-44)

The role of Time has been reversed from that of destroyer to preserver, from being the agent of mutability to being the agent of regeneration. But this is all a matter of attitudes. Indeed, it is not Time that has changed, but the Man. Man has usurped the moral centre with the result that he becomes the prisoner of his own attitude. Now that "The moral centre has once more passed outside man"
he is once more free to dream and look towards the heavens in that spirit which another poet shares:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Behold, we know not anything;}
\text{I can but trust that good shall fall}
\text{At last - far off - at last, to all,}
\text{And every winter change to spring.}\quad 60
\end{align*}
\]

It has been spring in Sicily with good Leontes as King till Polixenes overstayed his welcome. The jealousy of Leontes springs from his underestimation of Hermione's love, and his lack of faith in others. It is apparent how Leontes has less external motivation for being jealous than even Othello, which is an indication of an inherent disease in his love. For he seems to be already bored with his friend as indicated by his brevity and lack of enthusiasm at the very beginning of the play. His seems to be a temperament more suited to councils of war and state than the softer cadences of love and friendship by the way he shows his lack of generosity and his inability to tell friendship from love. Once he persuades himself of his wife's guilt he goes about it like a thorough judge, and shows no mercy. His actions are so preposterous that his subjects see in it a disease of which he must be cured.

Yet it is a disease of ignorance about love. The remedy will be found only when Time is ready to administer it. It is significant how Shakespeare has managed to harness the
power of Time for creation of a new world over the wrecks of yesterday. While the old world lies sadly brooding on memories in penitence, Time prepares the remedy in obscure Bohemia. Time is still arbitrary and independent of the human will; otherwise Leontes's repentance has been awarded forthwith. But Paulina has no way of knowing about the baby's survival; thereby showing Time's autocracy. And like Pericles Leontes has sufficient opportunities that can lead him away from the path of lovers' reunion; and it is Paulina's good advice which perhaps makes him stay in the path of Time's re-creation.

Love in this play has suffered serious trials with irremediable consequences. In Shakespeare such severe trials are essential ingredients of purification and refinement, and love shines all the more brightly when the sufferings and tortures are over. The deaths of Mamillius and Antigonus are what make the tale real, as they cannot be raised up again by repentance or time. Time can still be cruel in its intransigence.

Again, it must be noted that Love in Shakespeare is total and as intransient as Time is. Loyalty, chastity, and sacrifice are not merely ideals, but the very forms and image of Love, without any of which it becomes a monster that devours and wreck human society. The consequences of Leontes's failure to trust in Hermione's love results
in his isolation which is worse than the isolation felt by Pericles because of a biting conscience. In *Hamlet* we find the prince-lover, disoriented as he is already by his mother's infidelity, further pushed towards insanity when his lady-love finds prudence stronger than her love. But here in the last romances we find young lovers asserting their loyalty to love inspite of heavy odds. Florizel proves his love for Perdita strong enough to abjure filial duty and an heirship to hazard all at the bottom of a ship and the mercy of nature. And in *Pericles* we see the ill-placed Marina rejecting the 'love' of a governor, only to win him truly by her rejection of his lust. Indeed, there is an almost magical quality about her chastity which gives her so much strength that she can almost dispense with our pity for her helplessness. It is a creed, a religion, a life-force with her, and she seems to exude certain divinity that marks her out as a moral and a spiritual prodigy. She therefore is not altogether helpless as Cressida in the Greek Camp is. Others like Viola and Imogen do not feel so safe in their femininity as Marina, having to put on men's clothes. So too Rosalind. This is not to imply that Marina has certain immunity from the cruelty and vice of others; but that her chastity gives her a kind of protective shield which freezes the passion of her would-be molesters.
Chastity becomes a symbol of moral strength with Shakespeare, and the essence of morality is faith in a more perfect order than is found in human society. To reiterate G. Wilson Knight's observation 'A strong faith tends to render tragedy impossible'. Faith in a meaningful order governing the systems may seem to explain the perseverance of Pericles and Leontes. The waiting and dependence on Time, the capacity to endure one's fate with a stoicism that will turn a Roman green with envy, implies moral power. These new supermen and superwomen by their heroic assertion of the human will against external forces more powerful than the inner forces warring against human ideals have raised the level of tragic catharsis to a new height.

In Cymbeline the moral thrust is on the theme of fidelity which Shakespeare has already studied earlier in The Rape of Lucrece. Not that fidelity is questioned but put on trial. What makes the difference in the outcome of the story is that Imogen is a princess while the villain of the piece has more refinement than a Tarquin. And since the chastity of Imogen is not questioned, but confirmed, the emotional battle takes place in the heart of Posthumus. Imogen gets her share of heart-ache only when she reads her husband's letter to Pisanio wherein she finds herself wrongly abused. The scene of temptation is hardly interest-
ing, knowing the stuff she is made of, except for the art of Iachimo’s skill in lying. But the mainspring of the play’s emotional force comes alive when Imogen braves the wild forests of Wales for love’s sake in a mortal quest like a lamb going happily to the slaughter. The very inhumanity of the plot against her is appalling and unbelievable until we realize that Posthumus is as good a lover and a sucker as Othello. Donne seems to be more seasoned in love where Posthumus foolishly flouted his wife’s virtue.

If, as I have, you also doe
Vertue’attir’d in woman see,
And dare love that, and say so too,
And forget the Hee and Shee;

And if this love, though placed so,
From prophane men you hide,
Which will no faith on this bestow,
Or, if they doe, deride;

Then you have done a braver thing
Then all the worthies did;
And a braver thence will spring,
Which is, to keepe that hid.

(The undertaking)

Posthumus makes a trial of her love, but in reality it is he whose faith in his love is being tried, and is found too weak and inadequate while Imogen proves her borrowed name Fidele in all truth. And like Othello, Posthumus, af-
ter having recklessly exposed his wife to the envy of 'prophane' men, trampled madly on the cascass of his love only to find that though he may kill her body he cannot kill her inside himself where she lives. To have her living inside his soul, and know her to be dead is more than he can bear. But he loves more wisely than Othello in that he offers his life for a more meaningful sacrifice to what substance is left of her: her country.

But the most significant aspect of Imogen's love and her fidelity is again that mysterious power of grace and ethereal light she carries with her wherever she goes. Like Marina, she too seems to radiate sanctity when other women of her beauty would excite lust: Iachimo cannot bring himself to look on her with lust even in the bedroom. In fact, she seems to be a little cold in that kind of love inspite of her hot royal temper. Posthumus confesses,

Me of my lawful pleasure she restrain'd,
And pray'd me oft forbearance. (2.5.8)

When he learns from Pisanio of her death by his command, he is guilt-stricken, though not yet resolved about her fidelity. He still loves her inspite of her alleged fault just as she loves him though her heart, "the innocent mansion" of her love is "empty of all things but grief", empty of the master "who was indeed/ The riches of it". (3.4.66)
Such strength in love, such persistence, such tenacity and forbearance because of love, such generosity as cannot count blessing complete without forgiveness, making foes friends (that we find accompanying the love of Imogen and Posthumus) make the play another facet of the beautiful crystal ball with which Shakespeare makes his divination of human love.

Finally, The Tempest binds up the blessed vision of life-renewing Love in a manner which opens a new world for the regenerated people. Shakespeare has made liberal use of the supernatural in forging the minds and actions of his characters without suggesting any possible allegorical substitute for it in the powers within man's reach. Supernatural events are almost always external revelations of vital knowledge behind the veil of time and space inaccessible to man, yet which is dramatically essential to resolve the plot. But it is only in The Tempest that a superhuman power is wielded by man at will, perhaps because Prospero's wisdom and maturity marks him out as a type of the Renaissance ideal of man, who is identified by Tennyson as the type

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book.62
Such is the god-like maturity of Prospero that his powers become more natural and beneficial than in Circe or Midas. And when he has done his god-like work of convicting sinners he is ready to cast off his "rough magic" the only substitute for which being prayer

Which pierces so that it assaults Mercy itself. (Epilogue)

The intriguing recapitulation of an earlier vision of universal flux and mutability in the hearing of two young lovers with only promises of future happiness is so unexpected that Prospero even excuses himself for his "infirmity". It is the voice of Shakespeare in the Sonnets, and as accidental as it may appear, it forms the essential philosophical background of the new world that is under hectic preparation here in the island of nowhere.

Ours is an old world, and lots of things are being taken for granted, especially by younger ones. It becomes a birthright for every baby to grow up and inherit all that the parents have inherited, plus the best of the present life. Life is full of promises when one looks up but full of emptiness when one looks down. Knowledge makes one 'old' and Prospero is doubly old, so that his vision embodies a seasoned knowledge of the essential nature of human life. It is a vision which, like a fairy tale to a child, sticks in memory to remind the young couples-to-be that Life is
a miracle, "a dream-like projection" of eternity, which must not be wasted but cherished and made fruitful.

However, love in The Tempest may look more like pre-planned, nurtured and overseen in contrast to the spontaneous and adventurous love of Florizel and Perdita. Yet all the same, the love between Ferdinand and Miranda is not less true and spontaneous than that of Florizel and Perdita, or of Imogen and Posthumus, even if the circumstances were provided somewhat supernaturally. There is nothing wanting in it which does not become the usual ebullience of lover's intoxication. Inspite of his apparent design to make his daughter 'Queen of Naples', Prospero has much ado to temper the effervescence of the love he has hatched from corroding the vessel which contain it.

They are both in either's pow'rs; but this swift business
I must uneasy make, lest too light winning
Makes the prize more light. (1,2.450)

And when he pretends to play the tyrant he finds more opposition from Miranda who tries to hold his arms from wielding the magic wand. A very significant action or inaction of Ferdinand succumbing to superior power throws light on the power of love to overcome that martial pride of man which makes Caesar almost a slave to it:
Might I but through my prison once a day
Behold this maid. All corners else o’ th’earth
Let liberty make use of; space enough
Have I in such a prison.

(1.2.490-93)

Yet such a joy of love needs to be qualified by a proper
awareness of life’s reality. Thus when Miranda exclaims
wonder-struck:

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world
That has such people in’t!

Her father cuts her short in the same breath:

‘Tis new to thee.

(5.1.184)

He knows what she will find where she is going, and for
him there is no idealizing about man. And that is why he
is so careful of the lives of these two in whom is the
promise of a new world.

A new awareness of time and mutability is expressed
by the old Gonzalo, which speaks for the attitude of a num-
ber of other Shakespearean characters:

Was Milan thrust from Milan, that his issue
Should become King of Naples?

(5.1.205)

Strange are the ways of Providence indeed! And it is a
chastened group of people who are returning to an old world
but with new minds and new hearts.
We have seen the progress of Shakespeare's treatment of Love as the essence of humanity by which alone is the effect of time and mutability on life ameliorated and neutralized or even discovered to be of advantage. From a neurotic hyperaesthesia to time as the number one enemy of human ideals and achievements through a horrifying vision of near despair in value-systems to a "wise passiveness, a ready adaptation to circumstances rather than a desire to control them", Shakespeare follows the light of love, showing it as a divine power placed at the disposal of man. He has examined, with uncanny insight and god-like understanding, the secret depths of human personality, its strengths and weaknesses, and seems to have discovered that nothing short of love on a universal scale is going to answer the Renaissance call for human transcendence of exigent situations. So altruistic is Shakespeare's idea of love that even when he is treating love in the context of man and woman, we seldom find the usual 'romantic' attitude, but it is invariably substituted by a more social courtship by 'wit' and intellectual accomplishment.

Throughout his entire work Shakespeare never seems to let go of his concern for life and society. He sees these two as mutually interdependent for their survival. Love is the essence of the human spirit which controls the entire
personality, supplying the energy for dauntless courage
to face overwhelming odds. Keats speaks of the world as a
"vale of Soul-making", meaning thereby that true soul-
hood is to be achieved by consciously opposing the resou-
rces of the spirit to the challenge of time and circum-
stances. And it is comforting to know that, behind the
threatening voices of invisible forces

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.  

(Hamlet 5.2.10)

Even love itself falters and rots without this vision of
an open moral system. Othello and Macbeth operate on a
closed moral system where man seeks end in himself. Once
the earthly vision evaporates, there is nothing but 'chaos'
to sustain the heroes. But Pericles leaves his world open,
so that he is ready to receive at the hands of Providence
a just reward for his patience, seasoned with 'Music from
the Spheres'.