The Language of Paradox in *Romeo and Juliet*

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[(essay date 1967) *In the following essay, Chang disputes criticism that considers love the primary concern of* Romeo and Juliet, *citing themes of time, death, and immortality as more important to the play.*]

Critical insight has foundered in the case of *Romeo and Juliet,*1 in part because critics restrict their readings to the level of understanding defined by the two choric sonnets, and in part because students of the play have misread Shakespeare's major artistic tool here, making it subserve their own penchant for analysis of character. For example, since Dowden, it has been commonly accepted that Shakespeare employs a low order of Petrarchanism in the first act to indicate the shallowness of young Romeo's conventionalized devotion to Rosaline.2 Petrarchan oxymorons tediously issue from the boy, when he is not playing the role of the melancholic, only to give way under the pressure of true emotion to genuinely moving poetry. From a man in love with love, he becomes a truly persuasive and compelling instance of romantic love in a play which demonstrates the inherent dangers of such love. It is my purpose here to raise some objections to this analysis by noting its inconsistencies and to demonstrate that the play is controlled by the Petrarchan contrarieties, which are realized both rhetorically and by the action.3 Finally, the tragedy is not primarily concerned with love, any more than first-rate *carpe diem* poetry is about actual seduction. As in the Elizabethan sonnet tradition,4 the play exploits a love-centered situation to explore problems of larger import, the abiding concerns of time, death, and immortal aspiration.

The fact is that the "bad" poetry of *Romeo and Juliet* is not reserved for young Romeo of Act I. While it may be convenient to think Shakespeare uses two poetic voices as an instrument of characterization, showing growth through the experience of love, in truth, he does not. Even if we forgive lines 181-88 of the first scene as deliberately hyperbolic--Romeo self-consciously mocks himself before his friends do5--there is the evidence afforded by Benvolio's and Montague's descriptions, all picturing Romeo as the love-struck melancholic. This understanding of Shakespeare's use of poetry to indicate growth in character might be acceptable were it not for Juliet's lines in Act III, after the lyrical experience of the banquet, after the rhapsody of the balcony. Awaiting her husband, she is frustrated with the news of Tybalt's death and breaks out with this fine piece of oxymoronic blubbering:

O serpent heart, hid with a flowring face!

Did ever draggon keepe so faire a Cave?

Bewtifull tirant, fiend angelicall,

Dovefeatherd raven, wolvishravening lamb,

Despised substance of divinest showe:

Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st,

A damned saint, an honourable villaine.

(*III.ii.73-79*)

By the criterion applied to Romeo's

                                        o brawling love, o loving hate,

O any thing of nothing first create,

O heavie lightnesse, serious vanitie,

Mishapen Chaos of welseeming formes,

Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fier, sicke health.

Juliet is obviously not truly in love with Romeo, only with the idea of love. No one suggests this of course; the answer is that Shakespeare, still a developing artist, cannot control his language. The patent error of such gratuitousness is in supposing the clever artist can in one instance deliberately resort to poor poetry for the subtle end of character development but in another, when true poetic energy is called for, he can only muster forth the same species of language he supposedly knows to be unworthy. The poet capable of *Antony and Cleopatra's* intensity and concentration is barely evident here, but surely, no poet who can consciously use bad poetry in Act I will two acts later use the same devices and believe them good.

Had it been Shakespeare's intention to write a tragedy of character, based on moral choice, illustrating the dangers of either love or youth,6 he might have chosen to represent the Friar as one of the "superstitious friars (the naturally fit instruments of unchastity)" Arthur Brooke speaks of as abetting "unhonest desire."7 What Shakespeare did to his source was to heighten Fortune's role, first by carefully removing the stain of sin and secondly by defining Fortune in terms of time and mortality. Moral guilt in Romeo and Juliet is averted by the propriety of their conduct and by the development of the feud. Thus, the "wicked lust" Brooke charges his lovers with is absent, and the "neglecting the authority and advice of parents and friends" is rendered meaningless in view of the inveterate feud. The Prince's condemnation of the feud deprives both sets of parents of all moral authority with the audience. As for the suicide, not to mention the two killings, Shakespeare had a greater problem in managing his play, since self-slaughter is a manifest sin. It seems however that Shakespeare intended to ignore this fact. The Friar's recapitulation does not refer to the cause of Romeo's death and only surmises on Juliet's. The man makes no judgment on the sinners; the Prince directs his wrath toward their parents. Critics have urged, not unreasonably, that lyricism supplants theology, poetic lapses and structural defects. That Shakespeare was unwilling to depend entirely on this resource is evident in III.v.207-210 and in IV.i.55-59. In these speeches Juliet declares her will to abide by a contract sealed in heaven, and she places suicide in the context of fidelity. As Friar Lawrence says, "vice sometime by action [is] dignified" (II.iii.22). There is a paradox, if there ever was one, and Shakespeare makes good on it, not by overwhelming a weak story with poetic energy, but by giving it shape, texture and meaning.

Whether or not we care for oxymorons, their function in the play, in Act I and in Act III, is development of theme, not character, and to this end they are consistent, using the same polarities despite fluctuations in poetic quality.8 The effect sought by the use of oxymorons and paradoxes is the same intended by Petrarch--to indicate the irreconcilable oppositions of love, or, indeed, of life itself. "O brawling love!" is certainly third-rate Petrarchanism; it is also the most succinct statement of the play's action, which is so contrived that for every moment of love, there is one of hatred.9 The significance of Tybalt's death extends beyond the inconvenient timing of the event and the problems it creates for the newly married couple. It is precisely timed to intervene the two acts of marriage, the ceremony and the consummation. The killing of Tybalt is the fulfillment of the first scene's comic treatment of brawling love: Samson intended to "push *Mountagues* men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall" (I.i.21-22). That Romeo kill Juliet's cousin, in effect shedding her blood, is as inevitable as her singling out a hated enemy to love. The same understanding may be applied to the killing of Paris, which Granville-Barker believes "wanton" and with "little dramatic purpose."10 But again, Romeo is on his way to the ultimate consummation of his love for Juliet, and attending this act of love is one of hatred. Again, rhetoric is realized in action, though at the peril of character.

These instances of brawling love and loving hate are supplemented by poetry, both fine and tedious. The latent aggressiveness of love is revealed in the imagery of Juliet's speech describing how she would possess her Romeo:

                                                            I would have thee gone,

And yet no farther than a wantons bird,

That lets it hop a litle from his hand,

Like a poore prisoner in his twisted gives,

And with a silk threed, plucks it backe againe,

So loving Jealous of his libertie.

(*II.ii.177-82*)

When Romeo responds approvingly, Juliet concedes the fatal possibility, "Yet I should kill thee with much cherishing" (l. 184). Awaiting her husband with a bride's eagerness, Juliet represents herself in the figure of a falcon whose destructive powers shall remain restrained until the proper moment (III.ii.14-16). With these details in mind, it is therefore difficult to allow her ambiguous remarks to her mother to remain at the simplest level of understanding:

                                                                                O how my heart abhors

To hear him namde and cannot come to him,

To wreake the love I bore my Cozen

Upon his body that hath slaughterd him.

(*III.v.100-103*)

Here is fine jesuitical practice, but beyond that, there is the same element of contrariety, touched upon in many ways other than love and hate. The wedding night is not unmitigated ecstasy; the anticipated passion of the soliloquy, "Gallop apace, you fierie footed steedes," is darkened and substantially altered by the news of Tybalt's death. The ambivalence of

But wherefore villaine didst thou kill my Cozin?

That villaine Cozin would have kild my husband

(*III.ii.100-101*)

is, in spite of what may strike us as false notes because of false poetry, entirely proper to the play.

The contrarieties in love, and in life generally, are touched upon in many more instances than can be here discussed. It must suffice to recall quickly that we find oxymorons in the punning before the ball, opposing heavy and light, nimble soles and soul of lead. The gallants burn their lamps by day; they come too late and they come too early, simultaneously. At the feast, the imagery of light and dark, of doves and crows, is pursued. The sweetness of new love will by Tybalt be converted to bitterest gall. In the lover's sonnet, pilgrims do wrong, faith turns to despair, one sin purges another. On the balcony, parting is sweet sorrow. When Benvolio and Mercutio catch up with Romeo the following morning, they all jest on good whores, the new form and the old bench, on Romeo's wit--"a very bitter sweeting." The copiousness of Shakespeare's invention suggests that the theme of loving hate is not exactly predicated on the modern psychologist's love-hate relationship, though there is indeed a strong resemblance. Rather, loving-hate is the primary instance of a series of paradoxes, and it serves as a focal point for a wider problem. This is verified in the two speeches which develop in detail the problem of life's bitter sweetness, the Nurse's monologue and the Friar's disquisition on herbs.

Far more than a comic set-piece, the Nurse's speech helps define the meaning of the tragedy in placing the action of the play--Juliet's relinquishing to Romeo--within a specific context. In the celebrated speech, the Nurse introduces an abundance of details--the now dead Susan, the earthquake, a pratfall, a bawdy joke, a dead husband--all in reference to another apparently irrelevant detail, Juliet's weaning. The weaning is the central incident, and it is described appropriately enough, in terms of bitter-sweet experience. The wormwood on the dug alters what had been sweet and palatable to something henceforth to be rejected. The point of the anecdote lies in the symbolic import of weaning, a milestone attained in the infant's progress to death. Juliet, at that time, indicated her growing independence in another way,

For then she could stand hylone, nay byth roode

She could have run and wadled all about:

For even the day before, she broke her brow,

And then my husband (God be with his soule,

A was a merrie man) tooke up the child,

Yea quoth he, doest thou fall upon thy face?

Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit.

Wilt thou not *Jule*?

(*I.iii.36-43*)

Though colored by the low imaginations of the nurse and her husband, the three events--walking, weaning, and capitulating to love's invitation--are of a piece. Neither walking nor weaning is achieved without pain and distress; the same is true of love, whether one understands its pain in Mercutio's or the Nurse's terms, of groaning and bearing the burden of love, or in terms of the exquisite sorrows of parting. Conversely, for the reason that the child must stand alone and never more palate the dug, Juliet must yield to love, when she has wit enough to do so. In reducing Juliet's age from what it had been in the source11 to nearly fourteen, Shakespeare may have increased the pathos of the tragedy, but he also fixed the events at the stage when the heroine passes physically from girlhood to maturity.

The Friar's speech (II.iii.5-30) is congruent with the Nurse's in a number of ways. Both make references to time, of which more will be said later. The Friar contrasts weeds and flowers, sententiously describes the earth as both womb and tomb, and he comments on the wonder that what heals may poison as well. The speech is built of the same antitheses found throughout the play, of light and dark, birth and death, good turning evil. Moreover, both speeches have in common the image of the child at suck, one actual and the other metaphoric:

We sucking on [earth's] naturall bosome finde:

Many for many vertues excellent:

None but for some, and yet all different.

Construed from both speeches, the implication of the image is, clearly, that eventually man must, in the process of attaining maturity, cut himself first from the womb, and then the earth, though, ironically, in so doing he must return to the womb, now a tomb.12

However, the Friar's speech says much more than this, raising the problem which faces the man who seeks to find his destiny. As Romeo enters the stage, the Friar proceeds with his speech:

Within the infant rinde of this weake flower

Poyson hath residence, and medicine power:

For this being smelt, with that part cheares each part,

Being tasted, slaies all sences with the hart.

Two such opposed Kings encampt them still,

In man as well as hearbes, grace and rude will:

And where the worser is predominant,

Full soone the Canker death eates up that Plant.

Here, the paradoxical equipoise is represented in a state of uneasy tension, and the wonder is not that man is compounded of warring elements, but that ultimately one or the other must prevail. The passage obviously applies to the lovers, who have been represented as buds and flowers;13 and we recall that Romeo speaks of the apothecary's poison as medicine (V.i.85), and Juliet kisses Romeo for the restorative yet on his lips (V.iii.166).

The difficulty of the speech is that it does not weigh the alternatives as clearly as the nurse's does. No parent would deny the inevitable need for walking or weaning. But the Friar raises the problem of finding the "true qualities" he so teasingly refers to:

O mickle is the powerfull grace that lies

In Plants, hearbes, stones, and their quallities:

For nought so vile, that on the earth doth live,

But to the earth some speciall good doth give:

Nor ought so good but straind from that faire use,

Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse.

Vertue it selfe turnes vice being misapplied,

And vice sometime by action dignified.

The simple contradiction of love and hatred is expanded to include the despised substance which is beneficial, or the vicious act, such as suicide, which under certain circumstances escapes condemnation either as evidence of a womanish disposition or as a sin. One can condemn Romeo and Juliet as having loved immoderately or too hastily, but one must keep in mind that until the point of death, they do nothing without the pious father's consent. In any case, the dualities in men and herbs must eventually be resolved for good or ill. Although the speech does not explicitly provide the scale by which we may evaluate the lovers' actions, it does help advance our ability to cope with the play in reminding us that man is a thing of parts, grace and rude will, senses and heart, even as the love between Romeo and Juliet is a thing of parts.

When Juliet attempts to dissociate Romeo from his name, she claims Montague has no part of his being;

                                                  it is nor hand nor foote

Nor arm nor face, nor any other part

Belonging to a man.

(*II.ii.40-42*)

The problem of identity is not so easily solved; Juliet is as wrong as Mercutio is in supposing that he can conjure Romeo by

                                                                                *Rosalines* bright eyes,

By her high forehead, and her Scarlet lip

By her fine foot, straight leg, and quivering thigh,

And the demeanes that there adjacent lie.

(*II.i.17-20*)

If Romeo's being is in his physical parts, then so too is Juliet's, and their love nothing more than Mercutio supposes. Shakespeare is using for dramatic purpose the same device employed in the famous mock-blazen of sonnet 130. In the conventional sonnet tradition, the blazon of love attempts to evoke the essential beauty of the beloved. But in his sonnet and in this play, Shakespeare modifies tradition so that his reader and his audience can realize love has nothing to do with either coral lips or reeking breaths. Thus, the nurse can find no urgent basis for loving Romeo though she concedes his desirability in physical endowment:

Well, you have made a simple choyse, you know not how to chuse a man: *Romeo,* no not he: though his face be better than any mans, yet his leg excels all mens, and for a hand and a foote and a body, though they be not to be talkt on, yet they are past compare: he is not the flower of curtesie, but ile warrant him, as gentle as a lamme.(*II.v.38ff.*)

In short, though there is every reason, objectively speaking, for a girl to love Romeo, the Nurse does not find him appealing. Capulet is, for this reason, foolish in supposing that Paris can be attractive to Juliet because he is

Of faire demeanes, youthfull and nobly liand,

Stuft as they say, with honourable parts.

(*III.v.182-83*)

The participle *stuffed* betrays the shallowness of such an appeal, essentially no different from Mercutio's conjurations by flesh. Paris does not exist in his parts, any more than does Romeo, whose name cannot be cut from his body (III.iii.107-109).

Well, then, what's Montague, if it is no part belonging to a man? This question, or some variation of it, is at the core of the tragedy, and lest we forget it, the playwright keeps it before us. Mercutio, finding Romeo able to keep pace with his own wit, presumes his friend to be his old self again: "now art thou sociable, now art thou *Romeo*: now art thou what thou art" (II.iv.93-94). But when despair overwhelms the youth, who seeks to destroy his identity by seeking its mansion, the Friar denounces him,

Art thou a man? thy forme cries out thou art:

Thy teares are womanish, thy wild acts denote

The unreasonable furie of a beast.

(*III.iii.109-111*)

Juliet asks, "O God! did *Romeos* hand shead *Tybalts* bloud?" and the nurse, with grammatical precision, replies, "It did, it did, alas the day, it did" (III.ii.71-72). This is guilt evaded by a reversal of metonymy, where the part is not equivalent to the whole. Similarly, when Juliet threatens suicide, she dissociates hand and heart:

God joynd my heart and *Romeos,* thou our hands:

And ere this hand by thee to *Romeos* seald

Shall be the Labell to an other deed,

Or my true heart with trecherous revolt,

Turne to an other, this shall sley them both.

(*IV.i.55-59*)

With minor variations, the theme of parts, with some more truly of a person than others, is developed in Juliet's rejection of the nurse,

                                                                                                                        Go Counsellor,

Thou and my bosome henceforth shall be twaine.

(*III.v.239-40*)

and in Romeo's euphoric statement,

My bosomes Lord sits lightly in his throne.

(*V.i.3*)

Of no less importance to the play are the many references and allusions to sexual organs, for they too are parts by which identity may be created. That is, one may either pursue the fulfillment of sexual gratification or the wishes of his bosom's lord. The current of sexuality in the play, extensive though limited to the scenes prior to Mercutio's death, has led to the misunderstanding that Shakespeare obliquely undercuts the lyrical innocence of young love by showing it to be motivated by sexual appetite. As in the standard romantic formula, it is love at first sight for Romeo and Juliet, with the often forgotten difference that neither actually has a direct view of the other, for it is at a masked ball that they meet, and Romeo most assuredly is masked.14 If not literally true that the lovers are veiled from each other's view, the symbolic importance of the masks must be recognized, inasmuch as in the balcony scene, the lovers are muffled by the dark. Juliet questions Romeo thus,

What man art thou, that thus beschreend in night

So stumblest on my counsell?

(*II.ii.52-53*)

As for herself "the mask of night is on my face" (l. 85). The effect is, I believe, to minimize the physical attraction each holds for the other. Without denying the urgency of Juliet's longing for her husband's coming, I think Shakespeare intends to contrast the love to which sexual activity is but an important incidental, to the preoccupation with physical gratification marked by Mercutio and the Nurse.15

The Balcony Scene is so managed that, while free from bawdry and eroticism itself, it is framed by these elements. Mercutio, by his conjurations, sets up in the audience's mind the expectation of sexual encounter between Romeo and Juliet. Later, both his friends and Friar Lawrence suppose Romeo to have spent the night with Rosaline. In the company of the gallants, Romeo can match jest for jest with Mercutio, but never in his conversations with Juliet is there a suggestion of sex. The single exception occurs during the Balcony Scene, and its presence there is intended to recall to the audience its expectation--prepared by Mercutio--so that it may recognize the essential purity of the present moment. The exchanged questions,

O wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?

What satisfaction canst thou have to night?

(*II.ii.125-26*)

provoke, for the audience, the obvious answer. Instead, Romeo returns to the language of the pilgrim and begs "Th' exchange of thy loves faithful vow for mine" (l. 127). Love of this sort--and despite our own cynicism, it exists in this play--is consummated in death, not in copulation.

Tumescence and the phallus are referred to repeatedly by the characters of low imagination. In one series of speeches the subject is elaborated upon particularly. Mercutio, before the balcony scene, offers this bit of bawdry:

                                                                                                                                  twould anger him

To raise a spirit in his mistresse circle

Of some strange nature, letting it there stand

Till she had laid it, and conjurde it downe.

(*II.i.23-26*)

Still better and still worse, these parts of love's blazon are incessantly repeated, until they are inescapable when the nurse admonishes Romeo, who at this point has been banished and is in despair:

Stand up, stand up, stand and you be a man,

For *Juliets* sake, for her sake rise and stand:

Why should you fall into so deepe an O?

(*III.iii.88-90*)

Though the language is the same, the virility Romeo is called upon to exercise is of a different order from Sampson's (I.i.20-22). It is with an erect spirit that Romeo will save his beloved, and only in this sense is the Friar's axiom valid: "Woman may fall when theres no strength in men" (II.iii.80). For Sampson and Gregory, for Mercutio and the Nurse, for Susan's prophetic father, it is otherwise; when men have strength to stand, then may women fall. The Friar's consolation might well have been used at the play's end, since it bespeaks the dramatic truth of the tragedy. For Shakespeare persuades us by his art that the physical decay of our heroes is no more significant than the artificial death Juliet takes on wilfully. Juliet's "death scene" of Act IV is an anticipation of the actual suicide, as is the Friar's description of how his herb will divest all her parts of life's image.16 Juliet's speech is better placed there than in Act V, for at the later moment, swift action is demanded. Moreover, the fear before artificial death is as valid as that inspired by an actual threat to life. This is so, not simply because Juliet's terror is manifest, but because actual death, according to the play, attacks only those parts to be numbed by the potion:

Each part depriv'd of supple government,

Shall stiffe and starke, and cold appeare like death.

(*IV.i.102-103*)

The upshot of the tragedy is obliquely stated in Friar Lawrence's consolation to the Capulets, who suppose their daughter dead. Because the speaker is a cleric, the tendency is to take his remarks as referring to Christian salvation, though, as has been noted, the problem of salvation and damnation are not insisted upon at the play's close. The speech is coordinated with the play in its reliance on Juliet's parts, that which has its place in heaven, above the clouds, and those which may be claimed by death.

                                                                                                              heaven and your selfe

Had part in this faire maide, now heaven hath all,

And all the better is it for the maid:

Your part in her, you could not keepe from death,

But heaven keepes his part in eternall life:

The most you sought was her promotion,

For twas your heaven she should be advanst,

And weepe ye now, seeing she is advanst

Above the Cloudes, as high as heaven it selfe?

(*IV.v.66-74*)

The opposition of mortal and immortal parts is reiterated explicitly in Balthasar's report to the banished Romeo:

Then she is well and nothing can be ill,

Her body sleepes in *Capels* monument,

And her immortall part with Angels lives.

(*V.i.17-19*)

For those who would pursue the ends of their sexual parts, there is a fool's paradise offered (II.iv.176); for Romeo and Juliet, a place among the immutable stars.

The play's movement is not from sinfulness to salvation through either grace or Divine Providence,17 but rather from an alien existence as mortals to one's true abode, figuratively represented in the stars or in heaven. The conflict focusses on the traditional antagonism between body and soul, modified however so that the conflict is not in terms of subordination of the passions. The play instead opposes the irreconcilable modes of being manifest by body and soul, the mortal and the immortal. The crisis is not whether reason can moderate passion, but whether the immortal part can survive in an earthly prison. The theme of parts is eventually brought to the implied opposition of Friar's Lawrence's rebuke.

Why raylest thou on thy birth? the heaven and earth?

Since birth, and heaven, and earth all three do meet

In thee at once.

(*III.iii.119-21*)

Romeo longs for death, as will Juliet, and by the play's end, they will have attained it. Birth and death are the moments marking the conjunction and divergence of heaven and earth. The play is so constructed that for Romeo and Juliet, and for the audience which shares their experience, the union is an impossible one.

Capulet misunderstood the truth he spoke in describing Juliet, not yet fourteen, as a stranger in the world (I.ii.8-9). So are all men, whether they have the sensitivity to perceive that fact or not. Romeo's banishment is a felicitous stroke, balancing Juliet's alienation. Benvolio is, therefore, half-right in saying of the dead Mercutio,

That gallant spirit hath aspir'd the Clowdes,

Which too untimely here did scorne the earth.

(*III.i.122-23*)

All death is timely, since time is death's instrument. Hence the propriety of the Nurse's lamentation, which curses the day and not the supposed fact of Juliet's death, a woeful, lamentable, hateful day, a day never so black as this (IV.v.49-54).

The Friar's long recapitulation of the tragic sequence (V.iii.229-69) at the play's close is, thematically if not poetically, valid, in its continual placing of events in the context of time. The Friar refers to time, now early, now late, now exact. The marriage day is stolen, the potion loses its power on "this dire night," the Friar returns "some minute ere the time" of "the prefixed hower." Death however is consistently referred to as untimely, and the Friar's speech thereby fulfills a theme already established in the play. Romeo had been apprehensive about the "vile forfeit of untimely death" (I.iv.111) before his meeting with Juliet, and Capulet, gazing on his daughter's still form, had believed that

Death lies on her like an untimely frost,

Upon the sweetest flower of all the field.

(*IV.v.28-29*)

For the Friar, "*Tybalts* doomesday" brought his "untimely death," and side by side in Capel's monument,

                                                                                here untimely lay

The Noble *Paris,* and true *Romeo* dead.

As for himself, he is willing to "be sacrific'd, some houre before his time." Wiser far than the Friar and Benvolio, who had thought Mercutio's death untimely, Ben Jonson understood that his own son's death was timely, being "Exacted by [his] fate, on the just day" ("On My First Son").

The general note of death touching all the principals which marks the play's end is therefore entirely valid thematically. Lady Capulet hears her death knell, Lady Montague has died, and the Friar, like Capulet early in the play, anticipates his own death. In the First Quarto, moreover, Benvolio's death is reported. Juliet is not singular; no man may "weare out the everlasting flint" (II.vi.17). For these reasons, the Friar's words to Romeo,

Affliction is enamourd of thy parts,

And thou art wedded to calamitie.

(*III.iii.2-3*)

apply generally, for all men await the calamity of death which will claim their mortal parts. By the play's end, the strangers are all gone, even as they departed from Capulet's residence, itself a metaphor for the world. On the occasion of the party, when earth-treading stars invaded his home, "well appareld Aprill" supplanted "limping winter," and "fresh fennell buds" inherited his house (I.ii.27-30). Winter still attends, though, as does the canker, and such a mansion must be abandoned, and the soul's mansion must be sacked for a mansion of love.

What's Montague, then, but that singular part which can escape time's ravages, all else being but "a forme of waxe, Digressing from the valour of a man" (III.iii.126-127)? No less than for the sonnets, time is a major factor in the play, and Shakespeare's careful manipulation of sequence goes beyond the plotter's preoccupation with timing.18 True, timing creates the plot,19 but time in the play is not used to illustrate the youthful vice of impetuosity, but to develop a tragic action centering on the conquest of time.

The preponderance of critical investigations into time in *Romeo and Juliet* have been concerned with the intervals between events, from the relatively simple matter of the duration of the represented events, to the number of hours between the individual incidents. Among the judgments arising from these inquiries is that the play exhibits "double time"20 with the lovers hasty and precipitous,21 and their parents and the older characters cautious and deliberate. The inconvenient fact that Old Capulet later contradicts himself by insisting upon a quick marriage for Juliet is explained as a relinquishing to the impetuosity of youth.22 Actually, the treatment of time is more complex than the simple association of haste with youthful impatience and deliberation with mature action. For one thing, the elder Capulets do not always move in conjunction: at first, Old Capulet is reluctant to allow Paris' suit, while his wife favors it. The reason he urges Paris to wait is the same his wife uses to promote the match: the girl is nearly fourteen. At that age, Juliet's mother, as did many "ladies of esteeme" in Verona, bore a child (I.iii.70-74); Paris agrees with the proposition that Juliet is at the proper age for marriage. Old Capulet, of course, feels otherwise (I.ii.8-11). However, at another point touching on time, the parents are coordinated in their unawareness of its passage. Remarkably, Lady Capulet is uncertain of Juliet's precise age, a fact which the Nurse provides. Similarly, Old Capulet cannot properly fix the years since last he masked; he grossly underestimates the years since Lucentio's wedding (I.v.31-41).23 In each case, Shakespeare provides a character who is able to define the forgotten date with precision. The dramatic point is clearly that these two individuals, and not older people in general, live their lives unaware of time, though time takes its toll. Before he knows it, Old Capulet must give up his sword for a crutch (I.i.82-83). Rather than instances of sober judgement, the Capulets are the unwitting victims of time's ravages.

But old folks, many fain as they wer dead,

Unwieldie, slowe, heavie, and pale as lead.

(*II.v.16-17*)

Better instead to feign death by yielding one's mortal parts to death so that one may "bound a pitch above dull woe" (I.iv.21).

In contrast to Lady Capulet's unawareness of time is the Nurse's sharp recall of its passage, precisely measured in terms of disaster.24 Susan, who should be Juliet's age, is dead, as is her father. The weaning itself is well fixed in time by the earthquake. Though the event has escaped Lady Capulet's memory, the nurse will remember it a thousand years because of her husband's little joke. Even Old Capulet is not so caught up in the present that he cannot realize his advanced age, and in his best line in the play, he confesses of his youth, "'Tis gone, 'tis gone, 'tis gone" (I.v.26). Reason enough to call throughout the scene, "more light, more light" (I.v.29,89,127), for soon enough the darkness comes to swallow his last hope.

Until he too is caught up in the frantic events, the Friar is singularly free in his own mind of time's pace, standing apart to comment on haste, now in Romeo, now in Paris. It is instructive that despite his self-discipline, his careful planning, and his conscientious observing of his appointed hour at Capel's tomb, he is no more successful in controlling time than any other character. His oft-quoted maxim, "Wisely and slow, they stumble that run fast," (II.iii.94) must be counterbalanced by the paradoxical, "Too swift arrives, as tardie as too slowe" (II.vi.15). Slowly done is not always wisely done; one may as well proceed swiftly, for the results are the same. And, as is consistent with the play's thematic structure, there is no middle ground of moderation, though the Friar thinks there is (II.vi.14). His own utter failure as benevolent intriguer is sufficient testimony of his error.

In the sonnets addressed to his friend, Shakespeare offers two resources against fell Time, heirs and art. After the manner of the sonnet tradition, Romeo laments the barren course followed by Rosaline, and he complains of love's effect upon him, fettering him to dull earth. As the play proceeds to demonstrate, Romeo is wrong in both respects. In the tragedy, if not in the sonnets, beauty will survive by the love it inspires, since love is its own value. It can overwhelm its antagonist, death, since death holds power over dull earth alone. That love frees man--rather than burdening man with a soul of lead or staking him to the ground (I.iv.15,16,19-22)--is symbolically demonstrated in the easy movement of young Romeo climbing the stony limits of Capulet's walls (II.ii.66-67). Later, before Balthasar brings news of Juliet's interrment, Romeo speaks of his dream (V.i.1-11), the point of which is too often taken for simple dramatic irony. Shakespeare does not merely wish to sharpen the anguish of Balthasar's news by first having Romeo anticipate joyful news. The imagery is too carefully coordinated with earlier speeches to allow for so limited an intent. He has had a dream; his bosom's lord--that is, that part above all other parts--sits lightly in his throne, and he is again lifted above the ground; and the dream itself represented Juliet's reviving him from death, for even as he prepares to take his deadly "Cordiall and not poyson" (V.i.85), Romeo experiences a lightening before attaining "A datelesse bargaine to ingrossing death" (V.iii.115), a "timelesse end" (V.iii.162). Juliet, in perfect harmony with her beloved, kisses Romeo, paradoxically, to "dye with a restorative" (V.iii.166). For each, the other is quick despite all contrary appearances:

Death that hath suckt the honey of thy breath,

Hath had no power upon thy bewtie:

Thou art not conquerd.

Thy lips are warme.

Not only does love have the power to lift man above the limits imposed by his gross body, but it can confer a vitality beyond death. Romeo's error in complaining of Rosaline's cold chastity is that love's immortality is understood in terms of its secondary effects, the propagation of children. Romeo thinks as Old Capulet does when he charges

O she is rich in bewtie, onely poore,

That when she dies, with bewtie dies her store.

(*I.i.221-26*)

True as this conventional proposition is, it bespeaks a lower order of truth than that apprehended by Romeo as he first catches sight of Juliet at the ball. On that occasion, there are present "Earthtreading starres, that make dark heaven light" (I.ii.25), and Juliet is manifestly

                                                  a rich Jewel in an Ethiops eare,

Bewtie too rich for use, for earth too deare.

(*I.v.48-49*)

Shakespeare creates the conflict between mortality and immortality in a variety of ways, either by the opposition of time and eternity, or by reference to other symbols suggestive of one or the other. The lovers themselves seek night and create an artificial day, making actual the reported conduct of Romeo, who, while pledged to Rosaline, "away from light steales ... locks faire day-light out, And makes himselfe an artificiall night" (I.i.143-46). Though Romeo's affection will change, he is nevertheless correct in his conduct, as Juliet well knows, for

Lovers can see to do their amorous rights,

By their owne bewties,

(*III.ii.8-9*)

Miss Spurgeon missed this essential point about Shakespeare's light imagery, equating as she does "the irradiating glory of sunlight and starlight in a dark world."25 The difference depends upon a realization of the symbolic import of sun and stars, one as the measure of time and the other as the symbol of timelessness. It is by the self-created rays of love that our young heroes can attain a stellar constancy.

There are in the play two schemes of time, that of the real world--incessant and implacable, now too soon, now too late, but ever true to itself, and that measured by the lovers. These timepieces are metaphorically represented, the one traditionally as Phoebus' chariot, and the other, by Queen Mab's chariot. The sun is represented in all its ruthlessness by Romeo's image:26

The grey eyde morne smiles on the frowning night,

Checkring the Easterne Clouds with streaks of light,

And darknesse fleckled like a drunkard reeles,

From forth daies pathway, made by *Tytans* wheeles.

(*II.iii.1-4*)

In addition to the picture of relentless force overwhelming all in the sun's path, there is the promise that the night's dew will be consumed as the sun progresses (II.iii.6), an ill omen for the lovers who have just created the rhapsody of the balcony scene by night, that time when "the earth doth drisle deaw" (III.v.127).

Romeo and Juliet can never exist under the servitude imposed by time, for the rhythms of their lives, now one, are measured by Queen Mab. Far from a poetic but dramatically irrelevant outburst, Mercutio's speech (I.iv.53-95) is central to the play's meaning. Like the sun, Queen Mab too courses through the skies in a chariot, but unlike her opposite,

                                                                                                              she comes

In shape no bigger than an Agot stone,

On the forefinger of an Alderman,

Drawne with a teems of little attomie,

Over mens noses as they lie asleep:

(*I.iv.54-63*)

In the delicacy of detail, Queen Mab's vehicle is like the chariot Juliet imagines will transport love to her. Love is drawn by "nimblepiniond doves" (II.v.7), and

                                                                      loves heraulds should be thoughts,

Which ten times faster glides then the Suns beames,

Driving backe shadowes over lowring hills.

(*II.v.4-6*)

Juliet would toy with her imprisoned bird, using nothing more than "a silken threed" (II.ii.181) to confine it.

Queen Mab is not the goddess of love; rather she is the figure of subjective reality, bringing to men the dreams they dream. To the soldier, and to quarrelsome men like Mercutio and Tybalt, she brings the desired realities

                                                            of cutting forrain throates,

Of breaches, ambuscados, spanish blades,

Of healths five fadome deepe.

(*I.iv.83-85*)

But for such as Romeo, who dream of love, love comes.27 As with so much else in this play, Mab is a figure of ambivalence, for her confusions, however mischievous, must be yielded to:

                                                                                          this is that very Mab

That plats the manes of horses in the night:

And bakes the Elflocks in foule sluttish haires,

Which once untangled, much misfortune bodes.

This is the hag, when maides lie on their backs,

That presses them and learnes them first to beare,

Making them women of good carriage.

(*I.iv.88-94*)

With more meaning than Romeo perceives, he charges Mercutio with talking of nothing; but everything in the play is built on nothing, from the "three civill brawles bred of an airy word" (I.i.96) to the love so pure that it transforms Juliet to one like him who

                    bestrides the lazie passing Cloudes,

And sayles upon the bosome of the ayre.

(*II.ii.31-32*)

and enables Romeo to master his gross element, to

                                                            orepearch these walls,

For stonie limits cannot hold love out,

And what love can do, that dares love attempt.

(*II.ii.66-68*)

After all,

A lover may bestride the gossamours,

That ydeles in the wanton sommer ayre,

And yet not fall.28

(*II.vi.18-20*)

Indeed, Juliet's love for Romeo is for that part which is nothing, being no physical part of the man. The inevitable direction of the drama is that forecast by Juliet for Romeo:

                                                                                                    when I shall die,

Take him and cut him out in little starres,

And he will make the face of heaven so fine,

That all the world will be in love with night,

And pay no worship to the garish Sun.

(*III.ii.21-25*)

Love, Romeo's "any thing of nothing first create" (I.i.183), confers immortality because it is generated from nothing and cannot share in the corruption and decay awaiting all things.

Love, measured by the standards of the world, is inadequate. Fragile because it is compounded of ephemeral realities, love is suspect. Those who know of the secret love--Romeo, Juliet, the Friar--all at one or another time warn of its dangers. When it appears that Romeo will never claim his bride, the Nurse suggests a reasonable expedient. The Friar, though he lends his counsel, sanctions the relationship on peripheral considerations, the feud between the houses. Otherwise, he is dubious. Even Romeo and Juliet have their misgivings. There is a point of divergence, nevertheless, which carries Romeo and Juliet beyond the simple realities of the Friar and the Nurse. Significantly, Juliet first weans from the Nurse, at whose breast she sucked wisdom, and later, from her ghostly father.

The love between Romeo and Juliet is just such a dream as Mercutio spoke of,

Begot of nothing but vaine phantasie:

Which is as thin of substance as the ayre,

And more inconstant then the wind who wooes

Even now the frozen bosome of the North:

And being angerd puffes away from thence,

Turning his side to the dewe dropping South.

(*I.iv.98-103*)

Spoken just before Romeo meets Juliet, these lines figuratively anticipate his erratic progress from old love to new love. Moreover, they suggest that the change of affection is not rooted in fickleness, but is rather generated by obvious wisdom in turning from a barren suit to one which is promising. As in Capulet's apprehensions, contrasting barrenness and fertility, the dream of love, though an airy nothing, cannot be satisfied with the nothingness of rejection and must turn to more hospitable climes. There, love can truly come into being, for until it is requited, it is only devotion.

In the management of the imagery, the evanescent nature of love is freely confessed. It is begot of nothing, it is, like the dew, the spider's thread. Moreover,

It is too rash, too unadvisd, too sudden,

Too like the lightning which doth cease to bee,

Ere one can say it lightens.

(*II.ii.118-20*)

Love, as Romeo is well aware,

                                                                                                    is but a dreame,

Too flattering sweete to be substantiall.

(*II.ii.140-41*)

These lines, among others, are often thought to serve as foreshadowing of tragic consequences for the youth's hasty and immoderate love. In support of this contention are offered the complementary images of gun-powder and explosions.29 Nevertheless, as in the Friar's long speech on herbs, there is an ambiguity in the comparison of love to lightning. Although the enveloping darkness instantly prevails over the brief moment of illumination, that moment itself is precious. The paradox is that however slender the experience afforded by love, it can in its brief span create values otherwise forever obscure. This is the limitation Romeo accepts, and quite rightly, regardless of what the Friar has to say. The Friar, in terms of the perspectives created for this play, speaks a simple contradiction, and not a paradox, in advising Romeo to "love moderately," for "long love doth so" (II.vi.14). Being outside of time, love is neither long nor short, and Romeo has the higher truth. As an absolute value, it can hardly be moderated without being vitiated.

An understanding of the dramatic use of the devices and themes of Elizabethan sonnet conventions yields an approach to the tragic meaning of the play. Though defective in several respects--one recalls Schücking's charge that Romeo, unlike Troilus, is not truly masculine30--the play creates its tragic effects despite inconsistent levels of poetic accomplishment and inadequate character development. For the tragic issue lies in the exposure of life's impossibility. Death for the Elizabethans was feared "as the conclusion to all accomplishment. It was," Theodore Spencer explains, "a kind of horrible joke which grinned at impotent desire and mocked all achievement into air. Because death destroyed them, beauty and power and wealth were hollow on their own account, not in comparison to the pleasures of heaven."31 The play uses love to create a value for life and a means of sustaining it. When that value is threatened by death, the center of the tragedy moves to mortality, an area of experience far more comprehensive than young love. Because the play does not revolve around the eccentricities of the principal characters, it can transcend supposed weaknesses in their conception or execution. Critics have recognized that the play generates pity and pathos, while withholding the final constituent, fear or terror, by which the play achieves stature as tragedy.32 I would claim both effects for the play, for there is a terrible beauty in the inevitable course toward ruin, yet transcended.33 In its own way, the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* is built around the same awareness which in *Hamlet* is expressed as the consummation devoutly to be wished, in *Antony and Cleopatra* as immortal longings, the shackling of accident, and the bolting up of change.

The tragic basis of the drama does not lie in moral or personality defects. *Romeo and Juliet* is not a tragedy of character. As in the sonnets, love is used as a vehicle for representing, simultaneously, man's subjection to time and decay and man's ability to transcend the limits prescribed by his mortal nature. Paradoxically, by seizing the day, lovers can triumph over time. It is precisely because man is born to die that the play moves inexorably to its conclusion, dateless death. What distinguishes Romeo and Juliet is not their impetuosity, for so too are Mercutio and Tybalt, Lady Capulet and her husband, and the County Paris impetuous. The tragic experience is exclusively reserved for the lovers because they alone perceive, gradually, that the scope and compass allotted by time is not enough. With such an awareness, there is no recourse for a man

But to rejoyce in splendor of mine owne.

(*I.ii.106*)

**Notes**

1. All citations are taken from George Walton Williams' critical edition, *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet* (Durham, N. C., 1964).

2. See his note to I.i 180 of the Arden edition, as well as Shakespeare: *A Critical Study of His Mind and Art,* 3rd ed. (New York, 1881), p. 94. See also, Wolfgang Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), p. 79, and Irving Ribner, *Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy* (London, 1960), p. 32. According to Miss Lu Emily Pearson, in this play "Shakespeare shows first the break between Petrarchan love and natural love" *(Elizabethan Love Conventions,* Berkeley, 1933, p. 291). George Ian Duthie holds "the poetic inanities of the lamentations of Capulet, his wife, and the Nurse in 4.5 are no doubt intended by Shakespeare to symbolize the poverty of their emotional life and the smallness of their spiritual stature, as contrasted with the richness and greatness of the emotional and spiritual being of the hero and heroine" (Introduction to the edition by John Dover Wilson and George Ian Duthie, Cambridge, 1955, p. xxxiv). E. E. Stoll, commenting on Juliet's lamentation over Tybalt, attributes the lines to "the immaturity of Shakespeare's art," though he mitigates this criticism by allowing for the dramatic requirements of the situation (*Shakespeare's Young Lovers,* New York, 1966, pp. 32-33; first printed, 1937).

3. Especially useful are essays by M. M. Mahood, in *Shakespeare's Wordplay* (London, 1957), pp. 56-72, and by John Lawlor, in *Early Shakespeare, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* III (London, 1961), 123-43. Lawlor amplifies G. Bullough's observation (in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare,* 1957, I, 278) that Shakespeare "makes Romeo's conventional passion express itself in contradictions and paradoxes suited to the pattern of the whole play." Robert O. Evans, *The Osier Cage: Rhetorical Devices in Romeo & Juliet* (Lexington, Ky., 1966), offers a detailed study of the play's rhetorical figures. Like others, he believes language (specifically, rhetoric) is used "to emphasize the development of character" (p. 97). His originality lies in defending many passages which have been faulted. Juliet's speech (III.ii. 73-79, given below), is "a subtle and extensive complex of figures ... [which] serve[s] to refine her intellect and make her a fitting equal for Romeo (if they do not make her his superior)" (p. 36). As with many others, Mr. Evans seems prejudiced in Juliet's favor, though the girl does nothing that Romeo does not do.

4. On the Elizabethan sonnet, see J. W. Lever's discussion of "the conflict of Love With Time" in *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet* (London, 1956), pp. 246-72. On Shakespeare's sonnets, see G. Wilson Knight, *The Mutual Flame* (London, 1955), esp. Chapter IV, "Time and Eternity," pp. 69-103. See also Kenneth Muir's chapter on *Romeo and Juliet* in *Shakespeare's Sources* (London, 1957), I, 21-30. Though too precise in identifying sonnet 85 in Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* and Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamund* as influences, Muir is correct in the affirmation, "into his play Shakespeare infused the quintessence of Elizabethan love-poetry" (p. 30).

5. Ernest William Talbert, *Elizabethan Drama and Shakespeare's Early Plays* (Chapel Hill, 1963), p. 287.

6. For a recent presentation of this view, see Franklin M. Dickey, *Not Wisely But Too Well* (San Marino, 1957), pp. 63-117.

7. *Romeus and Juliet,* ed. J. J. Munro (London, 1908), p. lxvi.

8. Presumably Professor Virgil K. Whitaker had the standard of poetic excellence in mind when he warned "that it is unwise to search the implications of Shakespeare's language too closely, simply because his language is not consistent," *The Mirror up to Nature* (San Marino, 1965), p. 111. J. M. Nosworthy attributes the stylistic inconsistencies to Shakespeare's reliance on *The Two Angry Women of Abingdon,* though the lines of clearest indebtedness to Porter's play are not the worst by any means at all. "The Two Angry Families of Verona," *SQ,* [*Shakespeare Quarterly*] III (1952), 219-26. Others have suggested revisions by the playwright to explain variations in poetic quality. I am not here concerned with the problem; regardless of inconsistencies, there is an overriding uniformity based on paradoxical oppositions.

9. Or of comedy and violence, as Talbert points out with respect to the opening scene (p. 297).

10. "Romeo and Juliet," *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (Princeton, 1946), IV, 50, n. 10.

11. In Brooke she is sixteen; in Painter almost eighteen.

12. See below, n. 29.

13. Imagery depicting the lovers in terms of flowers and fruit is found in the following passages: I.i. 157-58, I.ii. 10-11, II.v. 44, IV.i. 99, IV.v. 29 and 37. Floral imagery is also applied to their love (II.ii. 121-22) and to Paris (I.iii. 77-78). Eventually the image merges with that of sucking: "Death that hath suckt the honey of thy breath, Hath had no power yet upon thy bewtie" (V.iii. 92-93).

14. The Stage Direction for I.iv. reads, "*Enter* Romeo, Mercutio, Benvolio, *With five or six other Maskers, torchbearers.*" The text indicates that Mercutio puts his mask on (I.iv. 29-30) and that Old Capulet has his on (I.v. 34-35).

15. By another avenue, Irving Ribner comes to the conclusion, "it is not really the sight of Juliet which causes [Romeo] to change" (p. 29). Paul N. Siegal concludes, "Intense though their passion is, however, it is exalted." "Christianity and the Religion of Love in *Romeo and Juliet,*" *SQ,* XII (1961), 380. Gordon Ross Smith places the tragedy in the context of neo-Platonic aspiration ("The Balance of Themes in *Romeo and Juliet,*" *Essays in Shakespeare,* ed. G. R. Smith, Univ. Park, Pa., 1965, pp. 15-66). See also Duthie, p. xxxvii.

16. The Friar's speech is derived from the medieval tradition and, in one sense, entirely conventional (Cf. T. J. Spencer, *Death and Elizabethan Tragedy,* New York, 1960, pp. 26-34). Shakespeare's innovation is in use of a secular context. The lovers overwhelm death, not by reason of their own virtuousness or God's redeeming grace, but because of their commitment to the values threatened by death.

17. See Ribner, pp. 28-35.

18. Tom F. Driver finds the handling of time in this play to be Shakespeare's means of "creating on stage the illusion of passing time," meaning that the young dramatist is concerned with realistic effects. "The Shakespearian Clock: Time and the Vision of Reality in *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Tempest,*" *SQ,* XV (1964), 363-70.

19. Whitaker claims that coincidence and chance weaken the plot (p.109). Some critics have preferred to speak of fatality, rather than chance. Examples are J. W. Draper, "Shakespeare's 'Star-Crossed Lovers,'" *RES,* [*Review of English Studies*] XV (1939), 16-34; G. L. Kittredge, in his Introduction to *Romeo and Juliet* (Boston, 1940), p. xii; and Duthie (pp. xvii-xix). Georges A. Bonnard makes an important contribution in demonstrating that "Shakespeare himself is responsible for most of the incidents that render the catastrophe inevitable." "*Romeo and Juliet*: A Possible Significance?" *RES,* n.s. II (1951), 325.

20. Granville-Barker, IV, 40.

21. Brents Stirling, *Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy: The Interplay of Theme and Character* (New York, 1956), p. 19.

22. "The leisureliness of the time of the older generation forms a background which makes the tragedy of haste even more tense by contrast. The older generation is part of the tragedy too, however, since it becomes ineffective and doomed to failure when forced to act with the speed of youth." G. Thomas Tanselle, "Time in Romeo and Juliet." *SQ,* XV (1964), 360-361. H. Edward Cain, on the contrary, finds an opposition between "Crabbed Age and Youth in 'Romeo and Juliet,' "*SAB,* [*South Atlantic Bulletin*] IX (1934), 186-191. Bonnard's experience of tragic fatality is prompted by the heroes' isolation "in the evil of their world, being unable to understand and participate in the feelings and prejudices of their relatives" (325).

23. There is some doubt as to whether Capulet knows Juliet's age. When he says to Paris, "Shee hath not seene the chaunge of fourteen yeares, Let two more Sommers wither in their pride, Ere we may thinke her ripe to be a bride" (I.ii. 9-11), he may mean, "I will consent when she is fourteen; but since she is only twelve, I must deny your suit." In this case, he would be in agreement with his wife in thinking fourteen a proper age, and he would be giving further evidence of his inability to keep track of the years.

24. In tone and content, the Nurse's speech is faithful to Brooke's poem, ll. 652-660, with the significant difference provided by Shakespeare's addition of the three disasters.

25. *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (Cambridge, 1935), p. 310.

26. Williams follows Hosley in assigning these lines to Romeo rather than to the Friar, contrary to the practice of most editors. On literary and dramatic grounds, the decision is, I believe, fortunate. See Williams' note on the passage, pp. 119-121.

27. Norman N. Holland, applying psychoanalytic techniques to Romeo's dream, speaks of it in terms of wish-fulfillment. "Romeo's Dream and the Paradox of Literary Realism," *Literature and Psychology,* XIII (1963), 97-104.

28. True, the Friar goes on to add, "so light is vanity," but his pejorative remark may be tested against the play's imagery, which approves of lightness, and the play's effects.

29. Though an instrument of death, the cannon, when compared to poison, is described in paradoxical terms, its breech being compared to a womb: poison takes its effect "As violently, as hastie powder fierd / Doth hurry from the fatall Canons wombe" (V.i. 64-65).

30. *Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York, 1948), p. 55. First published, 1922.

31. Spencer, p. 231.

32. Some instances are Brents Stirling: "There is no tragic guilt in this play except the plague of both the houses; no such complexity as Aristotle held essential to tragedy. This play has pity only, no purgation by pity and terror" (p. 17). Whitaker finds the issue of moral culpability confused, and so the principal effect is pathetic: tears are shed "over the needless sacrifice of young love to a cruel world" (p. 113). See also, H. S. Wilson, *On the Design of Shakespearian Tragedy* (Toronto, 1957), p. 30.

33. Though Professor Ribner goes further than I am inclined in his Christian reading of the play (pp. 25-28), he comes closer to the truth than most in placing the play in the context of Stoic tragedy. For an excellent discussion of this subject, see Hardin Craig, "The Shackling of Accidents: A Study of Elizabethan Tragedy," *PQ,* [*Philological Quarterly*] XIX (1940), 1-19. In his too brief discussion of this play, Donald A. Stauffer declares, "Love conquers death even more surely than it conquers hate. It sweeps aside all accidents, so that fate itself seems powerless." *Shakespeare's World of Images* (New York, 1949), p. 58.

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