ROMANTIC CRITICISM OF SHAKESPEARIAN DRAMA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Of all the so-called schools of Shakespearian criticism, the Romantic has been and continues to be one of the most influential. Perhaps this is true merely because of the importance which the Romantic School places upon the genius of the subject, for all schools of criticism recognize Shakespeare's ability at creating effective drama. A more accurate answer, however, probably lies in the fact that "romanticism" has a broad base and encompasses so very much. At any rate, it is an important school of thought and one has only to look at the names of scholars of the past and of the present who are associated with this school to recognize the school's lasting and continuing influence.

Romantic criticism of Shakespeare has interested this writer for several years, primarily, I think, because of the great stress which the Romantic School places upon characterization. To me, characterization is the heart of any dramatic creation, and the concern of the so-called Romantic for the motivations of the characters is a coincidental concern of mine.

L. C. Knights, in an article titled "On Historical Scholarship of Shakespeare,"[1] discusses various criticisms of Shakespeare. He comments at one point about the various critics and how they have shown the significance of traditional ideas concerning the laws of nature in some of the plays and how certain of the characters, like Macbeth, are saturated

with moral and metaphysical conceptions deriving from the Schoolmen; but, he adds, the point is that these ideas are never merely accepted and applied then and for all times; "they are relived."[2] Their adequacy is tested in a full and personal exposure to life. What Knights seems to be saying in part is that no matter how much historical or theological emphasis one places upon a certain play, the characters within embody whatever idea happens to be the theme, and a unique combination of perceptions, insights, and feelings result: man comes to life.

Man--life--reality! This to me should be the concern of the Shakespearian critic, and it has been the concern of those so labelled the "Romantics." It is their story with which I am concerned in this study of the criticism of Shakespearian drama.

Purpose of the Study and Scope

Romantic criticism can be defined as that criticism whose proponents believe that man is by nature morally good; that his taste is determined by individual feeling rather than by reason; that his knowledge is acquired empirically from the individual, concrete, particularized world; and that art in depicting man should possess spontaneity, immediacy, and originality stemming from a reliance upon sense-data.

Romantic criticism thus defined has been a matter of some study in recent years. A certain body of information reflecting Romantic interpretations of Shakespeare in contrast with more traditional views has been compiled by writers like E. Walden, R. W. Babcock, Augustus Ralli, Herbert Schueller, and Alfred Van Rensselaer Westfall, among others, who have concerned themselves with presenting an historical view of the full range of Shakespearian dramatic criticism. Some editors, like D. Nichol

Smith, Clifford Leech, Russell Leavenworth, and Paul Siegel, have anthologized various critical essays, including some of Romantic provenance, which serve as examples of critical attitudes shown toward Shakespeare's plays from the early eighteenth century until the present. Various authors, within their own critical writings, have included some mention of Romantic criticism of Shakespearian drama as opposed to the traditional. Brief note is present, for example, in the critical works of both Hazelton Spencer and Harley Granville-Barker. Still other writers prove evidence of the liveliness of Romantic criticism in their histories of Shakespearian drama, where comment on histrionic interpretations of characters, such as Irving's and Kemble's Hamlets, is made. Among these is found the _History of Hamlet Criticism_ where Paul Conklin notes certain Romantic treatment of Hamlet in one chapter devoted entirely to the _Hamlet_ stage-tradition. A more notable example perhaps is Arthur Colby Sprague's _Shakespeare and the Actors_, which makes note of Romantic interpretations of many of the characters in the plays.

However, to this writer's knowledge there exists no comprehensive study of the Romantic criticism of Shakespearian drama, tragic, historical, or comic. Therefore, it shall be the purpose of this dissertation to present the basic views of noteworthy critics whose interpretations are primarily Romantic, and by way of clarification to present the contrasting, more traditional interpretations. This study, of course, will not be an attempt to discuss all aspects of Romantic criticism of Shakespearian drama, but it should result in a more comprehensive treatment than any known to the present writer.

Because the scope of Shakespearian drama is so very broad and because Romantic treatment of the full range of the drama has been so

very prolific since the late eighteenth century, this study will be limited to treatment of the criticism of four Shakespearian plays, representing each of the dramatic genres. The four plays to be used are Hamlet and Antony and Cleopatra, representing the tragic genre; King Henry V, representing the historical; and The Merchant of Venice, representing the comical. These four have been selected because of all Shakespearian plays in the three genres they seem to have evoked, perhaps by their great potential, the greatest amount of Romantic criticism.

Procedure of the Study

The study will consist of six chapters. The first chapter will begin with an overview of general Romantic criticism of Shakespeare's plays, noting the beginnings and the development of Romantic criticism as it was initiated in the eighteenth century, as it culminated in the nineteenth, and as it continues in the twentieth to some degree, followed by a discussion of possible reasons for such development, seen especially in the general psychological predilections and interests of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Chapters two through five will focus upon the individual plays. Romantic interpretations of basic issues as they contrast with more traditional interpretations will be discussed. Chapter six will conclude the study with a summation of the findings.

Part I: An Overview of Romantic Criticism of Shakespeare's Plays

Ben Jonson's familiar words of comment upon Shakespeare's passing, "not of an age, but for all time,"[3] summarize quite well one definite point made by the Romantics in their treatment of Shakespeare and his

works: that no one could ever have the genius of that poet and no one could ever expect to represent for man what Shakespeare represents.

It would be inaccurate to term Ben Jonson a Romantic critic merely because of the compliment which he paid his friend, but the words spoken certainly show the prestige that Shakespeare possessed even in a time when very stringent rules were supposed to be followed by playwrights. An even better example, however, appears when convention has become a "god" and the neo-classic spirit has become the predominant temper in literature. John Dryden, in "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," writes these words about Shakespeare:

> To begin with Shakespeare. He was the man who of all modern and perhaps ancient poets had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind... He is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him; no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets, _quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi_.[4]

Another eminent figure of the age of convention gives "the noble bard" similar high praise. Alexander Pope, in his "Preface to Edition of Shakespeare" (1725), writes of his characters and his portrayal of passion:

> His characters are so much Nature herself, that 'tis a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as Copies of her. Those of other Poets have a constant resemblance, which shews that they received them from one another, and were but multiplyers of the same

> image...but every single character in Shakespeare is as much an Individual as those in Life itself...The Power over our Passions was never possess'd in a more eminent degree, or display'd in so different instances. Yet all along, there is seen no labour, no pains to raise them; no preparation to guide our guess to the effect: but the heart swells, and the tears burst out, just at the proper places...[5]

Even Johnson, that epitome of decorum of the eighteenth century, agrees by echoing Pope's words in his "Preface to Edition of Shakespeare," (1765):

> This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may be here cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.[6]

It is interesting to note that Dryden, Pope, and Johnson, all leading proponents of the neo-classical school, definitely touch upon certain aspects of the Romantic interpretation of Shakespeare, interpretations which later become recognized as a distinct school of criticism. Perhaps the most important thing of note is their emphasis at this early time upon characterization.

However, it is quite well known that in addition to much praise, Shakespeare received very heavy negative criticism during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The most prominent objection during this time was that he violated the unities of time, place, and action. Attacks on Shakespeare for this violation still persisted even after such a staunch and popular figure as Alexander Pope defended him in the essay cited above. In 1769 the Monthly Review was worried about Shakespeare's neglect of the unities but attributed it to the coarse

taste of the time. The same slightly critical attitude continued in Kemble's Macbeth Reconsidered (1786), in the Universal Magazine (1787), and in the European Magazine in July, 1789.[7]

Among the early critics defending Shakespeare, other than those defenders cited above, appeared general comment without greatly detailed argument. The British Magazine (1767) announced:

> With regard to the Unity of Time, which some rigid critics look upon as a matter of such great importance, it [Julius Caesar] is remarkably defective.

Horace Walpole's postscript to The Mysterious Mother (1768), in defending Shakespeare against Voltaire, rejected the unities simply as "mechanic," and in 1773 the Macaroni and Theatrical Magazine contended:

> The example of the ancients, upon this point, ought to have no weight with us...our critics are guilty of a mistake in admitting no greater latitude of place and time, than was admitted in Greece and Rome.[8]

Two years later the Universal Magazine declared that writers who use mechanical methods "are justly denied the palm of genius"; hence critics ought not "to comment by line and rule."

Another method of rejecting the unities in Shakespearian criticism of this period was to argue that nature is greater than rules. On this basis the unities were dismissed as mere pedantry, and the accent was placed on the magic of the scene and characters as triumphant over all rules. Mrs. M. W. Montague viciously attacked "the pedant who bought at a great pride the lamp of a famous philosopher." "Heaven-born genius," she adds, "acts from something superior to rules...and has a right of appeal to nature herself."[9] Richard Whately put delineation of character far above the unities in importance and added in his Remarks on Some

of the Characters of Shakespeare:

> Experience has shown, that however rigidly, and however rightly, the unities of action, time, and place have been insisted on, they may be dispensed with, and the magic of the scene may make the absurdity invisible. Most of Shakespeare abounds with instances of such a fascination.[10]

The kind of early criticism cited and that which extended through Samuel Johnson was primarily criticism which resulted from attendance at the theatre. The first editing of Shakespeare was not done until 1709, and that by Nicolas Rowe. Even though the folios sold well, the masses were not acquainted with Shakespeare by reading his works, but by seeing his works performed.

The next phase of criticism, however, is to be concerned with the Shakespeare of the study. Perhaps this brief discussion should be prefaced with some remarks about German criticism because (1) German readers tended to be much more sympathetic with our subject than did the French and even many English, and (2) the German acquaintance with Shakespeare was more through books than through the theatre.[11] It is the latter with which we are especially concerned at this point, of course.

It is common knowledge that Germany was the geographical heart of the movement in literature that was later to be called the Romantic School. It would be out of place at this point to elaborate on the German "movement," but it is rather important and it is relevant that we comment about some of the thoughts of the major contributors to German Romantic criticism because they serve as some of the first of the studious critics.

The first of the great German critics, Lessing, tended to make of Shakespeare almost a national issue, for it was he who affirmed that

Shakespeare was more congenial to the German taste than was any French drama.[12] Herder begins to appreciate the existence of something like a poetic pattern, in calling attention to the fitness between the passions of the personages and the scenery in which these passions are enacted.[13]

It is interesting to note the general tendency of the German critics like Lessing and Herder, in light of the very early English Romanticizers: they concentrate chiefly upon the philosophical significance of character. They penetrate to a deeper level than that of the simple moral values attributed to great literature by earlier times, and they foreshadow the "criticism of life" definition by Matthew Arnold.[14] Furthermore, it is during this period when the element of "mystery," a definite aspect of Romantic criticism, is recognized in Shakespeare.

With this background before us, we shall proceed with a concern for the studious criticism of Shakespeare's plays. The first important studious piece of English criticism of Shakespeare is Maurice Morgann's essay _On the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff_ (1777). This appears to be the first conspicuous member of a long line of criticisms dealing with the characters in the plays, considering not only their actions within the play itself, but also inferring from their behavior on the stage what their general character is.[15] It definitely is accurate to consider it the forerunner of the Romantic criticism of Shakespeare.

The thesis is that Falstaff was neither a coward nor a boaster, but a man of natural courage and alacrity of mind. The whole essay is an elaborate and ingenious paradox, with no weighing of Shakespeare's faults against his merits. Rather, it is an attempt to glorify his creative power by displaying his mastery of character creation. As one

reviews the role call of the early Romantic critics, he can see that more and more the tendency grew in the Romantic School to forget Shakespeare the dramatist, and to think of him as a creator of "real" characters about whom one could argue as about characters in history. "Real" here implies the whole man whether he is on stage or off. The result is that Romantic critics intuitively infer what characters may do or even should do, regardless of complete text, cultural context, or stage tradition.

Other early English critics writing about the time of Morgann did contribute something in their own way to the "new school" of thought. William Richardson published his Philosophical Analysis of Some of Shakespeare's Remarkable Characters in 1774. He calls Shakespeare "the Proteus of the drama who changes himself into every character, and enters easily into every condition of human nature."[16] Henry Home, Lord Kames, writes as early as 1762 in his Elements of Criticism:

> The speeches of Shakespeare's characters appear the legitimate offspring of passion while those of other dramatists are descriptive only, and illegitimate.[17]

Similar study was evident about this same time in America. Joseph Hopkinson was the first to plunge into character analysis in America and the only one who made any original contributions in this field for some time. His work was printed in Port Folio.[18] He seems to have been acquainted with some of the character analyses published in England, but he used a different method. He may have been less familiar with the psychology of the period; at least he brought in less of it, and devoted more attention to the analysis of the characters themselves. Richardson, cited above, had a decided tendency to end his analyses in a moral

application. An example of this can be seen in his study of Jacques:

> But if, previous to experience, we are unable to form such judgements of ourselves and others, we must beware of despondency, and of opinions injurious to human nature. Let us ever remember that all men have peculiar interests to pursue; that every man ought to exert himself vigorously in his own employment; and that if we are useful and blameless, we shall have the favor of our fellow citizens. Let us love mankind, but let our affections be duly chastened; be independent, if possible, but not insensible.[19]

Hopkinson was freer from this moral bias. There is greater freedom in his treatment, more artistic appreciation of the people in drama and pleasure in them. Yet he is typical of the "new criticism."

The Romantic School of criticism broke into full flower in the work of Hazlitt, DeQuincey, Lamb, and Coleridge in England, in the early nineteenth century. Of these, Lamb's work _On the Tragedies of Shakespeare_ appeared first (1810) and serves as his one contribution to Shakespearian criticism. His point of view is that of the reader and lover of poetry. He holds that Shakespeare's plays are "less calculated for performance on a stage than those of almost any other dramatist whatever. Their distinguishing excellence is a reason why they should be so."[20] One specific example of this concerns his comment on the producing of _Hamlet_ before the general public: "What does he suffer by being dragged forth to give lectures to the crowd--the shy, negligent, retiring Hamlet."[21] Hamlet is evidently to Lamb a real person who can be treated comprehensively and intuitively regardless of stage tradition, and not a character created for the sole purpose of being represented in action on the stage.

Samuel T. Coleridge is the best known of these early nineteenth century critics, and he is usually considered the best. His criticism

preserved in fragmentary form from two series of lectures delivered in 1811-12 and again in 1818 is indeed a blend of poetry and philosophy. According to Thomas Marc Parrott, he seeks to find a unity in the whole of Shakespeare's work and in each play that belongs to the body of that work.[22] Like a true poet he is keenly sensitive to the beauty of Shakespeare. Much that Coleridge was the first to say has become the commonplace of criticism, especially Romantic criticism, ever since.

The cornerstone of his philosophy is epistemological and seeks to establish the relationship between the subjective and objective worlds. The transcendental philosophy he developed argues that the fundamental act of knowledge requires, in his words, that the subject become "a subject by the act of constructing itself objectively to itself" in order that it may know itself as object.[23] Self-consciousness, in which subject and object are identical, must dissolve the identity to become conscious of it. In meaningful knowledge of the objective world, which otherwise is fixed and dead, the self must project itself as the object, live in it, in order that there may be coincidence of subject and object. "In order to make the object one with us," he wrote, "we must become one with the object--ergo, and object. Ergo, the object must be itself a subject."[24]

Essentially then, he saw in Shakespearian plays a reflection of his own epistemology, defining Hamlet as one averse to "externals" and betrayed by the "habit of brooding over the world within him."[25] In Hamlet, he said that Shakespeare intended to portray a person in whose view the external world and all its incidents and objects were comparatively dim and of no interest in themselves; they began to interest only when they were reflected in the mirror of his mind. What Coleridge is

saying implies of course that culture and historical context have no place of importance in dramatic criticism.

William Hazlitt appears next with his Characters of Shakespeare's Plays in 1817. Some recent critics have attributed the compliment of a more practical criticism to Hazlitt than to either Lamb or Coleridge. It is easy to see that he is like them in his enthusiastic worship of the bard and he is quite frank to admit it: "An overstrained enthusiasm is more pardonable with respect to Shakespeare than the want of it, for our admiration cannot easily surpass his genius."[26] Like them, he too is a lover of poetry. Accordingly, the pages of his studies of Shakespearian characters are packed with quotations chosen for their poetic beauty and dramatic fitness.[27] Hazlitt is perhaps the best example of the inconsistency found in much Romantic criticism. He often finds the poetry worthy of praise but the characters less worthy. As one studies the Romantic critics he finds that this kind of inconsistency arises often.

"O mighty poet!" said DeQuincey, making the standard ritualistic prostration before Shakespeare, "thy works are not as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art; but are also like the phenomena of nature...."[28] The occasion for the awe was his discovery of the significance of the knocking at the gate in Macbeth. The murder of Duncan, DeQuincey's argument runs, would naturally draw our sympathy to the murdered man; but Shakespeare's purpose is to let us look into the hell within the murderer's mind. To this end he isolated Macbeth and his wife, cut them off from the world of ordinary life, annihilated time. The knocking at the gate is the reflux of the human world upon this vacuum; rapt suddenly into the living world by the knocking, we are, per

contra, made conscious of the fiendish hell we have just witnessed, because, DeQuincey argues, "All action in any direction is best expounded, measured, and made apprehensible by reaction."[29]

In 1832 there appeared a very popular study, an anatomy gallery of Shakespeare heroines, written by one of the better-known minor critics of the times, Mrs. Anna Jameson. The study was similar to those of Morgann and Whately, but the lady was more devious. Subtle though she is as a dramatic analyst, she is an even more subtle, insidious feminist reformer, hoping to restore to woman the respect her true nature and worth deserve. Were she to devote her volume to describing ladies in real life rather than Shakespeare's heroines, she could, she explains, write only satire.[30] History is almost equally undependable, offering only contradictory or incomplete interpretations of human nature; nor do the moralists and philosopher aid greatly. What remains is Shakespeare, "who understood all truth." She adds:

> The riddle which history presented I found solved in the pages of Shakespeare. There the crooked appeared straight, the inaccessible easy; the incomprehensible, plain. All I sought, I found there; his characters combine history and real life; they are complete individuals, whose hearts and souls are laid open for us. I wanted character in its essential truth. I found all these in Shakespeare.[31]

It is not difficult to see that Mrs. Jameson was merely reiterating words of praise that can be found in the best of critics from the early eighteenth century on.

The note struck by the Romantics echoes through the nineteenth century until it culminates in the ecstatic rhapsody of Algernon Swinburne and his <u>A Study of Shakespeare</u> (1880). He places emphasis upon the musical quality of Shakespeare's verse. Moving from the premise that a

poet should be studied in his verse, he shows in his essay exactly how Shakespeare moved through various stages to become the master of "tragic beauty, passion, terror, love, pity, truth, delight and glory of life, and grace of nature."[32] The object of the drama is to display character in action, and successful plays have been written by men who were not true poets. Shakespeare, however, combined all the qualities of the dramatist. "The key to the individual character is through his emotions suggested by the music of the verse," and to Swinburne, Shakespeare understood the key.[33] We perhaps see in Swinburne the best example of the Romantic who is least concerned with plot structure. To him, and to many other Romantics, the poetry is much more important.

The Romantic tradition continued into the twentieth century. G. P. Baker's Shakespeare as a Dramatist (1907) and Brander Matthew's Shakespeare the Dramatist (1913) were general studies which showed that the tendency to approach through the characters rather than through the plot was still prevalent.[34] Perhaps the outstanding writer of the early twentieth century concerned with the Romantic trait of psychological interest in Shakespearian characters was A. C. Bradley. In his work Shakespearean Tragedy (1904), he deals with the traditionally recognized four great tragedies in an attempt to relate their common properties to the fundamental nature of tragedy itself. He begins by outlining characteristics of Shakespearian tragedy: it is primarily concerned with one person, the hero, and his story and death. "It is in fact essentially a tale of suffering and calamity conducting to death."[35] The suffering and calamity are exceptional in befalling a conspicuous person; they are unexpected, and they contrast with a previous glory and happiness. Hence, Shakespearian tragedy includes the medieval notion of the

tragic as a total reversal of fortune, but it goes beyond this in that the hero's fall affects the welfare of the whole state.

> And when he falls suddenly from the height of earthly greatness to the dust, his fall produces a sense of contrast, of the powerlessness of man, and of the omnipotence--perhaps the caprice--of Fortune or Fate, which no tale of private life can possibly rival.[36]

Further, Shakespearian tragedy does not simply happen but proceeds mainly from the actions of men. "The centre of the tragedy may be said with equal truth to lie in action issuing from character, or in character issuing in action."[37] It also includes abnormal conditions of mind, the supernatural, and chance: but these are always subordinate to deeds that issue from character.

The heroes are all exceptional:

> Desire, passion, or will attains in them a terrible force. In almost all we observe a marked one-sidedness, a predisposition in some particular direction; a total incapacity, in certain circumstances, of resisting the force which draws in this direction; a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion, or habit of mind. This, it would seem, is for Shakespeare the fundamental tragic trait.[38]

Bradley perhaps cannot be labelled Romantic but he appears to continue the Romantic tradition in Shakespearian criticism by stressing interpretation of character in general fashion. This allows a textual interpretation. Often his criticism is divergent with main line Romantic criticism, but again, the inconsistency is another of the traits of Romantic critics. Perhaps the reason for Bradley's long recognition as a foremost Romantic critic can be summed up in his comment of the greatness of man as presented by Shakespeare:

> 'What a piece of work is man,' we cry; 'so much more beautiful and so much more terrible than we knew! Why should he be so if this beauty and greatness only tortures itself and throws itself away?' We seem to have before us a type of the mystery of the whole world, the tragic fact which extends far beyound the limits of tragedy. Everywhere, from the crushed rocks beneath our feet to the soul of man, we see power, intelligence, life, and glory, which astound us and seem to call for our worship. And everywhere we see them perishing, with dreadful pain, as though they came into being for no other end. Tragedy is the typical form of this mystery, because that greatness of soul which it exhibits oppressed, conflicting and destroyed, is the highest existence in our view. It forces the mystery upon us, and it makes us realise so vividly the worth of that which is wasted that we cannot possibly seek comfort in the reflection that all is vanity.[39]

This view of man sees him basically as being good. Therefore, he is allowed praise and sympathy in almost all cases. This view of man's place in the universe allows great sympathy for a man like Macbeth because he continues to fight, or sympathy for Antony because he gave up the world for love.

Bradley is certainly not the last Romantic critic of the new century even though he might be considered the most important. Ernest Jones, following in Bradley's tradition, continued to stress the character rather than the plot of Hamlet.[40] In his Hamlet and Oedipus his analysis of Hamlet makes two assumptions well-stated and argued for. The first is that all drama is a representation of the actions of people in real life; and, consequently, that the motives and patterns of dramatized human behavior are subject to the same psychological laws as those of real-life behavior.[41] As he expresses it:

> Characters are created whose impersonating representatives act and move on the stage, and we are asked to believe that they are living persons; indeed, the dramatist's success is largely measured by this criterion...[42]

The difference in this point of view and that of Aristotelian mimesis is that here we allow for general interpretation of character regardless of text, history, or plot. Here there is complete freedom to see a character as he might have been "off stage," for to critics of the Romantic tradition this is the only true way of seeing dramatis personae.

Other critics of the twentieth century, like H. B. Charlton, an avowed Bradleyite concerned especially with the tragedies; J. M. Murray, a critic dedicated to seeing life at its fullest in all the plays; Donald Stauffer, a writer who, in focusing upon the moral ideas of the plays as found in the imagery, emphasizes character; and G. W. Knight, probably the most prolific recent critic of the century and one interested in all the genres, all exhibit decided Romantic tendencies, especially those as defined earlier in this paper.

So the Romantic treatment of Shakespeare's plays lives on. From the early recognition by his contemporaries of Shakespeare's genius, through the seventeenth and eighteenth century praise by even neo-classic fundamentalists, to the flowering of the Romantic School spurred especially by Morgann, and fed by passionate praise of Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge, DeQuincey, and Swinburne, the movement of Shakespearian Romantic criticism arose and flourished; and nurtured by men like Bradley and Jones, it shall continue to flourish even amid the extreme ridicule and harassment paid by certain recent critics.

Why will it continue? It will continue because Romantic criticism, like all Shakespearian criticism, searches for the answer to an age-old question: Why does he (Shakespeare) charm better than Chaucer, Milton, Aeschylus, Racine, and others? The Romantics have rejected the so-called classic theory or doctrine of The Great Exception.[43] They have

evolved the counter doctrine of Perfection. Everything in Shakespeare becomes wonderful and meaningful to them. This which we saw start late in the eighteenth century flourishes today. Some call it Bardolatry, but whatever it is called, it shows the continuing effort to cope with the central puzzle about "the great bard": the curious invulnerable attraction to him.

Part II: Bases for the Development and Growth of Romantic Criticism of Shakespearian Drama

The evidence provided in the previous section is sufficient to indicate a definite change in interpretation and criticism of Shakespeare's plays, a change from the great concern with plot structure, decorum, and the unities, to one primarily concerned with characterization. This movement or school of interpretation and criticism has commonly been called and is still called the Romantic School.

The stress on character found in the so-called Romantic School is certainly not something new. Character stress is indicative of man's interest in man rather than in the form of the creation or in the maintenance of decorum. From the beginnings of recorded literature, the Romantic temper is evident, whether it be in the pathetic situation of the Hebrew David, the tragic dilemma of Dido and Aeneas or the sad situation surrounding so many of the English popular ballads. It is this recurring interest in man's plight in life that causes him to become the focus of dramatic work from one era to the other. True, convention often takes precedence over feeling and human understanding, but soon within that period the matter of man in the world of drama assumes its rightful place. This is what happened with the initiators of the

Romantic School of Shakespearian criticism.

As we have seen, one extremely important aspect of this "new" attitude centered in the psychologizing of the dramatic characters, regardless of plot, text, history, stage tradition, or cultural context. It is, of course, of interest to the reader exactly how this method originated and why. Perhaps there is no one answer to that question, but some evidences can be surmised.

Mr. E. Walden wrote an important paragraph in 1895 concerning the philosophic movement in Shakespearian criticism: "This philosophic movement...was undoubtedly brought about by the wider critical movement of which Locke, Berkeley, and Hume are exponents."[44] It is quite evident that the philosophical treatises which these men wrote were certainly influential in literary circles as well as in socio-political groups. A brief statement about each writer perhaps will allow a better understanding of the precise point of influence each had upon Shakespearian criticism at this time.

John Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding is the first major presentation of the empirical theory of knowledge that was to play such an important role in British philosophy and in turn one that would influence greatly literary criticism. A discussion with some of his medical friends seems to have been the immediate occasion of the writing of the essay in which he attempted to work out a theory of knowledge in keeping with the developing scientific findings and outlook.[45] The question to which Locke addressed himself in his essay is that of inquiring into the origin, certainty, and extent of human knowledge, together with the grounds and degrees of belief, opinion, and assent. Locke hoped to discover where our ideas and our knowledge came from, what we

are capable of knowing about, how certain our knowledge actually is, and when we may be justified in holding opinions based on our ideas. It is the second book of the Essay which contains the positive argument of the empirical theory. Where does the mind obtain its ideas? From experience, Locke proclaimed. Experience comprises two sources of ideas, sensation and reflection. We receive many of our ideas when our sense organs are affected by external objects. We receive other ideas by reflection when we perceive the operations of our minds on the ideas which we have already received. These two sources, Locke insisted, give us all of the ideas that we possess.

It is to Locke that Edward Taylor in 1774 had direct recourse when he states:

> When we see Lear in distress, the mind is rather passive than active; it perceives and cannot avoid perceiving, as Mr. Locke justly observes, whilst the eyes and ears are open. Now if there is perception, some sensation must be produced in the mind. In the present instance the perception is that of grief, the sensation is that of pity.[46]

And similarly, from perception to sensation again:

> Murder on the stage gives us pleasure by rousing the mind from indolence and indifference; by exciting the most confortable ideas of our own present security-- this pleasure is further increased by our sensations of pity and compassion for the unhappy sufferers.[47]

David Hume, who held in his Treatise of Human Nature (1739) that all of our knowledge comes from impressions and ideas, with the impressions being more forceful and lively than the ideas, composed a particular literary criticism with his "Essay on Tragedy" in 1757. Here he developed a theory of the ruling passion and then explained

psychologically the effect of the fusing of opposite passions: "The subordinate movement is converted into the predominant and gives force to it, though of a different and even sometimes of a contrary nature."[48]

The stress on sensations as a form of knowledge can be seen also in George Berkeley's Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge (1710). His aims in writing this essay were to undermine skepticism and atheism by refuting materialism, to demonstrate God's existence and immateriality, to show the immortality of the soul, and to clarify current scientific and philosophical confusions. He writes:

> The objects of Knowledge are ideas of three kinds of sensations; ideas originating in the mind's own passions and activities and those of memory and imagination. Our immediate concern is with sensible objects. Perceived ideas require a perceiver, and this is spirit or mind, not itself an idea. Careful examination shows that thoughts and ideas have no existence external to minds; hence sensible things or physical objects do not exist apart from their perception in minds--their very esse is percipi; for them to be is to be perceived.[49]

There are perhaps others who should be projected into this picture of late eighteenth psychological criticism of Shakespeare. For example, Lord Kames was proclaimed by the Monthly Review in 1777 "one of the first adventurers" in psychological criticism. And Kames' direct follower was J. Priestley, whose Lectures on Oratory and Criticism appeared in 1777. Now whether Kames was the originator of this new criticism or not is by no means a matter of moment here, but the fact remains that his work Elements of Criticism (1762) had definite influence on the criticism of William Richardson, who refers to the book several times and "echoes it verbally over and over again."[50] It is quite evident to the reader by this time that William Richardson's criticism was tremendously important at this point in English literary history.

Edmund Burke is another writer who must be noted in this background of psychological criticism, for his Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757) also affected later Shakespearian criticism, notably that of Richardson. Burke's psychological tendencies appear in such section heads of his book as: "Novelty," "Pain and Pleasure," "Joy and Grief," "Of Beauty," "Sympathy," "Imitation and Ambition," "Terror," "Power," and "Privation."[51]

A remark from the Monthly Review in 1795 seems fitting to conclude this general discussion:

> It may not be altogether digressive in this place to remark that there is a passion of the mind,--the strength of which is usually commensurable with the progress of our knowledge of human nature,--which delights to observe the manners; to investigate the symptoms of character; to infer, from the occasional actions of an individual, the predisposing bent or state of his mind, or from a preconceived idea of his turn and disposition to infer his probable conduct in given circumstances, and to compare with these inferences the actual result; --a philosophic passion, which might be names of the ethic curiosity. Now it will be found to be the characteristic refinement of modern art chiefly to address this passion, and the characteristic excellence of Shakespeare habitually to satisfy it; in so much that those actions of his heroes, which do not at first surprise, and do not seem necessarily to result from the combined impulse of their habits and situation; nevertheless, when analyzed, are found to be the very actions which such men so circumstanced would unavoidably perform.[52]

No better summary of the method employed by the Romantic critics can be found. Herein we see the liberty taken by such critics in inferring what they will about "occasional actions" and in analyzing behavior from that which would appear to be natural and "unavoidably performed." Certainly in the passage one sees the reflection of our previous definition of Romantic criticism: the belief that man is by nature good; that his

taste is determined by individual feeling, rather than by reason; that his knowledge is acquired empirically; and that art in depicting man should be governed by a reliance upon sense-data. So it would appear that Shakespeare's characters taken in general satisfied the investigative psychologizing characteristic of the late eighteenth century.

Shelley but confirms in 1821 with his A Defense of Poetry this interpretation of criticism:

> The tragedies of the Athenian poets are a mirror in which the spectator beholds himself, under a thin guise of circumstance, stript of all but that ideal perfection and energy which every one feels to be the internal type of all that he loves, admires, and would become. The imagination is enlarged by a sympathy with pains and passions so mighty, that they distend in their conception the capacity of that by which they are conceived;...The drama, so long as it continues to express poetry, is a prismatic and many-sided mirror, which collects the brightest rays of human nature and divides and reproduces them from the simplicity of their elementary forms, and touches them with majesty and beauty and multiplies all that it reflects and endows it with the power of propagating its like wherever it may fall.[53]

Samuel Johnson states in his Preface to Shakespeare: "The players who in their editions divide our author's work into comedy, history, and tragedy seem not to have defined the three kinds by any very exact or definite ideas." This sentence perhaps should be studied, as Granville-Barker reminds us, by those who would divide periods and segregate men neatly into classical and Romantic groups.[54] It is at least a good reminder that such separation is not easy; nor is it always accurate, because certain lines of separation tend often to compromise and even overlap.

However, certain modes of analysis, certain new angles of vision, reveal different groups of slight and harmonizing touches, different

patterns hitherto only partially or dimly perceived. As Paul Siegel recalls, each age develops its own modes of analyses, and brings its own angles of vision.[55] In Shakespearian criticism, as in literary history, we can use the convenient labels "neo-classic," "Romantic," "Victorian," and "modern," if we so desire, for each period, with its own critical tenets and techniques, has seen Shakespeare differently. For the neo-classic critics, Shakespeare was an erratic genius whose plays were deficient in construction but who was unexcelled in the creation of scenes of passion faithful to human nature in general and appropriate to the dramatic character. For the Victorian critics, he was a moral philosophical who presented his changing view of life in plays which mirrored his emotional development. In modern times he is an artist using the dramatic conventions, the poetic resources, and the ideas of his time. For the Romantic critics he is these in part, but much more. Shakespeare to them becomes the infallible and godlike creator of characters living in a world of the imagination that operates by its own internal laws. In his own dramatic words, he becomes the "be-all and the end-all" for a large group of studious men, and it is that group and their criticisms with which we continue to be interested in this study.

NOTES

[1]L. C. Knights, The Sewanee Review, LXIII (1955), 236.

[2]Ibid.

[3]To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, First Quarto (1623).

[4]John Dryden, cited in The Literature of England, ed. George B. Woods, Homer A. Watt, George K. Anderson, and Karl J. Holzknecht (Chicago, 1958), p. 873. The Latin wording means as cypresses tower above low-bending shrubs.

[5]Alexander Pope, cited in Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare, ed. D. Nichol Smith (Glasgow, 1903), p. 48.

[6]Samuel Johnson, cited in Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare, p. 117.

[7]Cited in Robert W. Babcock, The Genesis of Shakespearian Idolatry (Chapel Hill, 1931), p. 45.

[8]Ibid., p. 52.

[9]An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare (London, 1810), p. xii.

[10]Cited in Babcock, p. 54.

[11]Harley Granville-Barker and G. B. Harrison, A Companion to Shakespeare Studies (New York, 1934), p. 296.

[12]F. W. Stokoe, German Influence in English Romantic Period (New York, 1963), p. 7.

[13]Ibid., p. 4.

[14]Matthew Arnold, Lectures and Essays in Criticism (Ann Arbor, 1962), ed. R. H. Super, p. 209.

[15]D. Nichol Smith, ed., Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare.

[16]Cited in The Persistence of Shakespeare Idolatry, ed. Herbert Schueller (Detroit, 1964), p. 87.

[17]Cited in Eighteenth Century Critical Essays, ed. Scott Elledge (Ithaca, New York, 1961), Vol. I, p. 838.

[18]Alfred Van Rensselaer Westfall, American Shakespearean Criticism, 1607-1865 (New York, 1939), p. 232.

[19]William Richardson, Boston Edition of Shakespeare (Boston, 1808), IX, p. 101.

[20]Essay found in The Charles Lamb Reader, ed. John W. Brown (New York, 1959), p. 562.

[21]Ibid., p. 564.

[22]William Shakespeare: A Handbook (New York, 1955), p. 220.

[23]"On Method," cited in The Coleridge Reader, ed. I. A. Richards (New York, 1950), p. 340.

[24]Ibid., p. 342.

[25]Ibid., p. 343.

[26]Lectures on the Literature of the Age of Elizabeth and Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (London, 1890), p. 10.

[27]Parrott, p. 222.

[28]"On the Knocking at the Gate," The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh, 1890), p. 393.

[29]Ibid., p. 391.

[30]Shakespeare's Heroines (London, 1897), p. 4.

[31]Ibid., p. 10.

[32]Cited in A History of Shakespearian Criticism, ed. Augustus Ralli (London, 1932), Vol. II, p. 3.

[33]Ibid., p. 4.

[34]M. C. Bradbrook, Elizabethan Stage Conditions (Hamden, Connecticut, 1962), p. 21.

[35]A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (London, 1904), p. 7.

[36]Ibid., p. 10.

[37]Ibid., p. 12.

[38]Ibid., p. 20.

[39]Ibid., p. 23.

[40] *Hamlet and Oedipus* (New York, 1910), p. 17.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Patrick Cruttwell, *The Hudson Review*, Winter, 1964-65, p. 491.

[44] Cited in *Shakespearian Criticism, Textual and Literary from Dryden to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, 1895, p. 19.

[45] Babcock, p. 155.

[46] Cited in Babcock, p. 155.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Cited in *Eighteenth Century Critical Essays*, p. 804.

[49] Ibid., p. 805.

[50] Babcock, p. 156.

[51] Cited in Babcock, p. 165.

[52] Ibid., p. 166.

[53] *The Reader's Shelley*, ed. Carl H. Grabo (New York, 1942), p. 488.

[54] *A Companion to Shakespeare* (New York, 1934), p. 294.

[55] "Introduction," *His Infinite Variety* (New York, 1964), p. 4.

CHAPTER II

HAMLET

It has been established in the introductory chapter of this study that a specific school of Shakespearian dramatic criticism arose, later to be called the Romantic School. It has been noted that a chief trait of this school is the stress placed upon the characterization in the Shakespearian drama. It is an attempt to treat the characters intuitively as living persons, inferring what their motivations and actions might be, rather than to treat them as dramatis personae only. One of the earliest of such specific treatments is that of Hamlet as found in William Richardson's Additional Observations: Essays on Shakespeare's Dramatic Characters, where he comments on Hamlet, III, iii, 73: "Now might I do it pat, now he is praying:"

> You ask me why he did not kill the Usurper? And I answer because he was at that instant irresolute. This irresolution arose from the inherent principles of his constitution, and is to be accounted natural; it arose from virtuous, or at least from amiable, sensibility, and therefore cannot be blamed. His sense of justice, or his feelings of tenderness, in a moment when his violent emotions were not excited, overcome his resentment.[1]

Richardson then points out that the reasons given by Hamlet himself to account for his lack of action are not the true ones, as there is nothing in his character to justify "such savage enormity."[2] In adopting this method of interpretation Richardson is one of the earliest

critics to disregard the text. He is implying here that Hamlet did not know what he was saying. Here we have a fair illustration of Richardson's metaphysical approach, of an early attempt at Romantic critical method, and certainly the introduction to that center of Romantic criticism of this play, the irresolution or delay. When we consider the limitations of the artificial philosophy which Richardson accepts and attempts to apply, we may feel that his solution of an absorbing difficulty is as near to the truth as we might expect.[3] This "irresolution" in Hamlet Richardson traces to the weakness of his character which makes him unable to decide upon a course of action when confronted by conflicting emotions. According to this early critic, Hamlet's sense of justice and his tenderness for the Queen conflict sharply with his resentment against Claudius, thus promoting the inescapable delay of action. Richardson thus initiates one of the Romantic positions concerning the irresolution of Hamlet, all of which inhibits Hamlet's immediate action. Richardson's idea of Hamlet's inherent weakness which will not allow him to bear the burden allotted him anticipates the thinking of Mackenzie, Goethe, and Hudson, among others.

Richardson opened the way for lengthy consideration of Hamlet's problem; others were to continue the commentary. Perhaps the most outstanding English critic of the eighteenth century who agrees basically with Richardson and other pre-Romantics regarding Hamlet as a reflective individual irresolute because of his temperament is Henry Mackenzie, known especially for his novel _The Man of Feeling_. He reported in _The Mirror_, No. 99, Tuesday, April 18, 1780, that Shakespeare fully understood Hamlet's sensibility and "delicacy of feeling," therefore placing Hamlet in situations that most adequately give occasion to, and call out,

the characteristics he wishes to be emphasized.[4] Mackenzie feels that delay is not only something natural for Hamlet, considering his character and personality, but also the source of Hamlet's dramatic strength. Mackenzie writes:

> If we knew what he was going to do, our interest would be in the event, not in the character. If he were a determined man, deciding upon a course of action and allowing nothing to interfere with it until his purpose was accomplished, his virtues would be less impressive.[5]

He thinks that Hamlet's difficulties increase his misery, but that they also increase his moral and spiritual greatness. He feels that the more perfect characters of other tragedies never move us as Hamlet does because our sympathy for his distress and our interest in his conduct are deeply stirred. Mackenzie quotes Horatio's lines, "Now cracks a noble heart," as an example to prove his point, for, he generalizes, at the sound of this remark we forget villainy, guilt, crime, everything in sympathetic contemplation of Hamlet's troubles.[6]

The nineteenth century saw the rise of the formal school of Romanticism with centralization in German criticism. One of the master products of that school and of that time was Johann W. von Goethe. Goethe too feels that Hamlet's delay is caused by his not being able to bear the burden of the task. In fact, it is his words spoken through "Wilhelm Meister's Critique" which become known for this particular stand. Goethe allows his character Wilhelm Meister to begin his critique by having him notice the change in events at Elsinore which affect Hamlet greatly.

> Ambition and the love of rule are not the passions that inspire him. As a king's son he would have been contented; but now he is first constrained to

> consider the difference which separates a sovereign from a subject.[7]

Since the crown was not hereditary, Hamlet was not actually destined to the throne, but his hopes of succession were naturally great. Now he finds himself in a sense a servant, not a lord, a kind of stranger in the scene of kingly inheritance. "The second stroke that came upon him wounded deeper, bowed still more." This was the marriage of his mother to his uncle. He not only loses the crown, but also his mother. Not necessarily reflective or sorrowful by nature, reflection and sorrow have however become for Hamlet a heavy obligation. This is shown, Goethe reminds the reader, from the beginning when he meets the ghost. After the delivery of the message, Hamlet is not panting for vengeance. He is not seen rejoicing to be called upon to punish the uncle as usurper. Trouble has come and astonishment takes hold the solitary young man. Goethe feels that Hamlet's words,

> 'The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right,'

show the key to his whole procedure. Goethe thinks that this is Shakespeare's way of showing a man who has a great action laid upon his soul which is unfit for such performance. He uses this comparison: "There is an oak-tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom; the roots expand, the jar is shivered."[8]

> A lovely, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden it cannot bear and must cast away. All duties are hold for him: the present is too hard. Impossibilities have been required of him,--not in themselves impossibilities, but such for him. He

> winds and turns, and torments himself; he advances and recoils; is ever put in mind, ever puts himself in mind, at last does all but lose his purpose from his thoughts, yet still without recovering his peace of mind.[9]

H. N. Hudson, a nineteenth-century American minister, also believes that the Ghost's call for revenge is a call too strong for Hamlet's character. Hamlet evidently questions the morality of such a demand, Hudson feels. How shall he justify such a deed to the world? How shall he vindicate himself from such a crime as he is accusing another of? He must be careful or he will be setting an example, not of justice, but of murder.

> He thinks he ought to do the thing, resolves that he will do it, blames himself for not doing it; still an unspoken law, deeper and stronger than conviction, withholds him.[10]

Hudson suggests that Hamlet's problem is that his conscience is urging from all directions. His strength of conscience keeps him from killing the King (a virtue in itself) and it also keeps demanding justice, so much so that his conscience is divided. Hudson feels, however, that Hamlet does not fail as a person just because of this conflict; rather, he succeeds morally at the cost of his own life. "He falls a martyr to his own rectitude and elevation of soul."[11]

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, writing in the twentieth century, says almost identically the same thing about Hamlet's problem as H. N. Hudson had said some fifty years before. Quiller-Couch sees Hamlet's delay a result of his quality of mind which is void of the ingredient which accomplishes purpose. He points to Hamlet's immediate reaction to the message of the Ghost. He recalls, as did Hudson, that Hamlet was

expected to become the next king, and the loss of this kind of glory and power was great, but the knowledge of the "murdering" uncle and his marriage to Hamlet's mother was just too much for the young man. What is the effect? Is it Hamlet's immediate pursuit of revenge? No, Quiller-Couch reminds us; rather, endless reasoning and hesitating; constant urging and solicitation of the mind to act; ceaseless reproaches of himself for sloth and negligence, while the energy needed to perform the needed action slips away quietly.

> Shakespeare wishes to impress on us the truth that action is the chief end of existence--that no faculties of intellect, however brilliant, can be considered valuable, or indeed otherwise than as misfortunes, if they withdraw us from, or render us repugnant to, action, and lead us to think and think of doing, until the time has elapsed when we can do anything effectually. In enforcing this moral truth Shakespeare has shown the fullness and force of his powers: all that is amiable and excellent in nature is combined in Hamlet, with the exception of one quality. He is a man living in meditation, called upon by every human motive and divine, but the great object of his life is defeated by continually resolving to do, yet doing nothing but resolve.[12]

The Romantic critics cited above emphasize an inherent weakness in Hamlet, encouraged by environmental forces, that promotes the delay in action. Others, maintaining a definite Romantic interpretation which stresses the philosophical cast of Hamlet's mind, believe that Hamlet's entire nature prevents the immediate revenge he has been called upon to carry out. These Romantic critics view Hamlet's ruling passion as being thought, not action, and they suggest that he, under any set of circumstances, would not have been able to fulfill the demand of the Ghost.

William Hazlitt, writing in the nineteenth century, sees Hamlet's delay as an attempt to rationalize the situation. Typical of most

worshippers of Shakespeare, Hazlitt thinks Shakespeare's character Hamlet a pure effusion of genius. He considers Hamlet a person of refined thought and sentiment, not one of great strength of will or even of passion. In fact, to Hazlitt Hamlet is perhaps incapable of deliberate action and is only hurried into extremities on the spur of the occasion when he has no time to reflect, as in the scene when he kills Polonius. At other times, according to Hazlitt, when he is most bound to act, he remains puzzled, undecided, and sceptical; dallies with his purposes till the occasion is lost, and always finds some pretense to relapse into indolence and thoughtfulness again. It is evidently for this reason that he refuses to kill the King when he is at his prayers, and by a refinement in malice defers his revenge to some more fatal opportunity.[13] Hazlitt furthers the picture of Hamlet's rationalization by adding:

> He is the prince of philosophical speculators, and because he cannot have his revenge perfect, he misses it altogether. So he scruples to trust the suggestions of the Ghost, contrives the scene of the play to have surer proof, and then rests satisfied with this confirmation of his suspicions, instead of acting upon them. Notice his comment on himself:
>
> > 'How all occasions do inform against me and spur my dull revenge.'
>
> Still he does nothing and this speculation on his own infirmity only affords him another occasion for indulging it. His ruling passion is to think, not to act.[14]

An American critic of Hazlitt's time, James Russell Lowell, agrees with Hazlitt on the matter of the delay, and adds that Hamlet could not possibly act because he knew too much. He could see the advantages of any kind of action, and the crossroads were too great for him.

> Men of his [Hamlet's] type are forever analyzing their own emotions and motives. They cannot do anything because they always see two ways of doing it. They cannot determine on any course of action because they are always, as it were, standing at the cross-roads and see too well the disadvantage of every one of them. It is not that they are incapable of resolve, but somehow the band between the motive power and the operative faculties is relaxed and loose. The engine works but the machinery it should drive stands still.[15]

Here we have an excellent example of the Romantic method of diregarding text, stage tradition, and history. Lowell is reading into the play what all men like Hamlet might possibly be expected to do.

This view is generally held also by the most prolific Shakespearian critic of the nineteenth century, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. When one reviews Coleridge's great concern with epistemology and psychology, he finds it not unusual at all for this critic to approach Hamlet's indecision from the point of view of Shakespeare's interest in mental philosophy. Coleridge feels that one cannot fully appreciate or understand Hamlet unless he reflects on the constitution of his own mind. Coleridge stresses the balance that should be constantly maintained in the healthy processes of the mind between the impressions from outward objects and the inward operations of the intellect. He stressed this concept because of the result of an overbalance in the contemplative faculty: man becomes a creature of mere meditation and loses his natural power of action. According to Coleridge, Shakespeare seems to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses, and our meditation on the working of our minds, but in Hamlet this balance is disturbed. Hamlet's thoughts and the images of his fancy are far more vivid than his actual perceptions, and his very perceptions, instantly passing through the medium of his

contemplations, acquire, as they pass, "a form and a colour not naturally their own."[16]

Coleridge uses for his argument the three best-known soliloquies of Hamlet and the three used most often by other Romantics in their criticisms. The first is the soliloquy found in Act II, ii, 575-634, where Hamlet is comparing the great ability of the actor in presenting the role of Hecuba with his seeming inability to do anything to accomplish his purpose. He begins to question his bravery:

> Ay, so God buy ye.--Now I am alone.
> O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
> Is it not monstrous that this player here,
> But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
> Could force his soul so to his own conceit
> That from her working all his visage wann'd,
> Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect
> A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
> With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!
> For Hecuba!
> What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
> That he should weep for her? What would he do,
> Had he the motive and the cue for passion
> That I have? He would drown the stage with tears
> And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
> Make mad the guilty and appall the free,
> Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
> The very faculty of eyes and ears.
> Yet I,
> A dull and muddy-nettled rascal, peak
> Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
> And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
> Upon whose property and most dear life
> A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?
> Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,
> Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face,
> Tweaks me by th' nose, gives me the lie i' th' throat
> As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?
> Ha!
> 'Swounds, I should take it; for it cannot be
> But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall
> To make oppression bitter, or ere this
> I should ha' fatted all the region kites
> With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!
> Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
> O, vengeance!

> Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
> That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
> Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
> Must like a whore, unpack my heart with words,
> And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,
> A scullion! . . .

The next soliloquy used by Coleridge, as well as by others, for arguing the philosophical, contemplative young hero is the most quoted of all lines from this play. Here Hamlet seems to be pondering the question of suicide. The soliloquy is found in Act III, i, 56-89:

> To be, or not to be; that is the question.
> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them. To die; to sleep;
> No more; and by a sleep to say we end
> The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
> That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wish'd. To die; to sleep;--
> To sleep? Perchance to dream! Ay, there's the rub;
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
> When we have shuffl'd off this mortal coil,
> Must give us pause. There's the respect
> That makes calamity of so long life.
> For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
> The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
> The insolence of office, and the spurns
> That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
> When he himself might his quietus make
> With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
> To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
> But that the dread of something after death,
> The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
> No traveller returns, puzzles the will
> And makes us rather bear those ills we have
> Than fly to others that we know not of?
> Thus conscience does makes cowards of us all:
> And thus the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er
> With the pale cast of thought,
> And enterprises of great pith and moment
> With this regard their currents turn awry,
> And lose the name of action....

And the third is found in Act IV, iv, 31-66, where Hamlet compares

his inaction with young Fortinbras, who is willing to risk his life and everything he has for a little piece of ground, something Hamlet considers worthless in itself. If anything should prick him on to fulfill his duty, Hamlet considers, it certainly should be the adventure of Fortinbras and the twenty thousand men who face possible death:

> . . .
> How all occasions do inform against me,
> And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
> If his chief good and market of his time
> Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
> Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and god-like reason
> To fust in us unus'd. Now, whether it be
> Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
> Of thinking too precisely on th' event,--
> A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom
> And ever three parts coward,--I do not know
> Why yet I live to say, "This thing's to do,"
> Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
> To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me;
> Witness this army of such mass and charge
> Led by a delicate and tender prince,
> Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
> Makes mouths at the invisible event,
> Exposing what is mortal and unsure
> To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
> Even for an egg-shell. 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. How stand I then,
> That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
> Excitements of my reason and my blood,
> And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
> The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
> That for a fantasy and trick of fame
> Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
> Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
> Which is not tomb enough and continent
> To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
> My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

Hence, Hamlet exhibits great intellectual activity; he is brave and careless of death; but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of

resolve. The result of the overbalance has occurred:

> The effect of this overbalance of the imaginative power is illustrated in the everlasting broodings and superfluous activities of Hamlet's mind, which is constantly occupied with the world within, and abstracted from the world without. It is the nature of thought to be indefinite...and his soliloquies spring from that craving after the indefinite which most easily besets men of genius.[17]

Certain twentieth-century critics hold the same idea of Hamlet's basic problem as Hazlitt, Lowell, and Coleridge. W. M. Courthope, writing in London in 1903, comments that Shakespeare's Hamlet is the dramatic example of irresolution. The duty of resolute action was imposed on the young prince, but he only recognizes that he <u>ought</u> to act. Courthope uses the third soliloquy cited above ("How all occasions do inform against me...") for his chief evidence. Why, then, Courthope ponders, does such a thinker as shown in this soliloquy pause? He has faced the problem squarely and honestly at this point. The answer lies in Hamlet's contemplative element that so strongly overbalances the active, that his passions and conscience fail to afford an adequate stimulus to his will. There are times when Hamlet can act and act quickly. Several instances can be found in the play: for example, when he convinces his mother that he is not mad, and when he alters the King's letters. But, he is not able to persevere in his action. The key lies in his intellect. "Many intellectual influences combine to restrain him from the execution of the purpose to which his intellect directs him."[18] His skeptical analysis is constantly suggesting to him the unreality of things, his vivid imagination produces a fear of the unseen, and an inward fear that his senses may have betrayed him arises. All of these evidences of skepticism furnish him with a cause for

inaction and delay.

C. E. Vaughan, continuing in this tradition, writes in 1908 that Shakespeare not only adds characters that grow in the course of drama, but he also adds reflection to the more active energies. The soliloquies show this new force best of all, especially the soliloquies of Hamlet: "Here for a moment the action is suspended, nay forgotten."[19] The hero has taken the resolution on which his subsequent action, or inaction, is absolutely to depend.

> He has designed the test which is to put the guilt or innocence of his enemy to the proof. Now all is forgotten. He enters entirely wrapt up in other thoughts. 'To be, or not to be?'--that is the question that now absorbs every energy of his soul.[20]

This is a mood that runs to the very end of the tragedy, suggests Vaughan. It is the inner, not the outer life of Hamlet. It is his reflection, rather than the deed, his inaction, rather than the action, which is the true theme of this drama.

A fairly recent critic, T. M. Parrott, agrees in essence with Courthope and Vaughan. To him, Hamlet is perhaps the most complex character that Shakespeare ever drew. He is a prince, a courtier, a soldier, a scholar, a disillusioned idealist, and a contemplative rather than an active man.

> It is worth noting that about 1600 Shakespeare had turned away from such men of action as Bolingbroke and Prince Hal and was interesting himself in such characters as the melancholy Jacque, the Pessimistic Duke from _Measure for Measure_, and the worldly wise Ulysses.[21]

Hamlet is Shakespeare's supreme creation to Parrott because he is a combination of all these. It is this creation that solves the dramatic

problem that confronts Hamlet. "It is because Hamlet is what he is that he delays his revenge."[22] Shakespeare created a man whose very nature prevents such immediate action as demanded.

A third Romantic approach to Hamlet's delay is witnessed in the criticism of writers like Edward Dowden, Eduoard Sievers, A. C. Bradley, J. M. Murray, Peter Alexander, Max Plowman, and Donald Stauffer. These critics too maintain the basic Romantic position that Hamlet is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." However, they hold that the real reason for this is not that he is especially reflective by nature, or at least not that alone, and not that he possesses some inherent weakness in itself, but that he suffers a tremendous moral shock when he learns of the turn of events at Elsinore.

Edward Dowden, speaking in terms of the one principle that all Romantics recognize, regardless of their varying viewpoints on specific matters, believes that the vital heart of this tragedy is not an idea, not a social revolution, not a political intrigue but Hamlet as an individual. He comes forth, says Dowden, "A wonderful creation, out of Shakspere's profound sympathy for an individual soul and a personal life."[23] Dowden agrees with Goethe's decision that Hamlet is asked to do something he is unfit for. Yet Dowden believes there is more to the cause of the delay on Hamlet's part. He thinks Goethe failed to recognize that Hamlet's other problem lay outside himself, that he, like Romeo, found the outer world the destroyer of order and the ruler of chaos.

> Hamlet is called upon to assist moral order in a world of moral confusion and obscurity. He has not an open plain on which to fight his battle; but a place dangerous and misleading with dim and winding ways....In the wide-spreading waste of corruption

> which lies around him, he is tempted to understand and detest things rather than accomplish some limited practical service. In the unweeded garden of the world, why should he task his life to uproot a single weed?[24]

Dowden agrees that Hamlet's power of acting was crippled by his habit of meditation, and he agrees with Coleridge that in Hamlet one sees a person with great intellectual activity and an aversion to real action. But Dowden thinks Hamlet is not merely intellectual; he is emotional, too: "His malady is as deep-seated in his sensibilities and in his heart as it is in the brain."[25] His thoughts are impregnated with feeling. His craving, sensitive heart must not be forgotten in a thorough analysis.

Eduoard Sievers expresses much the same idea in his book, Character of Shakespeare's Work. According to Sievers, writing in 1866, Hamlet succumbs and loses his belief in life and in goodness because he is made suddenly aware of life's dark background. He is thus deterred from his action, for a man cannot act for others and for all unless he is essentially sound. Hamlet's strivings are connected with this world; it is in life that he seeks his ideal, in the moral relations of men, in the supremacy of the moral spirit and in the moral sense of the individual.

> He represents man's spirit conscious of its divine capacity; and this makes him dare to set himself above the world and measure it by his subjective standard. He is champion of the higher moral demands made on life by man's spirit. His struggle is so high that everything personal is relegated to the background of his general moral interests. It is a sign of a deep idealistic nature to aim at the entire surrender of the individual self.[26]

Sievers concludes that the criticism which confines itself to the idea of a great deed hanging heavy on his soul is not sufficient. It is the

moral shock of his mother's remarriage that causes his melancholy and makes him even think of suicide.

One of the most concentrated efforts at diagnosing Hamlet's troubles issued in the early twentieth century from the pen of A. C. Bradley. In fact, Bradley's criticism for a time was considered to be so very comprehensive that nothing was left to be said about Shakespeare's tragic characters. Being basically a Romantic critic, at least from the standpoint of his concern for the characters as real people, Bradley too is concerned with the psychological nature of Hamlet, but he disagrees in part with other Romantic critics regarding Hamlet's procrastination. He feels, for example, that Coleridge's view is fatally untrue, for it implies that Hamlet's procrastination was the normal response of an over-speculative nature confronted with a difficult practical problem.[27] Bradley interprets Coleridge's criticism as indicative of a naturalness behind Hamlet's procrastination. Bradley reminds the reader, however, that under conditions of a peculiar kind, Hamlet's reflectiveness certainly might prove dangerous to him, and his genius might even become his doom. And it seems that this is exactly what happened in the play. Hamlet evidently experienced a great moral shock which caused him to sink into melancholy because no possible action was available immediately. His imaginative and generalizing mind extended the effects of this shock through his whole being and mental world. The state of melancholy being thus deepened and fixed, a sudden demand for difficult and decisive action in this matter connected with the melancholy arose and produced a state which had as one of its symptoms an endless and futile mental dissection of the required deed.[28] Bradley believes, therefore, that Hamlet's melancholy accounts for his inaction. He

thinks that the immediate cause of the delay is simply that his habitual feeling is one of disgust at life and everything in it, himself included, an attitude brought on by the moral shock experienced upon learning of recent events. Such a state of feeling is inevitably adverse to any kind of decided action. In such a state the body is inert, the mind indifferent, or worse, its response is "it does not matter, it is not worthwhile, it is not good."[29]

Bradley feels that even though he disagrees in part with Coleridge, his idea of melancholy as the cause of the delay in Hamlet is perfectly consistent with that "incessant dissection of the task assigned" of which the Coleridge theory makes so much. Bradley comments:

> For those endless questions, 'Was I deceived by the Ghost? How am I to do the deed? When? Where? What will be the consequence of attempting--success, my death, utter misunderstanding, mere mischief to the State? Can it be right to do it, or noble to kill a defenceless man? What is the good of doing it in such a world as this?--all this and whatever else passed in a sickening round through Hamlet's mind, was not the healthy and right deliberation of a man with such a task but otiose thinking hardly deserving the name of thought, an unconscious weaving of pretexts for inaction, aimless tossings on a sick bed, symptoms of melancholy which only increased it by deepening selfcontempt.[30]

Several more recent critics argue as Bradley does that the moral shock lies at the root of Hamlet's problem. J. M. Murray, writing in 1936, says that the appearance of the Ghost and the message it delivers presented Hamlet with such startling news that his moral nature was affected greatly. The Ghost fulfills its task of revealing the murder, commanding revenge (both of which are functions in the old revenge play), and in this case of effecting a fear in Hamlet's soul which prevents him from taking revenge immediately, a fear of death. The moral shock of

learning the truth about the death of his father and of the marriage of his mother causes his reflective nature to take control and now his thoughts are permeated with death.[31]

> Only two non-accidental causes could make him hesitate. One of these is precisely that sudden new fear of 'something after death' which has invaded him; the other, belonging to a different, deeper and more religious order of motives--an obedience to the supreme demand of Christ: 'Resist not evil.'[32]

Murray sees, however, the former motive of hesitation as having the tremendous potency in the play. He suggests that twentieth-century beings have become immune from the terror of the after-life; in effect our ideas of death and its consequences have changed considerably since the time of Shakespeare and Hamlet. To us Hamlet's remarks about death are simple speculations--we fail to see the potency in them. They do not "shake our disposition, with thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls."

> We have indeed to wrench our minds side ways if we are to admit that it may really have done this to Hamlet. Our mistake is not that we psychologize Hamlet--Shakespeare did that very fully and splendidly--but that we fit him to the pattern of our modern psychology. There is no reason to suppose that it fits him.[33]

Since Hamlet's victory lies in his conquering the fear of the after-life, the reader must be aware of the potency of his fear. He continues to be brave, but he has to be brave in a different way now; he continues to act, but now sometimes in momentary self-forgetfulness. The way in which Hamlet's moral nature is touched by events in the play or surrounding it is seen in no better way than near the end when he finally does carry out the revenge demanded. Murray feels, however, that it is Hamlet's instant reaction to the final act of loathsome treachery

carried out by the King.[34] Hamlet kills the King as much for his corruption of Laertes as for his treachery towards Hamlet's self. Thus and only thus could Hamlet have ever killed the King at all. Hamlet's moral questing is now satisfied, and he conquers by waiting.

Peter Alexander points to Hamlet's musing on the "soul of sensibility in the heart of man" as his way of showing amazement at the lack of correspondence between the trivial nature of the outward stimulus and the intensity of the response within.[35] Alexander thinks that critics would have us believe that Hamlet's obsession is itself about nothing. To them, Alexander muses, Hamlet's task is simple--driving a sword through a defenceless enemy. They fail to understand the moral conflict raging in Hamlet's soul. The Ghost's knowledge has given Hamlet purpose, but the purpose is blunted by natural reluctance in a man of proved nerve, courage, and resolution. Hamlet cannot allow himself to take advantage of a helpless man by striking the first blow.

> Hamlet's adversary must strike the first blow. Not that Hamlet can admit to himself, even for a moment, that this is what holds his hand. So unconscious is he of any virtue in this noble compunction that he cannot find words shameful enough to characterize it or blasphemous enough to excuse it.[36]

Alexander believes it one of the supreme achievements of Shakespeare's art that he is able to show us here such a reflective mind in its self-forgetfulness and humility. To Alexander, this is the secret of the life-like quality of the character.

> The play presents us with a type of eternal struggle of man's moral consciousness. Shakespeare has created an action that brings before us a perfection of courage, intellect, and heart, 'the instinctive wisdom of antiquity and her heroic passions uniting,' in the soul of the hero, 'with the meditative wisdom of later

> ages'--a perfection so difficult of realization as to place its creator among the supreme artists of the world; and yet a perfection so central to human nature, that the world will always agree to wear him in its heart of hearts.[37]

What Mr. Alexander implies about the moral shock of Hamlet concerning affairs in the state of Denmark, Max Plowman states explicitly. Mr. Plowman thinks that regarding Hamlet as a psychological study is accurate but in itself not sufficient. In other words, it is insufficient to see Hamlet as one who merely delays or vacillates. The tragedy cannot be realized fully unless one understands the depth of Hamlet's reason for delay.[38] To Plowman, hesitancy itself is nothing--a mere lapse in action. But when we discover the real meaning for the hesitancy, then we meet the profoundest problems of life. And the real meaning, the cause of Hamlet's inaction, actually lies outside the play's action, for certain events occurred before the play begins and it is these events which cause Hamlet's questionable behavior. The first of these events was the cause of Old Hamlet's death. Young Hamlet experienced the shock of it all by himself--not just the death either, but also the fact that the world moves on without greatly noticing personal tragedy. In mild opposition to Murray, Plowman does not feel that the question of survival of death is important at all in understanding Hamlet's delay.[39] In fact, he writes, everybody seems to take survival for granted. It is Hamlet's love for his father and the common universal experience of personal loss that cause Hamlet's musing over death. It causes him to question the permanence or impermanence of the object of his love, and eventually to question even his own condition.

> In the father's death, Hamlet sees the hollowness of human life epitomized. The fact that a great man's

> memory can thus pass to oblivion symbolises for him the heartless triviality of life. And yet, that it can be as trivial as it appears is incredible to him; he simply cannot believe that the value his father represented can be expunged from life as if it had not been. To his rich sensibility this is unbelievable. But the evidence stares him in the face; and it is this which leads him to question the entire value of life.[40]

The second event was his mother's conduct, which intensified what was already active. The Queen has evidently refused to bow to sorrow. She who according to the laws of love should weep the most, weeps not at all. Hamlet is shocked at the person whom he expected most to show affinity. To Hamlet, his mother is exhibiting a certain hardness of the heart that strikes his to the core, and for that it is difficult for him to forgive her.

> The tragedy is the tragedy of noble man living in a debased and ignoble society. Hamlet is self-conscious man encompassed by a world of violence that demands of him the traditional response of violence. The play is the representation of a state of Being. Hamlet is self-conscious man in an unconscious world. He therefore stands for what is enduring in the midst of what is ephemeral. And because he is made in the image of what is eternal and unchanging--because 'To be' is his whole function--he partakes of the nature of Eternity.[41]

Donald Stauffer, in his book which views the moral nature of Shakespeare's plays, takes a similar position. He quotes from the play reminding the reader of Hamlet's mental turmoil.[42] "O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell," says Hamlet, "and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams." But, as Stauffer reminds us, Denmark now is a prison and Hamlet's every thought toward "infinite space" is destroyed by people or events that surround him. His suspicions of Claudius are confirmed by the Ghost; Ophelia's normal

affection for him has changed to fright and silence; his school fellows betray him; later Laertes does likewise; and perhaps most importantly of all, his mother's conduct has caused Hamlet to think of her not as human but as beast. In fact, Stauffer queries, who in the play except possibly Horatio does not add to Hamlet's nightmare?

In response to this, what should be the response of the hero, his moral attitude? Perhaps in part he is expected to show a certain degree of stoicism--admit, accept, endure. "The heart breaks, while one keeps silence."[43] It is not generally true that thought weakens resolution or that consciousness produces cowards. "But it is true for Hamlet, because his lack of faith makes his thought pale and sickly. He cannot act positively and rationally, because his trust is dead and his reason leads him only to despair."[44] The shock has been too great for Hamlet. To him a little blotch of evil can infect the world with darkness, and the action he expends takes the form of evil. His only possible assuagement now in personal destruction.

It appears then that a basic Romantic position regarding Hamlet's delay has been and continues to be held with some sense of validity by a great number of Shakespearian critics, regardless of the specific approach taken by the individual writer. However, certain critics of the past and the present do not agree with the Romantics or those showing Romantic tendencies. They prefer to examine Hamlet's so-called delay in terms of historical setting. They almost unanimously regard Hamlet, not as a man of true delay, but of action. If Hamlet seems to delay, it is because he has a definite purpose in mind. He seeks method and device.

One specific approach of such criticism is to view the "delay" as a

necessary part of the drama inherited from the older play upon which _Hamlet_ is based. The two most vociferous critics who argue this position are J. M. Robertson and E. E. Stoll, both rather recent writers. Robertson argues that the fundamental problem of _Hamlet_ criticism is to explain the difficulties of the play as these converge on Hamlet's delay.[45] These difficulties cannot be reconciled by an aesthetic theory of an inner consistency in the play or in Hamlet's character. Only a scientific, genetic account of the play, a relating of the play to its immediate sources, can clarify _Hamlet_. "The history of the play," Robertson writes, "is thus vital to the comprehension of it."[46]

Part of Robertson's thesis is that Shakespeare's _Hamlet_ was based upon an earlier _Hamlet_ by Thomas Kyd and that the basic story was so popular that Shakespeare could not possibly change the action. Robertson supports this part of this thesis by citing verbal parallels between _The Spanish Tragedy_ and the First Quarto of _Hamlet_ (1603) and by comparing this First Quarto with the German version of _Hamlet_, _Der bestrafte Brudermord_ (1710). The second part of Robertson's explanation of Shakespeare's _Hamlet_ is that in the Second Quarto (1604-5) and in the final version Shakespeare added entirely new elements to the older material by Kyd. These include the infusion of pessimism and the transfiguration of the characters:

> Utter sickness of heart, revealing itself in pessimism, is again and again dramatically obtruded as if to set us feeling that for a heart so crushed (Hamlet's) revenge is not a remedy. And this implicit pessimism is Shakespeare's personal contribution: his verdict on the situation set out by the play.[47]

As for the transfiguration of the characters, Robertson feels that what Shakespeare did

> remains a miracle of dramatic imagination. In the place of one of the early and crude creations of Kyd, vigorous without verisimilitude, outside of refined sympathy, he has projected a personality which from the first line sets all our sympathies in a quick vibration, and so holds our minds and hearts that even the hero's cruelties cannot alienate them. The triumph is achieved by sheer intensity of presentment, absolute lifelikeness of utterance, a thrilling and convincing rightness of phrase, and of feeling where wrong feeling is not part of the irremovable material.[48]

Hamlet has made good; this is enough. "But the critical intellect too has its sights: its concern is simply conceptual truth"; and the undeniable conceptual truth, Robertson concludes, is that Shakespeare could not do what no man could do: render Kyd's archaic plot consistent with his own transfiguration of the characters.

> And the ultimate fact is that Shakespeare could not make a psychologically or otherwise consistent play out of a plot which retained a strictly barbaric action while the hero was transformed into a super-subtle Elizabethan.[49]

Robertson's argument has received some sharp criticism from G. I. Duthie in his book The Bad Quarto of Hamlet. According to Duthie,

> The First Quarto is a memorial reconstruction of the full text, made for provincial performance by the actor who played Marcellus and perhaps Lucianus.... When the actor's memory failed he wrote blank verse of his own made up of echoes from the full text and from other plays; occasionally he drew on the phraseology and other characteristics of the Ur-Hamlet, deriving from that source the names Corambie and Montano. Der bestrafte Brudermord was derived from a further memorial reconstruction made for a continental tour by a company that included one or two who had acted the Hamlet-text used for the First Quarto: the reporters in this instance made some fresh use of the Ur-Hamlet.[50]

Clifford Leech provides some interesting support for Duthie's view:

> These views are, of course, speculative, but Duthie has in many instances provided plausible demonstrations of the First Quarto reporter's patch-work. In any event, his theories have yet to be challenged.[51]

E. E. Stoll repudiates the Romantic conception of Hamlet on almost every issue. "The right and proper critical method," says Stoll, "is to seek Shakespeare's intention in writing it: to compare his techniques, constructions, situations, characters, and sentiments with other plays contemporary with Hamlet."[52] Stoll's hypothesis is that Hamlet is in the tradition of revenge tragedy or heroic romance, a drama of intrigue, blood, and fate--a tradition, derived from Seneca and sponsored in the Renaissance especially by Kyd, in which the hero remains ideal (with no defect) throughout the play and attains his appointed revenge. In his opinion, Hamlet

> dies young, dies in the accent of his triumph, dies as it must seem to others, with all this blood on his head. This is his triple tragedy, as Shakespeare, I think, intended it,--a simpler and nobler, possibly less interesting and piquant conception than the usual one, though one not less appealing. To some it may even be more interesting because it seems to be more nearly what Shakespeare intended--more like him and his age.[53]

Stoll feels that Shakespeare knew that in writing his play he could not tamper with the plot of the old Ur-Hamlet; he could change only the form--the words and sentiments. So, perforce, he retained the Kyd plot with the inherent weakness of the delay, his major transmutation being that of a slurring over of the delay. According to Stoll, he was forced to do this so as not to reflect on his hero because

> even if Shakespeare had desired it, he could scarcely, on the contemporary stage, have introduced so fundamental an innovation as in the place of a popular

> heroic revenger, a procrastinator, lost in thought and weak of will.[54]

Stoll sums up Shakespeare's modification of Kyd's Hamlet:

> When Shakespeare rewrote for his company Thomas Kyd's Senecan melodrama, now lost, he was, as usual, interested in the tragedy as a whole, not in a psychology; he strengthened structure, sharpened the suspense, and in particular pitted against the hero a king that was more nearly and worthily a match for him. The difficulty was the hero's delay, which was unavoidable. The dramatist could not (if he would) change the popular old story; the capital deed must, as in all other great revenge tragedies, ancient or modern, come at the end.[55]

Stoll does not deny that Hamlet "delays." What he denies is that this signifies psychological inadequacy in Hamlet. According to him, the delay functions as it had from the Greeks on, as part of the epical tradition; to him, it does not reflect upon the defects of the hero, but makes the deed momentous when it comes at the end of the play.

Stoll's position has been attacked by various writers like Lily Campbell, Ernest Jones, G. I. Duthie, J. I. M. Stewart, and J. D. Wilson. The latter is perhaps the most vocal and antagonistic in his disagreement. Wilson writes:

> That Stoll's thesis is moonshine any unprejudiced reader of the soliloquy in 4.4 may see for himself. Not that the evidence of the soliloquies by any means stands alone. Hamlet's sense of frustration, of infirmity of purpose, of character inhibited from meeting the demands of destiny, of the futility of life in general and action in particular, finds utterance in nearly every word he says. His melancholy and his procrastination are all of a piece, and cannot be disentangled. Moreover, his feelings are shared and expressed by other characters also. The note of 'heart-sickness' is struck by the sentry Francisco nine lines from the beginning of the play...in short, that

> 'the native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,'
> is not merely the constant burden of Hamlet's meditation but the key-note of the whole dramatic symphony.[56]

Another specific approach which contrasts with the Romantic is that Shakespeare introduces the melancholy type in order to display the baroque popular tone of his time, a theory whose leading proponent is Levin Schücking. While agreeing basically that any so-called "delay" on the part of Hamlet has a particular purpose, as argued by Robertson, Stoll, and others, Schücking differs somewhat in his willingness to allow Hamlet a melancholy frame of mind. Schücking takes as the primary problem in Hamlet criticism the correct explanation of the play in Elizabethan terms.[57] He says that if we are to explain Hamlet, we must place him in the context of Elizabethan dramaturgy. But we cannot even begin to do this until we locate the basic difficulty in Shakespeare's art. And Schücking's thesis is that this difficulty is ours, not Shakespeare's or that of his age. It is we who are mistaken by turning what was once simple, primitive, and clear into something that we consider, out of our ignorance of Elizabethan dramatic conditions, subtle and sophisticated. What is fundamental in the understanding of Shakespeare and Hamlet is an immediate transparency of his work which was shared by his audience, composed as it was of the various segments of Elizabethan society. Shakespeare's was a popular art, an art that appealed to a demanding, mostly ignorant public. It was not an esoteric or individualistic art.[58]

It is in this general context of character and action that Schücking presents his main analysis of Hamlet. He calls his explanation "the filling in of the given outline of the action," and his main

theme is that Shakespeare simply added new elements to the sacrosanct plot handed down by Kyd in the Ur-Hamlet. These new elements also derive from Kyd, in Kyd's creation of Hieronimo, in The Spanish Tragedy. Shakespeare's novelty consisted in his fusion of the plot of one Kyd play with the hero of another:

> In this new treatment of the subject the story of [Hamlet] and partial revision of the old play Shakespeare worked out the character in accordance with a plan which in a simpler form...was in all likelihood already contained in the play, viz., the idea of melancholy.[59]

Thus, Schücking in disagreement with Stoll holds that Hamlet is a neurotic, morbid, melancholy type, lonely and censorious, and not an ideal hero with no defect: "The point of departure for the explanation of Hamlet...lies in the morbid weakness of will of the melancholy character."[60] Shakespeare did not attempt to integrate all the elements of the play; he chose instead to fill in the traditional story with an equally popular melancholy type on which he could lay "some especially effective colours."[61]

In his lecture, "The Baroque Character of the Elizabethan Tragic Hero" (1938), Schücking enlarges upon the historical explanation of Hamlet to include certain principles of Elizabethan literary taste as a category of explanation. His thesis is that Shakespeare and his fellow dramatists, and their audience were part of a Stilwille that was more "baroque" than it was "Renaissance." Consequently, we must relate Hamlet to this prevailing style and see it as expressive of this style. Among the defining characteristics of the Elizabethan baroque are a

> wonderful striving for increased energy, extraordinary motion, emphasis, plenitude of power, variety,

> exuberance on the one hand and the tendency to sharp contrast on the other....[62]

Thus the heroes are mixtures of the sensational and great: they had to be impressive in order to meet the wishes of the audience. Therefore, playwrights went beyond the mirroring of nature and of people in real life.

> This 'outdoing the life' is, to put it roughly, achieved by heightening the figure of the hero beyond life-size, mostly through an extraordinary intensification of emotional stress. This is why above all the extremely passionate individual is chosen for representation, the exhibition of unrestrained passion being the climax of Elizabethan tragedy.[63]

J. Dover Wilson gives a general indictment of any such approach to Hamlet which without detailed scrutiny condemns the young man as a mixture of relics and fine poetry.[64] J. I. M. Stewart reinforces Wilson's objection by pointing out that some of Schucking's examples of non-coherence will not stand up under close scrutiny. (Hamlet's talk of the war of the Theaters, for example, is not an anachronistic device, but Shakespeare's way of exhibiting Hamlet's catholicity of interests, an important fact of his whole character.) He contends that Shakespeare does not create crude devices for holding the audience's attention, but that Shakespeare adds details to delineate character and to show the people in the context of the times.[65] Stewart feels that it is Schucking, not Shakespeare, who is crude, in his simple critical device of reducing the play and its constituent elements to the non-Shakespearian elements they resemble.[66]

Lily Campbell differs somewhat in her approach. She too believes that the delay is for a definite purpose. Her avowed motive is not so

much to stem the tide of Romanticism in Shakespearian criticism as to crush the doctrine, especially held by Bradley, that Shakespearian tragedy is essentially one of action, of a great hero who goes down to defeat in his struggle with inner and external spiritual forces. For her it is not an inner struggle with Hamlet, but passion that constitutes the essence of this Shakespearian play.

Miss Campbell glosses the words spoken by the Player-King in "The Murder of Gonzago" as the dominant idea of the play:

> What to ourselves in passion we propose,
> The passion ending, doth the purpose lose,
> The violence of either grief or joy
> Their own enactures with themselves destroy.
> Where joy must revels, grief doth most lament
> Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.
> (II, ii, 204-9)

According to her, passion is central in all Shakespearian tragedy; in each of the tragedies, the hero is dominated by one passion, which is also central in the play. Shakespeare analyzes it, as the play progresses, in accordance with the medical and philosophical doctrines of his age.[67] Passion is systematically related to Elizabethan theories of human nature and tragedy, especially dramatic tragedy, as thematic material in Shakespeare. With this as her claim, Miss Campbell begins her confirmation with an exposition of these theories.

Her first concern is with the problem of tragedy. She states that it has always been one aspect of the problem of evil. Tragedy exists in literature to present and explain evil. Hence, to discover the meaning of Shakespearian tragedy is to remind ourselves of how Elizabethans thought about the problem of evil. She sums up this aspect of Shakespeare's background with these words:

> Tragedies teach by exempla how to avoid ruin and misery by avoiding the loose and ungoverned passions which lead thereto. And dramatic tragedies teach by their exempla so much the more effectively in that they are imitation, and imitation pleases and convinces. Dramatic tragedies are, therefore, the most effective method of teaching by exempla the lessons of moral philosophy.[68]

To understand Hamlet, then, is first to grasp its significance as an Elizabethan tragedy, i.e., as an example of how to avoid ruin, misery, and destruction by not sinning against God. But to understand him fully we must also come to terms with the Elizabethan conception of passion and the relation of passion to medicine and moral philosophy. Passion in Elizabethan thought is one aspect of the whole of human nature. Hence, to understand passion, its significance for the Elizabethans, and its role in Shakespearian tragedy, we must see it in its context of the Elizabethan theory of man.

Miss Campbell sees this play as a study in the passion of grief. Hamlet's passion results in a grief that will not be consoled. He is already the victim of his passion; in refusing to allow reason to console him, Hamlet perseveres in the sin of sloth, a sin that ultimately leads to his destruction under a punishing God.[69] Thus, if we see Hamlet as the Elizabethans saw him, we shall see him as a type of grief: one that results in a melancholy which dries and cools the brain so excessively that the memory and mind become fogged, hence as a grief

> of one moved to revenge by heaven and hell and yet stayed by excess of grief from action, of one impelled by passion to revenge and yet through excess of passion having the cause of his passion blurred in his memory....[70]

Hamlet, thus, is a case study of a man who will not yield to the

consolations of philosophy and the claims of reason in the moderation of his passion of grief. Even though Shakespeare presents in Hamlet a man who retains our sympathy, Hamlet is nevertheless shown as justly punished, as "passion's slave."

E. E. Stoll, although considered a non-Romantic critic, disagrees violently with Miss Campbell concerning her view of passion as the theme:

> Shakespeare's tragedy...presents human nature, not a doctrine of human nature; heroes...and above all, men as we know them, not curiosities of the contemporary or even the Elizabethan psychology or physiology. In himself Hamlet is no more a prey to melancholy than he is to the deadly sin of sloth....How unexhilarating, unprofitable the conception! Audiences at a tragedy were not expecting to sit in at a clinic.[71]

Peter Alexander, somewhat in line with the Romantic position and certainly with Bradley on his emphasis of action in tragedy, argues against Miss Campbell, also:

> To attempt to establish the meaning or significance of Shakespeare's work by the line of argument used by Professor Campbell is to mistake the true historical approach to the work of art. Such interpretations preclude any historical understanding of Shakespeare's career as an artist and of his struggle to formulate in his work what he himself had learnt from his study of man and the actions of man.[72]

Another contrasting approach with the Romantic in regard to Hamlet's delay states specifically that Hamlet did not delay as such; he merely waits in preparation for the right way and the right moment for attack. This view was held as early as 1783 by Joseph Ritson, who defends Hamlet's somewhat contradictory-seeming actions on grounds that he found it necessary. Hamlet, in other words, had to proceed cautiously because the usurper was powerful, and he could not kill the King and tell the

people that a ghost had ordered him to do it.[73]

> Should not the inner certainty, reflected in the Ghost for popular satisfaction, suffice for the son's revenge? Not unless all Denmark is to look upon him as a mad homicide, a parricide, a lunatic ghostseer--he, the sound thinker, the fine mind, the enlightened spirit, the elegant knightly prince of penetrating understanding. In the nature of the crime lies the riddle. Shakespeare must establish the theory that evil deeds betray themselves, even when hidden beneath dirt. This is the fundamental idea that explains Hamlet.[74]

This kind of criticism paved the way for others, especially critics of the nineteenth century, to support Hamlet's actions as necessary things. Joseph Klein in Berliner Modenspiegel, No. 24, 1846, agrees that revenge is impossible at the time for it lacks that which "would justify it before God and the world, and to all reason--material proof."

Karl Werder, writing in the early twentieth century, says almost word for word the same thing that Klein said earlier. He claims that an objective reason for Hamlet's delay exists, that of justifying his action to the public. He would have been regarded as a shameless criminal, intent on his own ambition, if he had killed the King with the Ghost's message as his only proof. Truth and justice that is complete must come from the mouth of the offender, so Hamlet attempts to get a confession out of the King by the play within the play.[75] Hamlet's delay, believes Werder, is not without purpose.

Hazelton Spencer, one of the more prominent names in recent Shakespearian criticism, also accepts the position of Ritson, Klein, and Werder. He sees the delay as a means of action, a pause motivated by doubt whether it is "an honest ghost." Spencer, like many of the critics who challenge or disagree with the Romantic stance, returns to the

historical setting for his view. Spencer traces the historical interpretation of the play from its earliest recorded performances. He cites Burbage and J. Taylor, two of the earliest actors of the title role, as probably performing the part as Shakespeare intended it with a manly, active young person. However, Spencer admits, there is no real evidence. Records show that successive actors, Batterton, Wilkes, Garrick, Barry, Sheridan, and Henderson, definitely acted the part in what Spencer considers to be the traditional way. It was not until J. Philip Kemble's interpretation in 1783 that the Romantic treatment was definitely noted. This was followed by similar treatments of the role by Cooke and Keane. Spencer seems to think that after these actors passed from the scene, the traditional interpretation was once again accepted, and has been retained for the most part. He reminds the reader that every Elizabethan knew the Devil could assume the form of a ghost, give some fictitious account of the need for revenge, secure the avenger's promise, and in the end his damnation. Spencer cites Hamlet's own words: "The spirit that I have seen/ May be a devil...." He suggests that Hamlet is young and finds for the first time the necessity to make an extremely important decision.

> He accepts his task courageously, but like anyone still on the threshold of life, he is not yet entirely sure of himself. He is troubled by sordid thoughts about sex, all the more because the haste of his mother's remarriage inclines him to cynicism about women.[76]

Why does he not kill Claudius when he finds him in prayer? The revenge code required complete destruction, not just of body but of soul too. Hamlet postpones his vengeance not because he is weak, says Spencer, but because he is strong enough to wait till he can make it complete.

Hamlet has no other chance until the last scene of the play to strike the final blow.[77]

> Hamlet suffers a forced delay, but he gives us plenty of action. He sets the trap for Claudius, he kills Polonius, he foils Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and finally he gets his revenge. He is a sensitive and reflective person, often saddened or irritated by the sorry scheme of things, but those qualities do not frustrate him. Hamlet is a man of action.[78]

A second major topic of interest to Romantics and non-Romantics alike is the question of Hamlet's madness. It is not an easy matter to attempt any categorization of Romantic positions on this point. One can say that most of the Romantic critics seem to favor an assumed madness that is used by Hamlet because of his greatly disturbed mind. However, critics holding this view, men like Richardson, Dowden, Mackenzie, Chambers, and Bradley, for the most part recognize a <u>certain</u> element of insanity within the mind of the main character.

Richardson states categorically:

> Hamlet was fully sensible how strange those involuntary improprieties must appear to others. He was conscious he could not suppress them; he knew he was surrounded by spies; and he was justly apprehensive lest his suspicions or purposes should be discovered. But how are these consequences to be prevented by counterfeiting an insanity which <u>in part</u> exists?[79]

Dowden feels that Hamlet senses a need to calm himself, to escape into solitude, where he can recover self-control.

> He assumes madness as a means of concealing his actual disturbance of mind. His over-excitability might betray him; but if it be a received opinion that his mind is unhinged, such an access of over-excitement will pass unobserved and unstudied.[80]

Since madness possesses certain immunities, Hamlet can become an observer and critic. He can better look at events past and present and evaluate them.

> Hamlet does not assume madness to conceal any plan of revenge. He possesses no such plan. And as far as his active powers are concerned the assumed madness is a misfortune. Instead of assisting him, it is one of the causes which tend to retard his action.[81]

Henry Mackenzie does not attempt to minimize the difficulty of the problem of "madness" in the play, but he concludes that the madness is assumed. He argues that Hamlet is always in control of his faculties, even when his actions seem unexplainable on any rational basis. He is slow at times because his thoughts are always on the task at hand. Certain scenes appear, nevertheless, to show Hamlet insane or near insanity, but the extravagance of his speech and bearing, to which he naturally inclines, is the expression of his highly emotional nature. Mackenzie feels that for Hamlet to consistently maintain insanity, without ever revealing the real causes of his grief, would be impossible. If he is to accomplish his end, he must at all costs avoid arousing suspicion. The assumed insanity is his only answer.[82] Mackenzie pictures Hamlet as always studying himself. There seems to be present to his mind and thought this world and the other, too, and everywhere appear doubts:

> Hamlet doubts everything. He doubts the immortality of the soul, just after seeing his father's spirit and hearing from its mouth the secrets of the other world. He doubts Horatio; he doubts Ophelia, and he doubts the Ghost.[83]

He is an ingrained skeptic, but his is the skepticism of feeling, not of reason, whose root is want of faith in himself. In him it is passive;

and even though he appears off-balance mentally at times, and may be, the problem seems to be a malady rather than a function of the mind.

Sir Edmund Chambers agrees basically with Mackenzie, but perhaps with somewhat more qualification about the madness. Chambers feels that the problem is not merely insoluble; that it cannot even be propounded in an intelligible guise. He points out that psychology knows no rigid dividing line between the sane and the insane. One cannot, he reminds the reader, lay finger upon one element here or there in the infinite variety of human character and say "That way madness lies."[84] Nevertheless, he feels that Shakespeare did not mean Hamlet to be mad in any sense which would put his actions in a quite different category from those of other men, for that would have been to divest his work of humanity. Chambers sees Hamlet presented to us a man of sensitive temperament and high intellectual gifts. He is no ordinary prince; his spirit has been touched to finer issues; his wit is keen-edged and dipped in irony; his delicacy of moral insight is unusual among the ruder Danes. He has spent his time in an atnosphere of studious calm and philosophic speculation. His tastes are those of the scholar; he loves to read for hours together, and like most literary men, he takes great delight in the stage. He is not recluse, but. . ."his real interest is all in speculation, in the play of mind around a subject, in the contemplation of it on all sides and from every point of view."[85] Such a training has not fitted him to act a kingly part in stirring times; the intellectual element in him has come to outweigh the practical; the vivid consciousness of many possible courses of conduct deters him from the strenuous pursuit of one so that he has lost the power of deliberate action, and if this thoughtful man acts at all, it must be from impulse. He recognizes

the duty of vengeance--a difficult task for him. He does not refuse to shoulder the burden forced upon him. Only the habits of a lifetime are not to be thrown off so easily, and the necessity of thinking it over is potent with him. So instead of revealing all his knowledge, all his thinking, he binds his friends to a secrecy and forms the plan of pretending madness in order to gain time needed to really consider his position in his thoughtful meditative way.[86] Hamlet, in his assumed state, is merely relying upon an old habit of reflection.

A. C. Bradley emphasizes that he theorizes melancholy, not dejection, and not pure insanity.

> That Hamlet was not far from insanity is very probable. His adoption of the pretence of madness may well have been due in part to fear of the reality; to an instinct of self-preservation, a fore-feeling that the pretence would enable him to give some utterance to the load that pressed on his heart and brain, and a fear that he would unable altogether to repress such utterance. If we like to use the word 'disease' loosely, Hamlet's condition may truly be called diseased. No exertion of will could have dispelled it....It would be absurdly unjust to call *Hamlet* a study of melancholy, but it contains such a study.[87]

Bradley is more comprehensive than most of the earlier critics because he concerns himself also with the painful features of Hamlet which results from the melancholy. He reminds us of Hamlet's almost savage irritability on the one hand, and on the other of his self-absorption, his callousness, his insensibility to the fates of those whom he despises, and to the feelings even of those whom he loves. Bradley notes that these are frequent symptoms of such melancholy as Hamlet possesses.[88]

Hazelton Spencer, representing the group of non-Romantics, agrees that Hamlet's madness is assumed but sees the action as having no

overtones of any mental disorder.[89] To Spencer, Hamlet is merely biding his time and waiting for the right moment to kill. Spencer reminds the reader that this is another convention in the temple of conventions, the theatre. Revenge plays included a certain amount of delay out of necessity and often a certain feigned madness. "As for the morality of personal vengeance, however abhorrent the concept we must accept it in the play as Hamlet's sacred duty, just as we must accept the Ghost who urges it."[90] Spencer sees Hamlet as being disturbed at the outset and depressed by certain recent conditions at home, namely, his father's death, his uncle's election to the throne, and his mother's marriage, but his depression or melancholy was not great. It became great upon the appearance of the Ghost when he learns of his father's murder and his mother's adultery. Then begins his excessive depression and his unusual behavior.

There are other critics, however, especially Romantics or those showing Romantic tendencies, who believe in a real madness experienced by Hamlet. These critics are, of course, adopting an atextual position because they deliberately ignore Hamlet's remark about feigning madness. They tend to argue that the moral shock, mentioned by Spencer and others in their criticism, was so very great that it produced insanity for this noble man. A. O. Kellogg credits Shakespeare with a knowledge of medical psychology, something which he claims that not even his own (Kellogg's) contemporary critics held. This knowledge was that there are cases of melancholic madness of a delicate shade, in which the reasoning faculties, the intellect proper, so far from being overcome, or even disordered, may on the other hand be rendered more active and vigorous while the will, the moral feelings, the sentiments and affections

are the faculties which seem alone to suffer from the stroke of disease.[91] Such a case, Kellogg declares, has been given us in Shakespeare's Hamlet, "with a fidelity to nature which continues more and more to excite our wonder and astonishment as our knowledge of this intricate subject advances."[92] Kellogg here reflects Romantic thinking. He, like many nineteenth-century critics, disregards Shakespeare's consciousness of what he was producing; he feels that the delineation is so true to nature that those who are at all acquainted with this intricate disease are fully convinced that Hamlet represents faithfully a phase of genuine melancholic madness. His qualification follows:

> Whatever may have been the intention of Shakespeare, one thing is evident, he has succeeded in exhibiting in the character of Hamlet a complete revolution of all the faculties of the soul, by the overwhelming influence of the intense emotions excited in it; and whether the resulting condition of the mind be one of health or disease, sanity or insanity, the phenomena exhibited are, psychologically considered, of the most profound interest. We are convinced that the change wrought is so great that the resulting condition of mind must be regarded as of a pathological character, and that Hamlet must be admitted into the ranks of that 'noble array of martyrs' to a mind diseased. But we must by no means forget that the term does not imply mind destroyed, or even a mind deranged in all its faculties, but one changed in its normal operations.[93]

Kellogg feels that the real change comes in Hamlet when the Ghost disappears. His words immediately following the departure of the spirit show that his mental and physical state have been transformed. Up to this time we saw no weakness, no want of energy, no infirmity of purpose. After this, however, all these characteristics are irrecoverably lost and certain faculties of his spirit are completely paralyzed.[94]

A recent critic, prominent in the field of Shakespearian criticism,

agrees with Kellogg that the madness is real; although he thinks that the basis is the pressure of "the poisoned world" and Hamlet's inhuman intelligence. G. W. Knight has written well-known essays in two of his books concerning the Hamlet play. In The Wheel of Fire he asserts:

> He [Hamlet] has seen through humanity. And this inhuman cynicism, however justifiable, is a deadly and venomous thing. Hamlet is not of flesh and blood; he is a spirit of penetrating intellect and cynicism and misery, without faith in himself or anyone else, on the brink of insanity taking delight in cruelty, torturing Claudius, wringing his mother's heart, a poison in the midst of the bustle of court. He is a superman among men.[95]

Knight reminds the reader of Hamlet's line in Act II, ii, where he again doubts the spirit, postulating that it might have been the devil. Knight believes it was, a metaphorical devil, the devil of the knowledge of death, which possesses Hamlet and drives him from misery and pain to increasing bitterness, cynicism, murder and madness.

> Hamlet is right. What he says and thinks of them is true, and there is not fault in his logic...and Hamlet's ideals are worth nothing to them, and most maddening of all, they get on perfectly well as they are--or would do if Hamlet were out of the way. Thus, through no fault of his own, Hamlet has been forced into a state of evil....Thus Hamlet spends a great part of his time watching, analysing others. His poison is the poison of negation, nothingness, threatening a world of positive assertion. His is a dualized personality, wavering, oscillating between grace and the hell of cynicism. Hamlet is a living death in the midst of life.[96]

Paul Seigel notes in his introductory remarks to the essay "The Embassy of Death," reprinted in his anthology His Infinite Variety, that Knight's interpretation of Hamlet is in keeping with the findings of Lawrence Babb concerning the Elizabethan concepts of melancholy:[97]

> There is a genus of mental diseases called melancholy. This includes primarily a psychic disorder due to natural melancholy abounding beyond the rather vague limits of normality. This condition differs from the melancholy complexion more in degree than in kind. The principal symptoms are exaggerated griefs and fears, hallucinations, lethargy, unsociability, morbid love of darkness and seclusion, sometimes bitter misanthropy.[98]

Seigel comments further that Knight's interpretation also agrees with those of Fredson Bowers on the Elizabethan attitude toward the malcontent revenger:

> The Elizabethan audience's reaction to the revenge tragedies must be considered with an eye to the tradition of 'legel' revenge as well as to their religious and ethical education. It would be far too much to assert that Elizabethans believed every murder should be privately revenged by the son as a sacred duty: this Greek and Roman conception of a 'sacred duty' was no part of any Elizabethan code except on the stage. The foundation of the classical belief in the sacredness of the duty lay in the fact that the ghost could not find rest until revenge for its murder was achieved. Neither the Scandinavians of Hamlet's time nor the Elizabethans conceived any such religious connection between the revenge and the welfare of the murdered man's spirit. In both countries the obligation to revenge was based wholly on legal grounds. Nor, on the other hand, can the view be wholly accepted that every private revenger of blood was automatically considered by the man in the street as a criminal who must receive his reward in death. The truth lies somewhere between these two extremes. There is no question that the Elizabethans firmly believed the law of God, however, to forbid private vengeance.[99]

In addition to those who accept assumed madness of Hamlet for fact and those who perceive pure madness, there are even more who present what might be called intermediate positions. Among these critics are found both "Romantics," like H. N. Hudson and Donald Stauffer, and "non-Romantics," like H. Somerville and T. S. Eliot. In most of these cases,

the critic substitutes for such a charged term as madness some more euphemistic one, e.g., "mental breakdown," or "moral unbalance." Some may try to bring both assumed and real madness together, while others may denounce both as impractical.

Somerville, in establishing his theory of a mental breakdown, recounts the various kinds of mental conditions from which Hamlet suffers.[100] He admits that Hamlet for the most part is a sane person, or as sane as we perhaps can expect him to be considering his quick-changing disposition, his highly artistic temperament, and his active imagination. He is certainly not insane in the full sense of the word. At times, Somerville recounts, Hamlet appears to be close to melancholia, a form of insanity. His "to be or not to be" soliloquy is one good example; another is his musing on his unworthiness: "better my mother had not borne me"--a common symptom of melancholia as then conceived. At other times he is neither totally sane nor insane. The nunnery scene shows him in this mental condition best. There is reason mixed with madness. When he thinks of killing his mother and when he makes weird remarks, like "drinking hot blood," he is exemplifying acute mania. Still at other times he experiences hallucinations, e.g., during the closet scene.

Somerville does not accept the madness as feigned; he believes that Hamlet suffered a mental breakdown caused from the extreme shocks received earlier.

> Strange is it that one little speech of Hamlet's--marked as it is by weakness and indecision and sterile at its birth of prospect of maturing into action--should ever have been accepted as earnest of intention to feign madness ('put an antic disposition on'); and strange still that it should be magnified into evidence of proof that he does so, in face of the fact

> that there is nothing in the text to warrant the belief that he did feign madness; and that he could have gained by doing so any help towards the accomplishment of his main object.[101]

Somerville is of the opinion that since all of his exhibitions of extreme mental confusion follows some extreme experience, it is these which cause Hamlet to suffer a mental breakdown. During the whole play his mind is in a state of high tension, high activity and productivity. It is this kind of person who is most susceptible to manic-depressiveness, or mental breakdown, and here Hamlet is the victim. The outside forces are just too great for him.

Donald Stauffer recognizes that Shakespeare has availed himself of a common device of "assumed" madness, but he thinks to call it assumed is perhaps as inaccurate as to call it madness; it is evidently something in between.[102] In the plot, normal assumed madness would serve no purpose; since there are no witnesses to the crime, there is not one to "catch" or find out in the normal way. One might notice too that it does not allay the King's suspicions; it arouses them. For Hamlet, the antic disposition affords a vent of some kind for tortured feelings.

> His madness is merely the expression of unpalatable truths, and Hamlet is no more mad than the Fool in _Lear_, or else he is mad in the same wry and bitter fashion. To the world, accustomed to convention and the social lie, such brutal frankness may seem insanity. Hamlet's madness is most evident in the presence of his enemies, where its imaginative intensity and glancing allusiveness keep them from seeing that he never deviates from truth. But it is merely a device that allows him to give rein to his tongue and emotions, while protecting his secret in a hostile country.[103]

To Stauffer then this "assumed" madness is a species of moral madness, a device that reminds the guilty of their sins. Hamlet, in this light,

becomes a hunter of consciences, "a walking Nemesis."

H. N. Hudson introduces his theory by recounting the various ideas already projected about Hamlet's so-called madness. He holds however for a co-existing sanity and insanity, two conditions existing at the same time, but one showing itself more at a given time because of certain environmental factors.

> A reasonable view of Hamlet's mental condition is that in native texture he is a man of finest moral sensibility and intellectual sensitiveness, with a tendency to the noble melancholy of all great natures; and that (1) the discovery of his mother's conduct and the shameless conditions at court, so soon after his father's death, (2) his interview with the Ghost, (3) the Ghost's appalling disclosures and injunctions, and (4) his distant view and grasp of the whole dire situation in which he is now placed, have to a certain degree disturbed the equipoise of his mind, shaken it to its depths, but shaken it as storms shake trees to strengthen and make more efficient. Such a temperament and such an experience account naturally both for the skillfull assumption of the 'antic disposition' and for those outbursts of abnormal vehemence which mark Hamlet's conduct from time to time.[104]

Finally, critics like T. S. Eliot say that it is probably neither assumed or real:

> The madness of Hamlet lay to Shakespeare's hand; for Shakespeare it is less than madness and more than feigned. The levity of Hamlet, his repetition of phrase, his puns, are not a part of a deliberate plan of dissimulation, but a form of emotional relief.[105]

Eliot recognizes that a character like Hamlet cannot act, but the emotions expressed are not unique; the intense feeling, without an object or exceeding its object, is something which every person of sensibility has known. Hamlet then is acting as others might act given those same circumstances. His so-called madness is a type of universal behavior.

Summary

It is evident that at the heart of Hamlet criticism lie several points of attack common to all kinds of critics. Those critics stressed here exemplify, by virtue of the nature of this paper, the Romantic position; others presented offer certain contrasts which help distinguish more clearly what the Romantic critic of Shakespearian drama seeks for his argument. If one can generalize from the Romantic studies of Hamlet's character, one fact about Romantic criticism can be established: Romantics tend to adopt the same basic point of view that Hamlet should be viewed as an individual in an intuitive and psychological way without regard to the close confinement of the character on stage, i.e., as a person, not simply as a persona, and that this view will probably apply to all Romantic treatment of Shakespearian drama.

It can be seen in the preceding presentation that whether the critic is regarded as Romantic or otherwise, several basic issues persist:

(1) Is Hamlet melancholic, or ideal, or mad?

(2) Is Hamlet a psychological study, a revenge play, a study in passion and grief, or a study in conflict of character?

(3) Why does Hamlet delay?

Romantic critics for the most part say that the delay is brought about either by a conflict of emotion, or as a natural thing for such a melancholic personality, or because of the overbalance of the workings of a mind of genius, or because of the tremendous disgust with the "weeded garden" of life. Concerning Hamlet's madness, Romantics vary somewhat, but most, it seems, generally feel that it is either a state assumed out of necessity, or a form of insanity, or a real mental

illness brought on by environmental conditions.

It has been noted that various contrasting positions exist. Most of these centralize in the belief that Hamlet is not a man of delay but one of action, using his time to find the best way to fulfill his duty. Proponents of this view cite specific acts of Hamlet, e.g., his killing Polonius, his altering the King's letter, and his final melee at the grave, to show that he is capable of determined behavior. His time of meditation simply shows his common sense. Others say it was necessary because of Shakespeare's dependence upon the older Hamlet play and upon patterns of revenge tragedy. Others see another historical aspect which necessitated Hamlet's seeming delay: the development of the popular "baroque" character. Still others see Hamlet as a victim of passion and grief, allowed to delve into seeming melancholy in order to show the Elizabethan world how terrible are the consequences of sin and evil. These contrasting positions allow us to see somewhat more clearly what the "Romantic" attitudes really are as they pertain in this case to the tragedy of Hamlet. Certain challenges to such contrasting views also help display the Romantic spirit which is still very much alive in dramatic criticism today.

True, even among those critics who clearly indicate certain Romantic tendencies, there is room for a portion of disagreement. Yet, in the study of Hamlet all of them agree on one thing: Hamlet is a man and to understand his behavior we must think of him as such. Only if we consider human idealism and human frailty can we begin to appreciate Hamlet's dilemma.

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[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid., p. 316.

[79]William Richardson, cited in Robinson, p. 163.

[80]Dowden, p. 144.

[81]Ibid., p. 145.

[82]The Mirror, No. 100, Saturday, April 22, 1780.

[83]Ibid.

[84]"Hamlet," found in Williamson, p. 185.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Bradley, p. 120.

[88]Ibid., p. 124.

[89]Spencer, p. 314.

[90]Ibid.

[91]Shakespeare's Delineation of Insanity, Imbecility, and Suicide (New York, 1866).

[92]Ibid., p. 36.

[93]Ibid.

[94]Ibid., p. 44.

[95]The Wheel of Fire (London, 1949), p. 38.

[96]Ibid., pp. 39-41, passim.

[97]His Infinite Variety (New York, 1964), p. 290.

[98]The Elizabethan Malady (East Lansing, 1950), p. 37.

[99]Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy (Princeton, 1940), p. 39.

[100]Madness in Shakespearean Tragedy (1929), cited in part in Williamson, p. 511.

[101]Ibid., p. 513.

[102]Stauffer, p. 127.

[103]Ibid.

[104]H. N. Hudson, "Introduction," New Hudson Shakespeare (New York, 1881), p. 153, cited in Williamson.

[105]T. S. Eliot, Selected Essays (London, 1919), p. 146.

CHAPTER III

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Antony and Cleopatra is another of Shakespeare's tragedies that has received many contrasting interpretations. Most of these in this case, however, can be grouped into two basic schools of thought: the Romantic and the historical. Many critics, especially some of the twentieth century, like A. C. Bradley, Mark Van Doren, Donald Stauffer, and G. Wilson Knight, view this play as a kind of lyrical poem which exalts love as the greatest value in life and which shows love triumphant over death and the world. To these critics, the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra project the "diadem of love" and show these characters as examples of *vincit omnia amor* for all time.

Other critics, all members of the historical school of criticism, men like Willard Farnham, Leonard Dickey, and E. E. Stoll, see the actions of the lovers as they appear in the play and thus view it as an exposure of human weakness and corruption. These critics do not see love glorified here; rather they see two people who die because they give themselves over to the sensual matters of the world and forget moral principles and duty to country.

The eighteenth century critics in general did not touch upon *Antony and Cleopatra*. Most of Shakespeare's heroines were treated during this time, but Cleopatra was not included. She was rarely ever mentioned, especially by the English, perhaps because of the overriding

history of immorality associated with her. To American critics should go a great deal of credit for recognizing the beauty and power in the character of Cleopatra, for even though general English criticism tended to ignore her it was American critics who first attempted to remove the moral ostracism from her character.[1] It must be remembered at this point that Romantic critics often merge the historical person and the dramatis persona. For this reason, and because of the nature of this play, it is not necessary to make a distinction so that the character is approved of while the historical person is not. Romantics generally tend to select or merge ideas as they see fit according to what suits their purposes. The point is that it appears for years most critics had associated the person of Cleopatra with the character, and it was the early American Romantics who brought criticism of Antony and Cleopatra to the forefront. As early as 1824 an unnamed American writer dared to call her Shakespeare's best female portrait. According to him, she exhibits the "loftier and stronger traits of the female character." "The fascinating queen is a masterpiece."[2] He continued by remarking that although the play is occupied with battles and treaties, the commotion of war, and monarchs quarreling over the destiny of the world, "yet all are forgotten when Cleopatra is on the scene." Although she is a woman of great personal charm,

> it is her mind, the strength of her passion, the fervour and fury of her love, the bitterness of her hatred, and the desperation of her death, which take so strong a hold on the imagination. We follow her, admire her, sympathize with her, through all, and after the asp has done his fatal work, who does not exclaim with Charmion
>
> 'Now boast thee, Death! in thy possession lies a lass unparalleled!'[3]

Shortly after this criticism appeared, Anna Jameson, that prolific female English critic of Shakespearian drama, was able to see Cleopatra as "the real historical Cleopatra, individualised and placed before us in Shakespeare's marvelous way,"[4] so that one brilliant impersonation could come forth.

> Her mental accomplishments, her unequalled grace, her woman's wits and woman's wiles, her irresistible allurements, her starts of irregular grandeur, her bursts of ungovernable temper, her vivacity of imagination, her petulant caprice, her fickleness and her falsehood, her tenderness and her truth, her childish susceptibility to flattery, her magnificent spirit, her royal pride, the gorgeous Eastern coloring of the character; all these contradictory elements has Shakespeare seized, mingled them in their extremes, and fused them into one brilliant impersonation of classical elegance, Oriental voluptuousness, and gypsy sorcery.[5]

Jameson has paved the way in this colorful description for others to add their comments.

William Hazlitt agreed that Antony and Cleopatra is a very noble play. Though perhaps not in the first class of Shakespeare's production, still the play is full of a pervading comprehensive power by which the poet could make himself master of time and circumstances.[6] Hazlitt spends much of his time in this essay attributing praise to Shakespeare for his ability in creating characters that breathe, move, and live. "He does not present us with groups of stage-puppets or poetical machines making set speeches on human life, but he brings living men and women on the scene,"[7] characters who in Hazlitt's estimation speak and act from real feelings, according to the dictates of passion, with everything taking place just as it would have done in reality. He moves to the character of Cleopatra by labelling it a masterpiece.

> What an extreme contrast it affords to Imogen! One would think it almost impossible for the same person to have drawn both. She is voluptuous, ostentatious, conscious, boastful of her charms, haughty, tyrannical, fickle. The luxurious pomp and gorgeous extravagance of the Egyptian queen are displayed in all their force and lustre, as well as the irregular grandeur of the soul of Mark Antony. The rich and poetical description of her person, beginning,
>
> 'The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
> Burnt on the water; the poop was beaten gold,
> Purple the sails, and so perfumed, that
> The winds were love-sick--
>
> seems to prepare the way for and almost to justify the subsequent infatuation of Antony when in the sea-fight at Actium, he leaves the battle, and like a doting mallard follows her flying sails.[8]

Hazlitt sees Cleopatra's triumph in her voluptuous nature, in the way she loves pleasure and has the power of giving it, over every other consideration. He quotes Enobarbus' lines of praise from the play to support his criticism. In closing Hazlitt recognizes that Cleopatra has her faults, unpardonable ones at that, but "the majesty and the beauty of her death are great enough to almost redeem them." According to him, she learns from the depth of despair the strength of her affections, and she keeps her queen-like state even in the last disgrace, and her sense of the pleasurable even in the last moments of her life. In essence, "she tastes a luxury in death."[9] This is the essence of Romantic criticism of this play. Hazlitt, like others to follow, is portraying Cleopatra as one who becomes great through sexual love. She allows love to transcend earthly cares and desires for material power. Not only is this true of Cleopatra, but also of Antony as he "leaves the battle, and like a doting mallard follows her flying sails." Love above everything is the true conqueror, and any personal faults are superficial in the face of love. Cleopatra's death especially proves this point.

Frederick James Furnivall continues to glory in Shakespeare's artistry and in Shakespeare's character with Romantic spirit:

> On Antony and Cleopatra Shakespeare has poured out the glory of his genius in profusion and makes us stand by, saddened and distressed as the noble Antony sinks to his ruin; under the gorgeous colouring of the Eastern sky, the vicious splendour of the Egyptian queen makes us look with admiring hate on the wonderful study of woman he has left, the picture he has drawn, certainly far the most memorable, of that Cleopatra of whom Enobarbus said,
>
> > 'Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> > Her infinite variety; other women
> > Cloy the appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
> > Where most she satisfies.'[10]

Samuel Taylor Coleridge continues the praise of the play, terming it as the most wonderful of all. He praises Shakespeare for following history so minutely and at the same time for impressing the notion of giant strength so very strongly.[11] Considering the prolific nature of Coleridge's usual criticism, this comment is extremely brief. The note centers on a discussion of various interpretations of specific words used, with a consideration of various possible meanings. He does attempt to justify Cleopatra's actions, however, with a paragraph devoted to establishing an understanding of her motives. He suggests that Antony and Cleopatra be studied in mental contrast with Romeo and Juliet, as the love of passion and appetite opposed to the love of affection and instinct. He points out that

> the sense of criminality in her passion is lessened by our insight into its depth and energy, at the very moment that we cannot but perceive that the passion itself springs out of the habitual craving of a licentious nature and that it is supported and re-inforced by voluntary stimulus and sought-for associations, instead of blossoming out of spontaneous emotion.[12]

Here we see the strong basis for Romantic criticism of this play in the belief that energy reduces moral guilt. In other words, we cannot fully blame Cleopatra for her actions; her tremendous striving places her above the law.

We have seen then that certain American and British critics have begun to touch upon Cleopatra's characterization and most of them have glorified her as one who placed love above everything else, including duty to country. But one cannot overlook the fact that none of these criticisms is of any length. It is perhaps startling to the Romantic reader and interpreter to find names of typically Romantic critics like Lamb and Montague missing from the lists of those concerned with Cleopatra; it might be even more startling, however, to see such a prolific critic as Coleridge devote only two pages in his series of lectures to this heroine. This is not to imply that quantity is of more import than quality, but usually the Romantic critic who finds some cause to support becomes rather prolific in that support. The briefness of this early criticism of _Antony and Cleopatra_ may reflect a certain continuing hesitancy to discuss a woman with such a long history of questionable character. It falls upon a man of the early twentieth century--A. C. Bradley--to focus upon Cleopatra at length and with any true depth. Even though Bradley does not consider _Antony and Cleopatra_ to be one of Shakespeare's best works, he does see the heroine as a great queen and as one who conquers by providing the love that Antony needs in order to make him a person of honor. Bradley devotes as much space to Antony's character as to that of Cleopatra because he views the two as complementing each other. Bradley is not at all puzzled that Antony should become Cleopatra's slave; his feeling is that it is

perfectly natural for a lover to assume such a position if true love is involved. To him it is also natural

> that her women should adore her and die with her; that Enobarbus, who foresaw what must happen, and who opposes her wishes and braves her anger, should talk of her with rapture and feel no bitterness against her; that Dolabella, after a minute's conversation, should betray to her his master's intention and enable her to frustrate it. And when Octavius shows himself proof against her fascination, instead of admiring him we turn from him with disgust and think him a disgrace to his species.[13]

Bradley points out one thing about Cleopatra's attraction to others which most critics fail to consider: the irony found in the attraction to her when her beauty evidently was not especially notable. He reminds us that she perhaps did have a certain magic about her but she had not "extraordinary beauty like Helen's, such beauty as seems divine."[14] Plutarch tells us so, and Shakespeare goes out of his way to add to her age, telling us of her wrinkles and the waning of her lip. But it is to be noted that even Enobarbus, in his very mockery, calls her a "wonderful piece of work." One notices, too, Dolabella's interruption with the cry, "most sovereign creature." One notices further that we echo it without understanding explanation. "That which makes her wonderful and sovereign laughs at definition, but she herself came nearest naming it when in the final speech she cries:

> 'I am fire and air; my other elements
> I give to baser life.'"[15]

It is Bradley's opinion that the fire and air which at death break from union with those other elements transfigured them during her life, and still convert into enchantment the very things for which she is

condemned. The best example of this is seen in her love for Antony. We should not blunder by doubting that she loved him or that her glorious description of him came from else but her heart. She loves him well enough to follow him in death. Only the spirit of fire within her refuses to be trammeled or extinguished; "it burns its way through the obstacles of fortune and even through the resistance of her love and grief, and would lead her undaunted to fresh life and the conquest of new worlds."[16] It is this, Bradley feels, that makes her unbreakable, that speaks in her every tone and movement, that "glorifies" the rages which in another person would probably disgust the reader; and it is this which in the final scenes of her life causes us to watch entranced as she struggles for freedom, and reaches for triumph, "as conquered, she puts her conqueror to scorn and goes to meet her lover in the splendour that crowned and robed her long ago, when her barge burnt on the water like a burnished throne, and she floated to Cydnus on the enamoured stream to take him captive forever."[17] In Bradley's interpretation we again see the Romantic theory that tremendous energy and spirit is enough to overcome any moral offenses the person might possibly be guilty of. In this case, it is Cleopatra's "fire" which we identify with the theoretical energy of the Romantic critic. The desire to move ahead, to create in an individual way, is to be praised highly. Moral infractions are truly insignificant in comparison.

Bradley is equally concerned with Antony, for it is Antony who supplies the necessary factor in allowing an otherwise merely voluptuous queen die in the glorious fashion with which she customarily lived. Bradley, like many other critics, Romantic and otherwise, sees a definite greatness in Antony, "the first of living soldiers, an able

politician, a most persuasive orator," but one not necessarily destined to rule the world.[18] Bradley thinks that power to Antony is merely a means to pleasure, that he would be satisfied with a relatively small portion of the world to rule, as long as his pleasure was satisfied. Bradley's main argument is that any man who loved power as much as thousands of insignificant people everywhere love it would have made a sterner struggle than Antony's against his "enchantment." In fact, Antony hardly struggles at all. He brings himself to leave Cleopatra only because he knows he will return. Again we see a typically Romantic trait in Bradley's treatment of Antony. The critic is here inferring what Antony might have done in a given situation. He is reading into the play something that cannot be found literally in the text. Bradley assumes that Antony is not at heart a man interested in power and glory; he suggests by implication that Antony is more concerned with sensual happiness than personal honor. Bradley explains:

> In every moment of his absence, whether he wakes or sleeps, a siren music in his blood is singing him back to her; and to this music, however he may be occupied, the soul within him leans and listens. The joy of life had always culminated for him in the love of women; he could say 'no' to none of them. But when he meets Cleopatra, he meets his absolute; she satisfies, nay glorifies his whole being. She intoxicates his senses. Her wiles, her taunts, her furies and meltings, her laughter and tears, bewitch him all alike. She loves what he loves and she surpasses him. She can drink him to his bed, out-jest his practical jokes, out-act the best actress who ever amused him, out-dazzle his own magnificence.[19]

Bradley's conclusion, however, is that amidst all this round of manlike revelry, Cleopatra is yet a <u>great</u> queen. Whatever she might be doing, whether it is angling in the river, playing billiards, flourishing the sword, or hopping forty paces in a public street, she remains an

enchantress. She seems to have a spirit made of wind and flame, and the poet in Antony worships her no less than the man in him. Yet he is under no illusion about her: he knows her faults, he sees through her wiles, he believes her capable of betraying him. But it makes no difference. Why? Bradley concludes that to love Cleopatra was what Antony was born for; for him to imagine heaven is to imagine her; to die is to rejoin her. And for the reader to deny that this is true love, says Bradley, is the madness of morality.[20]

It is then the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that provide us detailed criticism of Antony and Cleopatra. One discovers that the eighteenth-century critic was quite willing as a rule to follow Dr. Johnson in dismissing the play as developing only one character thoroughly--Cleopatra--and she as distinguished by "her feminine arts, some of which are too low." The moral stigma was too great for critics in general of that time to accept her as suitable for tragedy. The nineteenth-century critics, however, were as a rule unwilling to accept this brief and sweeping dismissal. The Romantics especially would not allow moral judgment of Cleopatra to cause them to condemn the play as a whole. They felt generally that the play could be praised at the same time that some of Cleopatra's actions could be stigmatized. Most of the Romantics, like the ones discussed here, felt as Furness did in simply refusing to believe that any breach of morality may be attributed to Cleopatra. For Furness she is the ideal Victorian spouse: "Her love for Antony burned with the unflickering flame of wifely devotion."[21] Romantic treatment of this play continues in the twentieth-century. The dichotomy made by most of these critics between love and the world shows their Romantic orientation. Prominent among these are J. M. Murry,

G. Wilson Knight, Mark Van Doren, J. Dover Wilson, Donald Stauffer, and John Holloway. The common points of interest for these critics are Antony and Cleopatra's royalty and nobleness and their desire for love placed above their desire for the world.

Murry emphasizes the nobleness of Antony as seen in the actions of the other characters around him. Enobarbus, for example, lives in our memory as one that could endure to follow with allegiance a fallen lord. What compels this loyalty of his that is so final and so secure?

> The heart in him responsive to the heart in Antony, the things which made him weep while Antony bade farewell to his servants. But what was that? That royalty in Antony which made his servants kings: that power which was in Antony to say to them simply, 'I am I'; and trust to their love of that; the manhood in him which disdained a compelled allegiance, and when allegiance was withdrawn from him, sought instantly, by a natural motion, to find the cause within himself. This is the point at which the superhuman becomes human. The royalty that draws loyalty to it, that compels loyalty indeed, but by an internal, not an external compulsion, whereby the servant is at once the lover and the friend, and knows that he becomes his own true self only in serving his lord--this royalty is in the lord himself superhuman.[22]

To Murry, then, royalty and loyalty go hand in hand; and the man who is loyal, by his loyalty, becomes royal. This, he terms, is the true theme of _Antony and Cleopatra_, and Shakespeare's prodigious art consists first and foremost in convincing us of Antony's royalty. In this sense Antony becomes a giant, operating by what Shakespeare elsewhere calls "sovereignty of nature." The reader is convinced of this in several different ways:

> Primarily by the power of utterance which Shakespeare lends him; next, by the power of utterance which Shakespeare lends to those who describe him; then by the actions which he does; then, by the effect of

> those actions upon others. And let us remember that, in these kinds, we cannot distinguish between act and utterance. What Antony says to his servants, what he bids Eros write to Enobarbus,--the words are his gesture; just as in the main their words are the gesture by which they in turn respond to his.[23]

It is Murry's contention that one cannot judge a play like this as a record of action merely, because then its essence escapes the reader's judgments. He uses essence in the sense of the play's "vital inward unity."[24] Thus, he continues, Antony must be set before our imaginations as one to whom the final sacrifice of Enobarbus and Eros is a _natural_ duty paid. Antony needs to be interpreted by the reader as belonging to an order of beings who can declare in biblical fashion "he that loseth his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Murry recognizes that Antony becomes what he is in the minds of the reader partly by reason of such sacrifices, but he argues that Antony must already be such a person that one has no doubts lest his sacrifice should be wasted on an unworthy object. Two things, Murry suggests, are necessary in order for the reader to accept Antony's role of true nobility: one is that the passion to which he yields should seem overwhelming and elemental, a force of nature and a power of destiny; the other is that one should be convinced of his essential nobility. Of these two, the second is of course of more importance.[25]

Murry sees Cleopatra's magnificence in light of Antony's: he is magnificent; therefore, she must be. Up to the death of Antony it is from him that the life of the play has been derived. Cleopatra has been what she is by virtue of the effects we see in Antony. Now that Antony is dead, Cleopatra's function in the play is to maintain and prolong, to reflect and reverberate that achieved royalty of Antony's.

> Now in very deed, Cleopatra loves Antony. Now she discerns his royalty, and loyalty surges up in her to meet it. Now we feel that her wrangling with Caesar and her Treasurer which follows is all external to her--as it were a part which she is still condemned to play 'in this vile world,' a mere interruption, till the flame of perfect purpose breaks forth:[26]
>
> Now Charmian!
> Show me, my women, like a queen: go fetch
> My best attires: I am again for Cydnus,
> To meet Mark Antony. (V, ii, 226-9)

To Murry Cleopatra's words here indicate the truly first Cydnus, not the second, for that first event was merely a symbol and prefiguration of this, an event in time, not one in and for eternity. Those royal robes, her best attire, were then only beautiful material garments; now they are the clothing of the soul and must show her like a queen because she is a queen, as she never was before.[27] One sees in Murry's treatment of the play a concern with the "royal" love, not with any possible infractions of morality.

Perhaps the best known twentieth-century Romantic treatment of Antony and Cleopatra comes from the pen of G. Wilson Knight. It is from his writings that we glean the title "imperial diadem of love" for the two main characters. Knight, like Murry, feels that Cleopatra's role is a universal one, that she represents not a historical figure as much as she represents Woman.

> Cleopatra trades in love; so beauty ever lives by absorbing strength; woman, by allure of man. The phrase does not apply to Cleopatra alone, nor even to a feminine type: it goes deeper, and to misread it is to forgo [sic] the fine scope of our vision. Cleopatra is not one, but all woman, waiting for man. She is another Dido, or another Eve. She waits with her girls for Antony. Cleopatra and her girls at Alexandria are as the Eternal Femininity waiting for man.[28]

Knight suggests that the reader must keep two things in mind if he wants to understand Cleopatra's character: (1) her ability to act any part to gain or retain hold over Antony's heart; and (2) the deep sincerity of love beneath these surface insincerities. With exquisite subtleties she plays on Antony's affection when she can win but changes her tactics as soon as her power appears to be failing. Knight here is reestablishing the basic Romantic concept that Cleopatra truly loves Antony. Knight offers as an example the case of Enobarbus' comments on Cleopatra's questionable behavior:

> Cleopatra, catching but the least noise of this, dies instantly; I have seen her die twenty times upon far poorer moment. (I, ii, 149)

Enobarbus is questioning here, but when Antony bitterly admits her cunning, Enobarbus continues:

> Alack, sir, no; her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love; we cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report: this cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a shower as well as Jove. (I, ii, 156-9)

So closely is play-acting woven into her love, suggests Knight. She seems to be a mixture of truth and falsehood, and the complexity is often baffling. A curious combination of passion and premeditation exists within her, and she is adept in love's cunning.[29] The remarkable thing is that she has so many qualities potential in her.

> All colours blend in a rich fascination, a single impact, a myriad tints; like some sky-rainbow of humanity, she circles the solid humanism of former plays, containing all their essences, but, in sweeping curves of the spirit, outdistancing their varied experiences with ethereal compass. She is by turns

> proud and humble, a raging tigress and a demure girl; utterly deceitful, she is yet faithful to death; compact of highest regality, she is skittish as a shop girl on a bank-holiday; expressly feminine, she loves to engage in war; all woman's gentleness is hers, yet she shows the most callous and inhuman cruelty. She is woman's loveliness incarnate, beauty enthroned beyond the shores of time, set above the rugged map of imperial splendour and down-watching the fighting princes below--herself the only prize of valour, another Helen of Troy, fit to glorify a Caesar's triumph with eternal splendour, or crown an Antony with immortality.[30]

Always, however, Knight argues, the reader must observe that love is the root and the <u>only</u> root of her actions. She is thus undivided; whereas Antony serves both love and honor, Cleopatra is a trader in love alone. It is for love that she suffers. The reader notices that Knight is not speaking of "trading in love" in a pejorative sense; he is glorifying her, setting her apart as the epitome of female Love. He admits her evident ambivalence, and what more traditional critics would consider perhaps hypocrisy and treachery; but these acts are all overcome by the magnificent love shown Antony. She continues the royalty of Antony to the very end.

According to Knight the play also shows the reader something of the battle within of Antony, because he too is a noble person. Antony has a difficult time forgetting his soldiership, for the personal battle for him is not really Antony against Caesar, but Antony the soldier against Antony the lover.[31] The play then concentrates for its theme of action on the antagonism of values, seen both in the masculine and feminine forms, values suggesting a choice of either Empire or Love. The love value of course finally wins. So this is Antony's play as well as Cleopatra's. However, for Knight, Cleopatra is the more angelic of the two. It is she who really reminds us of humanity's spiritual wavering,

"the torch-like flickering, buffeted in the winds of time, extinguished, it would seem, one moment, then again bright flaring."[32] The death-moments of the chief persons of the play show its graded ascent: the death of faithful Enobarbus, the death of noble Antony, and now, the final resplendent vision, the death of Cleopatra.

> Here the bright palace of love falls. Cleopatra, Queen of Love's Eternity, has been attended throughout by her girls. We have seen them with her still waiting at Alexandria, beyond the turbulence of imperial contest, eternal feminine beauty outwatching the glories of time. But Cleopatra dies, diademed imperially with the crown of life, to meet her Antony, attended by her girls, whose dying with her, before and after, makes a silent melodic succession, a triple cadence, one death on either side her death, harbinger and escort of her approach.[33]

Even Caesar, the very symbol of temporal power, stands dazed by this Orient beauty in death. According to Knight, Caesar has wavered between admiration and despisal of Antony, and he has previously resisted Cleopatra.[34] However, now he, like the rest, bows finally to love, because Cleopatra wins him in her death. Knight points to Caesar's remarks as evidence:

> Dazedly he looks on her, crowned and robed for another Cydnus,
>
> > . . . she looks like sleep,
> > As she would catch another Antony
> > In her strong toil of grace. (V, ii, 345-51)
>
> Reft of all hope of an ignoble desecration of Cleopatra's majesty to swell his triumph, himself he speaks the last epitome of her and of Antony's glory:
>
> > Take up her bed;
> > And bear her women from the monument;
> > She shall be buried by her Antony:
> > No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
> > A pair so famous. High events as these
> > Strike those that make them; and their story is

> No less in pity than his glory which
> Brought them to be lamented. (V, ii, 359-66)

As David S. Berkeley reminds us in his article "On Desentimentalizing Antony," Knight's rapture at the death of Antony seems to derive from one's viewing this play in terms of the Tristan myth:

> According to this archetypal story, which is analyzed by Denis de Rougemont, love is fate, unavoidable and stronger than anything else in life. Love is based on adultery. The lovers, ravished beyond good and evil, love not each other but their passionate dream; they may admit that they have sinned, but they do not wish to repent. The man is depicted as 'the strongest'; the woman, as 'the most beautiful.' As the servente he receives ennoblement from the sacred flame of the lady who is spiritually exalted over the wife. . . . Death comes in the end because the passion, i.e., the suffering, of the highest love is never fulfilled here below.[35]

Mark Van Doren, a foremost American critic of Shakespeare's plays, agrees with Knight and others that Cleopatra's strength never appears more clearly than in the charm with which she yields herself to death. This is the one big play within the play that proves her claim for greatness. True, he says, she is an infinite variety.[36]

> Unlike Antony, Cleopatra's dimensions express themselves with an excess of drama, in many little plays. She comes in waves. She is fickle, she is spoiled, she is vain, even cowardly. Yet she is a queen whom everything becomes. Antony speaks of her as such. Her variety is infinite; she perfectly expresses the elasticity of Egypt's air.[37]

Van Doren considers Antony a great person, but he thinks that his greatness is seen in a different way. Noting the praise sung by Lepidus, Euphronius, Caesar, and especially by Cleopatra, Van Doren believes that Antony deserves such praises and more perhaps. But he reminds the

reader that one should not expect to see these praises necessarily exemplified in act. He explains:

> They are often negative things: there are not enough evils to darken his goodness, his death is not a single doom; nothing is left remarkable since he is gone, his bounty had no winter in it. Nothing more interesting was ever said about any man but it cannot be shown. The virtues of Antony cannot be dramatized because they are one virtue and its name is magnanimity.[38]

J. Dover Wilson thinks that Van Doren's term <u>magnanimity</u> is surely correct to single out as Antony's one supreme virtue if the word be taken in its modern sense. However, Wilson remarks, magnanimity shows us only one aspect of the man.[39] Antony possesses qualities finer than any of the military ones which brought him victory in the days of his greatest glory. Wilson asks, in considering the varied aspects of Antony's character, how it is that Shakespeare makes the reader love him. Even Antony's followers have done this. One is reminded of Eros, the armour-bearer, who chooses rather to slay himself than to cast the stroke called for by his chief; or of the fascinating realist Enobarbus, who decides to leave Antony to his path of defeat, but who having left him is so overcome by the striking attitude of the master he stills adores that he dies virtually of a broken heart. Wilson continues:

> When Antony hears he has gone over to Caesar, not a word of reproach falls from his lips. That great spirit, piercing to the root of the matter, finds excuse, not blame, for his friends' treachery. He bids them also send after him the chests and treasure he has left behind, together with gentle adieus and greetings signed by himself. The same noble integrity is shown after another fashion in the second scene of the play. 'The nature of bad news infects the teller,' says a trembling messenger who comes to tell him of disasters in Italy, to which Antony replies:

> When it concerns the fool or coward. On!
> Things that are past are done. With me, 'tis thus--
> Who tells me true, though in his tale lie death,
> I hear him as he flattered. (I, ii, 106-109)

And a little later, when the Messenger begins to hint at what they are saying in Rome of his dallying with Cleopatra, he breaks in with:

> Speak to me home, mince not the general tongue.
> O, then we bring forth weeds
> When our quick minds lie still, and our ills told us
> Is as our earing.[40] (I, ii, 110-12)

Mr. Wilson recalls also that Cleopatra deifies him after death, herself recalling the loftiness of his world-station, the splendour and graciousness of her person, his voice like the music of the spheres for beauty and range, his divine amiability, his immense capacity for enjoyment and for rising at any moment superior to it, and finally his ascendancy over mankind, together with his contempt for the fruits of power. Yet, Wilson asserts, all these combined do not make up Antony's real sum. Further evidence can be cited:

> Take a treatise on the virtues required in men of high calling, one well known to Shakespeare and his audience, like Sir Thomas Elyot's Boke Named the Governour, and run through the qualities named in the various headings: majesty, affability, benevolence, liberality, placability, amity, justice, fortitude, patience in sustaining wrong; all and more are Antony's. And if he lacks others such as continence and sobriety, or political sapience, which Elyot brings in towards the end of the catalogue, these defects only make his virtues shine more bright, while they are defects which male humanity has always found most venial in the heroes it takes closest to heart.[41]

Simply stated, Wilson sees Antony as a portrait of true greatness, of a man as well able to conquer with his sword a world he finds falling into chaos as was any cold dictator but one winning at the same time all the

hearts by geniality and self oblivious magnanimity; Wilson sees Antony as one conceived on a colossal scale in everything: in stature, force of character, generosity, affections, passions; and one who perishes because being human such greatness as his must come to an end. Wilson's attitude is Romantic, of course, in that it overlooks or makes slight any of Antony's faults. Deferment of faults is awarded to generosity, affections, and passions, i.e., the enormous love of Antony for Cleopatra transcends all.

If Antony's supreme virtue is magnanimity, Cleopatra's is vitality, says Wilson. And because she is also the genius of the play, vitality is the play's true theme--vitality as glorified in both of them, and in the form which Shakespeare most admired: The nobleness of life. Cleopatra too finds her true greatness and is touched to finest issues:

> Her death so far from arousing pity fills us with exultation and delight. Even Antony himself is translated to a sphere far above pity by her speech saluting the grandeur of his spirit. And having crowned him thus, she is ready to ascend the throne at his side. Such a word of farewell means, not death, but an undying triumph in the eternal city of the imagination of mankind, and a triumph over Caesar and every other political 'ass unpolicied' who finds in life no purpose but an extension of his own tethered range upon this dungy earth.[42]

The play then from Wilson's point of view displays the infinite variety of mood, the strength and majesty of human nature, the instincts of generosity, the graciousness and large-heartedness of noble people, and the warmth of blood and gaiety of spirit of the great. The play, in short, is Shakespeare's own "Hymn to Man."

Donald A. Stauffer, a recent critic who has concerned himself primarily with Shakespeare's imagery, agrees with the older Romantic Samuel

Taylor Coleridge that no play of Shakespeare's surpasses Antony and Cleopatra in grandeur of scope and scale.[43] According to Stauffer, Shakespeare takes the conflict between love and duty--a classical tragic theme--and treats it romantically by allowing the triumph of love over duty. He reminds the reader that Shakespeare is no rational or mechanical moralist. The classic solution to such a conflict would allow duty, since it perhaps involves the welfare of more individuals, to conquer love (e.g., Aeneas and Dido). But Shakespeare reverses that solution:

> He wagers all for love. Shakespeare is at one with Aristotle in holding that in the truly moral nature, instinct and intelligence are in harmony, as in Cleopatra. But in this play he is a romantic rather than an Aristotelian in believing that if they cannot be harmonized, then instinct must be chosen. Perhaps he is creating a dream of freedom rather than a way of life. It is a dangerous doctrine, for it depends upon the unverifiable quality and integrity of a particular passion, when passion in general may more frequently degrade than exalt. And it requires his greatest persuasiveness, in reshaping the old story of the royal courtesan and the great man ruined by lust.[44]

Stauffer sees Shakespeare as daring to defend the illicit passion that set the halves of the world at war and destroyed its possessors. To him the writing of the play constitutes in itself a moral act of judgment. He sees Shakespeare as deliberately taking four steps: (1) he must demonstrate that "reason" is mistaken, (2) he must belittle the cause of empire, (3) he must make passion larger than the world, and (4) he must spiritualize and ennoble an historical liaison until it appears as the true quality of love.[45]

Whereas so many of the critics focus upon Cleopatra's greatness or voluptuousness, Stauffer seems most concerned with Antony, for to him the tragic theme of the play lies in Antony's painful struggle to

renounce his former greatness and accept his present enchantment.[46] Antony in Egypt is a lascivious waissailer, a strumpet's fool, an instrument for a gypsy's lust. Moreover, he sees at times his course of life in Egypt as idleness; but the violence of the passion felt draws him back to Cleopatra. Hence, he sacrifices his occupation to love. In Stauffer's words,

> Passion becomes larger than the world; it is spiritualized, ennobled, triumphant. . . . The Love which Cleopatra never loses, to which Antony returns, and from which in spirit he is never long absent, is exalted by all the art at Shakespeare's command. At the start we learn that 'there's beggary in the love that can be reckon'd' and that to set limits to the love of this noble pair requires the finding out of 'new heaven, new earth.' When they are together, eternity is in their lips and eyes, and none of their parts so poor but that it is a race of heaven.[47]

Perhaps then, Stauffer surmises, Antony and Cleopatra is less a tragedy than a victorious vision, a fulfillment of immortal longings. Desire is sharp and pure; the protagonists create their own glowing worlds. The dramatic center of this play is the marriage of true minds, exalted above all faults and accidents. Love for both Antony and Cleopatra, it seems, is a creative force within the mind. It allays anger, gives medicine to shame, repays all loss, and multiplies its miracles. It is this kind of love that can take as husband the defeated and the dead, a kind of love the world is not large enough to contain. But says Stauffer, death here is not negation, but liberty--a liberation "that finds new heaven, new earth, and an assurance of a reunion which alone gratifies immortal longings."[48]

John Holloway, another recent American critic, finds that there is something both vague and strained about this and almost all accounts of

Antony and Cleopatra. He suggests that a possible reason lies in the fact that the bond between the lovers has been consistently overlooked. According to him, the bond is not just love, or passion, but the sense or realization they both experience of their noble position that they must live up to.[49] Holloway sees this third thing transpiring from the very start:

> Cleopatra's first words were 'if it be love indeed, tell me how much.' But insofar as Antony does tell her, it is a very particular kind of 'how much' that he stresses:
>
> > The nobleness of life
> > Is to do thus (embracing), when such a mutual pair
> > And such a twain can do't, in which I bind
> > On pain of punishment, the world to weet
> > We stand up peerless. (I, i, 36 ff.)
>
> Antony does not always talk so, but this is the attitude which re-emerges at Cleopatra's death. His pointed 'I come, my queen' leads into a vision of their reunion after death; yet, surely for those who weigh it, this vision is a remarkable one:
>
> > Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
> > And with our spritely port make the ghosts gaze.
> > Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops
> > And all the haunt be ours. (IV, xiv, 51-54)
>
> The peerless pair are not re-united in the intimacy of their love for each other; but are to be the cynosure of the world to come, as they have been of this one. Antony immediately goes on to see in Cleopatra herself exactly what he had seen in his love with her:
>
> > I, that with my sword
> > Quarter'd the world, and o'er green Neptune's back
> > With ships made cities, condemn myself to lack
> > The courage of a woman; less _noble_ mind
> > That she which by her death our Caesar tells
> > 'I am conquere of myself.' (IV, xiv, 57-62)

It is this sense of having the role of greatness to live up to that Holloway feels runs throughout the play.

But if Antony dwells less on love than on his and his queen's

nobility, especially at the moment of disaster and crisis, so does Cleopatra, argues Holloway. He reminds the reader that it is easy to allow personal ideas to play too freely in the mind and cause one to see Cleopatra's delight in Antony's greatness as going merely with a woman's affection and devotion towards her mate, in other words, as the expected thing.

> But when she says:
>
> > His face was as the heavens. . .
> > His legs bestrid the ocean; his rear'd arm
> > Created the world. His voice was propertied
> > As all the tuned spheres. . ., (V, ii, 79 ff.)
>
> then one sees her glorification of Antony's greatness. And Dolabella guides us to how she truly glories in Antony's glory as counterpart to her own:
>
> > Your loss is, as yourself, great; and you bear
> > It as answering to the weight. (V, ii, 101)
>
> What Cleopatra sees as calling her to commit suicide is not her love and her loss, as important to her as those are, but nobility:
>
> > Good sirs, take heart.
> > We'll bury him; and then, what's brave, what's noble,
> > Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,
> > And make earth proud to take us.[50]

It is Holloway's conclusion then that this is Shakespeare's way of qualifying the first two terms used, love and passion. To be able only to say in general terms that the love of these lovers is less than love in the fullest, or passion in the merest sense, is to say little. But this third quality exalts passion. "Both lovers find, in their love the manifestation and continuance of their own greatness."[51] This is the kind of nobility which the play has, and this, says Holloway, is what gives it its quality of dramatized exaltation, its eloquence, its superb if also savage egotism. In essence, Holloway is saying what the other

Romantic critics report, that herein is love exalted and with the world subordinated, the lovers are able to find in themselves the world they have longed for. The same idea is expressed well in an early 17th century poem by John Donne, "The Sun Rising."

> She is all states, and all princes I;
> Nothing else is.
> Princes do but play us; compared to this,
> All honor's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
> Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,
> In that the world's contracted thus;
> Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
> To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
> Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
> This bed thy center is, these walls thy sphere.

In general the poem apostrophizes the sun after a night of love. Love is indifferent to all the influences exerted upon the earth by the sun, for the lovers are as complete in themselves as is the whole earth. The idea then is not really new, but the Romantics presented here have capitalized upon it.

Certain twentieth century critics were to provide another insight into Shakespeare's creative mind, for they were not satisfied with approaches taken by critics like Jameson, Hazlitt, Coleridge, Bradley, Furness, Knight and others who are usually considered "Romantic." As Willard Farnham points out in his book Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier, they were to return to the pages of literary history and search out the so-called traditional or orthodox interpretation and lay stress upon it once more. Farnham reminds the reader that it was not the tendency of the age in which Shakespeare wrote to wash out the faults of Antony and Cleopatra in Romantic sentiment. Garnier sentimentally lightens the faults of Cleopatra, but he has moral condemnation both for her faults and for Antony's. Daniel has even more moral condemnation for the

faults of both lovers. It is evident too that Elizabethan writers who found cause to mention Antony and Cleopatra in passing were apt to deal harshly with them. Sir Richard Barckley, for example, says of them: "Antony was besotted upon Cleopatra and lost fame, power, and life through blind loue of her."[52] And Thomas Beard remarks: "Antony and Cleopatra got that punishment which they both deserued, a punishment that was one of God's heauy judgements."[53] Farnham contends then that Shakespeare, though not a preaching moralist about their faults, is neither a preaching Romanticist who, he says, normally wants to free them from the judgment of the moralist.[54]

Farnham's thesis, like that of most of the recent historical critics, is that in order for one to completely understand Antony and Cleopatra he must be aware of the historical facts surrounding the characters. He thinks one must understand that they are voluptuaries, admiring them for certain actions even while recognizing their true nature. He reminds the reader that in spite of their voluptuous nature, they are led to have certain qualities for which they may be respected. He suggests that they remain voluptuaries throughout the play, however, since they do not offer a bid for sympathy by reforming or by undergoing any purgation.[55] For him, even at the end, Cleopatra still has the instincts of a strumpet and Antony is still capable of being a fool in her hands because of his desire for her. But Farnham is forced to agree in part with the Romantics that the play shows these two to be much more than an ordinary strumpet's fool and an ordinary strumpet, much more than the typical "soldier broken down by debauchery" and the typical "wanton in whose arms such men perish."[56] It also shows them as apparently incapable of being their greater selves except through being their lesser selves.

> Antony is a man who fights for high place in the world because he has an unlimited desire to gratify his senses. He can waste time with Cleopatra in the most inane amusements, but his sensualism drives him to high endeavor as well as to such wasting of time. He has love for the strongest colors the world can show and the most pompous grandeur it can yield. To win commanding position in the world and the delight that for him goes with it, he is capable at times of denying himself and even of undergoing rigorous hardship.[57]

This is what makes Antony a great leader. He is fearless and an able general, and his love of the world includes love of the human scene, even though at times he can be cruel, as the selfish sensualist tends to be cruel. Still he understands people, he craves boon companionship, and he wins affection from his followers. His love for humanity can at rare intervals then produce the truest humanity in him. This is true in part with Cleopatra, Farnham continues to point out:

> From what we see of Cleopatra before Antony returns to her, we know surely that there are depths in her character which the opening scene of the play does not lead us to suspect. We are not surprised when she beats the messenger who brings news that Antony has married Octavia. But we are not prepared for the demonstration she makes when she admits that she was wrong in doing so. Even her royal spirit is paradoxical. It can produce both the pettiness shown by her assault, and the highmindedness shown by the condemnation of that assault:
>
> 'These hands do lack nobility, that they strike
> A meaner than myself; since I myself
> Have given myself the cause.' (II, v, 82-84)
>
> While Antony is in Rome, Cleopatra is willing to unpeople Egypt in sending messengers to him. Her thoughts are with him constantly, and she has no zest for her usual round of frivolities. All this does not prove that what she feels for Antony has great depth, but it does prove that what she feels has <u>some</u> depth.

Farnham attacks the basic Romantic glorification of Cleopatra, however,

when he recalls sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historians and their records of important events, especially here the death of Cleopatra and its cause. It has already been pointed out that most of the Romantics saw in her death a matching glory and grandeur of true love found in that of Antony's. Farnham believes, to the contrary, that Cleopatra took her life, not out of great, devoted love for Antony, but in order to save her pride and the pride of her own nation. In other words, she did not want to be led in triumph by Octavius. Farnham points out that Elizabethan writers saw no reason to think that a woman of her character was capable of being true in love and of dying for love.[58] Richard Reynoldes says that she killed herself to save her honor as a queen.[59] Thomas Beard expresses the same idea in _The Theatre of God's Iudgements_ (1597) and William Fulbeck, in _An Historicall Collection of the Continuall Factions, Tumults, and Massacres of the Italians_ (1601) agrees. Farnham's idea is that even though Cleopatra had given some thought to the loss of Antony, her main preoccupation is with the degradation which Caesar expects to afford her, so to Farnham the historical answer to Cleopatra's death is better than the Romantic one.

Another twentieth-century historical critic, Levin L. Schücking, asserts that Romantics are not consistent with their interpretations because Cleopatra herself is not a unified, coherent, consistent character.[60] He says that the woman of the last two acts, inwardly and outwardly a queen, has but little in common with the harlot of the first part. Before Antony's decline she is a strumpet; in the last events she is "an ideal figure," comparable to Desdemona and Imogene. It is interesting to note that ironically certain other historical critics do _not_ agree wholly with Mr. Schücking. C. H. Herford, for example, refuses to accept his analysis:

> We are here concerned only to describe a critical method not to discuss its results; but it is obvious to note, first, that the drama describes precisely a growth of the light liaison between the triumvir and the queen into a fierce though fitful passion which has moments of self-forgetting devotion (when no serious sacrifice is involved); and second, that even in this second phase the coquette, even the hard and brutal woman, flashes out at moments too; in her consummate dying speech, lover and actress, the jealous woman and the magnificent queen, the mistress of a Roman, who wishes to die like him after the high Roman fashion, and the Oriental weakling who experimented first in 'easy ways to die'--all are intermingled. The test of Cleopatra's coherence is not that a rather wooden mind may not discover inconsistency in the play of her 'infinite variety,' but that she impresses our imagination, not in spite of her variety, but by and through it, as a personality superbly real and one.[61]

Another well-known historical critic, Edgar Stoll, sides with Herford:

> But the essential unifying elements in the character, is I think overlooked by both critics. It is. . . rather in the speech, the identity of tone, than in the deeper psychological structure or the mental attitude. It would take many words for me to show this--there are so many facets to her glittering figure--if indeed I could show it at all. There are glimpses of her humour, for instance, not only in her death scene but at Antony's death. And her spontaneous explosiveness appears when she calls Dolabella liar and vents her rage on Seleucus, and when she called Antony one, raved against the Messenger, and threatened Charmian with bloody teeth. She is not wholly sublime and ideal as Professor Shucking takes her now to be. She abuses the gods and rails at Fortune when Antony dies, as she has continually and vindictively, with her modest eyes and her dullness. But above all she keeps her vivacious manner when excited. 'Note him, good Charmian, 'tis the man, but note him.' Again and again this dancing repetition recurs, as after Antony's death.[62]

J. I. M. Stewart also takes issue with Schucking's denigration of Cleopatra:

> Cleopatra has appeared a wanton, sunk beyond recall in a barren dream of sense; and only her poetry has spoken of something else. And yet this something else was the truth of her; through her sterile sensuality there has subterraneously run the quickening stream; and here at last is her monument--to our felling vast and oppressive as the Ptolemies' pyramids--like water cleaving the rock, her womanhood discloses itself in a mature and final splendour:
>
> Husband, I come. . .
> Peace, peace.
> Dost thou not see my Baby at my breast,
> That suckes the nurse asleepe. . .[63]

And one of the latest critics, though probably not one to be classified in any one school of thought, Leo Kirschbaum, says that what Schucking does not note enough is that Shakespeare never for a moment ceases to picture Antony and Cleopatra as voluptuaries. Kirschbaum's criticism agrees then with Farnham's at this point. He says that we can say of Cleopatra what she says of the rural clown in Act V:

> What poor an instrument
> May do a noble deed! (V, i, 30-31)

Nevertheless, she dazzles the eyes, and she almost escapes moral judgment. How consistent Shakespeare is in his depiction of her, says Kirschbaum, because she is the same strumpet at the end that she is in the beginning. Thirteen lines before the end of the play we are informed that she had made endless experiments in "easy ways to die."[64]

Herford, Stoll, Stewart, and Kirschbaum assert then that Cleopatra is a consistent character in that she remains basically the same kind of individual throughout the play. This view is usually taken to represent the traditional interpretation of this part of the play.

Probably one of the most outspoken historical critics of Antony and Cleopatra is Franklin M. Dickey. He surmises that the widespread

exaltation of the love of these two characters after whom the play is named is actually new. Dickey claims that Shakespeare was not under compulsion to give his audience what they expected. According to him, it is because of this fact that Romantics have claimed his tragedy unique in "defending the illicit passion that set the halves of the world at war and destroyed its possessors."[65] These critics, of course, tend to see the love which drives Antony and Cleopatra to death as a purifying flame, and according to Dickey, results in the extreme of canonizing the two as martyrs to love.

Dickey asserts that this view can be held only by overlooking a great many contrary actions and statements in the play itself. If one looks at the play literally, he sees two characters who are examples of rulers who threw away kingdoms for lust, and one cannot find any attempt by Shakespeare to present a contrast with this traditional abuse.[66] Dickey sees Octavius, the Augustus whom the Elizabethans regarded as the ideal prince, stating explicitly the theme that lust has made Antony less than a man.[67] Octavius' judgment of Antony's faults is severe, but it confirms what the reader has seen of him in Egypt. He tells Lepidus:

> he fishes, drinks, and wastes
> The lamps of night in revel; is not more manlike
> Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy
> More womanly than he. . . . (I, iv, 2-7)

Dickey continues by suggesting that if more proof is needed, the next character to call our attention to Antony's fall from the decorum of manhood is Cleopatra herself, who exults in having subdued her lover and thus confirms Caesar's judgment that lust has made Antony "womanly."[68]

> I laugh'd him out of patience; and that night
> I laugh'd him into patience; and next morn,

> Ere the ninth hour, I drunk him to his bed;
> Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst
> I wore his sword Philippan. (II, v, 18-23)

Equally strange, Dickey adds, is the fact that if Shakespeare wished to present an exalted picture of love, he would not have allowed so many of Cleopatra's luxurious musings which follow Octavius' shrewd estimate of her effect on Antony. Waiting for word from Rome, she jests outrageously with her eunuch Mardian and then falls into a reverie on Antony in which she recalls her past conquests:

> He's speaking now,
> Or murmuring, 'Where's my serpent of old Nile?'
> For so he calls me. Now I feed myself
> With most delicious poison. Thin on me,
> That am with Phoebus' amourous pinches black,
> And wrinkled deep in time? Broad-fronted Caesar,
> When thou wast here above the ground, I was
> A morsel for a monarch; and great Pompey
> Would stand and make his eyes grow in my brow;
> There would he anchor his aspect and die
> With looking on his life. (I, vi, 24-34)

In fact, Dickey thinks from this point in the play, the end of Act I to the conclusion, there is little that is appealing in the passion of Antony and Cleopatra. Antony appears as a man weakened by lust. His paramour appears as a fascinating but calculating woman, "no longer young, whose thought runs continually to her past and present conquests."[69] Further evidence, Dickey asserts, that Shakespeare conceived of the queen of Egypt as his contemporaries saw her appear in the repeated reference to her past love affairs. Why, he asks, if Shakespeare wanted us to consider her love ennobling, does he keep referring to her former conquests? She delights in her memories of Caesar and Pompey and looks upon Antony as another in her string, "albeit the best of the lot."[70]

One of the most recent Shakespearian critics, Daniel Stemple, agrees decidedly with Dickey in asserting that the reader who truly wants to understand the dramatic structure and characterization of Antony and Cleopatra cannot substitute his own values for Renaissance values. Stemple suggests that the theme is not "all for love," or "the world well lost," titles ironically given by an early critic, John Dryden, to his revision. According to Stemple, the fundamental problem in the plays of classic themes is restoration of health to a diseased state, the problem of order. He notes that this is true with most of Shakespeare's other tragedies so there is no reason to believe that it is not applicable to this one. Stemple reminds the reader:

> For the Renaissance mind, the order of the universe meant something quite different from the cosmological order accepted by the modern mind. This fundamental distinction can be reduced to the following simplification. The Renaissance following medieval practice, organized its cosmology by reasoning from biological analogies, that is, by organizing phenomena according to the principles governing living organisms, rather than by the use of mechanical analogies or mathematical descriptions, the methods pursued by post-Galilean thinkers. The effect of this approach was to establish a hierarchy of realms of order, all organized on similar principles, so that general correspondences of structure and function could be formed between the different levels. Microcosm and macrocosm--nature, the state, and man--existed and operated according to the same rules of order. The spread of chaos on the level of political organization, in particular, was feared by men of the Renaissance. Shakespeare's classical plays reflect this fear; it is the ultimate source of the conflict of values in all of them, including Antony and Cleopatra. Antony's domination by Cleopatra is an unnatural reversal of the roles of man and woman, and where there is a change of place, there is an inversion of values. On the psychological level, this change of values corresponds to the similarly unnatural dominance of reason by will in Antony's character and on the political level, it is mirrored by the struggle of Antony and Cleopatra against the rational Octavius.[71]

Stemple reasons from this historical information that if this is accepted as the dominant theme of the play, the entire drama, both in general intent and in detailed interpretation, possesses a significance which is not apparent to those who follow the conventional Romantic approach. It is Stemple's feeling that the key to the problem lies in the character of Cleopatra and her relations with the other characters in the play. Here our knowledge of Elizabethan mores can come to our aid:

> The war between the sexes is perennial, of course, and its historians can be numbered in the thousands between the author of Genesis and James Thurber. The methods of warfare, however, became especially vicious in the sixteenth century. The well-stocked medieval arsenal of arguments against women supplied the weapons, and the old charges were leveled with a new fervor. The most extreme of these misogynic arguments was that, in effect, man was woman's faculty of reason. Woman was a creature of weak reason and strong passions, carnal in nature and governed by lust. She could be trusted only when guided by the wisdom of her natural superior, man. This point of view was fully developed by medieval clerics, to whom women were the slaves of their own insatiable desires, which goaded them on to subvert nature by dominating men.[72]

It is against this background, Stemple argues, that we must place Shakespeare's Cleopatra. If she is measured against the model of unbridled desire rising in revolt against the rule of reason, supplied by the extreme misogynists, her motives and the resulting actions become understandable. Stemple feels that she is not so much a tragic slave of passion in herself as she is a symbol of Antony's slavery to desire. To Stemple she is the tempter and the temptation; she destroys the balance of Antony's nature by arousing his physical desire to the point where it defeats his reason. And by making physical desire Antony's guide,

Cleopatra makes it the guide of the state. Since the paramount value in the classical plays is the stability of the state, the Elizabethan mind would have seen no problem in judging the morality of Cleopatra's conduct. Stemple assures the reader:[73]

> The upheaval in the natural order of things which Cleopatra symbolizes is made amply clear in the direct statements of both protagonists. Both subordinate the welfare of the state to the gratification of their own desires. In the opening scene, Antony declaims:
>
> > 'Let Rome in Tiber Melt and the wide arch
> > Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.
> > Kingdoms are clay. . . . (I, i, 34-6)
>
> In the same fashion, Cleopatra rages in her jealousy: 'Melt Egypt into Nile.' (II, v, 77) And farther on she expresses the wish:
>
> > 'O, I would thou didst,
> > So half my Egypt, were submerg'd and made
> > A cistern for seal'd snakes.' (II, v, 93-5)

Stemple concludes by asking the reader to remove the Romantic veil by divesting himself of the admiration for Cleopatra which seems to come to the modern mind. With that veil removed, he suggests, the breadth and pervasiveness of the misogynic bias running through the play is gradually revealed. "Its influence molds both character and language; more important, it is so fundamental to the structure of the drama that the very genre of Antony and Cleopatra is determined by it."[74]

Summary

It has been noted that the hesitancy of the eighteenth-century critics even to discuss Antony and Cleopatra was certainly overridden by the militancy of the nineteenth-century Romantics. Adding to the early anonymous American criticism, Jameson paved the way for Romantic

appraisal in England with her colorful description of the "historical" Cleopatra presented in terms of "classical elegance, Oriental voluptuousness, and gypsy sorcery," and Hazlitt, Coleridge, and others were to further the Romantic tradition by establishing the criterion of sacrifice which showed a noble pair who died for love. The "infinite variety" of which Enobarbus speaks in applying that epithet to Cleopatra is accepted by these early Romantics (and some later ones, for that matter) as Shakespeare's way of characterizing a noble queen who never forgets her sense of nobility, even in the throes of a necessary self-imposed death. In fact, to these critics, it is especially Cleopatra's death which shows once and for all time that she deserves the title of "noble queen." In the words of Charmian: "Now boast thee, Death! In thy possession lies a lass unparalleled!"

The early twentieth century, however, was to produce dissident voices in the crowd, and the concept of vincit omnia amor was soon challenged. The cry of historical interpretation arose from the mouths of men like Willard Farnham and Levin Schucking and extended to later critics such as Franklin Dickey and Daniel Stemple. The basic common plea of the historical critics was and continues to be the need for placing the play in the context of the times in which it was written. According to these writers, one can fully understand the play only if historical perspective is employed. They see the two main characters as historical figures who, rather than giving their all for love, sold their better lives for lust.

But the dissident voices that arose did not drown out the Romantic song and that melody continues even today. Prominent among those critics whom we have discovered to exhibit definite Romantic tendencies are

A. C. Bradley, J. M. Murry, G. Wilson Knight, Mark Van Doren, J. Dover Wilson, Donald Stauffer, and John Holloway. The arguments offered by these men and others like them center in passages from the play that show Antony and Cleopatra as being truly in love, and as being willing to forsake the pleasures of earthly love for a higher kind, when duty of state fails to win control of their lives. These writers look to Mark Antony's portrait of true greatness, of a man well able to conquer with his sword a world of chaos, but one winning at the same time the hearts of many because of his geniality and his magnanimity. Pointing to praise of Antony by those around him, these critics remind us of Antony's position, of his splendor, of his great potentiality, and of his ascendancy over mankind by his sacrifice of duty and power to love. Quoting their heroine, they look to Cleopatra's preparation for death and her order to her faithful servants as a guide to her character: "Show me my women, like a queen; go fetch my best attire. I am for Cydnus, to meet Mark Antony." To the Romantics these lines offer the answer to her true character, for she produces an even greater sense of nobility in her desire to sacrifice this sensual life for a better, more eternal one. Her death completes the diadem of love.

NOTES

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[6]Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (London, 1817), p. 74.

[7]Ibid., p. 75.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid., p. 76.

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[12]Ibid., p. 77.

[13]Oxford Lectures on Poetry (London, 1934), p. 302.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., p. 303.

[16]Ibid., p. 304.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid., p. 295.

[19]Bradley, p. 296.

[20]Ibid., p. 297.

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[22]Shakespeare (London, 1936), p. 367.

[23]Ibid., p. 370.

[24]Ibid., p. 371.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 375.

[27]Ibid., p. 376.

[28]The Imperial Theme (London, 1931), p. 297.

[29]Ibid., p. 292.

[30]Ibid., p. 290.

[31]Ibid., p. 302.

[32]Ibid., p. 320.

[33]Ibid., p. 321.

[34]Ibid.

[35]David S. Berkeley, "On Desentimentalizing Antony," Notes and Queries, Vol. 11 (1964), pp. 140-41. See Love in the Western World, tr. Montgomery Belgion (New York, 1956), for further comment.

[36]Shakespeare (New York, 1939), p. 280.

[37]Ibid., p. 279.

[38]Ibid., p. 277.

[39]"Introduction," Antony and Cleopatra (Cambridge, 1954), p. 29.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid., p. 31.

[42]Ibid., p. 34.

[43]Shakespeare's World of Images (New York, 1949), p. 233.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., p. 234.

[46]Ibid., p. 241.

[47]Ibid., p. 144.

[48]Ibid., p. 147.

[49]The Story of the Night (London, Nebraska, 1961), p. 101.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid., p. 104.

[52]A Discourse of the Felicities of Man (1598), p. 43-44.

[53]The Theatre of God's Iudgements (1597), p. 250.

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[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid., p. 189.

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[61]A Sketch of Recent Shakespearian Investigation, 1893-1923 (London, 1923), pp. 49-50.

[62]Shakespeare Studies (New York, 1928), p. 144, note 40.

[63]Character and Motive in Shakespeare (London, 1949), p. 75.

[64]Character and Characterization in Shakespeare (Detroit, 1962), p. 109.

[65]Not Wisely but Too Well (San Marino, California, 1957), p. 144.

[66]Ibid., p. 178.

[67]Ibid., p. 183.

[68]Ibid., p. 184.

[69]Ibid., p. 185.

[70]Ibid., p. 186.

[71]"Transmigration of the Crocodile," Shakespeare Quarterly, VII (Winter, 1956), p. 62.

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[73] Ibid., p. 65.

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CHAPTER IV

HENRY V

It has been the plan of this paper to present within each chapter after the first the Romantic positions pertaining to the play under consideration, and then, by way of contrast, the more traditional or orthodox positions. Because of the nature of *Henry V* and its Romantic criticism, it is rather difficult to present the study of this play in the originally prescribed form. For one thing, the play has a political background, which in itself results in the need of a consideration of Romantic political positions that provide a rationale for Romantic criticism. Too, the Romantic criticism available differs greatly; the vast amount of it supports the play as a whole but some of it shows little, if anything, worthy of note. This makes it most difficult to organize this criticism into "schools of thinking." It is necessary then to provide rationale for those Romantics who avidly support the play, because in doing so they might appear at first glance to be violating normal principles held by Romantics in general.

It is for these reasons then that this chapter will take a somewhat different form from that of precedent chapters. Here the writer will present first of all some general statements regarding the usual Romantic views concerning politics, views that offer some basis of rationale for the study of Romantic criticism of this play. Then specific examples from leading proponents of the Romantic School reflecting these general

views will be presented in order to show how certain Romantic critics find Henry V rather distasteful. Following this a rationale, as particularly found in William Wordsworth, which identifies the basis for certain other Romantic attitudes will be discussed because it is here that we find the greatest support for the play, and generally speaking this is Romantic support. Traditional or more orthodox opinions will then be given by way of contrast. Hence, the original plan for the paper will not in its entirety be forsaken by the somewhat more analytical approach evidenced in the beginning of this chapter.

There are several basic positions taken by pure Romantics toward political affairs and society in general that offer the basis for rationale in a study of Romantic criticism of Henry V. As earlier stated, Romantics hold that man is basically and naturally good and that it is society in general that keeps man at different times from developing and exhibiting his goodness. This goodness, however, must work through feeling because this allows one to be brought back to nature and get him away from the evil environment which has corrupted him. The "noble savage" idea (primitivism) is especially strong in the Frenchman Rousseau's writings but it can be found in late eighteenth-century English material also. Although certainly not considered a Romantic in the general sense, Henry Fielding expresses this idea vividly:

> The nature of man is far from being in itself evil; it abounds with benevolence, charity, and pity coveting praise and honour, and shunning shame and disgrace. Bad education, bad habits and bad customs debauch our nature and drive it headlong as it were into vice. The governors of the world, and I am afraid the priesthood, are answerable for the badness of it.[1]

Therefore, the rescuing of men from their evil environment is important

to the Romantic. J. Thelwell celebrates the idea in a work of 1793:

> That thus, as with all I alternately blend
> The mind may expand and the heart may amend;
> Till, embracing Mankind in one girdle of Love
> In Nature's kind lesson I daily improve;
> And (no haughty distinctions to fetter my soul)
> As the brother of all, learn to feel for the whole.[2]

Brotherly love then is the key to the improvement of mankind. But this love must not be subject to restraint. Payne Knight warns us of this:

> If abstract reason only rules the mind,
> In sordid selfishness it lives confined;
> Moves in one vortex, separate and alone
> And feels no other interest than its own.[3]

Love then must be a free love force. It cannot be bound by laws and rules that are too unyielding for it. As the classicist writer reminds us,

> fixed by laws and limited by rules
> Affection stagnates, and love's fervour cools.[4]

The same basic idea is obvious in religion:

> Religion's lights, when loose and undefin'd,
> Expand the heart, and elevate the mind,
> But in dogmatic definitions bound,
> They only serve to puzzle and confound.[5]

Inherent here is the characteristic claim of the individual to emancipation from outward restraint. True love is natural, not something man made; therefore, existing government, especially monarchical kind, is unnatural and evil. The connotation of monarchy to the Romantic is usually disagreeable because there is an associative evil felt, the idea of rule by a tyrant. And as Mary Robinson reminds us in one of her poems:

"Tyrants shall fall--triumphant man be free."[6]

One sees in this attitude then the reason for Romantic dislike of institutions, both secular and religious, and for the hatred of the idea of hereditary principles, i.e., "blood will tell." The individual must be about his business to make sure that he overcomes this evil environment and becomes what he is potentially capable of becoming. The individual shall be his own priest and his own lord.

Therefore, the Romantic normally could find several specific elements in this play that might cause him to criticize it negatively: (1) He would normally dislike Henry because of (a) his supposed inherited nobility; (b) his hypocrisy shown in his youth, in his attempt to blame the clergy if he is unsuccessful in war, in his questionable treatment of Williams, and in his rejection of Falstaff; and (c) because of the possible future tyrannical rule that is open to all monarchs. (2) He would dislike the clergy because it represents (a) regulations not natural to man, (b) total depravity of man which goes against the basic Romantic theory of man's innate goodness, and (c) hypocrisy seen in its legalistic maneuvering with Henry in order to protect church property. These matters afford men like Hazlitt, Bradley, Shaw, Harris, Masefield, and Van Doren reasons for finding nothing of true merit in the work.

William Hazlitt sees little of value in Henry. To him, Henry scarcely deserves the honor which Shakespeare affords him in this play. Hazlitt thinks that Henry has not really changed from the Prince Hal person of <u>Henry IV</u>. He is then still careless, dissolute, and ambitious, having no idea of the common decencies of life and having no idea of any rule of right or wrong. Rather, his ethics are seen in "brute force, glossed over with a little religious hypocrisy and archiepiscopal

advice."[7] The implication here is that Henry is willing to blame the church if the war is unsuccessful, while at the same time he has sought the advice of the church.

Hazlitt says that Henry's adventure on Gadshill (Henry IV) was merely a prelude to Agincourt, only a bloodless one, and that

> Falstaff was a puny prompter of violence and outrage, compared with the pious and politic Archbishop of Canterbury, who gave the king carte blanche, to rob and murder in circles of latitude and longitude abroad--to save the possessions of the church at home.[8]

Hazlitt views Henry's war with France as a result of his inability to govern his own kingdom. Henry, not knowing how to exercise the power he has been given, sets out to create as much trouble as he can.

Hazlitt admits that Henry V is a national hero. Yet he feels that little love or admiration can be offered him because he sacrifices his own life merely for the pleasure of destroying others, and his object seems to be to conquer the French king, not the French people. If we like Henry, we must like him in the play for his splendid pageantry, but for nothing else:

> There he is a very amiable monster. As we like to gaze at a panther or a young lion in their cages in the Tower, and catch a pleasing horror from their glistening eyes, their velvet paws, and dreadless roar, so we take a very romantic, heroic, patriotic, and poetical delight in the boasts and feats of our younger Harry, as they appear on the stage and are confined to lines, often syllables: where no blood follows the stroke that wounds our ears, where no harvest bends beneath horses' hoofs, no city flames, no little child is butchered, no dead men's bodies are found piled on heaps and festering the next morning--in the orchestra.[9]

The implication here is that Henry more often is concerned with a war

that produces horror and suffering for innocent victims. Again the concept of the tyrannical monarch enslaving a people to fight because of his personal reasons is in evidence here, and this thing a pure Romantic could not tolerate.

A. C. Bradley continues to reflect negative criticism of this play. Bradley notes the treatment of Henry in Henry V as a national hero and the fact that he is often thought of as Shakespeare's ideal man of action and even his ideal of man in general. Bradley disagrees with these generalized evaluations, however:

> But Henry is neither of these. The poet who drew Hamlet and Othello can never have thought that even the ideal man of action would lack that light upon the brow which at once transfigures them and marks their doom. It is as easy to believe that. . . Shakespeare would have chosen never to have looked and sung. . . . If we follow Shakespeare and look closely at Henry, we shall discover with the many fine traits a few less pleasing. Henry IV describes him as the noble image of his own youth; and for all his superiority to his father, he is still his father's son, the son of the man whom Hotspur called as 'vile politician.' Henry's religion, for example, is genuine, it is rooted in his modesty; but it is also superstitious--an attempt to buy off supernatural vengeance for Richard's blood; and it is also in part political, like his father's projected crusade. Just as he went to war chiefly because. . .it was the way to keep factious nobles quiet and unite the nation, so when he adjures the Archbishop to satisfy him as to his right to the French throne, he knows very well that the Archbishop wants the war, because it will defer and perhaps prevent what he considers the spoilation of the church. This same strain of policy is what Shakespeare marks in the first soliloquy in Henry IV. It implies that readiness to use other people as means to his own ends which is a conspicuous feature in his father; and it reminds us of his father's plan of keeping himself out of the people's sight. . . . Henry is kindly and pleasant to everyone as Prince and even as king, but there is no sign in him of a strong affection for anyone.[10]

Mr. Bernard Shaw's contempt is so great for this play that he might

not be unwilling to serve as spokesman for this group of negative critics. He is distressed to find in Shakespeare's hero a dramatic embodiment of that which he has devoted his life to rebuking. He writes:

> The combination of conventional propriety and brute masterfulness in his public capacity with a low-lived blackguardism in his private tastes is not a pleasant one.[11]

To Shaw Henry typifies an able young philistine inheriting high position and authority, which he holds on to by keeping a tight grip on his conventional and legal advantages, but who would have been quite in his place if he had been born a gamekeeper or a farmer.

Frank Harris denounces Henry for his barbarism, his lack of sensitivity, and his manliness. Henry, according to Harris,

> shows as in a glass Shakespeare's poverty of conception when he is dealing with the distinctively manly qualities. This puppet is not even human: Mere wood.[12]

Perhaps the most denunciatory of the Romantic critics is John Masefield. He accuses Henry of masculinity, emotional and intellectual insensitivity, and in general of possessing a personality unlike that of Hamlet. To these, he adds the particular charge of "success and worldly happiness," an accusation more serious perhaps than those of militancy, gross vices, and aristocracy. One of Masefield's least relevant charges shows how very dissatisfied he was with Henry:

> When he [Henry V] learns that his behavior may have lost him the crown, he passes a sponge over his past and fights like a wildcat for the right of not having to work for a living.[13]

A more recent critic, Mark Van Doren, agrees with the noteworthy

neo-classic critic Samuel Johnson who could not understand why Shakespeare here gives Henry V the same quality of military grossness and unskillfulness which he condemned in Percy of Henry IV, Part I. Van Doren remarks:

> Shakespeare has forgotten the glittering young god whom Vernon described in Henry IV--plumed like an ostridge or like an eagle lately bathed shining like an image in his golden coat, as full of spirit as the month of May, wanton as a youthful goat, a feathered Mercury, an angel dropped down from the clouds. The figure whom he has groomed to be the ideal English king, all plumes and smiles and decorated courage, collapses here into a mere good fellow, a hearty undergraduate with enormous initials on his chest.[14]

Such negative attitudes as exhibited here can be found many times, of course, in the works of various leading proponents of the Romantic School. It is Lord Byron, for example, who writes of the glory of the good in man as exhibited by those who revert to rural, primitive culture in an attempt to remove themselves from societal corruption. Canto eight of Don Juan states:

> Motion was in their days, Rest in their slumbers
> And cheerfulness the handmaid of their toil;
> Nor yet too many nor too few their numbers;
> Corruption could not make their hearts her soil;
> The lust which stings, the splendour which encumbers
> With the free foresters divide no spoil:
> Serene, not sullen, were the solitudes
> Of this unsighing people of the woods.[15]

Byron here is referring to Daniel Boone and the Kentucky pioneers as examples of those who attempt to recreate good in man by going back to a primitivistic society.

As the corollary to this belief in Nature comes contempt for society and its corrupt restraint:

black solitude,
called social, haunts of Hate and Vice and Care.

Byron's contempt for restraint is shown at its best in Canto Eight:

> But never mind;--"God save the King!"
>   and Kings!
> For if he don't, I doubt if men will longer--
> I think I hear a little bird, who sings
>   The people by and by will be the stronger:
> The veriest jade will wince whose harness wrings
> So much into the raw as quite to wrong her
> Beyond the rules of posting,--and the mob
> At last fall sick of imitating Job.
>
> At first it grumbles, then it swears, and then,
> Like David, flings smooth pebbles 'gainst a Giant;
> At last it takes to weapons such as men
> Snatch when despair makes human hearts less pliant!
> Then comes "the tug of war;"--'t will come again,
> I rather doubt; and I would fain say "fie on 't,"
> If I had not perceived that Revolution
> Alone can save the earth from Hell's pollution![16]

Byron feels then that one must change his circumstances in order to preserve the greatness of man. The circumstances are social--state, church, and family. Byron demands that the individual be free to assert his virtue against the vicious restraints of society.

This hatred for restraint and love for individual reaction against it is evident in another leading Romantic, Percy B. Shelley. Shelley's special point of attack was religion. He hated Christianity and its priests, not so much because the church was in alliance with every kind of reaction, but because it was a discipline; it pronounced restraint of individual sensation and self.

Shelley saw freedom in an alliance with Necessity, whose voice is reason. Reason dictates actions that must result in perfect happiness. The problem of politics is to insure that every human being shall hear it. Everyone would hear it if he were free to do so. Social

institutions suppress man's natural ability to use the faculty of reason to guide his natural desire for expansion. This is perhaps best expressed in his play Prometheus Unbound. The classical writer saw in Prometheus' acts the violation of the gods' laws through disobedience; hence, he must suffer some punishment. Shelley sees good in Promethus' acts because he has brought something of worth to mankind; hence, he should be praised for his initiative. Shelley depicts Prometheus' acts as inspiration and hope for all men:

> The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
> Which mimicked, as with colors idly spread,
> All men believed and hoped, is torn aside;
> The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
> Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
> Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
> Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
> Over himself; just, gentle, wise; but man
> Passionless--no, yet free from guilt or pain
> Which were, for his evill made or suffered them;
> Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
> From chance, and death, and mutability
> The clogs of that which else might overscar
> The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
> Pinnacled dim in the intense in awe.[17]

The last few lines from the play summarize Shelley's intense love of individualism:

> To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
> To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
> To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
> Neither to change, nor falter nor repent;
> This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
> Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
> This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.[18]

The Romantic disdain for social hereditary principles is evidenced well in still another leading Romantic, William Wordsworth. In the

following lines from Prelude, Wordsworth stresses what man can make of himself, based upon the idea of course of innate goodness:

> It was my fortune scarcely to have seen
> Through the whole tenour of my schoolday time
> The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
> Was vested with attention or respect
> Through claims of wealth or blood, nor was it least
> Of many benefits, in later years,
> Derived from academic institutes
> And rules; that they held something up to view
> Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
> Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
> In honour, as in one community,
> Scholars and gentlemen; where furthermore,
> Distinction open lay to all that came
> And wealth and titles were in less esteem
> Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.[19]

The essence of Wordsworth's belief in the goodness of man's nature is summarized further in Book IX of Prelude:

> Man this noble nature, as it is
> The gift of which God has placed within his power
> His blind desires and steady faculties
> Capable of clear truth, the one to break
> Bondage, the other to build liberty
> On firm foundations, making social life
> Through knowledge spreading and imperishable
> As just in regulation, and as pure
> As individual in the wise and good![20]

These firm foundations Wordsworth has outlined in his Letter to the Bishop of Llandoff. In this pamphlet Wordsworth launches into abstract political theory. His idea is that a government is the creature of General Will of a society. It is at best a necessary evil caused by the existence of a few refractory individual wills in that society. The problem is to insure that acts of government will concur with General Will. The people must be in charge through the method of representative government. The people are by nature capable. Ignorance now is the

result of debauchery by the unlawful holders of power, by the particular wills of royal and aristocratic individuals. Ignorance can be overcome by establishment of democratic republican government.

The same spirit, however, that leads a Romantic rebel, like Byron, or Shelley, or Wordsworth, to revolt and to fight for a better freer country is the same spirit that on the other hand can sense a pride in nationalism. The rebel who fights to have more freedom will often of course fight to defend that freedom. This is the "other side of the coin" of certain Romantic attitudes. Hence, patriotism becomes a key-note of some singers of Romanticism. Wordsworth is a good example. In his Tract on the Convention of Cintra, he displays the importance of national spirit. He attempts to define the moral basis of nationalism, to show that nationality has a mystical justification that makes it the true outward mark of the General Will of a society, and that renders the nation-state the ultimate political result of the return to Nature.

Patriotism springs from the common, homely feelings that fill the hearts of men. From this lowly ground of natural man, Wordsworth finds that our higher principles of benevolence soar into being. A central problem of government is to give man full play for this part of his being. Wordsworth states it clearly in these words:

> The vigour of the human soul is from without and from futurity--in breaking down the limit and losing and forgetting herself in the sensation and image of country and of the human race; and when she returns and is most restricted and confined, her dignity consists in the contemplation of a better and more exalted being, which, though proceeding from herself, she loves and is devoted to as to another.[21]

The nation is such an exalted being made of common men. Now man has a common cause for actions with fellowmen. He is now no passive worshipper

but a crusader. In this doctrine of nationalism, the doctrine of the natural goodness of man has at last found a settled lodging.[22]

Peter Viereck discusses this kind of Romantic thinking in his book Metapolitics, where he traces the roots of the Nazi mind. He informs the reader of the German adoption of Rousseau's term "general will" just as Wordsworth did. Adam Nueller called the state "a vast individual enveloping all the little individuals." He wanted the state to become a person itself, a freely evolving whole, to which all members sacrifice their lives in some way. This is the Romantic organic view of the nation where the will of all is expressed in a unified fashion, somewhat mystically enshrouded in unclear purpose.[23]

It is within this rational framework, however, that the greatest number of Romantic critics endorse the play Henry V in its entirety. Criticism of this kind evolves around three basic ideas: (1) that the valor of simple men united in a common cause should be praised, (2) that through this act of unity, men of all types are sacrificing their lives for the good of the whole, and therefore should be revered, and (3) that Henry's leadership of these simple men embodies a racial soul and puts into practice directly democracy through action. It is with these ideas in mind that we now proceed to a discussion of various Romantic critics and their views of the play.

Thomas Carlyle was one of the first Romantics to approve the play without qualification. He first recalls A. W. Schlegel's remarks about Shakespeare's history plays being a national epic, and he agrees with Schlegel. He considers them epic in that they portray great salient points that are admirably seized:

> Therefore there are right beautiful things in those pieces, which indeed together form one beautiful thing. That battle of Agincourt in Henry V strikes me as one of the most perfect things we have anywhere of Shakespeare's. The description of the two hosts: the wornout, jaded English; the dread hour big with destiny when the battle shall begin; and then that deathless valor; 'Ye good yeomen, whose limbs were made in England.' There is a Noble patriotism in it,--far other than the indifference you sometimes hear ascribed to Shakespeare.[24]

Carlyle sees a true English heart in such a statement and in fact throughout the entire play; one not boisterous and protrusive, but rather calm and strong.

H. N. Hudson agrees with Carlyle. Hudson is aware that the subject was one not altogether fitting for dramatic representation; he also notes that it allows little scope for ordinary developments of character and passion of serious drama. However, Shakespeare fills the work with a large lyrical element, giving it the efficacy of a "great national song of triumph."[25] The play becomes charged with the spirit and poetry of jubilant patriotism:

> Viewed in this light the play, however inferior to many others in dramatic effect, is as perfect in its kind as anything the Poet has given us.[26]

John Walter also agrees that Henry V deserves praise. According to him, here we see fully the heroic king of England uniting his people. His personality has united England as never before. Henry shares the dangers of the men and is accepted into their fellowship with gladness. Noblemen and common soldier alike are inspired by Henry's gay and gallant spirits. The note of epic heroism that sounded at Thermopylae and at Rouncesvalles sounds here:

> While Henry infuses courage into his men, he is not without unease of soul. The conversation with Bates, Court, and Williams forces him to examine his conscience on his responsibility for those who are to die in the comming battle, and to complain how little his subjects understand the hard duties of a king in their interests. Militarily his position is desperate: His enemy has selected the time and place for battle, his men are heavily outnumbered, tired and weakened by disease and lack of food. His faith in the righteousness of his cause is strained to the uttermost, and in prayer he pleads that his father's sin of usurpation may not be remembered against him. His courage is magnificent, and his extraordinary self-control has not always been acknowledged. . . . He is the epic leader strong and serene, the architect of victory.[27]

G. G. Gervinus sees Henry in his role as encourager of the men continuing the poetry of the play:

> How popular after his old fashion, and at the same time how sublime, in his encouragement to the battle! How calm his last words to the French herald! How far is he from being overhasty in giving credit to the victory! When he hears of the touching death of the noble York, how near is he to tears! And at the same moment, alarmed by a new tumult, how steeled to a bloody command. How impatiently furious at the last resistance and at the moment when victory decides for him, how pious and how humble! And again, a short time after this solemn elevation of mind, he concludes his joke with Williams, careful even then that no harm should result from it. The poet has continued in the fifth act to show us to the very last the many sided nature of the King. The terrible warrior is transformed into the merry bridegroom, the humorous vein again rises within him; yet he is not so much in love with his happiness or so happy in his love, that in the midst of his wooing, and with all his jests and repartee, he would relax the smallest article of the peace which his policy had designed.[28]

We have seen how certain Romantic criticism has gloried in the unity of the men, bound together with a common cause, and led by a great man of courage and self-control. Now we look at an extension of that sort of criticism: the sacrifice of both common men and leader as they

work together to accomplish their end. The sacrifice of the common men found in such history plays as Henry V is epitomized in the sacrifice of Falstaff. Some Romantics would castigate Henry for banishing Falstaff from his presence, because this action might reflect aristocratic injustice. However, other Romantics see in the dismissal a kind of "sacrifice" that all must be willing to offer for the good of the whole. Perhaps the most positive criticism concerning this point comes from the pen of J. I. M. Stewart, who in introducing his support for Falstaff's rejection attacks so-called "objective" treatment of all the characters in the play. Stewart especially dislikes E. E. Stoll's method. Stoll, like others of the objective historical school of criticism, does not believe Shakespearian plays can be read accurately if intuitive considerations be allowed and if text is not placed along side historical Elizabethan traditions. Stewart disagrees violently with Stoll on such an approach, like his interpretation of Falstaff and Henry's rejection of him. Stewart regards Stoll's method as altogether misapprehending the creative situation, what is happening in the poet's mind when voices of inspiration begin to work.

Stewart does see great hope, however, in the approach that a much earlier critic, Maurice Morgann, takes. (It might be noted that Mr. Morgann's criticism of Shakespeare is taken into consideration in the introductory chapter of this paper as representative of the early trend toward Romantic interpretation.) Stewart says that Morgann's essay "On the Dramatic Character of John Falstaff" brings the reader close to Shakespeare. Stewart cites from the essay to show Morgann's interest in Shakespearian characters that are to be treated as real-life persons, not simply dramatis personae. These characters are seen in light of

depths and facets of human beings, not immediately rendered in behavior. We are asked to be concerned with them then as whole characters, exhibiting the same kinds of complexities of actual beings. This implies, of course, that all sides of a person's character must be considered, textually or atextually.

Stewart continues his criticism by citing Coleridge as another critic agreeing with Morgann that "Shakespeare's characters are like those in life, to be _inferred_ by the reader." The artist does not get the essence of his character from camera-work or from a filing cabinet; rather, he gets it from an interplay of this with something inside:

> Morgann knows that nothing was ever born alive this way, and that despite all the artist owes to tradition and convention, his is an inner travail still. That he draws from tradition is assured, and he will be the better, perhaps, for having before him the idea of the literary kind to which he would contribute. But what he contributes will be his own, or nothing in art.[29]

Stewart suggests that the majority opinion of modern critics is that Hal "is not the offspring of the poet's reflection and passion," and from this follows the idea that Shakespeare was not concerned with working towards an ideal kingship. But Stewart cannot accept this _in toto_. Shakespeare wants to show us these characters (especially Falstaff, in this case) as real people who can be thought of in an intuitive way. The rejection of Falstaff is inevitable from a moralistic standpoint. He must make way for a new king and the riot life of the youthful prince must die. Stewart explains:

> I suggest that Hal, by a displacement common enough in the evolution of ritual, kills Falstaff instead of killing the King, his father. In a sense, Falstaff is his father; certainly he is a father in the

> psychologist's sense of the word; and this makes the theory of a vicarious sacrifice the more colourable.[30]

Stewart continues in his explication:

> If this addition of another buried significance should seem extravagant, or an injudicious striving after Morgann's 'lightness of air,' let it be remembered that drama plays upon atavic impulses of the mind. All true drama penetrates through representative fiction to the condition of myth. And Falstaff is in the end the dethroned and sacrificed king, the scapegoat as well as the sweet beef.[31]

John Walter expresses quite well the Romantic rationale for Stewart's approach. Walter thinks this particular play, epic in nature, gains epic strength and dignity from Shakespeare's presentation of Falstaff's death (following the rejection), even as the Aeneid gains from Dido's death, because they are both sacrifices to a larger morality which they both ignore.[32]

J. M. Murry also accepts the view that it was necessary for Shakespeare to sacrifice Falstaff. He suggests that the necessity came about so that Henry could get back into history and become the national hero. In this suggestion we see a clear-cut expression of the Romantic theory based upon the idea that some of the men bound together must be willing to give their all for the common cause. Murry bases his idea on lines found in the preceding play Henry IV, Part I, V, iv, 64-7:

> I am the Prince of Wales; and think not, Percy,
> To share with me in glory anymore;
> Two stars keep not their motion in one sphere;
> Nor can one England brook a double reign.

These are Prince Hal's words to Hotspur just before he kills him. Murry says:

> Change 'Percy' to 'Falstaff' and they exactly describe the dramatic necessity for the dethroning of Falstaff. Only the order in which the necessity is compulsive is not the historical order, but the imaginative. And the necessity is a symbol of the tension between reality and historical fact.[33]

Murry sees in Shakespeare a writer with a human heart, not a critical philosophy, who might have said that Falstaff cannot be degraded with death. But being the human poet, Shakespeare could not say such a thing. Murry concludes:

> He had not been Sir John Falstaff for nothing. He stands looking upon him as Horatio looks upon Hamlet:
>
> 'Now cracks a noble heart, Good night, sweet prince,
> And flights of angels sing thee to thye rest.'[34]

According to Murry, we are here made partakers in a death of innocence, and the innocence of death. So the same sense of sacrifice as seen in Stewart and Walter is implied in Murry's criticism.

Donald Stauffer, in basic agreement with Murry and certain other Romantics, senses in Falstaff's rejection and sacrifice Shakespeare's seriousness amid a comic play. The comic is now dismissed, but it is a necessary and reasonable action, an action of which Shakespeare's social thinking would approve. The world of Falstaff with its fat and merry living would continue to exist in spite of all ideal lovers and noble kings, but as Stauffer puts it,

> the court of love needs its. . . .Falstaff. Not until he has learned from Falstaff the art of common and careless living, not until he has squeezed the great orange dry, can Henry afford to cast off his great companion. . . . In the death of Falstaff Shakespeare delivers a Parthian shot and passes another of his suspended judgements when we learn of Falstaff that 'the King has killed his heart.' At any rate, Falstaff must go down because he is in unreformable conflict with society.[35]

In other words, Falstaff has been a "natural" teacher for Hal, the Prince; now the Prince is educated, now he is King, so the teacher is no longer necessary. The sacrifice and death of one great commoner produces a great and noble leader of men.

Just as a commoner, like Falstaff, must sacrifice his life, if necessary, so must the leader be willing to give his. Charles Williams shows in his criticism Romantic rationale for Henry's part in the battles of the play. Williams sees Henry V as exhibiting in the early part of the play cheerfulness, efficiency, friendliness, leadership; nothing is seen yet of his capacity for being something "almost supernatural," but the wider and darker the night, the more the "touch of Harry in the night" gleams and shines. Why? Williams cites from Act IV, i, to give his answer: 'Tis good for all men to love their present pain.' (ll. 18-23) According to Williams this is the center of Henry's true capacity:

> He loves his present pains, and his spirit is therefore eased. He has rather more than accepted darkness, danger, defeat, and death, and loves them. It is this which gives him a new quickening of the mind, new motions of the organs; it destroys sloth and the drowsy grave of usual life. It is this love and the resulting legerity of spirit which enables him to be what the Chorus describe and what the rest of the Act accentuates:
>
> 'Upon his royal face there is no note
> How dread an army hath enrounded him;'[36]

No better example can be cited illustrating the Romantic's desire to suffer for some great cause and enjoy the suffering. Morse Peckham calls this the negative phase of Romanticism.[37]

Edward Dowden's concept of the play in general concurs. Dowden sees Henry as a strong king, unlike his father who became exhausted and

worn out by the life of a ruler of people. To Dowden, Henry V is able to overcome any depression he might suffer because of the strength and virtue outside of and beyond himself:

> Joy may ebb with him or rise, as it will; the current of his inmost being is fed by a source that springs from the hard rock of life, and is no tidal flow. He accepts his weakness and his weariness as part of the surrender of ease and strength and self which he makes on behalf of England.[38]

Again we see Henry depicted as a suffering servant sacrificing himself upon the altar of England's glory. It is this kind of sacrificing spirit which Romantics see as the cause for Henry's inspirational influence upon his men.

We have seen how certain Romantics glory in the unity of common men bound together for a common cause that will benefit all, and we have also seen how this thinking is extended to include the concept of willing sacrifice by both leader and follower. Now we turn our attention to still a further extension of the basic idea, that the leader (in this case Henry) is the embodiment of a "racial Soul" that allows democracy to be put into action. R. B. Moulton is perhaps the earliest Romantic critic to approach a direct use of the term. He sees Henry as the "soul of it all" at Agincourt:

> From inspection of host and reception of herald, we glide insensibly into the scenes of the battle; but, whatever phase of war may be uppermost, Henry is the soul of it all. Now he is sweeping over the story of York and Suffolk, how they kissed one another's gashes as they died together, first fruits of the slaughter; now he is proclaiming his Welsh birth to humour the valiant Fluellen; now he is holding back the rejoicings of his soldiers until victory is more decisive. He responds without a moment's hesitation to the most terrible demands that the accursed business of war can make.[39]

Frederick Boas is one who gives the highest of possible praise to Henry and thereby helps establish the theory of an embodiment of a racial soul in Henry:

> The King towers in the forefront as the embodiment of national strength of glory. He is even more than the mirror of all Christian kings; he is the personified genius of his race. What Achilles is to the Greeks, Roland to the Franks, Arthur to the Celts, Henry V is to the Anglo-Saxons.[40]

John Palmer sees the war presented in Henry V as an opportunity for the re-establishment of an English brotherhood, promoted by a leader of valour and courage and consecration:

> Nothing, for example, could be more striking than the contrast between the reasons for which Henry went to war and the spirit in which the English armies follow him. He cynically sets out to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels, but at Agincourt he is identified with every patriotic Englishman who ever lived. The causes of the war are forgotten in the heroism that war inspires. It begins as a conspiracy against the nation; it continues as a brotherhood in which the nation is glorified. Henry, prompted by a subtle father and fortified by the complicity of a politic priest, invaded France to save his dynasty. But all that is forgotten on the field of Agincourt, where an English king is identified with the valour of simple men whose loyalty consecrates his leadership.[41]

One can see in Palmer's criticism several Romantic ideas. He reflects on the one hand the usual negative criticism of Henry, based on the notion that Henry is a hypocritical monarch. But one sees on the other hand more of the positive criticism of the play, based on two notions: (1) that whatever faults Henry might have, energy of will and the resulting spirit of fiery patriotism is sufficient to cause us to forget such faults (This, the reader will remember, is a chief basis of rationale for Romantic criticism of <u>Antony and Cleopatra</u>.), and (2) that Henry

here has embodied the soul of the people by identifying with everyone. The resulting loyalty and courage seem to be the climax of Palmer's criticism.

Dr. Herman Ulrichi sees the King and the other characters of this play as producing a "new" England, for he sees Shakespeare as moving away from a stress on nobility and instead emphasizing the people. This concept reflects the democratic principle advocated by most Romantics. Ulrichi says:

> It is the people in the narrower sense of the term that is presented to us, and its characters and relation both to the State and the other members of the body politic that are distinctly laid open. The nobles and grandees of the kingdom fall as it were voluntarily into the background and merge more into the general body of the people whenever a great and ruling mind, like Henry the Fifth, is at head of the State.[42]

Ulrichi of course uses this assumption as justification for all the scenes employing soldiers, camp servants, and officers, and also where the character of the different races of his subjects are dramatically embodied in such men as Fluellen, Macmorris, and Jamy.

The identification of the King with his men is noted also by Frederick Boas:

> Nowhere does Shakespeare emphasize so unmistakably his cardinal conception of Kingship as involving duties rather than privileges. The ruler must miss the 'infinite heart's ease' that other men enjoy and wins in exchange only 'thrice-gorgeous ceremony,' which cannot charm to the bed of state the round repose granted to the meanest son of toil. Thus Henry, like his father, envies his poorest subjects the blessing of sweet slumber.[43]

A. W. Schlegel also praises Henry at Agincourt, especially for the

effect he has on his men. He sees Shakespeare as painting a Henry endowed with every chivalrous and kingly virtue: openness, sincerity, affability. Shakespeare allows us to focus upon the war with the French by seeing the qualities of Henry and his influence upon his men, according to Schlegel:

> Before the battle of Agincourt he paints in the most lively colors the lightminded impatience of the French leaders for the moment of battle, which to them seemed infallibly the moment of victory; on the other hand, he paints the uneasiness of the English king and his army from their desperate situation, coupled with firm determination, if they are to fall, at least to fall with honor. . . . He has surrounded the general events of the war with a fullness of individual, characteristic, and even sometimes comic features. A heavy Scotchman, a hot Irishman, a well-meaning honorable, pedantic Welshman, all intended to show that the war-like genius of Henry V did not merely carry the English with him, but also the natives of two islands, who were either not yet fully united or in no degree subject to him.[44]

We see here not only a unification of England proper, but also of the British Isles in general. Henry unites and democratizes all.

We return to Charles Williams' criticism for further insight into Romantic interpretation of this play. Williams thinks Henry deserves more praise than he has been allowed. He notes that the muse conjectured not only a new and dreadful world, but also a "touch in the night," a thawing of fear, and the nature of the power of love and lightness which thrills through the dusk:

> Henry then has made of his crisis an exaltation of his experience; he has become gay. This gaiety--a modest gaiety, to take another adjective from the Chorus--lasts through the Act. It lightens and saves the speech on ceremony; more especially, it illuminates the speech to Westmoreland. In view of the King's capacity the stress there may well be on the adjective rather than the substantive: 'We few, we happy few.' His rejection of all those who have no

> stomach for the fight, his offer of crowns for convoy, is part of the same delight: so far as possible he will have no one there who does not love to be there. He makes jokes at the expense of the old men's tall stories of the battle, and at the French demand for ransom. We are clean away from the solemn hero-king, and therefore much more aware of the Harry of the Chorus, and of the thing he is--the 'touch of Harry in the night.'[45]

It is the "touch" then that shows evidence of the racial soul embodied in Henry and it is this same touch that enables him to "democratize" his followers.

One conclusion must be then that regardless of the negative Romantic criticism of Henry's action with the Archbishop and at Agincourt on the one hand, certain Romantic attitudes that tend to glorify Henry in his action evidently exist on the other. Nevertheless, other critics, more in the historical tradition rather than the Romantic, do not find all these praises enough justification for calling the play as a whole good. Most of them see the play as lacking certain qualities. William Butler Yeats, for example, recalls the emotional admiration for Henry V, which he thinks the German critics began and Dowden, Gervinus, and others extended. The apotheosis established was evidently based on the conviction that the commonplace shall inherit the earth, reflecting the 'touch of Harry in the night,' a conviction one might note that is highly Romantic.

Yeats cannot accept the belief that Shakespeare treats his characters in this manner. To Yeats, Shakespeare does not write in personal attitudes, nor does he create types; rather he balances character against character. To see Henry V as a glorified national hero is to fail to see his gross vices, and the coarse nerve of one who is to rule among violent people. The irony is that everyone talks of him as succeeding

when in truth he fails in the end.[46]

Hazleton Spencer, another historical critic, believes that the modest success and no greater seen in all the productions of Henry V is caused by the failure of the play to have any dressing of ideas. Its intellectual poverty is not compensated for by very much beauty. Henry's speeches are superb, but they appear to be more rhetorical than truly poetic. The nineteenth century revivals added spectacle and perhaps drew some attention but the void is still too great. Spencer suggests that the real reason perhaps lies in a flagging interest of the author in the straight epic treatment of history. The inadequacy of the medium alone could have dampened Shakespeare's initial enthusiasm.[47]

Harley Granville-Barker agrees with Spencer:

> Behind the action there must be some spiritually significant idea, or it will hang lifeless. And this is what is lacking in Henry V.[48]

D. A. Traversi, another critic found most often in the persuasion of the historical group, takes a moderate, perhaps more traditional stand in interpreting this play. He relies upon the historical thread which ties the histories together in thematic sequence. Also he thinks in terms of Shakespeare's preparation for the great tragedies. This tragic note is reflected in Henry V. The idea of order and its conditions, moral as well as political, must be kept in mind, suggests Traversi. In fact, this concept is really the point of departure for understanding Henry V. The condition of kingship rather than results really appears to be Shakespeare's interest. Traversi explains:

> Just as the state, already in Henry IV, Part II, is regarded in its divisions as a diseased body ravaged by a consuming fever, so is the individual seen

> increasingly as torn between the violence of his passions and the direction of reason; and just as the political remedy lies in unquestioned allegiance to an authority divinely constituted so does personal coherence depend upon the submission to our uncontrolled desires to reason. The link between the two states, political and personal, is provided in these plays by concentration upon the figure of the king.[49]

The understanding of Henry V rests upon a consideration of this context, according to Traversi. The king rightly demands in an ordered society unquestionable allegiance, but he must also show through self-control a complete and selfless devotion to his office. It is the personal implications of that devotion then that are considered in _Henry V_. Henry must continually examine his motives and subdue them in the light of reason. There is to be noticed in him an uneasy balance between violent passion and cold self-control. This self-control may be expected to break out in forms not altogether creditable. Traversi cites the incident of the French ambassador as an example. Such incidents produce the two-fold behavior of Henry: "the warrior in his triumphant energy as a grayhound straining at the leash" and seen against that of a ruthless and inhuman engine of destruction.[50] Both aspects are inseparable.

Traversi comments too upon the supposed hypocrisy of Henry as often found in other critics' interpretations, especially those of a certain group of Romantics. Traversi again sees Henry as playing a necessary historical role in order to maintain order. Hence the actions are not true hypocrisy. He suggests that

> it would be wrong to suppose that Shakespeare, in portraying Henry, intends to stress a note of hypocrisy. His purpose is rather to bring out certain contradictions, human and moral, which seem to be inherent in the notion of a successful king. As the play proceeds Henry seems increasingly to be, at least in the moral sense, the victim of his position. The cunning

> calculations of the Archbishop, with which the play opens, have already given some hint of the world in which he moves and which, as king, he has to mould to his own purposes; and the treasonable activities of Cambridge, Grey, and Scroop are further indications of the duplicity with which monarchs are fated by their position to deal.[51]

Traversi continues his argument by citing the royal isolation underlined when Williams points out the spiritual consequences of a conflict for which the King, as unquestioned head of his army, is alone responsible. Williams is really asking whether or not one can reconcile killing with Christian ideals. Henry is placed in isolation and must dutifully justify his call for war. Once again he must at the same time defend his action and effect self-control. The painstaking self-examination is the kind anticipating the heart-rendering action of the great tragedies to come. Henry's actions are merely one step in the realization of themes fully developed there.

Summary

We have seen then that negative Romantic criticism of Henry V emphasizes the inconsistency of change in Henry from a rascally Prince to a heroic King; the hypocrisy of Henry as seen in his association with the clergy; and the capability of his becoming a tyrannical monarch, seen in his waging war on France, in his rejection of Falstaff and his treatment of other commoners, like Williams, and in his hasty judgments of those accused of treason. We have also seen the vast amount of positive Romantic criticism of this play, which bases its conclusions on the idea that Henry is a noble King who identifies himself with others and fights for a common cause of retaining for the English what they believe to be theirs by right; hence, embodying in himself the "racial soul" of

the people and putting democracy into action through his courageous efforts at victory.

The more traditional view has been presented by way of contrast. It is that Henry's change is justifiable, considering what had been promised in _Henry IV_, even though it does seem abrupt. Henry has now become the king of his people and as such is responsible for maintaining order. This responsibility requires a certain amount of expediency.

NOTES

[1]Crane Brinton, Political Ideas of English Romanticists (Oxford, 1926), p. 16.

[2]The Peripatetic (London, 1793), Vol. II, p. 228.

[3]The Progress of Civil Society (London, 1796), Book II, ll. 452-5.

[4]Ibid., Book III, ll. 150-1.

[5]Ibid., Book IV, ll. 456-67.

[6]Poems (London, 1791), Vol. I, p. 209.

[7]Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (1817), ed. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (London, 1962), p. 157.

[8]Ibid., p. 158.

[9]Ibid., p. 161.

[10]Oxford Lectures on Poetry (London, 1934), p. 256.

[11]Dramatic Opinions (London, 1906), Vol. I, p. 426.

[12]The Man Shakespeare (London, 1909), p. 92.

[13]William Shakespeare (New York, 1911), p. 11.

[14]Shakespeare (New York, 1939), p. 176.

[15]Don Juan, Canto 8, Poetical Works of Lord Byron, ed. E. H. Coleridge (London, 1905), Vol. VI, p. 351.

[16]Ibid., pp. 345-6.

[17]Prometheus Unbound, The Complete Poetical Works of P. B. Shelley, ed. G. E. Woodberry (Boston, 1901), p. 197.

[18]Ibid., p. 206.

[19]Prelude, Book IX, Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (New York, 1933), p. 713.

[20]Ibid., pp. 714-15.

[21] Prose Works of Wordsworth, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (London, 1876), Vol. I, p. 116.

[22] Brinton, p. 58.

[23] Metapolitics (New York, 1941), pp. 32-3.

[24] On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History, ed. A. R. Marble (New York, 1905), p. 146.

[25] "Introduction," Henry V, Smith edition (New York, 1909), p. 17.

[26] Ibid.

[27] "Introduction," King Henry V, Arden edition (London, 1954), p. 29.

[28] Shakespeare Commentaries, 1849-62, ed. Arthur Baker (New York,

[29] Character and Motive in Shakespeare (London, 1949), p. 111.

[30] Ibid., p. 114.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Walter, Arden edition of Henry V, p. 26.

[33] Shakespeare (London, 1936), p. 180.

[34] Ibid., p. 181.

[35] Shakespeare's World of Images (New York, 1949), p. 100.

[36] "Henry V," Shakespeare Criticism: 1919-1935, ed. A. Bradby (Oxford, 1936), p. 180.

[37] Morse Peckham, "Toward a Theory of Romanticism," PMLA, LXVI (February, 1951), pp. 5-23.

[38] Shakspere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art (London, 1875), p. 219.

[39] Shakespeare As a Dramatic Thinker (New York, 1907), pp. 30-31.

[40] Shakspere and His Predecessors (New York, 1896), p. 281.

[41] Political Characters of Shakespeare (London, 1961), p. 228.

[42] Shakspeare's Dramatic Art (London, 1846), p. 379.

[43] Boas, p. 287.

[44] Cited in Hudson, pp. 20-21.

[45] Williams, pp. 187-8.

CHAPTER V

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

The critical commentary about this play is voluminous, primarily because of so very much disagreement concerning the nature of Shylock's role. There seem to be three basic positions taken toward explaining Shylock: (1) that which considers him a mere comic character, (2) that which considers him to be a villain, and (3) that which views Shylock as a sufferer, a martyr of his race, an object of tragic essence. The first two views are held by critics usually aligned with the historical school of criticism; the latter is usually espoused by the Romantics, so it is this view with which we are most concerned in this chapter.

Behind the Romantic position lies the spirit of defending the underdog. It is the same idea that produces the Satanist interpretation of Milton's Paradise Lost. This interpretation suggests that Milton presents Satan as a hero because of his grandeur and heroic stand against such odds. Satan's great vitality is sufficient to overcome his inherent faults; at least it is sufficient to gain sympathy from those critics who exhibit Romantic tendencies.

Percy B. Shelley, a leader of the Romantic School of the early nineteenth century, provides the rationale for such sympathetic understanding of villainous-type characters in his theory of criticism. Shelley thought that poets create by some mystic genius which, unlike reasoning, is below the level of the conscious; the access of this genius

they cannot prevent nor can they hinder its departure. Further, they express what they cannot fully understand, that understanding being left for the future; they are "the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not. . . ." This means that criticism is then the record of one's soul among masterpieces; the critic is not closely bound to regard his author's sense nor is he obliged to see a poem in historic context. Therefore, Shelley felt himself free to re-interpret Paradise Lost according to his own lights. He wrote:

> Milton's poem contains within itself a philosophical refutation of that system of which, by a strange and unnatural antithesis, it has been a chief popular support. Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in Paradise Lost. It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. . . . Milton's Devil, as a moral being, is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent, in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. Milton as so far violated the popular creed as to have alleged no superiority of moral virtue to his God over his devil.[1]

What Shelley is saying here about Paradise Lost in specific can be said of course about any serious work where the Romantic is concerned, and it is exactly in this spirit that Romantic interpretation of Shylock is seen.

In the year 1796 appeared a volume, Essays by a Society of Gentlemen at Exeter, which contained an essay by Richard Hole entitled "An Apology for the Character and Conduct of Shylock," and this essay is, as far as the author has been able to determine, the first detailed

character criticism of Shylock.

Hole is considering Shylock from the point of view of the Jew. The title of the essay may owe something to a short statement made by Richard Farmer in an Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare (1767) that "in The Merchant of Venice, the Jew, as an apology for his cruelty to Antonio, rehearses many sympathies and antipathies for which no reason can be rendered. . . ."[2] Hole was able to give an apology for Shylock's conduct that Farmer felt the old Jew fails to give for himself, and in so doing forecast the image of the injured man that was to be a primary idea in so much of the Romantic interpretation of this play.

Hole asks the reader not only to "divest ourselves in that prejudice we have contracted against him on account of his being a Jew,"[3] but also to ask himself what would have been Antonio's attitude if Shylock had treated him to the same indignities in some Jewish republic.[4] We are first of all to put ourselves in the place of Shylock and to see through his eyes.

Hole next suggests to us that we ought not to judge Shylock by our laws, but by those of the community to which he belonged. "According to the religion of Moses 'an eye for an eye' was strict morality, and no more disgraceful than was suicide for a defeated Roman; nor was usury considered degrading. It is no less absurd to condemn a Jew for usury than a Mohammedan for polygamy."[5] Hole has placed Shylock in a strong position, but it is significant that his plea for us to judge Shylock by the laws of the Hebrews is an echo of Alexander Pope's statement in the Preface to the Works of Shakespeare (1725) that "to judge. . .of Shakespeare by Aristotle's rules is like trying a man by the laws of one country, who acted under those of another."[6] One must be aware, however,

that Pope was a true classicist and was here making a generalization concerning the whole of Shakespeare's works; Hole is evidently taking such a generalization, as most Romantic critics are prone to do, and applying it to a particular circumstance, and in this case, to a particular character.

Hole does not deny that Shylock was vindictive and cruel, but states that "those who condemn him for his stern unforgiving disposition do not consider that he had suffered the most intolerable injuries from Antonio . . .and had been robbed of his daughter and property by one of his associates. Who can reflect on this, and not make great allowance for his meditating so severe a retaliation?"[7] At this point in the essay Hole again insists that Shylock should be judged by the Hebraic laws. The critic is sympathetic with the old Jew, and attempts to rationalize all that has been objected to in him. Hole's essay seems to balance a statement that exhibits the other extreme in Shylock interpretation of this period, a statement made by Francis Gentleman in 1770 that "Shylock is the most disgraceful picture of humanity. . .all shades, not a gleam of light: subtle, selfish, fawning, irascible, tyrannic. . . . The wretched state to which he is in turn reduced is so agreeable a sacrifice to Justice that it conveys inexplicable satisfaction to every feeling mind."[8]

Richard Hole does not deny that Shakespeare meant to represent Shylock as a villain, such as Francis Gentleman and certain actors of the period seem to have interpreted, but he insists that this is not to Shylock's discredit, but to Shakespeare's. He is convinced that if any of Shylock's countrymen were poets they would represent him in a different light. They would probably make the play a tragedy, and "by giving

it a different catastrophe, softening some hard expressions, and introducing others of a pathetic kind, interest every sentimental and tender-hearted descendant of Abraham in his favour."[9]

On this note Hole ends his essay. The critic in his interest in the character of Shylock sees wholly from the Jewish point of view. He has made the Jew an injured man not through the study of elemental passions that are common to man, but by a partial historical study. We must consider the world in which the Jew lives and the injustice of the Christian merchants to him. Thus Richard Hole has combined the sympathetic interpretation often associated with the Romantic critics with an historical background in his defense of Shylock; and he has stated many of the critical problems that were to be the subject of discussion in the coming nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Shylock, as the representative of his race; Shylock's true nature; the result of his sufferings from the injustice of the Christian merchants to him; and the essential tragic nature of his character, all topics about which the Romantics and the more traditional critics were to disagree upon violently for years to come.

David Philipson in a study of <u>The Jew in English Fiction</u> (1889) first restates the various points of view from which Shylock has been regarded by previous literary critics. The character has been considered, he says,

> as the incarnation of wickedness on the one hand, as the injured party seeking redress on the other; as the villain by this critic, as the justifiable plaintiff by that, as the Christian-baiting fire-eater by one, as the ardent defender of his religion and his race by another. His motives, his actions, his character, his every word, has been subjected to examination and criticism, and everyone has found something to censure, to excuse, to reprove, to justify, to condemn, to condone.[10]

Philipson in actuality is expressing briefly the gist of both Romantic and traditional interpretations juxtaposed. It is appropriate for the reader to keep these arguments in mind as we proceed now with the Romantic treatment.

Often one can discover the origin of dramatic interpretations through a look at stage history. In considering the Romantic attitudes exhibited toward this play, one might find the intimations for such attitudes in the various actors who have played the role of Shylock. Edmund Kean appears to have been the first actor to make Shylock an injured human being upon the stage; and his acting captured the attention of the Romanticists. David Richardson says that

> Kean always remembered Shylock's true condition as a member of a feeble and despised community. . . . The Jew's voice and manner grew gradually firmer and more daring as he appeared to approach the consummation of his desires, but he never hazarded a gratuitous provocation. . . . He looked and spoke as if he felt that were he to lose that he would lose everything, and sink again into comparative insignificance and contempt. . . . Kean's Shylock was remarkable for an air of suppression and reserve.[11]

Such an interpretation of Shylock on the stage pleased the audience, and it is said that William Hazlitt was "flushed with his admiration of the Shylock of Edmund Kean."[12]

Hazlitt, a foremost Romantic critic, points out the good qualities of Shylock. We have seen that Richard Hole pleaded for the Jew as a member of a downtrodden race, but the superior mental faculties that Shakespeare has given to Shylock are the chief interest of Hazlitt. The critic first points out the transition that is occurring in the interpretation of Shylock, and in so doing indicates briefly both attitudes toward the Jew. He states that

> in proportion as Shylock has ceased to be a popular bugbear, 'baited with the rabble's curse,' he becomes a half-favorite with the philosophical part of the audience, who are disposed to think that Jewish revenge is at least as good as Christian injuries.[13]

But he does not think that the Jewish revenge is an individual matter wholly conditioned by Shylock's grievances; he feels that the Jew is a representative of his race in his vengeance. Hazlitt says that "he seems the repository of the vengeance of his race; and through the long habit of brooding over daily insults and injuries has crusted over his temper with inveterate misanthropy, and hardened himself against the contempt of mankind."[14] In this last statement of Hazlitt we see a prominent part of Romantic criticism at work in his attempting to explain Shylock's character by a form of psychological interpretation. In the description of Shylock in the court room scene the critic emphasizes the strong qualities exhibited by the Jew. He considers that there

> is a strong, quick, and deep sense of justice mixed up with the gall and bitterness of his resentment. . . . In all his answers and retorts upon his adversaries, he has the best not only of the argument but also of the questions, reasoning on their own principles and practice. Shylock defends himself well and is triumphant on all general topics that are urged against him, and only fails through a legal flaw. . . . The keenness of his revenge awakes all his faculties; and he beats back all opposition to his purpose, whether grave or gay, whether of wit or argument, with an equal degree of earnestness and selfpossession.[15]

Critically, Hazlitt is the first, as far as the author has been able to determine, to call attention to the legal quibble that was the Jew's undoing, and he is the first to consider Shylock's mental faculties as superior to those with whom he is dealing. This psychologizing of Shylock is a conscious expression of the Romanticist's interest in the

expression of the elemental passions and experiences enjoyed universally by mankind. It will be remembered that Hole did not really concern himself with the "elemental passions," even though he did lay the foundations for Romantic treatment of this play; however, Hazlitt exhibits the "pure" Romantic strain by emphasizing the universal experiences of man.

Repudiation of the monster conception of the Jew continued with George Farren's essay on Shylock in 1833. He considers that "of all the many splendid essays on the vices and frailties springing from human passions, which Shakespeare has furnished. . .the character of Shylock . . .may be considered as a masterpiece."[16] He views Shylock as a true representative of his people, but considers that Shakespeare did not indicate in his words or actions an intention to mark the Jew for public execration. Farren calls to the reader's attention the dignity of Shylock's deportment, the kindness to his servant, affection shown to his daughter, and commemoration of his wife. These qualities combined with the Jew's quick perception of the remarks of others, and the great store of knowledge in his own conversation keep the character from reflecting animosity to the Jewish race. Yet with all these qualities the critic says that "he is still. . .not free from the weaknesses and infirmities of poor human nature;. . .in a moment of human depravity, he vows to sacrifice his persecutor, and having registered his oath in Heaven, he, with the mistaken zeal of an enthusiast, considers that he must 'do according. . .to the vow he had vowed.'"[17] It seems as early as 1833 the Jews were considering the portrayal of Shylock as anti-Semitic. George Farren shows in his essay some knowledge of Hebrew law, and in his interpretation of the character is nearer to the spirit of Hole perhaps than to Hazlitt. However, it is not to be overlooked that

we see depicted here a human being representative of his race overthrown by passions that are common to mankind. This criticism remains basically then a Romantic interpretation of Shylock.

In the year 1836 David L. Richardson published a criticism of this play in Literary Leaves in which he states that Shakespeare was influenced in his portrayal of the character of Shylock by the prejudices of the English audience of the period. He asserts that if the dramatist had made him bold, blustering, and independent, the character would have been thought unnatural, and would have consequently been unpopular.[18] But in spite of the prejudiced point of view of Shakespeare in his portrayal of Shylock, Richardson commends the character in his analysis. This critic sees the strength of Shylock in much the same way as Hazlitt did. He says that "The original force of his nature, and. . .conventional restraint combined to give a unity and depth to his character, that were rather indicated by the steadiness of his purpose than by any extravagance of language or of manner. . . ."[19] It is in the deportment of the Jew in the court room scene that Richardson thinks he is most superb. The critic considers that there is a

> self-possession in the Jew that is almost sublime. . . . He is so far from being bewildered by his emotions, or thrown off his guard, that he seems to say just so much and no more, in the way of self-defense and retaliation, as is consistent with his personal safety and the furtherance of his object.[20]

Richardson sees the grandeur of the character, but he recognizes that Shylock is driven by an absorbing passion, and feels that the "single passion of revenge swallows up every other, even that of avarice"; he considers that this is not merely personal revenge, but is mixed with sympathy for his own race.[21]

Richardson is perhaps the first critic to voice an objection to the unsatisfactory ending of The Merchant of Venice and to the unfairness of the punishments given to Shylock. He says, "We are pained to see a powerful and deeply injured spirit so completely thwarted and subdued by a mere quibble and are shocked at the absurd and unnecessary insult of insisting 'that he do presently become a Christian.'"[22] Shylock's consent to the terms imposed upon him seems to the critic inconsistent with his character. He is particularly dissatisfied with the enforced conversion of the Jew and implies that Shylock could scarcely be turned into a hypocrite, much less into a Christian. Richardson is so much in sympathy with Shylock that the dramatic necessity of the last act is unappreciated. Indeed, the play is to him the tragedy of Shylock. This is truly another aspect of Romantic interpretation and criticism. The spirit of fighting for and sympathizing with the underdog is evident in Richardson.

In 1848 Henry Norman Hudson in Lectures on Shakespeare analyzed the character of Shylock as that of a "true representative of his nation."[23] That is, the critic is of the opinion that Shakespeare has portrayed a racial type in the characterization. The passions that Hudson thinks are naturally present in such a delineation are the love of money and the hatred of Christians, but these are the inevitable result of "his [Shylock's] origin and situation." Thus, the character of Shylock is, to a great degree, the product of social conditions. For in him may be seen "the remains of a great and noble nature, out of which all the genial sap of humanity has been pressed by accumulated injuries."[24] Here we are introduced to the strong trait of Romantic criticism which says that environment is much more important than heredity. The true

Romantic scorns heredity; only environment produces good and/or evil. Man is born good, that is, he is naturally good, but environment can cause one to become evil. Shylock is supposed to have degraded himself as an example of humanity not because he was naturally a monster, but because his environment left him little choice.

Although the critic recognizes the social foundation for Shylock's action, he is concerned primarily with the malignant aspects of the character. He describes Shylock's conduct at the trial as "sublimity of malice" in that present "in the impassioned calmness, the cool, resolute, imperturbable malignity of his answers. . . . . There is something that makes the blood to tingle."[25] This malignity that culminates in the trial scene, according to the critic, was implied by Shakespeare in the early part of the drama when Launcelot urged Shylock to go to Bassanio's supper because 'my young master doth expect your reproach,' to which Shylock replies, 'So do I his.' That is, the dramatist meant "to have it understood that the Jew exercised his cunning in plotting and preparing the rumors or reports of Antonio's losses at sea!"[26]

In questioning why Shakespeare did not reveal the subtle activities of Shylock, it is the opinion of the critic that such a procedure would have made the Jew too deep a criminal for his part in the comedy. For after all the character portrayed is "essentially tragic" and lacks the proper "timber of comedy."[27]

The conception of the role of Shylock as that of tragedy and unsuitable for comedy had been proposed ironically as early as the year 1709 by Nicholas Rowe in <u>Some Account of the Life of Mr. William Shakespeare</u>. He says that

> tho' we have seen that Play Receiv'd and Act'd as a Comedy, and the Part of the Jew perform'd by an excellent Comedian, yet I cannot but think it was assign'd Tragically by the Author. There appears in it such a deadly Spirit of Revenge, such a savage Fierceness and . . .such a bloody designation of Cruelty and Mischief, as cannot agree either with the Stile or Characters of Comedy.[28]

There is included in the statement made by Rowe enough similarity to the later criticism of H. N. Hudson to assume that this nineteenth-century critic has used and developed more fully the primary idea proposed by the older scholar. The irony lies in the fact that Rowe generally speaking was a classicist and usually criticized anything that might have been cherished by the Romantic critic. Hudson goes further, of course, than Rowe. He combines several factors that show the complexity of the character. Shylock is seen to portray the Jewish racial type, the faults of which are placed on his origin and situation; to show the development of malignant nature so artistically that such descriptive phrase words can be used as the "sublimity of malice," and "rapture of hate"; and to be considered primarily a tragic character. Hudson's criticism is definitely Romantic.

H. Giles in 1868 continued the kind of criticism that implies certain social factors being involved in Shylock's fate. He declares that Shylock's hatred was "the anger of many generations condensed into one heated bolt. . . ."[29] Thus, in making the cause of Shylock's wrath the accumulated injuries that the Christians had inflicted upon his people, the critic has brought up again the matter of both racial and social factors involved in the characterization.

Indeed, Rev. John Hunter, in an edition of this play (1872), felt so convinced that there was a positive social implication in the

portrayal of Shylock when Shakespeare created him that he says that the dramatist "saw that Shylock's moral deformity might be in great measure justly attributed to the influence of social circumstances, and that he felt that the Jew, even in a temper of malignity, might convincingly show to Christians that their persecuting spirit impressed on his tribe the character which the Jews bore in society."[30] To state what Shakespeare saw and felt in the character he created is rather a daring assumption on the part of the critic, but the ideas brought forth indicate that there was a growing interest in the problems of the individual and a relationship was being drawn between these problems and social conditions.

John W. Hales, in an essay first published in The Athenaeum, December 15, 1877, agrees with both Giles and Hunter that Shylock's nature has been brought about by social circumstances. He says that Shylock had been made the hard, savage, relentless creature we see him by long and cruel oppression. He inherited a nature embittered by centuries of insult and outrage, and his own wretched experience had only aggravated its bitterness."[31] So the idea emphasized so greatly by Hudson in 1848 continued throughout the nineteenth century.

Thus there was definitely developed by the critics the idea that Shylock's character had been shaped by the social circumstances under which he and his race lived, and Shylock serves as a representative of this persecuted race. This idea continued into the early years of the twentieth century. Israel Davidson in an article in the Sewanee Review (1901) states that Shylock is the type of the average Jew of the Middle Ages, with all his faults and merits. . . .his is the same healthy religious belief which made the Jew in the Middle Ages proof against all the

trials of spirit and flesh.[32] In the development of this thesis the critic declares that although

> Shylock is a man of moderate intellectual attainments . . .persecuted by his neighbors, he withdraws into himself for intellectual nourishment, and ignores everything that is not Jewish. . . . He recognizes no classics, knows nothing of mythology, and cares not for profane sciences. The Bible and the later rabbinical literature satisfy his mental cravings. He supports his arguments with illustrations taken from these sources and his conversation is pregnant with illustrations taken from the same.[33]

But Davidson does not believe that Shylock's portrayal as a representative Jew keeps him from being a distinctly human characterization. He says,

> Shylock is quite human. . . . Shylock is a human being, with hands, organs, dimensions. . .as all of us are. He is real and we can understand him and sympathize with him.[34]

This sort of interpretation is the basis for Romantic criticism when intuitive understanding is expected of the audience. Romantics suggest that since the character is "human" the viewers can read into his actions what he either will do or should do. Herein is the heart of the Romantic phrase, "seeing the whole character."

Israel Davidson not only thinks that Shylock is a real human being, but states that he "is a man that abides by the law and is conscious of his integrity. . . . No one impugns his honesty, no one doubts his integrity, no one disputes his right to have acquired wealth."[35] In other words, Shylock is a respected citizen of Venice.

Sir Walter Raleigh is another of the early twentieth-century critics who championed the cause of Shylock. In introducing his support

for Shylock, he comments upon the reason for the widely different interpretations given the role:

> They have their origin in a certain incongruity between the story that Shakespeare accepted and the character of the Jew as it came to life in his hands . . . . The Jew of the story is a monster of medieval imagination and the story almost requires such a monster if it is to go with a ringing effect on the stage. But Shylock is a man too, and a man more sinned against than sinning.[36]

Certain actors following the story closely portrayed the character as revengeful, cunning, and bloodthirsty; others, influenced by Shakespeare's sympathy presented so sad and human a figure that the verdict of the court is accepted without enthusiasm. This last interpretation seems to be in accord with the Romantic conception of the character. In the following quotation, Raleigh makes it clear that to him Shylock is primarily a tragic figure:

> Antonio and Bassanio are pale shadows of men compared with this gaunt tragic figure whose love of his race is as deep as life; who pleads the cause of a common humanity against the cruelties of prejudice; whose very hatred has in it some of the nobility of patriotic passion; whose heart is stirred with tender memories even in the midst of his lament over the stolen ducats; who in the end is dismissed, unprotesting to insult and oblivion. . . . So ends the tragedy of Shylock, and the air is heavy with it long after the babble of the love plot has begun again. . . . The revengeful Jew whose defeat was to have added triumph to happiness, keeps possession of the play and the memory of him gives to the beautiful closing scenes an undesigned air of heartless frivolity.[37]

Perhaps the strongest recent argument for Shylock as a tragic character is found in the criticism of J. Dover Wilson. Wilson argues vehemently that Shylock is a tragic rather than a comical figure. His argument rests upon three points. One is that the play loses a great deal

if Shylock is merely comical. Another is that this play would have been compared with Marlowe's _Jew Of Malta_ by the Elizabethan audience and Shakespeare would undoubtedly have wanted to outbid Barabas. Therefore, he would have humanized Shylock so that he would be more convincing than Barabas. The third point is that Shakespeare does not create comic villains. According to Wilson none can be found in his other plays. Wilson concludes:

> Yet if he is not comical, he is not a mere villain of melodrama like Barabas either. He is a tragic villain, i.e., he is so represented that we feel him to be a man, a terrible and gigantic man enough, but with hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions--fed with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is. Shylock is far greater than Barabas. . .because he is one of ourselves.[38]

Charles Norton Coe agrees with Wilson that Shylock is more than another villain. In attempting to explain why Shylock appears more human like than most "villains" would naturally, Coe suggests that it is because Shakespeare took such pains to explain why Shylock acted as he did. Coe argues:

> Shylock's position is an understandable one; his reasons for desiring revenge are those with which we can sympathize. Add to this the fact that Shylock represents the underdog and the emotional basis for conceiving of him as an object of pity is complete.[39]

Hardin Craig finds in Shylock's oration-defense of the Jew as a human (III, i, 62-68) Shakespeare's evident attempt to make him an individual in the play. Craig says:

> The puzzle in Shylock's relation to his daughter and in the play as a whole arises from the fact that, in

> spite of all this Elizabethan tradition of Shylock as a conventional villain and in spite of the recognizable anti-Semitism of the whole picture, Shakespeare has made Shylock appeal to us on the broadest possible grounds of humanity.[40]

Craig cites further evidence in the recollection of Shylock's courtship. He closes with this remark: "It is no wonder that the play has been distorted and turned topsy-turvy by its modern interpreters."

Harold Goddard's sympathy for Shylock lies in the latter's being an excluded thing. Goddard suggests that the Venetian world makes him their scapegoat. They project on him what they have dismissed from their own consciousness and they hate him because he reminds them of their own unconfessed evil qualities. Shylock then is an insulted and injured man. Goddard continues:

> Shakespeare is at pains to make plain the noble potentialities of Shylock, however much his nature may have been warped by the sufferings and persecutions he has undergone and by the character of the vocation he has followed. His vices are not so much vices as they are perverted virtues.[41]

It is evident to us at this point that a large number of literary critics of The Merchant of Venice adopted what is easily seen as the Romantic point of view. The belief initiated by Hole that Shylock is an injured man and should be treated as tragic we see continued by critics like Raleigh. The idea emphasized by Hazlitt and Farren that Shylock is a human being succumbing to evil only as any human would under the same circumstances is continued by Wilson, Craig, and others. And the assumption seen early in Hudson's criticism that Shylock is representative of the underdog, i.e., of the Jewish race, molded into a "villain" by evil society, is continued by critics like Davidson, Coe, and Goddard. This

is not to say, however, that all critics by any means accepted the Romantic view, for as early as the late eighteenth century there were contrasting attitudes exhibited against the sympathetic note struck for Shylock. In January, 1797, for example, the Monthly Review was willing to disagree in part with Richard Hole's apology for Shylock. It declared:

> though we think Shakespeare highly blameable for the sacrifice which he made to bigotry and the spirit of persecution, we cannot doubt that he succeeded in painting a really detestable character; and the apology here made for Shylock. . . .is no more than the universal plea that may be made for revenge in its most abominable forms. As an usurer, indeed, he cannot consistently be an object of abhorrence in a land of stockjobbers, but as an insidious contriver of murder, we hope that he will never be regarded with a mitigated detestation.[42]

This interpretation differs considerably from Romantic interpretation for the Romantic would allow "noble character" to negate certain violations of law, especially when those violations were supposed to have been caused by environmental forces. Just as Romantics would absolve Antony and Cleopatra from sexual sins, so would they absolve Shylock from murder, primarily because their noble nature allowed them to continue striving against great obstacles placed before them not of their own doing.

The components of the Jewish stereotype in Shakespeare as used by the more traditional critics of The Merchant of Venice are summarized quite well by Edgar Rosenberg. He says about the Jew image:

> He was a fairly thoroughgoing materialist, a physical coward, an opportunist in money matters, a bit of a wizard in peddling his pharmaceutia; queer in his religious observances,. . . .Clannish in his loyalties, secretive in his living habits, servile in his

> relations with Christians, whom he abominated. . . . Though a widower, he had the comfort of an attractive daughter; Gentiles wooed her, and sometimes won her . . . . His affections were evenly divided between his ducats and his daughter. As a rule he was permitted one confidant, a business friend, Jewish, male. He himself sat, spiderlike, in the center of an impressive commercial network. Other animal metaphors which described him were the hog, the dog, the rat, the vulture, the weasel, the fox, the toad, the serpent, and the wasp. As a creature less sinned against than sinning, he hardly qualified for tragedy; on the other hand his repulsive physiognomy, his eccentric habits, and his hostile motives conspired to suit him ideally for purposes of the comic and the horrific.[43]

It is with this stereotype in mind that the Monthly Review and other literary sources of criticism would exhibit dislike with Romantic sympathy toward Shylock. The British Critic in April, 1797, was even more outspoken than the Monthly Review in its condemnation of Hole's criticism. It declared that the essay by Hole was "not an apology, but merely an extenuation. We cannot but reprobate these fanciful attempts to palliate characters which the poet either meant to make odious or had written foolishly. . . ."[44]

Perhaps the most outspoken critic of the nineteenth century in offering a challenge to such attitudes as exhibited by Hole's essay is W. W. Lloyd. In protesting in 1856 against the maudlin sentimentality that has been bestowed on the murderous Jew, which he suggests was probably due to a considerable degree to the stage interpretations in the first half of the nineteenth century,[45] he contends that Shylock

> is ready to impute his disgrace to antipathy to his race and envy of his gains, but the poet leaves us in no uncertainty that his hands were those of a usurer, in the sense which, under any dispensation of political economy, involves at least dishonesty, his honour, cruelty, and fraud.[46]

Thus his downfall is considered to be the result of the unmoral profession he pursues rather than to be caused by the forces of religious or racial persecution. This theory is in direct opposition, of course, to the Romantic notion that Shylock's evil nature was caused by environmental influences.

The contrasting attitudes to Romantic interpretations continued with critics like Theodore Martin, Frank Marshall, and Israel Davis. Martin, in response to an article written by Frederick Hawkins proposing that Shakespeare was actually making a plea for toleration, says that he

> can find no trace of any plea for toleration. Nobody in the play urges anything in the nature of such a plea. Jew and Christian are alike intolerant. . . . Save in the words that fell from Portia, there is not in the play, to my mind, a trace of any recognition of the great doctrine of religious toleration.[47]

Marshall adds that

> it is not necessary to suppose that Shakespeare had any special views with regard to the removal of Jewish disabilities in his portrayal of the character of Shylock. Shakespeare was not a doctrinaire; he was essentially a dramatist. . . .[48]

Davis develops the concept presented by Marshall even more fully:

> Shakespeare was too thoroughly an artist to write a play with a moral purpose. In regard to the essence of a drama, he was guarded irresistibly by a keen appreciation of the real nature of men's thoughts and feelings. Shylock is an interesting character, not evil by nature, but made evil by treatment to which he has been subjected. The moral suggests itself that if the Jew had been treated in a better way he would have been a better man; and Shakespeare cannot have been unconscious that he preached that moral, although the purpose of his play was to preach no lesson, but to describe human life.[49]

Still other critics of the more traditional school were to follow. Felix E. Schelling, although conceding that Shylock "is and has always been the hero of The Merchant of Venice--whether the comic tinge of Barabas was given the Elizabethan Shylock or not,"[50] repudiates the idea that Shylock was created to glorify the Jew, but on the contrary was created in a full realization of the revengefulness, the implacability, the grotesqueness bordering on laughter, and the pathos bordering on tears of his complex and deeply interesting nature. The union of the pathetic and the grotesque have made the drama remain in the realm of comedy instead of tragedy.

In a consideration of the same problem, William Poel states that the tragic interpretation of the role was brought about by the

> marked isolation in which the dramatist has placed Shylock that tempts the modern actor to represent him as a victim of religious persecution and therefore one that does not merit the misfortune that falls upon him. In this way the figure becomes tragic, and contrary to the dramatist's intention, is made the leading part; so when the Jew leaves the stage, the interest of the audience goes with him.[51]

As early as 1887 this critic had called attention to the isolation of the character of Shylock as a factor in making him an object of pity in the eyes of the audience; and had proposed that the design of the play might be faulty in that one character, Shylock, overpowers all the others in dramatic intensity.[52]

Thus Poel appears to have preceded Sir Walter Raleigh in claiming that the tragic interpretation of Shylock's role was to be found in the design of The Merchant of Venice. But he does not give what he considers the evolution of the tragic conception until the year 1909, two years after the publication of Raleigh's criticism. These two critics are

diametrically opposed, of course, in what they consider to be the didactic purpose of the dramatist in the creation of the character. Raleigh, it will be remembered, states that Shylock pleads the cause of common humanity against the cruelties of prejudice; whereas, Poel says that "while Shakespeare shows what are the evils of religious intolerance and their effect upon character, he also makes it clear that in his time, Christianity made for the good of the community."[53] Therefore, it appears to Raleigh that the dramatist champions the cause of Shylock, whereas to Poel he is sponsoring the cause of Christianity.

However, the main contribution of Poel's study to the history of the literary criticism of Shylock is that Shakespeare has thrust the conventional usurer of the old Latin comedy into a Romantic drama to act the part of a stage villain; and that he is intended to be laughed at and defeated, not primarily because he is a Jew, but because he is a curmudegon; thus the prodigal defeats the miser.[54] This statement indicated that it was on a comic rather than a tragic plane that the dramatist intended Shylock to function.

The main conclusion drawn by E. E. Stoll, a foremost historical critic, in his very comprehensive study published in 1911 was in accord to a great degree with that of William Poel. In summarizing the essay he says, "I have found in Shylock the comic villain, and though finely and delicately done, nothing really and sincerely pathetic in him at all."[55]

In making this point Stoll first took up the matter of the dramatist's intention in the creation of his character; as he conceives it, "a character is as much the author's means of communication to the public as a phrase or sentiment;. . .and a convention or dramatic device

though now outworn is as important a means of such communication as the wording of the text." This is done through the study of Elizabethan ideas and technique. Mr. Stoll is presenting here the major characteristic of the historical critic, which almost always runs counter to that of the Romantic.

The first impression imparted to the reader is of Shylock's villainy through three particular artifices: the comments of all the characters except Tubal are against him; the ordering of the scenes in such a manner as to inform the reader of his actions; and the asides made by Shylock revealing his intentions. All these devices indicate that Shakespeare intended Shylock to be proclaimed as the villain though a comic villain or butt.[56]

But, besides these dramatic devices, Shakespeare uses the prejudices of the day that might add to the impression that he wished Shylock to make. The three objects of popular detestation and ridicule--the miser, the money-lender, and the Jew--are combined in one character. In elaborating upon this fusion, the critic gives a survey of anti-Semitism in England and the Elizabethan attitude towards usury.[57]

Not only does Shakespeare capitalize on the prejudice of the times which in all likelihood were shared by him, but he built his character on the traditional theatrical pattern then prevalent. In the words of Mr. Stoll,

> In the Elizabethan drama and character writing, the Jew is both money-lender and miser, a villain who hankers after the Christian's blood, a gross egoist, even an atheist, and at the same time a butt, a hooked-nose niggard.[58]

The reader will recall that Mr. Stoll's description of Shylock and other

Jewish villains fits the stereotype summarized by Mr. Rosenberg in <u>From Shylock to Svengali</u>.

The latter part of Elmer Stoll's essay is taken up with a discussion of questions and problems involved in modern critical theories concerning the interpretation of Shylock. He refutes the idea that Shylock is a good man much abused. He argues that

> It is the result of reading Shakespeare--and very inattentively too--as if he wrote yesterday. Shakespeare. . .takes pains with first impressions and general effects, and is often careless of detail; if the detail is important it is repeated or enlarged upon. Modern authors. . .frame characters and plots that are studies and problems, in which detail is everything. . . . If we lose a word or a look, we may lose the meaning of the whole. Turning straight from these to Shakespeare we are likely to lose the meaning in our eagerness to catch every fleeting word or look.[59]

Stoll claims that the view that Shylock became bad because of social environmental forces came about in two ways: first, through claiming that Shakespeare is making use of dramatic irony. Antonio's behavior to the Jew is an example of the spectacle or race-hatred pointed at by the poet. This irony is carried still further into the characterization of Antonio and his friends by those who consider that Shylock is a noble spirit brought to shame. But as irony, as Shakespeare uses it, is within the play, not underneath it, the critic disagrees with this view and contends that the dramatist condemns Shylock in a simple and sincere manner.[60] Second, those who consider Shylock to be the product of his environment are forgetting the time in which Shakespeare lived. As Stoll puts it,

> The thoughts of men had hardly begun to run in such channels. . . . If a scoundrel is a bastard, or is

> mean of birth, the fact is not viewed as an extenuating circumstance, but is turned to reproach. It may in a sense explain his depravity, but never explains it away. . . . It confirms the prejudice that there is a difference between noble blood and that of low degree. So though our hearts are softened by Shylock's recital of the indignities he has suffered, the hearts of the Elizabethans, by a simler way of thinking, are hardened. It confirms the prejudice that there is a difference between Christian and Jew.[61]

Another critical problem taken up by Stoll is whether Shylock is not also a pathetic creation. His arguments denying that Shylock can be both a comic and pathetic creation are summarized by Augustus Ralli:

> Those who would make Shylock pathetic do so by perverting the artist's chief means of expression--Emphasis. They lighten what is dark and stress what is unimportant, and therefore make both the author and his work irrelevant. In the second place, it is said that comedy often skirts tragedy. Yes, but such tragedy is of our own making, not the dramatist's. Under the comic spell we indulge in laughter, not grief, not our sympathetic passions, but our social prejudices. . . . Sympathy spoils sport, blights and kills comedy. On the stage Shylock is a harsh father, miser, usurer, and Jew. Thirdly, comedy assents to the customs and prejudices of the times. In Shakespeare's London there was no defined society or sensitive social consciousness--but a vindictive social consciousness. . . . Singly as Jew, miser, usurer, Shylock would repel the comedy; therefore, in these roles united how could he appear pathetic? Lastly, the Shylock scenes are said to contain so much formal external comic technique that he may be said to appear pathetic. To support this, critics have quoted his lament for the Jewels that belonged to his wife; but they err in viewing the text piecemeal, but not as a whole. Now and then a phrase may seem pathetic, but on the whole, the daughters-ducats scene plays the familiar dramatic trick of deceiving the audience for a moment and then clapping on the pathetic sentiment one that is cynical, selfish or incongrous. . . . Then there is inversion, the tables turned at the trial against these critics who discover a pathetic meaning, we think his defeat brings home to us the comic fact of retribution. . . . To sympathize with Shylock we must turn against Gratiano, Portia, the Duke and all Venice. The spirit of retaliation rules

> in the judgement scene; the laughter is harsh and vindictive.[62]

Thus the critic draws the conclusion that in Shylock there is not present anything to make him a pathetic figure; this has been brought about by the modern tendency to see in him the picturesque. His dignity and isolation are emphasized while the ignoble and villainous traits are submerged. In doing this, Shylock has been tamed and domesticated; whereas, Shakespeare intended for us to shudder at him and laugh at him. In arriving at this conclusion, Stoll is of course challenging the Romantic critics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; he is attempting to interpret Shylock as he was supposed to have been presented on the Elizabethan stage and as he was perhaps created in the mind of Shakespeare.

Three years after the publication of Stoll's very comprehensive study, Clarence V. Boyer included a criticism of Shylock in his new book, The Villain Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy. The thesis of this study is that although Shylock is a villain, whose character may be considered in part as tragic, he cannot be characterized as the hero of the drama unless The Merchant is considered as a soul tragedy. Boyer claims that although Shylock has certain qualities similar to the typical villain hero--revengefulness and traces of Machiavellism in his speech--he is not to be classified with them, as the diabolical cleverness of his villainy does not overshadow everything else. If he is to be considered as a hero, it must be on other grounds than his villainy.[63]

The idea that Shylock is a hero because we sympathize with him so much for his suffering is denied in that although it is brought about through the revelation of his proud and spirited inner nature, and by

displaying the oppression which has brought about the hardening of his character, it is sympathy with a villain. Boyer admits that "the trial scene is tragic and the character of Shylock is tragic. Shylock, the villain of the play, suffers a tragic fate."[64] But Boyer denies that this makes a hero of the character. He argues:

> The Merchant of Venice must be conceived of as the representation of the mind or soul of an oppressed and proud-spirited Jew who longs with all the intensity of his passionate soul to get his oppressor beneath his foot, and who when on the verge of success, depending upon the impartiality of the law--the only thing that does not oppress him--is at that moment caught by the very law and subjected to still deeper humility.[65]

The point is that even though Boyer does not agree completely with Stoll in his criticism, the basic traditional interpretation can be found in both men: that Shylock is not devised to be a tragic hero of this play.

It has been noted earlier in this chapter that certain Romantic critics found in Shylock a person separated from society, hence, sinned against. Raymond M. Alden refutes the idea that Shakespeare in the characterization of Shylock was attempting to expound a social problem. In his words,

> The Elizabethan audience despised him, and were quite untroubled by suspicion that anti-Semitism was an unworthy thing. . . . The utter and irreconcilable animosity of Jew and Christian was the simple datum of Shakespeare's sixteenth-century story and he accepted it, interpreting it for the matter-of-course attitude of his audience, with no more occasion to study independently the social problem involved than to study the constitutional character of the laws of Venice. The story demanded that the spectator's sympathies should be all against the Jew; the play would cease to be either comedy or romance if they were not. To conceive, therefore, that Shakespeare was in any way seeking to interpret the general question of racial or religious prejudice is a pure hallucination.[66]

O. J. Campbell's criticism adds support to that of Alden's. Campbell sees Shylock as a villain and little else:

> Shakespeare develops Shylock as the conventional dramatic villain. The "good" characters all deride and execrate him. We are made to sympathize with Jessica's elopement, which outrages all her father's instincts, and which are meant to rejoice when in the trial scene he is sentenced to the punishment due a villain. To Elizabethans the demand that Shylock denounce his religion and become a Christian would not have seemed a kind of sacrilege. Rather were they convinced that the Judge, by requiring Shylock to be baptized, was saving the Jew's immortal soul.[67]

Marc Parrott also sees Shylock more as a villain than a comic individual and certainly not as a man "wronged." His thesis relies heavily upon the idea of vengeance in the mind of Shylock. He recalls:

> Shylock. . .bears an ancient grudge against Antonio, compounded of personal, economic, and racial motives, for Antonio has spit upon his Jewish gabardine, hindered him of half a million, and scorned his sacred nation. Shakespeare makes it clear at the first interview of the two rivals in business that Shylock proposes the "merry bond" with the firm intention of catching Antonio upon the hip.[68]

Parrott continues his argument by reverting to stage interpretations, as so many critics have done. He feels that the tragic element in Shylock has been overstressed. He cites the performance at Drury Lane, recorded by Heine, where the friend burst into tears claiming that "the poor man is wronged." Parrott also refers to Edwin Booth's decision at one time to end the play at the close of the trial scene, and his counter-decision to play the last act. Parrott remarks that Booth was at this point returning to Shakespeare's intent. He continues:

> He Shakespeare would never have written that act, with its blend of poetry, music, and mirth, had he wished to dismiss his audience with the figure of the Jew 'wronged,' or over-justly thwarted, in their minds. . . . The whole purpose of the act is to make us forget the near tragedy of the trial scene in the happiness of the lovers.[69]

Parrott cites further a performance in 1932 at the Old Vic which presented the play as something like a fairy tale, through which the figure of Shylock moved like that of the big bad wolf in the Disney films. According to Parrott, this version, although dehumanizing Shylock to some degree, seemed closer to Shakespeare's intention than a performance like Henry Irving's, which presented the Jew as a noble representative of a persecuted race. In other words, Parrott sees Shylock as a villain set on revenge, not as a figure of tragic essence more sinned against than sinning.

Summary

We have learned from our study then that the literary critics of the last decade of the eighteenth century and of most of the nineteenth century were primarily concerned with the consideration of the more Romantic aspects of the characterization of Shylock, viewing him as a representative of his maligned and persecuted race and as a product of his environment. They were concerned with his possible motives for his intense hatred of Antonio and whether or not there is implied in the characterization the principle of toleration. These Romantics and those to follow them in the twentieth century hold generally that Shylock is more sinned against than sinning and that his vices are not so much real vices as they are merely perverted virtues. It is evident that such Romantic treatment came about because of certain stage interpretations

of the character, but gradually the critics conceived that the intention of Shakespeare had been to make Shylock a villain. The best evidence for this view is seen in Shylock's apparent conformity to the traditional pattern of Jewish villains in Elizabethan drama. In addition to this, there were claims, notably from Stoll, that Shylock was a comic butt as well. Certain critics who hold a more traditional view support Stoll in this theory. Hence, there develops a definite admission that the problem of interpretation is in the text of the play, regardless of the fact that earlier Romantic criticism has recent support in critics like J. Dover Wilson, C. N. Coe, Hardin Craig, and others.

NOTES

[1]Cited in David S. Berkeley, *A Milton Guide* (Stillwater, 1965), pp. 159-160.

[2]Richard Farmer, *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, ed. D. N. Smith (Glasgow, 1903), p. 190.

[3]Richard Hole, *Essays by a Society of Gentlemen at Exeter* (London, 1790), p. 553.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 564.

[6]*Eighteenth Century Prose*, ed. L. I. Bredvold (New York, 1935), p. 321.

[7]Hole, p. 557.

[8]"*The Merchant of Venice*," *The Dramatic Censor* (London, 1770), I, p. 291.

[9]Hole, p. 566.

[10]David Philipson (Cincinnati, 1889), p. 34.

[11]David L. Richardson, *Literary Leaves* (Calcutta, 1840), II, pp. 303-7.

[12]Harold Child, "The Stage History of *The Merchant of Venice*," ed. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (Cambridge, 1826), p. 183.

[13]*The Works of William Hazlitt* (London, 1909), IV, p. 191.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., p. 193.

[16]George Farren, *An Essay on Shakespeare's Character of Shylock* (London, 1833), p. 49.

[17]Ibid., p. 50.

[18]Richardson, II, p. 305.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid., p. 307.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid., pp. 308-9.

[23]Lectures on Shakespeare (New York, 1848), I, p. 304.

[24]Ibid., p. 306.

[25]Quoted from W. H. Hudson, Introduction to The Merchant of Venice, 1819, by H. H. Furness, A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare (London, 1895), p. 432.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare, p. 12.

[29]Quoted from H. Giles, Human Life in Shakespeare, 1868, in Furness' Variorum, p. 430.

[30]Quoted from John Hunter, in Furness' Variorum, p. 430.

[31]John W. Hales, Notes and Essays on Shakespeare (London, 1884), p. 218.

[32]"Shylock and Barabas," Sewanee Review, IX (1901), p. 347.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., pp. 344-5, 348.

[35]Ibid., pp. 341-2.

[36]Shakespeare (New York, 1907), pp. 149-50.

[37]Ibid., p. 151.

[38]Shakespeare's Happy Comedies (London, 1962), p. 108.

[39]Demi-Devils: The Character of Shakespeare's Villains (New York, 1963), p. 86.

[40]Five Plays of Shakespeare, ed. Hardin Craig (Chicago, 1965), p. 1 p. 150.

[41]The Meaning of Shakespeare (Chicago, 1951), p. 96.

[42]Cited by F. T. Wood, "The Merchant of Venice in the 18th Century," English Studies, XV (1933), pp. 209-18.

[43]From Shylock to Svengali (Stanford, 1960), p. 35.

[44]Wood, p. 217.

[45]Annette May Osborne, "The Contribution of Shakespearean Actors to Shakespearean Criticism," University of North Carolina, M.A. Thesis, 1929, gives the following descriptions of the actors' interpretation of Shylock during this period in Chapter V ("The Merchant of Venice"), pp. 93-7:

> Edmund Kean (1787-1833)--"His Jew was one of murderous malice though of distinctly Hebraic majesty . . . . Kean's Shylock had a fine Italian countenance, light step, piercing and brilliant eye, and perfect self-possession of manner."
>
> Junius Brutus Booth (179601852)--"He laid particular stress on the racial pomp and religious austerity. His Shylock was the representative Hebrew marked by intense pride of race and pride of intellect."
>
> William Macready (1793-1873)--"interpreted Shylock as a majestic character whose sole purpose was to avenge the Christian for the wrongs of his 'sacred nation.' He was a creature full of murderous malice."
>
> Edwin Thomas Booth (1838-1893)--"presented Shylock as an exponent of personal hatred and revenge. His Shylock was an injured, insulted and bitterly resentful man. His revenge and hatred were intensified by racial and religious antipathy."

Other critics cite dramatic interpretations also. Bernard Grebanier has one chapter of his recent book _The Truth about Shylock_ devoted to a study of actors' concepts of Shylock. He discusses Charles Macklin's performance of 1741 as setting the tradition of Shylock as a villain, followed by the contrasting Edmund Kean in 1814, who set the Romantic tradition; then William Macready, who returned to the more orthodox interpretation in 1823; followed by Charles Kean, who revived his father's earlier Romantic interpretation in 1858; then by Junius Booth, a Romantic interpreter; later by Edwin Booth and Henry Irving, the latter the most celebrated of the Romantic actors. Grebanier continues the chapter with a discussion of twentieth century Shylocks.

Oscar J. Campbell is another critic who gives a summary of the dramatic interpretations of Shylock in _The Living Shakespeare_. The comments are similar to those previously cited.

Perhaps the fullest treatment of dramatic interpretation up to 1905 is to be found in Arthur Colby Sprague's _Shakespeare and the Actors_ (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 19-31.

[46]Quoted from W. W. Lloyd, _Critical Essays_, in Furness, p. 249.

[47]Quoted in Furness, p. 433.

[48]Ibid., p. 434.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Elizabethan Drama: 1558-1642 (Boston, 1908), I, p. 373.

[51]Shakespeare in the Theatre (London, 1913), p. 20.

[52]"The Merchant of Venice in Relation to Its Dramatic Treatment on the Stage" (London, 1887), I, pp. 27-28.

[53]"Shakespeare's Jew and Marlowe's Christians," Westminster Review, CLXXI, p. 64.

[54]Ibid., p. 57.

[55]Elmer Edgar Stoll, Shakespeare Studies (New York, 1927), p. 331.

[56]Ibid., pp. 263-6.

[57]Ibid., pp. 269, 275-85, 289-95.

[58]Ibid., pp. 274-5.

[59]Ibid., pp. 295-6.

[60]Ibid., pp. 298-9.

[61]Ibid.

[62]A History of Shakespearean Criticism (London, 1932), II, pp. 309-10.

[63]The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy (London, 1914), p. 227.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid., p. 233.

[66]Shakespeare (New York, 1922), p. 212.

[67]The Living Shakespeare: Twenty Two Plays and the Sonnets, ed. O. J. Campbell (New York, 1949), pp. 264-5.

[68]Shakespearean Comedy (New York, 1949), p. 138.

[69]Ibid., p. 139.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In attempting to abstract some final remarks about this study, one conclusion I must draw is that Romantic criticism of Shakespearian drama is still very much alive. Not, of course, in the same sense as it was during the so-called Romantic Age of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and their contemporaries. But certainly in the sense that particular Romantic attitudes can be identified in the writings of certain recent critics, e.g., Mark Van Doren, Donald Stauffer, John Holloway, G. Wilson Knight, J. M. Murry, among others. This is not to label these critics as Romantics in the strictest sense, but only to imply that they reflect definite Romantic tendencies in their various interpretations of Shakespeare's plays, and even then more in some criticism than in other.

It is evident that the Romantic treatment has its flaws. Perhaps the greatest is that, in attempting to allow the individual mind to work at its fullest intuitively in interpreting the plays, it completely and intentionally ignores other important elements surrounding the works--elements that possibly offer ideas leading to a fuller understanding. This kind of action makes it appear that Shakespeare alone created everything in every play, when it is common knowledge that he borrowed so very much and probably would be the first to admit the borrowing could he do so. After all, one must remember that the modern concept of plagiarism is quite unlike that of the Renaissance. Then, any

improvement upon older material allowed use of earlier creativity. Hence, Romantic idolatry of creative genius of Shakespeare, though valid to a great degree, overlooks how very much Shakespeare was indebted to other sources.

On the other hand, the more traditional historical approach has its faults also. This method, especially in its most recent form, places great stress upon (1) the psychology of the period, and (2) a consideration of the general conditions, thoughts, and customs of that period. The problem here is that the so-called psychology of the period is in reality a creation of fairly recent scholarship which has given a supposed unity to many varied psychologies and psuedo-psychologies.[1] Too, the Medieval world picture has been so merged with the Renaissance that it has been almost covered over and the reader can hardly distinguish one period from the other. Helen Gardiner offers an apropo comment on this point:

> The 'Elizabethan World Picture' tidily presented to us as a system of thought cannot tell us how much of that picture had truth and meaning for any single Elizabethan.[2]

It seems to me that in order to fully appreciate Shakespeare as a dramatist the intelligent reader will make use of any available criticism that offers a sensible interpretation based upon valid scholarly research. This is the general approach employed in teaching modern theories and practice of literary criticism. It is my opinion that we must have this kind of variety in Shakespearian interpretation. Perhaps the Romantic interpretation of <u>Hamlet</u> does not please the historian or the psychologist, but to the reader who is inclined to Romantic interpretation, the play takes on a special meaning. And after all, is that

not a primary trait of great art: that each reader finds therein something of special significance for himself? Viewed in this way then the Romantic interpretation of Shakespearian drama does have a place in the general criticism of the genre. It may be true that the eccentric interpretation is often found among those critics who exhibit Romantic tendencies, but it would not be fair to limit eccentricity to this group. Besides, eccentric interpretations will not win the battle with common sense, with the meticulous examination of texts, and with the insistence that Shakespeare wrote for the theatre.

We cannot fully dismiss Coleridge and the other Romantics when they stress the _dramatis persona_ as character in full life, but neither can we dismiss Stoll and others when they demand the recognition that Elizabethan thought somewhat controlled the actions of the characters. It is only by a synthesis of ideas that a reader comes away from Shakespearian drama fully aware of the true art of the genius who created it. To be overzealous with one approach to the exclusion of any other offers the possibility of misunderstanding. Perhaps, as Cicero reminds us, "the pursuit, even of the _best_ of things, ought to be calm and tranquil."

NOTES

[1]See Lily Campbell's Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes and Lawrence Babb's The Elizabethan Malady for discussions of Elizabethan psychology.

[2]Helen Gardiner, The Business of Criticism (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 34.

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