

**THEME OF
LOVE, TIME AND MUTABILITY
IN THE WORKS OF
SHAKESPEARE AND DONNE**

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Time watches from the shadow
And coughs when you would kiss.

W.H.Auden 'Song' _____

More than in any previous age, it was during the Renaissance that man became truly conscious of his inner potential and of an existential situation enveloping him. While the inner potential was his exciting possession that meant to be worked out in the best possible way and on the largest possible canvas, the outer existential situation, understood in terms of time and space, i.e. of temporal and spatial circumstances more often than not pressed upon him as a limiting, frustrating, even a maddeningly agonising factor over which he had hardly any control. Thus even as he became aware of the power of awakening that love brought him, he could not remain insensitive to the destructive power of time and circumstances. Love's ebullient strength, he was anguished to realize,

lay at the mercy of time and change. Indeed, never before in human history did man feel so cheated of his dues, never before did he hear the winged chariot of time hurrying near as menacingly. And never before did he cry out as plangently.

Love is one of the most powerful themes in Shakespeare's plays and poems and can indeed be seen as the real motor of some of his creations. And Donne is pre-eminently the poet of love. As Renaissance artists, both were haunted by the frightening awareness of time's destruction. They show, among other things, what chances Love has under the tyranny of time.

An exploration of the theme of love, time and mutability in the works of Shakespeare and Donne could be of absorbing interest. We are conscious of the extensive range of scholarship available to us in the field. While we will naturally draw heavily on the existing scholarship, we will not fail to make our own individual explorations of the texts and we may be able, in the process, to bring some touch of freshness to our understanding of these two great authors in their distinctly individual treatments of love and time.

What is Love? What is Time? What is Mutability? - These questions, although vital, need not take us into a philosophical Augean stable. It would not even be appro-

priate to treat them as philosophical concepts here any more than we should expect Shakespeare and Donne to write their poems or plays as philosophical works. Shakespeare was a professional playwright, and Donne rendered into poetry thoughts and feelings which others would confide in personal diaries. But they were not less alive to the scientific and philosophical novelties of their day than we are to the happenings across our world today. In fact, there was very little area of the human landscape not visited by the exploring imagination of Shakespeare or the dialectical intellect of Donne. And they were (as poets often are) unusually more sensitive to their environments than their more 'fortunate' contemporaries in the circle of society that mattered were, with the result that they reacted in ways dictated by their individual temperaments. Shakespeare, not necessarily owing to a philosophical bent of mind, possessed the peculiar ability of emotional detachment necessary for an objective assessment of life - a phenomenon Keats has found convenient to call 'Negative Capability':

that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason.¹

For there is more to life than what any man can take for granted, understand or even believe is possible. This may

be the reason why tragedy loses much of its excess in Shakespeare. "A strong faith tends to render tragedy impossible", says G. Wilson Knight.² To a man whose knowledge of life lends him the capability to accept life in all its aspects, the agony and the ecstasy, faith comes naturally: faith in human nature, faith in the future, faith in evil - provided that man 'distils it out'. The singularity of Shakespeare as a dramatist is that even the darkest of his tragedies end in optimistic expectancy of a regenerated society after the ideal catharses have taken effect.

Where does this universal empathy in Shakespeare derive from? It was perhaps Dryden who first answered this question, when in his famous encomium he attributes to him "the largest and the most comprehensive soul" which, by implication, assumes the nature of a microcosm of humanity. If it is true that our opinions of others and the world at large are modified projections of our egos, we may not have to seek farther than Shakespeare's own heart for the fountain of this universal goodwill and understanding. In that case, it would make little difference were the Beauteous Friend of the Sonnets more responsive to the Poet's pleadings than being "too much in love with himself to get married and be bound to a particular woman".³

mary In the case of Donne too, undone as he was for loving too well, it has been a fond conceit with him to place himself in his mistress's heart and eyes as a way of perfecting the desired union. Or sometimes the union is sanguinarily achieved inside the body of the flea which has bitten him and later his mistress. And drops of farewell tears bearing their images dissolve into each other symbolically.

The nature of 'love' in the works of Shakespeare and Donne is of the kind familiar to all men and women, ranging from the primary instinct of procreation to a higher and nobler attribute conducive to social harmony. While the main action takes place in terms of normal relationship between man and woman, which has more or less been the limit of courtly love, the lovers in the works of Shakespeare and Donne are more ambitious of reaching a higher plane of happiness than what physical consummation of love can afford. Ironically, love pursued for the sake of the senses tends to destroy the very end of it: the satisfaction of total union. For it is realized, perhaps sooner than desired, that after all lovers' union is of a higher order than physical experience, the highest moment of which slips through the fingers like a dream. When you think you have it then it is gone; but the me-

mory of it lingers, and the lovers can never be again what they were before, their love-making having left

A kinde of sorrowing dulnesse to the minde.⁴

Shakespeare too could hardly have uttered a stronger condemnation of this Ovidian amore di amore than he did in Sonnet 129 :

A bliss in proof, and prov'd, a very woe;
Before, a joy propos'd; behind, a dream.

Perhaps one should not be blamed for saying that English Love Poetry reached full maturity with Shakespeare and Donne. Sir Herbert Read appears to have no qualms in stating that

There is no aspect of love that is not covered by Shakespeare's poetry,⁵

and concurring with Grierson that

it is only in the fragments of Sapho, the lyrics of Catullus, and the songs of Burns that one will find the sheer joy of loving and being loved expressed in the same direct and simple language as in some of Donne's songs, only in Browning that one will find the same simplicity of feeling combined with a like swift and subtle dialectic.⁶

Love has come a long way from rustic courtship to its stylized conventionalization as courtly love, and thence to its liberation from the insidious dichotomy of institutionalization.

More than ever in the past, - perhaps owing to the

sharpening awareness of fresh promises of life opened up by the Renaissance humanism - the consciousness of temporality in poetry became increasingly acute and pervasive in the Elizabethan age. Sickness and wars aggravated fears of impending death. Religious pietism, instead of providing peace and security, encouraged constant fear of impending doom as a means to keep men virtuous. Medieval scholasticism had viewed pleasure, either of thought or of the senses, with suspicion, denouncing even the pursuit of earthly love. The transience of earthly joys in contrast to the permanence of the love of Christ had become conventional in poetry for almost four hundred years.⁷

Spenser
interest
his val
Love only love, and hate the filth of sin;
Give Christ your soul, that we may dwell within;
For as he bought it, sought it, seeks it, so
Shall you have bliss, and heaven in you grow.

The nature of love is this: where it is true,
It stays for ever and will not change for new.
Who holds, or once possessed, love in his mind,
Is saved from care, and heart's delight shall find.

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But fleshly love is like a flower in May,
And scarcely lasts an hour in the day:
And then desire and joy and pride lament
In lasting woe their sad predicament.⁸

A contrary reaction to the cramped feeling of being Time's

prey appeared in such popular literary motif as 'carpe diem' appearing in Herrick's 'To the Virgins, To make Much of Time' (Gather ye rosebuds while ye may), Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' (Gather therefore the Rose, whilst yet is prime - II.xii.74), Marvell's 'To his Coy Mistress'.

One It will be seen in the following chapter how the majority of Medieval poems treat of love within a religious framework, clothing it with the ideal of courtly love. This apparent dearth of secular love poems needs not be taken to mean that medieval life was exceptionally pious and chaste. The few surviving secular love-poems such as the Harley 2253 MS as well as the works of Chaucer and Spenser testify to the sensuousness of the age. Another interesting explanation has been made by John Speirs in his valuable study of Medieval English Poetry:

The a large proportion of medieval lyrics
 concl owe their preservation to having been copied
 same and kept in religious houses. The ecclesiastical
 authorities, upon whom the preservation in MS
 must largely have depended up to the end of the
 fourteenth century, would not have been parti-
 cularly concerned to preserve profane songs -
 unless these had been first sanctified, trans-
 formed into Christian songs. That may be the
 age reason why so many Christian religious lyrics
 amato have been preserved. There is little doubt that
 rtly the medieval communities as a whole were more
 pagan than appears from the written evidence

It is clear from these records [i.e. of ecclesiastical denunciations and prohibitions which indicate active opposition on the part of the Church to profane songs and dance] alone that profane song was associated with old Paganism, its rites and dances.⁹

One such poem anticipates the nineteenth Elegy of Donne:

A pleasing mouth to frame her thought,
 Lips red and true, expressly wrought
 A fine romance to read.
 As sweetly set as any known,
 Her teeth are white as whale-bone;
 Let courtly men take heed.
 Her swan-like neck is truly set,
 And longer than I ever met,
 A perfect pleasure indeed!
 I'd rather wait for her to come
 Than be the Pope and ride in Rome
 In pomp upon a steed.

The catalogue of sensuous body fills three more stanzas, concluding in a sanctimonious inducement to possess the same as a gift from God:

A man were blest in Jesu's sight
 If he could lie with her at night,
 For he'd have heaven here.¹⁰

For all its ascetic idealism the "great theocratic age of England"¹¹ could not suppress the vitality of its amatory element. Indeed, a closer inspection of the courtly ideal of love reveals gross contradictions between

of mortality and impermanence. Hence the strong and insistent cry to assert life and make the most of it. The hope of eternal happiness was exchanged for a more tangible, but ephemeral, happiness subject to an unpredictable law of mutability - by which is known the ineluctable, but highly unstable motion of a blind impersonal universe ticking away unconscionably like a clock in a ball-room.

Mutability may be stated as the law or system which explains the changes in nature and the instability of order in the universe, both of which are attendant upon the continuous movement of time. In its essence, which is constant interchange of states, mutability is the reverse of eternity. Even when time and mutability are felt to be inescapable, they are recognized as preludes to eternity of which they are the moving image.¹¹ To the medieval mind not yet troubled by the Renaissance attitude of rationalism, the concept of time and mutability posed less of a threat to man's will to life and immortality than as a warning of their effect upon the brief span of life allotted to man, and as an exhortation to make use of time in preparing for eternity. But as the concept of eternity grew more diffused towards the Renaissance, the attitude to time and mutability also grew more alarmed and depressing.

While it is undoubtedly the work of the Renaissance to usher in the scepticism which began to undermine the received faith, we may also see in the new spirit of 'humanism' a strong insistence on justifying the moral aspects of the Renaissance. For the humanism of the early Renaissance, unlike its later developments, honestly believed in giving emphasis to the practical aspect of Christian values. They believed that

man's existence, far from being a brief and painful preparation for the afterlife, could, through exercise of human reason and talents, offer fulfillment in this life.¹²

However, the strain of trying to bridge the two worlds - the world of unconditional faith and the world of examined faith - was severe, as strikingly portrayed by Marlowe in Dr. Faustus. And it is hard to determine how far the Renaissance humanism succeeded in resolving the casuistical questions attending on this transition.

Shakespeare's plays afford significant explorations into the mind of Renaissance man. They reveal the limits of human faculties against the vast and unfathomable backdrop of an unknown universe. Renaissance man is pitted against his own ignorance on this arena called 'space-time' with the spectators - assuming there are - sitting behind one-way glass partition, having little or no communication with the contestants. Time and mutability have never been

treated merely as philosophical concepts by the Renaissance writers. They are seen and treated as moral forces bearing significantly on human actions. The voice of Marcus Aurelius still echoes down the ages through his writings which are now assimilated assiduously like living waters:

Therefore make your passage through this span of time in obedience to Nature and gladly lay down your life, as an olive, when ripe, might fall, blessing her who bear it and grateful to the tree which gave it life.¹³

This is not too far from the stoicism of an Edgar or a Gloucester. T.S.Eliot has expressed his view that the Elizabethan age had a certain affinity to the brutal age of the Roman empire when

Stoicism is the refuge for the individual in an indifferent or hostile world too big for him.¹⁴

Once the long respected guardian of man's thoughts - the Church - has been found inadequate to answer man's curiosity, and man begins to search the inner recesses of his own mind for an explanation of the riddle of life, it is only inevitable that pessimism should set in where man discovers his limitations. Contrary to popular views of the Renaissance as an enlightened age of optimism, Prof. Sukanta Chaudhuri observes ominously:

More and more evidence may be gathered to suggest

that the Renaissance was not simply a glorious 'rebirth' but an age of collapsing values and systems, of disturbance, exhaustion, and deep humility.¹⁵

It is no wonder, therefore, that we find a proliferation of love poetry during the Renaissance. For once the wonted solace of faith in the spiritual and the intangible aspect of human experience has lost its credit, what is left of any possible cause for the will to life having any stamp of honour is only love - the only transcending virtue capable of consolation. Love, as in medieval time, is still inspired by beauty. But it is no more an idealized pursuit of chastity and heroism as an overture to spiritual bliss. The object and inspirer of love, the beautiful woman, deconventionalized, becomes a woman of flesh and blood to possess whom is the ideal of the lover. In place of the knight-errant in perpetual quest to prove his physical prowess and moral impeccability, we have the lover-courtier snobbishly cramming up philosophy and with crumpled love poems in his pockets, sighing like a furnace.

The medieval ethics of love apparently showed its intrinsic weakness in that it failed utterly to accommodate sex for reasons too obvious to mention. The medieval dichotomy successfully suppressed the carnal aspect of love so long as religion and illiteracy held back the free and

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individual expression that the Renaissance was to foster. But we see in the works of Chaucer how the spirit of love has been yearning for release, and vigorously stating its case in the person of the Wife of Bath, as well as in the Franklin's and the Merchant's tales. In Spenser, that great interpreter of Medieval ethics for the Renaissance, "The medieval dichotomy is being bridged",¹⁶ the taboo smashed and exposed for what it really is, while virtue and chastity become 'earthly' ideals. For Spenser makes of love "a perfectly satisfying spiritual experience without transcending its human, erotic character. Sacred and profane love meet in Spenser's chastity."¹⁷ But the strain was hard on the potential of man: the ideal of an 'earthly' purity seemed no easier than the attainment of a 'spiritual' renunciatory ideal of sainthood.

It is in Donne that we find a more successful synthesis of the hitherto incompatible ideals. This he has done by a more 'scientific' temperament capable of taking for granted the 'imperfections' of the human condition as the ground in which love must take root. If at all a transcendence of any kind is expected of Donne, it will be in the amoral attitude to sexual love which J.B. Leishman prefers to call "religiousness"¹⁸ so strikingly paramount in his love poetry. But the fusion Donne seems to have achieved in his love poems, like the very conceits which convey them, app-

ears but as a shooting star; real but ephemeral. While Donne's poetry treats of love in all its aspects - from sterile Platonic love to love that kills "with excess of heat" - there is ample evidence to show that Donne was writing (and living) under severe constraints and conflicts. The conflicts are, however, not so much between what C.S.Lewis calls "a medieval sense of the sinfulness of sexuality"¹⁹ and unabashed celebration of "Gentle love deeds", as they are between the inner (timeless) experience of love and the external (temporal) experience of loving which are mutually complementary to and interdependent on each other for a full experience of love, while mutually tending to cancel each other. The strong insistence of The Extasie that there is "Small change, when we're to bodies gone" is after all conditioned by a stronger "If" that their

two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none
can die.

This apprehension attending on the highest moment of love is characteristic of Donne who, like any sensitive man of his time, could not afford to turn a deaf ear to the call of time. In fact, the very insistence on the totality of the lovers' experience can be seen as a direct challenge to Time and Mutability. And this is the most

typical and most persistent voice of Elizabethan and Jacobean love poets. However, hardly any poet of the time stands comparison with Shakespeare and Donne in the depth and range of the treatment of human love in the context of temporality and an unstable order. While the majority of their contemporaries instinctively recoiled at the cold touch of reality, advocating an epicurean attitude to life to spite the horrors of tomorrow, Shakespeare and Donne showed quite a different attitude to the grim reality of Time's supremacy over human achievement. Theirs is a more lasting vindication of love in a world they dramatize as intrinsically hostile to it. And this they have done by a higher and nobler sense of man's worth and faith in man's indomitable spirit to subordinate his situation in life. More than in the works of any of their contemporaries we are presented in their works with the nearest approximation in imaginative form to the Renaissance picture of man. What is of paramount importance in Donne's final rejection of love, therefore, is his sense of the failure of love to sustain the moment of perfect unity, and not the moral problem of sexuality which Donne has transcended in the purity of his concept of love.

It has become customary to call Shakespeare's love for the 'Beauteous youth' of the Sonnets platonic in a gross misunderstanding of the term. The Platonic concept

of love as "desire for the perpetual possession of the good", and whose object is not beauty but "to procreate and bring forth in beauty",²⁰ more truly applies to Shakespeare's idea of love for a friend than it defines the nature of relationship between them. But what should rather concern the reader of the Sonnets is the almost paranoiac obsession with the effect of time on the Friend's beauty and the instability of man's estate which deprives man of what little joy and happiness he finds in his brief allotted time. Just as Donne puts himself in his mistress's heart and eyes, Shakespeare, embodied in his love, lives or dies in the beauty of his Friend. Hence the urgency of his cry to make war on Time by procreation.

Make thee another self, for love of me,
That beauty still may live in thine or thee.

(Sonnet 10)

For Beauty is the real 'food of love' while it is as much the prey to Time. Beauty and love are doomed:

All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee and come to dust.

(Cymbeline, 4.2.275)

So overpowering is this knowledge that Shakespeare gives it a universal apocalyptic scale in Sonnet 64, and again in The Tempest (4.1.151-158). MAN, the pride of Creation, is seen in his true dimension in the scale of the universe.

Donne's vision of this diminution of Man in The first Anniversary is a morally degenerate being in the process of self-annihilation trying to out-god God:

Wee seeme ambitious, Gods whole worke t'undoe;
Of nothing hee made us, and we strive too,
To bring our selves to nothing backe.

(11.155-7)

The graveyard scene in Hamlet, more than the prince's famous declamatory speech on man and the cosmos, shows the nadir of Shakespeare's naturalistic world view. It is some conjecture to think what Shakespeare would write had he looked at this beautiful blue ball from out in space like Armstrong!

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.
O, that that earth which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall t'expel the winter's flaw!

(5.1.207-10)

What a thought! Would not Tennyson have written this with Hamlet in his mind as well as Hallam:

And he, shall he,
Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or sealed within the iron hills?

What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil. (In Memoriam 61)

What is the end of man, and what is the purpose of his life, are recurrent questions the "unquiet heart and brain"²¹ ask through the ages; no less Shakespeare's. And for the Renaissance humanist it is especially significant as the growing feathers of man's aspiration need the special glue that will not melt in the hot sun of his own rationalism. It is significant that there are no Providential interventions in Shakespeare's plays by way of grace or retribution apart from the working out of Time in the irreversible law of mutability, where ~~_____~~ the whirligig of time brings in his revenges and rewards. Shakespeare's universe is self-sustaining, where every action is stored up in a retrieval system, and nothing comes from nothing. Even the island magic of Prospero is tolerated as a dramatic licence which can never be admitted in Milan. Whenever Shakespeare needs to bring in an element of strangeness, it must be in the by-ways and suburbs of normal society - the moonlit woods of Athens, the forest of Arden, a dreamy nightwatch, high-land heath, superstitious minds.

The macabre figure of faceless Death with a long scythe overlooked the landscapes of Shakespeare's world like a monument of oblivion. Keats wrote his poem, Bright Star, on a blank page in his copy of Shakespeare's Poems, clinging passionately to life and promised love: his only reality-

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art -
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
 And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
 The moving waters at their priestlike task
 Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
 Or gazing on the soft-fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors -
 No - yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
 Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
 To feel forever its soft fall and swell,
 Awake forever in a sweet unrest,
 Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
 And so live ever - or else swoon to death.

The same tragic irony of an elusive, unrealized happiness recurs again and again in Shakespeare as a result of Time's fickleness, as in Romeo and Juliet. But the tragedy of loss that Keats feels often loses its sting in Shakespeare when lovers simply refuse to let Time end their love. Antony and Cleopatra find in death the true union of souls neither empires nor sex can give. Just as Macbeth tried to abbreviate time to serve his ambition, the lovers in Romeo and Juliet make a drudge of Time as they do the Nurse; and in a manner which calls Time to revenge.²² The irreligiousness of Romeo, so typical of a teenage lover, can hardly be paralleled in its hubristic recklessness:

night Friar L. So smile the heavens upon this holy act
 That after-hours with sorrow chide us not!

Romeo. Amen, amen! But come what sorrow can,
 It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
 That one short minute gives me in her sight.
 Do thou but close our hands with holy words,
 Then love-devouring death do what he dare;
 It is enough I may but call her mine.

To which the Friar pronounce a pious prophecy:

These violent delights have violent ends,
 And in their triumph die; like fire and powder,
 Which, as thy kiss, consume. The sweetest honey
 Is loathsome in his own deliciousness,
 And in the taste confounds the appetite.
 Therefore love moderately: long love doth so;
 Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow.

(2.6.1-15)

The tragedy of love that often derives from lovers' deprivation of earthly happiness, while assuming the physical consummation of love as the chief reward of love, holds out in clear perspective the truth that love is not fulfilled in sensual terms. Shakespeare leaves no doubt about his attitude to love informed by the senses; neither does he equate sex with love as essential complements. Juliet is indeed a little 'hot' as her Nurse says, to whom love is no more than being hot. And Romeo hardly thinks of the marriage ceremony more than as a means to 'call her mine'. But neither marriage vows nor bridal night yields lasting happiness. The ultimate test of love

comes when the lover has to choose between his love and his life. Those who accuse Cleopatra of being a strumpet find their rebuff at seeing her choose death rather than live another strumpet life. Juliet still has an opportunity to live a new life, even if we consider the same chance for Romeo a little too slim. Valentine exhibits true love in willing to lose Sylvia's hand to Proteus if only to show what love is; and Bassanio parts with his wife's gift on Antonio's request, to be forgiven for the love which prompted him. Tragedy comes when the fruit is mistaken for the tree that bears it. The lovers' fantasy of permanence is not to be found in the continual flux of time and mutability, but is a reality lovers experience in the timeless consciousness of their need for each other.

Shakespeare's essential humanism reveals itself in the ambiguity of his tragic catharsis. By this is meant the tenacious optimism of Shakespeare, his inexorable faith in the human will to override his fate, by which tragedy is often robbed of its sting, and a perfect catharsis, all the more desirable for the welcome way in which even death is met, is achieved. Not only the death of a Hamlet, a Lear, or an Othello, but that of a Richard II, a Richard III, or a Macbeth is relieved by shows of indomitable will to trample on their fates.

And yet the greatest significance of Shakespeare to the

modern world may be for the fresh hope he has brought to life by resolving the claims of Love and Time in his later Comedies. The mature Shakespeare is a man who has come to realize the irresistible forces man has to contend with. Man is not a beast whose "chief good and market of his time" is "but to sleep and feed". Man differs from beast less in anatomy than in what he does with his anatomy. To quote J. Bronowski, a noted biologist,

Among the multitude of animals which scamper, fly, burrow and swim around us, man is the only one who is not locked into his environment. His imagination, his reason, his emotional subtlety and toughness, make it possible for him not to accept the environment but to change it.²³

But Time and his own mortality are environments which man can never modify to suit himself, but he may modify his attitude to them so as to relieve his sense of fate. The Senecan stoicism of an Edgar simply robs life of the glory of the strife. It is the voice of a world whose 'inhabitants' see themselves as victims, a world wherein

Humanity must perforce prey on itself.

(Lear 4.2.48)

The world hardly changes in the later Romances. The storms still rage; the bear bites; tempers run high still; pride, jealousy, lust and ambition prevail. But the lovers here possess a certain miraculous power to absorb all kinds of

adverse circumstances, and to evolve into new creatures that can turn adversity to advantage. Duke Senior learns his lesson in a much more pleasant way than King Lear. Leontes and Pericles take their fate much like Gloucester till love awakens them from their brooding. Portia gains a true lover by a means which could possibly deprive her of her only love. Viola's suit becomes her blessing through her efforts to bless another.

Love in Shakespeare finally becomes a moral force which brings together in its warm embrace, not only man and woman for propagation, but all who have learnt to swim along the stream of events. One reason why Shakespeare does not treat love in the 'carpe diem' spirit is perhaps due to his unerring faith in life wherein 'the whirligig of time' brings in not only his revenges but rewards as well. Once love is born, Prospero is prepared to renounce his magic to face the world inhabited by the Antonios and the Sebastians, whose repentance hardly convince us. It is Leontes's undying love for Hermione that brings her back to him. Yet this might never have happened but for the love between Florizel and Perdita. It is Love that shows

How far that little candle throws his beams
to Portia, who has just done a good deed of love that shines
like the candle in that naughty world.

This treatment of love as virtually the prime motivating spirit of harmony in society is a new thing in literature, which not even the spirit of medieval Christianity had been able to discover. This spirit of love capable of so much self-sacrifice and tolerance, this spirit of love which "bears it out even to the edge of doom", and does not "bends with the remover to remove", is a truer gospel than what medieval Christendom had preached. By weaving the delicate and fragile thread of love through the labyrinthine maze of life, Shakespeare (Donne too in a more limited sense) seems to point out that it is only love that can resolve the problems with which mankind finds itself hemmed in on all sides. The consequence of mishandling this vital link with life is stated unreservedly by both Shakespeare and Donne, showing us the rotten feeling left by love when lust is served. Love to them is a motion of the entire personality, surging forth from the inmost depth of the soul, and not a mere physical appetite that can be surfeited with sensory experience. This is what makes Enobarbus say of Cleopatra's enigmatic charm:

Her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love.... This cannot be cunning in her. (1.2.142)

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
The appetite they feed, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies. (2.2.239-42)

Character, not beauty - the 'loveliness within', to use Donne's expression - is the basis on which Shakespeare and Donne, in the final analysis, erect their image of love. The choice of caskets in The Merchant of Venice; the constancy of Desdemona, Hermione and Marina, defenceless even in innocence; the incorruptible optimism of Portia, Viola and Rosalind; the resoluteness and bravery of Cordelia and Imogen, are all alike indicative of this.

Time usually assumes almost the role of a character in Shakespeare's works. It conditions the poet's sensibilities concerning love and human dignity. It is the poet's acute sense of Time's supremacy over the entire creation to which we must attribute his constant assertion of the power of love over that of Time:

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips
and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and
weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

(Sonnet 116)

This is not a defeat of Time but a victory over Time's power on transience and mortality. Put this alongside Donne's poems on the same topic, like The Anniversarie, The good-morrow, Love's growth, Death be not proud (Holy Sonnet X), and we have a symphony of kindred spirit singing in unison the true and noble aspiration of the human

soul striving against his 'mortal coil'. Time in Donne's poetry does not so much impress mortality and 'beauty's doom' as it spells out the period of love in contradistinction to the atemporal nature of lovers' experience. For Donne is concerned in his love poetry with the precise nature of the full experience of love, taking into account the full-blooded sensory experience as well as the emotional experience of total unity.

All other things, to their destruction draw,
 Only our love hath no decay;
 This, no to morrow hath, nor yesterday,
 Running it never runs from us away,
 But truly keeps his first, last, everlast-
 ing day.

(The Anniversarie)

Yet, notwithstanding Donne's assertion that there is

Small change, when we're to bodies gone,

(The Extasie)

that

Love must not be, but take a body too,

(Aire and Angels)

it is obvious that by relying on the body which is subject to time, love has become subject to time and the law of mutability. Love is then measured by the unit of time:

For I had rather owner bee

Of thee one houre, then all else ever.

(A Feaver)

The disquieting presence of Time as an invigilator in the person of the prying sun may be 'eclipsed' with a 'wink' of self-deception; but the very action of denying time's reality has also become a denial of love's reality:

But that I would not lose her sight so long.
(The Sunne Rising)

For the very birth, growth and decay of love take place in time:

Me thinkes I lyed all winter, when I swore,
My love was infinite, if spring make it more.
(Loves growth)

Love is a growing, or full constant light;
And his first minute, after noone, is night.
(A Lecture upon the Shadow)

Love must be rejected, therefore, if it proves to be an illusory heaven, if it is "onely for a minute made to be". (Farewell to love). It is this conflict between the 'stasis' (still time) of lovers' experience and the irresistible movement of time which punctuates love's eternity that lends all the force, the urgency and the pathos of Donne's poetry.

Thus we find Donne sharing with Shakespeare the overwhelming consciousness of Time's challenge to the human will to gain a hold on eternity. The passion and the pathos of his poems derive from the intensity of his desire to transubstantiate the moment of love's perfection. Perhaps Donne has found the best medium at his disposal, as Shakespeare does, in his poetry.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

be cheerful, sir.
Our revels now are ended.

_____ 'The Tempest' _____

It is so true to human nature, and therefore hilarious, that Prospero fails to notice the cause of Ferdinand's 'dismay': his own display of "some passion/ That works him strongly", about which even his daughter says:

Never till this day
Saw I him touch'd with anger so distemper'd.
(4.1.144,145)

Ferdinand is not dismayed that the 'revels' have ended out of which his patronizing father-in-law to-be is drawing a full-fledged sermon on life, completely taken away himself by it.

It is tempting to see in this apocalyptic speech Shakespeare's view of life, as in several other speeches in

other plays of his which do not always present identical views. If this were a world-view it is hardly one that should make a promising groom 'cheerful'. Yet, it is a good lesson, the only lesson of eternal validity. Its very inconsistency with the situation is its urgency. It is the sign of a man growing beyond the confines of a narrow life that he can acknowledge the truth of sudden switches of posture and utterance. Prospero's sudden inconsistent posturings have a lesson for Ferdinand. In Donne too, the same inconsistency is felt when the poet seeks the eternal in the temporal experience of love.

The entire works of Shakespeare and Donne may be seen as a drama of human conflict between consciousness and unconscious environments. This varied drama of awakened human consciousness quickens our sense of a vestige of the divine in fallen man yearning to assume the lost essence. There are more direct expressions of this yearning in Vaughan, Wordsworth and Tennyson - Shelley too perhaps: these are what we call intimations of immortality. This is not to say that Shakespeare or Donne is chiefly concerned with the metaphysical problems of life, for the deeper truth is that either is concerned with man's preoccupation with his conscience. For to live, for a sensitive person, is to be conscious; and consciousness is possible only in relation to others and environments.

A history of ideas mainly records the reasoned thoughts of men who have developed their understanding of life through a life-time of study and observation, with experiments, if needed. But the thoughts and feelings of ordinary men and women have always been expressed and recorded in songs and stories. Both Shakespeare and Donne had ample exposure to the pulse of life and ideas of their time as it appears from the direct and vivid manner of their treatment of love.

It was a fast moving epoch: the wheel of fortune spun madly without reason or justice - often at the whims of an unstable political system or as mere coincidences. Man is a chaff of life blown hither and thither by accidents of time. The 'whirligig of time' seemed to turn at the will of a depraved Machiavelli. No 'deus ex machina' descends on the Shakespearean stage to assert external providence, but ugly Nemesis with impeccable memory feeding on human folly and vices. It was an age of tired efforts. King Henry IV, perhaps the only honest politician, admits to being helpless against the current of history:

O, God! that one might read the book of fate,
And see the revolution of the times

.

The happiest youth, viewing his progress through,
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
Would shut the book and sit him down and die.

(Pt.2-3.1.45-56)

The poet too is tired, and says so in Sonnet 66:

Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry:
but quickly realizes that

. . . to die, I leave my love alone.

The same discovery of Love's power is made by Donne in The Sunne Rising, where the 'Busie old foole' impersonating the wheel of moving history is well dispensed with by 'a winke' but for the constant image of Love. Instead of being a means of escape devised by man, love is revealed as a concrete essence of time itself, so that escape from life and time is escape from love too. Eliot's assertion of the pervasive power of time suddenly becomes meaningful in the context of love in Shakespeare and Donne:

But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time time is conquered.

(Burnt Norton)

But, as we have seen, the vision of love imperilled by time in the works of Shakespeare and Donne is stamped with the irreducible singularity of their genius. Love is esoteric for Donne. True lovers constitute a kind of priesthood and they have their exclusive arcana or secrets to which the rest of humanity are aliens.

When Donne talks of the growth and effects of love, he is talking of a phenomenon confined to the lovers. Love is a peculiarly private and personal experience with no visible bearings on the larger society. This is true even when the teeming life of the world around is felt in the poems. Shakespeare, on the contrary, sees love as both inward and outward looking, having transforming effects on life and society.

Love in Shakespeare is at once a vital inwardness and an inclusive extroversion. It not only touches and brings into play the plenitude of the lover's heart and mind but simultaneously works towards a cathartic purification, a togetherness, understanding and unification in the wider world. While it sweeps the lovers into each other's arms, its inherent outward-looking and altruistic impulse builds bridges where enmity and misunderstanding have created gulfs of separation. One has only to look at what the love-impelled Rosalind, Portia, Viola and Cordelia, among others, succeed in accomplishing in the face of the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune". And one needs to take into account what Florizel and Perdita come round to achieving by off-setting and finally transforming the adversities of circumstance, i.e., the daunting accidents of time. Romeo and Juliet die but the story of their tempestuous love is

not over before rebuilding the disrupted society; in other words, before bringing the Montagues and Capulets together. Antony and Cleopatra die but their tale is not finished before Octavius has paid his memorable tribute to Cleopatra who looks unvanquished by death, Time's scourge:

. . . but she looks like sleep,
Ass she would catch another Antony
In her strong toil of grace

and before his magnanimous recognition of the time-transcending lustre of their love:

She shall be buried by her Antony:
No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
A pair so famous.

These are Shakespeare's ways of suggesting love's intransigent answer to the challenge of time and mutability. They constitute not only man's bulwark of defence but his gesture of triumph.

Keats speaks of the world as a "vale of soul-making", meaning thereby that true soul-hood is to be achieved by consciously opposing the resources of the spirit to the challenge of time and circumstances. Shakespeare and, if to a lesser degree, Donne seem to be suggesting the same truth, when they see and make us see in love the power to bear infinite pain and suffering, the power of fortitude and growth. Its growth is such that

No winter shall abate the springs encrease. Both Shakespeare's and Donne's dramatization of love would seem to arise from a direct and immediate experience, so that one can sense the tang of actuality about the vividness of love's manifestation. The treatment is so full-blooded and undoctrinaire that modern man, shorn of all philosophical and religious support, can see in it an undisguised mirror of his own agony and triumph.