

SHAKESPEARE'S TREATMENT OF
COURTLY LOVE

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to make a brief survey of Shakespeare's treatment of the traditions of courtly love in a representative group of his plays.

Although the term "courtly love" is not listed in the dictionaries, it is commonly recognized and used by scholars studying this phase of medieval history and literature.¹ It was a system of courtship which grew out of the necessity of the difficult times of medieval Europe. It gradually evolved as a complex of beliefs, or pretenses, rationalizing and justifying an abnormal means of satisfying normal desires, desires which often had been condemned by the Church. This system helped to provide justification and self-respect for those who affected this cult. The man traditionally complained, and possibly believed, that if his love were not returned, he would die; certainly he could be justified in trying to save his own life. The lady was told that if she failed to grant the requests of her lover, he would perish, and she would become his murderer; perhaps she considered this ample justification for her generosity and mercy. Courtly love gave these affairs a semblance of dignity, and even nobility.

Perhaps it would be well to enumerate a few of the most common characteristics of courtly love as it developed into a more complete system and became more commonly accepted.

The individuals involved had to be persons of quality. If this system was to lend dignity and nobility to love, it had to be associated with only

¹ Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, introduction and trans. by John J. Perry, New York, 1941, p. 3.

Margaret Adlum Gist, Love and War in the Middle English Romances, Philadelphia, 1947, p. 8.

those of the upper social strata. Long lists of qualifications for ladies and gentlemen were gradually evolved.²

Love was thought to be an irresistible power.³ It was something which could not be prevented or controlled. Consequently, the participants were freed of personal responsibility. ✓

It was engendered by the meeting of the eyes and was immediately effective.⁴ Hence it may be said that "love at first sight" was a common precept of courtly love. From the eyes of the lady to the eyes of the gentleman went sparks, or arrows, which inflicted him with the mortal disease of love. His first reactions were a great fear of his lady⁵ and immediate symptoms of intense physical and mental agony.⁶

The disease was thought to be mortal, inevitably bringing death to the gentleman if not relieved, and the only way in which it could be cured was by the solaces of his mistress.⁷ Therefore the more pain and anguish the gentleman could portray, and the more immediate seemed the prospect of his death, the greater was the lady's justification for healing him. Perhaps

² Count Baldassare Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby, ed. Ernest Rhys, New York, n.d., pp. 31-42, 71-77, 94, 190-193. Gist, pp. 63, 65, 193.

³ David Lloyd Stevenson, The Love-Game Comedy, New York, 1946, p. 34.

⁴ Hardin Craig, The Enchanted Glass, New York, 1936, pp. 43-44. Stevenson, p. 247.

⁵ Geoffrey Chaucer, The Knight's Tale, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, Boston, 1933, ll. 1074-1100. (Later references to the works of Chaucer will use the lineation of this edition.)

⁶ John Lyly, The Complete Works of John Lyly, ed. R. W. Bond, Oxford, 1902, I, 201. (Other citations of Lyly refer to this edition.) Castiglione, p. 27.

⁷ Capellanus, p. 45.

these artifices seem ridiculous to us now. But what lady would not be flattered to find herself so irresistibly and mortally attractive to a gentleman? In satisfying his desires, and hers, she could feel that she was being noble, generous, kind, and merciful.

During the early stages of his love the gentleman used many clever devices in bringing his plight to the attention of his beloved.⁸ He put himself constantly in her way. She could not venture out of her house unescorted without being confronted with him. He would sigh and moan and look as pitiful and ill as possible in order to gain her pity, and at night he would groan and sing beneath her window. Besides making a nuisance of himself in every possible way, he would bribe her servants and use mutual friends as go-betweens, by whom he would send her notes, poems, gifts, tokens, and bribes of all kinds.⁹ It was commonly thought that some lovers used witchcraft and potions with magic properties in overcoming the resistance of their ladies. Bribes and trickery of any sort were approved.¹⁰ The more powerful the potion, and the more subtle and clever the trickery, the more justified the lady could feel in finally giving her love.

While the gentleman was advancing his campaign by every possible means, the lady was expected to remain aloof and cold, outwardly showing no sign of interest.¹¹ It was the gentleman's responsibility to woo so ardently and so effectively that the lady might consider longer resistance impossible and justify her actions by feeling that she was not at all responsible for them.

⁸ Castiglione, pp. 130-133. Capellanus, pp. 184-186.

⁹ Castiglione, pp. 181, 132-133. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 232-233.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

When she did capitulate and her love was finally granted, it was only on the condition of utmost secrecy. It was thought that one mutual friend, to act as go-between, was necessary, but when the secrecy was lost, nothing remained which could be defended.¹² A husband was still justified, by common approval, in killing his wife without a hearing if he found her engaged in adulterous activities.¹³

The granting of her love and the lady's solaces was supposed to endue the gentleman with great courage and nobleness of character.¹⁴ Not only could she feel justified in her love because of her helplessness to resist and her generosity in saving his life, but also she could take great pride in making a man noble, valorous, and gentle, the ideal qualities of chivalry and knighthood. This last attribute of courtly love gradually came to be recognized as the central characteristic or the heart of the entire system.

The total concept of courtly love could never be put inside the boundaries of a simple definition. Its aspects and characteristics varied from time to time, from place to place, from situation to situation, and even from person to person. It was essentially flexible, for it had been created to fill a need which itself varied greatly with the circumstances, yet the general or central characteristics which I have mentioned tended to remain essentially the same.

With the social, political, and religious changes brought on by the passing of the centuries, courtly love also underwent some modifications. The peripheral characteristics became more and more elaborate, and the

¹² Capellanus, pp. 184-186. ¹³ Craig, p. 206 Gist, pp. 36-38, 47.

¹⁴ Capellanus, p. 31.

central idea of sexual gratification outside of marriage received less and less emphasis. In its effect on the literature and manners of England the emphasis on extra-marital activities was almost completely ignored, except in stories with a deep continental flavor, and in the questionable behavior of some of the ladies and gentlemen of the court. To the people of England it was mainly a system of manners and conduct which carried with it an air of good breeding and social quality which was considered highly desirable during the Renaissance.

In the following chapters traces of this system of courtly love will be noted in a representative group of Shakespeare's plays. His use of these traditions will be studied, and an over-all picture of his treatment of courtly love will be formulated.

CHAPTER I

In this chapter Shakespeare's treatment of love in his earlier romances will be compared with the traditions of courtly love; the background for his later development will be provided, and early indications of a break with traditions will be shown.

Although the exact dates of composition are not available, there is fairly conclusive and generally accepted evidence that Love's Labour's Lost, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and A Midsummer Night's Dream were the first of Shakespeare's romantic plays.¹ In these plays he follows very closely the traditions and customs of courtly love which had been handed down from the Middle Ages and were still prevalent in Renaissance literature. His characters conform in their actions and feelings to types and patterns in the prevailing cultural tradition. The author seems to be relying more on accepted literary tradition than upon his own observations of life about him for his portrayal of love.

According to the best traditions of courtly love, only persons of noble birth were qualified to participate.² In his earlier plays Shakespeare follows this tradition carefully. In Love's Labour's Lost the King of Navarre and his three nobles, Longaville, Dumain, and Berowne, pair off with the Princess of France and her three gentlewomen attendants; the lovers in A Midsummer Night's Dream, Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, and Helena, are all

¹ Thomas Marc Parrott, Shakespeare, ed. Edward Hubler and Robert Stockdale Telfer, New York, 1938, pp. 98-99.

² Capellanus, pp. 149-150. Castiglione, pp. 31-33.

members of the court of the Duke of Athens; and in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Valentine and Proteus are both qualified gentlemen, Julia is a gentlewoman, and Silvia is the daughter of the Duke of Milan.

These lovers not only had to be of noble birth, but they were also expected to be patterns of true gentility. Both men and women had to be well-educated, witty conversationalists, and excellent dancers. The gentlemen were expected to be courteous at court and fierce in battle.³ The gentlewomen were expected to be beautiful, interesting, intelligent, and entertaining.⁴ The lovers in Shakespeare's early romantic plays meet these qualifications remarkably well.

Although these plays are romances, and military warfare is not brought into the plots, there is usually a hint of some battle in the background, and the gentlemen show their pride in their profession by wearing their arms. In The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Proteus and Valentine offer their services to the Duke of Milan. Their being noblemen probably means they are to be officers in his army. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, the action of the play is set in motion by the fact that the Duke has just concluded a successful military campaign. In one speech he says,

Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.⁵

And Maria, one of the gentlewomen attending the Princess of France, makes the following remark about Longaville.

³ Castiglione, pp. 31-42, 71-77, 94. ⁴ Ibid., pp. 190-193.

⁵ William Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. George Lyman Kittredge, Boston, 1936, I, 1, 16-19. (Later citations of Shakespeare's plays use the lineation of this edition.)

A man of sovereign parts he is esteem'd;
Well fitted in arts, glorious in arms.⁶

Their fondness for wit, or the play upon words, is shown when Katherine, also attending the Princess, says of Dumain,

...he hath wit to make an ill shape good,
And shape to win grace though he had no wit.⁷

And Rosaline, the third gentlewoman attending the Princess, says of Berowne,

His eye begets occasion for his wit;
For every object that the one doth catch
The other turns to a mirth-moving jest,
Which his fair tongue (conceit's expositor)
Delivers in such apt and gracious words
That aged ears play truant at his tales
And younger hearings are quite ravished,
So sweet and voluble is his discourse.⁸

Boyet, a servant of the Princess, makes the following remarks about the cleverness and wit of the ladies.

The tongues of mocking wenches are as keen
As is the razor's edge invisible,
Cutting a smaller hair than may be seen,
Above the sense of sense: so sensible
Seemeth their conference; their conceits have wings,
Fleeter than arrows, bullets, wind, thought,
swifter things.⁹

In these earlier plays Shakespeare follows the tradition of having his gentlemen lovers fall in love at first sight.¹⁰ After the King of Navarre meets the Princess of France for the first time, Boyet tells her that the King has fallen in love with her.

Boyet. If my observation (which very seldom lies),
By the heart's still rhetoric, disclosed with
eyes,
Deceive me not now, Navarre is infected.

⁶ Love's Labour's Lost, II, i, 44-45. ⁷ Ibid., II, i, 59-60.

⁸ Ibid., II, i, 69-76. ⁹ Ibid., V, ii, 256-261.

¹⁰ Stevenson, p. 34. ¹¹ Love's Labour's Lost, II, i, 228-249.

Prin. With what?
 Boyet. With that which we lovers entitle 'affected.'
 Prin. Your reason?
 Boyet. Why, all his behaviours did make their retire
 To the court of his eye, peeping through desire.
 His heart, like an agate with your print impressed,
 Proud with his form, in his eye pride expressed.
 His tongue, all impatient to speak and not see,
 Did stumble with haste in his eyesight to be;
 All senses to that sense did make their repair,
 To feel only looking on fairest of fair.
 Methought all his senses were lock'd in his eye,
 As jewels in crystal for some prince to buy,
 Who, tend'ring their own worth from where they
 were glass'd,
 Did point you to buy them along as you pass'd.
 His face's own margent did quote such amazes
 That all eyes saw his eyes enchanted with gazes.
 I'll give you Aquitaine and all that is his
 An you give him for my sake but one loving kiss.¹¹

Not only does the King fall in love at first sight, but his three attending lords suffer exactly the same fate, each succumbing to the beauty of his particular gentlewoman.¹² We may assume that this business of wholesale love at first sight was not only accepted by the public, but was anticipated and approved, for it followed the ancient literary traditions of courtly love.¹³

In The Two Gentlemen of Verona both Valentine and Proteus fall in love with Silvia as soon as they meet her at her father's court. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Oberon, King of the Fairies, has a special magic potion which has the quality of causing its victim to fall in love with the first object of the opposite sex that his eye might fall upon. Both Lysander and Demetrius are victims of this potion.

¹¹ Love's Labour's Lost, II, i, 228-249.

¹² Ibid., IV, iii, 1-246.

¹³ Chaucer, The Knight's Tale, ll. 1077-1079.

Although gentlemen traditionally loved at first sight, sudden infatuation was not expected of the ladies. The conventional lady of the court was to be won only after long and arduous effort.¹⁴ The Princess of France and her attendants are unwilling to commit themselves, even after the King and his gentlemen companions have made an intensive campaign.¹⁵ Silvia, in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, does not give her love to Valentine until she has been wooed in the traditional courtly manner,¹⁶ and there is no reason to believe the same is not true of Julia. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Oberon's magic love potion, causing love at first sight, is used on the gentlemen only, not on the ladies. The one exception is Queen Titania.¹⁷

The symptoms of love shown and expressed by the characters of these plays also follow closely the traditional manifestations of Dan Cupid's passion. This love was supposed to be a secret, fearful thing, and the gentleman who loved was expected, at first, to be stricken almost dumb with his emotion.¹⁸ While Julia and Lucetta are discussing the different gentlemen who are trying to win Julia's hand, they make the following remarks.

Jul. His little speaking shows his love but small.

Luc. Fire that's closely kept burns most of all.

¹⁴ Castiglione, pp. 200, 220, 230-233.

¹⁵ Love's Labour's Lost, V, ii, 795-885.

¹⁶ The Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, iv.

¹⁷ A Midsummer Night's Dream, II, i, 27-34, 244-268. When Oberon administers the potion to the two gentlemen, it is with the purpose of helping them with their love affairs, but when he gives the potion to Titania, his wife, it is for spite. Gods and fairies were capable of doing almost anything when their own personal feelings were involved.

¹⁸ Castiglione, p. 238. Stevenson, p. 34.

Jul. They do not love that do not show their love.
 Luc. O, they love least that let men know their love.¹⁹

At this particular time the ladies are speaking of Proteus. Julia criticizes him only in order to hear Lucetta defend him and say the things that she, Julia, would like to say. The statements made by Lucetta agree closely with the medieval descriptions of the effect of love.

According to these traditions, the gentlemen lovers must undergo much pain and suffering. In the following lines Proteus tells of the terrible effect which his love for Julia has had on him.

Thou, Julia, thou, hast metamorphis'd me,
 Made me neglect my studies, lose my time,
 War with good counsel, set the world at naught;
 Made wit with musing weak, heart sick with thought.²⁰

Valentine is not impressed by Proteus' symptoms of love. He mocks Proteus and rails on love, and in doing so, aligns himself with another of love's traditions. This mockery of his serves as a warning to the audience, preparing them for Valentine's eventual fall. Well they knew that one who mocked Cupid and Venus would suffer the rigors and pains of love in a special way.²¹ Shakespeare does not disappoint his audience. The next time Valentine makes his appearance on the stage he has been hopelessly stricken with love for Silvia. Speed, Valentine's servant, tells us a little of what has happened to his master.

...you have learn'd like Sir Proteus, to wreath
 your arms like a malecontent; to relish a love
 song like a robin redbreast; to walk alone like
 one that had the pestilence; to sigh like a

¹⁹ The Two Gentlemen of Verona, I, ii, 29-32. ²⁰ Ibid., I, i, 66-69.

²¹ Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, Book I, ll. 197-280.
 Troilus, who has mocked love and lovers, is himself smitten.

schoolboy that had lost his A B C; to weep like a young wench that had buried her grandam; to fast like one that takes diet; to watch like one that fears robbing; to speak puling like a beggar at Hallowmas. You were wont, when you laughed, to crow like a cock; when you walk'd, to walk like one of the lions; when you fasted, it was presently after dinner; when you look'd sadly, it was for want of money. And now you are metamorphis'd with a mistress, that, when I look on you, I can hardly think you my master.²²

Later, in telling Proteus of his love, Valentine says,

I have done penance for condemning love,
Whose high imperious thoughts have punish'd
me
With bitter fasts, with penitential groans,
With nightly tears, and daily heartsore sighs;
For, in revenge of my contempt of love,
Love hath chas'd sleep from my enthralled eyes
And made them watchers of mine own heart's
sorrow.²³

All of these symptoms of love mentioned by Speed and Valentine follow closely the traditions of courtly love.²⁴

Another time-honored manifestation of love was jealousy.²⁵ In his early plays Shakespeare seems to care little for dramatizing this emotion²⁶ and seldom allows it to take a very important part in the feelings of his lovers, but he does show his knowledge of the tradition when Valentine mentions his jealousy of Thurio, Valentine's rival for Silvia's love.

²² The Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, i, 19-34.

²³ Ibid., II, iv, 128-135.

²⁴ Capellanus, pp. 45, 184-186. Castiglione, pp. 231-232.

²⁵ Capellanus, pp. 154, 158, 184-186.

²⁶ The jealousy of Othello, which has no relation to courtly love, will be discussed in Chapter III.

My foolish rival, that her father likes
 (Only for his possessions are so huge),
 Is gone with her along; and I must after,
 For love, thou know'st, is full of jealousy.²⁷

Not only were lovers condemned to a life of tears, sighs, moans, sleeplessness, and jealousy, but they also showed the stricken condition of their hearts by the disordered appearance of their dress.²⁸ Shakespeare seems to delight especially in this custom. In The Two Gentlemen of Verona Speed compares Valentine's disreputable appearance to that which Proteus had made when the latter had been in love with Julia.

...for he [Proteus], being in love, could not see to garter his hose; and you [Valentine], being in love, cannot see to put on your hose.²⁹

Love was considered a disease, or a madness, forced upon the lover by some power completely beyond his control. The lover was not considered responsible for his actions while under the influence of this power.³⁰

Theseus, in explaining to Hippolyta the strange qualities of lovers, says,

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
 More than cool reason ever comprehends.
 The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
 Are of imagination all compact.³¹

²⁷ The Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, iv, 174-177.

²⁸ Craig, p. 201. Craig tells us that the physical appearance and condition of the lover were believed to correspond to his spiritual condition.

²⁹ The Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, ii, 82-84.

³⁰ Castiglione, p. 179. Bernard says, "Truely the passions of love bring with them a great excuse of everie faulte."

Lyly, I, 231. Lucilla says, "Love gives no reason of choice, neither will it suffer anye repulse."

Craig, pp. 125, 130-131. All love was thought to be lunacy and disease. A man was considered the victim of his passion.

³¹ A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i, 4-8.

This overpowering passion also was thought to inspire the lover to write poetry. As he sighed, groaned, wept, and spent his nights in sleeplessness, he used part of his time in trying to honor his lady by praising her virtues in verse.³² Jaques, in his famous "All the world's a stage" speech, describes the lover as

Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow.³³

In Love's Labour's Lost each of the four lovers writes a poem to his particular lady,³⁴ and in the first act of The Two Gentlemen of Verona we find Lucetta delivering Proteus' love note, "writ... in rhyme" to Julia.³⁵ In A Midsummer Night's Dream Egeus, Hermia's father, accuses Lysander of sending Hermia love poetry. This type of poetry was thought to be very effective in winning a lady's heart. Egeus complains to the Duke:

This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child.
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes
And interchang'd love tokens with my child;
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung
With feigning voice verses of feigning love...
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart.³⁶

After the lover had carried out the initial stages of his campaign successfully, and his lady had finally consented to answer him and accept his attentions (though she still carried on the formal pretense of not committing herself), he declared himself to be his mistress' servant and

³² Castiglione, p. 232.

³³ As You Like It, II, vii, 148-149.

³⁴ Love's Labour's Lost, IV, iii, 1-120.

³⁵ The Two Gentlemen of Verona, I, ii, 34-140.

³⁶ A Midsummer Night's Dream, I, i, 27-36.

tried to prove himself worthy of her by his deeds of valor.³⁷ Thus the four lovers in Love's Labour's Lost, Proteus and Valentine in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and Lysander and Demetrius in A Midsummer Night's Dream all pledge themselves to be their ladies' servants.

At this stage of the courtship it was customary for the lady to present her lover with some token which he should always wear or carry with him. In Love's Labour's Lost the King and his lords try to push their campaign a little too rapidly and are mocked by their ladies in a confused situation in which the gentlemen are given tokens belonging to the wrong ladies; and in A Midsummer Night's Dream Egeus tells Theseus that Lysander and Hermia have "interchanged love tokens."³⁸ These tokens might have been locks of hair, gloves, scarves, rings, or anything else that seemed appropriate to the imagination of the lovers.³⁹

Another rule of courtly love, also illustrated by Shakespeare's characters, was that "a new love puts to flight an old one."⁴⁰ When Proteus meets

³⁷ Chaucer, The Knight's Tale, ll. 2111-2115.

Castiglione, p. 234. Lord Cesar says, "And certes it is not possible, that in the hart of man, where once is entred the flame of love, there shoulde at any time raigne cowardlinesse. For he that loveth, alwaies coveteth to make him selfe as lovely as he can, and evermore dreadeth that hee take no foile, that shoulde make him litle set by: and passeth not to goe a thousand times in a day to his death. To declare him selfe worthie of that love."

Lyly, I, 219, 226.

Stevenson, p. 34. One effect of a courtier's falling in love was an increase in both the depth and number of his chivalric virtues.

³⁸ A Midsummer Night's Dream, I, i, 29.

³⁹ Capellanus, p. 152, 176. Castiglione, pp. 181, 231-232.

⁴⁰ Capellanus, pp. 182-186.

Craig, p. 24. Craig explains that the strange, sudden changes of heart of characters are explained by their belief that one emotion or passion drives out another, and that the substitution is immediately operative.

Julia and starts a campaign to win Silvia's affection. He says this of his old and new loves:

Even as one heat another heat expels
Or as one nail by strength drives out another,
So the remembrance of my former love
Is by a newer object quite forgotten.⁴¹

In A Midsummer Night's Dream we find that Demetrius, like Proteus, first wins the love of one lady, Helena, and later transfers his love to Hermia and scorns Helena. Then, after Oberon sends Puck out with the love potion, Lysander's love for Hermia turns to loathing when he awakens to look upon Helena; Demetrius' love for Hermia becomes a hazy dream of the past when he comes to love Helena once more; and Lysander again finds himself in love with Hermia and not interested in Helena. To Shakespeare's public there was really little amazing in all these quick switches of love. There was no reason for surprise when Demetrius first switched from Helena to Hermia, and the later accelerated shifts were caused only by a more intense dose of the same potion which was responsible for all love. That powerful poison had been engendered by a wound from Cupid's arrow. Oberon explains to Puck that Cupid had loosed his shaft at a "fair Vestal, throned by the West" (Queen Elizabeth), but because of her chastity, she passed on, a maiden, fancy-free.

Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell.
It fell upon a little Western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flow'r; the herb I show'd thee once.
The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid,
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.⁴²

⁴¹ The Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, iv, 192-195.

⁴² A Midsummer Night's Dream, II, i, 165-172.

Although these shifts in love are breathtaking in their rapidity and effectiveness, they must have seemed quite natural to an audience which was steeped in the superstitions and traditions of its medieval ancestors.⁴³

But as gentlewomen were expected to be more slow in succumbing to love, so also were they expected to be more constant.⁴⁴ While the lovers of Julia, Hermia, and Helena change objects for their affections with great rapidity and apparent ease, the ladies themselves remain constant in their love.

The most important thing about love, however, was its final end. The medieval tradition of courtly love was very clear on this point. The final end of love was the complete physical possession of one's mistress.⁴⁵

⁴³ Castiglione, pp. 232-233. Lord Cesar says of lovers, "Other seeke by enchauntments, and witchcraftes... wherein are seene wonderful conclusions" to overcome the resistance of their ladies. "Here then for all hard matters are found out remedies, counterfeite keys, ladders of ropes, waies to cast into sleepe..."

Henry Thew Stephenson, Shakespeare's London, New York, 1906, p. 7. "The people [of Shakespeare's day] not only believed in ghosts and witches, but in magic of every sort."

⁴⁴ Capellanus, pp. 161-162. Capellanus shows us how much more constancy was expected of women than of men. "What... if...he should meet with a little strumpet or somebody's servant girl? Should he, just because he played with her in the grass, lose the love of his beloved?" The implied answer is, "No." Then he continues: "God forbid that we should ever declare that a woman who is not ashamed to wanton with two men should go unpunished."

Castiglione, p. 177. Bernard says, "Wee our selves have established for a law, that in us [men] wanton life is no vice, nor default, nor any slaunder, and in women it is so great a reproach and shame, that shee that hath once an ill name, whether the reporte that goeth of her be true or false, hath lost her credite for ever."

Craig, p. 134.

⁴⁵ Capellanus, pp. 28, 30, 42, 102, 122, 130, 136. Capellanus makes it clear that no matter what clothing love wears, the one end is copulation.

Castiglione, p. 181.

*D. How
against
double
standard
(Jane/Hamlet)*

There had been various modifications and opinions concerning the conditions of the surrender, but the basic principle remained the same. Some advocated marriage; some believed marriage and love to be complete antitheses; and some idealized the consummation of love by saying that before possessing his mistress physically, the lover should first possess her spiritual beauty; but all agreed that physical possession was the final end.⁴⁶

In the new, national England which had emerged during the Renaissance, social stability was regarded as very important and marriage was accepted as the only proper condition for the consummation of courtship, but the other concepts were by no means completely disregarded, especially by those who lived in the comparatively artificial social environment of the court.

Shakespeare's audiences must have found great delight in the pairing-off of the love-stricken couples, for many of his plays end in a wholesale teaming-up. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, when the lovers are having difficulties, Shakespeare lets Puck assure the audience,

Jack shall have Jill;
Naught shall go ill...⁴⁷

Counting the fairy King and Queen, there are four couples paired off in this play; in The Two Gentlemen of Verona there are only two couples to be married at the end of the play; but in Love's Labour's Lost there are again four couples, although there is a one year postponement of the final rites. Shakespeare at times, perhaps, has qualms about carrying a good thing too far, for later, in As You Like It, we hear Jaques say,

⁴⁶ Capellanus, pp. 100-103, 156, 184-186. Capellanus declares that love must be outside of the bonds of marriage.

Castiglione, pp. 315, 303. Castiglione gives love a spiritual as well as a physical quality.

⁴⁷ A Midsummer Night's Dream, III, ii, 461-462.

There is, sure, another flood toward, and
these couples are coming to the ark.⁴⁸

Yet Shakespeare seems to pronounce his blessing on all his lovers when
Oberon, King of the Fairies, chants,

Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be;
And the issue there create
Ever shall be fortunate.
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be....
With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait,
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace.
And the owner of it blest
Ever shall in safety rest.⁴⁹

From these examples it is apparent that in his earlier plays
Shakespeare follows the conventions of courtly love very closely. The char-
acters are types and their actions and speeches follow the patterns set
down by custom.⁵⁰ He seems to rely more on literary traditions and con-
ventions for his portrayal of love than upon his own observations. His
treatment indicates neither an objective nor a subjective approach, but
merely a reproduction and padding of accepted, artificial concepts of love.⁵¹

In this early stage of his writing he seems to be chiefly an imitator.
In many ways his early plays differed very little from the mass of litera-
ture produced at that time. Yet, to the thoughtful reader, there are in

⁴⁸ As You Like It, V, iv, 35-36.

⁴⁹ A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i, 408-427.

⁵⁰ Craig, p. 161.

⁵¹ Stevenson, pp. 9, 124.

even the earliest of his plays indications that the young playwright would not always be an imitator, bound by artificiality and conventions. In the following chapters we will trace his growth in freedom and his development in the mastery of his materials.

CHAPTER II

The plays to be discussed in this chapter are Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It, and The Comedy of Errors. These plays, with the exception of The Comedy of Errors, are generally accepted as having followed chronologically the plays treated in chapter one.¹ They will be examined for traces of the doctrines of courtly love and for evidence of new trends in Shakespeare's use of these traditions.

The Comedy of Errors, an earlier play, has been included because in it are found indications of a greater freedom yet to come. In this play, where artificiality abounds in plot, in characterization, and in situation, as indeed it must in any good farce, may be found a refreshing reality and naturalness in the courtship of Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse. In these love scenes there is little suggestion of the artificiality and dependence upon the literary traditions of love that have already been pointed out in Love's Labour's Lost, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and A Midsummer Night's Dream. Perhaps one reason for this is that The Comedy of Errors is not primarily a love play, and it could hardly qualify for courtly love since the emphasis is on farce. At Shakespeare's time a farce was not the best vehicle for carrying the characterizations necessary for an affair of courtly love.² Since he is not dealing primarily with the people of the court in this play, he is free to ignore the courtly traditions. Consequently, here, in contrast with his other early plays, the love-making is free to run its natural course without either benefit or hindrance of the artificial literary traditions of romance. As a result, he gives us one of

¹ Parrott, pp. 97-100.

² Craig, p. 207.

his loveliest heroines and some of his truest, most natural and convincing love scenes.

Since he treats this couple with sympathy, since their love scenes are original with him, and since he is free of literary traditions of courtly love in handling these scenes, his treatment of love in this play assumes some significance. He exhibits this lack of affectation in several scenes.

Mistaking Antipholus of Syracuse for his twin, who is the husband of her sister Adriana, Luciana chides this Antipholus for not loving Adriana. In defense he replies that he would much prefer to make love to Luciana, and she reproves him by saying, "It [his affection for her] is a fault that springeth from your eye."³ Luciana's speech is the nearest resemblance to a courtly love tradition found in this play, but here the circumstances give it very little weight. Antipholus does not declare that her eyes have wounded him, and there is no manifestation of a courtier suddenly stricken with love's deadly disease. A lovely girl simply reproves a young man, attracted to her, for having a roving eye, because she mistakenly believes him to be already married. Yet, according to the early traditions of courtly love, if he had been the husband of Adriana, he would have been a much better candidate for Luciana's love than for Adriana's.⁴

Another noticeable variation from these traditions may be found in the treatment of jealousy. Luciana chides Adriana for her jealousy. She scolds,

Self-harming jealousy -- fie, beat it hence!⁵

³ The Comedy of Errors, III, ii, 55. ⁴ Capellanus, pp. 100-103.

⁵ The Comedy of Errors, II, i, 102.

and

How many fond fools serve mad jealousy!⁶

Here jealousy is looked upon as being harmful and mad, but the traditions tell us that it encourages love and that there can be no true love without jealousy.

According to the traditions, when a man loves a lady, she becomes his ruler and he becomes her servant, but when Adriana tells Luciana that she, Luciana, will also nag her husband when she marries, Luciana replies,

Ere I learn love, I'll practice to obey.⁷

She tries to tell Adriana that the husband is lord and the wife should practice obedience.

Antipholus' courtship of Luciana follows none of the set procedures commonly dictated by courtly love. He simply and sincerely declares his respect and affection, and we are made to feel confident that she will return it. There are no love tokens, no strange powers of the eyes, no poems, no gifts, and no trials. On the part of Luciana there are no teasing and playing with the desires of her lover, no clever bursts of rhetoric, and none of the customary play on words. Neither do we see any of the traditional symptoms of love. Antipholus retains his health and sanity; he doesn't forget to dress and care for himself properly; and we hear nothing of sighs, moans, nor groans,

Another disagreement with continental traditions is found in the attitude displayed toward marriage. Marriage is shown not only to be honorable, but also to be desirable, the only satisfactory and proper end

⁶ The Comedy of Errors, II, 1, 116.

⁷ Ibid., II, 1, 29.

of courtship. The man should be master, and the woman should be patient, gentle and obedient. Perhaps Shakespeare reveals to us, through Luciana, how Elizabethan England felt about marital relations.

The fact that Shakespeare does not follow the traditions of courtly love in The Comedy of Errors does not mean that he has abandoned them, but it does indicate that there are some definite boundaries for the use of these traditions. Moreover, this play presents an opportunity to observe him as he deals sympathetically with courtship, when there are no artificial conventions upon which he leans and no material in his sources from which he may seek guidance. Here is an opportunity for studying his treatment of love when he is left completely on his own. The results are interesting and delightful. In Luciana we find a forerunner of the loveliest of Shakespeare's heroines. She is sweet, thoughtful, kind, sympathetic, honorable, understanding, and completely devoid of artificiality. Also, this early bit of original treatment of love gives us something with which we can compare his later treatment of the same subject.

Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, and As You Like It are thought to have been composed in the period from 1595 to 1600. Since some of Shakespeare's plays were written as early as 1590 or 1591, this gives him from five to ten years of experience, without counting his apprenticeship.⁸ With these years behind him any noticeable changes or tendencies in his use of courtly love should prove significant.

Each of these plays easily qualifies for the possible use of courtly love traditions by placing a primary emphasis upon the love interests and

⁸ Parrott, pp. 97-100.

by being peopled with a cast of gentlemen and ladies, many of whom are closely connected with court life. In Romeo and Juliet the two young lovers are the sole children of two great, rival families of Verona. In The Merchant of Venice Portia is a lady of noble breeding and great wealth. Among her suitors are dukes, counts, lords, barons, and princes. Although Bassanio seems to be something of a "gentleman of fortune" and he bears no title, it is obvious that he is a gentleman in truth, for so he is esteemed by those who know him. When he pays suit to Portia, there is nothing to suggest that he is not quite so proper a suitor as any of the nobility that has gone before, and both he and Antonio are on friendly terms with the Duke of Venice. In As You Like It both Rosalind and Celia are daughters of dukes, and Orlando and Oliver are sons of Sir Roland de Boys and heirs to a large estate.

Although these lovers, who are the main characters in the three plays, are quite as well qualified to be treated according to the best traditions of courtly love as were those in the earlier plays, their slavery to the artificialities of these customs will be found to have disappeared almost entirely. The rules of love are often used for material for conversation and sometimes are followed in the characterizations of the lovers, but seldom does the action become artificial by blindly following these traditions, and rarely does a character fall into the rigid molds of the rules of courtly love unless his actions are already motivated and justified in some more natural and plausible manner.

Upon examining this group of plays for evidences of "love at first sight," a common tenet of courtly love,⁹ one may find numerous suggestions

⁹ Castiglione, p. 247. Craig, pp. 43-44.

of this doctrine but few traces of the earlier artificiality. Rosalind and Orlando, in As You Like It, succumb almost instantly to love's attack. Although they are not actually stricken at first sight, before the end of their first encounter Cupid has begun his disturbing work. At the conclusion of the wrestling match, when Orlando has succeeded in throwing Charles, the girls, Rosalind and Celia, ask to have a word with him.

Rosalind says,

Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown
More than your enemies.¹⁰

And when the girls have gone, after a rather awkward and hesitant conversation, Orlando says,

What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue?
I cannot speak to her, yet she urg'd conference.
O poor Orlando, thou art overthrown!
Or Charles or something weaker masters thee!¹¹

And later, in the forest, in identifying the author of some love poems,

Celia has this to say about the same event:

It is young Orlando, that tripp'd up the wrestler's
heels and your heart both in an instant.¹²

These young people did fall in love quite suddenly, and by using the term very loosely we might even say that they "loved at first sight," but even so, the passion seems to come in a natural manner and there is no feeling of artificiality.

In the same play, though, when Oliver and Celia become enamored, there is a suggestion of haste and lack of motivation. That the author was well

¹⁰ As You Like It, I, ii, 265-266. ¹¹ Ibid., I, ii, 268-271.

¹² Ibid., III, ii, 224-225.

aware of this is shown by Orlando's queries.

Is't possible that on so little acquaintance you should like her? that but seeing, you should love her? and loving, woo? and wooing, she should grant? And will you persevere to enjoy her?¹³

That this haste and lack of motivation were not a result of blindly following the dictates of tradition is evident by the hurried culmination of the entire affair. It is true that the laws of courtly love say that the lover falls in love instantly, but it is also true that a long and arduous campaign must follow. With Oliver and Celia, though, the wooing and granting are quite as precipitate as is the falling in love. Their haste and artificiality are simply difficulties in the mechanics of the play. Shakespeare wants to please his audience by having Celia and Oliver marry, but he has neither the time nor opportunity for them to carry on a normal courtship; so he compromises by taking care of it off-stage and giving us a few apologetic lines of explanation. A similar example of haste in the same play is the conversion of Duke Fredrick.¹⁴ Each time, Shakespeare does that which is expedient and sacrifices some naturalness in minor events in order to bring his play to a happy conclusion within a reasonable time limit.

In Phebe may be seen another example of instantaneous infatuation, but love comes to her not so much because of what she sees as because of what she hears. This is seen when Rosalind, disguised as a young man, scolds Phebe for her rough treatment of Silvius.

Phebe. Sweet youth, I pray you chide a year together.
I had rather hear you chide than this man woo.
Ros. [to Phebe] He's fall'n in love with your foulness,
[to Silvius] and she'll fall in love with my anger.¹⁵

¹³ As You Like It, V, ii, 1-5. ¹⁴ Ibid., V, iv, 157-172.

¹⁵ Ibid., III, V, 64-68.

And after hearing a few specimens of Silvius' love-making, we may easily sympathize with Phebe's reactions. Silvius makes such a door mat of himself that Phebe, a very spirited wench, is delighted when she finds some one with spark and fire. Although, in defense, Phebe quotes, "Whoever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight,"¹⁶ she eventually is satisfied with Silvius, who has been wooing her for some time.

In Romeo and Juliet we have been prepared for Romeo's very sudden love for Juliet by his previous love for Rosaline and by suggestions of emotional immaturity. When Romeo loves Juliet at first sight, he does follow the traditions of courtly love, but his background, which Shakespeare carefully provides, makes this logical, rather than forced and artificial.

In The Merchant of Venice there is a suggestion of love at first sight when Gratiano tells Bassanio of his engagement to Nerissa.

My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours.
You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid;
You lov'd, I lov'd.¹⁷

Here, as elsewhere, Gratiano seems to be guilty of exaggerating somewhat, but it is difficult to believe that Bassanio has succumbed to a precipitate volley of Cupid's arrows when his courtship of Portia is so carefully and deliberately planned. His motives, perhaps, are not so ideal as we should like them to be. In debt and in great need of money, he seems to look upon this attempt to win the wealthy Portia largely as a business venture. He tells Antonio, from whom he has borrowed money and wishes to borrow more,

And from your love I have a warranty
To unburthen all my plots and purposes
How to get clear of all the debts I owe.¹⁸

¹⁶ As You Like It, III, V, 82.

¹⁷ The Merchant of Venice, III, ii, 197-199. ¹⁸ Ibid., I, i, 132-134.

symptoms, and delights in thinking of himself as being quite overcome. Among the other characteristics that he mentions is that of the power of the eyes. In lamenting the fact that Rosaline would not love, he says, "She will not ...bide th' encounter of loving eyes."²¹ Romeo's friends also are impressed. Mercutio says, "Alas, poor Romeo, he is already dead! stabb'd with the white wench's black eye."²² And Benvolio suggests that, as a remedy for his disease, Romeo should give his eyes liberty to examine other beauties in order that some new infection of his eyes might drive out the old.²³

This artificiality is especially apparent when Romeo is imagining himself in love, but when he meets Juliet and really falls, there is a notable contrast. With her he is as abrupt and direct in his approach as he had been devious and artificial with Rosaline; in their first encounter he manages to kiss her twice. Although his language is still stilted and affected (Juliet accuses him of kissing "by th' book"),²⁴ there is no mention of the work of the eyes, nor any of the tortuous traditional routes to a lady's heart.

Juliet also shows herself familiar with the reputed power of a young lady's eyes to engender love. In speaking to her mother of young Paris, she says,

I'll look to like, if looking liking move;
But no more deep will I endart mine eye
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.²⁵

Juliet is prepared to use her eyes on Paris, where any magic help would hardly be necessary, but in her unlooked-for encounter with Romeo both young people are completely captivated, and any attempt to use the eyes in

²¹ Romeo and Juliet, I, i, 219-220. ²² Ibid., II, iv, 13-14.

²³ Ibid., I, i, 234-235; I, ii, 46-47. ²⁴ Ibid., I, V, 112.

²⁵ Ibid., I, iii, 97-99.

accordance with the traditions of love is quite forgotten.

In The Merchant of Venice there is very little mention of the power of the eyes, except when it is used as a means of making complimentary conversation. When Bassanio opens the proper casket and finds the picture of Portia, we hear him say,

But her eyes—
How could he [the artist] see to do them? Having made one,
Methinks it should have power to steal both his
And leave itself unfurnish'd.²⁶

Portia also mentions the work of the eyes when she says to Bassanio,

Beshrow your eyes!
They have o'erlook'd me and divided me;
One half of me is yours, the other half yours...
And so all yours!²⁷

Yet there is no action in the play which bears out her implication that his eyes have engendered her affection. Whether her language is intended to be literal or figurative, neither the action of the play nor the characterization of Portia is materially affected. It is interesting to note that here Shakespeare lets Portia take liberty with this tradition in accusing Bassanio of using his eyes to conquer her. Traditionally this power rested in the eyes of the lady, not in the gentlemen.²⁸ Earlier in the play, Bassanio, speaking of Portia, tells Antonio,

Sometimes from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages.²⁹

But attempting to tie this to the theory that the eyes engender love could hardly be justified. It suggests communication rather than conquest.

²⁶ The Merchant of Venice, III, ii, 123-126.

²⁷ Ibid., III, ii, 14-18. ²⁸ Craig, pp. 43-44.

²⁹ The Merchant of Venice, I, i, 163-164.

Whether the communication concerned love or not is irrelevant; there is no suggestion of a mastering, conquering power.

This strange power of the eyes is mentioned several times in As You Like It, but in none of these instances does it assume any notable importance. When Rosalind, disguised as Ganymede, meets Orlando after he has been injured by a lioness, the following lines are exchanged.

Ros. I thought thy heart had been wounded with the claws of
a lion.
Orl. Wounded it is, but with the eyes of a lady.³⁰

Actually there had been no mention of eyes at the time Orlando had fallen in love. This would seem to be just a bit of word play in which Shakespeare delighted to have his lovers indulge.

At one time Phebe ridicules Silvius for saying that her eyes had injured him.

Thou tell'st me there is murder in mine eye
Now I do frown on thee with all my heart;
And if mine eyes can wound, now let them kill thee!
...mine eyes,
Which I have darted at thee, hurt thee not.³¹

Yet, a few minutes later she tries, with no success, the very strategy that she has just ridiculed. From this we may gather that Shakespeare expected neither the ridicule nor the tradition to be taken too seriously. Although he alludes a number of times to the traditional belief that love is a sickness engendered by the eyes of another, he does not at any time lean upon this concept to the point of giving his characters or the action of these plays the taint of artificiality.

Another criterion of courtly love is that the victim must show great

³⁰ As You Like It, V, ii, 26-27. ³¹ Ibid., III, v, 10-25.

signs of physical and mental suffering. Romeo demonstrates his familiarity with this concept when he says,

Love is a smoke rais'd with the fume of sighs....
 Being vex'd, a sea nourish'd with lover's tears.
 What is it else? A madness most discreet,
 A choking gall...³²

While he imagines himself to be in love with Rosaline, Romeo becomes a model of the courtly lover. His father complains,

Many a morning hath he there [in the wood] been seen,
 With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
 Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs...³³

When Benvolio asks him if he is mad, Romeo makes this reply,

Not mad, but bound more than a madman is;
 Shut up in prison, kept without my food,
 Whipp'd and tormented...³⁴

He speaks further of his love for Rosaline by saying, "Under love's heavy burthen do I sink."³⁵ Unrequited love, according to these traditions, was thought to be a disease causing death.³⁶ Romeo is well aware of this phase of the tradition. He says,

She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow
 Do I live dead that live to tell it now.³⁷

The contrast between the symptoms which he exhibits at this time and his behavior after falling in love with Juliet is noteworthy. The next day, after having met Juliet, Romeo finds his friends amazed that he is no longer weeping and groaning. Mercutio exclaims,

³² Romeo and Juliet, I, i, 197-201. ³³ Ibid., I, i, 138-140.

³⁴ Romeo and Juliet, I, ii, 55-57.

³⁵ Ibid., I, iv, 22.

³⁶ Capellanus, p. 45.

³⁷ Romeo and Juliet, I, i, 230-231.

Why, is not this better now than groaning for love? Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo...³⁸

In The Merchant of Venice there are only very slight references to these painful symptoms of courtly love, and they are somewhat negative. It seems that Antonio is strangely moody and sad. Salanio and Salerio, friends of his, are trying to find the cause of his sadness. They suggest that he is worried about his ships and merchandise, but Antonio replies, "My merchandise makes me not sad." Then Salanio ventures, "Why, then you are in love."³⁹ But neither does this prove to be the difficulty. Another reference to traditional symptoms of love is found in Portia's speech in which she tells how she will portray the character of a young man. She explains how she will boast, saying,

...honorable ladies sought my love,
Which I denying, they fell sick and died.⁴⁰

In As You Like It the traditional symptoms of courtly love are used freely in the conversations of Rosalind and Orlando but are seldom exhibited in the characters themselves. When Orlando is first overcome by his love for Rosalind, he becomes dumb and can not speak. Later, when he meets the disguised Rosalind in the forest, she teases him by saying,

There is no true lover in the forest; else sighing every minute and groaning every hour would detect the lazy foot of time as well as a clock.⁴¹

When she ridicules the love poems which she has found hanging in the trees, he admits that he is the "love-shak'd"⁴² author. Continuing her teasing,

³⁸ Romeo and Juliet, II, iv, 92-94.

³⁹ The Merchant of Venice, I, i, 45-46. ⁴⁰ Ibid., III, iv, 70-71.

⁴¹ As You Like It, III, ii, 320-323. ⁴² Ibid., III, ii, 385.

she tells Orlando that he can not be in love for he fails to measure up to the traditional symptoms. She protests that he should exhibit the following proofs of his love: lean cheek, sunken eye, neglected beard, hose ungartered, bonnet unbanded, sleeve unbuttoned, shoes untied, everything showing careless desolation.⁴³

Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punish'd and cured is that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too.⁴⁴

Also, in the course of their conversations, she tells him that Rosalind will not have him; whereupon he replies that if that be true he will die, but she mocks him and says that no man ever died for lack of love.⁴⁵ Silvius and Phebe also proclaim these tenets of courtly love in their speeches. Silvius speaks of the "wounds invisible/ That love's keen arrows make,"⁴⁶ and tells Rosalind that to love "is to be all made of sighs and tears,"⁴⁷ and Phebe, in her rhymed letter to Rosalind, says that if her love is denied then she will "study how to die."⁴⁸

In Romeo and Juliet and in As You Like It Shakespeare makes extensive use of the tradition that a gentleman in love must suffer great physical and mental pain. Yet, in neither play is this tradition allowed to become a rule governing the true feelings of his characters. Romeo, for a time, displays love's symptoms admirably, but there is no attempt on the part of Shakespeare to convince the audience that these symptoms are real. On the contrary, the artificiality of his symptoms is clearly shown by the contrast

⁴³ As You Like It, III, ii, 391-401. ⁴⁴ Ibid., III, ii, 420-424.

⁴⁵ Ibid., IV, i, 94-108. ⁴⁶ Ibid., III, v, 30-31.

⁴⁷ Ibid., V, ii, 90. ⁴⁸ Ibid., IV, iii, 63.

with his later, real love. Orlando has little to say about the traditional symptoms of love nor does he exhibit many of them in the action of the play. Rosalind speaks volubly on the subject but always in a teasing or critical manner. In The Merchant of Venice these traditional symptoms are neither approved nor criticized; in fact, they are hardly mentioned.

In these three plays there are very few attempts to follow the traditions of courtly love in depicting long, arduous campaigns of courtship. Probably Shakespeare found these campaigns very difficult material to handle in a dramatic production. In Romeo and Juliet Romeo begins a campaign in the proper traditional manner. He mourns and groans and tries to impress the object of his attentions of the seriousness of his plight, and, also according to tradition, during this initial stage he receives no encouragement from her. This campaign, though, is cut off almost before it has begun by Romeo's new love. We see only enough of it to get the proper insight into Romeo's character. This is necessary background material for the play, but when the real love between Romeo and Juliet takes the stage, courtly traditions go to the winds. Romeo's approach is abrupt and direct and Juliet almost immediately reveals her love, even without being asked. Although this is accidental and she has some fear of violating courtly etiquette, she is happy to let Romeo know of her love when he assures her of his. She says,

O gentle Romeo,
If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully.
Or if thou thinkest I am too quickly won,
I'll frown, and be perverse, and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.⁴⁹

They immediately pledge their mutual love and begin planning for their

⁴⁹ Romeo and Juliet, II, ii, 93-97.

marriage. In this romance there is no place for the traditional, drawn-out campaign.

Neither is there any possible place for a long love campaign in The Merchant of Venice. The very heart of the play centers upon the fact that Portia is to be won by a gamble, and not by a campaign. Her surrender is to be brought about by the choice of the correct casket, not by love poems, gifts, deeds of valor, nor by any of the traditional methods.

As You Like It presents a different situation. In it are at least two full-fledged love campaigns with many parallels to the steps and procedures of the traditional courtly lovers. Although Orlando's courtship of Rosalind is certainly not the orthodox campaign, it does follow the traditions in many respects. There is the suggestion of the time element, for the courtship runs almost the entire length of the play. Also we find his lady withstanding him, and putting him off, and teasing him. This is traditional, although she certainly does not do it in the normal manner. Orlando writes love poems for his beloved, and, if the imagination is allowed some latitude, we might say he even undergoes a difficult trial which proves to his love his great valor. Perhaps the lioness and snake could substitute for the enemies of the battlefield or the opponents of the tournament. There is also an exchange of gifts but in this instance it probably violates the traditions more than it bears them out. At their first meeting Rosalind gives Orlando the chain which hangs about her neck, which is a proper gift, but it is not given at the proper time, and Orlando later presents her with a bloody handkerchief, which hardly seems appropriate. Of course, the most unorthodox part of the courtship is that Rosalind is disguised and Orlando considers the entire business to be only pretense.

In some ways Silvius and Phebe follow these traditions very closely in

their courtship. Shakespeare has Corin speak of this campaign in the following manner.

If you will see a pageant truly play'd
Between the pale complexion of true love
And the red glow of scorn and proud disdain,
Go hence a little, and I shall conduct you,
If you will mark it.⁵⁰

In this scene Silvius begs Phebe not to scorn him. He suggests that if she does he will die and thus she will become his murderer; he asks if she will be more stern than the common executioner. Phebe's replies are sharp and scornful, but still one receives the impression that she is enjoying the scene very much. Although she ridicules Silvius at this time, later she uses the same traditional methods herself.⁵¹ The scorn which she shows does not indicate that Phebe has no respect for the methods of Silvius. Actually, in scorning him she is adhering as closely to the traditions as is he.⁵² She realizes that in this game any sign of sympathy from her is to be received by him as a tacit consent to his proposals, an agreement that the campaign is coming to a successful conclusion. Whatever her reasons are, Phebe is not willing for the campaign to terminate. Later, when she falls in love with Ganymede, she shows herself to be guided by the traditions of love. She even writes poetry and sends it to her beloved, and Silvius shows the extremity of his cleaving to traditions by acting as her messenger.⁵³

In these plays there is also some mention of the ennobling and strengthening quality of love, but only in Romeo does it receive any emphasis. When Juliet asks him how he scaled the high walls, he replies,

⁵⁰ As You Like It, III, iv, 55-59. ⁵¹ Ibid., IV, iii, 5-63.

⁵² Castiglione, pp. 200, 231-232. ⁵³ As You Like It, III, v, 134-136.

With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls;
 For stony limits cannot hold love out,
 And what love can do, that dares love attempt.⁵⁴

Later, in the same scene, when she warns him of the danger of his being discovered, he answers,

Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye
 Than twenty of their swords! Look thou but sweet,
 And I am proof against their enmity.⁵⁵

There is no opportunity for this tradition to be exhibited by Bassanio or Gratiano because marriage immediately follows the capitulation of the ladies. And, although Orlando does conquer the lioness, there is no positive evidence to show that his valor and strength are results of his love.

In ending each love affair Shakespeare is consistent with the English modifications of the courtly love system in having the unions dignified and made permanent by marriage. Although there are suggestions in two different instances that marriage is not the object which the lover has in mind, in neither case does the gentleman succeed in making this type of conquest.

Romeo, in speaking of Rosaline, complains,

She'll not be hit
 With Cupid's arrow. She hath Dian's wit,
 And, in strong proof of chastity well arm'd,
 From Love's weak childish bow she lives un-
 harm'd.
 She will not stay the siege of loving terms,
 Nor bide th' encounter of assailing eyes,
 Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold.
 O, she is rich in beauty; only poor
 That, when she dies, with beauty dies her store.⁵⁶

His language parallels that of the French courtier of the Middle Ages, and if the language used carries the same connotations that it did with the French

⁵⁴ Romeo and Juliet, II, ii, 66-68. ⁵⁵ Ibid., II, ii, 71-73.

⁵⁶ Ibid., I, i, 215-223.

lover, marriage is far from Romeo's mind. Although marriage was the approved and accepted culmination of courtship in Elizabethan England, these people were by no means unaware of the earlier continental concept. The French tradition of love outside of marriage was no stranger to the literature of England; this was especially true of stories taken from French, Italian, or Spanish sources. Gist says,

That the code of courtly love was of major literary importance is not to be disputed. It is true that the complete outline of the convention does not often appear in the English romances; but its influence is felt everywhere--in the occurrence of lovesickness on the part of the knight or lady, in the lady's initial inaccessibility and coldness, in the knight's endurance of hardships for love's reward, and in the occasional presenting of the adulterous relationship as beautiful and enduring.⁵⁷

Stevenson says that the love in Shakespeare's romances is a battle between idealism and realism. The realism is the desire for sexual satisfaction without regard to the demands of society, and the idealism is the desire for love on a spiritual plane. He says that marriage is merely the compromise, or balance of these two conflicting elements.⁵⁸ Gist also says,

They [the English ladies] were cautioned against giving audience to wooers who would bewail their anguish and seek sympathy only that they might gratify their desires.⁵⁹

Chaucer and Lyly, my two English sources for comparison with Shakespeare, use this conception of courtly love freely; Stevenson says that it is also made use of by such eminent English writers as Spenser, Sidney, and John Donne,⁶⁰ and similar examples may also be found in other plays written by Shakespeare. The other instance in these two plays is in the romance of Phebe and Silvius. Phebe says, "Thou hast my love, is that not neighborly?"

⁵⁷ Gist, pp. 105-106.

⁵⁸ Stevenson, pp. 185, 188, 223.

⁵⁹ Gist, p. 76.

⁶⁰ Stevenson, p. 18.

and Silvius replies, "I would have you."⁶¹ Perhaps this could be construed as a proposal of marriage but, under the circumstances, the possibility seems to me to be remote. Silvius has, up to this point, been consistent in following the traditions of courtly love; if he retains this consistency, and there is nothing to suggest that he does not, he certainly is not asking for Phebe's hand in marriage. Neither Romeo nor Silvius is successful, though, in making a marriageless conquest. Romeo in his new love forgets his former quest, and Silvius is happy to accept marriage as a compromise after fearing to lose his beloved completely.

In these plays may be found numerous examples of the traditional concepts of courtly love, but, in contrast to the earlier ones, there is hardly any artificiality caused by over-dependence on them. At this stage Shakespeare takes what he can use, when he can use it, and ignores anything which might hamper the characterization or action in his plays.

Although he completely disregards these conventions at times and uses them to produce humor and fun at other times, there is no reason to believe that he dislikes the idea of writing love poems, nor should we respect Orlando less for having written them, and Rosalind is delighted with the poems which she mocks. Of course Touchstone and Audrey provide a travesty of love and lovers, but it would not be logical to credit Shakespeare with lampooning those in whom he had seen these customs exhibited. The fact that a servant apes a noble with ludicrous results does not necessarily suggest malice; this is a very common method of creating humor. In the affair of Silvius and Phebe it would be very difficult, as well as dangerous, to try

⁶¹ As You Like It, III, v, 90-91.

to draw any conclusion about Shakespeare's attitude toward courtly love. These characters are not the simple country people they seem to be; they also represent the pastoral life, the ideal of the very top of society. When lines portraying courtly love are spoken by them, it would be impossible to say who is officially speaking, the peasant, or the pastoral ideal of a gentleman, or the actual gentleman himself. Likewise, if malice or discredit is detected, or imagined, it would be just as difficult to determine at whom or what the discredit is aimed. There seems to be no good reason for believing that Shakespeare is seriously criticizing traditional romantic love. Taking humor too seriously may be a very misleading and unhappy error.

There is an abundance of evidence that Shakespeare has changed his technique in treating of courtly love; now he uses these conventions in the most advantageous manner in order to get whatever effect he desires in a particular scene, rather than letting the conventions dictate to him. But this does not mean that he holds these traditions in disrepute; it merely indicates that he is growing and developing in this phase of his writing ability as well as in others.

CHAPTER III

This chapter will deal with evidence of courtly love in Troilus and Cressida, Antony and Cleopatra, and Othello, dramas written in the period from 1602 to 1607. In these will be found no new tendency in Shakespeare's use of courtly love, but rather an intensifying of the trend noted in the last group of plays. He gradually frees himself from the artificialities of these traditions; when they fit his purpose, he uses them, and when they do not, he modifies them or ignores them.

In most respects all three plays are well qualified for the use of courtly love. The characters include emperors, kings, queens, princes, princesses, generals, and Roman senators. These people are well qualified socially for love's court. The plays deal primarily with different phases of love, infidelity, lust, and jealousy, which are favorite topics for courtly traditions. Yet they possess another attribute, the quality of vivid reality, which makes an elaborate use of these ancient love codes or a dependence upon them quite impossible. Shakespeare avoids any harmful artificialities which might lessen the dramatic impact of these plays.

The characters of serious plays demand an intense sympathy on the part of the audience, which any suggestion of artificiality might destroy. They must possess a high degree of reality, their emotions and reactions must be real, and have real reasons for being. The situation requires verisimilitude, and the motivation and action of the characters must be completely justified, for this is the most difficult type of drama to present. Every member of the audience must feel himself in the part of the actor on the stage. Any artificiality, any incongruity, because of the intensity and seriousness of the theme, might loom as ridiculous. Rude guffaws at the

wrong time could destroy the performance for both the audience and the cast. Although these plays are romances dealing with the very top of society, the precepts of courtly love are ruled out by the extreme tone of gravity and the intensity of feeling demanded. Realism becomes an absolute necessity; artificiality tends to be an unqualified evil. Here Shakespeare demonstrates his genius and the maturity of his development by choosing from a great hodge-podge of possible materials those which can be made to add to the serious intensity of his productions.

The choosing and discarding are especially apparent in Troilus and Cressida, a play based upon a story which, since the time of Chaucer, had been a model for literature of courtly love. Although the story remains essentially the same, in Shakespeare's play almost every vestige of artificiality has disappeared. There is no suggestion of the wounding power of the eyes which Chaucer dwells upon in such detail.¹ When the play opens, Troilus is already hopelessly in love, and, although she conceals it for a time, Cressida is already infatuated with him. Troilus does follow the traditions somewhat in his wooing, but only in a very general way. The details, in which lie the artificialities, are almost completely ignored. His anxiety and frustration are well motivated and easily understood. There is no evidence of the extremities to which the traditional courtly lover goes. He is not found pitifully groaning and moaning as he lies upon his bed racked with his disease. In spite of his unrequited love, he is quite active, both on the battlefield and in managing the business of the city. In pressing his suit, he does send Cressida notes and he does use a go-between, but the notes

¹ Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, Book I, ll. 288-308.

are not stressed and are used in a perfectly normal, well-motivated manner. Pandarus, the go-between, is a bit artificial and could hardly be justified as being essential to the plot, but probably is kept because of public demand. The story of Troilus and Cressida was well known in Elizabethan England. Everyone knew of the gallant young Troilus, the unfaithful Cressida, and the despicable Pandarus. To these people he was quite as essential as either of the others. They probably would not have been happy if denied Pandarus, at whom they could jeer. Troilus speaks of Cressida as being "stubborn-chaunce against all suit,"² but this only serves to raise more clearly the trusting nobility of the character of Troilus and add emphasis to the treachery and treachery of Cressida.

A real and natural motivation for her restraint may be found in her speeches. After Pandarus, who has been praising Troilus to her with no apparent effect, moves off, Cressida colloquizes,

But more in Troilus than can be said I see
 Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be.
 Yet hold I off. Women are angels, wooings:
 Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing.
 That she believ'd knows naught that knows not this:
 Men prize the thing ungain'd more than it is.
 That she was never yet that ever knew
 Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.
 Therefore this mania out of love I teach:
 Achievement is command; ungain'd, beseech.
 Then, though my heart's content firm love doth bear,
 Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.³

This speech not only explains her reticence but it also provides an insight into her character which makes her infidelity more plausible. Later, when

² Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, I, i, 300.

³ Ibid., I, ii, 310-321.

Cressida consents to give herself to Troilus, we have the following lines.

- Cres. Boldness comes to me now and brings me heart.
 Prince Troilus, I have lov'd you night and day
 For many weary months.
 Tro. Why was my Cressid then so hard to win?
 Cres. Hard to seem won; but I was won, my lord,
 With the first glance that ever—pardon me!⁴

Her very use of these artificialities of courtly love intensifies her falseness and cheapness. Instead of making her passion more true, her suggestion of love at first sight merely adds to her perfidy.

Lover's vows are mentioned, but even this adds to the reality of the play when the idealistic Troilus reveals a realistic understanding of their worth.

- Tro. O, let my lady apprehend no fear! In all Cupid's
 pageant there is presented no monster.
 Cres. Nor nothing monstrous neither?
 Tro. Nothing but our undertakings when we vow to weep
 seas, live in fire, eat rocks, tame tigers—thinking it
 harder for our mistress to devise imposition enough than
 for us to undergo any difficulty imposed. This is the
 monstrosity in love, lady, that the will is infinite and
 the execution confin'd, that the desire is boundless and
 the act a slave to limit.⁵

When Cressida is sent to the Greek camp, she and Troilus exchange gifts as tokens of their love, but Cressida almost immediately presents the sleeve which she has received from Troilus to her new lover, an officer in the Greek army. Again Shakespeare uses the very artificiality of a tradition of courtly love in portraying in stark reality Cressida's lowness of character.

To a modern reader the actions of Cressida are difficult to comprehend, but to the Elizabethan her character and motivation were fully understood before she appeared upon the stage; Cressida was already accepted as the type

⁴ Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, III, ii, 121-126.

⁵ Ibid., III, ii, 80-90.

of the harlot. Kittredge says that "when Shakespeare took pen in hand, Cressida's name had become a synonym for strumpet."⁶ If he had prepared scenes adequate for our understanding of her character, they would have seemed superfluous to his Elizabethan audience.

It is almost paradoxical that the dramatic power of this romance is based upon the realistic characterization of the two lovers, and that this realism is heightened by the masterly use of the artificialities of the traditions of courtly love. When Troilus, the idealist, and Cressida, the adventuress, meet, tragedy is inevitable. Before the scene in which Cressida is observed betraying Troilus, the suspense and drama are heightened by Ulysses' characterizations of the two lovers. Of Troilus he says,

The youngest son of Priam, a true knight;
 Not yet mature, yet matchless; firm of word;
 Speaking in deeds and deedless in his tongue;
 Not soon provok'd, nor being provok'd soon calm'd;
 His heart and hand both open and both free,
 For what he has he gives, what thinks he shows,
 Yet gives he not till judgment guide his bounty,
 Nor dignifies an impair thought with breath;
 Manly as Hector, but more dangerous;
 For Hector in his blaze of wrath subscribes
 To tender objects, but he in heat of action
 Is more vindicative than jealous love.
 They call him Troilus, and on him erect
 A second hope as fairly built as Hector.⁷

And of Cressida he has this to say.

Fie, fie upon her!
 There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip;
 Nay, her foot speaks. Her wanton spirits look out
 At every joint and motive of her body.
 O, these encounterers so glib of tongue,
 That give accosting welcome ere it comes
 And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts

⁶ William Shakespeare, The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. George Lyman Kittredge, p. 880. (This quotation is taken from Kittredge's notes on Troilus and Cressida.)

⁷ Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, IV, v, 96-112.

To every ticklish reader--set them down
 For sluttish spoils of opportunity
 And daughters of the game!⁸

Qualities which would have been admired in others become base in Cressida because of the fundamental baseness of her character. In contrast, virtues ride on Troilus as if they were medals for his adornment.

In this play Shakespeare reaches a new height of achievement in the use of the traditions of courtly love. Ideas which in the original story served as models for the artificialities of courtly love now are used in such a way as to provide characterization and motivation, actually adding to the naturalness and reality of the play. Artificiality is used as a tool in producing reality.

Shakespeare's portrayal of the passion of Antony and Cleopatra is almost completely devoid of any trace of courtly love traditions. Their love is an outlaw love which flares and burns in defiance of all outward laws and rules. Cleopatra, the great motivating force in the play, is a law unto herself. Traditions, codes, customs, ethics, and the laws of Rome mean little to her. She is ruled only by her desires and by circumstances which help or hamper her in gaining them. Antony, in giving his allegiance to Cleopatra, also throws off normal restraint and makes himself a moral and social outlaw; however, he wavers constantly in his resolution and has many qualms about his life without the law. In a play revolving about two such characters there is little place for the artificial regulations of courtly love.

Shakespeare shows himself to be free of any dependence upon these traditions by ignoring them almost completely. The one possible exception,

⁸ Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, IV, V, 54-63.

appropriately enough, is found in one of Antony's remarks. His presence is needed in Rome, and he finally stirs himself to leave his "Egypt." She is very unhappy about this and does not hesitate to let him know how she feels. Antony smooths over the situation somewhat by saying,

I go from hence
Thy soldier, servant, making peace or war
As thou affect'st.⁹

This seems to satisfy Cleopatra to some extent and Antony makes his departure in relative peace. The speech is strongly suggestive of the tradition of courtly love stating that the lover should serve his mistress, especially in feats of battle, and in this particular instance it is well used. Antony has already made up his mind to leave, regardless of Cleopatra. Whether he says this merely to placate the Queen or in sincerity, it evidently serves the purpose well. Even a suggestion of insincerity or artificiality fits in nicely when a general is forced to find excuses to satisfy his mistress whom he is leaving. Other than this one example there is no suggestion of courtly love in Antony and Cleopatra.

In Othello Shakespeare finds another use for the traditions of courtly love. Here they are used as weapons for the destruction of the nobility of Othello and of his love for Desdemona. These traditions are used sparingly but deliberately by Iago, and in every use the purpose is knavery and treachery.

Iago hates Othello because he has promoted Cassio, rather than Iago, to the position of captain. Also Iago fears, without reason, that Emilia, his wife, has been intimate with Othello. He reveals his thoughts by saying,

⁹ Antony and Cleopatra, I, iii, 69-71.

For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
 Hath leap'd into my seat; the thought whereof
 Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;
 And nothing can or shall content my soul
 Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife;
 Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
 At least into a jealousy so strong
 That judgment cannot cure.¹⁰

One of Iago's favorite weapons in his arsenal of evil is his knowledge of the customs of courtly love. From the inception of his evil plan until its tragic conclusion, he makes use of these traditions in creating confusion and havoc, until finally he and all those closely associated with him meet with injury or destruction. This knowledge of courtly love first becomes apparent when he ridicules Roderigo for threatening to drown himself because of his love for Desdemona. Iago recognizes in Roderigo a vain, foolish person who imagines himself to be a lover in the traditional style of courtly love. Iago says,

Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of
 a guinea hen, I would change my humility with a
 baboon.... Seek thou rather to be hang'd in compassing
 thy joy than to be drown'd and go without her.¹¹

Also his choosing Cassio as the proper person for stirring up jealousy in Othello, though not exclusively related to courtly love traditions, does exhibit close parallels to the qualities of the traditional courtier.

Iago says,

Cassio's a proper man....
 He hath a person and a smooth dispose
 To be suspected -- fram'd to make women false.¹²

And he describes Cassio to Roderigo as

¹⁰ Othello, II, i, 304-311.

¹¹ Ibid., I, iii, 316-318, 367-368.

¹² Ibid., I, iii, 398-404.

A slipper and subtle knave; a finder-out of occasions; that has an eye can stamp and counterfeit advantages, though true advantage never present itself; a devilish knave! Besides, the knave is handsome, young, and hath all those requisites in him that folly and green minds look after. A pestilent complete knave! and the woman hath found him already.¹³

Because Cassio fits so well into the traditional mold of the courtly lover, Iago takes advantage of this and enlarges upon it greatly to both Roderigo and Othello. He presents Cassio to Othello as Desdemona's lover in order to torment Othello and get revenge. He does the same for Roderigo in order to get him to clash with Cassio, thus avenging himself upon Cassio.

Roderigo is hesitant, but Iago continually spurs him on to do his mischief for him. At one time he plays upon Roderigo's vanity and weakness for the traditions of courtly love by saying,

If thou be'st valiant (as they say base men being in love have then a nobility in their natures more than is native to them), list me.¹⁴

In this manner Iago tells Roderigo that he, as a true lover, should attack Cassio, and the foolish Roderigo, because of his vanity and desire to be the model lover, lets himself become a tool used by Iago in the destruction of Cassio and Othello. Roderigo must have been well versed in the doctrines of courtly love. This idea of love giving strength and valor had come to be accepted as the very heart of the entire courtly love system.

Another courtly love tradition of which Iago makes clever use is that of plying the beloved with gifts.¹⁵ Iago reminds Roderigo of this tradition repeatedly and volunteers to act as the go-between, perhaps still another

¹³ Othello, II, i, 246-253.

¹⁴ Ibid., II, i, 216-219.

¹⁵ Castiglione, p. 232. Chaucer, The Miller's Tale, ll. 378-383.

vestige of courtly love.¹⁶ Roderigo sells his entire estate and puts it all into jewels and other valuable gifts which he intrusts to Iago, but the gifts, intended for Desdemona, go no farther than Iago's own pocket.

Still another example of his use of courtly love traditions in furthering his evil schemes is his declaring Desdemona's handkerchief to be evidence of her infidelity. After stealing the handkerchief from Desdemona, with the innocent help of Emilia, and planting it in Cassio's quarters, he convinces Othello that Desdemona has given Cassio the handkerchief. This was interpreted by Iago, according to the traditions of courtly love, as a token indicating that she had agreed to be Cassio's mistress. By this time Othello is almost completely out of his mind with fear and grief, and Iago, carefully gauging Othello's lack of judgment, even goes so far as to suggest that perhaps Desdemona and Cassio lie together naked in bed, without really meaning or doing any serious wrong. He says,

Or to be naked with her friend in bed
An hour, or more, not meaning any harm?
...So they do nothing, 'tis a venial slip.¹⁷

This is remarkably like Capellanus' discussion of the same subject in his book on courtly love. He says,

Pure love goes as far as the kiss and modest contact with the nude lover, omitting the final solace....God sees very little offence in it...mixed love gets its effect from every delight of the flesh and culminates in the final act of Venus.¹⁸

Othello, because of his wrought-up condition, instead of beating Iago for insulting his wife's honor and his own intelligence, blindly swallows the poison and asks for more.

¹⁶ Castiglione, pp. 231-233. Chaucer, Miller's Tale, p. 59, l. 375.

¹⁷ Othello, IV, 1, 3-10.

¹⁸ Capellanus, p. 122.

For Iago the next step is easy. The final phase of courtly love, according to the French traditions, was copulation, or, as Andreas put it, "the final act of Venus." Iago informs Othello that he has overheard Cassio tell of lying with Desdemona. When Othello demands proof, Iago arranges for him to partially overhear Cassio as he tells of his adventures with Bianca, who is a common whore. Iago arranges it so that Othello understands Cassio to be speaking of Desdemona. After this experience, Othello is completely overcome and determines to kill his bride as soon as possible.

In Iago, completely his own creation, Shakespeare uses the traditions of courtly love as instruments for creating evil.

It is truly said that Othello is a study of jealousy, but it must be remembered that jealousy is a word which may be used to cover a great variety of meanings. Jealousy may range from the clever, teasing devices of the courtly lovers to the divine wrath of Jehovah. Usually, though, we think of jealousy as an unpleasant, unjustified suspicion of the faithfulness of one's husband, wife, or lover. Emilia, in speaking to Desdemona, puts it very well when she says,

They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they are jealous. 'Tis a monster
Begot upon itself, born on itself.¹⁹

This, I believe, is the most common and accepted meaning of the word. A jealous person is one who is disposed to suspicion. There is jealousy of this sort in the play, exemplified by Iago, but Othello is not guilty of it. There is nothing to indicate that his violent emotion is the result of a predisposition to be suspicious; quite the opposite is true. His passion can be termed jealousy only when the word is used in its broadest, most

¹⁹ Othello, III, iv, 160-162.

general meaning. This play is based upon neither the courtly idea of jealousy nor the ordinary concept of that emotion.

Although the three plays in this chapter reveal no new trends in Shakespeare's use of the traditions of courtly love, they go even further than the preceding ones in depicting the reality of man and his passions, and they do display some remarkable variations of those tendencies already noted. In The Merchant of Venice we recognize his tendency to ignore them, but in Antony and Cleopatra he does ignore them. In Romeo and Juliet he used the traditions to disclose the emotional immaturity of Romeo, but in Troilus and Cressida they are used to reveal the artificiality and cheapness of Cressida. In As You Like It courtly love traditions are used to produce lightness, gaiety, and mirth, but in Othello the same traditions are used as instruments of treachery, evil and tragedy. We no longer find any suggestion of his being hampered by these traditions; instead we find him discarding them when they are not appropriate, and skilfully adapting them to forward his plots and intensify his characterizations when he does use them.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages I have made a brief survey of a representative group of Shakespeare's plays which deal primarily with courtship and romance. These plays have been studied for evidences of the doctrines of courtly love.

In the earlier productions, such as Love's Labour's Lost, we found that he tended to follow the conventions of courtly love very closely. He seemed to rely more on the literary traditions and stereotyped conventions for his portrayal of love than on his own understanding or observation. The characters lacked naturalness and individuality, and their actions and speeches followed the traditional patterns. His treatment was not original but merely a reproduction and padding of the accepted, artificial concepts of love, among which the courtly traditions were predominant. In most respects these earlier plays differed little from the other dramatic literature of that period, but even in these were found some indications of a freedom yet to come.

The next group of plays, those included in the period from 1595 to 1600, revealed many evidences of courtly love, but the contrast with his earlier plays was notable. No longer were his characterizations slavishly patterned after the artificialities of courtly love traditions; instead the author modified those customs and used them as background material, as in As You Like It, to produce humorous dialogues and interesting situations. Although examples of these concepts of love were numerous in this group of plays, there was little artificiality caused by an overdependence upon them. The author was rapidly becoming the master of his material instead of the conventional imitator. There were times when he exhibited a tendency to ignore the traditions completely, but this was only when they did not blend easily

with the theme and mood of his play. He revealed his flexibility by using the same traditions to produce a variety of effects. Although courtly love was used in producing humor, there was no indication that he held these traditions in disrepute.

In the last group of plays studied, those of the period from 1602 to 1607, Shakespeare reached new heights of achievement. Although he displayed no new tendencies, he revealed a remarkable intensifying of those already noted. He showed himself to be completely free of the artificiality of these traditions by using them, as in Troilus and Cressida, and Othello, with amazing effectiveness in realistic characterization and in the creation of suspense. At times he discarded courtly traditions completely, as in Antony and Cleopatra, when they did not fit his purpose. Ideas which originally served as models for the artificialities of courtly love were so turned as to add naturalness and realism to his characterization and motivation. Artificialities became tools for producing reality. The stilted, seemingly harmless pretenses of courtly love, through his genius, were transformed into powerful weapons of destruction, producing tragedy and stark, moving drama. There was no longer any suggestion of imitation or weak dependence upon the traditions of courtly love; instead these precepts were discarded or skillfully adapted to his use. The follower and imitator had become the master and creator.

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