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SHAKESPEARE

DETAILED

MACBETH

Some of the life-themes found prominent in Macbeth are 1) Warrior-honour 2) Imperial magnificence 3) Sleep and Feasting and 4) Ideas of creating and nature's innocence. These are typical Shakespearean themes. In *Macbeth*life forces are vividly and very clearly contrasted with evil, with forces of death and ill-omen darkness and disorder. Creation is opposed by destruction.

The theme of warrior-honour is stressed right from the beginning of the play. Macbeth is from the first a courageous soldier. He is 'brave Macbeth', 'valour's minion', 'Belliona's bridegroom'. Duncan exclaims'. O Valliant Cousin! Worthy gentleman". Macbeth is rewarded for his valour by a title. At the start Macbeth's honourable valour is firmly contrasted with the traitor's ignoble revolt. There is no honour in absolute courage. It must be a service, or it is worthless. Macbeth knows this. Duncan lavished praises on him and he replies.

"Theservice and the loyalty! Owe,
In doing it pays itself your highness 'part
Is to receive our duties: and our duties
Are to your throne and state, children and servants
Which do but what they should, by doing everything
Safe toward your love and honour'

The passage ends with an emphasis on 'honour'. The subject bound to is his lord by love and honour. The value of warrior ship may notdissociate from allegiance. It is one with the ideal of kingship and imperial power. But against this bond the evil is urging Macbeth. The evil in him hates to her Duncan proclaiming princely honours on Malcolm despite the promise of more distinctions for such as himself.

'Sons, kinsmen, thanes,
"And you whose places are the nearest, know,
We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland; which honour must
Not unaccompanied invest him only,
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine
On all deserves".

Here, sons, kinsmen, thane - all are bound close together in a harmonious order. Scotland is a family, Duncan its head. A natural law binds all degrees in proper place and allegiance. Only in terms of this allegiance is courage an honourable ideal. The king's honours' are compared to 'stars', the king's gentle rule of love thus blending with universal lights. But the evil that grips Macbeth must hide from such things of brilliance and universal beauty:

Stars hide your fires:
Let not light see my black and deep desires:
The eye wink at the hand: yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done to see."

Throughout, the evil in Macbeth is opposed to such order, to all family and national peach, and is alien to sun, moon, or star blotting their radiance from man.

The warrior-theme is closely twined with our next positive value imperial magnificence. On the ethical – as opposed to the metaphysical-plane Macbeth falls through trying to advance from deserved honour as a noble thane to the higher kingly honour to which he has no right. This kingship he attains, yet never really possesses it. He is never properly king: his reality is a mockery. Now, through the mark which envelops the action there are yet, glimpses of the sensuous glory which Macbeth desires but which ever elude, his grasp. The sensuous glory is always undermined, blurred by the dark, the abysmal negation, the evil. The Macbeth-world is in substantial, emptiness, its bottom knocked out of it; a hideous nightmare falling, like Satan dropping in his fight through chaos. Solidity and reality are grasped in vain by the falling soul, Macbeth and his wife reaches out for power and glory; the sense-forms correspondent is crowns and sceptres. The glint of these burns grimly and sullenly through the murk. Lady Macbeth would drive from her Lord.

At that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seen
To have thee crowned withal

'The golden round' – solid, glorious gold to bind the brow with royalty. The same glinting solidity burns in the phraseology, especially the final word of:

Which shall to all our nights and days to come?
Give solely sovereign sway and master Dom."

These are the glorious things of life. So, Lady Macbeth presses him on to win the ornament of life, though Macbeth objects to this absurd grasping of additional royalty by a man royalty honoured already. He would wear his 'golden opinions' in their newest gloss' rather than risk losing them so soon.

So Macbeth sees clearly that the gold of evil desire will add nothings to his real honour: yet he cannot resist.

Macbeth fears, envies, hates Banquo who has the reality of honour whereas he has but a mockery, a ghoulish dream of royalty. He envies Banquo's posterity their royal destiny won in terms of nature' not in terms of crime: and is maddened at the insecure mockery of his own kingship:

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe."

He has grasped these gold power- symbols to himself: and they are utterly 'barren' in every sense: barren of joy and content, barren of posterity. So falsely has Macbeth made himself the centre and end of all things: a 'fruitless' philosophy. To this the evil has tricked him. He and his wife are without 'content'.

Sleep and feasting are important themes in the play. Peaceful sleep is often disturbed by nightmare. Sleep is closely twined with feasting in this play. Both are creative, restorative forces of nature. So Macbeth and his Queen are bereft of both during the play's action. Feasting and sleep are twin life-givers:

"*Me thought I hear a voice, cry, and 'Sleep no more!*
Macbeth does murder sleep' – the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the revelled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

The retributive suffering is apt. Macbeth murdered Duncan in sleep, after feasting him. It was a blow delivered at innocent sleep: sleep, like death in *Antony* and *Cleopatra,* is the gentle nurse of life. Macbeth does more than murder a living being: he murders life itself because he murdered hospitality and sleep. Therefore his punishment is a living death, without peaceful sleep or peaceful feeling:

"But let the frame of things disjoint both the worlds suffer
Eve we will eat our mean in fear, and sleep
In the affliction of these terrible dreams
That shakes us nightly.

So Lennox prays for the time when Scotland
'------ *may again*
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,
Free from our feats and banquets bloody knives
Do faithful homage and receive free honours

The evil-feasting opposition is powerful in the play. Duncan compares his joy in Macbeth's success to a banquet:

"*True, worthy Banquo he is full so valiant;*
And in his commendations I am fed
It is a banquet to me".

After the murder of Duncan, feasting is again emphasized. It is shown now
this even-handed justice
commands the ingredients of our own lips'.
Macbeth finds he has 'putrancour's in the vessel of his peace'.

He may not feast with these lords in peach and harmony. Banquo's ghost breaks into the attempted festivity, disperses it throws it into disorder. At the start, hospitality, conviviality, 'welcome', and 'degree' are emphasized; the very thing Macbeth has so brutally desecrated.

Macbeth : You know your own degree; sit down: at first and last the hearty welcome.
Lords : Thanks to your majesty
Macbeth : ourself will mingle with society.
And play the humble host
Our hostess keeps her state, but in the best time we will require her welcome
Lady Macbeth: Pronounce it for me, sir, to all our friends
For my heart speaks they are welcome.
Macbeth : See, they encounter thee with their heart's thanks.
Both sides are even : here I'll sit in the midst:
Be large in mirth; anon we'll drink a measure
The table round.

There are three outstanding scenes in the play illustrating the evil-feasting opposition. First there is Duncan's murder in sleep and after elaborate feasting by his host, kinsmen, and subject all concepts which stress Macbeth's ruthless desecration of social units on human life. Next, we find Banquo's ghost violently forbidding that Macbeth enjoy that hospitality and feasting which he has desecrated. The third scene is that with the Weird Sisters in their cavern, the contrast with the banquet scene is vivid. Here we watch a devil's banqueting. The Weird Women with their cauldron and its holocaust of hideous ingredients, the banquet idea has been inverted. Instead of suggesting health, this one is brewed to cause 'toil and trouble'. The ingredients are absurd bits of life jumbled together to "boil and bake' in the cauldron: 'eye of newt', toe of frog', a dog's tongue, a lizard's leg, and so on. But not only are there animal pieces. We have a Jew's liver, a Turk's nose, a Tartar"s lips, the finger of a birth-strangled babe etc. Through the bodies from which these

are torn are often themselves by association, evil. Yet we must note the additional sense of chaos, bodily desecration, and irrationality in the use of these absurd derelict members, things like the 'pilot's thumb. The ingredients suggest an absolute indigestibility. It is a parody of banqueting a death banquet, a hell broth. It is all quite meaningless, nameless, negative, utterly black.

Nature's innocence is evoked by images and association in several places. Nature's food of 'milk' is often mentioned in this connection. Lady Macbeth fears her lord's nature: he is too full of the milk of human kindness. She invites spirits of evil to take her own 'milk for gall'. Then, boasting of her conquest over natural pity, she speaks the terrible lines:

'*I have given suck, and know*
How tender it is to love the babe that milks me
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this"

The child-thought is frequent. There is the unnatural horror of the 'birth-strangled babe' and the matter of Macduff's mysterious 'Again'

And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast or heaven's cherubim horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air.

Unsullied nature's fresh innocence here blends with the angelic hosts—'heaven's cherubim' of supernatural grace. Babyhood and 'milk' are thus often mentioned. There is another milk-reference. Malcolm, pretending to be another Macbeth, would

Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,
Uproar the universal peach, confound
All unity on earth".

Notice the close association of childhood's innocence ('milk') with 'concord". This evil is antagonistic not 'only to man but the universe' a blow at all 'unity' at nature, creation, and the universal peach' so terrible that the sun is blackened and heaver's thunder reverberates the desolation of human families:
……each new morn
New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland and yell'd out
Like syllable of dolour'.

Innocent nature is in agony. Twice Macbeth is contrasted with a lamb. Evil fear is contrasted with a summer's cloud and 'good men's lives, die like 'flowers'. So nature will rise to avenge Macduff whose slaughtered wife and children demand redress:

'…… your eye in Scotland
Would create soldiers, make our women fight,
To doff their dire distresses.

Nature would 'create' soldiers to avenge Macduff's children, make women fight to avenge his wife. Creation is an important idea in the play. Toward the close, nature's assistance is vividly apparent. Macbeth is 'ripe for shaking'. He himself knows it:

" I have lived long enough: my way of life
Is fall'n into the sear of yellow leaf"

But the avenging forces are mostly young and fresh, to avenge the desecration of nature's child-like peach:

"*there is Siward's son,*
And many unrough youths that even now
Protest their first of manhood:.

Malcolm himself is compared to a flower dew-sprinkled: the Scottish lords would "dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds". So sweet a nature-image again suggests nature's assistance: which thought is even more clear apparently in the matter of Birnam Wood. Not a human army only attacks Dunsinane. The very trees rise against Macbeth, in league with his enemies. That is creative nature accusing and asserting her strength after her long torment of destruction. So Bimam Wood matches against. Macbeth.

Macbeth as a Shakespearean Tragedy

Bradley has explained the salient features of Shakespearean tragedy in his monumental work. According to Bradley, a Shakespearean tragedy recounts the fall of an exacted personage. The fall is due to a grievous flaw in the character of the hero. The fall of the hero ruins not only himself but also those around him. In a Shakespearean tragedy, there is not only external conflict between the hero and external circumstances, but also an internal conflict in the hero's mind between the good and the bad in him. The internal conflict is far more interesting than the external conflict. The final impression left on our minds by a Shakespearean tragedy is not a feeling of gloom and depression but a heightened sense of " the value and beauty of life in spite of its frailty.

Macbeth has all these salient features of a Shakespearean tragedy. Macbeth is an exalted personage right from the beginning of the play. Even before the play begins, he is the Thane of Glamis. Afterwards he becomes king of Scotland. He is described as an invincible warrior as Bellona's bridegroom. He has the fiery imagination of a poet.

Macbeth is destroyed not by others but by the flaw in his own character. His character is his destiny. Some people feel that Macbeth is not responsible for his fall and that he is a plaything in the hands of the witches. But this is not quite true. Macbeth in influenced by the witches, because he has an innate susceptibility to evil. The witches' prophecy only brings out the evil already latent inside him.

The conflict between the forces of good and evil is quite marked in Macbeth. Macbeth wants to murder Duncan and yet is unnerved by moral qualms. This moral conflict continues throughout the play. Macbeth is at once the hero and villain of his tragedy. There is a similar conflict between good and bad in Lady Macbeth's mind also. In the murder scene, she is villainous but in the sleep-walking scene the good hitherto kept suppressed within her comes out.

'Macbeth' does not leave us depressed. For, good triumphs at the end. Macbeth is overthrown and Malcolm, the legitimate successor, is restored to the throne. He reign promises to bring peace and prosperity to the much ravaged land. At the same time, Macbeth's death creates a sense of waste. Much of Macbeth's energy that could have been used for constructive purposes is wasted in destructive ways.

The Sleep-walking Scene

The Sleep-walking scene is the most sensational scene in Macbeth. It has a profound, psychological and moral interest. Lady Macbeth had earlier exhibited indomitable courage. She had said that she could even pluck her baby from her breast and dash out its brains in order to help her husband realize his ambition. She had declared that the sleeping and the dead are but pictures. She had boldly smeared the drunken grooms with Duncan's blood. She says that she could have murdered Duncan herself if he had not resembled her father. When Macbeth is helplessly staring at his blood-stained hands after murdering Duncan, Lady Macbeth assures him that a little water can wash away the stain. All these remarks show that she took the murder of Duncan in a light-hearted vain.

But the sleep-walking scene shows her thoroughly changed. Her speeches in the somnambulistic state bring out all the anxiety, terror and remorse preying on her sub-conscious mind. From her words we can understand that she feels anxious for the safely and well-being of her husband. The suspense and anxiety she had felt on many occasions when Macbeth had been in his fits of introspection, on the point of convicting himself of the murder of Duncan and Banquo, have begun to haunt and harass her perpetually. In the murder scene, she said," what is done is done". But now she despairingly laments "What is

done cannot be undone". Again, in the murder scene, Lady Macbeth said that a little water can wash away the blood stain from her husband's hands. But now she feels even a vast ocean cannot clean her hand but will be turned red, if her hand is dipped into it. The sleep-walking scene brings out her horror of hell also. She says that hell is dark and always keeps a light by her side to light up hell, if she goes there after her death.

The Character of Macbeth

Bradley, in his famous book on Shakespearean tragedy contrasts Macbeth with Hamlet and Brutus and says that Macbeth unlike Hamlet and Brutus, is not "one of the children of light". Macbeth is a dark personality. The rugged, gloomy landscape of the Scottish Highlands forms a perfect background for Macbeth's character. It corresponds to Macbeth's gloomy character.

It is wrong to say that Macbeth's evil desire to usurp the throne by killing Duncan was implanted in his mind by the witches and his wife. The witches merely echo the ambition lurking in the innermost recesses of his heart. Even before meeting the witches, Macbeth must have toyed with the idea of murder and usurpation and that is why he listens to them with avidity.

What part is played by Lady Macbeth? Some critics call her the fourth witch in the play, considering her to be the motivating force behind her husband's crimes. Of course, Lady Macbeth eggs him on to commit murder when his will-power begins to flag. But the idea of usurping the throne is not hers. She merely strengthens the idea which already exists in his mind.

Macbeth's greatness lies in his feeling of horror at the prospect of committing a murder. He is not a simple, cinematic villain, committing a murder casually and feeling no qualms about it. He has a very complex character. He rashly draws up a plan to murder Duncan but is overwhelmed by his basic good nature. For one thing, he does not want to forfeit the "golden opinions" which he has so recently won from everybody. He is also unnerved by the prospect of his plan failing. Lady Macbeth, with her superior will-power brushes aside all these objections. She tells him that the murder can be committed successfully without incurring anybody's suspicion. Macbeth, disarmed by her arguments, has to yield to her and "bend up each corporal agent to this terrible feat". Yet, he cannot feel at peace with himself. His sensitive imagination conjures up such horrid visions of cruelty that it makes his hair stand on end. Pity, like a naked new-born babe, pleads against the deep damnation of his taking off". He is unnerved by thoughts of vengeance here and hereafter, of the even-handed justice that commends the ingredients of the poisoned chalice to our own lips.

Macbeth's punishment begins as soon as the commits the murder. Instead of being punished by other, his own acute moral conscience punishes him. "He is impelled to

court self-destruction act an accelerating speed along the slippery slope of moral degradation:. The craving for security and peace of mind impels him to commit fresh crimes. He orders the murder of Banquo. When Fleance escapes, he is upset still more. He cannot sleep. He has murdered sleep. After the ghost scenes at the banquet, his restlessness and distraction become very painful. Yet, he cannot stop his headlong career of murder and crime. He has waded so far in blood that it is impossible to retrace his steps. He has to go forward. So, he orders the murder of Lady Macduff and her children.

Now, Macbeth develops into a blood-thirsty tyrant. His moral degeneration proceeds at a rapid pace. The witches had formerly courted him; he now sets out to court them. They advise him to persist in the "bloody, bold, resolute" policy which he has already adopted, and never to waver. Now, the witches treat him with contempt and freely play upon his hopes and fears.

The final stages of Macbeth's degradation are only reported. Under his blood-thirsty tyranny, some woman or other is deprived of her husband. "New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows strike heaven on the face". He becomes a notorious tyrant.

"Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
That has a name"

As Professor Bradley remarks; "Who would have expected avarice or lechery (luxurious –lecherous) in Macbeth! His ruin is unexpectedly complete! Now Macbeth has become a 'blunt, callous, insensitive' murderer. He has lost the capacity to feel. He has "supped so full with horror" that murder and death become common-place to him. Even Lady Macbeth's death does not move his heart. Life has become meaningless for him. Life has become "a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"

In the final stage of his life, Macbeth loses his courage also. So far he has felt secure, depending on the witches' prophecy that no man born of woman can murder him. When Macduff announces himself, "not of woman born". Macbeth at once gives way to despair. He dies fighting desperately.

<u>The Character of Lady Macbeth</u>

But for Lady Macbeth's constant encouragement, Macbeth would not have brought himself to murder Duncan. After the murder of Duncan, she fade away into the background because there is virtually nothing more for her to do.

Malcolm refers to Lady Macbeth as "the fiend-like queen". But his is too harsh a judgement of her. She does not deserve this severe condemnation. Lady Macbeth is not more inhuman than her husband. Her inhumanity is due to her wish to aid and abet her husband. To help him achieve his diabolic goal she has ruthlessly crushed over her own finer feelings and transformed herself into a pitiless monster. She goes to the extent of

boasting of her inhumanity. She says proudly that she can pluck her nipple from her sucking baby's boneless gums and dash out its brains.

The stature of Lady Macbeth is fully revealed in the famous 'Temptation Scene'. In this scene, she is seen exerting her influence of Macbeth to the utmost extent and stop his wavering. She displays an indomitable will-power and super-human courage. Macbeth is simply stunned by her courage and will-power and exclaims:

"*Bring forth men – children only;*
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males".

Having committed the murder, Macbeth is horrified. He is paralysed. He does not know what to do next. Lady Macbeth displays admirable self-control and resourcefulness in this context. It is she who smears the sleeping porters with blood so that they, and not Macbeth, will be suspected. When the knocking at the gate is persistent, she hurries up Macbeth to go and wash his blood-stained hands and prepare himself to receive visitors. Thus, she retains her balance and coolness and helps her husband in maintaining an appearance of innocence.

But her coolness does not last long. Soon she loses her peace of mind. She realizes that she has lost more than she has gained by murdering Duncan.

"*Naught's had, all spent*
Where our desire is got without content;
This safer to be that which we destroy,
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy".

She is restless and hopeless throughout the rest of her life. She does not evince and interest in her husband's struggle against fate any more. She is no longer his partner in crime. Macbeth does not consult with her before planning to murder Banquo and Lady Macduff. She comes to know about these murders only after they are committed. Though not consulted, she ably rescues her husband in a banquet scene. When Macbeth is startled by Banquo's ghost at the banquet, she tells the gathering that her husband's fit is due to his sleeplessness and disperses them and thus saves her husband.

The sleep-walking scene brings out Lady Macbeth's submerged personality. She is haunted by the smell of blood. She says that even all the perfumes of Arabia cannot dispel the smell of blood. She feels acutely remorseful. When her husband hesitated to murder Duncan, she laughed at his fear saying that a little water will wash away the blood-stain. Now, she realizes that nothing can make her hands clear again. In the murder scene, she invoked thick night to pall her in the dunnest smoke of hell. But now she has become afraid of darkness, for darkness recalls thoughts of Duncan's death. Therefore, she keeps

light by her side continuously and shudders to think that “Hell is murky”. Formerly she said carelessly; “What is done”. But now she wails sorrowfully: “ What is done cannot be undone”.

Like all the characters in Shakespeare’s tragedies, Lady Macbeth is also the victim of a serious flaw in her character. She has wrongly assessed her character. She wrongly judged that she could suppress her kindly feeling and her conscience. Still, she never complains against her husband’s inhumanity or his lack of regard for her. She dies uncomplaining. Her downfall is sublime.

The Character of Banquo

Banquo serves as a foil to Macbeth. There are many glaring dissimilarities between the two. Macbeth compares Banquo to Octavius Caesar and himself to Antony. Macbeth fears that if Banquo is left alone, he will become a serious threat to his safety and so he murders him. If the witches had not said anything about the likelihood of Banquo’s progeny capturing Macbeth’s throne. Macbeth would not have thought of murdering Banquo at all. Thus, Banquo is the first victim of the prophecy of the witches.

The encounter with the witches brings out the contrast between Banquo and Macbeth. Macbeth is shocked to see the weird witches. He is dumbfounded with astonishment. But Banquo is not at all upset. He fearlessly questions the witches and does not attach any importance to their prophecy. When they yanish he compares them to ‘bubbles in the earth’ corresponding to bubbles in the water. He advises Macbeth not to allow himself to be swept off his feet by the tempting prophecy of the witches. He tells Macbeth that the witches are instruments of evil. They lie in wait to entrap man and bring about his perdition. “They win with honest trifles to betray us in deepest consequence”. Banquo is not ambitious. So he is not temped by the prophecy of the witches.

When Macbeth is made Thane of Glamis and Cawdoor the prophecy of the witches is partially fulfilled. It remains to be seen whether Macbeth will become the next king of Scotland. If Macbeth becomes king, then the prophecy of the witches regarding his (Banquo’s) children will also come true. It is along such lines that Banquo begins to think. He begins to harbour wicked thoughts. Though assailed by evil thoughts, he does not yield to them. He remains loyal to King Duncan. After Duncan’s death, Banquo begins to suspect Macbeth.

“Thou hath it now; king. Cawdor, Glamis, all
As the weird women promised and I fear,
Thou play’s most foully for’t”

Banquo does not denounce or expose Macbeth, though he knows that Macbeth has murdered Duncan. He continues to support Macbeth. Why? It is not due to lack of valour or might that Banquo fails to oppose Macbeth. He has these resources in plenty.

The only explanation of Banquo's continued support of Macbeth might be that Banquo's is playing about ways and means of usurping the throne. Banquo's last soliloquy is about to make the full extent of his moral weakness clear. But unfortunately he is interrupted by Macbeth.

Banquo is a dauntless warrior. But eh meeting with the witches seems to have stirred the evil dormant in him. Instead of exposing the murderer, he cringes before him and plays the courtier to him, probably waiting for an opportunity to dethrone him. The murder of Banquo has but an end to his degeneration. He died at a time when his evil thoughts remained undeveloped.

The Character of Duncan

The Duncan of Shakespeare is quite difference from the Duncan of real history. Shakespeare has made his mild and meek to make the"deep damnation of his taking off "terrible". His lamb-like innocence sets off the hideousness of Macbeth's butchery'?

Duncan's mildness and innocence, combined with his venerable appearance, wins all people. Even Macbeth hesitates to murder such a good natured king;

"Besides, the Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office that his virtues
Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against
The deep damnation of his taking off"

Macbeth realizes that Duncan has not offended in any way and has not given even the slightest provocation to Macbeth to murder him.

Duncan's chief flaw is his trusting people readily without testing them. When re received the news that the Thane of Cawdor has betrays him, Duncan is surprised. For, he never thought that the Thane of Cawdor would be capable of treachery. He condemns the Thane to summary death and then goes on to repose the same absolute trust in Macbeth. He makes Macbeth Thane of Cawdor, without understanding that Macbeth is far more treacherous than the condemned Thane.

Duncan continues to be misled by appearances to the very last. He is attracted by the excellent site and healthy climate of Macbeth's castle. He does not know that it is going to be his death trap. He praises Macbeth in superlative terms calling him his "peerless cousin". He thinks highly of Lady Macbeth also, without suspecting in the least the murderous thoughts seething in her heart. "He ignores the significance of Macbeth's failure to welcome him at the gate. He takes no serious notice of Macbeth's rude abruptness at the banquet and his failure to bid him good night before retiring to bed. Just before retiring

his last words are messages of good-will to his excellent hostess sent along with a keepsake to her in the shape of a ring! Thus unsuspecting to the last, this good, meek, mild, old man goes forth to meet dis doom, kissing the hand that is about to strike him down like a variable lamb taken to the slaughter.

Macduff and Malcolm

Both Macduff and Malcolm whom Macbeth plans to murder escape from him and finally bring about his death. Macduff " not of woman born" is Macbeth's preordained avenger.

Macduff is not sufficiently individualised. He plays a prominent part in the counsel that is held soon after the murder of Duncan. He conducts himself calmly, though everybody else in that scene is upset and agitated. He is chivalrous and considerate to Lady Macbeth. Before telling her about the murder of Duncan, he apologizes to her. He notices her swooning and calls attention to it.

Macduff begins to suspect Macbeth and so does not attend his coronation at Scene. Unlike Banquo, he does not collaborate with Macbeth. He flies to England to seek Malcolm's help in delivering Scotland from the clutches of tyrant Macbeth. This proves his patriotism.

Macduff is such a great patriot as to place his country above his family. He leaves his wife and son defenceless and rushes to England. When they are murdered by Macbeth, Macbeth is agonized. But he does not give way to grief. He composes himself and sets out to bring about the downfall of his enemy, Macbeth.

Malcolm is much more shadowy than Macduff, eventhough Malcolm is the son of Duncan and successor to his throne. Unlike his father, Malcolm is quick to detect the insincerity of people. He is not taken in by Macbeth's highsounding lament for Duncan.

"To show an unfelt sorrow is an office
Which the false man does easy"

Malcolm is the first to think of flight from Macbeth. He understands that it is risky to wait and watch for Macbeth's next move:

"This *murderous shaft that's shot Hath not yet lighted, and over safest way*
Is to avoid the aim"

Even after reaching England, Malcolm remains cautious. He does not trust anybody readily. He pretends to distrust Macduff and only when he is assured of Macduff's sincerity he throws his mask away and joins hands with him. This shows how cautious and diplomatic Malcolm is. He is quite a contrast to his innocent, unsuspecting father.

Malcolm's cautious nature is displays on the battlefield also. It is his idea that they should conceal the poor strength of his army my making use of Birnam wood. This simple

measure has undreamt of consequences. Macbeth's superstitious reliance on the witches' prophecy that he will be defeated only, when Birnam wood moves is undermined. He gives way to despair. He emerges from his impossible castle and goes to battle in the open against the superior odds of the enemy and is easily defeated.

Malcolm's speech at the conclusion of the play shows how he is quite hopeful about the future of the country.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Antony and Cleopatra is a great tragedy, but it is a tragedy with a number of distinctive features of its own. It is closely based on the Shakespearean concept of tragedy as depicted in the four great tragedies – Macbeth, Othello, Hamlet and King Lear – and so it closely resembles them in some respects. But it would be wrong to say, as Coleridge said, that it closely rivals the great four. It is a difference kind of play with a number of distinctive features of its own.

The Heroine: Her Equal Importance

For one thing, the four great tragedies are single star. They are named after their respective tragic heroes. In the present play, the heroine has been assigned an equal importance with the hero. She dominates Act I and V and looms large in Act III. She plays such an important part in the play that it will not be wrong to say that the play depicts the tug of war between Caesar and Cleopatra, for the possession of the love and loyalty of Antony, and in the end Cleopatra wins, though Caesar becomes the 'sole sire' of the world. But we feel that the world has been well lost for love. Hence the play has been rightly named both after the hero and the heroine. This is not the case with the four great tragedies. Indeed, it is only two other plays – Romeo and Juliet and Troilus and Cressida – of Shakespeare that have such dual titles.

Close Adherence to History

Secondly, in the present tragedy Shakespeare's principal source is Life of Antony in North translation of Plutarch's Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans, and Shakespeare has followed his source more closely than he did in the four great tragedies. He was working on Roman History and his material was often intractable and improper for dramatic treatment. His imagination was hampered by the facts of history; the action ranges over the whole of Roman Empire and the result in there is much looseness in construction. It lacks the concentration and compactness of the four great tragedies. There are frequent change of scenes as the action shuttle-cocks between Egypt, Athens and Rome.

The Two Themes : War and Love

Besides, the play does not depict merely an individual and personal catastrophe. The Catastrophe in the play affects the entire Roman world, kingdoms are lost for love and as

Antony's fortunes decline and he come to a bad end, Caesar is left the "sole sire of the world". This is so because it is both a love tragedy, as well as a great historical tragedy. The two themes – war and love – are inextricably mixed. Infatuation of Antony with Cleopatra is the root cause of his downfall and death but this infatuation also results in his defeat in war with Caesar, in spite of the fact that he is much superior soldier. Its ramifications are world-wide, and it affects the fortunes not only of the hero and the heroine, but the nation as a whole. It results in the sole assumption of power over the Roman world of a keen, calculating and shrewd dictator. Since the action covers such a vide and crowded scene, loss in intensity was inevitable. However, the dramatist has tried to make up for it by the use of highly charged imagery and poetic diction.

Antony and Fatal Flaw

Such are the unique features – among others – of the present play, and they distinguish it sharply from the four great tragedies. However, Antony has the chief characteristics of a Shakespearean tragic hero, and his fall also in brought about by the 'fatal flaw' in his character. Antony is one of the Triumvirs; he is the triple pillar of the world. He is praised even by his enemies and rivals, Pompey, Caesar etc. He is a mighty Titan, the descendant of Hercules, one whole "legs bestrid the ocean" and whose "reared arm crested the world." Cleopatra also is a woman of rare charm and majesty. In a Shakespearean tragedy, the fall of this exceptional individual, the hero, is brought out, not by external circumstance, but by some fault in his own character. As A.C.Bradley rightly points out, Antony's fall is brought about not by the military might of Caesar but his own infatuation with Cleopatra. The very excess of his self-indulgence brings about his ruin. Caught in the mighty talons of " the serpent of Nile". He neglects state affairs, refuses to listen to the advice of his generals, fights at sea instead of at land where he is strongest, and allows Cleopatra to be present at the scene of battle. The result is defeat at Actium and total disaster.

The Supernatural : Its Role

Chance and the supernatural do enter a Shakespearean tragedy, but they do so only at a later stage. In Antony and Cleopatra there is no element of chance and the supernatural is merely hinted at through the Soothsayer who predicts that the genius of Antony is helpless before the more powerful genius of Octavius Caesar. It does not influence the course of events which issue out of the characters of the hero and the heroine. They are entirely responsible for their own downfall.

No Internal Conflict

In a typical Shakespearean tragedy, the action develops through conflict and this conflict is both external and internal. In Antony and Cleopatra there is external conflict, between Antony and Caesar for the sole sireship of the Roman Empire. But there is very

little internal conflict. In Hamlet, Macbeth and other tragedies the very soul of the hero is laid bare through the conflict that rages within them and which tears their souls to pieces. However, the dramatist has not internalised the action in the present tragedy as he did in the four great tragedies. There is ample of external conflict, but no internal conflict to give us a peep into the anguished soul of the hero. The dramatic could have shown the conflict in the mind of Antony when he has to leave Cleopatra for Rome. But this has not been done: the passion for Cleopatra has been represented as an over-mastering passion which is irresistible and against which no attempt at resistance is ever made. *In this respect, they play makes no attempt, "to rival the four great tragedies".*

Lack of the Sensational and the Melodramatic

Comparing Antony and Cleopatra and the four great tragedies, A.C.Bradley pertinently remarks that there is very little of the sensational and the melodramatic in the present play: "Most Shakespeare's tragedies are dramatic, in a special sense of the word, as well as in its general sense, from beginning to end. The story is not merely exciting and impressive from the movement of conflicting forces towards a terrible issue, but also from time to time there come, situations and events, which even apart from their bearing on this issue, appeal most powerfully to the dramatic feelings – scenes of action or passion which agitate the audience with alarm, horror, painful expectation or absorbing sympathies and antipathies. Thus in Hamlet, we have the ghost scenes, the passion of the early soliloquies, the scenes between Hamlet and Ophelia, the play-scene, the killing of Polonius. We have similar scenes in *Macbeth* and in *Othello.* The scenes by themselves, either because of the action or passion, appeal to the audience. We see sensational things actually taking place. Such scenes are generally to be found in the first three Acts. "What is there resembling this in *Antony and Cleoopatra*? Almost nothing, People converse, discuss, accuse one another excuse themselves, mock, describe, drink together, and arrange a marriage meet and part. There is no sensational action, nothing like the ghost scenes of *Hamlet*or the witch-scenes of Macbeth. We hear wonderful talk, but it is not talk, like that of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth or that of Othello and I ago at which we hold our breath. In the first half of the play, there is only one scene that contains either an explosion of passion or an exciting bodily action, -- the scene where Cleopatra storms at the messenger and draws her sword at him."

The Comic Note

"The first half of the play, though it forebodes tragedy, is not decisively tragic in tone. Certainly, the Cleopatra-scenes are not so." We read them and we should witness them in delighted wonder and even with amusement. The only scene that can vie with them, that of the revel on Pompey's ship, though full of menace, is in great part humorous. Even later, when the tragic tone is deepening, the whipping of Thyreus, in spite of Antony's rage, moves mirth. A play, of which all this can be said, may well be as masterly as Othello or Macbeth and more delightful: but in the greater part of its course, it cannot possibly

excite the same emotions. "It makes no attempt to do so, and to regard it as though it made this attempt is to miss its specific character and the intention of its author.

Not Kathartic in the True Sense

The two tragic emotions of pity and terror are not fully aroused as they are in the four great tragedies and so the play is not Kathartic in the true sense of the word. To quote A.C.Bradley again, "After all, we feel: What is this world which Antony has lost, worth? His greatness rises above the meanness of the world around him." In any Shakespearean tragedy we watch some elect spirit colliding, partly through its error and defect, with a super human power which bears it down; and yet we feel that this spirit even in the error and defect, rises by its greatness into ideal union with the power that overwhelms it." The final impression of these tragedies is not one of despair at a malicious fate that strike down whomsoever it likes, but one of reconciliation. In some tragedies this feeling is weak; in the present play it is exceptionally strong. The tragic emotions are stirred to the fullest possible extent only when such beauty or nobility of character is displayed a commands unreserved admiration or love, or when the forces which move the agents and the conflict which results from these forces attain a terrifying and overwhelming power. The other tragedies satisfy these conditions completely; *Antony and Cleopatra,* though a great tragedy, satisfies neither of them completely. This is so because it is a tragedy of a different kind. It does not do what other tragedies do it makes no attempt to rival the four great tragedies.

Hollowness of the Roman World : Its consequences

The pettiness and corruption of the Roman political scene, with all its intrigues and counter-intrigues, has been so much stressed that our tragic awe at the fall of Antony and Cleopatra is blunted. The play's magnitude fails to uplift or dilute the imagination. A painful sense of hollowness oppresses us when we observe that the world-sharers are no better than captains of banditti, everyone is selfish and that, in short, this splendid world is really false and pretty. "Placed as Antony is in such a petty world, our feeling of the greatness of his fall from prosperity is blunted. This feeling of fall is extremely acute in the four great tragedies. "In this play, however, our deeper sympathies are focused rather on Antony's heart, on the inward fall to of which the enchantment of passion leads him, and the inward recovery which succeeds it."

Conclusion

It is no doubt a great play and great tragedy, the work of the ever-green genius of a dramatist who had "the most comprehensive soul" and who was a subtle-souled psychologist". But it is a tragedy of entirely different kind, and so it is futile to compare it with the great four.

2. **"Antony and Cleopatra" as a love-tragedy OR**

The theme : Heroic Love and its magnificence OR

Love-theme in the play: Its Magnificence and its morality OR

Love as the cause of the downfall of Antony

'Crosses' in the Way of True Love

It was the usual practice of Shakespeare to name his history plays after the name of the kings concerned, and his tragedies after the name of central figure, the tragic hero. His love-tragedies he named both after the names of the hero and the heroin. Thus we have *Romeo and Juliet, Troilus and Cressida and Antony and Cleopatra.* In all the three love-tragedies of lovers are destroyed by the intrusion of foreign forces. In the earliest play 'the crosses' in the way of true love come in the form of a family feud; in the second, this 'cross' assumes the form of a national war, and in *Antony and Cleopatra* the love-theme is inextricably intertwined with the civil war for the control of the whole Roman empire. Antony is one of the three rulers, Cleopatra is a queen, and so private life and public life, love and war, are inextricably mingled. This 'knot intrinsic ate' cannot be untied. When the sea-fight is lost, Scarus sums up the position in a phrase"

We have kissed away
Kingdoms and provinces

Ruinous Love

Their, of Antony and Cleopatra, love is intense and transcendent but it is also a ruinous passion. It ruins Antony and sends them both to their doom. This has given rise to a lot of controversy. **Ten Brink**has called Cleopatra "a courtesan of genius" and **Goethe**has condemned their love as immoral. Even **Maccallum**is of the view that "Relatively it may be extolled; absolutely it must be condemned." Such critics point to the past of Cleopatra and say that the 'serpent of the Nile' is never tired of exercising her sexual charms on all those who come near her, and that she is wily and cunning. She was Pompey's mistress, and then of Julius Caesar. In the play she flirts with Thryeus and tries to pack cards with Octavius Caesar. Their love is rooted in the breach of truth and duty, and it bears within itself the seeds of infidelity and wrong. It has none of the unviability and security of a lawful love. That is why their relations are often vitiated by jealousy and fear. Antony is mad at the sight of the liberties she allows Thryeus, and later concludes that she has betrayed him and her fleet has deserted him at her instance. Such alarms and suspicions are quite natural in love outside marriage.

Is it Justified By Its Intensity?

However, a number of modern critics seem to think that the very intensity of their love is its justification. It is a transcendental passion, forgetful of the world and of all other considerations. **Henri Fluchere talks** of 'Antony's death as a triumph, and of Cleopatra's transfiguration'; **D.A.Traversi**finds in the play 'the transcendent justification of passion'. Mark Van Doren, Donald Stauffer, G.Wilson Knight, even A.C.Bradley, seem to agree that transcendent passion can outweigh conventional morality and excuse neglect of duty

The Elizabethan Context

Thus the critical wrangling goes on. The controversy boils down to the question whether love-outside marriage, however intense, passionate and transcendent, can justify self-indulgence. Most varied answers have been given to the question and highly divergent and contrary views have been expressed. But the difficulty can be resolved, and a balanced estimate of their love cane be reached, only if the play is judged in its Elizabethan context. A number of contemporary authors regard Antony and Cleopatra not as symbols of deathless love, but as examples of destruction caused by lust pride and the abandonment of duty. **Dryden**too chose the story for 'the excellency of the moral : for the chief persons represented were famous patterns of unlawful love and their end accordingly was unfortunate". "And yet nothing is ever simple and straightforward black or white, in Shakespeare. The passion of Antony and Cleopatra is transcendent Shakespeare's play is everywhere paradoxical and ambiguous. Caesar may at the end be the 'asunpolished' that the dying Cleopatra, the 'lass unparalleled', calls him. But he is fact left in triumph, master of the whole world. How can this be compared with the 'new heaven, new earth' of the lovers? Who does win in the end? Many people feel today that an overwhelming passion is its own justification, and that love of a certain degree of intensity is above rules of conduct. This is never the Elizabethans' view. They believed that 'natural' law and order are not to be transgressed with impunity. When 'love is a frenzy' it I a bad thing, and this judgement is mirrored on the stage. In comedies, love leads men to behave absurdly, but not wickedly, so there can be happy endings. But when passion is all consuming, and leads to transgression of moral laws, it ends in disaster. The wages of sin is death".

Stress of Decorum

'Noble' and 'nobleness', key-words often repeated in *Antony and Cleopatra*, had a particular significance for Shakespeare. He and his contemporaries assumed that a nobleman, an aristocrat, should be noble in his conduct also. They assumed, like Iras and Cleopatra herself, the necessary of 'decorum' which meant both appearing and behaving suitably, in accordance with one's position in life. It was thought fitting that noblemen and generals, too, should dress far more elaborately and richly than their followers. But much more than mere appearance was involved in 'decorum'; there was also an implied moral obligation that the highly born should behave better than the lowly born. Neither Antony

nor Cleopatra fulfils this obligation; and Cleopatra herself admits that her behaviour can 'lack nobility'.

The Pagan Atmosphere

In Act I 'the nobleness of life' is to embrace, and this exaltation of the love of Antony and Cleopatra reminds us that the whole atmosphere of the play is pagan. This is the only play of Shakespeare's where adultery is not clearly regarded as a sin – Antony's love is 'dotage', silliness, a practical mistake, an obsession, but is never characterized, as it would be in a Christian world, as moral sin.

Pagan Glorification of Suicide

In Act IV and V, nobleness is no less sought after, but is defined differently. To be noble is to die. The defeated Antony has a 'less noble mind' than Cleopatra because, he thinks, she has already killed herself. Eros, too, killing himself rather than slaying his master, becomes 'thrice-nobler', and he and Cleopatra thus acquire nobleness in record'. The dying Antony consoles himself that he was 'the noblest' as well as 'the greatest prince o'th' world, and Cleopatra picks up the same phrase to lament him. She urges her 'noble girls' to do what's noble', to die after the high Roman fashion'; later to Cleopatra suicide is 'great' a noble act, and to commit it is to 'be noble to myself'. Antony's very blood is 'noble' to Dercetus, and Caesar himself applies the word to Chairman's suicide. 'Decorum' ordained that the defeated leader, if he survived the battle, should 'prefer/A noble life before a long'. Suicide was the correct and honourable way out.

This is a second clear indication of the pagan note in the play, for suicides in a Christian world are damned to eternal torment; but in *Antony and Cleopatra* after this ‚noble act' the lovers will find themselves united for ever in blissful Elysian fields. Those who see Christian repentance in Cleopatra's last speeches, or a Christian reference in Caesar's final phrases in praise of Cleopatra's strong toil of grace' contradict the whole atmosphere of the play."

Stoic Philosophy : its Impact

The values of the play are not Christian, but Stoic. At the end of the sixteenth century, there was a great revival of interest in Stoic philosophy. "The Stoics held that man's life was a perpetual contest between reason and passion. Man should conquer passion by reason, should be master of himself, showing patience and endurance. Also, they believed it better to die than to submit to dishonour, and many stoic Philosophers had committed suicide. In the play, it is not Christian pity, but admiration, that the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra evoke. "There is a feeling that nothing in their lives became them like the leaving of it; that at last they have justified their high station by decorously high behaviour. *Antony and Cleopatra* depicts the struggle between passion and reason, and creates a purely pagan world of Stoic values".

Their Love : Magnificent and Noble

In recent times **A.C.Bradley** has taken into consideration the various factors in the controversy, and has reached a more balanced and considered conclusion which carries conviction and deserve a fuller consideration. He agrees that the love of Antony and Cleopatra is destructive; that in some ways it clashed with the nature of things, that, while they are sitting in their paradise like gods, its walls move inwards and crush them to death. "Their passion is, no doubt, ruinous, but we cannot deny to it the name of love. No doubt, it is owing to his love that Antony fails in his war with Octavius and loses the sireship of the Roman world. But Shakespeare has taken pains to show that this world is hopelessly corrupt and decadent, not equal to the magnificence of the love of Cleopatra. No doubt, Octavius gets the world, but then he is an 'as unpolicied', a contemptible figure in comparison with Antony. How can we say, then, Antony was unsuccessful and that he did not achieve anything. He does achieve magnificency and nobility in his love of Cleopatra.

Antony : A Pilgrim and Martyr of Love

To say that Antony and Cleopatra are not lovers or that they have utterly missed the good of life, "is to mutilate the tragedy and to ignore a great part of its effect upon us." We sympathise with them in their passion, it reveals the infinity that there is in man; and even when we acquiesce in their defeat, we are exulting in their victory; and when they are dead we say,

The odds is gone
And there is nothing left remarkable,
Beneath the visiting Moon.

Their love has something divine about it; it is a grand passion which exalts them, but which also ruins them. For Antony, the joy of life had always culminated in the love of women and when he meets Cleopatra, he finds his Absolute in her. She satisfies and glorifies his whole being. She intoxicates his senses. She brings out all the poetry that is latent in him. She has bewitched him and when he speaks of her, it is purest poetry that comes out of his lips. She is his heart's desire made perfect. To love her is what he was born for. To imagine heaven is to imagine her; to die is to rejoin her. How pathetic and how sublime is the completeness of his love for her. He kills himself when he is told that she is dead; and when he comes to know that was a deliberate lie, he does not reproach her. He simply wishes to be carried to her for a last kiss. *To deny that this is love is the madness of morality.* In his love of Cleopatra, he touches the infinite. He is not a mere pilgrim of love, but also 'a martyr of love'.

An Ennobling and Transforming Passion

And Cleopatra's love is equally sincere, intense and irresistible. She loves him and it is a strange blunder to doubt her love. Her feeling might have originated in craft and self-

interest, but in catching him, she was caught herself. Whenever she refers to her lover seriously, it is with something like adoration; purest poetry bursts out of her lips on such occasions. He is her 'man of men' and she will not let him go, for, though he be painted one way like a Gorgon, the other way he is Mars. It is this love of hers which lifts her up to heights of tragedy. It is this love which makes her triumph over her conqueror, to make him an 'assunpolished', as he departs this life to meet her lover in the next world, dressed in all that pomp in which she had first met him at Cydnus. By the intensity of her love and her heroic death she proves her right to be called a wife and it is to meet 'her husband' that she goes to the other world, ' to the new heaver and new world', much superior to the corrupt Roman world of political intrigues and self-centred pursuit of power.

Conclusion : A Great Love-Tragedy

Antony and Cleopatra is, in short, a great love-tragedy, but love in it is inextricably mixed up with Roman politics and hence its greatness as a love-tragedy is obscured, and is realised only after a careful consideration.

Despite its Elizabethan context, the play shows that Shakespeare was not of an age but of all ages, that he was the immortal poet of the world and in the present play he has immortalised the love Antony and Cleopatra and cleared away many of the cobwebs that obscured the greatness and intensity of their passion. He has enabled us to see it in the correct perspective.

Character of Antony

Idealisation of Reality

Shakespeare has followed history more closely in his Roman plays than he did in his English history. This is also true of *Antony and Cleopatra.* He has adhered to Plutarch faithfully not only in broad outlines, but also in minor details. In the field of characterisation also he has followed Plutarch closely, and his characters even the minor ones, are true to history. He genius is seen in the fact that his characters are recognisable figures true to history. But they are also different and this difference results from the genius of the dramatist. He has never falsified reality, but he has idealised it. This is done through a constant process of sifting and re-arranging and change of emphasis. This process is best seen in the case of Antony; his Antony is true to history but is much nobler and grander than he is in Plutarch.

Exaltation of Antony " Dramatic Reasons

The exaltation of the character of Antony was essential for dramatic reasons. Cleopatra of infinite variety known for her many seductions and attractions, must have a lover worthy of herself. Hence he glorified the character of Antony, always remaining true to the facts of history, but constantly stressing and magnifying his virtues, and omitting or

slurring over his many faults which have been dwelt upon in details by Plutarch. It is in this way that he has created a lover worthy of Cleopatra, one whose passion is as transcendent and all-absorbing as that of the Queen herself. Antony, as presented in the play is a new creation, though he is also the Antony of history. Such is the alchemy of the dramatist's genius that he can *create* when dramatic reasons so require an entirely new figure who is still historically true and recognisable. **Gervinus**, the German critic, rightly says, " It is wonderful how Shakespeare, on the one hand, preserved the historic features of Antony's character so as not to make him unrecognisable, and yet how he contrived, on the other hand, to render him an attractive personage."

Ennoblement of the Historical Figure

Plutarch's Antony is given to drinking and other vulgar excesses. He is given to wantonness and lechery, and maintains himself in grand style by robbery, and finally becomes the prey of the lust of an artful courtesan. Dishonesty in money matters, jealousy and lack of efficiency as a soldier and general may also be added to the list of his shortcomings enumerated by Plutarch. Antony's good qualities have merely been hinted at. Shakespeare, on the other hand, brings his virtues to the foreground and emphasises them. His valour, endurance, generosity, versatility, resourcefulness, self-recovery etc., have all been thrown into sharp relief, while his offensive traits have been relegated to his bygone past. Thus there is constant idealisation of reality and transfiguration and ennoblement of the historical figure.

Stress of His Heroic Soldiership

Shakespeare's Antony has a grand, gigantic personality. He is a veritable colossus, the descendant of Hercules, who stalks the world with giant strides. He is the triple pillar of the world and when dressed in armour he looks like 'plated Mars', the Roman God of War. His legs "bestir the Ocean" his raised arm "crests the world:, and his voice is propertied like " the tuned spheres". There is nothing of all this in Plutarch. Shakespeare has also stressed his heroic soldiership and dwelt at length, as Plutarch has not done, on his skill as a commander and military general. Caesar refers to his earlier military exploits and victories and the hardships which be bore so heroically. Pompey is afraid only of him and regards his soldiership as equal to that of the other two – i.e Caesar and Lepidus. He is sure of victory only if Antony is unable to break his Egyptian fetters and participate in the fight against him. He is invincible on land and troops of kings follow him and rush up to serve him only if he nods. Caesar is no match to him as a soldier and general, as is shown by his sally against his rival in whose ranks he creates havoc and whom he forces to retreat defeated and in panic. Caesar wins not because he is a superior soldier and general, but because Antony's error of judgement in fighting him at sea, against the advice of his trusted and seasoned followers. It is the fall of a great Prince and General and so truly *Kathartic* in the Aristotelian sense.

His Nobility and Generosity

Not only is Antony grand, heroic and majestic as a soldier and General, he is also noble and generous and so can inspire his followers with love and loyalty. His generosity has been magnified and repeatedly stressed. After the battle of Actium, overcome by shame and remorse, he distributes his treasures among his followers. How noble and generous is his treatment of Enobarbus! Several scenes are devoted to this episode. He sends his treasures behind Enobarbus; Enobarbus is so much moved by this generosity that he dies of thought. Antony is noble, generous in nature, and is capable of arousing such loyalties as that of the slate boy Eros who can neither kill his master nor live after him, and so he kills himself.

His Grand Passion

"*The great thing about Shakespeare's Antony is his capacity for a grand passion"*Plutarch does not dwell on the glory and greatness of Antony's love. He regards the whole affair as a pitiable dotage, a great calamity, an unfortunate infatuation which leads to the undoing of the triple pillar of the world. He speaks of this love as the extremist mischief which weakened and stirred up many vices yet hidden in him. Cleopatra, in short, we are told, quenched all that was good in him and made him worse than before. Shakespeare does not neglect this aspect of the case, but he also shows that, "Antony's devotion to Cleopatra is the grand fact in his career, which bears witness to this greatness as well as to his littleness, and is at once his predication and his apotheosis". Antony's love is a grand passion which certainly ennobles him, though it also destroys him. Nothing matters to him but his love:

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall. Here is my space,
Kingdoms are clay.

Tragic Greatness

As Bradley puts it, Antony passion is a force which cannot be resisted and which he makes no efforts to resist. It is this passion, ruinous no doubt but grand and noble all the same, the very excess of it which lifts Antony up to the heights of tragic greatness. It reveals his capacity of finding in something the infinite and of pursuing it into the jaws of death. *The passion which ruins him also exalts him; he touches the infinite in it.* The completeness of his love for Cleopatra is sublime. *He is not merely love's pilgrim; he is love's martyr.*

Exaltation of Antony : Some Other Ways

Antony's character has been further exalted by giving him a beloved worthy of his passion. One whom Cleopatra of infinite variety loves and dotes upon must certainly be a man of man, a veritable Prince and lord of man. Further his greatness has been thrown

into sharp relief by providing him with a rival who is keen and calculating but no match to him in the various noble qualities of head and heart which Antony has in such ample measure. Octavius serves as a foil to throw into sharp relief his heroic courage and soldiership, as well as his nobility and generosity. Further the Roman world has been shown as corrupt and decadent and Roman politics as a tissue of lies, duplicity, and intrigues and counter-intrigues. And we admire Antony for having lost this base world for love. It was worthless, fit only to be thrown away. Octavius may live on as its 'sole sire' but Antony's loss of it for love does credit to him and it further exalts and ennobles him. He was right in living and dying for his love.

Conclusion

It is by following the dual process of stressing the desirable and passing over the undesirable that he has created the magnificent figure of Antony. The result is that few now think of Plutarch's Antony; consciously or unconsciously they remember only Shakespeare's Antony. All subsequent accounts of his character are coloured by Shakespeare's creation.

(**A**) **MARCUS ANTONY**

Not a Hero of the Noblest Type

The character of Antony is closely based on Plutarch's *Life of Antony,* but Shakespeare has minimised his faults and magnified the good in him for dramatic reasons. "Though we hear nothing from Shakespeare of the cruelty of Plutarch's Antony, or of the misery caused by his boundless profusion, we do not feel the hero of the tragedy to be a man of the noblest type, like Brutus, Hamlet, or Othello. He seeks power merely for himself, and uses it for his own pleasure. He is in some respects unscrupulous; and, while it would be unjust to regard his marriage exactly as if it were one in private life we resent his treatment of Octavia, whose character Shakespeare was obliged to leave a mere sketch, lest our feeling for the hero and heroine should be too much chilled." Yet, for all this, we sympathize warmly with Antony, are greatly drawn to him, and are inclined to regard him as a noble mature half spoiled by his times.

Drawn on a Colossal Scale

Shakespeare has drawn Antony on a colossal scale. He is a lord of lords a 'huge spirit' and everything about him is greater than life-size – his physical prowess, his military ability, his force of character, his passion, his energy. According to **Helen Morris**, " throughout, Antony is described in terms of the cosmos, even as a kind of demigod – 'this Herculean Roman' , the demi-Atlas of the earth' and 'the triple pillar of the world'. Antony with half the bulk of o'th world played as (he) pleased'; with-his sword he,

Quartered the world, and o'er green Neptune's back

With ships made cities.

Others are to Antony ' as is the morn-dew on the myrtle-leaf to his grand sea'. He seems as beautiful and as life enhancing as the sun itself; his countenance 'lighted the little O, the earth'.

He would shine on those
That makes their looks by his;

He isgolden,a 'mine of bounty'. His death is more than sunset accompanied by 'black vesper's pageants' it is like the end of the world"

1) O sun
Burn the great sphere thou mov'st in, darkling stand
The varying shore o'th world.

2) The crown o'th earth doth melt…….
And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon

"We may think these exaggerations natural to Cleopatra, but even to Caesar Antony looms remarkably large." It is Caesar who describes the fantastic hardships which the younger Antony had bravely endured and who sees his faults as equally gigantic:

A man who is the abstract of all faults
That all men follow

When Antony dies, Caesar himself pronounces a noble epitaph:

The death of Antony
Is not a single doom: in the name lay
A moiety of the world.

<u>Generous, Kind and Considerate</u>

Antony is noble, he is generous and his generosity is as magnificent and splendid as his love and it is presented on as grand a scale as his total personality. Though Caesar condemns him for fraternising with knaves and slaves, he wins the love and loyalty of all he comes in contact with. When he bids his followers farewell, in Act IV, scene ii of the play, even though Enobarbus is 'onion-eyed' though he has just told Cleopatra that Antony is being deliberately sentimental. Eros kills himself rather than obey Antony's order to kill him, his master, and Enobarbus when he at last deserts Antony dies of pure grief, when he comes to know of his generosity. Kind and considerate even in the hour of his greatest misfortune, he thinks more of others then of himself. That the magnificent Cleopatra of infinite variety loves him and dies for him is in itself ample evidence of his inherent nobility.

A Born Soldier and General

Antony is a born soldier and skilful general, brave, courageous, and having heroic endurance. Though in the play full justice has not been done to his soldier ship, yet there are frequent references to his unmatched superiority in this respect.

Thus Octavius refers to the day when, after the battle of Modena, he underwent all sorts of hardships on the Alps and lived on grass for a long time. Pompey is afraid of him along and regards his soldier ship as, 'twice the other twain'. His hopes of success lie in Antony's remaining in Egypt. In the play itself there is his march against Octavius in which he triumphs over his rival. Octavius is afraid of soldier ship, and therefore, turns down with a show of contempt, his challenge to a single fight. He also knows that Antony in unconquerable on land, and therefore, cunningly challenges him to fight by sea. There is, no doubt, that ultimately he is defeated, but his defeat results not from the superior soldier ship of his rival, but from his own folly in rashly throwing away his advantages.

Causes of His Defeat : i) His Bad Luck

Helen Morris dwells at some length on the causes of his defeat and points out that, Antony is not only twenty years older than Caesar, but more old fashioned too. Romantically and absurdly, he challenges Caesar to single combat: Caesar though piqued by Antony's attitude – 'he calls me boy….. The old ruffian' can control his passions. He does nothing but 'laugh at his challenge'. Victory, Caesar knows, is on the side of the big battalions. We are given clearly to understand, however, that whatever Antony did, however, he behaved, he was foredoomed to be conquered by 'full fortuned Caesar', if ever they opposed one another: 'It was predestined', wrote Plutarch, ' that the government of all the world should fall into Octavius Caesar's hands'. Shakespeare had already made Macbeth declare that under Banquo.

My genius is rebuked, as it is said
Mark Antony's was by Caesar's

A man's 'genius' was his guiding spirit, his guardian angel or daemon'. The Soothsayer tells Antony that,

Thy deamon, that thy spirit which keeps thee, is
Noble, courageous, high, unmatchable,
Where Caesar's is not. But near him thy angel
Becomes a fear: as being o'erpowered….
I say again, thy spirit
Is all afraid to govern thee near him,
But he away, 'tis noble.

He does not have 'natural luck' which Caesar has in ample measure. There are frequent references to 'the good stars' which he once had, but which have now deserted him. He is

no longer 'lucky' as he used to be, the 'luck' is now on the side of Caesar and so he is foredoomed to defeat and disaster. He says.

----*My good stars that were my former guides*
Have empty left their orbs and shot their fires
Into th' abysm of hell.

The guards hear the spirit of the god Hercules, his ancestor, leaving Antony. There are evil omens before the battle, so evil that the auguries.

Say they know not, they cannot tell; look grimly
And cannot speak their knowledge.

ii) His Own Faults

This may lead us to think that Antony's downfall is a matter of bad luck, and the fault lay not in him but in his stars. But to take such a view is to disregard utterly Shakespeare's conception of tragedy. In Shakespeare the downfall of the tragic hero, is not caused by external factors, its seeds lie in his own character. In *Julius Caesar, Cassius* speaks for Shakespeare when he says to Brutus,

The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves---
"Antony perishes in the end through his own weakness." When Cleopatra asks " Is Antony or we in fault for this'? Enobarbus replies"

Antony only that would make his will
Lord of his reason

"Will is used, as so often by Shakespeare, to imply "passion, self-will, selfishness, sensual desire". The fashionable Stoic philosophy pictured man's life as a continual struggle between reason and passion. Hamlet admires Horatio because his 'blood' and judgement are so well co-mingled' that he' is not passion's slave' but it is passion's slave exactly that Antony does become. He cannot bring 'reason to cool (his) raging motions …… unbitten lust'. He is drunk with the love of Cleopatra and her 'flickering enticements'.

His Love of Cleopatra : Self-indulgence

In his love of Cleopatra he has become passion's slave and lives only for the pleasures of the present unmindful of the disastrous consequences of such a life of pleasure and self-indulgence. Immediately after his marriage with Octavia, he decides to depart for Egypt, since, "In" th' East my pleasure lies' sending Ventidus into Parthia along. But as Antony himself says, 'present pleasure' can become the opposite of itself and Caesar can ultimately defeat him, since not Caesar, but Antony himself has 'subdued his judgement'.

His men realize that their general is no longer 'what he knew himself; Enobarbus sees, " a diminution in our captain's brain", Antony himself cries, "Authority melts from me" and draws a poignant self-portrait:

The wise gods seel our eyes
In our own filth drop our clear judgements, make us
Adore our errors, laugh at's while we strut
To our confusion.

Neglect of His duties

Despite so many qualities of head and heart, he is ruined by the life of self-indulgence, revelry and sensual pleasures which he leads with the Queen of Egypt. Frivolous pleasures of the moment enslave him completely so much so that MacCalum writes, "He is so many-sided, so many ways endowed, so full of vitality and vigour, potentially so affluent and bright, that we look to find his life a clear and abundant stream and disbelieve our senses when we see a turbid pool that loses itself in the sands. This is so because he has an immense zest for life and leads a life of self-indulgence to the neglect of his duties as a triple-pillar of the world. He has a gust for every pleasure of life; luxury, debauchery, banqueting, drunkenness, all appeal to him. He finds a relish even in vulgar pleasures, and with the queen on his arm, mingles incongnito in the crowd, wandering through the streets. He turns aside from the messengers from Rome, carriers of momentous news, to embrace his love. He has become a strumpet's fool, "the bellows to fan a gipsy's lust". This might be vulgar life, "but it is lifted above vulgarity by the vastness of the orbit through which his desire revolves. It is grandiose, and almost divine."

A Martyr of Love

But his passion for Cleopatra is not mere lust: it is love in the true sense of the word. As **A.C Bradly** says, to deny it the name of love is "the madness of morality". The very intensity of his love ennobles and glorifies it. According to **MacCallum** his ideal is, "an infinity of pastimes under the presidency of his love; and any ideal, no matter what, always dignifies those whom it inspires." He lives for love and dies for love. Despite his best efforts he is unable to break his "Egyptian fatters." **Bradley** rightly remarks that he may go to Rome but, "in *every moment of his absence a siren music in his blood is singing him back to her : and to this music, the soul within his soulleads and listens*." In her love, he declares, lies his space, his kingdom. She simply intoxicates his senses. Her wiles, her taunts, her furies and melting, her laughter and tears – all these bewitch him alike. In spite of his own better knowledge, in spite of Enobarbus' entreaties, he fights by sea, simply because she wishes it. Then in mid-battle, when she flies, he follows her leaving his army and navy. The completeness of his love for Cleopatra is pathetic and sublime. For a brief moment, after

the final defeat, he suspects her of treachery. But the mood passes away, when he hears of her death; then he stabs himself, and when lifted up to her monument he says:

I am dying, Egypt, dying, only
I here importune death awhile, until
Of many thousand kisses, the poor last
I lay upon thy lips.

To quote Bradley again, "he is more than love's pilgrim: he is love's martyr."

Conclusion

Like the other tragic heroes, he, too, has his own faults, but still we admire him for his frank, generous and noble nature. He is grand, he is splendid, and he wins the heart and mind of the readers, as the cool and calculating Caesar does not. He is the centre of action in the play, and both Caesar and Cleopatra contend for the possession of his soul. His love and Cleopatra win and Caesar gets kingdoms which are "only clay", for the lion-hearted Antony. As we close the play we feel that, "the world has been well lost for love."

(B) CLEOPATRA, THE SERPENT OF NILE

Contrary Estimates

Contrary to his usual practice, Shakespeare has assigned to Cleopatra an importance equal to that of Antony. She dominates in Act I, Act V is devoted exclusively to her, and she looms large in Act III of the play. In none other of the tragedies does the heroine occupy such an important place. She has attracted much critical attention, and most varied accounts have been given of her character and personality. She has been called a 'courtesan of Genius", A.C.Bradley calls her " Doll Tearsheet sublimited", and in the play itself she is referred to (by Antony) as " a triple-turned whore" she is called a whore and a strumpet, a vile seductress who has charmed and cast her spell on the noble Antony who has thus degenerated into bellows to cool ' a gypsie's lust'. There are others who admire her for the intensity of her love for Antony and point out that she goes to meet "her husband" in the other world in the high "Roman fashion". Thus the critical wrangling goes on.

Her Strange Fascination

Mrs Jameson hits the nail on the head when she writes of her as, "a brilliant antithesis, a compound of contradictions". She exercises a strange fascination on all those who come in contact with her, with the possible exception of Octavius Caesar. She ensnared Pompey, the Great, she ensnared Julius Caesar, and Antony, "the triple pillar of the world" is helpless in her taloons and failsutterly to break his "Egyptian fetters". The shrewd, matter of fact Enobarbus knows the strange hold which she has on Antony and so rightly points out that

his marriage with Octavia, instead of cementing the bonds of friendship between the two pillars of the Roman world, would lead to much greater enmity, for Antony is bound to return to Egypt and to his love at the earliest.

Her Tomboyish Pranks

What is the secret of this strange fascination, for she is neither young, nor is she extraordinarily beautiful. She has a 'tawny front" is black with the 'amorous pinches' of the sun, and has 'waned lips'. She even indulges in absurd tomboyish pranks, entirely unworthy of a lady and a Queen. In the play we hear constantly of her pranks. This is so because on the Elizabethan stage there were no actresses. Female parts were performed by boy actors. That is why Shakespeare has created a Cleopatra which the boy actor could brilliantly suggest; it is very hard otherwise to envisage a mature woman behaving in these ways without seeming ridiculous. This also accounts for the fact that Elizabethan royalty had virtually no privacy; not have Shakespeare's Egyptian rulers. We do not see the lovers along together; no opportunity is given for love-making on the stage. After Fulvia's death, and Antony's consequent departure, the lovers are described but not seen together until the battle of Actium, and Act IV is all war. There is nothing sensual about the soldier's kiss when Antony leaves for battle, nor about their public embrace when he returns (IV.8) , nor about their kisses when he is dying (IV.12). And as Antony dies, Cleopatra is transformed into quite a different being from the tomboyish companion, the hot sensual woman, the teasing vixenish lover or the irresponsible queen who fled from battle. She is 'fire and air (V.2) idealized and speaking a new kind of poetry.

Her sensual Nature

Cleopatra's sensual nature is suggested early in the play by a few phrases spoken to her attendants. Her nature is sensual and she can even indulge in bawdy jokes and bawdy talk with her attendants. This is clear from her remark to one of her attendants, "I take no pleasure in aught a eunuch has", and from her thoughts of Antony in his absence:

Or does he walk? Or is he on his horse?

O happy horse to bear the weight of Antony.

The bawdy chatter of the queen's attendants in the second scene of the play suggests the character of their mistress.

Touch of the comic

Her behaviour is undignified and un-lady like when she pulls by the hair and threatens to murder the messenger who brings to her the news of Antony's marriage. She draws a knife at him, and he runs for his life. Her mad rage imparts a touch of the comic to her character.

Her Infinite Variety

The secret of her strange fascination lies in her "infinite variety". Enobarbus refers to it when he says,

Age cannot wither her, not custom stale
Her infinite variety; other women cloy
The appetites they feed; but he makes hungry
Where most she satisfies.

She exhales the very spirit of enchantment. Her hold over Antony in complete. This is so because she possesses an inexhaustible variety of moods and graces. She is always fresh, always different from what she was a moment before, and none can predict what she will do or say the very next moment. Her moods are infinite, her variety limitless, and her personality enigmatic. She has not grown old with age, but has gained greater skill and experience in the use and embellishment of her physical charms, and with these the added charms of grace, culture and expressiveness.

Gorgeous and Majestic

She knows how to set off her charms with all the aids of art, wealth and effort, as we see from her appearance at Cydnus:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
Burned on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love-sick with them; the oars were silver
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes.

Her barge, "like a burnished throne/Burned on the water", this repetition of "burn" adds glitter and dazzle, and the word, 'throne' adds majesty.

Continuing with his description of Cleopatra, Enobarbus, further says that her cupid-like attendants were dimpled and smiling, and used,

Divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem,
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid, did

"Cleopatra is thus given glowing cheeks, and the paradoxes (glow-cool, undid-did), the repetitions with opposite meaning, suit the growing picture of her in the play as a bundle of contradictions."

Her Policy of Pin-pricks

She is sensual, she is splendid, she is majestic and the versatility of her moods is infinite and fascinating. **MacCullum**stresses the point when he writes, "She is all life and movement and never the same, so that we are dazzled and bewildered and too dizzy to measure her by any fixed standards. She can pass from gravity to gaiety, from fondness to banter, with a suddenness that baffles conjecture. We can forecast nothing about her. *She follows a deliberate policy of pin-pricks, not to repel but to allure.* She can faint at will and weep and sob beyond measure. When Antony announces his departure, she is ready to swoon. She over-whelms him with opposite reproaches of all sort. When he does not mourn for Fulvia that is a proof of his infidelity:

Now I see, I see,
In Fulvia's death, how mine received shall be

When he expresses distress, she charges him with mourning for his wife:

I prithee, turn aside and weep for her;
Then bid adieu to me, and say the tears
Belong to Egypt

When he loses patience, she mocks at him:

Look, prithee, Charmian.
How this Herculean Roman does become
The carriage of his chafe.

But at the very word of his leaving, she at once becomes wistful tenderness:

Something it is I would---
O' my oblivion is a very Antony,
And I am all forgotter.
But the mood soon changes to gravity and quiet dignity and she utters tender words of farewell:

All the gods go with you! upon your sword
Sit laurel victory and smooth success
Be strew'd before your feet

"Tranquillity and dullness fly at the sound of her name. Her love relies on provocation in both senses of the word."

Her Forwardness of Moods

She often mocks Antony and often contradicts him, to retain his love;

If you find him sad
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, say
That I am sudden sick.

This nimble changefulness has its own charm and piquancy. She is queenly and magnificent even in death. In her death there is something dazzling, splendid, sensuous and magnificent. It is a measure of her queenliness that even in death.

She looks like sleep,
As she would catch another Antony
In her strong toil of grace

Her Love : Its Intensity and Magnificence

There is ample evidence in the play to show that her love of Antony is not mere lust. It is a magnificent, splendid passion, the very intensity of which ennobles and uplifts her. Scattered throughout the play there is ample evidence to bring out the depth of her love for Antony. No doubt, she deserted Antony at Actium but her flight was the result of fear and not of treachery. Her fear was natural for a queen leading a sheltered life in her palace, with no experience of war and naval battles. When Antony rebukes her "Ah, thou spell, avaunt", here exclamation.

Why is my lord enraged against his love?

Shows genuine amazement. "All the negotiations and interviews after Antony death seem to imply that she had no previous understanding with Octavius" , and had in no way packed cards with him. The lofty death scenes in Act V are sufficient vindications of her queenliness as well as of her love. It has been said that she dies not out of love for Antony, but out of fear of disgrace and dishonour. She first tries to reach an understanding with Caesar and commits suicide only when she comes to know from Dolabella that she is sure to be taken in triumph through the streets of Rome. But when Antony advises her,

Of Caesar seek your honour, with your safety,

She replies,

They do not go together

As soon as Antony is dead, she exclaims,

What is brave, what is noble?

Let us do after the high Roman fashion.

And the words have sincerity and a depth of feeling that bring out the genuineness of her love. She proceeds cautiously, pretends that she has a desire to live and thus makes Caesar "an ass unpolicied". She puts on her regalia, the same she had worn at Cydnus, and her last words are:

Husband, I come:

Now to that name my courage prove my title
I am fire and air; my other elements
I give to baser life.

In this way does she assert convincingly the nobility, purity and dignity of her love.*There is, no doubt, that the passion which destroys both Antony and Cleopatra, also ennobles them."*

Mrs. Jameson, " One the Death of Cleoopatra"

"The death of Lucretia, of Portia, and of others who died 'after the high Roman fashion' is sublime according to the Pagan ideas of virtue and yet none of them so powerfully affect the imagination as the catastrophe of Cleopatra. The idea of this frail, timid, wayward woman dying with heroism, from mere force of passion and will, takes us by surprise. The attic elegance of her mind, her poetical imagination, the pride of beauty and royalty predominating to the last, and the sumptuous and picturesque accompaniments with which she surrounds herself in death, carry to its extreme height that effect of contrast which prevails through her life and character. No art, no invention, could add to the real circumstances of Cleopatra's death. Shakespeare has shown profound judgement and feeling in adhering closely to the classical authorities: and to say that the language and sentiments worthily fill up the outline is the most magnificent praise that can be given. The magical play of fancy and the overpowering fascination of character are kept up to the last: and when Cleopatra, on applying the asp, silences the lamentations of her women---

Peace, peace
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?—

These few words --- the contrast between the tender beauty of the image and the horror of the situation --- produce an effect more intensely mournful than all the ranting in the world. The generous devotion of her women adds the moral charm which alone was wanting; and when octavius hurries in too late to his victim and exclaims when gazing on her-----

She looks like sleep---
As she would catch another Antony
In her strong toil of grace---

The image of her beauty and her irresistible arts, triumphant even to death, is at once brought before us, and one masterly and comprehensive stroke consummates this most wonderful, most dazzling delineation."

THE TEMPEST

The Source of the Tempest

Critics surmise that *The Tempest* was based on an old German play called 'The Fair Sidea" by Jacob Ayrer of Nuremberg. Though there are certain similarities between the two, the poetry, the characterization and the humour of *The Tempest* are Shakespeare's own

A brief outline of the Tempest

The play opens with a scene of shipwreck. The ship carrying Alonso, King of Naples, Sebastian, Alonso's brother Ferdinand. Alonso' son and Antonio, the usurping Duke of Milan and brother to Prospero, the lawful Duke, is destroyed. The passengers jump into the sea and make good their escape. Next, the scene shifts to Prospero's cell. Prospero and Miranda are watching the shipwreck. Miranda is very sympathetic. She pities the shipwrecked people. She asks her father Prospero to save them. Prospero narrates to her how, twelve years ago, his kingdom was usurped by his villainous brother Antonio. Antonio had left Prospero and his little daughter Miranda adrift in a boat. The boat finally reached the present island where Prospero established himself by using his powers of magic.

Prospero has a servant by name Ariel. Ariel informs Prospero what he had done with the ship. Ariel took the shape of a flame and frightened all the passengers on board the ship and made them jump into the sea. Among the shipwrecked people, Ferdinand alone has been separated from the others. We learn that Prospero had freed Ariel from the clutches of Sycorax, an old witch. Prospero takes his daughter Miranda to see the monster Caliban who was the son of Sycorax. Caliban is sore with Prospero. His contention is that Prospero had usurped his (Caliban's) mother's island. Caliban had incurred Prospero's lasting wrath by trying to rape Miranda.

Charmed by the invisible Ariel, Ferdinand approaches Prospero's cell. He meets Miranda. The two fall in love with each other at once.

The scene shifts and we are taken to another part of the island where the treacherous Antonio and Sebastian mock at Gonzalo, the loyal follower of Prospero. Gonzalo whiles away the time by outlining his conception of an ideal commonwealth.

In another part of the island, Caliban makes an ass of himself by mistaking the two drunkards, Trinculoo and Stephano, for gods. He suggests to Stephano to kill Prospero and marry Miranda.

To test the genuineness of Ferdinand's love for Miranda, Prospero makes him carry heavy wooden pieces. Miranda takes pity on Ferdinand and offers to share his burden. Seeing this Prospero reaches the conclusion that the two are in unbreakable love with each other. Prospero warns Ferdinand against trying to have pre-marital coitus with Miranda. Ferdinand solemnly pledges to follow Prospero's advice. Stephano and Trinculo are attached by the flimsy dressing materials scattered all over the cell. Caliben is disgusted with their low tastes. Prospero's spirits drive them away.

Antonio and Alonso are brought to Prospero's cell by the invisible Ariel Alonso is happy to find his son Ferdinand playing with Miranda. Prospero appears before his former enemies. They all acknowledge his greatness. Prospero leaves for his kingdom with his daughter and Ferdinand, setting free Ariel and Caliban.

A Scene-wise Analysis of the Tempest

Act Scene 1

The play opens with a dreadful storm at sea. A ship is in danger. The ship is carrying Alonso, King of Naples; Sebastian, Alonso' brother; Ferdinand, Alonso' son: Gonzalo, Alonso's counsellor; Antonio, the usurping Duke of Milan and brother to Prospero, the lawful Duke. The king and his men are panic-stricken, when they find the ship rushing towards the rocky shore. The boatswain gets angry with the king's men for their meddlesome and unhelpful ways. He is particularly angry with Gonzalo, who, the boatswain thinks, talks too much. In spite of the utmost efforts of the boatswain to save the ship, the ship is dashed on the rocky shore. The passengers jump into the sea. All take leave of one another the king and his son kneel in prayer. The storm makes a sensational beginning for the play. Man's impotence in face of the terrible natural forces is seen.

Act I, Scene2

This is a pretty long scene. It is laid before Prospero's cell in the lonely island. Ferdinand and Miranda are watching the shipwreck. Miranda is moved to pity by the passengers whose lives are in danger. She knows that her father created the storm. So she requests him to stop it and save the passengers. Prospero tells her that he has done all these things only for good. He assures her that none of those whom she has seen perish has received the slightest injury. Prospero then relates to Miranda the story of their past. He tells her that twelve years ago, he was the Duke of Milan. He bookish nature and his aloofness were taken advantage of by his unscrupulous brother who usurped the throne and banished Prospero. Prospero and his infant daughter were left adrift in a boat. Only Gonzalo was kind enough to leave some food and clothes in the boat. Listening to the story, Miranda falls asleep. This is the result of Prospero's magic but Miranda does not know it.

Now Prospero calls Ariel to his side and asks him what he has done with the ship and its passengers. Ariel reports that he changed himself into a flame and frightened all the

passengers on board the ship and made them jump into the sea. But nobody got hurt. Ariel has separated Ferdinand from the rest who have dispersed in small groups in difference parts of the island.

Ariel then starts nagging Prospero and wants him to grant freedom to him. Prospero is irritated and reminds Ariel how he freed him (Ariel) from the clutches of Sycorax, and old witch. When Prospero came to the island, he found Ariel imprisons in the hollow of a pine tree and howling horribly. Prospero drove out Sycorax and took Ariel into his service. For this help Ariel should be helpful to him. On hearing this harangue, Ariel stops nagging Prospero and promises to be obedient and uncomplaining.

Prospero now awakens Miranda and both go to see the monster Caliban. Caliban, son of Sycorax, is angry with Prospero because he thinks that Prospero has deprived him of island which is his legitimate property as inheritance from his mother. We are informed that Prospero was at first kind towards Caliban and made much of him. But Caliban once tried to deflower Miranda and that put an end to Prospero's civil treatment of Caliban. Prospero has taught him his own language but Caliban used it only to curse Prospero. Such is the strained relationship between the two. Prospero threatens to torture Caliban and only this threat makes Caliban do the work allotted to him; namely gathering firewood.

Now, Ferdinand, charmed by the invisible Ariel, approaches Prospero's cell. He sees Miranda and falls in love with her at once. She regards him as a divine being and he is very much surprised to hear her speaking his own language. Prospero who has arranged this meeting feels that he must erect some barrier between the couple. Otherwise, his daughter, conquerted easily by Ferdinand, will be considered cheap by him. So Prospero pretends to be angry and tells Ferdinand with a scowling expression on his face that he is a traitor and a spy and he is going to put him in prison. Ferdinand at first tries to fight with Prospero, but being immobilized by the latter's magic, Ferdinand is helpless. Still Ferdinand bravely says that he will gladly endure imprisonment if he is allowed once a day to see Miranda.

The scene gives us much valuable information about the past of Prospero, Ariel and Caliban. The first meeting between Ferdinand and Miranda brings out the innocence, idealism, and bravery of youth. The young people of Shakespeare's last plays have more of the essential spirit of youth than those he depicted in his own youth.

Act II, Scene 1

The place of action is another part of the island. Alonso thinks that his son Ferdinand has drowned in the ocean. He is very sad. Gonzalo tries to comfort him, talking of various matters. Antonio and Sebastian mock at him. They also tell the king that he has lost both his children- he has lost his daughter, Claribel, by marrying her to an African and he has lost his son too, as the son has drowned in the ocean.

Once again Gonzalo tries to cheer up the king by outlining his conception of an ideal commonwealth. He says that if he were king of an island he would do away with all traffic, magistrates, earning riches, cultivation and sovereignty. Antonio points out that there is a basic inconsistency in the stand taken by Gonzalo. He wants to become a king and then wants to abolish kingship. All laugh at Gonzalo. At this time Ariel comes there and makes both Alonso and Gonzalo fall asleep. Antonio and Sebastian remain awake. Antonio has to pay a heavy tribute to Alonso for the latter's help in banishing Prospero. He finds this a heavy burden. He thinks that if Alonso is killed, he will not have to pay any tribute. So he asks Sebastian to kill his brother Alonso when he is asleep. Thus Sebastian can become the king of Naples and Antonio can stop paying tributes. Sebastian at first, revolts at the suggestion. He is soon brainwashed by Antonio. However when Sebastian and Antonio raise their swords to kill Alonso and Gonzalo, Ariel awakens Alonso and Gonzalo. Sebastian and Antonio lie to them that they unsheathed their swords to kill dangerous animals, if any came that way.

This scene throws into bold relief the loyalty of Gonzalo by juxtaposing it with the treachery of Antonio and Sebastian.

Act II, Scene 2

This scene takes place in yet another part of the island. Caliban is carrying fireweed and cursing Prospero all the time. He sees Trinculo, who has like others, escapes the shipwreck. He mistakes Trinculo for some spirit sent by Prospero to torture him. In order to hide himself Caliban falls flat on the ground. Meanwhile a storm is brewing. Trinculo looks around himself for a place of shelter. Finding none but Caliban lying there, he creeps under Caliban's gabardine to shelter himself from the rain.

At this time Stephano comes there. Stephano is the king's butler. He is in a drunken state. He has a bottle of liquor in his hand. He pours some liquor into Caliban's mouth, as Caliban is shivering and appears to be suffering from ague. Trinculo also gets some liquor. He is very pleased to meet his old friend, Stephano.

Caliban looks upon Stephano as a god and his drink as a celestial liquor. He is even ready to lick Stephano's feet. Stephano plies Caliban with drink again and again to retain his loyalty. Caliban vows to desert his old master Prospero and stick with Stephano. He promises to show Stephano the best springs, pluck berries, catch fish and bring wood for him. He asks Stephano to kill Prospero and marry Miranda and Stephano agrees to do so.

The Scene shows how the foolish Caliba, imagining that he is becoming free by choosing to serve under Stephano, is simply exchanging masters. What is worse, he is exchanging a better master for a worse one. "Real freedom can come only through, sincere and cheerful service".

Act III, Scene 1

The scene is laid before Prospero's cell. Ferdinand is seen carrying logs of wood. Thinking that her father is hard at study, Miranda has come out stealthily to see Ferdinand. She offers to carry the logs herself, so that he can take rest. But he says that her presence has put new energy into him and that he does not need any rest. Ferdinand tells her that he has met several women each of whom had some good quality or another. But he sees in Miranda a combination of all these qualities. He tells her that he is a Prince. He offers to marry her and make her his Princess. Miranda is very happy to hear this. She weeps for joy. She says that she would like to serve as his mind, if he does not marry her. Prospero watching this scene invisible feels very happy seeing two innocents in love with each other.

Act III, Scene 2

Once again Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban make their appearance. They are all drunk. Caliban suggests that they can go to Prospero's cell in the afternoon, because that is the time he is asleep. Caliban tells Stephano to seize hold of Prospero's book on magic first, for without his book he is powerless. Then, Stephano can easily kill Prospero and marry Miranda. Ariel hears this conspiracy. He creates a quarrel between Stephano and Trinculo by remaining invisible and standering both of them. Then he sings a song remaining invisible. Trinculo and Stephano are frightened at this. But Caliban assures them that such music by invisible singers is quite common in the island and that he has often been lulled asleep by such music, awakening only to fall asleep and hear the sweet music once again. Ariel leaves them to go and inform his master of Caliban's plot against him.

Act III, Scene 3

Alonso and his party figure in this scene. They are very tired and want to take rest. Antonio and Sebastian plan to kill Alonso and Gonzalo that night. Suddenly they hear solemn music. Strange shapes bring in a banquet. The king and others are very much surprised. When they begin to eat, Ariel appears as a harpy and takes away the banquet. Then Ariel speaks through the thunder asking Alonso and Antonio to repent genuinely for their sins against Prospero. Then Aril vanishes in thunder. The strange shapes re-enter and mock at the traitors with various gestures.

Alonso imagines that the thunder cried the name of Prospero and condemned him for having banished Prospero. Alonso now believes that his son's death is a punishment given to him for his crime against Prospero.

The banquet and the appearance of the strange shapes are concessions to the low tastes of the Elizabethans and their craving for sensational scenes.

Act IV, Scene 1

Prospero, pleased with Ferdinand's integrity and genuine love for Miranda, formally introduces his daughter to him. He warns Ferdinand seriously against pre-marital coitus: Ferdinand takes a solemn vow to follow this advice. Prospero wants to celebrate this betrothal in a fitting manner. Ariel is directed to arrange the Mosque of Juno. The first to appear in the masque is Iris, Juno's messenger. Ceres and Juno come next. Juno blesses the Lovers with honour, riches, happiness of married life, and increase of these Blessings. Ceres comes and blesses the lovers with plenty and prosperity.Ferdinand enjoys the show. But it is rudely and abruptly stopped by Prospero who has to go away to check Caliban's conspiracy. Before leaving, he tells Ferdinand that just as the show is an illusion so also all the objects on the earth and the earth itself are illusions that will pass away sooner or later without leaving even a trace behind. Our life itself is but a dream and ' is rounded off with 'a sleep' that is, death.

Ariel comes and tells Prospero that he has lured his associates to a stinking pool. Soon they themselves reach Prospero' cell. Finding gaudy dressing material there, Stephano and Trinculo quarrel with each other to possess it. Caliban who wants them to do the murder first is disillusioned at this. AT this time Prospero's spirits in the shape of hounds drive them out.

Act V, Scene 1

This scene also takes place in front of Prospero's cell. Ariel describes to Prospero the pathetic condition of his enemies. Prospero tells Ariel that he will not punish his enemies too hard. He says, "The rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance".

Now that all his plans are about to end successfully, Prospero decides to give up all his magical powers. Addressing the spirits of hills brooks, standing lakes and groves, and various other spirits who have faithfully served him all these years, Prospero decides to bury his magic staff in the earth and is magic book in the ocean.

Meanwhile, he enemies, the king and his party, arrive there. Prospero commends his old servant, Gonzalo, for his loyalty. Then, he puts on his old clothes. All the people now recognize him. Alonso repents and promises to restore Milan to Prospero. Prospero forgives him. When Antoni repents sincerely he forgives Antonio also. He tells Sebastian that he knows about his evil plan against his brother but that he will not expose him, now that he has repented. Next, Alonso is led by Prospero into the cell where Miranda and Ferdinand are playing chess. Alonso is happy to see his son and blesses the lovers.

Next the captain of the ship and the boatswain come and report to Alonso that their ship is intact and that they woke up to find everything in the ship in order. Prospero dismisses Caliban angrily from his presence, asking him to tidy up the cell so that all the guests can be received. Caliban realises his folly and asks for Prospero's forgiveness. But

Prospero is not quick in forgiving Caliban. Prospero intends to release Ariel before leaving the island for Milan. He says that after reaching Milan and witnessing his daughter's marriage 'every third thought shall be of my grave".

The epilogue is spoken by Prospero. But it is Shakespeare himself who is voicing his feelings. He requests the audience to clap their hands and release him from the spell which ties him to them.

Character Sketches

1. Prospero

Prospero's tragic flaw:

As in the heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies, there is a tragic flaw in Prospero. Or rather he had a tragic flaw which brought about his banishment from Milan. Originally he was the Duke of Milan. But he neglected his royal duties and devoted all his time and attention to academic pursuits. He reposed trust in his untrustworthy brother, Antonio. The result was that Antonio captured the throne and banished both Prospero and his infant daughter, Miranda.

Prospero's present state

As a result of this bitter experience, Prospero has become very cautious and watchful. He is no more trustful and unsuspecting. He takes care to protect himself against evil-doers. He is no more misled by appearance. When Miranda rhapsodizes over the men she sees, exclaiming that they represent a brave new world, Prospero is cynical and remarks that the world is brave and new only in her eyes, not in his. He once neglected his duties, and lost his kingdom. But now he jealously guards his mastery over Ariel and Caliban and would not allow them to flout his authority. He peremptorily gets back his kingdom from Antonio. In the past, he entrusted all his powers to Ferdinand. Now, he puts Ferdinand to the servant test possible before entrusting his daughter to him.

Prospero's affection for Miranda

Prospero is affectionate by nature. His affectionate nature is revealed in his attitude towards his daughter and his servant Ariel. In the opening scene Miranda is agitated by the shipwreck brought about by her father. She pleads with him to save the passengers and not to be cruel. Prospero explains to her that he has done all that only to promote her welfare.

" I have done nothing but in care of thee:
Of thee, my dear one: thee, my daughter"

He always refers to her warmly, calling her affectionately "loved darling', 'dear heart', 'a rich gift', ' a third of his own life'. When he finds that Ferdinand and Miranda have

fallen in love with each other and that Ferdinand is fit to be her husband, he is very happy. "My rejoicing", he says, "at nothing can be more".

Prospero's affection for Ariel

His relationship with Ariel is also marked by love and affection. He regards Ariel as a naughty, yet beloved child. He uses nothing but terms of endearment for Ariel calling him ' My brave spirit', 'fine spirit' 'my Ariel, chick', 'delicate Ariel', 'my tricky spirit'. When Ariel asks Prospero, whether he loves him. Prospero says, with intense emotion, dearly my delicate, Ariel'. On one occasion, he tells Ariel "I shall miss thee".

Prospero forgiving nature

Prospero's most dominant trait is his forgiving quality. He enjoys unlimited powers but he does not exercise them ruthlessly. His deeply felt conviction is that,

" *the rarer action is*
In virtue than in vengeance".

Sometimes Prospero appears short-tempered, especially in his dealings with Caliban. But we must remember that he was kind toward Caliban in the beginning and tried his best to civilize him. He has to be very harsh towards Caliban because he tried to deflower Miranda. Again he was harsh towards Ferdinand to such an extent as to imprison him. But he does this only to make his daughter hard to get at and to test the strength of Ferdinand's love for her. Once he is sure of Ferdinand's unchanging love for Miranda, he does not stand in the way of the lovers. Thus Prospero is essentially kind and forgiving towards all.

2. MIRANDA

Miranda – A goddess

Miranda , as her name itself indicate, is an object of admiration. She is admired by all the characters. All who see her for the first time take her to be a goddess? Ferdinand, on seeing her first, exclaims rapturously.

"Most sure, the goddess
On whom these airs attend"
His father, Alonso, also looks upon her as a divine creature at his first sight of her.

"Is she the goddess that hath severed us,
And brought us together?
Caliban though an uncivilized savage has yet glimmerings of imagination in him and he too is attracted by her beauty.

Miranda's sympathy

The quality of Miranda that strikes the reader most is her instinctive sympathy for suffering people. When she sees the shipwreck brought 'about by her father, her heart is wrung'. When her father narrates to her the circumstances that led to his exile her "heart bleeds'. She exclaims, "Alack, what trouble was I then to you".

Miranda's innocence

Her naturalness and innocence also attract readers. In order to appreciate the beauty of Miranda's character fully, we must forget for a moment we are in the twentieth century. We must banish from our minds the conventionalities and false modesty of our own generation. We should strive to appreciate Miranda's full purity and innocence. Verity remarks, "Emotion with her is fresh and natural". She does not conceal her feelings in an artificial manner. She speaks out what she feels, frankly and honestly. With delicious frankness, she takes the initiative --- unusual for a woman ---- and declares her love for Ferdinand and requests____ him to marry her. Her declaration reveals her modesty, innocence and frankness.

Miranda's love for Ferdinand

Her love of Ferdinand brings out all her best qualities. She falls in love with Ferdinand at first sight. Her love is not an ephemeral fancy. The strength of her love is in evidence when she defies her father's prohibition are meets Ferdinand. She offers to relieve him by carrying the logs herself. She casts in her lot with him. She offers to be his servant, if he does not marry her. When her father tells her that Ferdinand in comparison with other men is as ugly as Caliban, Miranda resorts with some vehemence:

"My affection
Are then most humble; I have no ambition
To see a goodlier man"

Her father is quite sure of the strength and lasting nature of her love and also of the genuineness of Ferdinand's love and so gives consent to the marriage.

3. FERDINAND

Introduction

Ferdinand is a fresher from the court. Like so many lovers featuring in the early comedies, Ferdinand also falls in love at first sight. The path of his love is fairly straight. He does not have to face any major hurdles.

The first meeting between Ferdinand and Miranda

The shipwreck that occurs in the opening scene separates Ferdinand from his father. Lured by Ariel's music, he is brought to Prospero's dwelling place. He marvels at Miranda's beauty. He regards her as a goddess.

Ferdinand freely confesses to Miranda, the nature of his past. He tells her that he has had contacts with several women but that he was not satisfied with any of them fully. Every one of them was marred by some defect or other. But he finds in Miranda a perfect woman. His saying so comes from his heart. It is not a piece of flattery.

The hurdles faced by Ferdinand

Prospero imposes certain restraints on Ferdinand in order to test the genuineness or otherwise of Ferdinand' love. Ferdinand is chained. Self-respecting to the core, he regards Prospero's treatment as most insulting. He goes to the extent of raising his sword against Prospero. Using his magical powers, Prospero immobilizes Ferdinand for the time being.

The other hurdle faced by Ferdinand is that he is ordered to remove a heap of logs from one place to another. A prince is brought down to the level of a coolie. Ferdinand gladly undertakes this menial job to prove his love for Miranda. He turns down Miranda's offer to help him. Prospero is moved by the mutual love and concern of the pair of lovers. He allows them to be intimate with each other. At the same time, he warns them against rash pre-marital coitus. Ferdinand follows Prospero's advice faithfully.

The lovers playing chess:

Ferdinand's father Alonso is brought to Prospero' cell by the invisible Ariel's music. The father is very happy to see his son alive. And so is the son. The nuptials of the lovers are to take place as soon as they return to their kingdom.

4. **CALIBAN**

Introduction

Caliban is the opposite of Ariel. He is gross and earthly whereas Ariel is refined and ethereal. Hazlitt says, "Caliban's character grows out of the soil. It is of the earthy; It seems almost to have been dug out of the grave". The name Caliban is metathesis of 'Cannibal'. Prospero calls him a devil, a born devil whom neither nature nor nurture can improve.

Caliban's origin

Caliban seems to derive his grossness and monstrosity from his mother, 'Sycorax. She was an abominable witch. Her sorceries were so terrible that her countrymen banished her to a remote island. It was here that Caliban was born.

Prospero and Caliban

When Sycorax, defeated by Prospero, died, Caliban was taken care of by Prospero. Prospero was kind towards Caliban in the beginning and took extra efforts to teach him and civilize him. But Caliban proved thankless. He rebelled against his master's efforts to civilize him. The restraints imposed upon him irked him. He used the language taught to him by Prospero only to curse him.

"You taught me language: and my profit on't
Is , I know how to curse"

He also went to the extent of attempting to deflower Miranda. It was this barbaric act which turned Prospero completely against Caliban and led him to control Caliban with an iron hand. The more Caliban is controlled, the greater is his bitterness. Thus, the relationship between Caliban and Prospero goes from bad to worse.

Caliban's hero-worship

Caliban has an innate craving to hero-worship somebody or other. He gladly chooses to serve under Stephano because, hating Prospero, he must have some substitute to here-worship. He abuses himself and voluntarily offers to do Stephano those services which Prospero is at present extorting from him.

Shakespeare takes care to differentiate between Caliban the natural savage, and Stephano and Trinculo, the savages of civilization. Caliban wants to kill his master because of the latter's inhuman treatment of him. So, there is some justification for his criminal tendency. But there is no justification whatsoever for the greed and wickedness of Trinculo and Stephano and their readiness to murder Prospero. When they enter Prospero's cave, their attention is diverted by the gaudy dressing material that they see there. They quarrel with each other to possess it. Caliban is disgusted with their shallowness and craze for flashy materiala. He breaks away from them.

Caliban's love of beauty

Caliban has a certain characteristic which normally one does not find in coarse people--- his capacity to enjoy the beauty of the island where he lives. The most poetic passage in the plat comes from Caliban. Only he speaks in appreciation of the music that pervades the island:

Be not afeard: the island is full of noise
Sounds and sweet airs, that gives delight and hurt not
The mind that is revealed here is that of a poet and not that of a

coarse monster. Even Ariel does not have such stirring imagination in him. To a certain extent Caliban has been refined by the beauty of nature surrounding him, even though the human agent Prospero has failed to ennoble him. Nature does what man cannot do.

5. ARIEL

Introduction

The fairy machinery plays a pivotal role in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and 'The Tempest". A 'Midsummer Night's dream' is marked by crudity. In this play fairies are introduced merely for fun. The fairies of this play are irresponsible. They play pranks on human beings and manipulate their affairs as they like. On the other hand, the fairies of 'The Tempest' are not irresponsible. They are guided and controlled by Prospero. They cannot go against his wishes. Ariel has super human powers and can change his shape at will. But he too is subservient to Prospero. Whenever Ariel shows signs of restlessness and insubordination, Prospero checks him and reprimands him so much that Ariel has to apologize.

Ariel's Capacity

As in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in 'The Tempest' also the fairies are diminutives. Ariel performs miracles at the behest of his master. There is a boastful ring when he tells his master that he can do anything his master wants him to do.

Ariel also takes any shape or remains shapeless and invisible. Ariel delights in playing pranks on other. With Prospero's approval, Ariel misleads night wanderers. He tempts Stephano and Trinculo and Caliban to walk into "briars, sharp furzes, pricking gross, and thorns."

Ariel's love of music

Ariel is fond of music. Caliban says that music pervades the island, but that he is not able to locate the singer. The invisible musician is Ariel and his sweet music makes Alonso and Gonzalo sleep. At the same time, he harsh thunderous music makes Alonso feel guilty of his past crimes.

Ariel's love of freedom

The most prominent trait of Ariel is his love of freedom. He is always voicing his desire for freedom. In the scene in which he makes his appearance for the first time he is moody and irritated. For, he has to add more and more work. Freedom is not within sight. Only when Prospero is vexed by his repeated wish for freedom, Ariel stops protesting. Ariel is very happy when, at the end of the play, he is granted freedom by his master.

Ariel as a symbol

Ariel's character has been interpreted by many critics as a symbol. Miss. Helen A. Stewart suggests that Ariel is the quintessence of the higher laws of nature, those forces which are invisible, yet irresistible, work in all material things. He is also said to symbolize elements and forces of nature which have a tendency to escape, unless held prisoner by the ingenuity of man. He represents all that is refined, spiritual and delicate in nature, just as Caliban represents all that is coarse, earthy and vulgar in human nature.

TWELFTH NIGHT

Act I Scene I

The opening scene in Twelfth Night

The plats open in the palace of the Duke of Illyria. Duke Orsino makes his appearance with a retinue of courtiers. He asks them to play on musical instruments and smooth his ruffled mental state. He compares the languid music to the smell of violets in the wind. Soon, the Duke tires of the music and starts philosophizing on the nature of love. Music soon satisfies the listener and surfeits his appetite. But his nature of love is different. It always remains"quick and fresh". Its capacity is infinite; yet its desire for novelty is so great that no single object can satisfy it for long; it lives on variety.

One of the gentlemen waiting on Orsino, Curio by name, suggests to him hunting as a diversion; hunting, say, of the hart. The Duke says that he has *hunted* the noble heart of Olivia. Ever since he first sighted that lady, his own heart has been turned into a hart hunted down and torn to pieces by his desire for the lady. Thus the Duke, though immersed in melancholy thoughts, has spirit enough to indulge in puns.

At this time, Valentine, Orsino's messenger, returns from Olivia's house. He reports that Olivia refused to see him but sent him a message to the effect that she was determined to have nothing to do with Orsino. She was determined to spend seven years, mourning her brother's death, watering once a day her chamber round with eye-offending brine". She was also determined not to see any man during the seven- year mourning.

This downright rejecting does not at all dishearten Orsino. On the other hand, it only promotes his hope. Such an attachment to a dead brother gives him hope that her love will be far greater yet, when once Cupid's arrow penetrates his desire to nurse his thoughts of love amid beds of flowers in his palace garden.

The opening scene serves several important purposes. The nature of Orsino's courtship is revealed. "Though he has apparently seen little of Olivia, he fancies himself desperately in love with her. His love is that of the first awakening". He is in love merely

with the idea of love. The first scene shows Olivia also, with her strange vow to shut out all men for seven years, as a highly sentimental creature. She is shown to be a female counter-part of Orsino.

" The reader is introduced into an atmosphere of high romance; the setting of Illyria, the rich luxuriant south; the luxury and refinement of the court; the music and flowers the extravagant indulgence of Orsino and Olivia in exquisite love-thoughts and love-sorrow; Olivia's vow is like the action in a fairy tale. After hearing her love we are prepared for other strange, romantic events in Illyria".

Act I, Scene II

The scene shows us Viola, shipwrecked and cast on the shore of Illyria. The captain whose ship was wrecked informs her that her brother, Sebastian, could not have drowned as he saw him holding fast to a mast and swimming safely. Viola thanks him for his heartening words and rewards him with gold.

The captain further informs her that Illyria is ruled by Duke Orsino. Vioa recollects that her father often used to talk about the Duke who was a bachelor then. The captain says that the Duke continues to be a bachelor but that he is in love with Olivia. Viola learns from the captain the Olivia is turning down the approaches of the Duke and is determined to mourn the death of her brother for seven years. Viola thinks that Olivia, being secluded, would be the ideal person to shelter her. But the captain says that Olivia is inaccessible. So, Viola changes her mind and decides to serve the Duke in the guise of a page. She hopes to win him by her talent in singing.

The scene shows Viola's resourcefulness. "The swift way I which she puts from her mind, for the time being, her brother's fate and sets about arranging her future, and the ingenious devices to get herself into the Duke's service, show her to be a person of strong character, intelligent and quick-witted. She feels that with her knowledge of music she could help the love-born ruler and become valuable in her service".

Act I, Scene III

The setting and tone of the scene presents a marked contrast to the sentiment and romance of the preceding scenes. The scene of action is Olivia's house. Sir Toby Belch, Olivia's uncle, enters slightly tipsy. He complains of Olivia's excessive mourning and swears that he will drink as long as there is wine in Illyria and a hold in his throat down which to gulp wine.

Maria, the maid-servant of Olivia, informs him that Olivia is taking exception to his drinking and late-coming. She tells him that she particularly dislikes his boon companion, Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Toby defends his friend by saying that he is skilled scholar. At this moment, Sir Andrew Aquecheek himself comes into the house. He foolishly addresses

Maria as 'Good Mistress Accost, mistaking Sir Toby's introduction of Accost, Sir Andrew, accost. When Maria turns to leave, Andrew is further put by her keen wit in playing on his words "fools in hand". Sir Toby tries to cheer up the foolish knight by inviting him to drink. Andrew admits his foolishness, ascribing it to his beef-eating. Andrew wants to quit Illyria, as his suit of Olivia is not proposing. But Toby tells him that Olivia will certainly not marry anyone above her station or wit. Andrew immediately changes his mind and agrees to stay a month more. Toby praises his leg as especially suited for galliard, a dance, and encourages him to dance.

The scene introduces some of the chief characters in the subplot, Toby, Andrew and Maria. The prominent features of their characters are also brought out in this scene. Toby is a bloodsucker. He heartlessly plays on the stupidity of Andrew and wheedles money out of him. He has a keen sense of humour which is revealed in his 'rather clumsy use of puns, his humorous unse of foreign words: ' castiliano vulgo' and 'pourguoi', his bantering of Sir Andrew and his enjoyment of Sir Andrew's capers"

Andrew is shown to be a silly ass who, however, over-estimates his skill in dancing. His weak will is revealed when he allows himself to be persuaded by Toby to state on in Illyria. As for Maria, she has a waspish tongue. Her sly jokes at the expense of Andrew are lost on him. Her teasing of Toby, however, is born out of her love for him.

Act I. Scene IV

Viola has entered the Duke's service and is on very intimate terms with him. Neither the Duke nor his courtiers are able to see through her male disguise.

The Duke Askes the new page to go up to Olivia and plead with her on his behalf. Viola asks what she is to do if Olivia refuses to see her. Orsino tells her to persist and rather grow impolite and insolent then return without seeing Olivia. The Duke thinks that the page, with his charms and musical voice, is sure to attract Olivia's attention. Viola agrees to go and faithfully carries out his instructions. However, in a aside she reveals that she has already fallen in love with the Duke.

A triangular situation is beginning to form in this scene. Viola loves Orsino but Orsino is in love with Olivia. This scene brings out Viola's loyalty and capacity for self-sacrifice. Though she has fallen in love with Orsino, still she tries to bring Olivia closer towards Orsino. Her lovely features are also stressed in this scene. Orsino, undeterred by Olivia's refusal, cheerfully continues to wee her by proxy.

Act I, Scene V

At the beginning of the scene, Maria is talking with the clown. Maria tells him that Olivia is displeased with the irregular habits and long absence. The clown is nonchalant. He replies that he is not afraid to be hanged by Olivia, for then he need fear no

'colours'. The clown plays on the meaning of military 'colours' and the hangman's 'collar'-noose. When Maria points out that Olivia may dismiss him, he answers with unconcern that summer will bear it out. He impudently remarks that "many a good hanging will prevent a bad marriage."

Olivia enters with her steward, Malvolio. The clown disarms Olivia also by telling her that she, and not he, is a fool, because she is morosely mourning for her brother who is in heaven. Olivia's coldness melts at this remark and she asks Malvolio whether the clown is not improving. Malvolio rails at the clown and what is more, accuses those that enjoy his clowning are mere "fools' zanies". Olivia curtly criticizes Malvolio's self-love and peevishness.

In the meantime, Maria announces the arrival of Cesario, the disguised Viola. Sir Toby, half-drunken, has stopped her at the doorstep. Olivia sends Malvolio to send away Viola. But Viola stubbornly refuses to go away. At last she is let in.

Viola has an interesting talk with Olivia. At her request Olivia removes her veil and shows her face to Viola who praises it warmly. Viola faithfully pleads with Olivia on behalf of Orsino. She says that Orsino's love for her is characterised by "adorations, fertile tears, groans that thunder love and sighs of fire". She says that, were she Orsino, she would not take 'no' for an answer. She would build a willow but at Olivia's gate and sigh for her, write songs and sing them in the dead of night, call out Olivia's name and do everything to move Olivia's heart to pity. Olivia offers Viola money which she promptly refuses, saying the recompense is due to Orsino andnot to her.

Before Viola departs, Olivioa tells her not to come on Orsino's behalf any more. However, Viola is welcome to return to tell how the Duke takes her answer. The truth is that Olivia has fallen in love with Viola, thinking her a man. After Viola's departure Olivia sends a ring after her through Malvolio, telling Malvolio that the ring was left behind by the page boy. But Olivia is furtively indicating to Viola that she has fallen in love with her.

The scene introduces some more characters in the subplot --- Feste, the clown, and Malvolio. Feste's resourcefulness is shown in his proving Olivia a fool. Malvolio's surliness and intolerance are brought out when he tries to snub Feste. Olivia, however, puts him in his place by telling him htat he is unnecessarily exaggerating Feste's petty foibles, and that he is mistaking 'birdbolts' for 'cannon-bullets'. Olivia's unnatural mourning is brought to a close by her falling in love with the disguised Viola. It looks as though Nature has taken revenge on her by making her fall in love with a disguised girl.

Act II, Scene I

The scene of action is the shore of Illyria. Sebastian, the twin brother of Viola, has reached the shore with the help of a captain by name Antonio. Antonio has grown very fond of Sebastian and would like to go wherever he goes. But Sebastian thinks that Antonio would

be involved in trouble if he came along with him. Sebastian leaves Antonio behind and sets out to the court of Orsino. Antonio, too fond of Sebastian to be separated from him also secretly follows him to Orsino's court, though he has many enemies there.

Meanwhile, Sebastian is very sad because he thinks that his sister, Viola, might have got drowned in the sea.

Act II Scene II

Malvolio catches up with Viola and peevishly throws the ring on the ground for her to pick up if sees so desires.

Viola, soliloquising, says that women, with their 'waxer' hearts, are easily misled by men's exterior as Olivia has been by her disguise. She loves the Duke but the Duke love only Olivia and Olivia, in turn, has fallen in love with her. Viola feels helpless. She says that only time can resolve this triangular situation.

Act II Scene III

Sir Toby and Andrew, half-drunken, invite the clown to sing a love song. The clown sings 'O mistress mine' which is lustily applauded by the two knights. Then the clown sings a catch 'Thou Knave' in which the two knights also join.

Maria tries to calm down the noise-revellers in vain. Malvolio also comes there in a towering rage. He roundly condemn the roisters: Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty?..... Is there no respect of place, person or time in you... Sir Toby, I must be round with you". Sir Toby does not at all care for Malvolio. He reminds Malvolio that he is a mere steward and should not think of controlling others. He tells him point blank that because he is virtous, he should not condemn 'cakes and ale'. They all continue to drink and shout, heedless of Malvolio's presence. Malvolio goes away threatening to report he matter to Olivia.

After his departure, Maria tells them that she has got a sound plan to disgrace Malvolio. Malvolio, though a puritan, is full of self-conceit. He thinks that whoever looks on him will love him. Maria decides to play on this weakness of Malvolio. Maria proposes to write love letters in Olivia's hand and drop them in Malvolio's way. Sir Toby guesses the outcome of the plot and heartily admires Maria calling her "Penthesilea" and "a beagle, true-bred".

This scene thus leads to a show-down between the revellers and Malvolio.

Act II Scene IV

The scene of action is the Duke's court. Viola makes veiled references to her love for the Duke. She says that the only person she loves is like the Duke in looks and years. The Duke advises Cesario to choose and marry a younger girl and not one as old as he.

Feste enters and at the behest of Orsino, sings the sentimental diege, 'Come away, come away, death". He refuses to take any payment for his pains, as singing is a pleasure to him. He leaves, after wishing the Duke the protection of Saturn, the god to melancholy temper. He makes fun of Orino's inconstancy, comparing him to an opal.

Viola once again makes veiled references to her fruitless love for the Duke. She says that she once had a sister who loved a man, as she might love the Duke, were she a woman. The Duke inquires about the history of the girl. Viola states that it was a 'blank'. She bore her love in silence and pined away in grief. To the Duke's question, as to whether her sister died of her love she replies evasively that she is the only one left of all her father's daugters and brothers. But all these indirect hints are lost upon the Duke. Urged by him, she once again goes to plead with Olivia.

Act II Scene V

The sub-plot reaches a climax in this scene. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Fabian, a servant of Olivia, hide themselves behind a shrubbery to watch Malvolio making a fool of himself. Fabian dislike Malvolio because the latter once spoke ill of the former to Olivia and deprived him of her favour.

Malvolio is fully unmasked even before he reads Maria's forged letter. His imagination simply runs riot. "He falls to imagining himself

Count Malvolio, raised from his steward's position married to Olivia for three months and giving directions to the servants ". He imagines himself treating Sir Toby with contempt.

While he is in this frame of mind, he picks up Maria's letter. He takes the jumble of letters MOAI as a hint at his name. In the latter, he is instructed to be severe with Toby, surly towards servants, to talk gravely of affairs of state, to wear yellow-stockings and cross-garters and to keep smiling in the presence of his mistress. Malvolio, who has already presumed that Olivia is in love with him, now feels confirmed. He decides to carry out all the instructions noted in the letter.

After his departure, Maria tells the group hidden behind the shrubbery that yellow-stockings and cross-gartering are fashions detested by Olivia and that Olivia, being in a melancholy state, will abhor the smiling Malvolio.

Malvolio's hypocrisy is fully revealed in this scene. 'He imagines himself married to Olivia, living a life of indolence and ease, and ordering Sir Toby and Sir Andrew around, all contrary to his supposed virtue.

Maria's mischief wholly wins over Toby who now proposes to her.

Act III Scene I

Viola has come to Olivia's garden. Feste enters upon a series of bantering replies, punning and playing upon Viola's words. When Viola asks Feste whether he is Olivia's fool, Feste replies that Olivia is no fool as she is unmarried.

Sir Andrew hears Viola addressing Olivia in choice terms and makes a note of them. Olivia openly declares her love for Viola, Viola can only say in turn that she loves no woman and never will and takes her leave.

Act III Scene II

Andrew tells Toby that he intends leaving Illyria, as Olivia is inclined more towards Cesario (Viola) than towards him. But Toby and Fabian tell Andrew that Olivia seemingly encourages Cesaio only to incite Andrew to throw Viola a challenge. Andrew is stupid enough to believe the words to Toby and Fabian and goes out to prepare the challenge.

Toby tells Fabian that Andrew's challenge would be too stupid to frighten Cesario. So Toby declares to give Andrew's challenge to Cesario by word of mouth. Toby and Fabian are sure that there will be capital fun in forcing the cowardly Andrew and Duke's gentle page to a duel.

Act III, Scene III

Antonio hand his purse to Sebastian so that he can spend freely. Antonio says that he will stay in an inn at the outskirts of the town. Antonio, who once fought against Orsino's ships, may be identified if he enters the city. So Sebastian leaves Antonio behind the inn. They agree to meet at the inn an hour later.

Act III, Scene IV

This is the longest scene in the play. Malvolio wearing yellow stockings and cross garters, appears before Olivia, with his face wreathed in smiles. He quotes lines from the 'forged' letter to indicate to Olivia that he is obeying her instructions. His wild behaviour and babbling shock Olivia. She leaves him to be looked after by Toby and hastens to receive Viola. Malvolio thinks that Olivia is sending Toby to him in order to be insulted, as noted in the letter. Malvolio leaves in anger when Toby and Fabian try to bully him.

At this moment, Andrew comes there with his challenge. Toby finds it silly and so delivers an oral challenge to Viola, frightening her out of her wits by telling her that Andrew, "a devil in private brawl" is determined to fight with her for a certain offence. Viola is scared and wants the duel to be stopped. Toby grants Andrew also by telling him that Viola, fencer to the Shah of Persia, is determined to kill him. Andrew, dismayed, is prepared to give up his horse to Viola to mollify her. Viola and Andrew are brought together, each unwilling to

fight with the other. When the duel is about to begin, Antonio arrives there. Mistaking Viola for her twin brother Sebastian, Antonio prepares to fight in her defence. At that time, Orsino's officers come there and arrest him. Antonio, thinking he is talking with Sebastian, asks Viola to return his purse. Viola, who knows nothing of Antonio's purse, is still willing to give Antonio a part of her scanty wealth in hour of his need. Antonio condems Sebastian's ingratitude and is dragged away by Orsino's officers. Vioa is happy because the mention of Sebastian leads her to hope that her brother is still alive.

Act IV, Scene I

Feste comes across Sebastian in from of Olivia's house. Mistaking him for Viola, he puts irritating questions to Sebastian and is angrily sent away. After some time, Andrew comes there. He also had mistaken Sebastian for Viola and pounces on him. Sebastian retaliates with blows and Toby is also drawn into the fray in defence of Andrew.

At this moment Olivia, fetched by Feste, comes out. She also mistakes Sebastian for Viola and apologising for Toby's rudeness, tenderly invites him to her house. This is a pleasure surprise to Sebastian. With pleasure he succumbs to the temptation and goes with Olivia. He thinks it is all part of a dream and wants his dream to continue.

Act Iv, Scene II

Toby, Feste and Maria subject Malvolio to the maximum possible indignity in this scene. Malvolio has been considered mad and shut up in a dark room. At Toby's request, Feste disguises himself as a priest, Sir Topas, and appears before the dark room of Malvolio. Malvolio pleads that he is quite sane. To test Malvolio's santity, Feste asks him his opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl. Malvolio's answer is correct by Topas persists in treating him as a mad man. After some time, Feste reverts to his own voice. Malvolio pleads with him, " I am as well in my wits, fool and thou art". Feste retorts against Malvolio by telling him he must be mad since he is no better than a fool. Feste agrees tobring Malvolio writing materials. He goes singing a farcical song about the devil and the vices.

Act IV, Scene III

Sebastian is overwhelmed by "his good fortune". While he is wondering about Olivia's behaviour, she herself comes in haste. She brings a priest along and, excusing her haste, she asks Sebastian's hand in marriage in order to appease her "most jealous and too doubtful soul". The marriage is to be kept secret until he chooses to have it made public. Sebastian consents, swearing eternal faithfulness to her.

Act V, Scene I

In a series of rapidly changing situations, the end of the play is brought. about.

At last Orsino comes to Olivia's house to wee her in person. Finding Viola with him and mistaking her for Sebastian. Olivia accuses her of saving failed to meet her according to the promise given by Sebastian. Viola who knows nothing of Sebastian's promise is puzzled. Orsino understands that Viola is loved by Olivia. Considering Viola ungrateful, he swears to kill her in order to spite Olivia. Viola ever faithful to Orsino, says that she is prepared to die "a thousand deaths".

At this time, Toby and Andres come there. Andrew complains that he has been most unmercifully beaten by Sebastian. Seeing Viola there and mistaking her for Sebastian. Andrew bitterly complains against her. At this time, Sebastian himself appears there. All are shocked to find Viola and Sebastian looking exactly alike. The truth that they are twins is now known.

Olivia, being married to Sebastian, is very happy. Orsino, recalling Viola's words that she would never love a woman as much as she loves him, asks her hand in marriage and gets it.

In the meantime, Feste brings Malvolio's letter in which Malvolio had bitterly complained against Olivia's callous treatment of him. Malvolio is brought along by Fabian. He accuses Olivia of deliberately wronging him. He wishes to know the reason for giving him: clear lights of favour" and then confining him in the dark room and marking him 'the most notorious geck and gull". Only now Olivia understands that Maria has forged her hand and wrought havoc in Malvolio's life. She promises Malvolio redress and punishment of his enemies. But Malvoli leaves in a towering rage, swearing revenge on them all. Orsino enters Olivia's house with Viola. Only Feste stays back and sings a wishful song on the ups and downs of life: "When that I was and a little tiny boy".

Character – Sketches

1. **Viola**

Viola is the pivot of the main plot. She is one of the most charming of the romantic heroines of Shakespeare's comedies.

Viola's charm is frequently commented on in the course of the play. The Duke rhapsodizes over her "smooth and rubious lip" comparing it to Diana's : her voice is remarkably "shrill and sound" unlike the gruff voice of a man. Sebastian tells how his sister was 'of many accounted beautiful". With her good looks, Viola is able to charm one and all. She wins the captain's sympathy on her first appearance. The captain is all solicitude for her and offers her help and advice and promises to keep her plan a secret. With her charm and skill is music, she secures the Duke's trust in three days. Olivia is simply swept off her feet by Viola's charms. After her departure, Olivia says of Viola:

" The tongue, they face, they limbs, actions, and spirit
Do give 'thee five-fold blazon…….
Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
With an invisible subtle stealth
To creep in at mine eyes".

Viola's resourcefulness and aplomb deserve praise. At the beginning of the play, Viola finds herself in an unenviable situation. Shipwrecked and reaching a strange land, she quickly sets about to find a way out of her difficulties. Her brother being lost, she is along in Illyria. But she does not give in to despair. Learning from the captain that the Duke of the land is unmarried, she at once decides on entering Orsino's service as a page. Her intelligence and skill in music quickly win her master's favour. Her wooing of Olivia shows her resourcefulness. She displays such agility and sprightliness on this occasion that Olivia falls in love with her! She resists Olivia's wooing as best as she can, without giving herself away.

Viola's loyalty deserves mention. She is deeply in love with Orsino. At the same time, she is called upon to win Olivia for the Duke. She is torn between her love for the Duke and her duty as his page. She places her duty above her love and sincerely tries to secure Olivia's love for the Duke, when in the last Act; the Duke finds out that Olivia is in love with Viola, the Duke thinks that Viola has treacherously attracted Olivia to herself. In a towering rage, he swears he will kill Viola to spite Olivia. Viola says that she will gladly die "a thousand deaths" in order to please her master. Viola appears an embodiment of loyalty in this scene.

Though dressed as a man, Viola is essentially womanly and modest. Though she is deeply in love with the Duke, she is very reserved and reticent. She makes only a veiled reference to her love for the Duke. Telling the story of an imaginary sister who being disappointed in her love-affairs pined and wasted away, is the only hint that Viola can give to disclose her own love for the Duke. Unfortunately, the hint is lot upon Orsino. Viola's womanliness is shown in her unwillingness to fight with Andrew and in her feeling relieved when Antonio appears on the scene and rescues her.

Viola's love for the Duke is the main-spring of her life. Her love is deep and pure. "The love of Orsino for Olivia is dramatized, sentimental and morbid; Olivia's love for Viola is marked by the conflict of strong passion and of dignity and pride. Viola's love is constant, deep and entirely selfless. It prompts her to further the Duke's suit to her own potential rival. It makes her glad to die many times for him".

2.<u>Olivia</u>

In the first new scenes of the play, Olivia is merely mentioned. Orsino reports on her stubborn refusal to reciprocate his love. Sir Toby and Feste complain of her being given to excessive mourning for her brother's death. Thus in the first few scenes of the play, a picture of Olivia can be formed by these reports.

Olivia is no less charming than Viola. Orsino passionately praises her beauty. He speaks of her appearance as "purging the air of pestilence". When he sees her approaching, he goes into raptures: "Now heaven walks on earth". Viola also eulogizes her beauty "trulyblunt whose red and white Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on". Thus all who come into contact with her are thrilled by her beauty.

Olivia is chiefly responsible for the pervasion of a romantic atmosphere in the play. Her very vow to shut herself inside her house, shunning all men, mourning her brother's death is a highly romantic decision. "She is the heroine of a romance, wealthy, noble, beautiful, majestic and inaccessible to all. She is to be won by him who could successfully conquer the castle of her heart.

Her running her house is marked by a judicious mixture of sternness of softness. She is soft-hearted. But at the same time, she does not allow her household to run riot. She is firm but solicitous towards her servants. Thus, she chides Feste for his irregular habits and exaggerated fooling but at the same time protects him against Malvolio's venomous attack. Similarly, she criticizes Malvolio's narrow mindedness and at the same time sympathizes with him when she discovers that brutal pranks have been played upon him without her knowledge. Many instances of her control over her household can be cited. Maria warns Toby against incurring Olivia displeasure; Feste afraid of being turned out; Sir Toby repents of having pushed is pranks too far in Act IV, and Fabian tries to pacify her in Act V when the whole story of the gulling of Malvolio leakes out. Sebastian is quite impressed by her efficient administration of the house. Thus Olivia knows when to stiffen and when to relax.

Olivia's love is quite difference from Viola's. In Olivia accord with the romantic glamour of her position, is more sentimental, and less unselfish than Viola……. She is under a dignified, proud exterior, more easily impassioned than Viola". Her minds keep swinging between extremes. Her love for her dead brother is carried to an absurd extreme. Her decision to avoid contact with men of seven years, in memory of her brother, is an unhealthy one. Nature, thus shut out, takes revenge on Olivia by making her fall head long in love with the first creature dressed in male attire, namely Viola. When she falls in love with Viola she errs in the opposite direction. The woman, who formerly vowed to keep away from all men now literally chases Viola before weighing the consequences, apologises for it (III, 1,110) only to renew her wooing of Viola to break off again and bit Viola farewell. She is sad and proud in their next meeting. Sebastian brings her love into the open again in a moment, and she hastily weds him without any further thought for the possible consequences of her action". Olivia's love is like a powerful maelstrom that drags its victim mercilessly into its vortex.

There are certain glaring inconsistencies in Olivia's character. The women who has been refusing to see Valentine or the Duke yields to Viola's pressure and admits her. After having vowed to lead a solitary life, she literally runs after Viola when the latter presents

herself in male attire. When she discovers that she is married to Sebastian and not to "Cesario", she is not at all agitated. Her marriage to Sebastian, the sober, unsentimental man, will certainly prove a counterweight to her romantic excuses.

3. **<u>Duke Orsino</u>**

Duke Orsino is the only male character of real importance. The other male characters belonging to the main plot are shadowy and unsubstantial.

Orsino, like the others belonging to the main plot, is charming. The captain speaks of him as noble in nature and name. Olivia though cold towards him does praise him in eloquent terms:

"I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,
Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth:
In voices well-divulged, free learned and valiant;
And in dimension and the shape of nature
A gracious person".

Her description shows Orsino to be a replica of the nobleman and courtier of Shakespeare's time "liberally endowed with good look, wealth, a noble character, and various accomplishments"

Orsino's besetting weakness is his sentimentality. His very first introduction discloses his sentimentality, his effusion and effervescence. "He has been fascinated by the sight of Olivia, and his romantic imagination makes him believe himself hopelessly in love with her. In reality he is indulging rather in sentimental enjoyment of being in love for the sake of the emotion, not of Olivia". That he is not really in love with Olivia is amply proved when he transfers his love with astonishing facility from Olivia to Viola at the end of the play. His sentimentality is manifested in the way he feeds his thoughts on music, enjoying its rich melancholy till it grows cloying. "He is not interested in many pursuits such as hunting and administration of the dukedom. His description of true lovers as "un staid and skittish" fits him to a nicety for he himself is restless and unsettle. His conversation bristles with inconsistencies. At one time, he praises the constantly of woman's love. In the same breath, he doubts it and declares that men have a great capacity for love. His language is also stamped by his sentimentality. "It is highly coloured, rich and poetical. He speaks of violets, scented winds, rich golden shafts of love, of beds, of flowers, of the pleasure in music. He compares his own capacity with the sea. He is always rhapsodizing over love, its sweetness, luxury, melancholy, constancy and fervour. His comparisons are always hyperbolical. For example, he compares Olivia to a goddess – "now heaven walks on earth".

How different is Orsino's love from Viola's? Orsino is selfish and exacting whereas Viola makes sacrifices. He expects Olivia to yield without hesitation. He flies into a towering

rage when he suspects that Viola has cheated him by attracting Olivia to herself. He vows to kill her. But Viola, though in love with him, sincerely tries to gain Olivia's love for him. Also, when he swears to kill her, she meekly says that she is prepared to die 'a thousand deaths jocundly" to please Orsino.

Viola's marriage to Orsino seems to be a misalliance. But it is not really so. Viola's sobriety and common sense will act as an antidote to Orsino's headlong fancies and romantic postures.

4. **<u>Sir Toby Belch</u>**

One of the main sources of mirth in Twelfth Night is Sir Toby Belch. He supplies a major share of the broad humour and comedy in the sub plot. " His very name is expressive of his nature; it is coarse, homely and prosaic, in contrast to the musical, Italian names of the characters of the main plot. It suggests the pickled herring that he eats in order to cure his hangovers, and that he blames his hiccoughs on. He is thus oddly cast in the house of his niece Olivia. His hard drinking and coarse humour is typical of the English country squires whom he resembles more than he does the romantic natives of Illyria."

Sir Toby's view of life is stated in his disapproval of Olivia's unnatural grief: "Nay I am sure care is an enemy to life". He is full of spirit and gusto. His drinking bouts last deep into the night. He indulges in a serious of lively pranks, and in noisy singing and jesting. One detestable characteristic of his is that he is heartless and selfish in the pursuit of his pleasure; he does not finch from hurting the feelings of Olivia, Malvolio, Sir Andrew or Viola. However, some of his traits are altogether lovable. "He is expansive, fond of merry companionship, and is happiest when engaging in a joke with others: …… His constant drinking is evidence of his total lack of seriousness….. His ability in thinking up schemes and his love for joking show his intelligence, rather limited in application but lively and active. "He displays courage in fighting Sebastian in defence of his boon companion, Andrew. He takes his "bloody coxcomb" at the hands of Sebastian without complaint. He likes Maria for her wit and sharp tongue. Though he is callous and irresponsible, he does not harbour any malice against other, and carries out his pranks purely for the sake of amusement. His philosophy is antithetical to that of kill-joys like Malvolio. His criticism of the latter - "Because thou are virtuous dost thou think their shalt be no more cakes and ale?" – is unanswerable.

Toby's earthly humour and broad farce are in contrast to Festes subtle wit. With astonishing facility he coins words like 'substractors', ' castliano vulgo' etc. He delights in punning on the meanings of words. He teases Maria by his sarcastic praise of Sir Andrew's qualities and knowledge of tongues, and he makes fun of Sir Andrew, by commenting on his hair and his dancing and by instructing him how to challenge Viola.

Toby's love for Maria is hearty and quite unlike the sentimental dalliance of the people of the main plot. He likes Maria for the fun that she sets in motion with the forged letter; he would marry her and ask no other dowry with her but such another jest. Such heartiness is an effective counter weight to the sentimentality of the major characters.

5. **<u>Sir Andrew Aguecheek</u>**

Sir Andrew Aguacheek is a wealth but foolish knight who has come to woo Olivia without any knowledge on her part, it seems. He is fed by Sir Toby on the false hope of marrying Olivia some day or other.

Feste is a fool by profession but Sir Andrew is a natural fool. He seems to take delight in being called a fool. He is laughed at by one and all in almost all the scenes. He asks Maria whether she thinks that she has tools by hand. She impudently replies that she does not have him by the hand. He offers his hand at once. "Mary, but you shall have, and here's my hand? His vocabulary is so poor that he does not know the meaning of the word 'accost' and mistakes it to be Maria's name. He enjoys jokes without grasping them. Thus he takes delight in the high-sounding jay-breaking, nonsense spoken by Feste. He praises Feste for "Speaking of Pigro mitus of the Vapians passing the equinoctial Queubus". He does not understand that Feste uses such words to pull his leg. He is always out to imitate others 'mannerisms. His vocabulary being limited, he is always impressed by the high-falutin style of others. Listening to Cesario's address to Olivia, he exclaims, "Odours' 'pregnant' and 'vouchsafed'. I'll get them all three ready'. He parrots Sir Toby's words frequently, even to repeating that he could marry Maria and have her set her foot on his neck.

Sir Andrew is very vain. His appearance is ridiculous. He is really lean, lanky, sandy-haired and thin-faced. But he thinks that he is quite charming. When others praised her person and appearance he is elected, without understanding that others are trying to pull his leg. His thin and long legs make him so funny to look at. Still he swallows his friend's compliment that he is born under the star of galliard, and he begins to demonstrate his talent by capering higher and higher. Again, Toby compares Andrew's thin, sandy hair to flax on a distaff. This is not at all intended to be a compliment. Still, Andrew is delighted with the remark.

Though a coward, Andrew is eager to believe himself a perfect 'fire-eater'. The letter of challenge written by him to Cesario is concrete proof of his cowardice and so Toby decides to deliver the challenge by word of mouth. Toby emboldens Andres to attack Cesorio. However, he later on paints a terrifying picture of Caesario's swordsmanship. Andrew is scared. He pathetically begs Toby to buy peach and readily gives his horse as the price for it. When Cesario and Andrew are brought together with great unwillingness the latter draws his sword! When Antonio interferes on behalf of Cesario and stops the fight. Andrew feels immensely relieved.

A praiseworthy trait of Andrew is his unshaken loyalty to Toby. At times, he has a glimmering consciousness that Toby is exploiting his weakness. He threatens to leave for home. Yet, when Toby wants him to stay on, he at once yields. Such is his implicit obedience to Toby. In the fast scene, both Andrew and Toby are injured by Sebastian whom they have mistaken for Cesario. Andrew in not angry with Toby, though it is his association with Toby that has landed him in all these dangers. He steadfastly stands by Toby and offers to get his wounds dressed up. He is not hurt even when Toby scolds him uncharitably: "Will you help an ass-head and coxcomb and a knave, a thin-faced knave, a gull?"

6. Malvolio

Malvolio's character has been interpreted in difference ways by different critics. Campbell considers him a vulgar coxcomb whereas Lamb regards him as more sinned against than sinning.

Let us first consider Malvolio's plus points. As a steward, he carries out his duties with scrupulous care and attention. He knows the distraught state of Olivia who has decided to mourn her brother's death for seven years. He checks the revellers because they are a source of vexation to his mistress. He is so very duty-conscious that he does not flinch from clashing with Olivia's uncle in carrying out his duties. The high esteem in which Olivia holds him is a solid proof of his worth. She will not have him miscarry for the half of her dowry. When he goes out in a towering rage at the end of the play, the Duke wants him to be entreated to peace. The Duke's concern for him also shows his value.

The flaws in the character of Malvolio outweigh his virtues. Malvolio is a hypocrite. He thinks that he is a purist. But, in reality, he is seething with lust. This is shown in his soliloquy in the orchard. He fancies that he is already married to Olivia and that he is in the habit of sleeping with her in daytime. It is in this libidinous frame of mind that he picks up Maria's forged letter and falls an easy prey to its suggestions.

Malvolio is very conceited. His self-love results in ludicrous vanity about his person, appearance and manners. Maria is right when she say that he is so persuaded of his own excellences as to think that all who look upon him must love him. It is his notion of himself as an irresistible lady-killer which makes him fall a prey to Maria's temptation.

Malvolio is intolerant in the extreme. He rebukes the servants uncharitably. He lashes out at Toby and his crew without any tolerance of the Twelfth Night merriment. He considers Feste to be barren and sternly objects to his mistress's indulgence to him. He considers them all to be very much beneath his dignity. Olivia is correct when she says, that Malvolio tends to exaggerate minor vices, to deem 'bird-bolts to be cannon-bullets". Olivia is lenient towards Feste and she expects Malvolio also to be so. Unfortunately Malvolio tends to maximise the vices of others and minimum his own.

What is the reader's over-all impression of Malvolio? Malvolio like Olivia and Orsino, is a self-deceiver. Olivia and Orsino emerge from self-deception, saner and happier. But when Malvolio is unmasked, he does not humble himself. Even at the end of the play, he is not repentant. Whatever was the Elizabethan attitude towards Malvalio he was certainly an unfailing source of amusement, He continues to be so modern theatre-goers also:

: lo in a trice

The cockpic, galleries, boxes, all are full

To hear Malvolio, that cross-gartered gull"

NON DETAILED

] **HENRY V**

The Elizabethan stage lacked scenery. The Chorus (a single speaker) apologizes for the limitations of the theatre, acknowledging that "a Muse of fire", an actual sun, would be the ideal source of theatrical power, and that real princes and a real kingdom are superior to actors and their small stage. The Chorus then speculates: just as an actor "plays" King Henry, King Henry would play the god of war himself, would "[a]ssume the port [bearing] of Mars". The Prologue is thus a formal Apology for the production, but tempered with the speculation that the world, too, is a kind of stage, nested in a larger structure of imitation. The Chorus encourages the audience to use their "imaginary forces" to overcome the stage's limitations: "Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts."

The early scenes deal with the embarkation of Henry's fleet for France, and include a real-life incident in which the Earl of Cambridge and two others plotted to assassinate Henry at Southampton. (Henry's clever uncovering of the plot and his ruthless treatment of the plotters show that he has changed from the earlier plays in which he appeared.)

When the Chorus reappears, he describes the country's dedication to the war effort – "They sell the pasture now to buy the horse." The chorus tells the audience, "We'll not offend one stomach with our play", a humorous reference to the fact that the scene of the play crosses the English Channel.

The Chorus appears again, seeking support for the English navy: "Grapple your minds to stern age of this navy", he says, and notes that "the ambassador from the French comes back / Tells Harry that the king doth offer him / Katharine his daughter."

At the siege of Harfleur, Henry utters one of Shakespeare's best-known speeches, beginning "Once more unto the breach, dear friends..."

Before the Battle of Agincourt, victory looks uncertain, and the young king's heroic character emerges in his decision to wander around the English camp at night, in disguise, so as to comfort his soldiers and determine what they really think of him. He agonizes about the moral burden of being king, noting that a king is only a man. Before the battle, Henry rallies his troops with the famous St Crispin's Day Speech (Act IV Scene iii 18-67), referring to "we few, we happy few, we band of brothers".

Katharine learns English from her gentlewoman Alice in an 1888 lithograph by Laura Alma-Tadema. Act III, Scene iv.

Following the victory at Agincourt, Henry attempts to woo the French princess, Catherine of Valois. This is difficult because neither speaks the other's language well, but the humour of their mistakes actually helps achieve his aim. The action ends with the French king adopting Henry as his heir to the French throne and the prayer of the French queen, "that English may as French, French Englishmen, receive each other, God speak this Amen." ---86--

Before the play concludes, however, the Chorus reappears and ruefully notes, of Henry's own heir's "state, so many had the managing, that they lost France, and made his England bleed, which oft our stage hath shown" – a reminder of the tumultuous reign of Henry VI of England, which Shakespeare had previously brought to the stage in a trilogy of plays: *Henry VI Part 1*, *Henry VI Part 2*, and *Henry VI Part 3*.

As with all of Shakespeare's serious plays, also a number of minor comic characters appear whose activities contrast with and sometimes comment on the main plot. In this case, they are mostly common soldiers in Henry's army, and they include Pistol, Nym, and Bardolph from the *Henry IV* plays. The army also includes a Scot, an Irishman, and an Englishman, and Fluellen, a comically stereotyped Welsh soldier, whose name is an attempt at a phonetic rendition of "Llywelyn". The play also deals briefly with the death of Falstaff, Henry's estranged friend from the *Henry IV* plays, whom Henry had rejected at the end of *Henry IV, Part 2*.

Sources: Shakespeare's primary source for *Henry V*, as for most of his chronicle histories, was Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*; the publication of the second edition in 1587 provides a *terminus post quem* for the play. Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Illustrious Families of Lancaster and York* appears also to have been consulted, and scholars have supposed that Shakespeare was familiar with Samuel Daniel's poem on the civil wars. An earlier play, the *Famous Victories of Henry V* is also generally believed to have been a model for the work.[3]

Criticism and analysis

The Battle of Agincourt from a contemporary miniature Readers and audiences have interpreted the play's attitude to warfare in several different ways. On the one hand, it

seems to celebrate Henry's invasion of France and valorises military might. Alternatively, it can be read as an anti-war portrayal.[4]However, the play likely will remain beyond the dichotomy of pro- and anti-war, as it presents a fuller picture of the subject than either of these perspectives quite allows. Shakespeare makes apparent the misery and corruption of war alongside the glory and high emotion which makes it such a complex theme for art.

Some critics connect the glorification of nationalistic pride and conquest with contemporary English military ventures in Spain and Ireland. The Chorus directly refers to the looked-for military triumphs of Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, in the fifth act. Henry V himself is sometimes seen as an ambivalent representation of the stage machiavel, combining apparent sincerity with a willingness to use deceit and force to attain his ends.[5]

Other commentators see the play as looking critically at the reason for Henry's violent cause.[6] The noble words of the Chorus and Henry are consistently undermined by the actions of Pistol, Bardolph, and Nym. Pistol talks in a bombastic blank verse that seems to parody Henry's own style of speech. Pistol and his friends, thus, show up the actions of their rulers.[7] Indeed, the presence of the East cheap characters from *Henry IV* has been said to emphasise the element of adventurer in Henry's character as monarch.[8]

The American critic Norman Rabkin described the play as a picture with two simultaneous meanings.[9] Rabkin argues that the play never settles on one viewpoint towards warfare, Henry himself switching his style of speech constantly, talking of "rape and pillage" during Harfleur, but of patriotic glory in his St Crispin's Day Speech.

The play's ambiguity has led to diverse interpretations in performance. Laurence Olivier's 1944 film, made during the Second World War, emphasises the patriotic side, ignoring the fact that the enemy of the play, the French, were in fact allies in that conflict,[b] while Kenneth Branagh's 1989 film stresses the horrors of war. A 2003 Royal National Theatre production featured Henry as a modern war general, ridiculing the Iraq invasion.

In recent years, there has been scholarly debate about whether or not Henry V can be labelled a war criminal.[10] Some denounce the question as anachronistic, arguing that contemporary legal terminology can't be applied to historical events or figures like those depicted in the play.[11] However, other scholars have pushed back on this view. For instance, Christopher N. Warren looks to Alberico Gentili's *De armis Romanis*, along with *Henry V* itself, to show how early modern thinkers (including Shakespeare) themselves were using juridical approaches to engage with the past.[12] As a result, Warren argues, the question of whether Henry V was a war criminal is not only legitimate, but also "historically appropriate."[13]

A mock trial of Henry V for the crimes associated with the legality of the invasion and the slaughter of prisoners was held in Washington, DC in March 2010, drawing from both historical record and Shakespeare's play. Titled "The Supreme Court of the Amalgamated Kingdom of England and France", participating judges were Justices Samuel Alito and Ruth

Bader Ginsburg. The outcome was originally to be determined by an audience vote, but due to a draw, it came down to a judges' decision. The court was divided on Henry's justification for war, but unanimously found him guilty on the killing of the prisoners after applying "the evolving standards of the maturing society". Previously, the fictional "Global War Crimes Tribunal" ruled that Henry's war was legal, no non-combatant was killed unlawfully, and Henry bore no criminal responsibility for the death of the POWs. The fictional "French Civil Liberties Union", who had instigated the tribunal, then attempted to sue in civil court. The judge concluded that he was bound by the GWCT's conclusions of law and also ruled in favour of the English. The Court of Appeals affirmed without opinion, thus leaving the matter for the Supreme Court's determination.

King Lear

Lear himself is the chief figure of the plot. The consequences of what he does at the very outset of the play, exercise a considerable influence upon him as well as upon others. Lear is, as he reveals about himself. "... a very foolish fond old man, fourscore and upward, nota hour more nor less." This fact must be borne in mind, as it makes one thing obvious, viz., there is no scope for the development of the character. The leading features of Lear can e discerned and thereafter it may be observed with interest how a peculiar change in his life and circumstances would affect the character of this man. The transformation eventually results into Lear's insanity. E. I. Fripp observes : "He is a titanic figure, vast in his presence and authority, in his explosions of wrath and terrific vehemence of speech....his overwhelming grief and desperate yearnings, and at last, his utter humility and sweetness. He is on a scale with the tempest which he defies, and with Supernatural Flowers which cast him down and then raise him to a new majesty." Let state us study Lear's mind, and we shall find that from first to last his mental state is one which is more or less diseased. His nature is headstrong and imperious and his mind is invested with an extraordinary vigour. The paradox of his character is that we may be marked with sufficient interest that his rule has been despotic and those around him are inspired by fear rather than love. If this idea is accepted that Lear is nothing more than infirm old man, whose shallow mind and feeble power of judgement pass into raving madness as a result of the iniquitous treatment he receives at the hands of his ingrate daughters, Act I of the drama would appear but a gross improbability. The moment we see his mind in a state of unsoundness, that could be made acute merely by provocation and suffering, we are convinced of the events and hence improbability, as such, vanishes. Coleridge rightly terms Lear's trial of his daughters' love as a mere "silly trick". Dr. Bucknil observes:

"Does it not lead us to conclude that from the very first the King's mind is off its balance; that the partition of the kingdom, involving inevitable feuds and wars, is the first act of his developing insanity; and that the manner of its partition, the mock-trial of his daughters' affection, and its tragical denouement, is the second act of his madness"? The great mind, so vigorous in its mad ravings, with such clear insight into the heart of man that all the pretty coverings of pretence are stripped off in its wild eloquence, not only is unable

to distinguish between the most forced and fulsome flattery and the genuineness of deep and silent love; it cannot even see the folly of assuming to apportion the three exact and pre-determined thirds of the kingdom according to the professions made in answer to the 'silly trick', cannot even see that after giving away two-thirds the remainder is a fixed quantity which cannot be more or less according to the warmth of the professions of his youngest and favourite daughter; a confusion not unlike the account the subsequently gives of his own age – 'fourscore and upwards, not an hour more nor less' ...Lear's treatment of Kent; his ready threat in reply to Kent's deferential address, which in the words of true devotion, only looks like the announcement of an expostulation; his passionate interruptions and reproaches; his attempted violence, checked by Albany and Cornwall, and finally the cruel sentence of banishment, cruelly expressed; all these are the acts of a man in whom passion has become a disease. In the interview with France and Burgundy, the seething passion is with difficulty suppressed by the rules of decorum and kingly courtesy. To Cordelia's entreaty that Lear would let the King of France know the simple truth of his displeasure, only the savage reply is given-

'Better thou

Hadst not been born, than not to have pleased me better' and he casts out his once loved daughter – the darling of his heart, the hope of his age – without his grace, his love, his benison.'

In regard to Lear's accomplishments, inner as well as outer, I cannot do better than summarize the most valuable views, described by Edmund Blunden:

Lear is a curious student and even at his worst times can approach his torture with the calm of a Harvey: 'Then let them anatomize Regan, see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hearts?' He is a lover of the English scene, and even as he points to the map he expresses it;

'With shadowy forests and with champions rich'd,

With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads.

He is a reader of the classics, and seems when he mentions 'the mystery of things' to have the little of Lucretius' poem in his system, his 'thunder bearer' and 'high-judging Jove' are of the old poets. In hunting hawking, archery tournament, the art of war and even football he has acquitted himself well and through his decline lights up at the thought of them. The magnificence of the English sportsman is presented in most affectionate though smiling fashion when, at the culmination of his tragedy, as he holds dead cordelia in his arms, Lear catches at a compliment to his mastery :

Lear. I killed the slave that was-a-hanging thee

Officer. 'Tis true, my lords, he did.

Lear. Did I not fellow?

I have seen the pay, with my good biting falchion,

I would have made them skip.

'Every inch a king' he has fallen short of perfection; but he has never fallen short of the desire for it, and under the punishment of fate and age and the wilderness he continues to 'have one part in his heart' that receives whatever may make his rule more equal, his feelings more imaginatively open to the problems of the unprivileged man. In brief, Lear is without doubting it further, as gifted and as generous a sovereign as ever could have the title of the King of Britain; but we should know so much without any illuminated addresses from Shakespeare.

It is a pity that Lear blinded by his rage puts himself entirely in the power of the two daughters whose characters he has never taken the trouble to understand. The colloquy at the end of Act I, sc. I, between Goneril and Regan show it very clearly that little good can be hoped from this arrangement. We learn later from Goneril's complaint that things are much worse. Lear is every hour flashing "into some fresh crime or other." This is probably an exaggerated description, but Lear's conduct in the very next scene shows that there must be some ground for complaint. He condescends to language, unbecoming his rank and strikes Oswald, his daughter's steward. We perceive, at the same time, some qualities in Lear, whereby he calls for our respect. He commands the loyalty and devotion of a man like Kent. He has a sincere and honest affection for his Fool "pretty knave" whom he not only treats with utmost tenderness,, but also accepts his most unpalatable gibes and sarcasms as to his folly. Besides enduring the ""poor boy's" biting remarks, he remains deeply affectionate to him:

"Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart

That's sorry yet for thee."

Lear would like his Fool to enter first in the hovel:

"In, boy : go first, You houseless poverty, -

Nay, get thee in." -

Lear has discerned it well that since Cordelia's departure, the Fool has pinned away. Despite noticing the neglect of Goneril's attendants, he has refrained from speaking, thinking that his own jealous curiosity was to blame rather than there was a purpose of unkindness. He also reveals that his treatment of Cordelia has been preying on his mind.

But just then he has begun to win your respect he acts as such a way as to lose much of the ground he has gained. Goneril's contact is bad and her language to the father passes the limits of decency, but is it such as to warrant all the terrible imprecations which he cast upon her? It is not until we find that he is conscious of the wrong he has done Cordelia, "I did her wrong" – I, and that we see him first kneeling to Regan for "raiment, bet and foot" -

then placed between the two (iniquitous ingrate daughters and tossed like a shuttle cock from one to other with insult and disdain, while wave after wave of passion sweets over his soul, that he at length wins us wholly to his side.

Lear, as a result of this most cruel treatment of his daughters, rushes out into the tumultuous storm, crying "I shall go mad". He has no other companion than his faithful fool. He hurls defiance against the pudder of the elements and here he becomes really great, a grand tragic figure, "every inch a king". For the first time now ,Lear, "very passionate, irritable and exacting old man, " takes stock of the past, and reflects upon the multitudinous problems of life and justice, his regret for having not done so in the days of his prosperity. He ponders persistently, his mind trembling on the verge of insanity, on human weakness and suffering, and learns from his own sorrows to be in communion with the poor houseless wretches. The struggle and the strain of contending emotions prove too much for his mind, enfeebled by old age and passion long uncurbed. Al the moment, when some relief is offered to him, be becomes altogether insane.

Lear, from time onward, is scarcely better than a lay figure. Again we see him, in progress of recovery, none-the-less harping on worldly wrong and justice. He recovers, but merely to be a shadow of him, a helpless old man clinging desperately to his daughter, whom he had denounced, but who loves and cherishes him in spite of all. His only ambition is to live with Cordelia and be contented to remain even in prison, knowing as he does that "upon such sacrifices the gods themselves throw incense". But when Cordelia departs from the world, wherefore should he live anymore?. His spirit flutters but in the cage of fleshy tabernacle. The only prop, that supports his life, is gone and he follows her to where "the rest is silence".

A comprehensive account of Lear's character, however, shall remain incomplete, without the inclusion of X-ray of his mind, performed by Hudson: " In the transition of Lear's mind from its first stillness and repost to its subsequent tempest and storm : in the hurried revulsions and alternations of feeling – the fast-rooted faith in filial virtue, the keen sensibility to filial ingratitude, the mighty hunger of the heart, thrice repelled, yet ever strengthened by repulse; and in the turning up of sentiments and faculties deeply imbedded beneath the incrustations of time and place;- in all this we have a retrospect of the aged sufferers whole life; the abridged history of a mind that has passed through many successive stages; each putting off the form, yet retaining and perfecting the grace of the proceeding.."

Cordelia

Cordelia is one of the noblest heroines of Shakespeare. She is incessantly kept before the mind of the audience, and her spirit seems to influence of entire tragedy. The impression left by her in one of a guardian angel of the play haunting our minds. Schlegel finds himself somewhat diffident: "Of the heavenly beauty of soul of Cordelia, pronounced in few words. , ' I will not venture to speak," Cordelia's part in the play is but slight. It is only

four times that she appears and hardly speaks a hundred lines altogether. In this reticence, I incline to think, lies the beauty and grandeur of her character; of whose paradox reveals her silence to be much more eloquent." Bradley observes: The character of Cordelia is not a masterpiece of invention or subtlety like that of Cleopatra; yet in its own way it is a creation as wonderful. Cordelia appears in only four of the twenty six scenes of ***King Lear***; she speaks- it is hard to believe it - scarcely more than a hundred lines: and yet no character in Shakespeare is more absolutely individual or more ineffaceably stamped on the memory of his readers … I am obliged to speak of her chiefly because the devotion she inspires almost inevitably obscures her part in the tragedy. This devotion is composed of two contrary elements, reverence and pity. The first, because Cordelia's is a higher nature than that of most, even of Shakespeare's heroines. With the tenderness of Viola or Desdemona she unites something of the resolution, power, and dignity of Hermione, and reminds us sometimes of Helena, sometimes of Isabella, though she has none of the traits which prevent Isabella from winning our hearts."

Though Cordelia is little seen and less heart, yet she, by the impression left by her, is ubiquitous. To prevent Cordelia as a meek saint would be a serious mistake. She has in her, more than a touch of her father. With all her sweetness and youthful elegance, she is as obstinate and a proud as her imperious father. In her juvenile fervour, "she answers uncalculatingly with pride to his pride, even as later she answers with pity to his misery." Accordingly to Granville Barker, to miss this likeness between the two is to miss Shakespeare's first important dramatic effect: the mighty old man and the frail child, confronted, and each unyielding:

"Lear. So young and so untender?
Cor . So young, my Lord, and true

Kent, who is evidently of her temper, seems to ask pity for her, but his chief concern is to warn the hot and hasty Lear against his own folly and consequences thereof. His aim is to emphasize as well as applaud her strength of mind:

"The Gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said."

She vindicates her case. The integrity of her nature is linked with her innate dignity. She has no traffic with bargaining. Burgundy to whom she replies with an acid sharpness, when her self-respect is put to defiance:

"Peace be with Burgundy!
Since that respect and fortune are his love
I shall not be his wife."

With respect, applause and delight, does France accept her?

"Fairest Cordelia, that is most rich, being poor;
Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd!
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:
But it lawful I take up what's cast away."

Now not even all the dukes of "Wat'rish Burgundy" can purchase "this unpriz'd precious main" of him. She Does voice her feeling but who would care to listen this 'still small voice' in the midst of turmoil and "non-committal growl" of Lear:

"The jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes
Cordelia leaves you…….
……..Love well our father;
To your professed bosoms I commit him:
But yet, alas! Stood I within his grace,
I would prefer him to a better place."

Candidates and reticence are excellently blended in her. That 'glib and oily art of flattery' is something extraneous to her nature. She is in fact rich for the very want of it. Is it not the magnetic charm of a loving heart – of which she has too much to 'heave into words' – that makes the Fool pine away in her absence? What makes Kent, clamped with 'cruel garters' peruse her letter, as if it were a page of the scripture? –

"Approach, thou beacon to this under globe,
That by they comfortable beams I may,
Peruse this letter."

By 'beacon' Kent means 'heavenly benediction,' the writer of that letter to him being a part of it. What is it that evokes from Gentleman the most beautiful and rapturous description of her?.

"……patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen
Sunshine and rain at once; her smiles and tears
Were like a better way: those happy smiles
That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to know
What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence?
As pearls from diamonds dropp'd.

In the Reconciliation Scene, the unfathomed depths of her ineffable noble nature are revealed to us. Her compassion, like that of Miranda and Desdemona, seems to embrace all suffering:

"Mine enemy's dog

Though he had bit me, should have stood that night

Against my fire."

How terrific indeed is tow watch "poor perud" with his 'thin helm' opposed 'the deep dread thunder' and 'the warring winds'?

Hudson observes: "Formed for all sympathies, moved by all tenderness, prompt for all duty, prepared for all suffering, we seem almost to hear her sighs and feel her breath as she hangs like a ministering spirit over her reviving father."

What she speaks to her father is still insufficient. Presumable she does not find speech itself simple of genuine enough for the expression of her deep

Heart. "A virgin delinquency is genuine and deep feeling" makes her shrink from verbal protestations. Love's best eloquence is when it disables speech."

It goes against her very nature to profane her feelings with exuberance of words. Her reply may be marked to Lear's "You have some cause, they have not."

"No cause, no cause."

It seems neither good fortune nor ill can stick to Cordelia herself; this is at once her strength and infirmity both. She says:

"For thee, oppressed King, am I cast down?

Myself could else out frown false fortune's frown

We are sure, she could do so. Thereafter, she falls into dumbness—into such dumbness as was her first undoing – and passed, quiet, from out sight. No more could the voice that was "ever soft gentle and low" be heart. To sum up, in Mrs. Jameson's words: "Amid the pictures of moral and physical wretchedness which harrow up the soil, the tender influence of Cordelia, like that of celestial visitant, is felt and acknowledged without being understood. Like a soft star that shines for a moment from behind a stormy cloud and the text is swallowed up in tempest and darkness, the impression it leaves is beautiful and deep but vague".

Goneril and Regan

The two unnatural daughters appear to us no less than personifications of cruelty and ingratitude. Whenever they appear on the state, "pure horror" reigns, as from the presence of "Gorgons" and Hydras and Chimaeras dire." Coleridge notes that Goneril an Regan do not appear often, so that the peculiar effect of horror which they produce is not mitigated, as it might be, by familiarity; and when they are present, " not a sentiment, not an image, which can give pleasure on its own account, is admitted."

The twin monsters, however, can be differentiated. Goneril is the stronger and more masculine spirit, while Regan is of a more feminine bearing. It is Goneril, who originates the joint plan of action by herself and Regan against Lear:

“The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash: then
Must we look from his age, to receive not alone the imperfections?
Of long-engraffed condition, but therewithal the unruly
waywardness that inform and choleric years bringwith them”
Goneril shows herself able to design as to carry out a resolute course of action. Regan’s eyes do not have “the fierce burning light” of Goneril’s – in fact, their expression seems generous: Lear says above her:

“No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse.
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give
Thee o’er to harshness: her eyes are fierce, but thine
Do comfort and not burn.”
While Cordelia is the personification of filial love, Goneril and Regan typify filial ingratitude. Goreril rules her mind and docile husband Albany:

“Let me still take away the harms I fear,
Not fear still to be taken: I know his heart.”

She despises him:

“…… I marvel our mild husband
Not met us on the way.”

She acts on her own initiative, without consulting him and hardly condescends to his remonstrance’s:

“Alb. ……. Whereof comes this?
Gon. Never afflict yourself to know more of it.”

She openly defies her husband, and calls him a “Mils-liver’d man”. She has no hesitation in the path she has chosen for herself. She listens to Lear’s imprecations unmoved and follows him to her sister, being apprehensive of an infirmity on the latter’s part, so as to counteract it by her presence. It is Goreril, who is resolute in keeping Lear out in the storm.

“ Tis his own blame; hath put himself from rest,
And must need taste his folly.”
To Gloucester she asks to “entreat him by no means to stay”. No less hideous and unnatural than her treatment of the old King, is her adulterous passion for Edmund. The moment, she conceives a passionate love for Gloucester’s illegitimate son, her wits are set to work to remove the obstacle of Albany’s existence. The news of Cornwall’s death at first alarms her. She is suspicious and apprehensive, lest Regan, now being free, should feel the same

passion as herself. She begins to ponder over the new prospect, how to get rid of Albany and Regan, so that the entire kingdom might be governed by Edmund and Goneril. She administers poison to Regan and leaves it till after the battle to dispose of Albany. This adulterous love for Edmund brings nemesis in its train. Her plans are exposes, as a consequence of which she ruthlessly takes away her own life.

Regan is more submissive and less iniquitous than Goneril non-the-less she is equally venomous and spiteful. She turns cruel even more than her husband Cornwall, that bloody wolf. In the midst of scuffling, she does not forget to tell Gloucester that his own son has betrayed him, and even as he faces her, blinded and bleeding, she sneers and jeers at him. She readily joins in Gonerils design, but she does not seem quite equal to the task of playing her part. She shrinks from Lear's curse:

"O the blest Gods! So will you wish on me
When the rash mood is on"
She tries to make some excuse for shutter Lear out in the storm"

"This house is little: the old man and his people
Cannot be well bewtow'd".
She, reassured by Goneril, becomes even more iniquities than her elder sister. It is Regan, who says in a final stroke: "What need one?"

Though Regan appears to have a gentler and more attractive a countenance than the more resolute Goreril, she delights in cruelty for cruelty's sake. While Goreril suggest the putting out of Gloucester's eyss, Regan is present at the act itself, plucking the beard of the old Earl and encouraging Cornwall:

"One side will mock another;th' other too."

It is with exultation that she informs Gloucester, of the treachery of Edmund. The spirit that is shown by her is slaying the servant, who has wounded her husband, would be admirable but only under other circumstances.

As for strength of purpose, Regan is inferior to her sister. Thou she suspects an intimacy in between Edmund and Goneril, she never thinks of taking concrete steps against her sister. But perhaps she reposes her trust in Edmund. Goneril by her very nature acts at once, without trusting anybody. Dowden distinguished these two sisters from each other thus " Goneril is the calk wielder of a pitiless force, the resolute initiator of cruelty. Regan is a smaller, shriller, fiercer, more eager piece of malice. The tyranny of the elder sister is a cold, persistent pleasure, as little affected by tenderness or scruple as the action of some crushing hammer; Regan's ferocity is more unmeasured, and less abnormal or monstrous … When, after Lear's terrible malediction, he rides away with his train, Goneril, who would bring things to an issue, pursues her father, determined to see matters out to the end. To

complete the horror they produce in us, these monsters are amorous. Their love is even more hideous than their hate. The wars of ---

"Dragons of the prime
That tares each other in their slime"

formed a spectacle less prodigious than their mutual blandishments and caresses. To the last Goneril is true to her character. Regan is dispatched out of life by her sister: Goneril thrusts her own life aside, and boldly enters the great darkness of the grave"

ROMEO AND JULIET

Romeo and Juliet as a typical Shakespearean tragedy:

Introduction

Analysing Shakespeare's tragedies, A.C.Bradley found that they conform to a certain broad pattern. The protagonist in the Shakespearean tragedy falls because of an inherent flaw in his character. Bradley terms it 'tragic flaw'. The fall is due not only to this factor but also to certain chance occurrences which frustrate all carefully laid plans. In some plays certain supernatural forces also wreak havoc. There are broad comic touches and farcical scene which alleviate unbearable tragic tension. Such *comic relief*is found in almost all the tragedies of Shakespeare. Finally, the Shakespearean tragedies never end on a depressing note. In spite of the pile of dead bodies on the stage, there is something heartening and cheerful at the end. Let us see how far these features are found in *Romeo and Juliet*

The tragic flaw of Romeo and Juliet:

The tidal passion of Romeo and Juliet is their tragic flaw. They know that they belong to families that are dead against each other. Yet, they do not and indeed cannot restrain themselves. Romeo says that he will take any risk and cross any sea, however turbulent it might be, in order to get at Juliet. Likewise, Juliet is swept off her feet by passion. She insists on Romeo arranging for their marriage at once. Another passion that brings about the tragedy is Romeo's strong bond of friendship with Mercutio. To avenge Mercutio's death, Romeo kills Tybalt and gets banished. From this spring all tragis developments

The play of Chance:

Friar Lawrence's well-known plans are all set at naught by chance occurrences. The messenger Friar John sent by Friar Lawrence to inform Romeo of Juliet's feigned death does not reach him because of the sudden outbreak of the plague. If Romeo had reached

the vault a little late or if Juliet had recovered from her unconscious state a little early, the tragedy would not have occurred. Because of these chance developments, the Friar's plan goes awry and tragedy works havoc without any impediment.

Comic Relief:

Tragedy would become unbearable if tragic scenes are arranged without any interruption. Hence tragedy is preceded by comedy. The gory death of Mercutio and Tybalt is preceded by the brilliant ribaldry of Mercutio and the Nurse. Romeo's remark the Death is keeping Juliet as his mistress is a flippant remark. It lightens the heart-break caused by Juliet's death.

The end of Romeo and Juliet not depressing:

Even though all the major characters die, there is no vacuum at the end. Sane and sensible people such as Benvolio, Prince Escalus and Friar Lawrence survive. We can hope that life will continue on an even tenor without any cataclysmic ups and downs as long as such sober people are in positions of power. Also death serves as an eye-opener to the Capulets and Montagues. They realize how hatred results only in destruction of most precious lives. The Capulets and the Montagues unite, with Capulet regarding the dead Romeo as his son-in-law and raising a golden statue for him and Montague reciprocation by viewing the dead Juliet as his daughter –in-law and raising a golden statue for her. The establishment of mutual harmony between the hitherto acrimonious families is a great gain. The play ends on this positive note.

Character Sketches

Romeo

Introduction:

A sketch of Romeo's character is divisible into two broad parts- his early life when he is crazy after the unresponsive Rosaline and his later inextricable intertwining with Juliet.

The First Phase:

Rosaline is never seen in flesh and blood in the play. But from Romeo's references, we can form a fairly vivid picture of her as a very charming but withdrawing type of girl, uninterested in cultivating sensual relationships. Romeo says that she has Diana's wisdom and sternly resists Cupid's arrows. However, Romeo does not and cannot give her up. He remains in the lonely forest near Verona or shuts himself in his room fruitlessly pining for her. His love is discordant and self-contradictory. This is seen in his definition of his love as 'feather of lead, cold fire, sick health' etc. It is insubstantial. Romeo calls it 'anything of nothing creates'. Romeo's friend Benvolio is a sane and sensible man. He predicts that

Romeo's craze for Rosaline will melt away if he looks at some other charming woman. The prediction does come true when he glimpses Juliet at a party.

Romeo electrified by meeting Juliet at a party:

Masking himself and accompanied by his friends, Romeo attends the banquet at Capulet's house. He loses his hear to Juliet, the moment he looks at her. He goes up to her and kisses her. He praises her in superlative terms. He eyes dazzle like the sun and stars. He says that she is a holy shrine and he a pilgrim. He tells her that he will take any risk in order to win her. He hates living long without her. He says that he will cross any sea, however turbulent it might be, in order to catch a glimpse of her. Juliet is attracted by his bravado. She asks him to fix up a date for their marriage. With the help of his friend and counsellor Friar Lawrence, Romeo and Juliet get married in the former's cell. All this happens at lightning speed.

The Turning- Point in Romeo's Life :

A fight breaks out between Romeo's friend Mercutio and his newly married wife Juliet's cousin Tybatt. Mercutio remarks that Tybalt is just a cat all whose nine lives can be destroyed by him at a stroke. The contemptuous remark provokes Tybalt into killing Mercutio at a flash. Romeo cannot brook this. He blames himself that love for Juliet has made him effeminate. On behalf of the dead Mercutio, Romeo fights with Tybalt and kills him in a trice. Prince Escalus, a stickler for discipline, banished Romeo from Verona. This is the origin of Romeo's later downfall and death.

Romeo's orientation toward Death:

When banished, Romeo thinks of committing suicide. He cannot think of positive means of regarding his original status. He cannot bear separation from his newly married wife. Friar Lawrence chides him for being womanly. He arranges for Romeo spending the night with Juliet and leaving for Mantua the next morning.

Romeo's Death

Romeo's death is due to his rashness. He believes his servant Balthazar's report that Juliet has committed suicide. He does not care to ascertain the truth. He kills Paris in a rash fight. Next, lamenting that Death has taken away Juliet to keep her as his paramour, he consumes deadly poison and throws himself dead by Juliet's side – all rash acts. The death of this pilgrim to the shrine of love unites the erstwhile hostile Capulet's and Montague's.

Juliet

Introduction

Juliet hails from the Capulet family which is inimical to Romeo's Montague family. Though only fourteen, she displays a rare degree of maturity, sobriety and steadfastness.

Juliet's pertness

Meeting the masked Romeo at the banquet in her house, she is thrilled by his fearlessness. She is stormed when he kisses her and tells her that for sake he will take any risk and cross any sea, however turbulent it might be. She loses her heart to him then and there. She is not coquettish. It is not her intention to flirt with him and spend the time in a care-free manner. She insists on Romeo's making necessary arrangements for their marriage at once. She hates artificial reservations. She tells him that, if he so desires, she can pose as reserved and stand-offish.

Juliet's passion

Juliet displays her passion unabashedly. In the balcony scene, she is unwilling to part with him even for a while. She compares herself to a boy who ties his pet bird with a string, pulling the bird back to himself and never allowing it to stray far away. She fidgets when the Nurse takes more than three hours to bring information from Romeo regarding when and where to meet him to get married to him. She feels that messengers of love should not be human beings but thoughts which travel faster than sunbeams. After marrying Romeo, she thirsts for consummation. She blushes and wishes the darkness of night to come and conceal her blush, just as a hood is placed on a hawk's head to enable it to bear sun-light.

Juliet's chastity

When Tybalt is killed by Romeo, Juliet's firsts reaction is to blame Romeo. She compares him to beautifully bound book but whose contents are abominable. The very next minute she changes her attitude and says the Romeo is thoroughly good-natured and incapable of villainy. She attribute Romeo's murder of Tybalt to the latter's aggressiveness.

Juliet's sterling chastity is seen in her staunch refusal to marry Count Paris even though her father threatens to drive her out and make her beg for food in the streets. She tells Friar Lawrence that she is prepared to take any risk in order to escape having to marry Paris. She will jump down tall towers, sleep in charnel-houses or lie with a deed body and cover herself with its shroud, and step through nestling snakes if thereby she can evade Paris's approaches. She takes the Friar's drug, knowing fully well that it may misfire and

that she may get suffocated in the vault. She follows this dangerous method only because there is no other alternative for her to get rid of Paris.

Juliet's Death

Romeo mistakes Juliet's drugged state for death and commits suicide by taking a dreadful poison. Recovering from her unconscious state a few minutes later, she is horrified at the sight of Romeo's dead body. She spurns the Friar's suggestion to her to live safely in his cell. She kisses Romeo's poison-smeared lips and, stabbing herself, falls down dead by Romeo's side. The union that life denied them is theirs after death- it is their spiritual union in heaven. After the death of the lovers, the hitherto hostile Capulet's and Montague's join together and celebrate love, as is seen in their erecting the golden statues of Romeo and Juliet jointly in the central part of Verona. Though the lovers die, their love is immortal.

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

The play opens in front of a tavern in the English countryside, where Christopher Sly, a drunken beggar, goes toe-to-toe with the tavern hostess over Sly's disorderly conduct. Sly passes out on the ground and, when a local Lord happens along, he decides to teach Sly a lesson. Sly is carried to the Lord's nearby mansion, where he's dressed up like a nobleman and convinced that he is a "mighty Lord." Sly tries to hook up with the kid pretending to be his wife, but gets shot down. A group of traveling actors then perform a play in Sly's bedroom.

This inset or, play-within-the-play, is set in Padua, Italy, where Lucentio, a rich guy from Verona (along with his trusty servant Tranio), arrives to top off his education. Tranio and Lucentio end up eavesdropping on a little family drama that's happening nearby. Baptista Minola, his daughters Kate and Bianca, and Bianca's suitors bicker about marriage. Baptista lays down the law and says that Bianca's admirers should scram – Bianca's not getting married until Baptista can get Kate off his hands. The suitors whine that this is no fair because Kate is a total *witch* and nobody wants to marry her.

Lucentio, our little eavesdropper, falls in love with Bianca on the spot and hatches a plan to get with her. He dresses up like a tutor named Cambio so he can infiltrate Baptista's house, Trojan horse style, and be near Bianca. The servant Tranio dresses up like Lucentio.

Petruchio, another rich bachelor from out of town, arrives at his pal Hortensio's house with his servant Grumio. Hortensio is in lust with Bianca and convinces Petruchio that he needs to marry Kate so Bianca will be available. Petruchio is all over this plan – Baptista has lots of money so Kate will come with a big ol' dowry. Petruchio also sees himself as a "shrew tamer," so he's not worried about Kate's attitude. Hortensio disguises himself as Licio the music tutor, so he too can get close to Bianca.

The ridiculously old suitor, Gremio, has hired Cambio (really Lucentio in disguise) to tutor Bianca as a gift to Baptista. Hortensio, Lucentio, Gremio, Tranio, and Petruchio meet up and decide that they will finance Petruchio's quest to "wed and bed" Kate. That settled, they head over to Baptista's house, where the "tutors" successfully gain access to Bianca. On the way, they stop at a bar for a round of shots.

Baptista immediately agrees to Petruchio's plan to marry Kate, as she's a total pain. When Kate and Petruchio meet, all hell breaks loose as they fight it out in a kind of verbal *Friday Night Smackdown*. Katherine totally rejects Petruchio, but she's as quiet as a mouse when Petruchio tells her dad that she's interested him and wants to get hitched. She also says nothing when Petruchio lies that Kate couldn't keep her hands and lips off of him when they were alone. A wedding date is set.

That being settled, Baptista agrees to hand over Bianca to the highest bidder, Tranio (who is disguised as Lucentio). Meanwhile, Hortensio (as Licio) and Lucentio (as Cambio) "tutor" Bianca – they both declare their love but Bianca plays it cool and doesn't commit to either man.

On Sunday, everyone comes together for the wedding of Kate and Petruchio, who arrives late and is dressed in a wild, totally inappropriate outfit. Petruchio causes a big scene during the ceremony and then drags Kate off to his house before they can go to the reception for a slice of cake. Kate's family and friends shrug it off a little too quickly and party on without her. Kate is made miserable the second they hit the road and, when they arrive at Petruchio's house, she's starved, deprived of sleep, and psychologically manipulated by Petruchio, who has launched a campaign to "tame" Kate of her evil ways by acting like an even bigger shrew than Kate.

Back at Baptista's, Bianca and Lucentio get rid of Hortensio by making out in front of him. Hortensio decides Bianca is not such a nice girl, so he will marry the Widow instead. Tranio then finds a random old guy and tricks him into pretending to be Lucentio's father, who is needed to sign some contracts before Lucentio can marry Bianca.

Meanwhile, Petruchio continues to mess with Kate's head. They set off for Padua to attend Bianca's wedding and Petruchio makes her wear dirty old rags instead of the clothes the tailor made for her. On the way to Padua, Kate finally breaks down and agrees to go along with whatever Petruchio wants from her. When Petruchio wants to pretend the sun is the moon she says fine. When Petruchio pretends an old man on the road is a young virgin, she plays along with that, too.

The old man turns out to be Lucentio's *real* dad, Vincentio. So the crew heads over to Lucentio's house. Meanwhile, Lucentio and Bianca have run off to elope (at St. Luke's church), while Baptista signs documents with the fake Vincentio. The real Vincentio shows up on the scene and looks like a madman. Before he can be carted off to the clink or the

asylum, Lucentio and Bianca show up and apologize for being the worst kids *ever*. All disguises are removed and true identities are revealed. Oh well, the fathers decide. Let's have some cake and celebrate the marriage of Lucentio and Bianca. Kate and Petruchio have been watching the whole thing go down. They make out on the street and then head in to join the party.

At the banquet, people sit around doing what they do best in this play (talking smack) and the guys make a bet to see whose wife is most obedient. Petruchio wins when Kate runs out and delivers a long speech about her obedience to her Petruchio. Kate fondles his feet and then they make out again before running off to bed.

GENERAL STUDY
Elizabethan Theatre and Audience

<u>Shakespearean Theatre and Audience</u>

Of Shakespeare, his theatre and his audience it could truly be said:

"The drama's laws, the drama's patrons give
For we hat live to please, must please to live"

Shakespeare's plays have been conditioned a great deal by the stage that he wrote for and the world that he lived in. The Elizabethan audience craved for noise and outcry, for pomp and pageantry and Shakespeare provided them with plenty of it in every one of his plays. They liked broad jests and puns ad word-jugglery. Shakespeare did not hesitate to let them have their fill of the same.

Shakespeare's plays were mostly staged at the Globe and Black Friars as he was mostly connected with them. The typical Elizabethan theatre was a wooden structure, hexagonal outside and round within. The stage and the boxes by the walls were covered. The rest of the theatre was open to the sky. The plays were staged by daylight. The stage was divided into four parts. The front stage projected far into auditorium. This part of the stage served as a street or battlefield or garden and was open to the sky. The back stage was the part behind the pillars. It served as a large room, a palace hall; an office or a tavern as required. The wall of this part of the stage was hung with tapestry, black for tragedy and blue for comedy. At the back of the two side walls were the entrance and exit for the actors. There was a screened inner stage which served as the bedroom scene in "Othello" and "Macbeth". It also served as Juliet's tomb and as a Prospero's cell. Over the inner stage was the balcony or the upper stage. It served as the window in Shylock's house from which Jessica threw the casket on the street. It also served as Cleopatra's monument to which the dying Antony was raised to kiss Cleopatra farewell.

The audience were made up of the groundlings in the pit and those in the galleries around very much like the galleries in a modern circus. The rich used the boxes, while the

young gallants sat on seats provided at the edge of the stage itself. There was no curtain for the Elizabethan stage and very little of moveable scenery. A scene therefore began with the entrance of the actors and ended with their exit. The deed bodies had to becarried off the stage in a funeral procession. In ***Julius Caesar Antony*** and others carry off the dead body of Caesar. Hamlet drags away the body of Polonius from the stage. At the end of the comedies, generally and particularly in *Much Ado About Nothing*orders are given to the pipers to strike a tune and all exeunt dancing. The fact that at the end of every scene the players walked off the stage made the scenes end tamely. A scene could not be worked to a crisis. Two other characteristics of the Shakespearean stage deserve to be referred to. There was no painted backdrop. Shakespeare made good this lack with descriptive passages poetic in appeal. This also helped quick changes of scenes. In *Antony and Cleopatra for* instance, there are as many as forty two scenes flitting all around the Mediterranean coast. This also helped a more rapid action than in a modern play. In spite of complicated plots any Elizabethan play could be staged in two hours.

Another significant fact about Elizabethan theatre that needs to be mentioned was that women's parts were played by boys. This explains why Shakespeare's plays do not contain many women. In the tragedies they remain mostly in the background and some of the women characters Portia, Nerissa, Jessica, Viola and Rosalind appear in the guise of men. It is difficult, however, to see how boy actors could have done full justice to women characters like Lady Macbeth or Cleopatra.

This brings us to Shakespeare's audience and their tastes. Shakespeare pre-eminent consideration was success on the stage. Shakespeare quite often wrote down to the playgoers and gave them what they wanted. The people were generally crude and rough. The came to the theatre to have a laugh at the antics of the clown, the discomfiture of the pompous or the rough and tumble of tavern brawls. The enjoyed the scenes of bloodshed and violence. They wanted a laugh even in the middle of a tragedy. Shakespeare, therefore, had to bring in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as also the grave-diggers ain Hamlet, the drunken porter in ***Macbeth,*** the clown in Othello and the fool in King Lear. Shakespeare, also brought in the wrestling match in " As you like it", the rapier duels in "*Romeo and Juliet*" and "*Hamlet*" the sword fight in " Macbeth". He had to provide good songs and singers in his plays. The Elizabethan audience was also superstitious. They believed in ghosts, witches and fairies. They also believed in supernatural happenings as in "*Julius Caesar*".

The average Elizabethan went to the theatre for an escape from the sordid realities of life into the world of romance and laughter. Shakespeare transported his audience into such a world on the wings of his imagination.

Middleton Murry in his book on Shakespeare gives us a detailed description of the Elizabethan audience. "Nearly every country gentleman great or small went up to London to read a little law at one of the Inns of Court to equip himself for his duties as justice of the

Peace and manager of his own estates. They were the staples of the better class audience of the players. Murry also refers to the gentlemen of the court and the captains and soldiers temporarily out of employment". He also mentions that "thechief nuisance of the stage was the gallant on the stag e". The audience with which Shakespeare had to come to terms was not an audience of aristo crafts but of the common folk. If they had a fault at all, it was that of uncritical catholicity of tastes. It was in fact the pit that above all demanded the poetic drama as well as horseplay mingled with vulgar wit.

Bradley concludes his Oxford lecture on the Shakespearean theatre as follows: "Shakespeare neither resisted the wishes of his audience nor gratified them without reserve. He accepted the type of drama that he found and developed it without altering its fundamental character. And in the same way , in particular matters, he gave the audience what it wanted, but in doing so gave it what it never dreamed of"

Shakespearean Tragedies

Shakespeare's tragedies conform greatly to the Greek tradition except in one respect, in introduction of comic relief. The Greek tradition expects a tragedy to excite the emotions of the pity and terror which in the end should be resolved by catharsis, reconciliation of man to his fate, with the satisfying glorification of the soul of man. The Shakespearean tragedy like Greek tragedy does not leave behind a feeling of depression. It soothes and strengthens man's belief in himself and in his destiny.

It will be well to remember, however, that Shakespeare wrote his tragedies for the Elizabethan stage and audience. He presented themes essentially sensational and often melodramatic, as Nicoll has pointed out. The excitements are such as to rouse the most apathetic audience. Macbeth has its witches, its ghosts an apparition – its murder in a dark chamber, its drunken porter, its sleep-walking Lady Macbeth. In Hamlet we have the ghost, the killings, the play within a play and the grave-diggers. But Nicoll concludes, 'Obviously this is only the outward framework'. Beyond and within this external sensationalism, Shakespeare has placed a more subtle, a more poetical and a less tangible tragic spirit. In discussing Shakespeare's tragic vision, therefore, we must primarily concern ourselves with this inner or higher tragedy. In Shakespeare's tragedies there is generally one hero, a conspicuous person who stands above others in a high degree. Hamlet is a prince, Lear, a king, Macbeth is of the royal family and a brave general, as is Othello. There are, however, the exceptions concerning the fate of two, the hero and the heroine, in Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet' and "Antony and Cleopatra". But a Shakespearean tragedy as Bradley points out, 'is essentially a tale of suffering and calamity conducing to death". Macbeth after the murder suffers the tortures of Hell. Othello is racked with jealousy for the greater part of the play. Lear goes raving mad. Hamlet's soul is torn within with feigned and spasmodic real madness.

But in as much as the fall of the hero leads to cataclysmic convulsions in the state, it produces a sense of the powerlessness of man and the omnipotence of fate. This is one way in which Shakespeare ushers in an element of university in his tragedies.

The tragic hero is a character built on a grand scale. He is a person of high degree and an exceptional nature. But he has a fixation, a habit of mind, which works itself into a terrible force. Bradley refers to this state as the tragic flaw. Macbeth has vaulting ambition and Hamlet, a noble indecisiveness. Othello is credulous and rash. Lear suffers from the follies of old age. This error of the tragic hero in an essentially alien or hostile environment leads him to his doom. In this sense the tragic hero shapes his own tragedy. At the same time, however, we find at the close of the tragedy that it is not only evil that is expelled, but also much that is good and admirable. Along with evil, the good is also destroyed. In *Othello,* lago is punished. But Desdemona and Othello are dead. In *Hamlet and Lear*, the good is destroyed along with the evil. There is in fact no tragedy in the expulsion of Evil; the tragedy is that it involves waste of Good.

NicolL points out that Shakespeare's tragedies are not mere tragedies of character. They are tragedies of character and destiny. The here, we find, is a tragic misfit in his environment. It is destiny which places him in such a situation. Macbeth has vaulting ambition. That ambition is lighted and fuelled by the witches into the wild flames that consume him. Othello is placed in a situation that calls for calm detached thinking which capacity in a situation that calls for calm detached thinking, which capacity he has not. Hamlet finds himself where resolute action is called for. But he is given to brooding and indecisiveness. Othello in Hamlet's place or Hamlet in Othello's place would lead to no tragedy at all. The flaw in the character of the hero therefore proves a fatal flaw only in the peculiar circumstances in which cruel Destiny pas placed him.

There are, moreover, some other conflicting factors that work upon the character and circumstances of the tragic hero. Macbeth suffers some hallucinations. Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep. Lear is half insane in his old age to begin with. The supernatural element that affects the heroes is not mere illusion. The witches in *Macbeth*and the ghost in *Hamlet*are objective entities. These elements, however, are used only to confirm the inner worthiness of the heroic mind. The ghost that Brutus sees at Philippi is but an expression of his sense of failure. The ghost is Hamlet only strengthens the suspicions already there in his mind. Even the witches in Macbeth may be said to be symbolic of the vaulting ambition within his soul. But the element of chance and accident plays a more decisive role in the development of the tragedy. Desdemona dropping her handkerchief, at just the critical moment, Juliet not waking up from her sleepis significant instances of chance working against the hero or heroine. Such instances, however, occur only when the action is too far a advanced.

The conflict in Shakespeare's tragedies is both external and internal. It may be noticed that in the earlier tragedies the conflict is more external than internal. In the love

tragedies of 'Romeo *and Juliet' and Antony and Cleopatra"*the conflict is more external than internal. Destiny plays a dominant part. In the historical tragedies again in *Richard III and Richard II, inJulius Caesar and in Coriolanus*, the external conflict plays a greater part, though the tragic ending is brought about both by the tragic flaw and hostile destiny. In the four great tragedies, however, the internal conflict in the hero plays a dominant and significant role. The spectacle of suffering by the hero is terrible and heart-rending and arouses of emotions of pity and terror as called for by Aristotle.

It may be noted that in the four greattragedies the tragic hero, just before his death, is granted a flash of what might have been. He appears at peace with himself and faces death with a sane and clear mind. A true conception of their own actions, painful as that may be, sheds light into their souls. Macbeth before he meets Macduff in the fight, in which he is killed, reflects ruefully on what might have been friends, the esteem of peers and the happy life which by him own actions he has lost. Othello regains his dignity and nobility just before he dies. A sort of calm descends on the tragic hero very much in the manner of the great Greek tragedy. It is this calm that the tragic hero attains before his end that gives the audience or the reader a sense of satisfaction and not of defeat. Man sees his destiny as glorious in the context of the immensity of space, the infinity of time and the mystery of life.

Women in Comedies & Tragedies

Women in Shakespeare's plays

The range and variety of women characters in Shakespeare tempts most critics to assert that Shakespeare has comprehensively covered the entire gallery of women in his plays and that his portraits of women have never been surpassed. Critics have also taken great pains to classify his heroines. Mrs. Jameson's classification may be accepted as briefer as and simpler than most others. The common sense classification, however, would be differentiate them as clever and assertive like Portia in 'the Merchant of Venice', Beatrice in 'Much ado About Nothing' and Rosaling in ' As You Like It'. The next group will be the loving and fanciful like Juliet, Helena, Viola, Ophelia and Miranda. In the third group would come the tragic heroines, Desdemona and Cordelia, even Hero in *Much Ado AboutNothing as* also Hermione. The last group would comprise aggressive and dominant creatures like Lady Macbeth, Goneril and Regan and Cleopatra.

Women who stand out for their cleverness, their assertiveness and who come out unscathed from the conflicts in which they are involved are the favourites among Shakespeare's heroines. Among these may be included Viola, Beatrice and Rosalind of Shakespeare's most brilliant comedies, as also Portia in 'The Merchant of Venice". These glittering heroines, bright, beautiful, and witty, always hold in front of the stage. They achieve the purpose by their practical wisdom and single mindedness. Mrs.Jameson points out that, Beatrice is not just a high-spirited witty girl, but womanly in her tenderness and affection for Hero as well as her love for Benedick. In the final scenes of the play Beatrice

displays the deeper and finer qualities of her nature. The next most loveable of Shakespeare's heroines is Viola in *Twelfth Night.* The Viola who is loveable is not the Viola of the sentimental critics who see her as one who simply allows herself to be carried along by the stream of time and events to happiness at the end. The loveable Viola is more the character said to have been portrayed by the great Ellen Terry in her prime. Viola is hearty, though not heartwhole. In her scenes with Orsino, instead of very nearly betraying herself, she cleverly drops hints, the most blatant of which is "I am all the daughters of my father house".

We see Viola always as shrewd and sure of herself. She understands quickly that Olivia has fallen in love with her disguise and say to herself: 'Disguise, I see: thou are wickedness". She is able to hold her own in her encounters with Feste and Malvolio as with Olivia. It is only when she is face d with having to fight duel with Sir Andrew that she betrays her womanly weakness Rosalind, displays her love and her womanliness in her scenes with Oriando.

In the second grouping of Shakespeare's women, we see Helena in A Midsummer Night's Dream as a passive and sentimental young woman. Lysander says of Helena that she "Devoutly dotes, dotes in Idolatry" on Demetrius. When Demetrius tells her that he hates her she cries out.

"And even for that do I love you the more
I am your spaniel"

Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*is passionate, constant and self-sacrificing. Love has transformed her. But the physical basic of love does, in no way, make her less pure or modest. Even Portia, in *The Merchant of Venice*surrenders herself, her wealth and all to Bassanio who she has accepted as her lord and master. Even Portia, the wife of Brutus who assists her right to share her husband's thoughts and worries, kills herself unable to bear the separation from Brutus.

Ophelia in *Hamlet*, like *Hero in Much Ado* shows herself passive in love and pathetic in her helplessness. Miranda in 'The Tempest' is loving and fanciful, but a passive character in the play.

It is such women characters that lent credence to the contention of some critics that Shakespeare's female characters are inferior to his men. Of all Shakespeare's tragic heroines, Desdemona evokes out sympathy the most. Desdemona is described as:

"A maiden never bold:
Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
Blush's at herself"

In her extraordinary innocence she was 'Half the wooer' and almost invited Othello's courting and gave him all her love. Desdemona's love for Othello oversteps the brink of idolatry. She cannot bring herself to see any fault in him even when he strikes her publicly in his blind rage of jealousy. Emilia had been shocked by Desdemona's passive submission to Othello's brutality. Her docile reactions only show the strength of her love and the refinements of her nature. When Othello strangles her to death, her last words to Emilia who asks her who has killed her are

"Nobody; I myself, Farewell,
Command me to my kind Lord"

In Cordelia, we see passivity combined with pride. She is proud, she is obstinate and she is strong in mind. We see in Cordelia unadulterated tenderness and love with strength when occasion demands it. She has foresight and practical sense. She exercises the influence of a strong nature over others. But she is selfless. She does not see things from the standpoint of her own loss or gain.

Among the aggressive evil women in the gallery of Shakespeare's women characters, Lady Macbeth stands out as the Clytemnestra of English tragedy. She possesses a frightful determined will, and iron stability of resolve.

But this in the end proves her ruin. In self-reliance and in intelligence, she is superior to Macbeth as Portia is to Bassanio and Rosalind to Oriando. Her womanliness comes out in her last minute reluctance to kill Duncan in his sleep because she saw her father's face in his.

It is also to be seen in her tender concern for Macbeth to the last. She stands out in contrast to Goneril and Regan in that she suffers the compunctious visiting of Nature. The other two are seen as absolutely remorseless.

In the delineation of the characters of Goneril and Regan, however, Shakespeare appears to the content to assure that there are really incorrigibly wicked people. They are realists. They give their father the smooth speech which he wants of them. Goneril is a Schemer. Regan, but echoes Goreril. She appears to shrink from acting on her own. The two sisters are different even in their monstrous cruelty. Goneril is cruel with a method and purpose. Regan positively delights in the infliction of pain. Granville-Barker has pointed out how the devil of lust comes to match the devil of cruelty in the two women. In their separate but illicit love for one and the same man, Edmund, they become reckless, shameless and foolish.

The last to be considered among Shakespeare's women characters but certainly not the least of them is Cleopatra, daughter of the Ptolemy. Her ability to attract and hold men

like Pompey, Julius Caesar and Antony lies in her skilful wit and feminine changeableness. Enobarbus says of her:

"Age cannot wither her nor custom
Stale her infinite variety".

FOOLS AND CLOWNS

Clowns and Fools in Shakespeare's play

The fool or the clown plays an integral part in most of Shakespeare's plays. In Macbeth we have the drunken porter at the gate. His unconscious wit adds to the terseness of the drama. Among Shakespeare's fools, the best known are Touchstone and Feste and the fool in 'King Lear'. In Shakespeare, there are also the clowns who are unintentionally funny – like Bottom in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and Dogberry and Verges in 'Much Ado About Nothing'. As pointed out by Gordon, the true extremes of clowning were the rustic fool and the Court Jester. All the varieties are the mixtures of the two. "They were there to make the company or the audience laugh."

The Elizabethan audience, to be sure, was very fond of being tickled by the jokes of the clown. Shakespeare had to comply with their tastes. Shakespeare had to write a part for Will Kempe in his plays. He was the original of Dogberry in 'Much Ado' and Peter in "Romeo and Juliet". He probably took the part of Launcelot, Touchstone, Feste and of the grave-digger in Hamlet. Shakespeare's clown was, therefore, written with one eye on Kempe as Moliere's clowns were created for Scaramouche. Shakespeare's clown, however, were superior to those of other playwrights of his day, not only in their wit and humour, but also in the fact that they were human beings. It may be the clown or the fool is a direct descendant of the devil or the vice, the fun makers in the morality plays. There is also something of the court fool or jester in Shakespeare's fools. Olivia in Twelfth Night justifies the privileges of the fool saying that there was no harm in an avowed fool. Feste himself glorifies the fool with the words that he wears not motley in his brain. He further remarks 'Better a witty fool than a foolish wit. Viola also appreciates Feste in her comments: "This fellow is wise enough to play the fool: and to do that well, needs a kind of wit. Palmer in his criticism caps Viola's comment with the words "He will see things as they are, but without malice". Shakespeare's fools and clowns may be classified, according to Gordon as those who play with or who are played with, by words. Touchstone and Feste come under the first category. Dogberry and Verges and the hempen homes puns in ' A Midsummer Night's Dream' come under the second.

Shakespeare's fools generally appear as servants of principal characters. Touchstone is the servant of the Duke in 'As you like it'. Feste is a dependent of Olivia. The fool is invariably a love of creature comforts. Launcelot Gobbo complains that he is famished in the Jew's household. Feste is seen cringing for money. Sir John Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch are

drunkards and big eaters. They are also braggarts and cowards. The clowns are also shown indulging in pranks. They enjoy baiting as seen from the baiting of Malvolio by Feste and others. The clowns also indulge in vulgar jokes and word jugglery. This sometimes leads to sheer nonsensical talk as indulged in by Feste and the fool in 'Lear".

The fool as stated already plays an integral and significant function in Shakespeare's plays. He adds spice to the comedy by his humour and foolery. He provides dramatic relief as well as heightens the intensity of the tragic scenes in the tragedies. This heightening of the tragic effect is by the properly timed juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic. This is best seen in Antony and Cleopatra and King Lear. In the comedies, the fool frequently corrects the extra sentimentality of the romantic characters as does Feste in Twelfth Night and Touchstone in As You Like it. In Twelfth Night, Feste ridicules the ridiculously inflated grief of Olivia for her dead brother. He suggest to Duke Orsino that he should get his tailor to make his clothes of changeable taffeta to suit his quick changing romantic moods. "It is the clown's office to restore the equilibrium of life which is essence of comedy, whenever that equilibrium is too much disturbed".

The fool in Shakespeare sometimes performs the function of the chorus in Greek Tragedy. He frequently comments on the course of action and on the different characters as well as supplies the information necessary for a proper understanding of a play. If any character in the plays of Shakespeare may be said to express the view of the playwright, he is certainly the fool. The fool Shakespeare is not just a purveyor of wit and pranks. He is also a philosopher and a critic.

The true function of the fool, the clown or the clumsy rustics is to help bring out the ridiculous and the incongruous in the action of the play. Feste in "Twelfth Night" clashes with Malvolio who strongly disapproves of him. Feste plays a great part in the gulling and baiting of the pretentious and unfortunate steward. Feste acts as a goad in bringing out the pretentions of Malvolio. Feste is also shown crossing swords with Viola who comes in the guise of Cesario as an ambassador of love from Olivia. Feste, then appears as the boon companion of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in the caterwauling scene. Feste is seen at his best exposing the sentimentality of Olivia and Orsino.

In Shakespeare's plays we come across lasting types of ridiculous humanity who are not exactly fools or clowns. Topping the list of such characters is Sir John Falstaff. He is a great figure of fun. He is witty in himself and evokes the wit of others. He is irrepressible. Bottom, the weaver, is another such classic character. He is preposterously vain and ambitious to play all roles in 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. He is not at all perturbed when his head is transformed into an ass's head. He takes Titanic's talling in love with him as a matter of course. Dogberry and Verges, pompous fools parading their legal knowledge and wisely dodging dangers, are exquisite comic characters.

Shakespeare's fools are integral manifestations of his humour which is generally kindly and tolerant. Shakespeare laughs with a fool and the coxcomb and not at them. He at times, indulges in lash-like satire. Malvolio, cross-gartered and yellow-stocking with the eternal smile on his face, quoting repeatedly from Olivia's supposed love letter is a cruel satire on vanity and puritanism. Sometimes Shakespeare's humour can be grim and morbid as in the grave-digger's scene in "*Hamlet*". In *King Lear* the fool has been introduced in the most tragic situations not only to heighten the tragic effect by contrast but also to serve as the chorus of the play to kindly the sentiments of the audience.

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

Shakespeare's Sonnets have been for long looked upon as the secret key to the poet's loves.

"With this same key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart"

writes Wordsworth. Browning echoes Wordsworth's tribute. Shelley and Tennyson eulogize the sonnets in the same strain.

In the complete modern edition of Shakespeare's sonnets Dowden traces a fairly clear outline of that sector of Shakespeare's personal life during which he wrote the sonnets."A Young man, in poet's friend, beautiful and brilliant, is exposed to temptations. It is possible that his mother wants to see him married. The poet certainly wants it; he urges marriage upon his friend. First, Shakespeare urges the Fair Youth to 'perpetuate his beauty in offspring. If the fair youth refuses, the poet will fight against Time and Decay and confer immortality upon his friend by his verse.

This Fair Youth is eulogized by the poet as the pattern of Beauty, including both the male and female. Adonis and Aphrodite, even the Hermaphrodite principle of beauty,The image of Hermaphrodite in Ovid's *Metamorphoses must* have possessed the imagination of Renaissance literature. It is this image, projected in the Elizabethan theatre by the boy actors of women's parts which has given sensual substance to the cult of friendship and the tradition of the praise of lovely boys. Stephen Spender's speculation that the Fair Youth could well be Will Huges comes nearest the mark. It is right to presume therefore that the language of sonnets addressed to the Fair Youth, extravagant as it now seems, is the language of complement and passion. It cannot therefore be mistaken "for anything else than the expression of a friendship delicate enough to be wounded and manly enough to be outraged".

The Fair Youth has been variously identified as Henry Wriothesley. Earl of Southampton and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. Both these young men were Shakespeare's patrons, whose favour he sought. The internal evidence is against the Fair

Youth being either Southampton or Pembroke. R.L.Eagle argues that the lines in one of his sonnets can possibly refer only to a favourite boy actor. The lines are as follows:

> What is your substance, whereof are you
> That millions of strange shadows on you tend?

Oscar Wilde indulges in a fond fancy evoking before our vision the image of beautiful youth. Shakespeare loved the youth on the verge of idolatry. The sonnets are addressed to a particulars young man whose Personality for some reason seems to have filled the soul of Shakespeare with terrible joy and no less terrible despair.

Shakespeare however was involved not only with a fair youth but also with a dark lady. Dowden observes "Shakespeare at some time of his life was snared by a woman, the reverse of beautiful according to the conventional Elizabethan standard. Dark-haired ,dark –eyed , pale-cheeked, skilled in touching the virginal (a form of harpsichord), skilled also in playing on the heart of man, who could attract and repel, irritate and soothe join reproach with caress, a woman faithless to her vow in wedlock". Shakespeare praises the dark lady as a woman without beauty. She is voluptuous and clever, she is a coquette and she is cruel.

When the Dark Lady makes her delayed but most effective entry (in the 127th sonnet) one would almost think that Shakespeare's theatrical cunning had something to do with it. The process of introspection continues at a faster tempo and with ever-increasing intensity. The lady is depicted with grossly familiar equality, a bitter and bawdy ferocity. Her promiscuity is described in a language of indecent and unpoetic realism. The poet's perception that the Dark Lady is a whore makes him write in a moral tone far fiercer and deeper, and self-examination more searching than anything before. In the last couple of his 150th sonnet, the poet writes that he has loved the dark lady for her unworthiness. This, in turn, has infected him. It has made him unworthy. His unworthiness makes him worthy of her. In the next sonnet the poet admits in terms unusually religious for Shakespeare, that his love is betraying his soul.

The dark lady has been variously identified as Mary Fitton or even as a creature of Shakespeare's own invention. Critics like Sydney Lee believe that Shakespeare's fertile dramatic imagination was not content with borrowing the conventional portrait of cruel mistress from the Italian sonneteers. He went one step further and made her immoral as well as cruel. 'The dark lady' Says Nothrop Frye, ' is an incarnation of desire rather than of love'. Bernard Shaw in his play 'The dark lady of sonnets' had made Fitton the dark day. Shaw has rightly pointed out that the cruelty about which the poet writes is in the language of sexual passion. In this context, Stephen Spender asks the pertinent question. "Is not the poet's love-hate for the Dark Lady related to the disgust for physical sex which is a feature of the last plays and of *King Lear*?" We may then see in the idealised relationship of the poet with his friend a sublimation of sex, and an escape from that kind of relationship which leads to revulsion and disgust.

Oscar Wilde in his analysis of Shakespeare's sonnets finds in the poet's infatuation for W,H. a noble basis of artistic comradeship. Beyond this we see the language of Neo-Platonism. But the sonnets seem to oscillate between Neo-Platonism at one end and autobiography at the other. Shakespeare has become a slave to his mistress who, he finds, has also seduced the fair youth. The poet therefore cries out in anguish:

"Two loves I have of comfort and despair
Which like two spirits do suggest me still
The better angel is a man right fair
The worser spirit a woman, coloured ill".

The poet finally sinks to the lowest depths of self-degradation when he appeals to the dark lady to include him as her lover along with his friend.

We find in the sonnets an occasional autobiographical reference to a rival poet. Mesey finds internal evidence for this in the sonnets as in the phrases.

'the proud full sail', 'mighty line' and 'affable familiar ghost'

in support of his contention, to point to the rival poet as Marlowe. Pinto however opines that the rival poet referred to was Chapmen who also claimed Pembroke and Southampton as his patrons.

Studying the sonnets as a whole we find that as the sequence precedes the texture of the poems show a slowly increasing complexity. They become more introspective. The interest is often far more on the state of the mind than the object of his love or even the love itself. In the sixty-sixth sonnet Shakespeare writes 'tired with all these for restful death I cry'. Self –disgust and self-reproach are the usual tones of his introspection. The poet is bitter at the thought of age. He feels even more deeply the conviction of failure as a poet.

In the final analysis we can say with Wilson Knight. "The Mutual Flame in consuming the grossness of love attains a spiritual consummation dreamt by Dante in his "Divine Comedy". Such a sacred flame, doubtless, is burning behind the sonnets of Shakespeare.