CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Critics from time to time have spoken, though somewhat vaguely and casually, of Shakespeare's double vision of life as reflected in his plays. To name only a few, we may mention A.C. Bradley, Hardin Craig, S.C. Sengupta, A.P. Rossiter and fairly comprehensibly, Marion Bodwell Smith. A.C. Bradley, while discussing Shakespeare’s treatment of good and evil in the tragedies seemed to have noticed Shakespeare's ambivalence in the following words:

"Thus we are left at last with an idea showing two sides or aspects which we can neither separate nor reconcile."¹

According to Hardin Craig, in the absence of an absolute idea of truth in matters of religion, philosophy and ethics, the Renaissance mind loved to see the two sides of every question. And Shakespeare did the same:

"Shakespeare, the acutest of Renaissance thinkers, has a boasted breath of mind, an ability to see both sides of

¹ "Shakespearean Tragedy" 1904 (St. Martin Press, 1966, New York, p. 28).
a question and sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men".  

S.C. Sengupta also seems to have expressed the same point of view when he made the following statement:

"The most prominent feature of Shakespeare's character seems to be his ambivalence, his capacity for realizing opposed point of view. This is not the indecisiveness noted by Hardin Craig, although the two mental states are not unrelated. It means an intense capacity for appreciating contradictory impulses, emotions and ideas". But the most thorough-going student of this aspect, one who has made somewhat a subtle and comprehensive study of Shakespeare's duality and ambivalence as reflected in the sonnets and some plays, seems to be Marion Bodwell Smith who has made the following important observation:

"The quality of mind, the intellectual attitude which links Shakespeare with his age and accounts in large part for both his universality and his individuality is a lively awareness of contradictions accompanied by a particularly keen sensitivity to interdependent relationships. It is this double vision to which I have applied the inclusive


And this double image, according to her, is indicative of an underlying unity which shows the "soul of goodness in things evil". Furthermore, she aptly and rightly describes Shakespeare's ambivalence in words which are worth-mentioning here:

"Often his tone and attitude are ambivalent and evoke contradictory responses from his audience. He both exploits and mocks conventions, social and literary, sometimes in the same play; he even, on occasion, burlesques his own works. He paints both manners and men, is individual and universal, the microcosm of his age and himself alone."

From the above observations made by distinguished critics it seems clear that Shakespeare had a double vision of life who likes to show the "soul of goodness in things evil and the "dram of ill in the best". We propose to apply this notion of duality and ambivalence to an area which invites it most. We know that "Troilus", "All's Well" and "Measure", which are commonly known as 'problem comedies' in modern Shakespearean criticism, have created quite a few problems for the critics. In fact, the term "problem play"

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4 Preface to "Dualities in Shakespeare" (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1966).
5 Ibid., p. 4.
6 Ibid., 5.
itself seems to indicate the dilemma of the critics. If these are seen as plays where a feature of Shakespearean vision, also present elsewhere in his works, acquires prominence, that may help us to alleviate our critical confusion somewhat. These, then, will no longer appear as eccentric by-products alien to the main trends of Shakespearean drama. Though this concept of duality expresses itself in a variety of ways in different plays of Shakespeare as Marion Bodwell Smith has noted, we may tentatively suggest that in the "problem comedies" three kinds of dualities are more emphatically manifest. These are ambivalence of characterization, mixture of genres such as tragedy and comedy, romantic comedy and satirical comedy, and the mixing of contrasting and contradictory tones and moods.

It is important to note that this manifestation of double vision of human nature and the quality of ambivalence in Shakespeare's works was probably no accidental phenomenon. It is traceable to certain inherent characteristics of Renaissance thought. It is a platitude that Shakespeare's works reflect the thoughts and ideas of Renaissance England and the age in which he flourished as a great playwright was an age of conflicts and controversies, contradictions and paradoxes in matters of religion, philosophy and ethics. The Renaissance mind was caught in the tug of war between "sufficient optimism and sufficient pessimism" when it contemplated the nature of man and his position in the world.7

7 In writing these paragraphs on man's position in the world as conceived in Renaissance thought, I am dependent on such scholar-critics as Theodore Spencer and E.M. Tillyard.
Like the medieval mind it conceived that man embodied the glory of creation, and he was the epitome of the world, but he betrayed his trust through original sin and became most miserable. The thoughtful man believed that as a result of the Fall, man's highest faculty, reason, was almost destroyed and the bestial passion became dominant in him. To add to this, the whole world was corrupted, Nature became offensive to man, the influence of the stars proved to be harmful to man and, man became unable to hear the celestial music. On the other hand, there was the sincerely held optimistic conviction that man's salvation could be attained through God's grace and Christ's atonement.

One optimistic aspect of Renaissance thinking was the notion of an omnipresent divine order operating in the cosmos, in the world of created beings and in the world of human government. Even a man of moderate intelligence had this idea of divine order animating the earthly order and seemed to have believed that when this "degree" was upset chaos was bound to come. He also believed in a "Chain of Being" in the divinely ordered universe which stretched from the foot of God's throne to the meanest inanimate objects which were linked together. This "Chain of Being" led to the idea of a universe of close inter-relations where no part was superfluous; it enhanced the dignity of all creation, even the meanest part of it.
Here one may notice another optimistic Renaissance assumption: through the contemplation of this divine order of the universe man could regain his true self-knowledge which he lost through the Fall. But the negative side of this notion was equally strong in the collective consciousness of the people. As E.M.W. Tillyard has put it:

"They were obsessed by the fear of chaos and the fact of mutability, and the obsession was powerful in proportion as their faith in the cosmic order was strong". 8

It is also important to note the traditionally accepted view on man's nature as conceived in Renaissance humanist thinking. According to this, man was a most wonderful creation who possessed God-like reason, who had the capacity to learn and had free will and, by applying his highest faculty of reason, he could rise higher and higher in the ladder of being. On the other hand, he might degenerate into the meanest creature by allowing himself to be dominated by the "bestial passion". In this vision of man there was a basic conflict between man's "dignity and wretchedness". According to Theodore Spencer the typical Renaissance view of man's nature is best expressed in the following lines of "Nosce Teipsum" a poem written by Sir John Davies:

I know my body of so frail a kind,
As force without, fevers within can kill;

I know the heavenly nature of my mind,
But it is corrupted both in wit and will.
I know my soul hath power to know all things,
Yet is she blind and ignorant in all;
I know I am one of nature's little kings
Yet to the least and vilest things am thrall.
I know my life's a pain and but a span;
I know my sense in mocked with everything;
And to conclude, I know myself a man,
Which is a proud and yet a wretched thing.\(^9\)

To Hamlet, who is regarded by the critics as the most brilliant spokesman of the contemporary Renaissance mind, man is "noble in reason", "infinite in faculties" and yet "the quintessence of dust." Furthermore, the Renaissance writer was equally aware of the simultaneous co-existence of good and evil in human existence. To Davies of Hereford the vile and the noble are complementary to each other:

The noblest creature need the vilest on ground,
The vilest are served by the honoured most.\(^10\)

In fact, this picture which was running from the middle ages down to the Renaissance, emphasised man's intermediate position between beasts and angels and his

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vacillating nature, and his proneness to sin and corruption, and also his redemption through God's grace. And this picture is basically of a dual nature, which admits of pessimism and optimism.

But there was another serious conflict which came to be deeply felt by the sensitive minds at the turn of the century. The "optimistic ideal picture" that man was created in God's image, and that his affairs were the centres of God's interest, and that though he was vulnerable to temptation and sin, could be saved through God's grace received a heavy blow at the hands of the revolutionary ideas of Copernicus, Montaigne and Machiavelli. According to Theodore Spencer this conflict, in which Copernicus questioned the cosmological order, and Montaigne questioned the natural order, and Machiavelli questioned the political order, was emotionally and intellectually extremely disturbing.\(^{11}\) It may be stated that the Ptolemaic system of the universe when considered apart from the Fall of man, was after all, with its divinely ordered superstructure, provided an optimistic image. But when the Copernican system came to be known to the educated people of Shakespeare's generation at the turn of the century, their minds were caught between the two worlds and were obsessed with doubt and uncertainty. Another important point is that prior to the coming of

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Montaigne and Machiavelli into the intellectual scene, the optimistic ideas of some writers like Cicero and Pico della Mirandola were widely popular. Cicero, a classical author, whose ideas were very popular in England during the early Renaissance, cherished the view that man had a feeling for order, for propriety and for moderation in word and deed, and by developing this capacity through the cultivation of moral virtues, man could lead a temperate and rational life. According to Pico della Mirandola, a popular humanist thinker, man had the power to be reborn into higher forms of life which were divine though he could also degenerate into an animal. But the optimism ingrained in the teachings of the Neo-Platonist philosophers was seriously challenged by the scepticism of Montaigne specially at the turn of the century. Montaigne, who was a great force in contemporary European thought, emphasized the vanity and insignificance of man. According to Montaigne man was the frailest, most arrogant and vulnerable of creatures, and there was practically no difference between man and animals because both could attain the knowledge of God. He even went on saying that man's five senses were notoriously inferior to those of other animals. It has also been acknowledged by many scholar-critics that the influence of Machiavelli was

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12 In this discussion on Cicero, Pico della Mirandola Montaigne and Machiavelli, I am specifically dependent on such scholar-critics as Theodore Spencer and Peter Milward. Montaigne strongly held the view that there was no difference between man and other animals (Theodore Spencer, "Shakespeare and the Nature of Man", pp. 38-42).
dominant in the Renaissance assumptions about the nature of man though Machiavelism was deplored by some as atheistic. To Machiavelli man was naturally evil, he was ever-prone to vicious impulses and indifferent to the good of others. So he preached that the ruler or the prince should ignore all considerations of humanity, justice and religion to govern man who is basically evil and that in public affairs the end justified the means. It is needless to repeat here that the Elizabethan dramatists had a special fascination for applying Machiavellian concepts of human character for their purpose and one may see an impressive line of villains moulded on it by Shakespeare in his plays.

The religious situation in Shakespeare's time was also not very clear. Catholicism had not been quite overcome and Protestantism had not triumphed absolutely. It is interesting to note that the Tudor Church settlement was, possibly, both acceptable and unacceptable to the people. The religious scene in Shakespeare's age is very well described by Joel Hurstfield:

"The generation preceding Shakespeare's birth had seen the turbulent years of the English Reformation, when the nation swung back and forth from Catholicism to Protestantism under Henry VIII then to extreme Protestantism, then back to Catholicism and now under Elizabeth to a Janus-like state religion which had the double disadvantage of looking like Catholicism to Protestants and Protestantism to Catholics."
A child born in 1533, the year when Elizabeth was born, if his family was a conformist, subscribed to five different versions of Christian religion by the time he was twentieth-sixth. When Shakespeare was born the Elizabethan Church Settlement was only five years old. It was a state Church made for political ends”.

To persuade her fellow-countrymen to accept the State Settlement or to impose it upon them became her lifelong mission. In one sense the mission failed: there were Catholics who preferred to die rather than to give up their moral duty to convert their fellow countrymen to the true faith. There were some Protestants who regarded the Elizabethan settlement as a travesty of what Protestant Church should; and they too preferred to die rather than yield”.13

In fact, it was an age of vehement conflict and controversy in the field of religion because one can easily observe that the forces of Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and the doctrines of Puritanism and Calvinism were simultaneously at work. The following observation made by R.M. Frye regarding Shakespeare's religious allegiance seems to be relevant:

Now it is generally acknowledged that we have no clear evidence of Shakespeare's inner convictions as to religion. We do know that he was a conforming member of the church of England but this fact tells us little of his personal faith. He may have been essentially Pagan, or he may have been a deeply committed Christian or he may have occupied some intermediate position.\footnote{1}{Shakespeare and the Christian Doctrine} (Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 89.

It is interesting to note that the social environment in which Shakespeare observed human life steadily also presents a double image. It is almost the generally accepted view that the Elizabethans were in favour of a hierarchic society where every man should know his place and remain satisfied with it. But according to recent scholarship this view is exaggerated. Hardin Craig maintained that the Elizabethan people believed in reform and they thought that the institutions though divinely created might not deliver the goods since they might grow corrupt because of man's inherently sinful nature and therefore needed to be restored to primitive perfection, but institutions could not and should not be revolutionized.\footnote{15}{The Enchanted Glass} (New York Oxford Univ. Press, 1936), p. 190.
there was a great deal of social mobility, men were easily accepted into a new class provided they assimilated into the tastes and habits of those people whom they joined.  

He has also described Shakespeare's assumptions about society in the following words:

"Shakespeare had certain governing assumptions about society which intervenes in his dramas. These assumptions were social instability, ideological conflict, a frequently re-enacted struggle for personal and political power. They also included high optimism of national independence identified with Henry VIII and Elizabeth and the realization that independence and power were only gained and held by vigilence and a constantly renewed struggle to survive.  

Historians often tell us that the age, in which Shakespeare was born and brought up, and where he flourished as a great dramatist, was a 'golden' age in which the "wonderful Queen" ruled for fortyfive years who brought about political stability to the country. In her reign Wales was becoming an integral part of England and the political relations with Scotland considerably improved. The Spanish war was permanently won which opened up immense prospects for the


17 Ibid., p. 28.

18 In writing these paragraphs on social history of Shakespeare's age I am heavily dependent on G.M. Travelyan and Joel Hurstfield.
Englishman all over the world and the worst possibility of a Puritan revolution was avoided by her shrewd religious policy. With almost absolute power in her hand, she has established an efficient administrative machinery with the help of her Privy Council, Parliament and Justices of the Peace so that peace prevailed throughout the whole country. Under the vigorous leadership of Cecil, she brought the industrial, commercial and social systems of the country under unified control. The greatest social change, of course, was effected by the expansion of overseas enterprise. As G. M. Trevelyan has described the situation so vividly:

In court and city, in Parliament and manorhouse, in workshop and fieldfurrow, talk ran upon the ocean and the new land beyond it, on Drake and Frobisher and Relegh, on the romance and profit of the explorer's and privateer's life, on sea-power as England's wealth and safety, on the prospect of colonization as means of personal betterment and national strength. What was the loss of Calais beside all this? Let the dead past bury its dead.\(^{19}\)

Another exceptional feature of the age was that there was greater harmony and freer intercourse of classes than in earlier or later times. Though there was social distinction, it was not rigid and it never did degenerate into a caste-system. The gentry, the citizens and merchants, the yeomen

and the wage-earning class lived together in harmony in a hierarchic society which was also dynamic to some extent. These were the optimistic aspects of Shakespeare's England and the bright image of the age in magnificently expressed by John Norden when he compared Elizabeth to the primum mobile, the master sphere of the Universe.20

But, side by side, there was another picture which looked dismal and ugly. There was a great deal of corruption, cruelty and religious fanaticism. We know from history that the Elizabethans transported the Negroes into slavery, robbed and slaughtered the Irish. At home sometimes a woman was hunted by her neighbours as a witch, the Jesuit Missionary had to mount the Scaffold and the Puritan dissenter was hanged. According to Joel Hurstfield early Tudor England was nominally Christian but in fact barbarous and corrupt.21 Robert Cecil who did yeoman's service to the Crown in many ways, was a corrupt man who rose to power by devious means and he tried to curb the power and authority of the Parliament without success. Sir Walter Ralegh, Courtier, poet, historian, parliamentarian, soldier, sailor, coloniser and one of the great creative writers of the time


found no security in that corrupt society but had to die. Hamlet's statement that "there is something rotten in the state of Denmark" and, the Duke Vincentio's statement that "there is a great fever of goodness" may be said to be the comments on contemporary social and political corruption. It is interesting to remember here that in a remarkable political pamphlet the Elizabethan England is described as a model Machiavellian state under the guidance of Cecil and Bacon. Jacobean England was usually considered more corrupt, which is clear from the following statement of James I himself:

"If I were to punish those who take bribes, I should soon not have a single subject left."

Furthermore, hypocrisy, falsehood and debauchery were some of the undesirable aspects of life at court. The economic condition was also discouraging. The common people were seriously hit by exorbitant price rise and many farmers suffered when the arable land was converted into pastures for wool production. In fact, the situation in which Shakespeare observed "life steadily and saw it whole" was both bright and gloomy and it is not strange if he presented a double image of human life and human nature in his plays.


It has already been said more than once that the Elizabethan age was strange, exciting and fascinating and it is interesting to note that the social behaviour of the people was somewhat queer. They seemed to have been attached to contradictory things. As Ivor Brown has observed:

What is extraordinary to us is the combined appetites of the Elizabethans for bestiality and beauty. While they were listening to the silver speech of a Shakespearean lover at the Globe they might hear the roars and howls of tortured animals in the neighbouring garden.  

Everybody knows that the Puritans of the time wanted to suppress all the theatrical activities on moral grounds. But the same people who attended a Puritan sermon in the morning flocked to the theatre houses to enjoy plays in the afternoon. The great personalities of the age also showed extraordinary and contradictory traits embodied in their characters. Sir Walter Raleigh was a sailor and an explorer and, by wandering through many parts of the globe he opened up immense material prospects for the Englishman but he was also a historian and a theologian who contemplated the glory of God and his creation. The Earl of Essex was a magnificently attractive personality, a brave soldier and

24 "Shakespeare in His Time", p. 85.
a cultivated man but he lacked a cool head and a balanced judgement. We also know that Queen Elizabeth was a woman of infinite variety who created the golden age for England but she had the unbecoming weakness for handsome young men. Bacon was a great literary writer, a philosopher and a scientist but he was also a corrupt official who took bribes. Robert Cecil was also a corrupt man but his efficient administration was immensely valuable to England. James I, who had been called "the wisest fool in Christendom" was a political philosopher and there was enough discrepancy between his words and deeds. Even Shakespeare was busy in the purchase of 107 acres of arable land and 20 acres of pasture land at Stratford when he wrote the Grave-diggers' scene of "Hamlet" in which his most enduring portrait ridicules the landowning courtier, Osric. In literature the metaphysical poets wedded such contradictory things as "making love and reading Spinoza". Sacredness and profanity characterized the tones of many poems written by John Donne.

There are some other important elements used by Shakespeare in his plays which were of double inheritance. The romance elements as reflected in Shakespeare's plays were derived from both classical and medieval romance. The point has been aptly dealt with by Marion Bodwell Smith:

"Shakespeare's use of romance materials demonstrate his characteristic desire to have the best of both worlds."
He exploits to the full the fashionable taste for music, song and dance and stage effects and other forms of spectacle without abandoning the seriousness of these which had pleased the "graver sort". In order to do so, he makes extensive use of allegory—a dominant feature of late medieval and Renaissance romances and employs restoration theme of the classical romances as a vehicle for the reconciliation of conflict.  

Shakespeare had also two distinct and somewhat contradictory concepts of love by way of inheritance—the classical and the romantic. E.C. Pettet's statement seems to be very relevant here:

"To the classical writer who was faithfully reflecting the actual life of Graeco-Roman Civilization, love was little more than a sexual appetite, a minor activity in life that was not to be regarded too seriously. To the romance writer, on the other hand, love was a sublime and momentous experience, perhaps most important of all human experiences. By it a man was transfigured; to its cult, he might, without absurdity, dedicate his whole being."  

This romantic concept of love, according to Pettet, changed the medieval concept of

25 "Dualities in Shakespeare" (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1966, p. 45).

marriage which was utilitarian in character, and henceforward marriage came to be regarded in the sixteenth century literature as a "marriage of minds" and a "spiritual union of souls". Shakespeare, who often liked to present a double rather than a single image employed both of these concepts in some of his plays — the classical to a lesser extent, the romantic to the greater. Pettet has pointed out how Shakespeare had made use of the classical concept of love and marriage in "The Comedy of Errors"; "The Taming of the Shrew" and "The Merry Wives". There is, however, no denying the fact that the romantic concept of love and marriage was consistently and persistently used by Shakespeare in the comedies and in the tragedies. In so doing, Shakespeare was, perhaps, not holding the mirror up to nature because love-marriage was rare in Elizabethan society. In "Troilus" Shakespeare seems to have attempted the interfusion of the two concepts of love. One may say that Troilus's love towards Cressida is intensely sensual on the one hand and transcendental on the other because Troilus feels that the "bonds of heaven are dissolved and slipped and loosened" when he finds her in Diomedes' grasp.

It is relevant to note here that this double image of human nature as manifested very often in Shakespeare's plays does not seem to go against the contemporary psychological

ideas relating to the nature of man. As we all know the Elizabethan writers had a deep knowledge of contemporary psychology, and the doctrines of Timothy Bright and Robert Burton were enormously popular, and the writers used those ideas to illustrate and illuminate character. In fact, the writers learned the instability of human nature and the notion of one passion replacing another from psychology. The idea of balanced man upheld by Ben Jonson who ridiculed its opposite had its roots in the formal psychology of the period. On the whole, it may be said that the vision of man as an unstable, vacillating creature prone to sin and corruption, capable of redemption and as having both God-like and bestial elements seemed to have had its endorsement in contemporary philosophy, ethics, religion and psychology. Another relevant point is that this kind of character-portrayal was not exclusively a Shakespearean phenomenon in his "problem comedies" but this tendency was noticeable in contemporary literature. Marion Bodwell Smith has rightly observed that Renaissance fiction and drama abound in paradoxical characters such as wise fools, lovable rogues, uneasy Machiavellians and honest whores. She has also suggested that the themes of Elizabethan and Jacobean

28 "The Enchanted Glass" (New York, Oxford Univ. Press, 1936) p. 124. In writing this paragraph on contemporary psychology I am strictly dependent on Hardin Craig.

29 "Dualities in Shakespeare" (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1966) pp. 16-17.
literature may very well be associated in pairs—that involve overt and latent oppositions—time and eternity, appearance and reality, growth and decay, love and friendship, love and honour, law and liberty, art and nature, the governor and the governed.  

One may take numerous examples to show Shakespeare’s dual and ambivalent attitude from his plays and poems. According to Marion Bodwell Smith Shakespeare’s ambivalence is best expressed in the "Dark Lady Sonnets". She has suggested that in one sense these sonnets represent the extreme form of Platonic Puritanism and in another, they represent Platonism turned upside down and, they express the feeling of violent alternation of infatuation and revulsion. It may be added here that in the sonnets Shakespeare seems to be very fond of using "conceits," but he is seen to satirise them in one of the sonnets:

My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun
Coral is far more red than her lips' red
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun
If hairs be wires black wires grow on her head.

From the early stage of his dramatic career, Shakespeare had

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30 Ibid.

31 "Dualities in Shakespeare" (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1966, p. 65).

32 Ibid.
a special fascination for romance and romantic love poetry. But occasionally he is also seen to mock at it, though in a light and amused manner. In "Love Labour's Lost" Berowne, one of the earliest but successful comic characters, mildly mocks at the extravagant style of romantic love poetry when he says:

Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation
Figures pedantical, the summer flies
Have blown the full of maggot ostentation
I do forswear them;
(Love Labour's Lost) (v.ii 406-409)

But interestingly enough, when Berowne makes out his plea for "honest plain words" he does it through a decorative metaphor—"russet yeas" and "Kersey noes". The duality of romance and reality is often presented in the romantic comedies. We know that in "The Two Gentlemen", Shakespeare places the realistic comedy of Launce and his dog with the romantic story of Valentine, Proteus and Silvia. In "A Midsummer" one discovers the realistic population of the English countryside against a purely romantic environment of the Enchanted Wood and the love adventure of the fairies. As it has already

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33 Many critics have rightly expressed the view that Shakespeare both exploits and mocks such conventions.

been noted by many critics "As You Like It" reveals the author's ambivalence — for its juxtaposition of opposed and contradictory points of view and, for its looking two sides of every question.35 Here, Rosalind, one of the most brilliant women character of Shakespeare, wants to shatter the illusions of romantic love and love-making by her witty raillery and mild ridicule. To her "love is merely a madness, and no man died in a love cause in this poor world which is six thousand years old". But it is very interesting to note that the most unromantic Rosalind falls romantically in love with Orlando and the most witty and brilliant Rosalind has her vulnerabilities and limitations. Moreover, on the one hand, we are shown that Rosalind often outwits melancholy Jacques and, on the other, she is shown as unable to understand the complexity of Jacques's character which is compounded of many simples.36

Another interesting aspect of the play is the way in which Shakespeare draws our attention to merits and demerits of both court life and forest life. The life in the midst of nature is no doubt "golden"; here one can hear the "merry note" of the birds under a "greenwood tree" but one cannot escape from "the winter and rough weather" and, cannot get the amenities of civilization. Touchstone criticises both

35 S.C. Sengupta has made a study of "As You Like It" in terms of Shakespeare's ambivalence and here I am greatly in-debted to his chapter IV in "A Shakespeare Manual".
36 Ibid., p. 77.
court-life and forest-life and the exiled Duke praises the charm and innocence of forest life, but he has not the slightest hesitation to return to the comforts of court life as soon as a favourable opportunity presents itself. In fact, the play presents a make-believe world where love and hatred, joy and sorrow, and, good and ill co-exist. In "Twelfth Night" love-making is by proxy and a festive gaiety and an undertone of gentle melancholy run parallel. In "Much Ado" equal emphasis seems to have laid on the Hero-Claudio plot which is romantic and on the Benedick-Beatrice plot which is unromantic. And with these two stories of contradictory nature the realistic story of Dogberry and Verges is subtly interwoven, which gives some amount of local colour to this romantic comedy.

Shakespeare's ambivalence may also be seen in his first successful tragedy, "Romeo and Juliet". The intensely passionate love of Romeo and Juliet and the intensely blind hatred of Montagues and Capulets are placed side by side and put in a perpetual conflict. Sometimes Friar Lawrence seems to be involved in the love-relationship and sometimes he seems to be detached from it. He seems to be an ambivalent character who thinks:

Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied;
And vice sometimes by action dignified.
("Romeo and Juliet," II, III 21-22)
He rightly sees the two sides of the overwhelming passion of love between Romeo and Juliet as he warns the lovers:

> These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die; like fire and powder,
Which, as they kiss, consume: the sweetest honey
Is loathsome in its own deliciousness,
And in the taste confounds the appetite:

(\textit{Romeo and Juliet" - II, vi, 9-13}).

Furthermore, it has been said that both the protagonists of this love tragedy are "star-crossed" but their tragic blunder, which is excessive passionate love, is also brought to sharp focus. The tragic death of the lovers does not simply exhibit the fact that hate is victorious because one may easily notice that the age-old hatred of the two rival houses are replaced by their new love for each other. Marion Bodwell Smith has suggested that the play was written in two styles — one is literary and artificial to the extreme and the other takes two forms, the lyric and the tighter, more swiftly-paced dramatic.\textsuperscript{37} In her final summing up, she says that "it is a tragedy of contradictions and paradoxes", "a compound of contrasting tones and moods", the tragic and the comic, the lyric and the satiric, the romantic and the

\textsuperscript{37} "Dualities in Shakespeare" (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1966) p. 100.
realistic, the sentimental and the philosophical.\textsuperscript{38} The
greatest tragedies of Shakespeare also exhibit this ambivalance of characterization. Hamlet, the most fascinating
of all characters, is an "ambivalent perfectionist"\textsuperscript{39} who
sought for absolute perfection in a world whose corrupt-
ness he knows he shares. Everybody knows that Hamlet
believes and disbelieves the ghost, wants to kill Claudius
but when the opportunity has come be lets it slip away. He
dismisses Ophelia calling her a "breeder of sinners" but
also declares that "forty thousand brothers cannot make up
the sum of his love towards Ophelia". He is both active
and passive, rational and impulsive, and there seems to be
no harmony between his active and contemplative sides
because when he acts, he does not think, and when he thinks
he does not act. He cannot do the right thing at the right
moment and when he acts it is already too late. Othello is
a close and intensive study of man himself, and of terrible
contrast between good and evil, and the nobility and best-
iality of which he is composed;\textsuperscript{40} and the greatness of
Lear's soul is indicated by his way of speaking and his use
of images, and the smallness of his intellect is shown by

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 109.

\textsuperscript{39} Marion Bodwell Smith, "Dualities in Shakespeare "(Univ. of
Toronto Press, 1966) p. 34.

\textsuperscript{40} Theodore Spencer "Shakespeare and the Nature of Man" 1936
his division of the kingdom and his testing of his daughter's love. Macbeth is a brave general and a dignified personality, though he has acted like an extraordinary criminal to satisfy his inordinate ambition. Antony is a shrewd politician having enough military reputation, but at times he behaves like an ass being enslaved by his passion for Cleopatra. Cleopatra is magnificent in her "infinite variety" in spite of her harlotry. Hence it may be said that Shakespeare's tragic heroes are self-divided and show amazing contradictions to a degree that is really remarkable. In the case of the tragic heroes of other playwrights contradictions within the same character are perhaps not so sharply focussed. Thus it seems clear that duality in our sense of the term is a prominent characteristic of Shakespeare's vision and art.

Now, in connection with our proposed study of the "problem comedies," it seems necessary to make a brief survey of the major trends of criticism relating to them. At present, so much work has been done that it has become an uphill task even to give a limited and superficial survey of the critical accounts of these three plays. The older generation of critics called them "dark comedies" but the modern critics seem to accept the term "problem comedy" for

41 Ibid., p. 138
42 In giving the brief survey of criticism of the "problem comedies," I am indebted to many critics especially to Michael Jamieson and David M. Berger.
them. Though these plays are still regarded by some as "unpopular" and "unpleasant" plays of Shakespeare, they have attracted the attention of almost all the outstanding critics during the last fifty years or so. If one looks into the critical interpretations of these plays, one would definitely exclaim with wonder and say that "here is God's plenty". The students of Shakespearean criticism know that older critics like Dowden, John Dover Wilson and many others tried to explain the salient characteristics of these plays in terms of the author's biography. These critics believed that Shakespeare had some distressing experiences of life and a deep psychological crisis at the turn of the century. Some of these were the execution of the Earl of Essex, the imprisonment of his patron, Southampton and the arrival of James I at the throne of England. In fact, the main point of this view was that Shakespeare was in a "sea of troubles" and therefore he expressed his pessimism in his dark comedies and the tragedies.

Such a view based on author's biography was strongly criticised by R.W. Chambers and many others. These critics claimed that Shakespeare had very often expressed his horror of civil war and he always wanted his countrymen to preserve the hereditary rights of the English throne, and as Essex had no legitimate claim to the throne, there was no reason why Shakespeare would sink into gloom and depression when a fomentor of a civil war was sternly but adequately punished.
Moreover, according to this view, the country heaved a sigh of relief at the enthronement of James I because the vexed question of succession was settled so easily. C.J. Sisson also tried to demolish all such biographical assumptions in British Academy Lecture 1934, entitled, "The Mythical Sorrows of Shakespeare".

Other critics, less biographical in their interest, hold that the plays written during the first decade of the seventeenth century reflect the growing pessimism and scepticism of the age. According to this view, the religious minded people of the age believed that the earth had already completed its allotted span of six thousand years and as it was on the verge of its destruction its inhabitants were becoming senile and degenerate. The Renaissance conflict came to be poignantly felt and the divisive trends of the Renaissance became distinctly observable in all areas of human activities. There were acute conflicts and razor-sharp controversies in religious, ethical and political matters and no harmonious system of thought emerged. And Shakespeare being the most representative playwright of the period shared the pessimism and cynicism of the age and therefore his dark comedies written during the first five years of the new century are superficially and nominally comic; they have a deep tragic undertone underneath their comic appearance. A great critic like Una Ellis, Fermor even went on saying that in "Measure" Shakespeare had touched the "lowest depths of Jacobean negation".

Then there are some critics who look upon these plays as satirical plays. According to O.J. Campbell both "Troilus"
"Measure" are "comical satyres" written after the manner of Ben Jonson and John Marston — the former was written for a special audience and the latter for a popular audience. Campbell had argued that when the vogue of writing formal satires was banned by the edicts of the Bishop of Canterbury and London on June 1, 1599, Ben Jonson invented a new kind of dramatic writing which he himself called comical satyres and his "Everyman out of His Humour" was the first successful experiment of the new genre. Jonson's innovations were imitated by John Marston and other playwrights and such plays enacted by the children's companies were tremendously popular at that time. And, hence, according to this view, Shakespeare was happy to imitate Jonson and Marston to exploit the changing theatrical taste of his audience. But it may be said that this type of interpretation has a limited validity because it tends to ignore the creative opulence of our "myriad-minded" Shakespeare. The assumption that Shakespeare wrote the "dark comedies" in a mood of bitter cynicism and pessimism and that they reflect the contemporary mood of doubt and despair has been strongly repudiated by H.B. Charlton. He asserts that these plays are sincere efforts on the part of the dramatist to rediscover the spirit of comedy. They never display any contempt of life but there is an intense impulse to discover the true sources of nobility in man. They are, not at all, a bridge linking the

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serene comic mood and the awe-inspiring vision of tragedy but they are the road by which Shakespeare has climbed from the misleading comedy of Falstaff to the richer and more satisfying comic air of "Twelfth Night" and "As You Like It". Though some of Charlton's observations throw some revealing light on the "problem comedies" they have ignored the most commonly accepted chronology of Shakespeare's plays and, as S.C. Sengupta has noted, he has given a misleading interpretation to Shakespeare's greatest comic creation. It is interesting to note that the following observation made by Sengupta runs counter to the above views of Charlton:

"For these plays, though they are ordinarily classed as comedies, have a touch of sombreness, the cynicism and irony which we may expect only from tragedies. Here Shakespeare seems to revel in opening the dirty, disgusting sluices in human society, in saturating his language with obscenity and in tearing off the delicate mask of romance from the relations of the sexes." Since the publication of G. Wilson Knight's "Measure for Measure and the Gospels" and R.W. Chambers "The Jacobean Shakespeare and "Measure for Measure", a great

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44 Shakespearean Comedy 1938 (Methuen 1985, p. 211).  
variety of Christian interpretations had been given to the "problem plays"—especially to "All's Well" and "Measure". G. Wilson Knight held that "Measure" is an illustration of the Gospel ethic and Chambers claimed that 'Measure' was written in a spirit of exalted Christianity. This Christian approach, thus emphasized, was followed by a large number of great critics such as Battenhouse, Neville Coghill, R.G. Hunter, William B. Toole and many others. The main argument of these critics seems to be that these plays do not at all reflect the personal despondency of Shakespeare nor do they display the cynical and pessimistic spirit of the age. But some of the ennobling doctrines of Christianity are the most important background elements of such plays as "All's Well" and "Measure". Of course, some critics like Clifford Leech, R.M. Frye and Ernest Schanzer reacted against these Christian interpretations and suggested that the 'problem plays' should be looked upon as secular plays of normal human affairs.

Among the more recent Christian interpreters, R.G. Hunter's and William B. Toole's views seem to be worthy of consideration in respect of "All's Well" and "Measure". R.G. Hunter seems to have given somewhat a dual interpretation which is at once secular and religious. He argues that "All's Well" and "Measure" are secular plays where the central concern is the relationship between man and woman in this world, but their ancestry goes back to the medieval
religious drama where the forgiveness of sins is the basic concern. He suggests that Bertram, Claudio and Angelo are "humanum genus" figures with whom we are expected to identify ourselves and, these plays dramatize an action in which the central figure sins, repents and is forgiven. He has also expressed the view that in "All's Well" Shakespeare has changed the source-material into a play of forgiveness and it is as a comedy of forgiveness rather than a purely romantic comedy that the play should be examined and judged. As for "Measure" he observes that it is primarily secular but a consideration of the play in terms of medieval allegory may help us to determine the structure and to understand its meaning. In summing up his views, Hunter suggests that despite their secular nature these plays were written for a Christian audience and they uphold the Christian view of the world.

William B. Toole suggests that one must know the philosophical and theological significance of the Dantean comedy to understand the form and meaning of the "problem comedies". Following M.C. Bradbrook and Neville Coghill, Toole says that Helena is the human counterpart of the good angel and Parolles, the human counterpart of the evil angel of a morality play and, Bertram is the sinning protagonist or the erring humanity. Toole also finds that as in Dante's poem, in "All's Well", the protagonist moves from metaphysical adversity to metaphysical prosperity and holds that the play, as a whole, does not exhibit a failure of creative
imagination but a superb amalgam of form and meaning. As for 'Measure' like many Christian critics, Toole is of the view that the "fantastical Duke of dark corners" reflects the wisdom of God. He also finds an allegorical duality embodied in the character of Angelo. Angelo is Everyman and also Lucifer. But it may be said that Toole's interpretation is thought-provoking yet not very convincing.

For "Troilus" Toole himself admits that chaos is come again and half-heartedly suggests that the world of "Troilus" is one of retribution lacking the implication of redemption, and hence it remains a tragedy.

As a reaction against all such Christian interpretations A.P. Rossiter says that though Shakespeare was a Christian, he was also a great "sceptic, Montaigne". He feels that in these plays we experience a certain uneasiness and a consequent uncertainty of interpretation and its cause is the tragi-comic view of man as depicted in these plays. He has also given a definition of tragi-comedy which is useful though supersubtle. According to him in a tragi-comedy we do not feel admiration and awe as we feel in a tragedy and, there is no whole-hearted enjoyment of human irrationality and human sentiment of comedy. It is an art of deflation, inversion and paradox and its subject as tragi-comic man and it is marked by serious and telling generalizations about man which is unexpected in a comedy.

Then he points out certain common characteristics features of these three plays. In these plays, according to him, we feel an attitude of refusal or failure to credit the dignity of man. There is an emphasis on human shortcomings even when he is engaged in great affairs and they involve us in the discovery of an ugly reality behind the fair appearance of things. In fact, some of Rossiter's observations are highly intelligent and they throw some light on Shakespeare's ambivalence reflected in the characterization of these plays and mixing of genres. To him "Troilus" is a tragic play without the greatness of a tragedy, "All's Well" is a comedy without a happy ending which makes us neither happy nor comfortable, and "Measure" gives a solution that simply does not answer the questions raised. In fact, any critical review of the earlier work done on these three plays seems to hint that there are some shortcomings which would justify the undertaking of this proposed study. For example, it seems that in the above interpretations the critical formulas do not apply equally well in all these plays. Further, if there are strong reasons in favour of one kind of interpretation there are equally strong reasons against it. Even Rossiter's definition "tragicomic view of man" appears to be a brilliant 'ad hoc' definition rather than a deeply thought out view.

Now, to complete our brief survey of the critical history of these three plays it seems necessary to see how
some critics have tried to define the Shakespearean problem plays. As we all know, the term "problem play" was borrowed by F.S. Baas from Ibsenist theatre, and by including "Hamlet" in the group he tried to define a Shakespearean problem play in the following way:

"All these dramas introduce us into highly artificial societies, whose civilization is ripe into rottenness. Amidst such media abnormal conditions of brain and of emotion are generated, and intricate cases of conscience demand a solution by unprecedented methods. Thus throughout these plays we move along dim untrodden paths, and at the close our feeling is neither of simple joy nor pain; we are excited, fascinated, perplexed, for the issues raised preclude a completely satisfactory outcome, even when as in "All's Well" and "Measure for Measure" the complications are outwardly adjusted in the fifth act. In "Troilus and Cressida" and "Hamlet" no such partial settlement of difficulties takes place, and we are left to interpret their enigmas as best we may. Dramas so singular in theme and temper cannot be strictly called comedies or tragedies. We may therefore borrow a convenient phrase from the theatre of to-day and class them together as Shakespeare's problem plays".48

Then, in 1931, Lawrence's outstanding work,

48 F.S. Boas's observations are quoted by W.W. Lawrence in "Shakespeare's Problem Comedies", 1931 (Frederick Ugar Publishing Co. 1960) p. 4.
"Shakespeare's Problem Comedies" was published. Lawrence had displayed a very good historical sense and his interpretation dominated as it is by awareness of folktale elements in the story threw a fresh flood of light on these plays. Describing some of the marked features of these plays Lawrence wrote:

"While they were composed, no doubt, in alternation with other work, they resemble each other closely in style and temper, and may be conveniently studied together. The settings and the plots are still those of romance, but the treatment is in the main serious and realistic. They are concerned, not with the pleasant and fantastic aspects of life, but with painful experiences and with darker complexities of human nature. Instead of gay pictures of cheerful scenes, to be accepted with a smile and a jest, we are frequently offered unpleasant and sometimes even repulsive episodes, and characters whose conduct gives rise to sustained questioning of action and motive. These pieces, in short, reveal to us a new phase of Shakespeare's mind, and a new type of comedy." ⁴⁹

Lawrence also put forward his theory of a problem play in the following words:

"The essential characteristic of a problem play, I take it, is that a perplexing and distressing complication

in human life is presented in a spirit of high seriousness. This special treatment distinguishes such a play from other kinds of drama, in that the theme is handled as to arouse not merely interest or excitement or pity or amusement, but to probe the complicated interrelations of character and action, in a situation admitting of different ethical interpretations".

"The term 'problem play' then, is particularly useful to apply to those productions which clearly do not fall into the category of tragedy, and yet too serious and analytic to fit the commonly accepted conception of comedy". 50

E.M. W. Tillyard, following F.S. Boas, includes "Hamlet" in his "Shakespeare's Problem Plays". 51 He does not attempt at any specific definition of a problem play and admits that he has used the term "problem play" vaguely and equivocally. But he has made some important generalizations about the nature of the problem plays. According to him these plays are invested with some abstract speculation or religious dogma which is not subordinated to a supreme theme, and in them Shakespeare has shown an acute interest in observing and recording the details of human nature for its own sake. Moreover, in all of them a young man is shown to

50 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
51 Tillyard has discussed some characteristics of the 'problem' plays in his book "Shakespeare's Problem Plays" (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1950, pp. 3-7).
get a shock and is becoming matured in the course of the dramatic events. Another point is that they display an interest in the old and the new generation. Though they contain a serious tone, a pervading melancholy, much evil and much sorrow; they are not predominantly pessimistic. Tillyard also found a "defective poetical style" in "All's Well" and an inconsistent style in "Measure" and suggested that these two plays paved the way for the final romances in many ways.

Ernest Schanzer includes "Julius Caesar" and 'Antony' but excludes 'Troilus' and "All's Well" in his book, "The Problem Plays of Shakespeare". His definition of a problem play runs as follows:

A play in which we find a concern with a moral problem which is central to it, presented in such a manner that we are unsure of our moral bearings so that uncertain and divided responses to it in the minds of the audience are possible and ever probable.52

Furthermore, Schanzer claims to have discovered a special procedure of manipulating responses to the main characters in these plays applied by dramatist:

"One of the marks of these plays — though it is by no means confined to them — is the playwright's procedure of manipulating our responses to the principal characters playing fast and lose with our affections for them engaging and alineating them in return. For the sake of convenience, the term 'dramatic coquetry' may be coined to describe the procedure". 53

From the above survey of the criticism of the "problem comedies" which is brief and sketchy, it is clear that they have evoked an extra-ordinary diversity of critical opinions and interpretations. The contention that Shakespeare was giving vent to the growing pessimism, scepticism and cynicism of the Jacobean age in these plays cannot be totally overlooked even if we do not pay attention to the old biographical assumption that our author was undergoing a deep psychological crisis at that time, and hence, he was expressing his deep personal anguish in these plays. And the interpretations based on Christian allegory and symbolism cannot be dismissed as totally baseless. On the whole, it may be said that almost every critic belonging to every school seems to be justified to some extent. We have also noted how the 'problem plays' of Shakespeare has been defined by critics like Boas, Lawrence and Schanzer and, though these definitions are not completely satisfactory, they offer

53 Ibid., p. 70.
valuable help for understanding these plays. The most significant point in Boas's definition is that "they cannot be strictly called comedies or tragedies". Lawrence's main argument is that in these comedies "Shakespeare has treated complicated interrelations of characters in a spirit of high seriousness" and, he has also noted that these plays do not fall into the category of tragedy and are yet too serious and analytic to fit the commonly accepted conception of comedy. Schanzer has also rightly observed that our sympathy and affection towards the principal characters are alternately engaged and alienated in these plays. But all these interpretations and definitions, while they certainly help us in understanding these plays seem to leave room for further efforts of definition and generalization. Because none of them seems to be definitive and comprehensive.

Now, it seems necessary to say that in the following chapters, we propose to make a somewhat rough study of these three plays, which have so long been regarded by many critics as enigmatic and baffling, by assuming that these plays more or less illustrate Shakespeare's ambivalent attitude towards human nature which prompted him to paint the 'dramatic personae' both in dark and bright colours, and his love of doing two things sometimes mutually contradictory, at the same time, and his fondness for putting forward two opposite points of view in relation to a particular thing or idea or situation; which well-accorded with the intellectual temper of the age. As it has already been noted, these plays were
written by the mature Shakespeare in his most fertile creative period and they were late Renaissance products when the conflicts of the Renaissance which we have mentioned became matured and came to a head. In this extremely complex and transitional period, such contradictory things as the idealism of Plato, the pragmatism of Aristotle, the Neoplatonism of Pico della Mirandola, "the deadly practicality of Machiavelli," the "scepticism" of Montaigne, the pessimism of Seneca and Epictetus went parallelly though they sometimes also clashed. The Epicurean ideal of wholesale enjoyment of the present life dashed against the Puritan denial of the flesh. The optimistic idea that man is a God-like creature because of his reasoning faculty clashed head on with the sceptical ideal of Montaigne which emphasized that man is inferior to the beasts. In such a climate of conflicting philosophies it seemed quite likely that the most representative dramatist of the age would cherish a positive-negative attitude towards human nature and would be interested in exhibiting the worth and worthlessness, and greatness and littleness of man. And it would not be at all strange if he depicts human nature as having immense potentialities and deplorable vulnerabilities.

We have already seen how Shakespeare's ambivalent attitude towards human nature found expression in some other plays, but this seems to be of special importance so far as the "problem comedies" are concerned. In portraying
the characters of these plays, Shakespeare seems to be confident that human nature is more or less a mixture of good and evil qualities and instincts, and the same person may behave both magnificently and trivially in difficult and different situations. From his own personal experience and the events that happened around him, and the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in the thought and culture of the age, Shakespeare seemed to have realised that human beings were not gods nor were they devils but, to some extent, they were both. And this double image of a single human nature found emphatic expression in the "problem comedies" which seemed to embrace both optimism and pessimism, idealism and cynicism, and romance and satire. Here in this connection, it is relevant to note that in "The Merchant" Portia seems to be a perfect character and she seems to evoke our unqualified admiration; and in "Othello" Iago seems to be an embodiment of evil who almost evokes our unqualified hatred or disgust. But, in these three plays, it appears to be extremely difficult to maintain a single critical attitude towards almost all the characters and our allegiance to them likely to be mixed. For instance, we may say that Hector, despite his magnificent generosity, behaves like a savage killer with the soldier in "sumptuous armour", and Ulysses, despite his political wisdom, resorts to cheap tricks. Helena, despite her self-reliance and intelligence, seems to have a blind passion for Bertram who is a cad and a liar,
and who repudiates her, and then this cad and liar is shown to have done "honourable service" in the Florentine wars. Similarly, Isabella, in spite of her lofty ideal of chastity and grand 'mercy' speeches, cannot evoke our absolute sympathy and complete admiration. Angelo, in spite of his cruelty and villainy, does not appear to be a thoroughly disagreeable and unlovable fellow especially in his self-confessed weakness. In a way, it may be said that in these plays perfect or near perfect characters are rare, and very often both sides of the polarity seem to be equally active and are held in balance.

It is important to note that Shakespeare was the most representative and professional playwright of an intellectually unstable age, and he seems to have shared the indecisiveness of a Renaissance thinker and the inconsistency of a Renaissance writer which he displayed very often in his plays. He seemed to have echoed and echoed the feelings and sentiments of a conflicting and controversial age. And sometimes he seems to have exploited the dualities, contradictions and conflicts inherent in contemporary life and its situations. It is very interesting to see Shakespeare's frequent display of inconsistency towards conventionally accepted norms and values. We all know that in "Troilus" Ulysses is made to speak magnificently on the importance of "degree" or order in all human societies. But one may be surprised a lot to
see that Henry V, who is portrayed as an ideal king, scoffs at "degree" as a part of idle ceremony.\textsuperscript{54} We can easily notice that in "All's Well" Helena, who surpasses the limits of feminine modesty in pursuing her reluctant husband, is portrayed more or less as an ideal though not a perfect woman. When Portia acts as a man order is restored but when Lady Macbeth acts as a man the outcome is chaos. When Isabella wants to preserve her chastity, the result seems to be destructive but when she consents to the indelicate stratagem of the Duke the outcome is safety. To Touchstone "truest poetry is most feigning", but to Hamlet, the function of drama is "to hold the mirror up to the nature". In a way, it seems as if Shakespeare was both a traditionalist and an iconoclast, both orthodox and sceptical.

It is a commonplace to say that Shakespeare had a complex awareness of good and evil, the conflict of which is the universal theme of great literature. He seems to have believed that good and evil are elemental, overwhelming and inscrutable forces operating in man and his world.\textsuperscript{55} We may, however, say that in his treatment of good and evil also ambivalence seems to be noticeable. In his comedies we find that good is finally victorious and evil is defeated; but sometimes we find that evil has its saving graces.


and it is not wholly unredeemable. In the tragedies though evil destroys good, evil is also destroyed, and very often there remains "place and means" for good to live. Hamlet's uncle Claudius, who had murdered his brother, has the capability to repent his misdeeds. He has shown pity for Ophelia and affection for Polonius and his queen. Even his blackest villains show some sparks of goodness at times. We know that Iago recognised the daily beauty of Cassio and dying Edmund wanted to do something good before it is too late. At times Thersites, a venomous and a foul-mouthed railer is allowed to discover some great truths about the Trojan war. The most graceful French king in "All's Well" and most humane Escalus in "Measure" show some caprice on certain occasions.

As it has already been reiterated, this double vision of life and this ambivalent outlook towards human nature and human life and its multifarious problems, seem to be the most important aspects reflected in the "problem comedies". Cressida, the most important female character of "Troilus" has frankly confessed to us that her nature is composed of two selves — "one kind self", "another unkind self". The two French Lords in "All's Well" have told us that "the web of our life is a mingled yarn; good and ill together", and we know that they are observer characters or observer characters or

56 Ibid., p. 37.
detached commentators. Mariana has also made us aware that "the best men are moulded out of faults". And it is important to remember that these characters, who have made these important generalizations about human nature and human life, have spoken sincerely, and these utterances do not exclusively belong to the particular moods of the speakers in particular dramatic situations. In other words, it may be said that these significant utterances were not wholly prompted by the private intentions of the speakers, but also by their own inner convictions. Like many great speeches and soliloquies of Shakespeare these seem to rise from the particular to the universal and make these so-called unpopular plays universally appealing to a great extent.

This vision which very often made Shakespeare instinctively to discover "a soul of goodness in things evil," and a "dram of ill in the best" gives a great variety and vitality to his plays. This remarkable insight and sensibility to probe into the duality of things prompted Shakespeare consciously or unconsciously to create many brilliantly contrasted characters which are assets of effective drama.\(^{57}\) It is this impulse which enabled Shakespeare to set an Epicurean Sir Toby against a Puritan

Malvolio, a sprightly Rosalind against a melancholy Jaques, an active Fortinbras against a reflective Hamlet and a humane Escalus against an inhuman Angelo. In fact, by taking things seriously and laughing at them at the same time, by writing in two styles often contradictory to each other, by mixing tones and genres, by presenting the paradoxical co-existence of love and hatred in man and his world, by exhibiting an ideal picture of a sunny side of life not ignoring the seamy side altogether, and by making the saddest tragedy not devoid of some mirth and laughter, Shakespeare wrote an immense variety of plays which have become great resources of world literature. In this connection it may also be said that this vision of life as emphatically manifested in the "problem comedies" did not only seem true and plausible in terms of Elizabethan and Jacobean thought but also true to human nature in all ages. Modern sociologists have told us that human beings from their primitive stages to modern times are mixtures of both good and bad instincts, impulses and traits. We also know from modern psychology and from the enormous complexities of modern existence that man is not consistent and he cannot afford to remain consistent. He is full of surprises, contradictions and paradoxes, and at times, elusive and unpredictable. There is enough discrepancy between his words and deeds and, very often, he wears a mask. Shakespeare's presentation of these very features in the "problem comedies"
make them realistic and naturalistic, which would continue to arouse the interest of posterity.

This ambivalence of attitude towards human nature seemed to have resulted in a formal experiment where traditional genres are mixed. As A.P. Rossiter and Marion Bodwell Smith have suggested, this duality of mixing genres especially of tragedy and comedy seems to be another characteristic feature of the problem comedies. Critics from the eighteenth century onward, had noticed this intermingling of tragic and comic elements in many Shakespearean plays in terms of his originality and his presentation of a total and variegated picture of human life. A.L. Rowse, a competent biographical critic of modern times, has expressed the following view which seems to be relevant:

"Shakespeare was a dual and ambivalent nature as good for comedy as for tragedy whereas Marlowe's was more unitary and homogenous, more restricted and intellectual."

In this context, it seems important to remember that as a dramatic artist Shakespeare was a tireless experimentator who looked for novelty, variety and flexibility all the times, and the period in which Shakespeare wrote these three plays was a period of intense experimentation. Philip Edwards

has suggested that Shakespeare struggled all his life with the conventions of drama to create out of them a work of art which would satisfy him completely and he had no complacency as a dramatic artist. Anyway, the experimental nature of the problem comedies cannot be denied and interfusion of the tragic and comic elements is therefore, not strange. And it may be a reasonable conjecture that here again Shakespeare seems to have displayed the humanist writer's instinct and effort of reconciling and synthesizing oppositions and contradictions in the field of playwriting. He seems to have done two things at once, and in each of them we may easily discover that both tragic and anti-tragic, and comic and anti-comic elements are juxtaposed and often brilliantly interfused. And because of this search for reconciliation between mutually opposite dramatic genres these plays seem to be baffling to those who try to classify them in strictly conventional terms.

Another point to be noted here is that English literature during the first decade of the seventeenth century was predominantly satirical. The satirical plays written by Jonson and Marston, enacted by the Children's companies were tremendously popular. And so it was quite likely that Shakespeare was happy to incorporate some satirical elements into these plays in view of a changing

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59 "Shakespeare and the Confines of Art" 1968 (Methuen 1972) p. 15.
theatrical taste. So one may call "Troilus" with a good deal of justification a "mingled yarn" of heroic tragedy and satirical comedy and "All's Well" and "Measure" "mingled yarns" of romantic comedy and satirical comedy along with tragic and comic elements interwoven. But it must be borne in mind that such an intermingling does not rule out a double vision of human nature and an ambivalent attitude towards it, but rather serves to intensify it in a subtle way. For instance, when Shakespeare created as tragic character our sympathy and affection are deeply engaged with him, and when he makes the same character comic our sympathy and affection towards the character seem to be restrained to some extent. When a character is depicted both as an ideal figure and a satirical butt, we are likely to have an ambivalent response to it.

Another characteristic feature, which one can easily discover in these plays, is the duality of mixing contrasting tones and moods. The pervading tone of "Troilus" seems to be oscillate between two opposite strains—the epic and the burlesque, the heroic and the mock-heroic, and sublime and the ridiculous. It is also interesting to note that in "All's Well" and "Measure" these are two strands which constitute the prevailing atmosphere—the sacredness of Christian colouring and the profanity of bawdry. In "Troilus" one can easily
notice the epic strain ingrained in the prologue and the burlesque strain in the epilogue. Helena's persuasive speeches to the French King for permission to treat the latter's fistula are sublime, but her active participation in the bawdy conversation initiated by Parolles seems to be quite ridiculous. In "Measure" we can easily sense the holiness of the convent, and "the oppressive gloom of the prison" and "the foul breath of the brothel".

Now, it must be admitted that in this study of the "problem comedies" much emphasis seems to fall on the characters, as has already been mentioned, and hence one may easily scoff at it by saying that it is the age-old Bradleian character-approach. In defence, we would like to say that so far as drama is concerned, characters seem to be most important and essential elements, and any dramatic enjoyment both in reading and in witnessing on the stage lives vividly in our memory through the characters. Moreover, it may be said with some risk of oversimplification that Shakespeare's "problem comedies" show greater strength of characterization than other plays from the standpoint of realism and naturalism. One can find more realism and less romance, more naturalism and less fantasy. In spite of their legendary and folktale origins, the characters as a whole, appear before us as living, breathing, and desiring men and women. In fact, the tendency towards realism and naturalism in Elizabethan and Jacobean
drama seems to be clearly evident in these plays. Such eminent critics like Theodore Spencer\(^60\) and E.M.W. Tillyard\(^61\) had already pointed out that Shakespeare had been acutely interested in observing and recording the details of human nature. Paul N. Siegel, one of the ablest critics of "All's Well" is of the view that characterization is the heart of the drama.\(^62\) And, therefore, it may be stated that even in these days of sophisticated criticism character approach has not lost its validity. Even other schools of critics who seek to minimise the importance of character approach very often seem to fall back on this approach during discussion. The most prominent critics of the 'problem comedies' of Shakespeare namely W.W. Lawrence, E.M.W. Tillyard and Ernest Schanzer seem to have given more importance to the discussion of characters than on the other aspects.

In connection with this proposed study it may be added that Marion Bodwell Smith, in her illuminating book, "Dualities in Shakespeare" has completed an arduous task of

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Here Theodore Spencer expresses the view that in "Troilus and Cressida" Shakespeare had shown greater strength of characterization.

\(^61\) "Shakespeare's Problem Plays" (Univ. of Toronto Press 1950) p. 5.

examining most of the plays of Shakespeare as manifestations of the concept of duality in various ways. She has rightly noted the duality inherent in the theme and form of the plays, and also dealt with the fusion of artistic and intellectual dualities in particular works, emphasizing in each instance one aspect of technique. But, so far as the "problem comedies" are concerned, her discussion appears to be brief. Though she has noted Shakespeare's ambivalence of intention in making straightforward dramatic use of some elements of a code of values and debunking others, and in characterization, and in using contrasting styles in "Troilus," she has excluded "All's Well." As for "Measure," she has examined the play mainly in terms of a double allegory of the two sets of four civil virtues in Renaissance political thought — the biblical Truth, Justice, Mercy and Peace, and the classical Justice, Temperance, Prudence and Fortitude. Hence, we deem it worthwhile to pursue a study of the "problem comedies" in terms of the three simplest dualities — ambivalence of characterization, mixture of genres and the duality of mixing contrasting tones and moods which were closely interrelated and interwoven in these plays, which, it may be expected, would throw some light on some of the

63 "Dualities in Shakespeare" (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1966) p. 38.
64 Ibid., pp. 129-130. Of course Smith has said that "Measure is also comedy of earthly happiness," p. 157.
difficult problems of interpretation posed by these plays. Shakespeare had also made use of numerical dualities employed by the Renaissance dramatists - such as double plots and minor characters in pairs, but these seem to be of less importance.