THE CONCEPT OF THE ENNOBLING POWER OF LOVE IN

SHAKESPEARE'S LOVE TRAGEDIES

APPROVED:

Sam A. Henderson
Major Professor

G. A. Daniel
Minor Professor

E. S. Clifton
Director of the Department of English

Robert B. Toulmin
Dean of the Graduate School
THE CONCEPT OF THE ENNOBLING POWER OF LOVE IN
SHAKESPEARE'S LOVE TRAGEDIES

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Barbara Jean Fort, B.A.
Denton, Texas
January, 1968
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. ROMEO AND JULIET</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. TROILUS AND CRESSIDA</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

C. S. Lewis in his book, The Allegory of Love, states that nowadays in literature it is common to assume "... that love (under certain conditions) should be regarded as a noble and ennobling passion. . . ." His encyclopedic book on love, however, makes clear that the ennobling power of love was not a prevalent idea in literature until the Renaissance. Many scholars refer to Plato as the originator of the idea that human love has the power to ascend to the divine; but when one studies Plato carefully, one finds that the "... original object of human love—who, incidentally, is not a woman—has simply fallen out of sight before the soul arrives at the spiritual object." Lewis' book very explicitly demonstrates what the ennobling power of love is not. He lists the characteristics of courtly love and shows very carefully how the courtly love tradition grew, flowered, and finally died with the publication of Spenser's Faerie Queene.

\[1^{1}C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford, England, 1936), p. 3.\]

\[2^{2}Ibid., p. 5.\]
Courtly love, explains Lewis, has four basic characteristics: humility, courtesy, adultery, and the religion of love. Humility and courtesy naturally result from the fact that in the Middle Ages the lady of the court was a feudal superior. Her suitors both humbled themselves in her presence and showed her courtesy. Adultery came to exist as a characteristic of the courtly love tradition because of the medieval attitude toward marriage. Since marriage was merely a utilitarian tool, idealized sexual love began by being idealized adultery. The church ironically also contributed to diverting poets from idealizing married love by ruling out "... passions, whether romantic or otherwise." Finally, the major reason that love became a religion with a set of rituals was that it became a rival of the real religion and emphasized "... the antagonism of the two ideals."

One writer in the courtly love tradition and the second author of The Romance of the Rose, Jean de Meun, obviously did not believe strongly in his theme. He seemed to be continually finding ways of skirting the subject of courtly love in his classic Roman. The problem with Jean de Meun's work is that he never found an alternate plan other than the strictly erotic tradition of love. Consequently his contribution to the Roman is one long diversion after another.

---

3 Ibid., p. 12. 4 Ibid., p. 13. 5 Ibid. 6 Ibid., p. 17. 7 Ibid., p. 18. 8 Ibid., p. 146. 9 Ibid.
Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is the last of the great pieces of literature written in the courtly love tradition, according to C. S. Lewis. At its end Spenser has true love or married love defeat courtly love.\(^{10}\) Spenser's work, in a sense, then may be considered a culmination of the courtly love tradition. Well before the appearance of the *Faerie Queene*, however, new concepts of love, largely derived from Platonic and Neoplatonic doctrine, had made their way into English thought and English letters. By the time Shakespeare's plays begin to appear, this transition is largely complete. A number of Shakespeare's plays, particularly the love tragedies, reveal that Shakespeare was both aware of and absorbed by the attitudes toward love which prevailed in his time.

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* Romeo's love for Rosaline, which was obviously love in the courtly tradition with all of its outward manifestations, was found to be meaningless when Romeo met and truly fell in love with Juliet. After he met Juliet, Romeo knew that he had never really been in love with Rosaline. Antony had been married long before he met Cleopatra, and Cleopatra had had affairs with many regal men; but when the two rulers met, they not only fell in love, but their love made them new creatures. Paradoxically, because of their love Antony and Cleopatra

became chaste again. Their love so "refined" them that they were in a condition as if they had never really loved before, for indeed they had not.

In the plays under consideration in this thesis, Shakespeare has taken old stories and made them new with the addition of the concept of the ennobling power of love. In talking of Romeo and Juliet, John Vyvyan states that Shakespeare borrowed heavily from Brooke; but since he borrows for many of his plays and fits them to his pattern, we "... conceive of him as a jeweller, re-setting old gems into his new design."\textsuperscript{10} Shakespeare's borrowing from Plutarch and Chaucer for the main plot lines for Antony and Cleopatra and Troilus and Cressida reinforces Vyvyan's observation. Since the concept of the ennobling power of love was new in the Renaissance and since it is this addition that essentially changes the works of Arthur Brooke, Plutarch, and Chaucer, it seems imperative to analyze the plays on the basis of the concept of the ennobling power of love.

It may be concluded that there are similarities in the courtly love tradition and the love tradition known in the Renaissance as Platonic love, but the differences far outweigh the similarities. Certainly humility and courtesy are a part of both traditions. The lover is humbled in the presence of his beloved. He also respects her as a woman.

One must admit, too, that in the Platonic tradition, as well as in the courtly love tradition, the lover tends to make a religion of his love. The primary difference one notices, however, in the religion made of love in the Roman and in Romeo and Juliet is that of outward and inward obeisance. The lover in the Roman makes all the proper outward overtures. Once "... the youth finds himself unmistakably in love..." he is instructed by the god of Love "... in the duties he will have to perform and the pains he will have to bear." On the other hand, Romeo and Juliet's genuine mutual reverence comes from within. It is literally and figuratively night when they meet--Juliet on her balcony and Romeo beneath in the garden--but the lovers make the night shine with their love. The light comes from within, as does their love. Another major difference between the courtly love tradition and the Platonic love tradition is in the matter of adultery. It has already been pointed out that because of the social situation in the Middle Ages and because of the stand the Church held on marriage that poets and writers turned away from married love to love outside marriage. With the coming of the Renaissance there seemed to be no reason for keeping love separate from Christianity.

---

13 Ibid.
Nesca A. Robb says in his *Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance* that Neoplatonism, as expressed by Marsilius Ficino, is an attempt to syncretize all philosophies in the light of Christianity. Rational or religious activity is what makes man unique. It is that which is eternal in his being. Ficino keeps the philosophic framework of ancient Neoplatonism, that is, the hierarchy of Being, but he tries to reconcile all opposing terms in the soul of man. Man by his nature allies himself with both the eternal and the temporal. The eternal is bent to man's nature while man spiritualizes and ennobles the temporal. Ficino sees the deification of man as a spontaneous act of the divine in man. From Ficino's uncertainty about whether the Absolute is above being and unknowable or whether it is latent within each soul comes his theory of love. Love existed in the heart of Chaos before the world came into being. Love is perfect and of great wisdom. Each of the worlds at the moment of its creation was in Chaos. The natural tendency of the created to turn to the Creator is called Love. After love, comes an illumination that results in the ordering of all forms or Ideas

... so that the chaos of the unillumined mind becomes a world or cosmos. The grace of the cosmos is Beauty, which draws the angelic mind

---

to desire its own perfection and so turn back in love to God who can supply its need.\textsuperscript{15}

Love makes life harmonious and is the true basis for morality. If love is the desire for beauty and is apprehended by the mind, the eye, and the ear, then the other senses are not involved. However, Ficino does not completely rule out physical relations between the sexes, realizing that procreation is essential to the continuing existence of mankind. Love of the body, he says, is merely a passing love; love of the soul is eternal; love of the body and the soul causes great wonder and joy. Love permeates the entire universe.

Man first sees the quality of the divine in natural objects through the senses. No corporal beauty satisfies man for long because it is merely a shadow of that which is real. Man is not satisfied with the body because what he desires is not in the body but the divine that is fused in the body of the beloved. The lover does not really know what he wants because he does not yet truly know God. When he reverences the beloved, in a sense, he is revering God. "Finally, the longing of the lover to transform himself into the beloved is really the fundamental longing of man to become a god."\textsuperscript{16}

For Ficino, there are two kinds of love, one celestial and the other terrestrial. One is drawn by innate love to contemplate Supreme Beauty. The other "... is moved to create a likeness of that beauty in material form."\textsuperscript{17} The

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 76.  \textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 79.  \textsuperscript{17}Ibid., p. 80.
soul itself has two powers: the power of contemplation and the power of generation. "The mind reverences and loves beauty as an image of the divine and at the same time the soul, dwelling in matter, desires to create a form resembling the beautiful object." Ficino insists "... that both loves are honest and have the divine image for their object. ..." In some places, he points out the division between body and soul, between human and divine love; in other places "... he makes of the two loves two moments of one activity." When a lover loves and his love is not returned, he dies. In the case of mutual love, each dies but lives again in the lover. The lover dies, but there are two resurrections: one, when his love is returned and, two, when he finds himself again through his beloved. The earthly part of his existence is a continual hindrance. By continual discipline and exercise of the cardinal virtues, man begins to understand himself and his Creator.

Ficino attempts to unify all love under Christian love. A partial reconciliation had already occurred between Christian and courtly love, according to Sears Jayne. Until the time of Petrarch, the love traditions were distinctly separate. Petrarch showed the unity between sexual and

---

18 Ibid. 19 Ibid. 20 Ibid.

spiritual passion by indicating the divinity of woman. Dante identified Beatrice with love "... in the broad sense of caritas, thus completing the ladder from man to God." For Neoplatonists, love is an inescapable force breathing in and out of the universe, coming from the One in ever widening circles to individual things and then returning again to the One. Usually thought of as a cosmic rather than a personal happening, this force is responsible for all cosmic processes. The individual is attracted by the One, the process being more intuitive than intellectual.

Ficino did not need to invent the identification of the Neoplatonic One with the Christian God or the Eros of the Neoplatonic soul with the Agape of the Christian soul because he was already familiar with that identification. . . .

Because he has the primary materials to work with, Ficino derives a cosmic theory complete with the details of the place of love in the cosmic force. Love's importance he finds perfectly explained in Plato's Symposium.

All the physical drives of human love might be justified spiritually and at the same time idealized intellectually, because love in man is not only a God-given and cosmically necessary and irresistible search upwards toward a perfection which is both spiritual and intellectual; it is also an irresistible, God-given, and cosmically necessary compulsion downward to create the likeness of Divine Beauty in the physical world.

---

22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., p. 227.
24 Ibid.
Platonism and Christianity are thus reconciled. In essence, they are in the process of being made one and the same.

Love for Ficino is the dart in the eye and the fire in the heart of the courtly lover, becoming idealized through the process described in the Symposium and ultimately revealing itself as identical with the world force of Neoplatonic Christianity. All the known love traditions are fused to show how love between individual persons derives from the love between the individual and God.25

According to A. J. Smith, Ficino feels the body is unimportant in love.26 The soul is the whole of man, the body its prison. Some Renaissance theorists, on the other hand, are continually trying to link body and soul. The spirit is the link; it moves life from the soul to the body. Conversely, this spirit takes from the senses images of outside bodies to the soul for judgment. Even then, the soul remains independent. The teachings of Aristotle are revived and approved in the sixteenth century; writers become syncretic; that is, they believe in the oneness of soul and body. In fact, many Neoplatonists discard Ficino's separation. Speroni feels that the soul cannot understand without the man—i.e., the senses. Varchi goes even further when he explains that everything in the intellect has first been perceived in the senses. Leoni Ebreo feels that physical

25 Ibid., pp. 227-228.

union should be sought after because it binds the knot faster. Physical union is also a sign that love is reciprocal. Even Cardinal Bembo feels that a kiss has the power to draw forth the soul from the lips. He also justifies the part the body plays in love. Betussi and Equicola praise temperate coitus in human relationships. Ficino's theories are rejected for the theory that the lover desires not just spiritual union but physical union as well so that the two lovers may form a more nearly perfect union. Ultimately, Aristotle's views supplant Plotinus' views as those that are most fashionable. One final step then remains to be taken: ". . . making . . . the perfect love of souls actually inseparable from, or dependent upon, the love of bodies." Since man's soul and body are one, love must be of the body and soul. The operations of the soul are dependent on the body. Speroni is particularly hard on those that feel the body is unimportant in the love relation. The senses are the pathways to reason; not just the sense of sight and hearing, but all. If one attempts to love with his mind or soul alone, he does more harm to himself than good.

In "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance," Sears Jayne traces Neoplatonism to England. Ficino's theories are rejected for the theory that the lover desires not just spiritual union but physical union as well so that the two lovers may form a more nearly perfect union. Ultimately, Aristotle's views supplant Plotinus' views as those that are most fashionable. One final step then remains to be taken: ". . . making . . . the perfect love of souls actually inseparable from, or dependent upon, the love of bodies." Since man's soul and body are one, love must be of the body and soul. The operations of the soul are dependent on the body. Speroni is particularly hard on those that feel the body is unimportant in the love relation. The senses are the pathways to reason; not just the sense of sight and hearing, but all. If one attempts to love with his mind or soul alone, he does more harm to himself than good.

In "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance," Sears Jayne traces Neoplatonism to England. Ficino's theories are rejected for the theory that the lover desires not just spiritual union but physical union as well so that the two lovers may form a more nearly perfect union. Ultimately, Aristotle's views supplant Plotinus' views as those that are most fashionable. One final step then remains to be taken: ". . . making . . . the perfect love of souls actually inseparable from, or dependent upon, the love of bodies." Since man's soul and body are one, love must be of the body and soul. The operations of the soul are dependent on the body. Speroni is particularly hard on those that feel the body is unimportant in the love relation. The senses are the pathways to reason; not just the sense of sight and hearing, but all. If one attempts to love with his mind or soul alone, he does more harm to himself than good.
original work was not widely read in England during the Renaissance. His theories, however, became strongly implanted in the literature of the period through his disciples. His theory, first expressed in Benivieni's poem "Canzona dello Amore celeste et divino," was followed shortly afterwards by Pico's Discourse. The Discourse was the beginning of a long list of trattati d'amore which popularized the Platonic doctrine. Bembo's Gli Asolani and Castiglione's Courtier were two such important discourses. These and others were imitated all over Europe. While much of the doctrine of Platonic love reached England through prose works, poetry, too, contained the love philosophy. Still another way that Ficino's theory spread from Italy was via Renaissance humanism. Symphorian Champier translated much of Ficino, particularly imitating his commentary on the Symposium. Platonic love united with French ideas of feminism and gentility. Between 1540 and 1550 Platonic love became the main theme at centers such as Lyon and the court of Marguerite of Navarre. Platonic love was incorporated into what had been basically Petrarchan poetry. Robert Caguin, French ambassador to England, Anne Boleyn, brought up in the court of Marguerite of Navarre, and Princess Elizabeth, who translated Marguerite's handbook into English, constitute only a few of the links between England and France.
French poetry set the styles and themes, and the English imitated. The French technique of writing Platonic love poetry was to use the theme of idealized love "... merely as a means of varying the standard Petrarchan poem of physical passion; there is little attempt to poetize the Ficinian theory or to deal with truly idealized love at all in its own terms." Platonic love is treated as a variation of and as a source of detail in Petrarchan poetry. In English poetry, too, Platonism becomes associated with Petrarchianism. It is obvious in the case of several poets--Spenser, Greville, Sidney, and Chapman--that these writers have gone beyond the French to the Italians. Spenser and Chapman attempt to deal with the whole philosophical meaning of love and beauty.

At this point Plato would not recognize his discourses on love. Through Plotinus they became systematized as a part of a cosmological philosophy. Ficino attempted a final synthesis by uniting all philosophies in the light of Christianity. Explaining the primacy of love in the cosmic force was his chief contribution to the growing body of doctrine on love. Other Italians, chiefly Speroni and Ebreo, leaned to Aristotelianism rather than Platonism. Theirs was the view that love of the body predetermined and prefigured love of the soul. This amalgam of ideas reached England by two

\(^{31}\)Ibid., p. 233. \(^{32}\)Ibid., pp. 233-237.
different routes: through literature and through Renaissance humanism, both of which arrived in England by way of France, picking up French feminism and gentility and uniting with the Petrarchan poetic tradition.

In view of the eclectic nature of Shakespeare's mind, it is not surprising to find that in the total body of his work there are numerous reflections of Platonic ideas on love. There have indeed been major studies tracing the Platonic influences in Shakespeare's work. It has become a commonplace of Shakespeare scholarship that Shakespeare was much influenced by Renaissance Platonic doctrine. Even so, there is surprisingly little in the way of close studies of particular Platonic ideas. This study proposes to demonstrate that the Platonic doctrine of the ennobling power of love is of paramount importance in a number of Shakespeare's plays. This thesis aims toward correcting the imbalance of existing Shakespearean scholarship by emphasizing the thematic importance of the ennobling power of love in certain plays.

This study has been limited to the three love tragedies because in them the ennobling power of love is a major theme, affecting both the characters and the plot structure. This analysis follows the precedent established by Franklin Dickey in his Not Wisely But Too Well, which singles out three plays as love tragedies: Romeo and Juliet, Troilus and Cressida, and Antony and Cleopatra. There is certainly nothing startlingly new in recognizing the importance of the ennobling
love theme in Romeo and Juliet. In Antony and Cleopatra and Troilus and Cressida, however, the love theme is often so disguised or so overshadowed by other factors that the plays are much misunderstood.

The major studies that concentrate on the love elements of these plays have emphasized thematic aspects other than the ennobling power of love. Franklin Dickey deals with the love tragedies in addition to Shakespeare's long narrative poems, Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece, in his book. However, Dickey feels that Shakespeare is being essentially didactic in his dramas. Love and passions, without the control of reason, lead to tragedy. John Vyvyan has two books, Shakespeare and the Power of Love and Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty, both of which have a wealth of material on the subject of love. The first book deals mainly with the tradition of courtly love and its relationship to some of Shakespeare's early works, one of which is Romeo and Juliet. The second of Vyvyan's books deals with the topic of Platonic beauty, which is related to but not the same as the topic of Platonic love. Vyvyan is chiefly concerned with the fact that beauty causes the awakening of love between people, and he analyzes several of Shakespeare's later plays to demonstrate his thesis. The concept of the ennobling power of love is not concerned primarily with the fact that beauty attracts two people to one another, and hence is the origin of love. More important to the concept is that existing
love gives the lovers powers and capabilities beyond their original capacities. Even with the existence of major studies such as those of Dickey and Vyvyan, the need still exists for a thorough study of the three love tragedies in terms of the very important concept of the ennobling power of love. The main intent of this thesis is to show what the ennobling power of love is and how Shakespeare interwove this concept into his three love tragedies, Romeo and Juliet, Antony and Cleopatra, and Troilus and Cressida. Shakespeare had much to say about all kinds of love in the total body of his works, but the kind of love that is the main concern of this study is the love that gives man the power to uplift, enrich, and ennoble men's lives.

The broad doctrine, ultimately Platonic, of the ennobling power of love incorporates four main subsidiary ideas, all of which are prominent to one degree or another in the three plays under examination in this thesis. One of the most obvious is the view that the lovers owe their highest allegiance to love. True love is the highest law, and the exterior law must conform to it. No matter what happens, the lovers must remain true to each other and to love. In relation to the lovers' allegiance to love, John Vyvyan's question is appropriate: "Why for more than romantic reasons, is the highest duty of Shakespearean lovers neither
to their parents nor to the law, but to love?" The answer is ". . . love, and nothing else, will lead the soul to perfection." Another of these main subsidiary ideas is that true love is immutable and indestructible. True lovers live and love eternally. Vyvyan says that for Spenser true love is ". . . an act of recognition between immortal companions. . . ." On this point Shakespeare would have agreed with Spenser.

The third of these subsidiary ideas is that love brings order to man's existence. If a man is not in love, then chaos reigns in his life. He is not himself; but once beauty is revealed to him, man discovers his true identity. Shakespeare makes the point quite often that revelation of the beautiful and self discovery occur at the same time. If man truly knows himself, then he is capable of being perfect. In Shakespeare the inner world of man is conceived as a kingdom. If it is in order, the soul achieves perfection. Order is achieved only if Love reigns therein.

The fourth of the subsidiary ideas is related to the third. If the inner world or microcosm is in order, then so is the universe or macrocosm. Love affects both spheres. The love of Romeo and Juliet brings harmony not only to the

---


34 Ibid.

lives of the lovers but also to the families of the two. Because of Antony and Cleopatra's love, the world finally achieves unity under the rule of Octavius Caesar. Love has the power to bring order not only to individuals but also to the entire universe. Vyvyan puts it very well when he says that when the lovers are truly in love "... something of the harmony of heaven will be realized on earth."\(^{36}\)

Another related corollary of the ennobling power of love remains to be cited. Important to the theorists about love is the manner or means by which man arrives at the sublimities of love. In a typical pattern of development a recognizable progression emerges.

Man reaches the heights of love by first loving one body. Seeing a similarity between one body and other bodies is the next step. He then sees a common beauty in all bodies. Becoming a lover of all bodies, he slackens the stress on the one. Next, he sets a higher value on the beauty of the soul, rather than the body. After this he can contemplate the beautiful in observances and laws "... and to behold it all bound together in kinship and so estimate the body's beauty as a slight affair."\(^{37}\) By perceiving true beauty, man brings forth fine fruits of discourse and meditation in philosophy. If man follows these steps in the love process,

---

\(^{36}\)Ibid., pp. 12-13.

he will have revealed to him "... a wondrous vision, beautiful in its nature..."\(^{38}\) This immortal beauty from which all else stems is never changing, always the same. Man proceeds as on a ladder—from one beauty to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies;

\[
... \text{from personal beauty he proceeds to beautiful observances, from observances to beautiful learning, and from learning at last to that particular study which is concerned with the beautiful itself and that alone; so that in the end he comes to know the very essence of beauty.}\(^{39}\)
\]

Man must continually be trying to catch a vision of the essence of beauty.

\[
... \text{through that which makes it visible, to breed not illusions but true examples of virtue, since his contact is not with illusion but with truth. So when he has begotten a true virtue and has reared it up he is destined to win the friendship of Heaven; he, above all men, is immortal.}\(^{40}\)
\]

A man who sees earthly beauty is reminded of true beauty. He feels his wings starting to sprout. Neglecting earthly things, he desires a heavenly flight. Of the earthly inspirations, beauty is the best. Beauty is of the highest origin to him who possesses it; this man is called the lover. A soul losing its wings comes to earth, taking the form of a human body. The body appears to be self-moving because of the power of the soul within it. The whole, which is made

\(^{38}\)Ibid., p. 205. \(^{39}\)Ibid., p. 207. \(^{40}\)Ibid., pp. 207-209.
up of the body and soul, is called a living being or mortal.\textsuperscript{41}

The important subsidiary concepts of love reviewed and delineated in this chapter constitute Shakespeare's concept of the ennobling power of love. That there is the idea that love is power is obvious in the three love tragedies. In each of the plays Shakespeare approaches the idea somewhat differently. Each has a unique resolution, but Shakespeare's philosophy remains constant. A consideration of each of the plays in relation to the theme of the ennobling power of love will comprise subsequent chapters of this thesis. The plays will be treated chronologically except for \textit{Troilus and Cressida}. Since \textit{Troilus and Cressida} will be a study in contrast to the ennobling power of love, it will be analyzed last. A concluding chapter will reiterate Shakespeare's ideas of love and show that he is consistent in his views throughout the plays.

CHAPTER II

ROMEO AND JULIET

Two distinctly different kinds of love traditions come together in Romeo and Juliet. One, the courtly tradition of love, is embodied in the relationship of Romeo and Rosaline. The second, the Platonic tradition of the ennobling power of love, is represented in the relationship of Romeo and Juliet. What Shakespeare does with the two traditions illustrates not only the utter meaninglessness of the courtly love tradition with its basis on an outward code of behavior, but also the saving power of ennobling love with its foundation on the inward feelings of the lovers. Also set in opposition to the ennobling power of love in the play are the forces of hate set loose in the city. Hate is at work early in the play as the servants of the two prominent families, the Montagues and the Capulets, fight bitterly in the streets. It soon becomes clear that this street brawl is one of a continuing series of incidents that have not only embittered the two families but also have destroyed the peace and harmony of the whole city. Their fighting not only attracts the attentions of the Montagues and Capulets but also of Prince Escalus, chief magistrate of Verona. The Prince warns the warring households that three times they have disrupted
Verona's peace by civil disturbance. The next time the Montagues and Capulets disturb the city with brawls, they will have to forfeit their lives. At this word all disperse except Benvolio, who remains to explain to Lord and Lady Montague how the brawl began.

Lady Montague is happy to learn that Romeo was not involved in the street fight, but she is worried about Romeo for still another reason. That Romeo has not been himself lately is common knowledge. Actually Romeo is suffering from what is called love melancholy. According to Ficino, if a man loves and his love is not returned, he dies.¹ Romeo's life is full of sighs, tears, and woes. Urging Benvolio to find the source of his cousin's problem, Lord and Lady Montague depart as Romeo meanders onstage.

Romeo claims to be in love, but in reality he is confused. He does not even know himself. Plotinus says that there is a definite connection between love and the self.² In John Vyvyan's words, "If Romeo has lost the reality of himself, then he has not found love."³ "Tut," says Romeo, "I have lost myself; I am not here; This is not Romeo, he's

some other where." (I,i,203-204) Romeo thinks of love as

... a smoke raised with the fume of sighs
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lover's eyes;
Being vex'd, a sea nourish'd with lover's tears:
What is it else? a madness most discreet,
A choking gall and a preserving sweet.
(I,i,196-200)

Love is a kind of madness, according to Plato, but it is sent from the gods so that the lovers can have the greatest happiness. Romeo's experience in love is anything but great joy. His beloved Rosaline will not share his love. She resists his eyes, his loving terms. This resistance to his affections is slowly but surely killing Romeo. Encouraging Romeo to forget Rosaline, Benvolio urges him to "... examine other beauties." (I,i,224) Romeo, of course, thinks that any other beautiful girl he sees will only remind him of Rosaline; no one can compare with her. "One fairer than my love! The all seeing sun/Ne'er saw her match since first the world begun." (I,ii,97-98) However, when he learns that Rosaline will be present at the Capulet celebration, Romeo agrees to go. Of course, Benvolio hopes Romeo will meet someone else at the party to take Rosaline's place. Accompanied by loquacious Mercutio, the two cousins set out to the party. Mercutio speaks of dancing when they get there, but Romeo cannot dance. "Give me a torch: I am not for this ambling;/But being heavy, I will bear the light." (I,iv,11-12)

---

He continues, "... I have a soul of lead/So stakes me to the ground I cannot move." (I, iv, 15-16)

Mercutio tells him that since he is a lover, he should "... borrow Cupid's wings/And soar with them above a common bound." (I, iv, 17-18) To which Romeo replies,

I am too sore empierced with his shaft
To soar with his light feathers, and so bound
I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe:
Under love's heavy burden do I sink.  
(I, iv, 19-22)

It is not accidental that Shakespeare stresses the heaviness of Romeo at this point. If Romeo were in love, he would be light; he would naturally dance. But since the love he feels for Rosaline is not reciprocated, he is heavy. Clearly his love is killing him. If he were in love, he would have sprouted wings as the lover did in Plato's Phaedrus. He would be ready for a heavenly flight, but poor Romeo is heavy-footed. The light he holds, however, is symbolic of the love that he is capable of attaining.

Again and again in the early scenes of Act I Shakespeare makes certain that his audience understands that Romeo is not himself in his relationship with Rosaline because he is not really in love. Romeo goes through the motions of being in love by attempting to woo his lady Rosaline. Being scorned in his love suit, Romeo resorts to tears. Like the ideal courtly lover in Castiliogne's The Book of the Courtier.

\[5Plato, Phaedrus, p. 487.\]
Romeo's whole being mourns for Rosaline, but Rosaline is never affected by Romeo's attentions. To onlookers of the affair Romeo looks the part of a lover, but actually he just goes through the motions of being in love. Since Romeo is so concerned with the outward accouterments of love in his relation to Rosaline, one can easily see that he is much like the youth in *The Romance of the Rose*. Romeo with Rosaline is a courtly lover; his love comes from without, not from within. Romeo's love for Rosaline produces nothing in her, and only sadness results in Romeo. When he sees Juliet, something within Romeo does occur. Attracted by one another's beauty, Romeo and Juliet see the best of themselves in one another. Romeo becomes full of Juliet, while a new Romeo emerges. The same change occurs in Juliet. She becomes a new creature in Romeo and at the same time is filled with his new being. From the time of the first meeting with Juliet, there begins to develop the classic pattern of the development of ennobling love. Love is first engendered through the eye by the beauty of the loved one. The lover is made light by his love, and the newly engendered love sets in motion the beginnings of self-knowledge.

Romeo finds his new wholeness when at the Capulet ball he beholds Juliet for the first time.

---

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
It seems she hangs upon that cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear;
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand,
And touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
Did my heart love till now? forswear it sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.
(I,v,46-55)

Again there is light imagery; torches, jewels are not as bright as Juliet's beauty. This beauty is almost above human conception. It is "... too rich for use, for earth too dear!" (I,v,49) Her beauty takes on attributes of the divine. Juliet in her purity stands out as white against the black of the ancient grudge. If Romeo touches his beauty's hand, his will be made blessed. He concludes that he has never perceived true beauty before. Romeo speaks to his image of beauty. If he hurts her by touching her with his rough hand, his lips are ready to smooth that hurt with a kiss. But Juliet lets him know that the hands of saints and palmers often touch in holy kiss. Romeo wonders if lips may kiss as hands do. With the first kiss Romeo is purged of his "sin"; but, now possessing the "sin," Juliet has it removed from her by a second. Delighted with what they have found in one another, the two discover not only their eternal identity but their temporal identity as well. He is a Montague and she a Capulet.

At this point Shakespeare has set the stage for his tragedy. The audience has been made aware of the emptiness
of Romeo's love for Rosaline. All breathe a sigh of relief that Romeo, so capable of loving and so desirous of that ennobling state, has now found Juliet. Romeo not only truly loves Juliet, but she returns his love as well. At the same time, however, there are implications of the consequences of Romeo, a Montague, loving Juliet, a Capulet. Nonetheless, Shakespeare is clear on the point that the ennobling love of Romeo and Juliet gives them power. The lovers will work out a solution to their problem. "But passion lends them power, time means, to meet,/Tempering extremities with extreme sweet." (II,Pro.13-14)

On his way home from the ball Romeo is drawn irresistibly to the proximity of Juliet.

Can I go forward when my heart is here?  
Turn back, dull earth, and find thy centre out.  

(II,i,1-2)

He realizes that the essence of his existence is love, and for him Juliet is that love. "... He is being led towards the discovery," in John Vyvyan's words, "that the centre is pure being, the essence love, and that his true self is also hers. This is presented to him as an exchange of selves in the communion of love."⁷ Not understanding that Romeo is about to make this significant discovery, Mercutio tries in vain to conjure Romeo's spirit by invoking the name of Rosaline, but Romeo no longer understands life in terms of

Rosaline. Romeo has abandoned his former unsettled state, seeking order and peace in his existence. The symbol of his new-found peace appears. "But soft! what light through yonder window breaks?/It is the east, and Juliet is the sun." (II,ii,1-2) Her eyes are so beautiful and bright that if they were to shine in heaven the birds would think it day. If two stars replaced her eyes. "... the brightness of her cheek would shame those stars..." (II,ii,19) Seeing her hand resting on her cheek, Romeo wishes he were a glove on that hand.

As Juliet starts to speak, Romeo thinks to himself. Any message from this lovely creature surely comes from heaven. Thinking of Romeo, Juliet wonders, "What's in a name?" (II,ii,43) Does a name make a man? Is it a part of his being?

So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself. (II,ii,45-49)

Pleading that he forget his name, Juliet urges Romeo to take her instead. She will make him whole. To which Romeo replies that he will be a new man if she will but love him. Both will be new and better as a result of their love. Up until this time Juliet has not known of Romeo's presence in the orchard. She wonders how he came to be there considering the height of the orchard wall. Romeo replies,
With love's light wings did I o'er perch these walls;
For stony limits cannot hold love out,
And what love can do that dares love attempt;
Therefore thy kinsmen are no let to me.

(II, ii, 66-69)

Romeo continues to feel light as compared with his heaviness before the party. He moves swiftly and easily with love's light wings. Since Romeo's wings have sprouted, his love is capable of a heavenly flight. Nothing can separate him from love. Even the impossible is possible for him who loves.

Romeo is a new man. He does not exaggerate; he believes what he says. Juliet warns that if her kinsmen see him, they will kill him. Romeo is not worried. "Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye/Than twenty of their swords; look thou but sweet,/And I am proof against their enmity." (II, ii, 71-73) If Juliet truly loves him, Romeo will be above hate. Besides, he would rather have her love him and be captured and killed by her kinsmen than to live without her love.

Juliet wonders how Romeo found her window, but the Platonist would have known the pattern. With the help of Romeo's eyes, love led him there, after beauty is perceived with the eyes. Beauty leads to her handmaid love, who, in turn, leads to self recognition. From there, constancy in love creates

---

8 Plato, Phaedrus, p. 483.
10 Vyvyan, Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty, pp. 29-30.
Thinking that Romeo might consider her too hasty in confessing her love, Juliet vows that she will be more true than those who are more reserved than she. She claims that her love for Romeo is as boundless and as deep as the sea. The more love she gives the more she has, "...for both are infinite." (II,ii,135)

Plans are initiated for their marriage. In this situation Shakespeare has the lovers marry as a symbolic act of their love. They have seen beauty in one another, which has led to love, which, in turn, has progressed to the recognition of their true selves. They vow that their love will be everlasting. Romeo senses the near religious quality of their love. Romeo calls to Juliet as he departs, "So thrive my soul. ..." (II,ii,154) Love goes toward love, as schoolboys from their books, "But love from love, toward school with heavy looks." (II,ii,157-158) Finding Friar Laurence at his cell, Romeo seeks his help in the marriage. Surprised to hear that Romeo has so early forsaken Rosaline for another, the Friar agrees to wed the two. He hopes that the marriage will help reconcile the hostile households. Later at Friar Laurence's cell meditating upon the impending ceremony, the holy man invokes the heavens to bless the marriage and hopes that the union will not bring the budding couple sorrow. Romeo feels that if sorrow comes to them it cannot equal the

exchange of joy that their union will bring. Juliet arrives.

0, so light a foot
Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint:
A lover may bestride the gossamer
That idles in the wanton summer air,
And yet not fall; so light is vanity.

(II, vi, 16-20)

Juliet is light of foot, for she, too, has sprouted the Platonic wings of love. Juliet's love has grown so that, if love were money, she could not add up half her wealth.

Following their exchange of vows, the Friar sanctions their love with the church's sacrament.

Shortly after the marriage wrathful Tybalt, cousin to Juliet, encounters Mercutio and Benvolio walking along the street. As Mercutio is trying to provoke Tybalt, he is distracted by Romeo. Romeo certainly does not desire to fight with Tybalt, or with anyone else for that matter. Romeo has found that with love the center of existence, the feud has receded into the background. He wants his friend, his kinsman, and the one so newly made his kinsman to understand his new self and to participate in the knowledge that love of the kind that he and Juliet share makes man a better creature than he was before he possessed it. In vain, Romeo tries to explain his new being to Tybalt, but Tybalt understands only the feud. He tries to reason with Tybalt. Finally, however, Romeo realizes that Tybalt will not understand that he is able to rise above the ancient grudge, that he has transcended the pettiness of the feud. If Romeo had not undergone
this transformation, he would be right in the midst of the turmoil. As Romeo tries to part the angered Tybalt and his friend, Tybalt stabs and kills Mercutio. Knowing himself, Romeo can be true to himself and to Juliet by leaving the scene of the murder, but he realizes his best friend has just given his life for a quarrel that was really his. He feels that Juliet has made him weak, unwilling to fight. In reality, the knowledge of Juliet's love has led him to discover who he really is, has brought order to his existence, and has made him above hate in any form. However, at this moment vengeance for his friend's death is stronger to Romeo than constancy in love. He calls on fury to give him the power to kill Tybalt. Immediately after the deed but too late, he realizes his mistake. "O, I am fortune's fool!" (III,i,141) Romeo departs quickly, leaving Benvolio to relate the events of the fracas. Upon hearing what happened, the Prince decides to have Romeo banished rather than killed.

That evening, awaiting Romeo's coming, Juliet bids the night come quickly. When night comes, so will her Romeo. She and Romeo will make the night bright with their love. She refers to Romeo as one who brings the light. "Come, night; come Romeo; come thou day in night. . . ." (III,ii,17)

When Romeo dies, someone should

Take him and cut him out in little stars,
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.
She says of her love, "O, I have bought the mansion of a
love,/But not possess'd it, and, though I am sold, /Not yet
enjoyed. . . ." (III,ii,26-28) At the height of her antici-
pation Juliet learns that Romeo has killed her cousin.
Emotionally she is pulled in two directions. However, she
realizes that if Romeo had not murdered Tybalt, the reverse
would have occurred. Tybalt is dead and Romeo banished.
Her tongue stops on the word banished. If Romeo is banished,
then she will no longer live—that is, the Juliet that lives
within Romeo will die. Thinking that Romeo hides himself in
Friar Laurence's cell, her nurse promises to take him Juliet's
ring and bids "... him come to take his last farewell."
(III,ii,143)

Meanwhile, Romeo learns of the Prince's decree that he
be banished; he would rather die than be banished.

'Tis torture, and not mercy: heaven is here
Where Juliet lives; and every cat and dog
And little mouse, every unworthy thing,
Live here in heaven and may look on her;
But Romeo may not. . . .
(III,iii,29-33)

Eternity, heaven is with Juliet. In the early stages of
love, their love is nourished and grows in one another's
presence. Romeo's being grows within Juliet and within him-
self, and Juliet's true self is nourished in Romeo's presence
and within her own being. To be separated at this stage
seems to be a fate worse than death. Driven to despair,
Romeo thinks of killing himself, but the Friar deters him.
If Romeo kills himself in anger, he will at once lose all these ingredients that make his life worthwhile.

The Friar urges Romeo to think about the good that has come of the tragedy. If Romeo had not slain Tybalt, remarks the Friar, certainly Tybalt would have slain him

... And ... thy lady too that lives in thee
By doing damned hate upon thyself?
Why rail'st thou on thy birth, the heaven and earth?
Since birth, and heaven, and earth, all three do meet
In thee at once; which thou at once wouldst lose.

(III,iii,117-121)

Shakespeare is making clear his philosophy through the words of the Friar. Juliet lives within Romeo. Romeo is one person possessing both earthly and heavenly qualities. If it were not for Juliet, Romeo would not be alive, at least not in the Platonic sense of the word alive. If Tybalt had had the chance, he would have killed Romeo. The Prince could have had Romeo killed, but he did not. Actually, Romeo has bounteous reasons for happiness, according to Friar Laurence. He urges Romeo to go to Juliet, to love and comfort her. However, before morning Romeo should go to Mantua. Meanwhile, in Verona the Friar will watch for occasions

To blaze your marriage, reconcile your friends,
Beg pardon of the Prince, and call thee back
With twenty hundred thousand times more joy
Than thou went'st forth in lamentation.

(III,iii,151-154)

After the night together Romeo takes leave of his wife as the day begins to dawn. Juliet asks that the window
"... let day in, and let life out." (III,v,41) Both see some misfortune in their future relationship. Juliet wonders if she will see Romeo again; Romeo believes they will again meet. Shortly after Romeo's departure Juliet learns that her father desires her to marry Paris the coming Thursday. Not desiring the union, Juliet resolves to go to Friar Laurence "... to know his remedy: If all else fail, myself have power to die." (III,v,241-242) Love will give her that power. The impending marriage to Count Paris drives Juliet to desperation. She reveals her fears to the Friar. Not wanting her to take her own life, the Friar offers Juliet an alternate plan. He warns Juliet that she must be strong in order to carry out the proposed deed. Juliet calls on love to give her the power to carry out the act. "Love give me strength! And strength shall help afford." (IV,i,125)

Early the next morning, discovering Juliet's supposed death, the nurse alerts the Capulet household. Lady Capulet realizes that she also dies in Juliet. "My child, my only life,/Revive, look up, or I will die with thee!" (IV,v,19-20) Lord Capulet speaks of her beauty. "Death lies on her like an untimely frost/Upon the sweetest flower of all the field." (IV,v,28-29) Lord Capulet perceives a part of himself has died too. "O child! O child! my soul, and not my child!" (IV,v,62) Friar Laurence says of Juliet

Heaven and yourself
Had part in this fair maid; now heaven hath all,
And all the better is it for the maid:
Your part in her you could not keep from death,
But heaven keeps his part in eternal life.
(IV,v,66-70)

The part of Juliet that dies is of this earth; the part that
lives eternal. Juliet has sacrificed for love. This will
remain equally true of the real death that is to come as it
is of the pretended death here.

At the beginning of Act V Romeo has dreamed that Juliet
finds him dead. Her kisses raise him, and he becomes an
emperor. "Ah me!" he says, "how sweet is love itself pos-
sess'd, / When but love's shadows are so rich in joy!" (V,i,10-
11) Even his dreams of love abound in joy, but he is quickly
brought to earth by his messenger Balthasar. Bringing Romeo
news from Verona, Balthasar tells of Juliet's death and en-
tombment. Romeo resolves to go and lie with her in death.
Summoning the aid of a destitute apothecary, Romeo exchanges
forty ducats for poison.

There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls,
Doing more murders in this loathsome world,
Than these poor compounds that thou mayest not sell.
I sell thee poison; thou hast sold me none.
Farewell: buy food, and get thyself in flesh.
Come, cordial and not poison, go with me
To Juliet's grave; for there must I use thee.
(V,i,80-86)

Money will not buy happiness, but the cordial will prepare
his heart for that which is to come. Learning that his
letter was never delivered to Romeo, Friar Laurence resolves
to go to the Capulet tomb. When Juliet awakes, he plans to
take her to his cell and send another letter to Mantua.
Mourning for Juliet, in the meantime, Paris has taken flowers to Juliet's grave. Hearing someone approach, Paris takes cover in the night. As Romeo arrives at the Capulet monument, he charges his lackey Balthasar not to interrupt his work but stand back away from the tomb. The next day Balthasar is to deliver Romeo's letter to Lord Montague. Romeo explains that he is going into the grave "... partly to behold my lady's face; But chiefly to take thence from her dead finger/A precious ring, a ring that I must use/In dear employment...." (V,ii,29-32) As he is about his work, Paris interrupts him, thinking that Romeo has come to do some further shame to the Capulet bodies. Paris warns Romeo to stop his vile work. Romeo must not be interrupted. If he is, then he will have to do battle with Paris, and he does not desire this. Persisting, Paris forces Romeo to fight. Again Romeo kills. With his dying words Paris appeals to Romeo, "If thou be merciful,/Open the tomb, lay me with Juliet." (V,ii,72-73) Romeo agrees to bury him

... in a triumphant grave;

A grave? O, no! a lantern, slaughter'd youth,
For here lies Juliet, and her beauty makes
This vault a feasting presence full of light.
(V,i,83-86)

Juliet's grave is not one where death prevails. Life is here. Juliet is beautiful even in death. Romeo thinks Death keeps Juliet in the grave just so that she can be his lover. Because of his concern for her, Romeo resolves to stay with her.
Oh here
Will I set up my everlasting rest,
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh.
(V,i,109-112)

Early in the play Romeo fears "some consequence yet hanging in the stars. . . ." (I,iv,107) Later when he has given fate control of his life by breaking constancy in love, Romeo defies the stars; but no longer will fortune have any control over him. He takes of his Juliet one last look, one last embrace, one last kiss. Drinking the potion, he joins her. He, too, has sacrificed for love.

As the drug's effect wears off, Juliet awakes as Friar Laurence enters the tomb, discovering the bodies of Romeo and Paris. He tries to get Juliet to come with him so that he can dispose of her "... among a sisterhood of holy nuns. . . ." (V,i,157) Juliet will not dream of it. She tells the Friar to leave. Noticing the cup in Romeo's hand, Juliet understands how he died. No poison is left for her, though, not even a trace on his lips. Hearing noises from without, Juliet takes Romeo's dagger and dies. At the end all gather at the grave and hear Friar Laurence explain the tale of the lovers. Romeo's letter reenforces the Friar's story. Against the families the Prince cries out,

Capulet! Montague!
See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love.
(V,i,291-293)

Love is sacrificed so that the quarrel may end. John Vyvyan
says that "... all sacrifice that springs from love exerts, according to its measure, some power of saving grace."12

When the lovers die, the reconciliation takes place.

O brother Montague, give me thy hand:
This is my daughter's jointure, for no more
Can I demand.

(V,i,296-298)

Not only do the families resolve their differences, but the lovers have sacrificed their earthly lives in the belief that their love will triumph in death. Romeo had said of Juliet, "Thou art not conquered ..." (V,iii,94) He decided to remain with Juliet. "O, here/Will I set up my everlasting rest..." (V,iii,109-110) When Juliet awakened and found Romeo dead, she resolutely joined him in death. According to Plato, true lovers live eternally.13 (Romeo and Juliet not only die so that the families can be reconciled, but they sacrifice their earthly lives so that their ennobling love will live eternally.) In effect, they have not been defeated. They have ceased to be "fortune's fools." Love has exalted them beyond their natural capacities and has revealed latent resources that could hardly have been expected of them. Their deaths have brought them victory paradoxically, and they have achieved a kind of apotheosis.

---

13 Plato, Phaedrus, p. 505.
CHAPTER III

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

Many modern critics of Shakespeare, reports Franklin Dickey, say that Antony and Cleopatra "... hymns a love so great as to transcend ordinary morality. If the lovers have lost a kingdom, they have gained a more 'eternal diadem of love.' For life on earth they have traded an eternal passion."¹ Dickey goes to great length to explore the classical and medieval modifications of the play to show that Renaissance audiences would probably be inclined to picture the lovers as examples "... of lust, of cruelty, of prodigality, of drunkenness, of vanity, and, in the end, of despair."² Audiences would hardly expect to see Antony and Cleopatra as "... patterns of nobility and of a deathless love..."³ Shakespeare could have changed the Antony-Cleopatra theme, but Dickey does not think he did. He believes that "... Antony and Cleopatra are examples of rulers who threw away a kingdom for lust, and this is how, despite the pity and terror which Shakespeare makes us feel, they appear in his

¹Franklin Dickey, Not Wisely But Too Well (San Marino, California, 1957), pp. 144-145.
²Ibid., pp. 159-160. ³Ibid., p. 159.
play. A declining and effeminate Antony neglects his third of the world for an infinitely varied Cleopatra. Near the end of his analysis, however, Dickey points out that Antony attains a kind of nobility in death that he only reaches intermittently in the play, and Cleopatra's love becomes "... more than a combination of lust and cunning." He concludes...

The only flaw in Dickey's analysis of the play is his failure to take into account the ennobling power of love. He fails to take into account that Shakespeare has added a new dimension to the old materials from which the play is drawn. Instead of passions leading to the downfall of man, they lead to a recognition of man's true identity. Once a man has viewed his better self, he must be constant in love, to paraphrase John Vyvyan's words. For Vyvyan, constancy means that the lovers not only must be faithful to one another but

---

4 Ibid., p. 179.  
5 Ibid., p. 198.  
6 Ibid.  
7 Ibid., pp. 201-202.  
also must be in one another's presence continually. In this sense then, Antony breaks constancy in his love for Cleopatra when the affairs at Rome reach such a state that he feels compelled to leave Cleopatra for his political interests. On the other hand, Antony never ceases being either faithful or constant in his love for Cleopatra, even though he marries Octavia. His inmost feelings are for Cleopatra, despite the fact that he marries Octavia in order to hold his empire together. Through the alchemy of love Antony has been refined, at the time of his death, to the degree that he very nearly has become the paragon that Cleopatra imagines him to be in the dream she relates to Dolabella. Cleopatra, in her turn, in death achieves a kind of secular apotheosis.

In the play two gigantic figures, leaders of different worlds, come together: Mark Antony, Triumvir of the Roman Empire in charge of the opulent East, and Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt and a creature of gaiety, enchantment, and passion. In the view of his men Antony should still be representative of the control and reason of Roman culture. As the play opens, Philo, speaking to Demetrius, concludes that Antony is not the warrior he once was. When he could be out winning battles and ruling his great empire, he wastes his time in Egypt with Cleopatra. It is natural that Antony's soldiers feel this way about him. After all, they are soldiers, and their duty is to fight. His warriors knew him before he knew Cleopatra, before he knew himself. And as the fate of
Enobarbus indicates, they never really understand the later Antony. They do not know that Antony has found his better self in the Egyptian.

It is fitting that when we meet these two great lovers they are talking of love. Gaily they speak of love with an ease similar to the ease with which Romeo and Juliet first confessed their love. Cleopatra asks Antony how much he loves her. His love cannot be measured; if it must be, then new heaven, new earth must be found for the measurement. Their love, says Antony, is divine as well as earthly. Syncretic Neoplatonists believed that "... the perfect love of souls [was] actually inseparable from, or dependent upon, the love of bodies." This is the kind of love Antony speaks of. Interrupted by a messenger from Rome, Antony does not want to hear from them. Life in terms of Rome and Fulvia holds no meaning.

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space. Kingdoms are clay: our dungy earth alike Feeds beast as man: the nobleness of life Is to do thus; when such a mutual pair And such a twain can do't, in which I bind, On pain of punishment, the world to meet We stand up peerless.

(I,i,33-40)

Antony has found the nobleness of his existence, not in extending the border of empire or in controlling Rome but in loving Cleopatra. According to Ficino, mutual lovers find

---

themselves in their beloved. Both Antony and Cleopatra have definitely found themselves in love. Antony wants the world to notice that their relationship is without parallel.

Always chiding Antony about his marital state, Cleopatra is aware that Fulvia is not really important to him. "I'll seem the fool I'm not. . . ." (I,i,42) To others, Cleopatra must seem foolish, but she knows that she, not Fulvia, is bound by eternal ties to Antony. When he is with her, "Antony will be himself." (I,i,42-43)

Not wanting to waste any of their precious time together, Antony sends away the ambassadors from Rome so that he can be with his infinitely varied Cleopatra,

Whom every thing becomes, to chide, to laugh,  
To weep; whose every passion fully strives  
To make itself, . . . .  

(I,i,49-51)

In Scene ii Antony hears from the messengers from Rome that Fulvia first fought Antony's brother Lucius, then joined forces with him against Caesar. While Caesar was distracted, the Parthian forces under Labienus were extending their empire. A second messenger brings Antony the news that Fulvia has died. Antony has wished her dead before, but now that she is gone he thinks of her as a "great spirit." The business she has broached in the empire will not endure his absence. Thinks the reasonable Roman, not Antony, "I

must from this enchanting queen break off: / Ten thousand harms, more than the ills I know, / My idleness doth hatch."  
(I, ii, 133-134) Antony is in a paradoxical situation. He has found himself in Cleopatra, but his Roman reason tells him that he neglects his empire to stay in Egypt.

Calling Enobarbus to him, Antony tells him that they must leave. Not believing his master, Enobarbus claims that if they leave, it will certainly kill the women. True, Cleopatra has used her "dying" trick for her own gains before, and she probably will again. Although she uses trickery, Enobarbus observes of her:

. . . her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love: we cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report: this cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a shower of rain as well as Jove.

(I, ii, 151-147)

It is love that makes Cleopatra capable of infinite acts. Antony wishes he had never seen her. Enobarbus assures him, "O, sir, you had then left unseen a wonderful piece of work. . . ." (I, ii, 159-160) Antony insists that he must leave. What Fulvia started in Rome must have his attention. Enobarbus replies, "And the business you have broached here cannot be without you; especially that of Cleopatra's, which wholly depends on your abode." (I, ii, 180-182)

Sensing that Fulvia has called Antony home, Cleopatra, not giving him opportunity to speak, rails at Antony.
Nay, pray you, seek no colour for your going,
But bid farewell, and go: when you sued staying,
Then was the time for words: no going then;
Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brow's bent; none our parts so poor,
But was a race of heaven: they are so still,
Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,
Art turn'd the greatest liar.

(I,iii,32-39)

In effect, Cleopatra is saying that love of the highest order belongs to them, and she insists that by his leaving Antony denies their love. He turns his back on his true self in Cleopatra. Antony carefully points out the necessity of his going. Resolved that he will go, Cleopatra begs one word of Antony.

Sir, you and I must part, but that's not it;  
Sir, you and I have loved, but there's not it;  
That you know well: something it is I would,—  
O, my oblivion is a very Antony,  
And I am all forgotten.

(I,iii,86-90)

Breaking down, Cleopatra does not think she can exist without him; truly she cannot. She reminds Antony of the power she has over him, but Antony feels that to stay with Cleopatra would be pure idleness when the empire demonstrably needs him. Realizing that Antony's honor is calling him away from her, Cleopatra reluctantly releases her hold on him:

Your honour calls you hence;  
Therefore be deaf to my unpitied folly,  
And all the gods go with you! upon your sword  
Sit laurel victory! and smooth success  
Be strew'd before your feet!

(I,iii,97-101)
Cleopatra feels that without Antony in her presence something will be lacking in their love. Antony assures her that no matter where he goes Cleopatra will go with him. Although Cleopatra stays in Alexandria, Antony's love will remain with her. "Our separation so abides, and flies,/That thou, residing here, go' st yet with me,/And I, hence fleet- ing, here remain with thee." (I,iii,102-104) So Antony leaves, hoping by returning to Rome to straighten out his affairs.

Meanwhile in Rome, receiving news that Antony lives in idleness while the empire crumbles, Octavius Caesar and Lepidus remember occasions when Antony was more of a man than he presently appears. Existing without adequate food or water for a period of time did not even faze him in the past. No more does he seem to be a reasonable man. They do not understand the change that has been wrought within him. They can wait for Antony no longer. If Antony will not help them, then Caesar and Lepidus must take matters into their own hands.

In the final scene of Act I, Cleopatra begs her handmaiden to give her mandragora to help her while away the time that Antony is apart from her. For Cleopatra, life is a void without Antony. She wonders what he is doing in Rome, what he is thinking. Does he think of her? Her thoughts are interrupted as Alexas brings a message and a gift from Antony.
"Say, the firm Roman to great Egypt sends
This treasure of an oyster; at whose foot,
To mend the petty present, I will piece
Her opulent throne with kingdoms; all the east,
Say thou, shall call her mistress."

(I,v,43-47)

Cleopatra hangs on Alexas' every word, delighting to hear that Antony is neither too happy nor too sad. He must, she concludes, be thinking of her as she does of him.

Speaking to one of her ladies in waiting, Cleopatra wonders if she ever loved Caesar as much as she now loves Antony. Distressed by Charmian's praise of Caesar, Cleopatra concludes when she was younger she did praise Caesar, but those were her "salad days" when she "... was green in judgment..." (I,v,74) Now she knows what it really means to lose oneself in love and in her lover find new meaning in existence. Cleopatra never truly loved till now.

In Rome Agrippa proposes a means of cementing the fidelity of Octavius and Antony. Antony should simply marry Octavia, the recently widowed sister of Octavius, to which Antony readily agrees. Caesar, Antony, and Lepidus leave at once to discuss the matter with Octavia. Remaining onstage is Enobarbus who describes for Agrippa and Maecenas Cleopatra's first meeting with Mark Antony. She was beautiful beyond description.

... She did lie
In her pavilion--cloth-of-gold of tissue--
O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
The fancy outwork nature: on each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid did... .
Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
So many mermaids, tended her i' the eyes,
And what they undid did. . . .
A seeming mermaid steers: the silken tackle
Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands,
That yarely frame the office.

(II, ii, 203-216)

Here Shakespeare employs richly decorative language to
describe Cleopatra. Everyone in the marketplace is awed by
her stunning beauty, the lavishness of the scene. Through
messenger Antony invited her to have supper with him that
night, and she refused, urging him to dine with her. Supping
with her that one night, Antony saw even more than the
multitude along the Nile saw. As Romeo found his love in
the eyes of Juliet, so Antony found his love. Knowing how
deply Antony still feels for Cleopatra, Enobarbus realizes
that if he marries Octavia it will be for political expedi-
cency only.

Never; he will not [leave her]:
Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety: other women cloy
The appetites they feed; but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies. . . .

(II, ii, 239-243)

From Italy comes a messenger telling Cleopatra of
Antony's marriage to Octavia. She reacts violently. She
twists the messenger's information to say what she wants it
to say about Octavia. To Cleopatra, Octavia is "... dull
of tongue and dwarfish . . ." (III, iii, 19), with a round
face, low forehead, and brown hair. A widow and nearly thirty, Octavia is no competition for majestic Cleopatra.

The Triumvirs have their meeting with Pompey, make him offer of Sicily and Sardinia if he will rid the sea of pirates and send a measure of wheat to Rome, to which Pompey agrees. They feast with one another before they part. Not knowing of Antony's decision to return to Egypt, Enobarbus prophesies to Menas, one of Pompey's men, the course Antony will follow:

He will to his Egyptian dish again: then shall the sighs of Octavia blow the fire up in Caesar; and, as I said before, that which is the strength of their amity shall prove the immediate author of their variance. Antony will use his affection where it is: he married but his occasion here.

(II,vi,134-140)

Antony takes Octavia to Athens. He learns soon after that Octavius has waged new wars against Pompey, made disparaging remarks about Antony, and jailed Lepidus. At Octavia's suggestion, Antony sends her back to Rome to see if she can patch things up while Antony prepares for battle. A preliminary battle cry sounds. Antony charges Octavius with breaking the pact with Pompey, keeping some of Antony's ships, and not asking Antony about how Lepidus ought to be handled. Counter alarms sound from the opposing side. Caesar says he will divide Lepidus' revenues with Antony, but Antony must reciprocate and divide the spoils of Armenia with Caesar. Octavia begs reconciliation of her brother with
Antony, but Octavius is already one step ahead of his sister. He knows a fact that Octavia is ignorant of; Antony has quit Athens for Alexandria. Enobarbus' prophecy has come true.

At Actium Caesar challenges Antony to fight by sea; Antony, more skillful fighting by land, decides to accept Caesar's challenge. Enobarbus thinks that Antony's confusion lies in Cleopatra's presence on the battlefield: "Your presence needs must puzzle Antony;/Take from his heart, take from his brain, from's time,/What should not then be spared."

(III,vii,11-13) What Enobarbus says has no effect on Cleopatra. She is there to look out for the needs of her kingdom. The forces clash on the high seas; and in the battle when it looks as if the tides of the war can go either way, Cleopatra turns her ship, retreats, and Antony follows.

From this point forward in the play, Antony's career as a soldier is in decline. Speaking to Cleopatra later about why he turned and fled after her, Antony said:

*Egypt, thou knew'st too well My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings, And thou shouldst tow me after: o'er my spirit Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods Command me.*

(III,xi,56-61)

Realizing the extent of her hold on Antony, Cleopatra sincerely begs pardon. Asking her not to cry, Antony says that he values her tears above everything that is won or lost. "Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates/All that is won and lost: give me a kiss;/Even this repays me." (III,xi,69-71)
Antony loves Cleopatra. In a more somber tone this passage echoes Antony's earlier "Let Rome in Tiber melt . . ." but his comment is made no less sincerely at this point even though he guesses at his own tragic end. "Alack, our terrene moon/Is now eclipsed; and it portends alone/The fall of Antony!" (III,xiii,153-155) Since the battle has begun, Antony feels compelled to finish it. He hopes for victory the next day. Antony wants to celebrate, but Cleopatra would just as soon have a quiet evening; "... but since my lord/Is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra." (III,xiii,186-187)

Still feeling guilty over her role at Actium, Cleopatra wants to know if it were her fault or Antony's that Actium was lost. Enobarbus replies that the full blame rests with Antony. In desperation Antony challenges Caesar to a duel. Caesar sends Thyreus to persuade Cleopatra to give up Antony, but Antony discovers what Thyreus is up to, beats him, and sends him back to Caesar. The duel being refused, Antony prepares for a final battle. As the external political situation becomes more desperate for Antony, his love for Cleopatra becomes more poignant. Enobarbus cannot bear to see the great Antony torn by his love for Cleopatra, on the one hand, and his love of Rome, on the other. The only end Enobarbus can possibly see for Antony is tragic.

To be furious,
Is to be frighted out of fear; and in that mood
The dove will peck the estridge; and I see still,
A diminution in our captain's brain
Restores his heart: when valour preys on reason, It eats the sword it fights with. I will seek Some way to leave him. (III,xiii,195-201)

Like others of Antony's army, Enobarbus deserts and joins Caesar. Antony sends after him his treasure. Enobarbus is moved by Antony's magnanimity towards him despite his moral turpitude in leaving him at such a dark hour. He scorns himself for not remaining faithful. "O Antony,/Nobler than my revolt is infamous,/Forgive me in thine own particular;/But let the world rank me in register/A master-leaver and a fugitive:/O Antony! O Antony!" (IV, ix,18-23) Enobarbus dies of a broken heart.

Returning from his first minor successes in battle, Antony is greeted by Cleopatra. "Lord of Lord!/O infinite virtue, comest thou smiling from/The world's great snare uncaught?" (IV,viii,16-18) She presents one of Antony's warriors with armor of gold. The imperial couple make merry.

Octavius plans wise strategy. Rather than send his own forces to the impending sea fight, he resolves to send Antony's deserters. Rather than fight, Antony's forces quickly yield, ". . . and yonder/They cast their caps up and carouse together/Like friends long lost." (IV,xii,11-13) Thinking that Cleopatra has betrayed him, Antony rages at her.

Charmian advises Cleopatra that she lock herself in her monument and send Antony word that she is dead. Perhaps if
she resorts to one of her old tricks, she can be restored to Antony's good graces. Cleopatra instructs Mardian to go to Antony. "Mardian, go tell him I have slain myself;/Say that the last I spoke was 'Antony,'/And word it, prithee, piteously: hence, Mardian,/And bring me how he takes my death."

(IV,xiii,7-10) Still furious at Cleopatra, Antony claims that she robbed him of his sword. "No Antony;/My mistress loved thee, and her fortunes mingled/With thine entirely."


Hearing the news, Antony is overcome with emotion. "The seven-fold shield of Ajax cannot keep/The battery from my heart. O, cleave, my sides!/Heart, once be stronger than thy continent/ Crack thy frail case!" (IV,xiv,38-41) Antony resolves to follow her. "I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and/Weep for my pardon. So it must be, for now/All length is torture: since the torch is out. . . ." (IV,xiv,44-46)

For Antony, Cleopatra has been his light of life. Since that light is out, he must also snuff out the light of his own earthly life. Antony is willing to sacrifice his physical self for love, but life does not end in death.

--Stay for me:
Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze:
Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
And all the haunts be ours.

(IV,xiv,50-54)

Antony calls on his soldier Eros to kill him. To
". . . escape the sorrow/Of Antony's death . . ." (IV,xiv, 94-95), Eros kills himself; so Antony gives himself a mortal
wound. In the meantime, worried about Antony's safety, Cleopatra sends Diomedes to him.

Before he dies, Antony's soldiers take him to Cleopatra's monument and lift him up to the grieving queen. "So should it be," chokes Cleopatra, "that none but Antony/Should conquer Antony; but woe 'tis so!" (IV,xv,16-17) Since Antony is as great and as powerful as the gods, he is unconquerable. Only Antony can triumph over Antony. Even at that, the triumph is merely temporary because Antony very quickly passes through the portal of death into eternal life. As the separation of the lovers takes place—Antony in death, Cleopatra in life—Antony loses some of his lightness.

How heavy weighs my lord!
Our strength is all gone into heaviness,
That makes the weight: had I great Juno's power,
The strong-wing'd Mercury should fetch thee up,
And set thee by Jove's side.

(IV,xv,32-36)

Antony belongs with the gods. If she had the power, Cleopatra would put him among the immortals. Of mortals Antony ranks as the best.

The crown o' the earth doth melt. My lord!
O, wither'd is the garland of the war,
The soldier's pole is fall'n: young boys and girls
Are level now with men; the odds is gone,
And there is nothing left remarkable
Beneath the visiting moon.

(IV,xv,63-68)

Cleopatra resolves that since her "... lamp is spent ..." (IV,xv,85) she, too, will make the sacrifice.
Going to Caesar, Dercetas tells of Antony's death. Maecenas observes about Antony, "His taints and honours/
Waged equal with him." (V,i,30-31) Agrippa says of him, "A rarer spirit never/Did steer humanity: but you, gods, will
give us/Some faults to make us men." (V,i,31-33) Caesar is also moved by Antony's death.

Caesar sends Proculeius to Cleopatra to comfort her and see that she does not do harm to herself. He is followed by Dolabella, who makes clear to Cleopatra Caesar's plans for her. Realizing her great grief, Dolabella listens patiently as Cleopatra praises her lover.

His face was as the heavens; and therein stuck
A sun and moon, which kept their course, and lighted
The little O, the earth...
His legs bestrid the ocean: his rear'd arm
Crested the world: his voice was proprietyed
As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,
There was no winter in 't; an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping: his delights
Were dolphin-like; they show'd his back above
The element they lived in: in his livery
Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates dropp'd from his pocket. (V,ii,79-92)

In his matter-of-fact Roman way Dolabella denies that there was ever such a man. Cleopatra knows that men like Antony are measured more by the spirit than by the terms of mortal men.

Not wishing to be led through Caesar's empire as Antony's whore, Cleopatra decides, "I am again for Cydnus,/To meet Mark Antony. . . ." (V,ii,228-229) Dressed in her best
queenly attire, Cleopatra gives final audience to a simple rural fellow who gains entrance past the guards by pretending to be bringing her majesty some figs. Contained in the clown's basket is Cleopatra's method of returning to her husband, the asps.

What poor an instrument
May do a noble deed: he brings me liberty.  
My resolution's placed, and I have nothing
Of woman in me: now from head to foot
I am marble-constant; now the fleeting moon
No planet is of mine.

(V,iii,236-241)

The moon, symbol of inconstancy, is no longer part of Cleopatra. Her love is constant, solid as marble. With her sacrifice Cleopatra, true to her best self, brings order to the world. That order will be achieved under the rule of Octavius Caesar. As she approaches Mark Antony in death, she becomes light enough for a heavenly flight. "I am fire and air; my other elements/I give to baser life." (V,ii,292-293) Charmian refers to her as the "eastern star."

Cleopatra rises in the death act. The asps, Cleopatra refers to as babies; new life is being revealed to her.

Charmian bids her good-bye.

So, fare thee well.

Now boast thee, death, in thy possession lies
A lass unparallel'd. Downy windows, close;
And golden Phoebus never be beheld
Of eyes again so royal!

(V,ii,317-321)

Of Cleopatra's death, Charmian observes, "It is well done,
and fitting for a princess/Descended of so many royal kings." (V,ii,329-330)

Caesar is summoned to the scene, but he is too late;
". . . she looks like sleep,/As she would catch another
Antony/In her strong toil of grace." (V,ii,349-351) Caesar decides, "She shall be buried by her Antony:/No grave upon
the earth shall clip in it/A pair so famous." (V,ii,361-363)

Further,

High events as these
Strike these that make them: and their story is
No less in pity than his glory which
Brought them to be lamented. Our army shall
In solemn show attend this funeral;
And then to Rome. Come, Dolabella, see
High order in this great solemnity. (V,ii,363-369)

Antony and Cleopatra are mature lovers in comparison
with naive and inexperienced Romeo and Juliet. Their love
affair had been in existence prior to the opening of the
play. Again and again in Antony and Cleopatra one finds that
the imperial couple owe their highest allegiance to love.
They are so raised and ennobled in their relationship that
no manmade law can contain them. Secondly, the lovers find
that their love is indestructible. Near the end of the play
when it is obvious that Antony and Cleopatra will meet with
tragic ends, their love becomes stronger. Love transcends
physical death for the lovers. Finally, the lives of Antony
and Cleopatra attain harmony as a result of their love.
Neither Antony nor Cleopatra knew the true meaning of exis-
tence before they met and loved.
CHAPTER IV

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

Love in Romeo and Juliet triumphs over the family feud and general chaos in Verona. By contrast, in Troilus and Cressida love succumbs to the ravages and treachery of war. Ironically the Trojan War started because Paris, son of King Priam, desired of the gods the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen, the wife of Greek King Menelaus. Her abduction precipitated chaos in Troy. Troilus and Cressida is more than just the single love story of true Troilus and false Cressid. Their personal love story develops against a background of an ignoble and ugly war that has soured and corrupted almost everything and everyone it has touched. In addition to Troilus and Cressida, Paris and Helen, Achilles and his male varlet Patroclus, and finally Hector and Andromache cannot remain constant in love. It seems almost ridiculous that there is anything edifying in any of the love relationships. However, it is possible to show that most of the Greeks as well as the Trojans have glimpses of their true identities. The tragedy of Troilus and Cressida lies in the characters' realizing their true identity but not remaining constant in love. First of all, the war began because of a false relationship. Paris was awarded Helen because
she just happened to be the most beautiful woman in the world. Shakespeare's play begins eight years after the beginning of the war. Although Paris desired Helen for her beauty, one does not have to believe that love existed between the two. The tainted love of Paris and Helen indirectly blights almost all personal relationships in the play, including the germinal love of Troilus and Cressida. The war has dragged on for eight years. It continues without much change because important people on both sides--Greek and Trojan--are not true to themselves or their professed ideals.

Opening in medias res, the play makes the audience aware that Troilus has a great longing for Cressida. He explains to Pandarus why he does not fight. Let "... each Trojan that is master of his heart ..." (I.i,4) fight, but not me. Troilus' mind is on other things than war, chiefly Cressida. "Patience herself, what goddess e'er she be,/ Doth lesser blench at sufferance than I do./At Priam's royal table do I sit;/And when fair Cressid comes into my thoughts,--/ So, traitor! 'When she comes!' When is she thence?" (I,i,27-31) He suffers without her and plainly cannot control his thoughts and dreams of her once she has entered his mind. Pandarus makes Troilus a little more miserable than he already is by feeding the young man's infatuation. He never misses an opportunity to plant thoughts of Cressida in the mind of Troilus. Like Romeo with Rosaline, Troilus suffers
from the torments of unrequited love. Like Romeo, too, Troilus has someone who listens and tries to understand his ailment. He explains that his hopes of possessing his beloved are drowned. He cannot imagine that Cressida will ever love him, but he insists to Pandarus,

I tell thee I am mad
In Cressid's love: thou answer'st "she is fair;"
Pour'st in the open ulcer of my heart
Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice,
Handlest in thy discourse; O, that her hand,
In whose comparison all whites are ink,
Writing their own reproach, to whose soft seizure
The cygnet's down is harsh and spirit of sense
Hard as the palm of ploughman: this thou tell'st me,
As true thou tell'st me, when I say I love her;
But, saying thus, instead of oil and balm,
Thou lays't in every gash that love hath given me
The knife that made it.

(I,i,51-63)

Troilus has the madness that the lover in Plato's Phaedrus had--the madness of love.\(^1\) When Pandarus talks of Cressid's physical attributes, "... her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice ..." (I,i,54), Troilus becomes melancholic. Like the lover in the Phaedrus, he can be relieved of such pain only by the presence of his beloved.\(^2\) Only in the presence of Cressida can he find happiness in place of wretchedness. Pandarus does not understand that talking of Cressid is agonizing for Troilus. He thinks that because


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 489.
Troilus does not want him to talk of her beauty, he does not think her fair.

Realizing how important Pandar is in the love suit, Troilus asks

What Cressid is, what Pandar, and what we?
Her bed is India; there she lies, a pearl:
Between our Ilium and where she resides,
Let it be call'd the wild and wandering flood,
Ourself the merchant, and this sailing Pandar
Our doubtful hope, our convoy and our bark.
(I,i,102-107)

To have what Cressid possesses is Troilus' desire. Her gifts are priceless, but to receive these gifts Troilus must go through tetchy Pandarus. This is a crucial stage for Troilus. If he does not soon get relief from his anguish, if his love is not reciprocated he will fall into lover's melancholy or even the lover's malady. On the other hand, if there is mutuality in their love, it may blossom into a genuinely ennobling love.

Meanwhile, discussing the attributes of the great warrior Hector, the Lady Cressida and her servant Alexander are joined by Pandarus. Uncle Pandar tries to convince disinterested Cressida that Troilus is a finer man than Hector. "Troilus is the better man of the two." (I,ii,63-64) Further he feels that Hector possesses some of the qualities of Troilus; and although he admits that Hector may be himself, poor Troilus is not. "Himself! no, he's not himself. . . ." (I,ii,82); but if Pandarus were Cressid, he would instantaneously claim Troilus for his own. Because Hector is
older, he may seem the better man, but Troilus has more wit and beauty than Hector. Why even Helen has praised Troilus' complexion above that of Paris'! Seeing that Cressid does not readily accept this theory, Pandarus claims, "I swear to you, I think Helen loves him better than Paris." (I,ii,116-117) Continues Pandarus, "I think his smiling becomes him better than any man. . . ." (I,ii,133-134)

"O, he smiles valiantly," (I,ii,135) agrees Cressida. Hoping that Cressid has considered the offer he made to her concerning Troilus, Pandarus tells her of Troilus' weeping condition without her. "And I'll spring up in his tears, and 'twere a nettle against May." (I,ii,190-191) In other words, her true identity may grow through his eyes, but in the summer of their love Troilus will find her a weed rather than a flower.

As the soldiers return from the battlefield, Pandarus points out who each is. Aeneas is one of the flowers of Troy; Antenor possesses shrewd wit and sound judgment; from Hector's countenance anyone can tell he is a brave man; Paris also is gallant; Helenus is a good enough warrior, but he is really a priest. Finally Troilus sneaks by. Quickly Pandarus overlooks this sneaking in his exaggerated praise of brave Troilus. If Pandar had a sister or a daughter, Troilus could have his pick. All other warriors in comparison with Troilus are "... asses, fools, dolts! chaff and
and die i' the eyes of Troilus." (I,ii,263-365) Even Achilles of the Greeks is nothing compared with Troilus.

"Well, well!" Why, have you any discretion? have you any eyes? do you know what a man is? Is not birth, beauty, good shape, discourse, manhood, learning, gentleness, virtue, youth, liberality, and such like, the spice and salt that season a man?

(I,ii,273-279)

Even these qualities do not make the whole man, Cressida realizes. She implies that without love man is nothing. Pandarus is incapable of understanding her talk. Interrupted by Troilus' boy, Pandarus takes leave of his cousin, saying that when he returns he will bring a token from Troilus. Cressida sees her uncle for what he is—a go-between.

Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love's full sacrifice, He offers in another's enterprise: But more in Troilus thousand fold I see Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be; Yet hold I off.

(I,ii,308-312)

She knows Troilus' merits without Pandar's telling her of them, but she restrains herself from showing her affections because

Women are angels, wooing: Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing. That she beloved knows nought that knows not this: Men prize the thing ungain'd more than it is: That she was never yet that ever knew Love got so sweet as when desire did sue. Therefore this maxim out of love I teach: Achievement is command; ungain'd, beseech: Then though my heart's content firm love doth bear, Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.

(I,ii,312-321)

She believes that there is more pleasure in the seeking than
in the possession of love. Once a man has found love he does not want it as much. She places love on an earthly plane. When a man wants something, dreaming of it is pure pleasure, but once that something is possessed, man realizes that, like all earthly possessions, it, too, lacks perfection. It does not bring him the greatest happiness because it is of the earth. Although it begins in the senses, love does not remain there. "Pleasure in the physical body of one's mistress [leads] to the contemplation of her true beauty—that of her soul—and this ultimately, to the ecstatic vision of the Eternal Beauty." Of such nature is love that it is both earthly and divine. As has been said before, love is capable of making man more than he is—of ennobling him. The kind of love Cressida has in mind will not progress far beyond the sensual level. However, because of her soul's divinity, she catches a glimpse of her true self in Troilus, but only a glimpse. She wants to remain true to Troilus, but she cannot.

Scene iii of Act I does not seem to pertain to the theme of love; but when the play is viewed in its larger context of love, that is, the fact that false love has brought about the Trojan War, the conference of Greek leaders is of utmost importance. The Grecian general Agamemnon wonders why Troy's

---

walls still stand after seven years of fighting. He partially answers his own question when he says that Jove tries man to see if man can find his true identity. "The fineness of which metal is not found/In fortune's love. . . ."
(I, iii, 22-23) All men lose their distinction, their true identity, when they follow what they know to be false.

Ulysses gets to the heart of the problem, claiming that Troy could have been in the hands of the Greeks long ago, but ". . . the specialty of rule hath been neglected. . . ."
(I, iii, 78) The chief Greek offender is Achilles. If all were in order in the Greek camp, Achilles would respect both Agamemnon's leadership and Nestor's age instead of mocking them.

Realizing that Achilles is not the only one who is guilty of being untrue to himself, wise Nestor says,

And in the imitation of these twain--
Who, as Ulysses says, opinion crowns
With an imperial voice--many are infect.
Ajax is grown self-will'd, and bears his head
In such a rein, in full as proud a place
As broad Achilles; keeps his tent like him;
Makes factious feasts; rails on our state of war,
Bold as an oracle, and sets Thersites,
A slave whose gall coins slanders like a mint,
To match us in comparisons with dirt,
To weaken and discredit our exposure,
How rank soever rounded in with danger.
(I, iii, 185-196)

It is no wonder that the Greeks have not made any headway in the struggle.

Coming into their midst, Aeneas brings from Troy Hector's challenge. Hector wants to meet in battle one ". . . that
loves his mistress more than in confession,/With truant vows
to her own lips he loves,/And dare avow her beauty and her
worth/In other arms than hers..." (I,iii,269-272) Hector
claims that ". . . he hath a lady, wiser, fairer, truer,/Than ever Greek did compass in his arms,/And will tomorrow
with his trumpet call/Midway between your tents and walls of
Troy,/To rouse a Grecian that is true in love..." (I,iii,275-279) Hector believes that he is true to himself in love.
This love brings order to his existence. Believing that none
of the Greeks, particularly Achilles, possesses this con-
stancy in love, Hector is confident of victory. The great
warrior Hector is constant to himself, but what he fails to
realize is that the Trojans, like the Greeks, "follow what
they know to be false." The pathos of this scene lies in
Hector's self-deception. What the scene reveals is that
even the poignant love of Hector and Adromache has here been
reduced to the empty phrases of ritual and their exemplary
devotion has in the expediency of the moment been made to
serve its turn in the mocking charades of the war.

Back in Troy King Priam reads a message from Nestor,
"'Deliver Helen, and all damage else--/As honour, loss of
time, travail, expense,/Wounds, friends, and what else dear
that is consumed/In hot digestion of this cormorant war--/
Shall be struck off.'" (II,ii,3-7) Hector thinks that they
ought to ". . . let Helen go..." (II,ii,17) The Trojans
have paid dearly for Helen, protecting her who neither be-
longs to nor profits them.

Troilus scolds Hector for using reason to counter in-
finte love. Helenus tends to agree with Hector that Helen
should be returned. Troilus, likewise, scolds his priestly
brother.

Nay, if we talk of reason,
Let's shut our gates and sleep: manhood and honour
Should have hare-hearts, would they but fat their thoughts
With this cram'd reason: reason and respect
Make livers pale and lustihood deject.

(II,ii,46-50)

Trying to convince Troilus that the war is for a shadow,
Hector continues. Just because Helen possesses the quality
of beauty, there is no reason to fight for that quality
rather than for beauty itself. But, persisting in his argu-
ment, Troilus claims that once materials are soiled they are
not then returned to the merchant. Why keep Helen? Why give
her back?

... she is a pearl,
Whose price hath launch'd above a thousand ships,
And turn'd crown'd kings to merchants.
If you'll avouch 'twas wisdom Paris went--
As you must needs, for you all cried "Go, go,"--
If you'll confess he brought home noble prize--
As you must needs, for you all clapp'd your hands,
And cried "Inestimable!"--why do you now
The issue of your proper wisdoms rate,
And do a deed that fortune never did,
Beggar the estimation which you prized
Richer than sea and land?

(II,ii,81-92)

Despite Cassandra's foretelling of the fall of Troy, Troilus
succeeds in convincing Hector that he will be contradicting
his original praise of Paris' deed if Helen is returned. In
addition, disgrace will come to Troy if Hector is afraid to keep her. The war has started; let it continue. Paris adds his comment. If he had the power to retract his act, he would not do so. What is one man's bravery in comparison with many? Further, he maintains that if he could, he would erase the rape of Helen by keeping her honorably. It would be treason to give her up just because Hector is convinced that Troy is in the wrong. No, Helen's beauty is as worth fighting for now as it was seven years ago. Regrettably Helen has become a symbol, and further has become intricately involved in that cherished but relative abstraction honor.

Realizing that their arguments are those of passionate young men, Hector also sees that Paris and Troilus do not perceive the right and the wrong of the war. "Nature craves/All dues be render'd to their owners." (II,ii,173-174) Helen is Menelaus' wife; thus, she should be returned. "To persist/In doing wrong extenuates not wrong,/But makes it much more heavy." (II,ii,186-188) Hector knows that he speaks for truth. In so doing, he remains constant to himself, and salvages something of his personal honor, but he yields to his brothers' wishes.

Troilus says of Helen,

She is a theme of honour and renown,
A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,
Whose present courage may beat down our foes,
And fame in time to canonize us;
For, I presume, brave Hector would not lose
So rich advantage of a promised glory
As smiles upon the forehead of this action
For the wide world's revenue.

(II,ii,199-206)

In the warped logic of the arguments presented in the Trojan council, there is no conclusion but that the war must go on, and if necessary everything must give way before it.

In the Greek camp it is indicative that Thersites, whose moral turpitude is all too evident, sees to the heart of the problem. All the Greeks are fools. "Agamemnon is a fool; Achilles is a fool; Thersites is a fool, and . . . Patroclus is a fool." (II,iii,62-63) He understands that there is no valid reason for the war, and its continuance just compounds the tragedy.

Here is such patchery, such juggling and such knavery! all the argument is a cuckold and a whore; a good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death upon. Now, the dry serpigo on the subject! and war and lechery confound all!

(II,iii,75-81)

Meanwhile in Troy, making arrangements for a rendezvous between Troilus and Cressida, Pandarus pays a visit to Paris and Helen, urging Paris to make excuse for Troilus if King Priam calls for him later that evening. Paris and Helen are listening to broken music. Like their relationship, the music is not quite right. Because Lord Pandarus interrupts their tête-à-tête, the couple have him perform for them. So Pandarus sings for them, and the theme of his song is love.

Love, love, nothing but love, still more!
For, O, love's bow
Shoots buck and doe;
The shaft confounds,
Not that it wounds,
But tickles still the sore.
These lovers cry Oh! oh! they die!
Yet that which seems the wound to kill,
Doth turn Oh! oh! to ha! ha! ha!
So dying love lives still:
Oh! oh! a while, but ha! ha! ha!
Oh! oh! groans out for ha! ha! ha!
Heigh-ho!

(III,i,125-138)

Pandarus' little song makes clear the kind of love that pervades the play—the love of Paris and Helen, of Troilus and Cressida, of Achilles and Patroclus, and finally the love of Hector and Andromache. None of the lovers are willing to give themselves for love. Each has too much pride, and each is deluded about himself. Love in Troilus and Cressida is not an ennobling, but a degrading love, and this in turn is reflected in the chaos and moral turpitude in both camps.

Troilus waits for Pandarus to lead him to the Lady Cressida. He is eager to see her, but he cannot go to her on his own. He must have the guidance of Pandarus. "O gentle Pandarus,/From Cupid's shoulder pluck his painted wings,/And fly with me to Cressid!" (III,ii,14-16) Troilus would not have to ask his guide to get him wings if he were really in love. He would already have sprouted a pair. It is indicative that the wings are painted wings. The entire affair is artificial. Love does not ring true. Troilus waits in the orchard while Pandarus goes to fetch Cressida. Thinking of the affair, Troilus speaks to himself:
I am giddy; expectation whirls me round.
The imaginary relish is so sweet
That it enchants my sense: what will it be,
When that the watery palate tastes indeed
Love's thrice pured nectar? death, I fear me,
Swooning destruction, or some joy too fine,
Too subtle-potent, tuned too sharp in sweetness,
For the capacity of my ruder powers:
I fear it much; and I do fear besides,
That I shall lose distinction in my joys
As doth a battle, when they charge on heaps
The enemy flying.

(III,ii,19-30)

While there is a certain attitude that almost approaches ecstasy in Troilus' anticipation of the love affair with Cressida, there is also evident a strange uncertainty and ambiguity as to how he will react to this love. Troilus is thinking much too deliberately and much too precisely for this passage to reflect a love which is genuinely exalting and ennobling.

Bringing Cressida to Troilus, Pandarus refers to her as the "prettiest villain." Troilus cannot speak, and Cressida's dialogue is uncertain. This uncertainty contrasts very vividly with the conversation between Romeo and Juliet first at the Capulet ball and later in the orchard. They have no difficulty in telling each other of their feelings, but both Troilus and Cressida are plainly afraid. They are indeed trapped by the artificial protocol of their environment.

Trying to allay her fears, Troilus urges his lady to have no reserve; "... in all Cupid's pageant there is presented no monster." (III,ii,80-81) The only thing monstrous in love is what lovers attempt in love's name. "This is the
monstruosity in love, lady, that the will is infinite and the execution confined, that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit." (III,ii,88-90) Troilus' statement is in direct opposition to the concept of the ennobling power of love. Love makes man capable of the infinite; it does not confine or limit the lovers. It is quite clear that Troilus and Cressida are so much concerned with the fears, ambiguities and limitations of love, that they can never, even under the best of conditions, transcend themselves.

Troilus at once swears constancy to Cressida. Agreeing with Troilus about the importance of constancy in love, Pandarus says that all his kindred remain true to their loved ones; "... they are burs, I can tell you; they'll stick where they are thrown." (III,ii,119-120) Cousin Cressid will prove much worse than a bur before the tragedy comes to a close. Cressida in her turn confesses her love for Troilus. "Prince Troilus, I have loved you night and day/For many weary months." (III,ii,122-123) She is ashamed of her boldness, of her thoughts. She wishes she were a man so that it would have been proper for her to confess her love sooner. Deciding she is too bold, Cressida asks that she be permitted to leave Troilus. She realizes that her prideful nature is threatened in his presence. "I have a kind of self resides with you;/But an unkind self, that itself will leave,/To be another's fool." (III,ii,155-157) She realizes
that the self that resides with Troilus, her better self, would just as soon be with any man.

Troilus senses that constancy in love is essential, but constancy is not the only element of love. However, constancy is all that poor Troilus can offer. "I am as true as truth's simplicity/And simpler than the infancy of truth." (III,ii, 176-177) He can be constant, and he says it over and over again, which leads one to believe that there is no solid base to his love, and indeed there is not. The whole affair, as the whole fabric of the play, is, as Thersites never lets us forget, reduced to the equation of a cuckold and a whore.

At this point the war intrudes upon the lovers and forces conditions upon them which they have not expected and which they are incapable of facing up to. Cressida's father Calchas, who lives in the Greek camp, requests that the Greeks exchange newly captured Antenor for his daughter. Agreeing to the trade, Agamemnon sends Diomed as ambassador of the interchange. Once in Troy Diomed travels with Paris to take possession of Cressida. Along the way they meet Aeneas. Suspecting that Troilus is with Cressida, Paris sends Aeneas ahead of the deputation to warn him. As they continue on their journey, Paris asks Diomed if he thinks he or Menelaus deserves Helen. Diomedes thinks neither should have her. Both men are causing a world of pain to their countries, according to Diomed. If Menelaus gets Helen back, he gets nothing good. If Paris keeps her, he ruins the
strain of pure Trojan blood. Helen is not worth fighting for. In the meantime, Aeneas warns Troilus of the approaching group and the import of their business. Quickly slipping away with his brother, Troilus leaves Pandarus to tell Cressida of the exchange. Troilus will die without his Cressida, says Pandarus. Cressida does not remember her father; she does not wish to go him; "... no soul so near me/As the sweet Troilus." (IV,ii,104-105) The word near is not chosen idly. Troilus does not reside within Cressida as Romeo does within Juliet, but he is near. Further, "... the strong base and building of my love/Is as the centre of the earth. ..." (IV,ii,109-110) Cressida has a glimpse of the meaning of true love, but a glimpse is all she gets.

Returning with the deputation, Troilus goes in to bring forth his lady. He says, "I'll bring her to the Grecian presently:/And to his hand when I deliver her,/Think it an altar, and thy brother Troilus/A priest there offering to it his own heart." (IV,iii,6-9) Little does he know at the time the outcome of the Diomed-Cressid relationship. The gods, claims Troilus, separate the lovers. They are jealous of such pure love. But Troilus is uneasy at the prospect of their separation. One wonders why Troilus finds it necessary to repeat his maxim. Delivering her to the Greek, Troilus tells Diomed that he should take good care of her. If he does and they meet on the battlefield, Troilus will spare
his life. If, on the other hand, Diomed were to misuse Cressida, then Troilus will make short work of him.

To the Grecian camp comes Cressida. She is warmly greeted by the Greeks—too warmly. They all take her kisses and give her their own. As earlier in the play, Ulysses sees to the core of the situation: falsity is the essence of Cressid's nature. "There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,/Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirit looks out/At every joint and motive of her body." (IV,v,55-57) She seems constitutionally incapable of constancy in love. Cressida is nothing but a whore.

Later in the Greek camp, Troilus asks Ulysses if he will lead him to Cressida. Answering that he will, Ulysses wonders if she had a lover in Troy. Quotes Troilus, "She was beloved, she loved; she is and doth:/But still sweet love is food for fortune's tooth." (IV,v,292-293) The love is not based on anything solid or lasting. With the tides love changes.

Outside of the tent of Calchas Ulysses pauses with Troilus. There concealed they watch Cressida, as does Thersites from another vantage point, as she betrays Troilus. Troilus hears Cressida and Diomedes plan a further rendezvous. He sees her whisper in his ear, stroke his cheek. Ulysses worries about how the scene is affecting Troilus. Troilus assures Ulysses, "I will not be myself, nor have cognition/
Of what I feel: I am all patience." (V,ii,62-63) He watches as Cressida gives Diomede his sleeve, the token of his love.

After Diomede leaves, Cressida remembers Troilus.

Troilus, farewell! one eye yet looks on thee; But with my heart the other eye doth see. Ah, poor our sex! this fault in us I find, The error of our eye directs our mind: What error leads must err; O, then conclude Minds sway'd by eyes are full of turpitude. (V,ii,107-112)

Something is wrong with her eyesight. She has the capacity to love Troilus. She has had a glimpse of the center of her existence, but because her vision is not accurate, she sees Troilus with one eye, but with the other herself. This is an ironic perversion of the sight and vision that engenders true love in the Platonic concept.

Troilus has difficulty realizing that Cressida is not true.

This she? no, this is Diomêd's Cressida: If beauty have a soul, this is not she; If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies, If sanctimony be the god's delight, If there be rule in unity itself, This is not she. (V,ii,137-142)

This Cressida is not the Cressida whom Troilus loves. By her unfaithfulness she loosens the bond of heaven which holds them together. She is not the Cressid that he loved; ". . . this is Diomêd's Cressida. . . ." (V,ii,137) Indeed, he never really knew her. He was constant in love, but not she.
The next day, Hector, despite forewarnings in his wife's dreams, his mother's visions, his sister's prophecy, and his father's intuition, sets off to battle. He is no longer true to himself. Hector is followed by Troilus, who is spurred on by rage to seek out the sleeve of Diomede's helm. The disharmony of the play reaches its peak as the noblest of men, Hector, meets his unchivalrous death at the hand of Achilles, who was at last awakened from his lethargy by the death of his sweet Patroclus. The play ends, but chaos and moral corruption continue. The war is not resolved because no one really wants it resolved. No one is willing to sacrifice himself for love, or for that matter for any other ideal. The play ends on a sour note. The filthy rogue Thersites sums up the feeling of the audience, "Lechery, lechery; still, wars and lechery; nothing else holds fashion: a burning devil take them." (V,ii,195-196)

In speaking of Troilus and Cressida, John Vyvyan says that order within and without is necessary to the soul. When that order is violated, tragedy occurs. Almost every character in Troilus and Cressida violates that order. Early in the play Ulysses states that the problem in the Greek camp is order. Later Hector tells the Trojans that the way to bring order to Troy is by giving up Helen. No one listens, and chaos multiplies in both camps. Violation

---

of order is the first step to calamity. Shakespeare makes it plain that to restore order in the universe the soul must be yielded to love. The corruption in the microcosm is reflected in the disorder and corruption in the body politic. In this stifling atmosphere, love, which ought to be the catalytic agent that brings harmony and order, is itself stifled and aborted.

5Ibid., p. 169. 6Ibid., p. 171.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

One can conclude with certainty that Shakespeare knew well the concept of the ennobling power of love. It is not likely that he read Plato, Plotinus, Ficino, and the later Neoplatonists with the idea in mind of developing his own concept of love. However, it is possible that he did so. It seems more reasonable to conclude, on the other hand, that, like others in the Renaissance, Shakespeare adopted the common contemporary concepts of love and used them for his own dramatic purposes. The ennobling power of love, the power that makes man more than he is, is one such concept.

It is not hard to demonstrate that an eclectic kind of Neoplatonism was readily available to Shakespeare. The ideas may be traced backward from England, to France, to Italy, and finally back to Greece. It has already been stated earlier that Shakespeare was much influenced by Platonic doctrine and particularly by the Platonic doctrine of love expressed by Marsilius Ficino and altered somewhat by the later Neoplatonists. Platonic love in the Renaissance, like Plato's original doctrine, begins with the love of the beautiful in one body perceived through the eyes.¹ Eye

contact causes love to grow. Once the lover and the beloved begin to love, they are uncomfortable unless they are in the presence of one another. In one another's presence, unless the lovers give themselves up to lust, wings begin to sprout. The growth of wings, coupled with the lightness of the lover and the beloved, is a sign that the love of the lovers is ennobling. In the Symposium Plato carefully points out that the purpose of love is not to love one person. Love proceeds upward from the love of one person to two, from two to a love of beauty in all persons. As the ladder is mounted, each preceding rung is rejected. Love ultimately leads to a contemplation of Beauty itself from which all other beauty comes. When the lover perceives the essence of true beauty, he then becomes immortal.

There are, of course, areas where Shakespeare departs from traditional Platonic doctrine. The most significant departure deals with the relation of the body in the love process. Plato, Plotinus, and Ficino believed that once the lover began to make the upward climb in love, the body was no longer needed in the love process. Like the later Neo-platonists, however, Shakespeare felt the separation of love

---

2Ibid., p. 487.

from the body impractical. 4 Shakespeare would go along with these words from John Donne's "Extasie":

To' our bodies turn wee then, that so
Weake men on love reveal'd may looke;
Loves mysteries in foules doe grow,
But yet the body is his booke.5

The concept of the ennobling power of love has as one of its basic ideas the fact that the lovers owe their highest allegiance to love. Love is above all exterior laws. If the lovers truly love, then their relationship will never die. As a result of love, the lives of the lovers will be harmonious. They will discover that they are capable of more than they would have been had they not loved. Since love makes lives harmonious, it also has the power to bring peace to the world of the lovers. Love affects both the microcosm and the macrocosm. Finally, if love is the right kind, the lovers have the power through love to raise themselves so that their love becomes more than just a love of persons but a love of God. Man is capable of attaining perfection through love, but often some external force in his world makes him turn his back on love for awhile. The extent to which he renounces love for chaos in his being is the measure of his tragedy.

Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet* as a young man, and in comparison with *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Troilus and Cressida* it is a simple play. There is only one story thread that Shakespeare spins in *Romeo and Juliet*, and his language and style are simple but beautiful. Romeo suffers from love melancholy as a result of his relations with Rosaline. He loves her, but his love is not returned. Discovering Juliet, Romeo perceives true beauty. His wings begin to sprout. He becomes light and airy. Through love Romeo becomes capable of that which seems impossible. The lovers discover themselves in each other. The balcony scene is one that shines incandescently in the night, but the light of their love, at least on earth, does not stay bright. It is nearly put out by the family feud that forces Romeo to break constancy in love. The light does not return until near the end of the play. The Capulet tomb glows like a lantern as Romeo and Juliet join each other in death. Through the sacrifice Romeo and Juliet demonstrate that their highest allegiance is to love. Love and peace are restored to the families through the sacrifice of the lovers, but their love is indestructible. It, like the lovers, continues to exist after death.

*Antony and Cleopatra* contains many of the elements of the ennobling power of love, but, like the mature playwright, Shakespeare's mature tragedy is much more subtle than his earlier work. Antony is completely happy in his existence
with Cleopatra until he hears of the wars that Fulvia has waged in his name against Caesar. Along with news of Fulvia's death, Antony feels compelled to leave Cleopatra and return to Rome. Against the advice of faithful Enobarbus and the wish of his Egyptian enchantress, Antony leaves Cleopatra for Rome. In trying to bring order to his empire and patch up arguments between himself and Octavius, Antony agrees to Agrippa's suggestion to marry Octavia, available sister of Octavius. The purely political marriage merely compounds Antony's tragedy. Distressed enough by Antony's absence, Cleopatra cannot understand why Antony has married Octavia when he is, in reality, married to Egypt. As quickly as he sees that his efforts in restoring peace among the Triumvirs is in vain, Antony leaves Athens for Alexandria and his peace. Octavius, in the meantime, has disposed of the weaker third of the Triumvirate. He is not satisfied with sharing his lordship of the world. In a vain attempt to regain slipping kingdoms, Antony goes to battle at sea with Octavius and loses. Thinking that Cleopatra has betrayed him for Caesar, Antony is driven to despair. He forgives all when he hears falsely of her death. Antony resolves to end his life. After the death blow is struck, Antony learns that his Egypt still lives. Close to her in her monument he is lifted in love to Cleopatra, who realizes in perhaps
the purest love poetry in English that none beneath heaven compares with Antony. Following Antony's example, Cleopatra resolves to sacrifice herself for love rather than continue a meaningless existence without Antony. Cleopatra joins him in death. Through death love lives. For the lovers their highest loyalty is to love. Truly their love is everlasting.

In *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare skillfully interweaves two stories. The war theme seems to overpower the love theme, but war for Shakespeare is a sign of chaos existing in the cosmos. Since love does not reign in the lives of the lovers, chaos in the person of war prevails in the universe. The Trojan War began because of the false relationship of Helen and Paris. Throughout the play, commentators—Ulysses for the Greeks and Hector for the Trojans—urge that the way to bring order out of chaos is to give Helen back to her rightful husband Menelaus, but neither side is willing to give up the promise of glory to restore peace. So the war wages on. Troilus, son of King Priam, like Romeo, suffers from unrequited love at the beginning of the play. His pain is eased somewhat by Lord Pandarus, who arranges a meeting between his cousin, the Lady Cressid, and the sorrowful Troilus. Much to Troilus' surprise, Cressida quickly confesses her love for him, and they spend one happy night together. Because Troilus is one of the major advocates on the Trojan side for keeping Helen and continuing the war,
Troilus loses his beloved in a war exchange—Antenor for Cressida. Because of her misdirected eyesight, Cressida becomes all that she can become in view of the circumstances—a whore. Hidden with Ulysses, Troilus watches Cressida give the Greek Diomedes a sleeve, the symbol of Troilus’ constancy in love. This Cressida is not the Cressida Troilus loves. Cressida, who has already broken constancy in love, forces Troilus by her action to break constancy with himself. No one, not even Hector, is willing to sacrifice himself for love so that order and peace will be restored in the cosmos. Hector, who pleads with his brothers to return Helen to the Greeks, finally agrees to go along with the wishes of Paris and Troilus although he knows right from wrong. Right is returning Helen; wrong is keeping her. Hector is murdered on the battlefield by lazy Achilles who, after his dear Patroclus is killed, sets out for revenge. An ugly and ignoble war has soured the entire play, including the lovers. Love never has a chance to develop in Troilus and Cressida. At the end as at the outset of the play wars and lechery prevail. What else but chaos can reign when love fails?

What the totality of these three plays indicates is that the theme of the ennobling power of love exercised a considerable interest for Shakespeare. In at least three plays the theme is a dominant one. Critics have recognized the importance of love as a theme in these plays to the extent that it is fairly common to see them referred to as
the "love tragedies." It has been the contention of this thesis that the theme of the ennobling power of love has not been sufficiently isolated and singled out as the single most important idea about love in the plays. This thesis has demonstrated that the plays cannot be fully understood outside the context of this theme. It is impossible to fully understand the major character development in these plays without realizing the shaping power of love on Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra or the lack of it on Troilus and Cressida. The theme of the ennobling power of love even has an influence on the dramatic and structural development of the plays. This is evident mainly in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra* in that the action rises toward a climax chiefly from the rising development of the love affairs and not usually from the external action of the plays. Clearly, Shakespeare believes that the ennobling power of love is the most important force in the universe.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Knight, George Wilson, The Imperial Theme, London, Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1951.


**Articles**


Encyclopedia Articles

