

SHAKESPEARE AS A LITERARY CRITIC

by

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The present study is undertaken with the belief that Shakespeare, the myriad-minded, must have contemplated the art he was practicing and that his comprehensive soul and analytical mind must have watched what he was doing as a poet-playwright. This initial statement sounds almost like a superfluity, for any careful reader of Shakespeare can notice that the greatest of poets was capable of watching the game he was playing and did not hesitate to insert his critical observations throughout the corpus of his writing. However, despite the fact that the critical consciousness ever present in his mind is revealed in his works, the myth of a genius asserting his unstudied artlessness throughout the body of his writing has had special appeal to the modern taste. The Romantic poets' proclamation of the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" seems to have had a remote resonance in our response to Shakespeare's art, especially for those of us who still remember Ben Jonson's observation that Shakespeare "wanted art" and Dryden's famous assertion that Shakespeare's comprehensive soul of inspired genius could create his art "not laboriously, but luckily."¹ But the truth is that Shakespeare's unmistakable delight in showing the working of his art, an almost irrepressible urge to talk about his art, is clearly seen in the lines he wrote.

Unquestionably, Shakespeare was not a critic in the modern sense of the word, and it is true that the word "critic" does not loom in our

mind at the mention of his name. Yet, the body of criticism Shakespeare made part of the corpus of his writing entitles him to be a literary critic, not only of his own works but also of the whole tradition of the western literature down to the Elizabethan Age. Shakespeare's works, early and late, his poems as well as his plays, clearly manifest his critical awareness and an urge to reveal his judgments on various aspects of the art of writing. His controlled use of critical observations notwithstanding, Shakespeare explicitly reveals a readiness to comment on what he is doing in a given dramatic action in progress, what he thinks about the literary conventions of his age, how particular scenes or modes of speeches are related to the overall development of a dramatic action, and the like. In this respect, Shakespeare was a critic of himself and of his own achievements rather than a critic passing judgment on his contemporary literature or proclaiming a system of critical theories through a series of critical observations.

Several critics have expressed disappointment at their being unable to find or establish an organized system of critical theories in the critical comments Shakespeare made in his works. For instance, Carl Van Doren's study of the subject begins with the statement: "Guesses as to what Shakespeare thought of his art are easy to make and hard to verify. Studying the problem, one perceives at the outset that the evidence is much too scanty for dogmatism."² As a possible solution for the difficult problem of systematizing the critical ideas appearing in Shakespeare's works, Van Doren even suggests having recourse to a statistical method: "One might, with the aid of a concordance, exhaust

the images derived from literature in Shakespeare's works.... It would be possible, also, to extend the study to his use of such terms as 'nature,' 'art,' 'imagination,' 'invention,' with the object of finding some clue to whatever principles of aesthetics he may have had or assumed."³ Professor J. W. H. Atkins, a major literary historian of our time, wrote: "Of Shakespeare... it would be true to say that he nowhere deliberately unfolds the secrets of his art; though hidden in his work is ample material for establishing a body of theory which, duly organized, would form a valuable counterpart to that contained in Aristotle's Poetics. Concerning his guiding principles and the details of his technique, however, but few direct indications are given. ... His dramatic theory, in consequence, remains unformulated, though everywhere implicit in his plays."⁴ Professor Arthur H. R. Fairchild once declared: "In Shakespeare no conscious art is apparent. Shakespeare holds no theory about himself as artist, about the ideas which may be said to pervade his work, or about the form which embodied them."⁵ Finally, David Klein concludes his study with the statement: "Dr. Paul Hamelius... expresses disappointment in the end that his quotations cannot be so arranged as to constitute a complete poetic theory. Neither can the quotations I have gathered... be so ordered as to constitute an organized system."⁶

What the scholars of the past have said, as glimpsed in the statements quoted above, reveals an attempt to systematize Shakespeare's critical ideas in an effort to establish a body of critical theories. The scholars who have taken this approach, however, have expressed a

common sense of frustration for being stymied by the lack of complete evidence that can serve as a basis for establishing a systematized body of critical theories, a Shakespearean critical dogma. Indeed, some of them have questioned the wisdom of probing the works of Shakespeare to survey and assess the critical ideas appearing in them, for the simple reason that Shakespeare's critical comments are only fragmentary revelations of his thoughts randomly projected here and there. David Klein, for instance, regrets that no system of critical theory can be established by a collection of critical comments appearing in Shakespeare's works.⁷ Carl Van Doren's following comment reveals an attitude many scholars have shared in their approach to the subject: "The people of Shakespeare's world think and talk little about literature of any sort. Such literary allusions as appear are, in the main, obvious, and they are not frequent. Shakespeare could probably not assume that his audience knew or cared anything like as much about literature as about history or law, and he obtruded no such knowledge upon them."⁸

Such conclusions represent a misorientation in scholarly approaches to the subject. Their conclusions suggest that they have given an inappropriate focus in the study of Shakespeare as a literary critic. Van Doren's statement, for example, reveals that he misinterprets the reason why critical observations appear in Shakespeare's works. Shakespeare did not, as Van Doren's statement implies, use his works as vehicles for expounding his literary creeds or theories; rather, he merely expressed his views on various questions pertaining to his art

as they were suggested by the context of his writing. Critical observations appear in Shakespeare's writings, not because he intended to propagate any literary dogmas or to use his works as instruments for his discussion of literary subjects: his purpose was to show his audience a full picture of the working of his art, to enhance the audience's awareness of dramatic situations in progress, and to remind them of the techniques used for desired effects. Scholars have often desired to present a body or system of poetic creed built upon the fragments of critical ideas scattered throughout Shakespeare's writings, and their attempt has proved unpromising.

Professor Joseph T. McCullen, Jr., makes the following observation:

There is no evidence that Shakespeare's intention was either to dictate principles or to sustain evaluations of literature written during his era. Instead, his objective was to utilize theory and practice (both traditional and contemporary) to enrich his own work and to focus awareness of readers and spectators upon what he offered them at any given moment. (Criticism in Shakespeare is organic in the most significant meaning of the term.) To assume that he either had or desired a systematic theory or, indeed, adhered to any particular theory throughout the corpus of his writing is--rather grossly, I believe--to minimize the genius of Shakespeare. To achieve effects desirable for a particular drama or poem in process of organic development, Shakespeare easily shifted from utilization or praise of a technique or principle to a questioning of that technique or principle and, consequently, wrote in conformity with inconsistencies that are the essence of Occidental life, literature, and art. When Emerson stated that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, he could hardly have had Shakespeare in mind as an illustration of this generalization.⁹

When considered in the light of the above observation, the objective scholars have had in mind in their approach to the critical comments by Shakespeare is clearly a misplaced one: they have wished to arrive at a body of critical theories advocated by Shakespeare and to present

it as an entity quite independent of the context where the critical comments occur. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to establish the stature of Shakespeare as a literary critic--not one who propagated or vindicated any particular doctrines but one who could watch the actual working of his artistry as he was writing and provided critical comments as bases for interpretations of his works. What Shakespeare says should be considered as his comments on his own artistic accomplishments rather than as statements that are self-sufficient embodiments of literary dogmas or theories. The objective of this study is to survey critical ideas alluded to in the works of Shakespeare and to assess his observations--not as an independent system of critical theories but as an element revealing his thoughts that dictated his critical consciousness in the process of the artistic formation of his works. The premise of this study is that the critical comments found in Shakespeare's works are not meant to be prescriptive but are diagnostic.

Critics concur that Shakespeare, despite the often misleading myth of his "small Latin and less Greek," as unfortuitously created by Ben Jonson, stood firmly on the classical tradition in his grasp and application of literary theories and that the classical heritage which had undergone modifications and ramifications through the medieval ages and the Renaissance inevitably had a strong influence on his critical awareness.¹⁰ A survey of the critical ideas that were the common heritage among the Renaissance writers is, therefore, in order. The following preliminary survey of the critical backgrounds will serve as basis for consideration of Shakespeare as a literary critic. How Shakespeare

digested the doctrines of the classical writers and the contemporary interpretations of these theories, and how he responded to them, will constitute the main thesis of the ensuing chapters. Again, how Shakespeare adhered to or deviated even from dominant critical ideas is a question of importance only to the extent that this knowledge can help to further insight into his critical observations in the context of his works as they were being formed as pieces of poetic art.

In view of the organization of the study, it will be desirable to survey the Renaissance and the pre-Renaissance critical theories according to the categories to be considered in the ensuing chapters. However, since the dominant critical ideas that have relevance to Shakespeare's critical awareness are intricately inter-related in such a way as to render it difficult to categorize the critical backgrounds, it would be unavoidable to overstep the boundaries of the categories under discussion.

II

Sister Miriam Joseph, who has abundantly demonstrated Shakespeare's conscious mastery of the figures of speech and forms of reasoning, declares at one point:

Shakespeare knew the complete doctrine and method of composition regularly taught in the grammar schools of his day from a combination of Latin text-books. He employed in his work the techniques prescribed.... These techniques, comprising the core of grammar school discipline, were applied to both composition and the reading of classical Latin literature in a manner which formed the Renaissance creating and responding mind. 11

A glance at T. W. Baldwin's monumental work, William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke, a vast and illuminating study of education at English schools in Shakespeare's time, is enough to convince one that Shakespeare had undergone the ordinary grammar school training that included grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Even without the testimonies of the scholars the lines written by Shakespeare clearly exhibit his readiness to talk about the arts of language, his conscious use of the techniques of rhetoric in the building of characters and dramatic situations, in short, his perfect awareness of the vast range of the arts and philosophy of language. However, a survey of the classical and the Renaissance theories on the use of language will help to illuminate the sense of decorum that pervades Shakespeare's observations on the use of language.

The Renaissance education of the trivium included disciplines in debating moral issues. After Cicero and Quintilian, the two rhetoricians most admired and studied in the Renaissance, moral principles were regarded as an integral part of rhetorical education. Despite the effectiveness of rhetoric in inculcating men and moving them to virtuous action, there had been a long-standing skepticism of the art of rhetoric, a distrust originating from the knowledge of the danger inherent in the abuse of it. The Renaissance writers' wariness toward rhetoric seems to have originated from the moral discipline they received along with the training in the use of language. Indeed, both Cicero and Quintilian had laid it down as a first principle that only a virtuous man with sound judgment could be a master of eloquence. The dual nature of all

elements that have transactions in human life must be put under control. And what enables men to mediate the dual aspect of every element of human life is judgment, the principle of decorum. The comprehensive and complex doctrine of decorum as inherited by the Renaissance thinkers was thus as much a part of moral as of rhetorical tradition, and was applied to both verbal and non-verbal behavior.¹²

The Renaissance philosophy of language and rhetoric was closely related to the classical doctrine of decorum as enunciated by Horace in his Ars Poetica. The intricate term "decorum" involves both practice of the arts of language and the judgment that controls non-verbal behavior as well, and no doubt Shakespeare inherited from the classical and the Renaissance rhetorical tradition a philosophy of language that included the principle of decorum governing the arts of language.

At the center of the doctrine of decorum, not only of verbal art but also of the non-verbal behavior, was the concept of the universal order man is to comply with. When John Hoskins wrote, "The order of God's creatures in themselves is not only admirable and glorious, but eloquent,"¹³ he was blending into the concept of eloquence the picture of the Great Chain of Being. The destruction of decorum, whether it be the verbal propriety or the non-verbal (that is, behavioral) "comeliness," as any Renaissance man would have put it, signaled the breach of the universal order. The primary purpose of the moral discipline, as emphasized by the classical writers and the Renaissance thinkers, was to instil in the students of rhetoric the philosophy of decorum, a measure of moral responsibility and aesthetic judgment. When the

moral or ethical guidelines are forgotten or deliberately ignored in the use of the arts of language, the sanctified gift of man, the fragrant flower of language turns into a deadly poison, as Friar Laurence's speech on the dual nature of things might symbolically illustrate.¹⁴ Cicero, in De Oratore, discussed the wide training that a properly qualified orator must have, and he included among other things the discipline in philosophy and ethics.¹⁵ For Quintilian also, the moral discipline in an orator was a subject of supreme importance.¹⁶ Thus, when Puttenham and Sir Thomas Elyot wrote about language's being the medium of rational persuasion that enables men to achieve harmony and order,¹⁷ they were reiterating what the classical writers had said. If, according to the Ancients and the Renaissance humanists, speech is the tool man is privileged with, and if the rational persuasion for virtuous action is the aim of all rhetorical endeavor, then it follows that moral principles should be the guideline for all rhetorical disciplines.

At the center of the Renaissance philosophy of language was thus the belief that eloquence cannot be separated from moral virtue. For Castiglione, the purpose of all rhetorical achievement was to "enforme [one's prince] frankly of the truth of every matter meete for him to understand... to disswade him from every ill purpose, and to set him in the way of virtue."¹⁸ Language was thus sanctified by both the classical writers and the Renaissance thinkers as the image of mind and soul. For Thomas Wilson, abuse of this sanctified gift from God signaled the corrupt state of mankind:

Man (in whom is powred the breath of life) was made at the first being an euerliuing creature, vnto the likenesse of God, endued with reason, and appointed Lorde ouer all other thinges liuing. But after the fall of our first Father, sinne so crept in that our knowledge was much darkened, and by corruption of this our flesh, mans reason and entendement were both ouerwhelmed.¹⁹

As implied in this statement by Thomas Wilson, the proper use of language can be a redeeming force for mankind. However, while eloquence can be used to enhance virtuous action, so it might be used to corrupt man's action and destroy the harmony and order that language and speech have created among mankind. This disturbing truth had to be dealt with seriously because it was the basis of the condemnation of rhetoric enunciated by Socrates and Plato and the resulting skepticism of rhetoric transmitted to the Renaissance. Socrates' condemnation of rhetoric as an art of enchanting the mind and Plato's use of the analogy of "cooking" in his denunciation of rhetoric as an art used to pervert mankind are well known.²⁰

While right use and abuse of rhetoric had been an issue among the Ancients and the Renaissance thinkers, the belief that the arts of language are indispensable for achieving persuasiveness had never been shaken. Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian regarded rhetoric as an ethical behavior rather than a mere collection of verbal techniques. Aristotle said about the right use of rhetoric:

If it be objected that one who uses such power of speech unjustly might do great harm, that is a charge which may be made in common against all good things except virtue, and above all against the things that are most useful.... A man can confer the greatest of benefits by a right use of these, and₂₁ inflict the greatest of injuries by using them wrongly.

Both Cicero and Quintilian criticized the Platonic condemnation of rhetoric by arguing that Socrates and his school separated philosophy and rhetoric. Cicero wrote:

Men who dealt with, professed, and taught the subjects with which we are now concerned were called by a single name: for all knowledge of the most important things, and exercise in them, was known as philosophy. This common name Socrates snatched from its exponents. In his discussion he separated the knowledge of wise thought and embellished expression, which are in fact inseparable. Socrates himself left no written word behind him. But Plato's writings handed down to immortality his genius and his varied conversations. This was the origin of a split, as it were, of tongue from brain, ridiculous indeed and inexpedient and reprehensible, that meant that²² one set of men teach us to be wise, another to speak.

The Renaissance view of rhetoric echoes the classical writers' notion that, precisely because of its harmful potentialities, rhetoric should never be detached from logic and ethics. Having inherited the classical rhetorician's notion of the inseparability of the mind and the tongue, the Renaissance thinkers refuted the Platonic distrust of the arts of language by making a clear distinction between the art itself and those who abuse it, after Aristotle. Henry Peacham wrote: "Much hurt it may doe, if like a mad man's sword, it be used by a turbulent and mutinous orator."²³ Henry Cornelius Agrippa, who revived the Ancients' distrust of rhetoric, still defended it as an important art, focusing his concern not on the nature of the art but on "a judicious use and an irresponsible abuse of it."²⁴ The Renaissance view of rhetoric as a useful art is found in Puttenham's remark: "as it hath bene alwayes reputed a great fault to vse figurative speaches foolishely and indiscretely, so it is esteemed no lesse an imperfection in mans vtterance, to haue

none use of figure at all."²⁵ William Vaughan's comment on the usefulness of the arts of language is more positive and assertive:

Rhetorick being the offspring of Logick shapeth it not only as a picture well varnished, but also enriched and polished with glorious fields and meadows, and such like glozing shews, that it may become faire to the eye, & pleasant to the eare. Being well applied, there is nothing so sacred to perswade as it.²⁶

As surveyed in the above quotations, both the classical writers and the Renaissance men of letters expressed their concern about the abuse or misuse of the arts of language, but they all agreed on this point: rhetoric can be effective in conducting men to virtuous action, and, therefore, it must be used only by men of discretion and moral virtue. What it all amounts to is the notion that discipline in rhetoric should include moral teaching, for both the Ancients and the Renaissance men never forgot that the successes of evil persuaders were in themselves testaments to the power of language and rhetoric. The inseparability of the mind and the tongue, as proclaimed by Cicero, led to the Renaissance humanists' emphasis on the inseparability of logos and ethos, which was deeply rooted in the classical tradition and was the predominant idea among the Renaissance critics.

At the back of this notion there was the doctrine of decorum, which was the governing law of all human behavior, whether verbal or non-verbal. Since Renaissance men believed language to be the image of the mind and soul, however, much attention was given to verbal decorum, which was the center of all their ethical and aesthetic sensibilities. The right use of language was regarded as the prime rule not only for writers but also for all other constituents of the

hierarchy of human society. Indeed, the dual character of the principle of decorum, both as verbal and as behavioral law, was deeply rooted in the philosophy of the classical thinkers and the Renaissance writers. This moral and aesthetic theory of classical antiquity, as found in Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Cicero, and Quintilian, was a pervasive and dominant principle among the Renaissance thinkers. Puttenham and Nashe expounded on decorum; Castiglione's main concern in The Book of the Courtier was to elaborate on the concept of verbal as well as behavioral propriety--on the ideal of combining the two. Plato's vision of the ideal beauty, which he perceived to be the foundation of his philosophical treatment of the patterns for human conduct, was the origin of the Renaissance ideal of proportion and harmony, the central code of the principle of decorum. Puttenham's belief that decorum is achieved only when discretion is used²⁷ is an echo of the Platonic-Aristotelian notion that only through prudence can virtue be attained. Aristotle's principle of the golden mean as the starting point of all moral and aesthetic virtue also contributed to the Renaissance doctrine of decorum.²⁸ The golden mean is always shifting, Aristotle said, according to the circumstances,²⁹ and it is the point of natural perfection between excess and deficiency. Thus, Thomas Elyot's definition of decorum as "the knowledge of opportunity of things to be done or spoken, in appointing and setting them in time or place to them convenient and proper" and as a "mean between two extremities wherein nothing lacketh or exceedeth,"³⁰ is a continuation of the Aristotelian notion of the golden mean as the way to moral and aesthetic virtue.

The breach of this aesthetic and moral principle of decorum, therefore, was considered a breach of the law of nature. Both excess and deficiency were anathema to the doctrine of decorum, as their presence meant the destruction of proportion and harmony. Puttenham's definition of decorum includes the following:

These excesses or defectes or confusions and disorders in the sensible objectes are deformities and vnseemely to the sence. In like sort the mynde for the thinges that be his mentall objectes hath his good graces and his bad, whereof th'one contents him wonderous well, th'other displeaseth him continually, no more nor no lesse then ye see the discordes of musicke do to a well tuned eare.³¹

When Quintilian noted that affectation is the chief vice in rhetoric and the quickest way to destroy decorum, he was alluding to the verbal excesses that overstep the modesty of nature. Hence Sidney's sprezzatura, the artful concealment of his careful artistry,³² and Shakespeare's constant ridicule and condemnation of the excesses in the use of language, in Hamlet, Love's Labor's Lost, and other plays.

In the rhetorical tradition, the chief measure for decorum was proper diction. A passage from Thomas Wilson's The Arte of Rhetorique merits a full quotation:

The vnlearned or foolish phantasticall, that smells but of learning (such fellowes as haue seen learned men in their daies) wil so Latin their tongues, that the simple can not but wonder at their talke, and thinke surely they speake by some reuelation. I know them that thinke Rhetorique to stande wholie vpon darke wordes, and hee that can catche an ynke horne terme by the taile, him they coumpt to be a fine Englisheman, and a good Rhetorician.³³

Wilson's attack on verbal affectation elaborates on the breach of verbal decorum, and one can recall Puttenham's condemnation of affectation and unnecessary use of words borrowed from foreign tongue, the mingle-mangle.³⁴

The sixteenth-century controversy surrounding inkhorn terms, neologism, and archaism was a manifestation of the concern for verbal decorum, a reaction to the increasing rhetorical spirit of the age that often indulged in stylistic ornateness and excessive verbal exhibitionism. As Professor Vernon Hall surveyed in his chapter on the "fight" for the vernacular,³⁵ the attack on the influx of foreign words had its root in patriotism and the pride against having to borrow. E. K.'s Epistle to Gabriel Harvey attached to Spenser's Shepheardes Calendar refers to English as "a gallimaufry or hodgepodge of al other speches." Although some Renaissance critics condoned the use of foreign words,³⁶ generally the influx of foreign words was frowned upon:

I thinke it not amisse to forwarne you that you thrust as few words of many sillables into your verse as may be: and herevnto I might alledge many reasons. First, the most auncient English wordes are of one sillable, so that the more monasyllables that you vse the truer Englishman you shall seeme, and the lesse you shall smell of the Inkehorne.³⁷

Puttenham speaks to the same purpose, with the difference that he ascribes the use of inkhornism to the perverted taste of the uneducated people:

As ye may ryme with wordes of all sortes, be they of many sillables or few, so neuerthelesse is there a choise by which to make your cadence... most commendable, for some wordes of exceeding great length, which haue bene fetched from the Latine inkhorne or borrowed of strangers, the vse of them in ryme is nothing pleasant, sauing perchaunce to the common people, who reioyes much to be at playes and interludes.³⁸

Governing all this concern for the proper diction was the principle of decorum; and Shakespeare seems to have absorbed this critical climate of his age characterized by the sense of decorum. Shakespeare, as Pro-

fessor F. P. Wilson states, "was never in danger of becoming an ink-hornist," and, "although he profits from them all, he cannot be attached to any one of the various schemes for enriching the English vocabulary. . . whether with inkhorn terms, outlandish terms, archaic words, or dialect."³⁹

While proper diction was deemed to be the foundation of eloquence, figures of speech were held to be its basic quality. The awareness that use of figures denotes a departure from daily language, however, was ever present. Hence the concern for the propriety of style. For Puttenham, as for many Renaissance men, the figures are essential to literature: "the chief praise and cunning of our Poet is in the discreet using of his figures."⁴⁰ His definition of figurative language includes the following:

This ornament. . . is giuen to it by figures and figuratiue speaches, which be the flowers, as it were, and colours that a Poet setteth vpon his language of art, as the embroderer doth his stone and perle or passements of gold vpon the stuffe of a Princely garment, or the excellent painter bestoweth the rich Orient coulours vpon his table of portraite.⁴¹

The principle expounded here is in harmony with the classical and the Renaissance creed that art is an improvement over nature. Art is not at variance with nature; instead, "Nature herself suggesteth the figure in this or that form: but Art aideth the judgment of his use and application."⁴²

Thus the art of language is not simply an imitation of nature; it is a re-creation of nature: "rather a repetition or reminiscence natural, reduced into perfection, and made prompt by use and exercise."⁴³ The Aristotelian notion that art is an imitation of nature, as repeat-

edly asserted by Sidney and other Renaissance writers, could lead to the idea that indiscreetly used figurative language can signal a breach of decorum--that, instead of producing a pleasing and persuasive effect, it can disgust a man of refined taste.

In view of the evidence cited so far, it would be reasonable to assume that Shakespeare's critical acumen was governed by the overall sense of decorum that was a predominant doctrine during the Renaissance. Indeed, Shakespeare's critical observations, whether on language and style or on dramatic action in progress, have as the guiding principle awareness of use and abuse, propriety and impropriety. In his observations on the use of language and rhetoric, whether the focus of attention is on diction or rhetoric, awareness of decorum is present. In his dramatic criticism, whether the inquiries are made on particular episodes or dramatic situations in progress, or on the matter of delivery or stage presentation, is the ever-present concern for decorum, including awareness of excesses and deficiencies.

In this chapter I have tried to survey some of the evidence from the Renaissance and the pre-Renaissance writers. Due to the nature of this study, it was necessary to provide a survey of the critical backgrounds, no matter how inadequate. The study of the doctrine of decorum during the Renaissance can by itself require a thorough probing. This survey can provide only an outline of the subject, and only to the extent that it can serve as the background of the discussions that follow.

CHAPTER II
LANGUAGE AND RHETORIC

Throughout the works of Shakespeare, awareness of the major objectives of rhetoric is evident. Shakespeare provides ample commentary on the use and effectiveness of rhetoric; and while his extensive comments on the use of rhetoric are concerned with the proper use and abuse of it, these comments have dramatic functions to perform in the process of the development of dramatic action. Shakespeare incessantly calls our attention to the effect that each of these comments is intended to create within the given dramatic context. His observations on diction and language have the same dramatic functions to perform. Rather than being separate entities, these critical observations are integral parts of dramatic action in progress; and our awareness of the dramatic functions of these comments should direct our interpretations of them. The rationale of the present study can be vindicated on the ground that Shakespeare, a playwright whose concern was to show his audience the full picture of the working of his dramatic art, inevitably felt the urge to reveal his thoughts on various aspects of the arts of language.

Before proceeding to the discussion of Shakespeare's observations on the use of language and rhetoric, a brief note on the historical phase of Shakespeare's stage language is necessary. In spite of its colloquial texture, T. S. Eliot's verse drama was a drastic departure from the common practice of his days, and his readers and auditors

can grasp the implied message easily: the obvious departure from the common language--choric repetitions and economy of diction, for example--was itself a declaration that art stands aloof from nature or, rather, is the process of the refinement of nature. For Shakespeare, an Elizabethan who worked within the given literary tradition and conventions of the age, conscious departure from the common pattern of the Elizabethan stage language was not an element he strived to achieve. Shakespeare worked within the mould of the accepted artistic form of his age, and an attempt, as in Eliot's case, to create a language quite different from the language of the contemporary stage was not his concern. If one is to find an analogy in the history of music, Eliot's case is like that of Sergei Prokofiev. Both Eliot and Prokofiev deliberately made a departure from the common practice or artistic fashion of their age and attempted a return to the classical form of composition: Eliot chose to revive the verse drama, and Prokofiev, despite the maddening practice of chromaticism of the twentieth-century music, wanted to revive classicism imbued with modern taste. Shakespeare, who was working within the established tradition of the Elizabethan drama and poetry, did not attempt any drastic changes in the use of the stage language: at least on the surface level Shakespeare faithfully followed the pattern of the language of the contemporary stage. Yet he produced a stage language that was much more mature and complex than that of the embryonic Elizabethan poetic drama--but not quite reaching the degree of overindulgence in the arts of language that one encounters in the late Jacobean dramatists' baroque style,

such as John Webster's. Both John Dowland's simple lyricism and Orlando Gibbons' polyphonicism are in the music of Shakespeare's language; but it does not have the baroque deterioration of Giovanni Gabrielli. This analogy with the history of music has been made here, despite the possible risk of digressing from the present discussion, in an attempt to clarify the historical phase of Shakespeare's language: Shakespeare, unlike T. S. Eliot, did not attempt any drastic severance from the stage language of his time, and he worked within the established mould of the Elizabethan stage language.

Yet, lest the above speculation lead to an oversimplification, one must note that Shakespeare's use of language was constantly governed by his critical consciousness that differentiated him from his contemporaries. The ever-present sense of decorum that controls his use of language and finds expression in his critical remarks on various conventions and contemporary literary trends denotes that Shakespeare the critic was constantly watching his own use of the arts of language. Although he worked within the mould of the Elizabethan drama and poetry, Shakespeare was not trammled by the conventions of his age. The following remark by Professor Gladys Doidge Willcock is to the point:

Shakespeare's language is differentiated from that of his predecessors and contemporaries by virtue of [his] alert and many-sided awareness as well as by his superior creative endowment. When he emerges as dramatist he is found accepting the common heritage of forms, imperfectly adapted as yet to the stage. I do not believe that his use of these forms was ever simply and naively that of his colleagues. It was distinguished from the beginning of his independent work by this sense of background and

this critical approach. . . . There is seldom a simple and unquestioning acceptance of linguistic modes which too extravagantly overstep the modesty of nature. In scenes where these occur questions and reservations are provoked in the modern reader. It brings us extraordinarily close to Shakespeare to find that, somebody present breaks in to say what we want said.¹

This comment by Professor Willcock contains several points to be noted; most important of all is the attention given to Shakespeare's response to "the linguistic modes which too extravagantly overstep the modesty of nature," as she describes the excesses in the use of language. Both excesses and deficiencies are breaches of decorum; and when one encounters passages where either excesses or deficiencies in the use of language are described or alluded to, one's critical sense is to be alerted so that one can readily detect Shakespeare's own diagnostic comments uttered as his characters' reaction to the modes of speech showing traces of either excess or deficiency in the use of the arts of language.

In considering the excesses in the use of the arts of language and the extravagances in the linguistic modes that are the constant targets of Shakespeare's criticism, one must take into account the Elizabethan fervor for linguistic adventure that characterized the Tudor literary climate. In her pioneering study, Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language, Sister Miriam Joseph has shown that Shakespeare himself used almost two hundred rhetorical figures in his works;² and one must assume that Shakespeare shared the common heritage of the rhetorical tradition that led to excesses in language and rhetoric for many writers of his age who were not endowed with critical acumen as

Shakespeare was. The general literary climate of the Elizabethan Age that was characterized by the "rhetorical spirit" is well pointed out by the editors of Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie:

A well-educated modern reader may confess without shame to momentary confusion between Hypozeuxis and Hypozeugma, but to his Elizabethan prototype the categories of the figures were, like the multiplication-tables, a part of his foundations. . . . We are all aware of the patterning in Elizabethan verse of this period, but we are generally content to name the genus--balance, antithesis, repetition, and so on. The educated Elizabethan could give a name to every species.³

The Elizabethan men of letters thus had to be constantly conscious of the numerous rhetorical figures as they were composing, and the Elizabethan readers (or educated audience) were capable of understanding the figures used. When one considers to what extent we have come to cope with the lines written by Shakespeare, equipped only with our inborn sinew of the mind and modern taste for "new criticism" or "imaginative interpretations,"⁴ as propounded by the twentieth-century critics, one might instantly sense the inadequacy of the modern readers' ability to deal with the technical aspects of Shakespeare's art. Yet it has been declared that "nothing but a whole heart and a free mind are needed to understand Shakespeare,"⁵ and probably one must find solace in the fact that the Renaissance cult of rhetoric does no longer exist and that the rhetorical spirit of the Elizabethan Age that left its trace in the lines written by Shakespeare simply does not influence our reception of his works. However, in order to understand the critical comments Shakespeare made on the arts of language, one must recall the historical background that generated the Elizabethan zeal for linguistic

frontierism that often resulted in excesses in figurative language.

The literary climate of the mid-Tudor period was characterized by its zeal for linguistic avant-gardism. The literary language that preceded Shakespeare was often influenced by an overly developed ardor for linguistic expansionism (if one is allowed to term it that way) showing traces of extravagant spirit of linguistic adventure into neologism, inkhornism, and what not. As to the literary modes that were prevalent during the period, Professor Willcock's comment will suffice to give us an idea: "The mid-Tudor period was the heyday of jiggling veins of rhyming mother wits in ambling fourteeners and Poulter's measure, or in those chippy eights and eights or eights and sixes. . . . And the vocabulary of the poets was even less happy than their metres."⁶ In this rather barren literary climate the Tudor movements in language were taking place, giving birth to the Elizabethan linguistic consciousness that found its ultimate expression in Lyly's Euphues. Propelled by growing nationalism and patriotic zeal for cultivating the vernacular, the mid-Tudor period was "a period of unparalleled linguistic awareness; spelling, vocabulary, and the art of writing English were not merely matters of moment to a small circle of linguistic enthusiasts, but problems of national importance to which the best minds of their time gave serious attention."⁷ Also, aided by the emergence of courtly leadership, these linguistic ventures could lead to active cerebration that often resulted in affected language or fantastical talk.

Shakespeare, whose literary career did not start until the late

sixteenth century, was fortunate in the sense that he was more or less free from the mid-century verbal restrictions (such as the Spenserian alliterative mannerism and love for excessive schemes and figures), yet was not too far from the period of linguistic transition to observe the flourish of linguistic adventures that characterized the literary climate immediately preceding his own time.

The "rhetorical spirit" that was the foundation of the literary climate of the Elizabethan Age was mainly responsible for the linguistic avant-gardism that often resulted in excesses in the use of rhetorical figures. Renaissance humanism, that revived classical literary theories and consciously worked toward rehabilitation of the sound literary judgment which the classical writers had propagated, did not provide enough momentum for self-discipline for many Elizabethans who were susceptible to the growing love of baroque ornaments in language. Indeed, Thomas Wilson's The Arte of Rhetorique was not meant to be a bible for Euphuistic writing; it was rather a stronghold for the sound humanist attitude toward rhetoric. Yet the Ramist reduction of rhetoric into elocutio and pronuntiatio provided an added incentive for the Renaissance love of ornament and an authoritative backing of the bygone medieval equation of rhetoric with style--elocutio or bene dicere.⁸ As Lyly's Euphues exemplifies, the Renaissance love of baroque ornament (a misguided notion of bene dicere) often resulted in excesses in the use of the arts of language.

The preceding survey of the historical background of the Elizabethan love for ornaments in language and its zeal for linguistic

avant-gardism brings us to the center of Shakespeare's critical response to the Elizabethan literary conventions. Shakespeare's treatment of the subject embraces diverse responses to the contemporary literary practices. Clearly noticeable is his awareness of the linguistic modes involving the use of rhetoric and diction. Shakespeare both advocates proper use of rhetoric, as indicated by several passages where the effectiveness or power of rhetoric is asserted, and denounces the abuse or misuse of rhetoric, as implied in the passages where wrongful or excessive use of it is criticized. The attention given to diction, whether it be malapropism, trite metaphor or simile, or manifestation of ludicrously excessive cerebration, is equally traceable in various passages. In revealing his thoughts on all these aspects of the use of language, Shakespeare's methods can be as varied and as complex as his diverse reactions to the linguistic-stylistic modes under scrutiny. His methods of criticism range from dramatization of the verbal conventions and mannerisms--in which case implied criticism is clearly seen--to direct intrusion of his own comments uttered by his characters without disrupting the progress of dramatic action. He occasionally engages in burlesque or parody, thus revealing his thoughts on the matters of verbal excesses or conventionalism.

Governing his treatment of the subject is his sense of verbal decorum that unifies all his critical judgments and his applications thereof in various dramatic situations. One must bear in mind, however, that the critical observations made in Shakespeare's writings always have dramatic-poetic functions to perform within the context of the

evolution and progress of the dramatic-poetic situations. The criticism appearing in his writings, whether implied and indirect criticism or direct intrusion of the writer's own voice, does not exist for its own sake; it is rather an element that is mandated by the dramatic situation in progress. Shakespeare the critic is constantly observing the lines he is writing, and when necessities arise, he puts critical comments into the mouths of his characters. But it is all for the purpose of enhancing the dramatic effects and enriching his characterization. Criticism found in Shakespeare's works is justified only within the context in which it appears. In the ensuing part of this chapter various critical comments on language and rhetoric will be listed. The main keynote that unifies all of them is the principle of decorum. When we hear any cacophony or deviation from the main keynote, our critical acumen is to be alerted so that we can hear the implied criticism; when we encounter direct intrusions of the writer's own comments, we should consider them in the light of the dramatic situations in progress, for they are meant to be a necessary part of the dramatic action rather than random insertions of the writer's thoughts quite alien to the development and formation of the works.

II

One encounters several instances where direct references are made to rhetoric. Shakespeare's attitude toward rhetoric is one of ambivalence. In most of the references to rhetoric the assertion of the

power of rhetoric and the distrust of rhetoric as an useless or even treacherous art are subtly interfused; however, there are quite a few instances where scorn or renunciation of rhetoric is clearly expressed. In his Sonnets, for instance, Shakespeare more than once renounces the artifice of rhetoric and extolls the virtue of plain-speaking sincerity:

when they have devised
 What strained touches rhetoric can lend,
 Thou truly fair wert truly sympathized
 In true plain words by thy true-telling friend,
 And their gross painting might be better used
 Where cheeks need blood--in thee it is abused. (Sonnet 82)

I never saw that you did painting need,
 And therefore to your fair no painting set.
 I found, or thought I found, you did exceed
 The barren tender of a poet's debt. (Sonnet 83)

To put it crudely, needless rhetoric is the theme of these sonnets.

Toward the end of Love's Labor's Lost the King of Navarre offers the Princess of France a tedious sermon in an attempt to console her, as the news of her bereavement has just come. The lines spoken by the King can be readily described as a sample of baroque distortion and verbal exhibitionism:

The extreme parts of time extremely forms
 All causes to the purpose of his speed,
 And often, at his very loose, decides
 That which long process could not arbitrate.
 And though the morning brow of progeny
 Forbid the smiling courtesy of love
 The holy suit which fain it would convince,
 Yet, since love's argument was first on foot,
 Let not the cloud of sorrow justle it
 From what it purposed; since, to wail friends lost
 Is not by much so wholesome-profitable
 As to rejoice at friends but newly found. (V, ii, 750-61)

King Claudius' tedious sermon on the unnaturalness of mourning one's father's death too long (Hamlet, I, ii, 87-117), when read alongside

the above speech, is an angel's whisper. At the Princess' puzzle-ment at this outpouring of sheer nonsense--'I understand you not. My griefs are double' (l. 762)--Berowne breaks into the situation with a touch of irony:

Honest plain words best pierce the ear of grief,
And by these badges understand the King. (ll. 763-64)

Earlier in the play, Berowne makes a farewell to rhetoric, when a genuine love for Rosaline has gotten hold of him:

Oh, never will I trust to speeches penned,
Nor to the motion of a schoolboy's tongue,
Nor never come in vizard to my friend,
Nor woo in rhyme, like a blind harper's song!
Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,
Figures pedantical--these summer flies
Have blown me full of maggot ostentation.
I do forswear them, and I here protest,
By this white glove--how white the hand, God knows!--
Henceforth my wooing mind shall be expressed
In russet yeas and honest kersey noes.
And, to begin, wench--so God help me, la!--
My love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw. (V, ii, 402-15)

Even at the moment when he is renouncing rhetoric Berowne cannot quite forgo the word sans. Rosaline cannot but plead: 'Sans sans, I pray you' (l. 416). The main irony in this passage is that Berowne is announcing his rejection of rhetoric at the same time he is using it. Professor McCullen's remark touches on this point: "The treachery of rhetoric, an art which in use may have one effect that contrasts sharply with another, is apparent in rhetorical attempts to condemn it."⁹ Indeed, to profess to renounce rhetoric is itself a rhetorical device. Antony's oration in Julius Caesar (III, ii, 78ff) is characteristic of this tactic. Antony pretends that he is a plain-speaking man; but under

the look of an innocent flower, as Lady Macbeth's maxim goes, there is a serpent fully knowing the effect his pretended naiveté and simplicity can exert over the gullible mob. Sidney's sprezzatura, although it belongs to a sound literary temper, is akin to this rhetorical tradition. In Astrophel and Stella Sidney's main rhetorical tool is his renunciation of rhetoric and his elevation of a simple heart. The first sonnet of the sequence embraces this theme:

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
 That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,
 Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
 Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain--
 I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of wo,
 Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,
 Oft turning others' leaves to see if thence would flow
 Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburn'd brain.
 But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay;
 Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows,
 And others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.
 Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
 Biting my trewand pen, beating myself for spite,
 "Fool," said my muse to me, "look in thy heart and write."

In Sonnet 21, Shakespeare repeats what Sidney says:

So is it not with me as with that Muse
 Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse,
 Who Heaven itself for ornament doth use
 And every fair with his fair doth rehearse,
 Making a couplement of proud compare
 With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich gems,

 Oh, let me, true in love, but truly write,
 And then believe me, my love is as fair
 As any mother's child, though not so bright
 As those gold candles fixed in heaven's air.

Indeed, one may wonder whether one should take the renunciation of rhetoric as Shakespeare's own. Even in the case of the sonnets, which might be thought to be revealing the poet's own personal feeling, the dramatic situation in progress is still there; and one must

not conclude that Shakespeare himself renounces rhetoric once and for all. Professor Winifred Nowotny, who has done a thorough analysis of the rhetorical techniques in Shakespeare's early sonnets, concludes: "Every age rediscovers the genius of Shakespeare. It is open to ours to discover and to show the working of his genius in the realm of forms."¹⁰ Although this remark was made in relation to the architectonics of the first sonnets, it can equally be applied to the other sonnets as well. In executing formal rhetoric throughout his sonnets Shakespeare easily shifted to the technique of renouncing rhetoric as needless ornament; and it all fits into the "dramatic" situations of the sonnets.

Shakespeare's ambivalent attitude toward rhetoric can be seen in many instances. Although Berowne's lines quoted above clearly renounce rhetoric, the fact that they are part of a wooing implies that the question is not that simple. Faulconbridge in King John pours out the following railing, when the First Citizen of Angier has finished his long plea to the embattled kings:

Here's a stay
That shakes the rotten carcass of old Death
Out of his rags! Here's a large mouth, indeed,
That spits forth death and mountains, rocks and seas,
Talks as familiarly of roaring lions
As maids of thirteen do of puppy dogs!
What cannoneer begot this lusty blood?
He speaks plain cannon fire, and smoke, and bounce;
He gives the bastinado with his tongue.
Our ears are cudgeled. Not a word of his
But buffets better than a fist of France.
Zounds! I was never so bethumped with words
Since I first called my brother's father dad. (II, i, 455-67)

The subtle technique Shakespeare is using here is too apparent: indeed,

the audience, as well as the stage characters standing around Faulconbridge, are to feel that they have 'never [been] so bethumped with words' (l. 466) until he engages in this railing attack on rhetoric. In its context the passage clearly pronounces Faulconbridge's scorn of rhetoric. But the lines were written with an eye to the character of the speaker, one who cannot control his tendency toward bombastic railing. As in the case of Berowne's speech (or Shakespeare's own in the sonnets quoted above), Faulconbridge's attack on rhetoric is part of the dramatic action in progress and a way of characterization.

In a passage in Othello the power of rhetoric is asserted without any trace of inhibition. Othello's account of how he has won Desdemona's love is sheer poetry; and, despite his proclamation that he is lacking in the skill of the tongue, the account itself is a beautiful piece of rhetoric:

Rude am I in my speech,
 And little blest with the soft phrase of peace.
 For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith
 Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
 Their dearest action in the tented field.
 And little of this great world can I speak,
 More than pertains to feats of broil and battle,
 And therefore little shall I grace my cause
 In speaking for myself. Yet, by your gracious patience,
 I will a round unvarnished tale deliver
 Of my whole course of love--what drugs, what charms,
 What conjuration and what mighty magic--
 For such proceeding I am charged withal--
 I won his daughter. (I, iii, 81-94)

Yet, one must note, the skepticism or distrust of rhetoric as a treacherous weapon for seduction and corruption is given utterance as well, this time in Brabantio's words:

I therefore vouch again
 That with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood,
 Or with some dram conjured to this effect,
 He wrought upon her. (I, iii, 103-6)

Brabantio is here confirming what Othello has already said; he is only looking at it from the opposite angle, as the dramatic situation in progress requires. Othello concludes his account with the lines:

She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
 And I loved her that she did pity them.
 This only is the witchcraft I have used. (I, iii, 167-69)

It is this capacity for objectively juxtaposing the two sides of the matter that Shakespeare the dramatist demands from Shakespeare the critic. Thus, while giving utterance to the positive view of rhetoric, Shakespeare can at the same time put the issue on a dramatic trial. Depending on the viewpoints and personal interest, the issue can be looked at from two opposite angles, as in the cases of Othello and Brabantio. What Shakespeare does here is none other than conscious, objective juxtaposition of the two different stances; and this conscious effort for dramatic conflict increases the audience's awareness of the dramatic effect of this scene.

In Measure for Measure Claudio, in an effort to secure a pardon from Angelo, asks Lucio to convey his message to his sister Isabella that she plead with the deputy duke:

Acquaint her with the danger of my state,
 Implore her, in my voice, that she make friends
 To the strict Deputy, bid herself assay him.
 I have great hope in that, for in her youth
 There is a prone and speechless dialect
 Such as move men. Besides, she hath prosperous art
 When she will play with reason and discourse,
 And well she can persuade. (I, ii, 184-91)

Although Claudio's desperation forces him to have recourse to his sister's eloquence and gift of dialectic, the last few lines of the passage clearly indicate that the power of rhetoric can be used constructively for persuasion--in this case, the release of Claudio, who is going to meet the ultimate penalty for his small sin. But the subtlety of Shakespeare's method is seen here again. No matter what his justification, Claudio's selfish motive--which becomes more clearly observable as the action progresses--is responsible for the utterance of this positive view of rhetoric. Claudio's preceding comment--'I have great hope in that, for in her youth/ There is a prone and speechless dialect/ Such as move men'--puts the ensuing statement on the effectiveness of rhetoric in a questionable spot. The dramatic irony created by this passage becomes clearer as we later watch Claudio pleading with his sister to sacrifice her chastity for the sake of his life. Despite the assertion of the power of rhetoric found in the passage, the dramatic context suggests that Claudio is glibly borrowing the advocacy of rhetoric as a useful art for his own selfish purpose.

Shakespeare's subtle comment on the power of rhetoric to corrupt appears in The First Part of King Henry the Fourth. The scene is the one in which Falstaff and his clan are trying to induce Prince Hal to join their planned robbery. Poins asks Falstaff to leave him alone with Hal so that he can talk to the prince privately. Falstaff's following comment implies a flagrant usurpation of rhetoric for his ill-purpose:

Well, God give thee the spirit of persuasion and him the ears of profiting, that what thou speakest may move and what he hears may be believed, that the true Prince may,

for recreation sake, prove a false thief; for the poor abuses of the time want countenance. Farewell. You shall find me in East-cheap. (I, ii, 170-76)

Shakespeare is dramatizing here the widely shared distrust of rhetoric as an art that can be used to corrupt, by putting the pious jargon of professional preachers into the mouth of Falstaff. All the beloved terms and phrases of the champions of rhetoric are deliberately used: 'spirit of persuasion,' 'ears of profiting,' 'moving,' and the like. The intended dramatic effect is clear: it is the sense of irony. The sacred concepts of persuasion and moving to virtuous action are flagrantly usurped by Falstaff. Shakespeare's introducing the traditional conception of rhetoric into this passing comment by Falstaff is deliberate and conscious.

In Hamlet Shakespeare's judgment on the abuse of rhetoric is unmistakable in his delineation of the characters of Polonius and Osric. Polonius' exquisite display of the scraps of rhetorical skill is indeed tantamount to Shakespeare's most humorous depiction of a character:

My liege, and madam, to expostulate
 What majesty should be, what duty is,
 Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
 Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.
 Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit
 And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
 I will be brief. Your noble son is mad.
 Mad call I it, for to define true madness,
 What is 't but to be nothing else but mad?
 But let that go.
 Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
 That he is mad, 'tis true. 'Tis true 'tis pity,
 And pity 'tis 'tis true--a foolish figure,
 But farewell it, for I will use no art.
 Mad let us grant him, then. And now remains
 That we find out the cause of this effect,
 Or rather say the cause of this defect,

For this effect defective comes by cause.
 Thus it remains and the remainder thus.
 Perpend.

I have a daughter--have while she is mine-- (II, ii, 86-106)

When Gertrude reprimands Polonius entangled in figures--'More matter with less art' (l. 95)--Shakespeare is not advocating a total rejection of rhetoric; he is rather rekindling the audience's awareness that Polonius is a windbag who can be easily entrapped in his own verbal ditch.

As we have seen, Shakespeare's attitude toward rhetoric is anything but a positive vindication of it. Shakespeare incessantly shifts his viewpoints between the two opposite poles. But it does not mean that he did not have any firm stance. According to the dramatic situations in progress, he could shift from one to the other, utilizing various ideas on rhetoric for his purpose. What matters is the dramatic effect created by the intrusion of these critical concepts. The awareness of proper use and abuse is always at the back of his observations; and what dictates our judgment on the individual passages voicing any critical notions is the dramatic context. Shakespeare's use of critical comments thus assumes a distinct dimension of purposefulness: his conscious utilization of the critical theories is done with an eye to the dramatic effects to be achieved. Since the intended dramatic-poetic effects are Shakespeare's primary object for any reference to rhetoric and language, the inconsistencies one encounters in Shakespeare's allusions to rhetoric and language should not puzzle us. Professor Hardin Craig has pointed out that the greatness of Elizabethan drama lies in the indefatigable interest in rhetoric and dialectic that characterized

the Elizabethan Age:

It is no wonder that drama flourishes, which is itself an art of conquest, dialogue, and debate, agreement, and disagreement. . . . The reason for this preoccupation with controversial utterance. . . arises from the conception of. . . dialectic as an instrument for the discovery of truth. . . . Every question has two sides, and the acutest minds would habitually see both sides. Now drama itself. . . is debate, and the issues it loves to treat are debatable issues. Shakespeare, the acutest of Renaissance thinkers, has. . . an ability to see both sides of a question. 11

In revealing his thoughts on the matters of rhetoric and language Shakespeare could show the two sides of the issue by making them part of his drama; and the subtle juxtaposition of any two stances in conflict was a way of his dramaturgy. Shakespeare introduced critical comments into his works as an element that can enrich his writings; he did not use his works as vehicles to carry his critical thoughts. If we are to approach Shakespeare's plays not as dramatic works but as repositories of his critical thoughts, we are in effect losing sight of the ends in examining the means.

III

Professor F. P. Wilson's lecture delivered as an annual Shakespeare lecture of the British Academy in 1941 contains the following remark:

The conditions of Shakespeare's art as a dramatist did not permit him to stray far from popular idiom, but even if they had, his mind was of a cast that would still have found the material upon which it worked mainly in the diction of common life. The best of the Sonnets are evidence of that and all the familiar images in his plays which, as his art matures, flow more and more freely from the less conscious

levels of his mind. At the same time his instinct for what was permanent in the colloquial language of his day is stronger than that of any contemporary dramatist. . . . In the words of Coleridge, his language is that which belongs 'to human nature as human, independent of associations and habits from any particular rank of life or mode of employment. . . . It is (to play on Dante's words) in truth the NOBILE volgare eloquenza.'¹²

This remark is an overall diagnosis of the inherent qualities of Shakespeare's language; the authority that Professor Wilson quotes termed Shakespeare's language the "nobly common language." This diagnosis of Shakespeare's diction as being deeply rooted in real life (therefore having permanence) brings us to the center of Shakespeare's creating and responding mind. When Professor Wilson uses the term "colloquial" or "popular" to describe the basic texture of Shakespeare's language, he does not mean that Shakespeare's stage language was a mere transplantation of the Elizabethans' common daily language. The mould of the Elizabethan verse drama required a certain degree of departure from the daily language; and the accepted conventions of the Elizabethan stage language necessitated a certain degree of elevation and artistic refinement--a requisite quality of all imaginative literature. Yet, Professor Wilson asserts, the underlying tenor of Shakespeare's language is that which is not far removed from that of the language of daily use.

The principle of decorum is present in this creating and responding mind, for a search for permanence is equivalent to a search for the golden mean. Art is an improvement over nature; but it is not a process of transformation of nature into a form of extravagance. Elevation and refinement are required in the process of artistic formation; but total transformation of nature amounts to its disfiguration. Cos-

metics can enhance natural beauty; but excessive use of them results in grotesque caricature.

Indeed both the creative faculty and the responding (critical) mind of Shakespeare manifested themselves in the observations he made on the use of language as well as in his own use of it. When one considers diction as the basic element of style--and I am using the term "style" in the sense as defined by Puttenham¹³--what Shakespeare says on diction is of vital importance to the present discussion. The sense of decorum that was the guidepost in Shakespeare's use of language made his diction lean toward that of "common life," as Professor Wilson puts it. While Shakespeare's creating faculty was governed by this temper, his responding mind was responsible for the critical observations on diction.

Hamlet's 'Words, words, words' (Hamlet, II, ii, 194) does not have much relevance to the present discussion. Yet it can be a prefigurement of Shakespeare's insistent consciousness of diction: for, what would be the substance--the 'matter' (ll. 195, 197)--of even a long list of slanders without the presence of 'words'? Indeed, language was an object of passion for Shakespeare. The mere sound of words, even of an unknown tongue, was enough to provoke the poet's imagination:

thy tongue
 Makes Welsh as sweet as ditties highly penned,
 Sung by a fair queen in a summer's bower,
 With ravishing division, to her lute. (1 Henry IV, III, ii,
 209-12)

However, excessive toying with words, thereby causing disfigurement and grotesquery, was a breach of decorum and a violation of the

language of common life. In Love's Labor's Lost, which Professor Alwin Thaler calls "the best dramatic essay ever written on words and their ways,"¹⁴ Shakespeare's response to the contemporary excesses in language and diction finds expression in various critical comments as well as in the dramatization of the practice. The play itself is an exposure of the artificialities of diction that the contemporary language-consciousness and the active cerebration in linguistic venture created during the Elizabethan Age. Three characters in the play, Armado, Holofernes, and Nathaniel, represent the absurd aberrations that were current during the mid-Tudor period. Indeed, all the characters in the play use and abuse a large number of rhetorical devices: their choice of diction out-Herods Herod. Clearly Shakespeare is satirizing the pedantry that is out of touch with real life, the modes of speech that are linguistically affected and extravagant. There can be no doubt of Shakespeare's attitude toward the stylistic affectations that had resulted from the contemporary enthusiasm for language and the excessive abuse of rhetorical devices.

Armado is described as a 'child of fancy' (I, i, 171) who uses 'high-born words' and 'fine-new words' (I, i, 173, 179). The 'fashion's own knight' (I, i, 179) 'that Armado hight' (l. 171) (note the archaism) indulges in bombast and pomposity throughout the play. Even Holofernes, who in his turn displays scholastic pedantry and excessive Latinisms, criticizes Armado's verbal habit as unnatural:

Novi hominem tanquam te. His humor is lofty, his discourse peremptory, his tongue filed, his eye ambitious, his gate majestical, and his general behavior vain, ridiculous, and

thrasonical. He is too picked, too spruce, too affected,
 too odd, as it were, too peregrinate, as I may call it.
 (V, i, 10-16)

The passage carries a special irony: a raven is denouncing a crow. Nathaniel's irrepressible admiration for Holofernes' verbal exhibitionism--'A most singular and choice epithet' (l. 17)--followed by his drawing out his table-book to record the brain-smashing word 'peregrinate'--adds a final touch to this cream of irony. Hamlet wants to write down the Ghost's command--'My tables--meet it is I set it down' (Hamlet, I, v, 107). For Hamlet it is a solemn rite of materializing the airy words of the Ghost in a written form. But Nathaniel's table-book, one can assume, must be full of exotic, rare, cerebrated words he has harvested arduously. All three of them are described by Moth as ones who 'have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps' (V, i, 39). Indeed, when Shakespeare puts the memorable lines in Berowne's mouth, he is holding a mirror for all of us, the descendants of Armado-Holofernes-Nathaniel:

Small have continual plodders ever won,
 Save base authority from others' books. (I, i, 86-87)

One encounters a similar situation in Twelfth Night. When the long disquisition into clowning and the verbal 'corruption' that clowning inevitably entails (III, i, 12-75) is over, there is a brief scene where a battle of small-calibred witticisms is described:

Sir Toby. Taste your legs, sir, put them to motion.
 Viola. My legs do better understand me, sir, than I understand what you mean by bidding me to taste my legs.
 Sir Toby. I mean to go, sir, to enter.
 Viola. I will answer you with gait and entrance. But you

are prevented. [Enter Olivia and Maria.] Most excellent accomplished lady, the heavens rain odors on you!

Sir Andrew. That youth's a rare courtier. "Rain odors," well.

Viola. My matter hath no voice, lady, but to your own most pregnant and vouchsafed ear.

Sir Andrew. "Odors," "pregnant," and "vouchsafed." I'll get 'em all three all ready. (III, i, 87-102)

One is almost tempted to think that this passage reveals an antipodal stance as regards the use of rhetoric and language. Sir Andrew does not take out his table-book, but his admiration for the rare choice of words achieved by Viola's extemporaneous verbal exertion to match Sir Toby's affected language is comparable to Nathaniel's worship of Holofernes' rare gift of pedantic cerebration. Polonius, who displays a critical temper in his own way--'That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase, "beautified" is a vile phrase' (Hamlet, II, ii, 11-12)--expresses his approval of a word Hamlet has difficulty in understanding: 'That's good, "mobled Queen" is good' (II, ii, 527).

One of Shakespeare's methods of characterization is to provide these little touches here and there; as the small instances accumulate in the course of dramatic action, each character becomes a living entity. Nathaniel, Sir Andrew, and Polonius are men of churlish taste and flimsy calibre, not to speak of their weak minds that can easily be swept away by petty and cheap witticisms.

The subtlety of Shakespeare's method is apparent in the following speech of Holofernes where he perpetrates the vice of "mingle-mangle," the mingling of different languages, that Puttenham denounced:¹⁵

Most barbarous intimation! Yet a kind of insinuation, as it were, in via, in way, of explication; facere, as it were,

replication, or, rather, ostentare, to show, as it were, his inclination, after his undressed, unpolished, uneducated, unpruned, untrained, or rather unlettered, or ratherest unconfirmed fashion. (Love's Labor's Lost, IV, ii, 13ff)

The initial epithet Holofernes uses is a blow on the mind: 'barbarous.' Indeed, the whole passage is quintessentially barbarous: the churlish display of his Latinism is what is really barbarous. The singularly Shakespearean humor is apparent here. The irony achieved here cannot be anything but a token of Shakespeare's conscious workmanship.

While excesses in language and diction are the main targets of Shakespeare's criticism, deficiencies in the mastery of the arts of language are equally ridiculed or pilloried in his works. But the two modes of the breach of decorum are, after all, two sides of the same coin: both excesses and deficiencies are the results of a failure to handle the verbal medium in the right way. Indeed, all the verbal excesses appearing in Shakespeare's writings are the results of the speakers' attempt to over-reach their mastery of the arts of language.

When Shakespeare describes the poor command of language of certain characters, his treatment of the verbal blunders or hopeless linguistic impoverishment is that of an amused observer. A Midsummer Night's Dream depicts the effort of the literal-minded 'mechanicals' who strive to achieve what they simply cannot. Their desperate effort to articulate something sensible out of sheer vacuum of mind constitutes the sub-plot of the play. Even Hamlet, who displays throughout Hamlet a remarkable degree of aesthetic sensibility and critical judgment, is shown at one moment to be the composer of a wretched love-lyric:

Doubt thou the stars are fire,
 Doubt that the sun doth move,
 Doubt truth to be a liar,
 But never doubt I love. (II, ii, 16-19)

Hamlet himself recognizes the wretchedness of the lines: 'O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers, I have not art to reckon my groans, but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu. Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, Hamlet' (ll. 120-24).

The ludicrousness of the affected words, 'reckon my groans' and 'machine,' does not need any further probing. What matters here is the question: Why did Shakespeare insert this passage at the risk of presenting Hamlet even momentarily as a man who is ill-trained in the use of language and can produce a few lines unworthy of a Wittenberg scholar? Surely, when we hear him delivering his masterful speech on the principles of stage acting (III, ii, 1-51), he is worthy of the appellation, 'scholar's . . . tongue,' (III, ii, 159) as Ophelia's eulogy has it. Is it just an example of Shakespeare's inconsistency in his characterization? Again, one must take the dramatic situation into consideration in responding to the particular passage. Hamlet's epistle is being read by Polonius, who has just finished his rhetorical prologue to the heart of the matter in his ludicrously figurative language. A well-written piece of lyric worthy of Hamlet won't do; it will break the continuity of the comical mood that has been sustained by Polonius' display of his 'foolish figure' (l. 98).

One finds another case where linguistic poverty is alluded to. Prince Hal, who feels much rivalry against Hotspur, picks an occasion to make a disparaging comment on Hotspur's verbal ability:

Prince. What's o'clock, Francis?

Francis. Anon, anon, sir. [Exit.]

Prince. That ever this fellow should have fewer words than a parrot, and yet the son of a woman! His industry is upstairs and downstairs, his eloquence the parcel of a reckoning. I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the North, he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, "Fie upon this quiet life! I want work." "O my sweet Harry," says she, "how many hast thou killed today?" "Give my roan horse a drench," says he, and answers "Some fourteen" an hour after--"a trifle, a trifle." I prithee call in Falstaff. I'll play Percy, and that damned brawn shall play Dame Mortimer his wife.

(1 Henry IV, II, iv, 108-24)

Hotspur is in fact one of Shakespeare's best poets--along with Hamlet and Mercutio. But in Hal's brief account of Hotspur's verbal ability, he appears to be a creature severely impoverished linguistically. Although a profound commentary on linguistic poverty by itself, the passage is written with an eye to the psychological conflict that is going on in Hal's consciousness. Hal is aware that his present life of dissipation does not measure up to his father's expectation. All his latent capacity for military feats is being squandered, while his peer is building up his soldierly fame. As Hal's soliloquy in Act I, Scene II (ll. 218-40) indicates, Hal is a sleeping lion waiting for the occasion to be awakened. Shakespeare puts the above comment in Hal's mouth to show that there is a rivalry against Hotspur in Hal's consciousness at all times (a feeling to be resolved dramatically later in the play) that finds an outlet even on a small occasion involving a tavern boy. After all, why should Hal's consciousness leap from a tavern boy's verbal habit to an imaginary scene between Hotspur and his wife?

As examined in a few instances listed above, Shakespeare's comments on verbal inadequacy are also closely related to dramatic situation in progress. They do not exist for the purpose of revealing Shakespeare's contempt for lack of verbal ability; they are there because the dramatic situations are ripe for the comments--or rather because these comments can enhance the dramatic effects and the audience's awareness of the dramatic action in progress.

IV

As we have seen so far, there are many instances where Shakespeare's comments on the use of language and rhetoric are subtly made. These comments can include commendation for speeches well done--such as King Duncan's praise of the martial report (Macbeth, I, ii, 43-44)--or impatient criticism of poor use of language by any of his characters. They can also include the poet's direct comments on particular modes of the use of language. After indulging in a long list of oxymoronic conceits in an attempt to expound on the nature of love (Romeo and Juliet, I, i, 181-88), Romeo adds: 'Dost thou not laugh?' Toward the end of As You Like It there is a scene where Orlando, Rosalind in disguise, Silvius, and Phebe are engaged in a quartet on the theme, 'what 'tis to love' (V, ii, 89ff). The lines uttered by the four in turn are full of repetitions and proclamations. Rosalind, who is always sober-minded, adds: 'Pray you, no more of this, 'tis like the howling of Irish wolves against the moon' (V, ii, 118-19). As Mercutio delivers

his Queen Mab speech (Romeo and Juliet, I, iv, 53ff), an exquisite piece of fantasy and sheer poetry with its immersion in the world of imagination, Romeo impatiently interrupts him: 'Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace!/ Thou talk'st of nothing' (ll. 95-96). As if Shakespeare were wary of the audience's being drifted away from the main stream of the action, he puts this comment into Romeo's mouth, although the passage by itself is one any poet would envy.

All these comments are subtly made in order that they do not interrupt the dramatic progress. The intended effect of these comments is to enhance the audience's awareness of the dramatic situations in progress. These unobtrusive comments of the author are made part of the dramatic speeches, and are well integrated in the action. What the audience would have said is uttered by some characters on the stage; and this intermingling of the audience's reaction and the stage characters' utterances helps the audience's fusion into the dramatic situations.

Although these direct comments that Shakespeare offers as extemporaneous insertions naturally draw our attention, there are also quite a few instances where indirect criticism of a certain style, convention, or use of language and rhetoric is made through imitation or parody of that style or language. This technique involves Shakespeare's dramatic criticism, for, while revealing his literary judgment on matters of style, diction, and language in these passages, he is attempting to achieve desired dramatic effects through them. A typical example can be found in a scene in The First Part of King Henry the Fourth, where Falstaff enacts an extemporaneous scene 'in King Cambyses' vein' (II, iv,

425-61). It is a superb parody of an early Tudor drama with its stilted style of a mock-heroic. Yet the purpose of introducing this episode into the play is not merely to criticize the style of the early Tudor drama, but rather to provide an occasion to delineate the character of Falstaff, a man of versatile humor and with a keen sense of aesthetics. Also, it is a scene where comic mood is aimed at. The dramatic effects Shakespeare achieves by introducing parody or imitation of his contemporaries' style are our primary concern; however, we can hardly bypass the implied criticism offered in passages like this.

The indirect criticism that Shakespeare offers encompasses several categories to be considered. First of all, there is a group of speeches in which Shakespeare employs the tone and mood of conventional poetry. The primary purpose of introducing these passages into his drama is not really to pass judgment on the literary fashions and the Elizabethan literary conventions. The implied criticism is there; but when one considers why Shakespeare introduces these parodies, one becomes aware of the dramatic functions of these passages.

In Othello, for instance, there is a passage where the conventional mode of consolation is criticized. The Duke tries to console Brabantio, who is heart-sick at the knowledge that his daughter is irretrievably lost to him:

Let me speak like yourself, and lay a sentence
Which, as a grise or step, may help these lovers
Into your favor.
When remedies are past, the griefs are ended
By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended.

To mourn a mischief that is past and gone
 Is the next way to draw new mischief on.
 What cannot be preserved when fortune takes,
 Patience her injury a mockery makes.
 The robbed that smiles steals something from the thief.
 He robs himself that spends a bootless grief. (I, iii, 199-209)

This passage is full of platitudes and general maxims. The artificial and superficial tone of feigned sympathy is too obvious in the couplets so glibly uttered. To this pseudo-consolatory speech, Brabantio answers with matching skill of artificial rationalizing:

So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile,
 We lose it not so long as we can smile.
 He bears the sentence well that nothing bears
 But the free comfort which from thence he hears.
 But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow
 That, to pay grief, must of poor patience borrow.
 These sentences, to sugar or to gall,
 Being strong on both sides, are equivocal. (I, iii, 210-17)

Brabantio's speech is a superb parody of the Duke's empty words of consolation. With this pair of matching passages Shakespeare is achieving dual effects: the implied criticism of the hollow style and language bedecked with platitudes and general maxims, and the dramatic portrayal of Brabantio's mortifying anguish that finds release in his bitterly rhymed answer.

In this relation Professor Hereward T. Price has commented:

When [Shakespeare] wants to suggest crudeness, triviality or insincerity, he adopts the artifices of Elizabethan convention. By indirection he reveals that he considers certain tricks of style to be cheap and flimsy. Critics often attack him for being intricate where it was so easy to be simple. These men forget that Shakespeare the dramatist sometimes imposes a duty on Shakespeare the poet, at which the latter must have groaned.¹⁶

The Duke's speech quoted above exemplifies this aspect of Shakespeare's

dramaturgy: use of platitudes and proverbial maxims. Yet use of platitudes was not the only element of Elizabethan convention. Verbal extravaganzas, bombast, overindulgence in conceit were also part of Elizabethan convention and misoriented rhetorical tradition. In Romeo and Juliet we find many passages that manifest these aspects of Elizabethan convention. Take, for example, the pseudo-elegiacs sung by the Capulets over the supposed death of Juliet:

Accurst, unhappy, wretched, hateful day!
 Most miserable hour that e'er time saw
 In lasting labor of his pilgrimage!

 Oh, woe! Oh, woeful, woeful, woeful, woeful day!
 Most lamentable day, most woeful day,
 That ever, ever, I did yet behold!
 Oh, day, oh, day, oh, day! oh, hateful day!

 Oh, woeful day! oh, woeful day!
 Beguiled, divorced, wronged, spited, slain!

 Oh, love! Oh, life! Not life, but love in death!
 Despised, distressed, hated, martyred, killed! (IV, v, 43-59)

One can hardly commiserate their forced ejaculations. The utter vacuity of emotion, despite which the Capulet members are striving to "mourn" the death of Juliet, is too obvious in these laughable lines. The quartet is a superb parody of the declamatory style of some of the pre-Shakespearean drama.

But one does not suspect that Shakespeare's parody here was meant to disparage the earlier playwrights' style. While revealing what his reaction was to the Kydian-Senecan declamatory lines, Shakespeare is achieving his intended dramatic effect: the hollow utterances reveal the character. The Capulets, including the man to whom they wanted to marry off Juliet, are devoid of true feelings, vulgar, and smacking of

unrefined bourgeoisie. They are more concerned with putting on 'the trappings and the suits of woe' (Hamlet, I, ii, 86), as Hamlet describes the general mourning of the court of Elsinore. The lines are equally imbecile as Bottom the Weaver's lines uttered in 'Ercles' vein':

The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates.
And Phibbus' car
Shall shine from far,
And make and mar
The foolish Fates. (A Midsummer Night's Dream, I, ii, 33-40)

Similar effects are achieved in Romeo's passage (I, i, 181-88) made up of a series of oxymoronic phrases. There is little point in trying to read some meaning into Romeo's list of adolescent conceits. Romeo, who is only in love with the idea of being in love at this point, utters the empty words; in fact, at the end of the verbal extravaganza, Romeo adds: 'Dost thou not laugh?' (l. 189) The tediously long and elaborate metaphor of Paris as a book--'Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,' and so on (I, iii, 81-94)--reveals the character of Lady Capulet, a vain bourgeois woman capable of indulging in petty conceit while discussing her daughter's marriage prospect. The scene between Romeo and Juliet where the intricate pilgrim metaphor is developed into an excessive conceit (I, v, 95-109) is criticism by indirection; although they play on religious imagery ad nauseam, the passage has no religious overtone. They have not yet matured into true tragic characters at this stage of the dramatic development.

The passages cited above are some of the instances in which Shakespeare achieves desired dramatic effects while offering indirect criti-

cism of the style and the use of language of his contemporary writers. Professor McCullen's study of Renaissance rhetoric contains the following remark:

Even while insisting that truth needs no colors, writers realized that human relations best suited to poetic and dramatic expression spring from three character types: the sincere mind expressed through simple language which reveals honest thoughts, the uncritical mind content with impersonal and conventional language (such as platitudes to advise or console) no matter how personal the situation, and the calculating mind ready to seize upon any effective means to selfish ends. If, therefore, the subject under development involved characters who would normally use any one or all these varieties of language, the responsibility of the writer was to use appropriate rhetoric. He risked a violation of decorum when through rhetorical excess or deficiency he expressed his meaning, delineated characters, and motivated or developed action. ¹⁷

If we apply the above statement to our consideration of Shakespeare's use of language, we can immediately recall a few characters that fit into the three categories suggested. Both Cordelia and Kent represent the first character type: "the sincere mind expressed through simple language which reveals honest thoughts." Goneril, Regan, Edmund, Iago, and Antony (at Caesar's funeral) come to mind in relation to the third category. Cordelia's first speeches (King Lear, I, i, 89-109) made after her two asides (ll. 63, 78-79) manifest her character. Her true love for her father cannot be so glibly transformed into words such as those Goneril and Regan could utter (ll. 56-62; 71-78). When one considers that the whole tragic sequence of the play starts with this initial encounter between the two character types, one becomes aware that Shakespeare is initiating the dramatic action by presenting the two modes of rhetoric.

The two character types usually constitute the main characters who initiate and sustain dramatic action in Shakespeare's plays. However, when Shakespeare's implied (indirect) criticism of a style or speech pattern occurs in the course of a dramatic action, it usually involves the second and the third character types or categories suggested in the above statement. Claudius' and Gertrude's glib and unfeeling words of perfunctory consolation--'Thou know'st 'tis common--all that lives must die,/ Passing through nature into eternity' (Hamlet, I, ii, 72-73)--only increases Hamlet's alienation and disgust. The Duke's speech in Othello (I, iii, 210ff) leads to Brabantio's superb parody of that conventional and insipid style. The speeches from Romeo and Juliet cited above are examples of Shakespeare's parody of conventional declamatory or extravagant style. Also, when excesses in language overstepping the modesty of nature appear in Shakespeare, one is to suspect that his use of that kind of style or language is aimed at achieving dramatic effect, whether it be that of irony or satire, or denoting the shallowness or treachery of the characters involved.

Professor Edwin R. Hunter, who has done a study on the manner of speech as an aspect of Shakespeare's characterization, concludes:

Perhaps it would be truer than calling this process the making of a character to call it the reporting of a character or the recording of a character. . . . So we come again, as we consider this matter of manner of speech, to the question: What was Shakespeare's method in this? What his awareness of any method? Our best answer is that there is great unlikelihood that Shakespeare himself ever deliberately wrought after such effects. His genius is too naive and common-sensical for that. What is likely is that the effect came as a by-product of the total operation of his genius as a creator of character.¹⁸

I hate to disagree with this lucid statement. But here again Professor Hunter argues for the "artlessness" of an unconscious genius, as asserted by several generations of critics since Jonson. When Shakespeare was writing the lines revealing the characters by means of their verbal textures, certainly he was conscious of the use of language he was assigning to his characters: otherwise, why did he refer to it so often? The following remark by Professor A. C. Bradley was made in his discussion of the construction of Shakespeare's tragedy, but is still applicable to the present discussion:

In speaking. . . of devices and expedients, I did not intend to imply that Shakespeare always deliberately aimed at the effects which he produced. But no artist always does this, and I see no reason to doubt that Shakespeare often did it, or to suppose that his method of constructing and composing differed, except in degree, from that of the most 'conscious' of artists. The antithesis of art and inspiration, though not meaningless, is often misleading. Inspiration surely is not incompatible with considerate workmanship. The two may be severed, but they need not be so, and where a genuinely poetic result is being produced they cannot be so. The glow of a first conception must in some measure survive or rekindle itself in the work of planning and executing; and what is called a technical expedient may 'come' to a man with as sudden a glory as a splendid image.¹⁹

Anyone who has done any writing, even if not in the creative faculty, would wholeheartedly agree with Professor Bradley. The passage Professor Bradley wrote is a living proof of the thesis he is arguing. Furthermore, if we read the statement in the context of the present discussion, we are at the center of its matrix: Shakespeare's criticism of language and rhetoric (even the subtlest) is manifestation of the blending of the conscious and the unconscious. And even an unconsciously achieved feat always stems from the critical consciousness that dictates the creative faculty at any given moment.

CHAPTER III
DRAMATIC CRITICISM

In this chapter I shall consider both what Shakespeare says about drama in general and what he says about the substance of his own plays as they evolve individually. The latter observations apply to and provide bases for the interpretation of a play, particular scenes within a play, characters as individuals and groups in particular situations, character types, the atmosphere and tone of a play or a scene, effectiveness of certain dramatic situations, and the like.

In applying the term "dramatic criticism" to the observations Shakespeare made in relation to the aspects listed above, one faces the task of studying Shakespeare as the interpreter of his own works. The interpretative comments Shakespeare made in the process of the formation of his works reveal the critical awareness the playwright sustained throughout the corpus of his works. Shakespeare's unobtrusive comments on matters of dramaturgy are spoken by his characters, and these utterances are made part of the dramatic action in progress. Indeed, all of Shakespeare's critical observations are made in such a way as to escape sounding like an intrusion of the voice of the dramatist; all the comments are hidden in the garb of dramatic speeches mandated by the overall dramatic process and the particular situations in progress. This is to say that Shakespeare's own comments are fitted into the dramatic situations and are uttered by his characters at appropriate moments with such an effect as to render them characteristic

of the dramatic personae involved.

Professor J. W. H. Atkins made the following remark in his survey of Renaissance dramatic criticism:

No explanation... is afforded [in Shakespeare's works] of his doctrine of significant form, according to which a play should provide in its beginning an expectation of its end, in its development rational movement and in its end a sense of fulfilment. Nothing, again, is said of his conception of either tragedy or comedy, of the need for selection, compression and idealization of dramatic material, of the different methods of revealing character, of the value of contrast and relief, of the different dramatic effects of verse and prose, or of the hundred and one devices he employed for holding the playgoer's interest.¹

In the statement quoted above Professor Atkins reveals his disappointment at not finding any palpable critical discussions in the works of Shakespeare. I heartily hate to disagree with one of the major literary historians of our time; but Professor Atkins' remark indicates that his approach to the subject has been stymied by an attempt to extract critical discussions from Shakespeare's works that can stand out as unmistakable expositions of his dramatic theory. This approach has been taken by other critics,² and the commonly shared objective of their studies is clearly summarized in the statement by Professor Atkins. Scholars have attempted to locate passages which can be read as direct and unmistakably clear expositions of Shakespeare's critical thoughts.

The truth is that Shakespeare's works are not repositories of his critical ideas; and, when critical allusions appear in his works, they cannot be read out of the contexts in which they occur. All the elements of dramaturgy Professor Atkins lists are demonstrated by the

works themselves but are not discussed in critical jargon that literary theorists would use in their professional faculty. The frustration commonly shared by scholars stems from their desire to build a body of critical theory upon the fragments of critical comments found in Shakespeare's works or to extract passages that can serve as critical expositions floating above the dramatic contexts.

The above speculation boils down to one point: the critical observations found in Shakespeare's works should be read as his comments upon his own achievements at any given moment in the process of the formation of his works rather than as self-sufficient statements that can step out of the contexts as once-and-for-all declarations of his critical thoughts. Shakespeare the dramatist is concerned with effectively awakening his audience's awareness of the dramatic situations in progress by offering his critical observations as necessities arise; Shakespeare offers his own interpretations of the action in progress from behind the scenes through the utterances of his dramatic characters.

In considering the interpretative observations Shakespeare made on his drama, one must recall the ever-present stage-consciousness and innate stage-sense that are manifested in his works. Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, in her study of Shakespeare's use of imagery, states that his writings contain only a small number of images derived from the theater.³ But the fact that Shakespeare's use of stage (or theater) imagery is, as Spurgeon notes, relatively sparse does not undercut one's belief that stage-sense and stage-consciousness were inveterate in the

poet's creative instinct and critical awareness. Apart from the numerous instances in which Shakespeare consciously provides practical hints for stage managements--indeed, in many instances the lines Shakespeare wrote provide stage directions--one can notice that his stage-consciousness and stage-sense never lost their grip on the poet's creating mind. The numerous variations on the theme, 'All the world's a stage,' prove to what extent Shakespeare's creative faculty was dominated by his stage-sense. Shakespeare readily finds images in the terms of his profession as an actor-playwright, and puts them into the mouths of his characters who do not have much to do with the stage art. Jaques' anatomy of human existence provides an unmistakable keynote of Shakespeare's innate stage-sense:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. (As You Like It, II, vii, 139-44)

As the final approaches, Macbeth's stoicism is expressed in similar terms:

Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. (Macbeth, V, v, 23-26)

Even a passing comment by Othello, who can know nothing of the stage art, contains stage terminology:

Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it
Without a prompter. (Othello, I, ii, 83-84)

Poems have little to do with the stage; yet Venus and Adonis has the lines:

And all this dumb play had his acts made plain
 With tears, which, chorus-like, her eyes did rain. (11.359-60)

In complaining of his helplessness in love, Shakespeare compares himself to

an imperfect actor on the stage
 Who with his fear is put besides his part. (Sonnet 23)

Portia refers to Falconbridge as 'a dumb-show' (Merchant of Venice, I, ii, 78). Macbeth calls the verification of the witches' first two appellations (I, iii, 48-9) 'happy prologues to the swelling act/ Of the imperial theme' (I, iii, 128-29). Northumberland's rage against fate includes the invocation:

let this world no longer be a stage
 To feed contention in a lingering act. (2 Henry IV, I, i, 155-56)

Lear in madness proclaims that our births are nothing but an entry into 'this great stage of fools' (Lear, IV, vi, 187). Yorks's account of the people's reaction to the dethronement of Richard and the ascension of Bolingbroke includes the lines:

As in a theater, the eyes of men,
 After a well-graced actor leaves the stage,
 Are idly bent on him that enters next,
 Thinking his prattle to be tedious. (Richard II, V, ii, 23-26)

Indeed, it is an endless task to list all the passages where theatrical allusions appear. The ever-present stage-consciousness in Shakespeare, one must conclude, was responsible for the recurring stage imagery and his free use of stage terminology in describing dramatic-poetic situations. At the risk of enumerating the obvious, I have quoted some passages which, though not critical comments in themselves, clearly indicate that Shakespeare's creative instinct was permeated by

stage-sense and stage-consciousness. One may call it an obsession--this persistent viewing the world as a stage, men as actors, life as a play. And this vision of life Shakespeare imparted to the whole body of his works, one must suspect, derived from his never-ceasing consciousness of the stage for which he wrote and lived.

Shakespeare's stage-consciousness was responsible for the interpretative comments which constitute the major bulk of the critical observations that can be encompassed in the category of his dramatic criticism. Stage-consciousness impelled Shakespeare to give utterance to his own interpretations of the dramatic situations in progress and to help the audience to remain keenly aware of the dramatic effect achieved at any given moment. For Shakespeare, making his critical comments part of the dramatic speeches was a compulsion. Even when a dramatic scene is an intensely tragic one, Shakespeare's stage-consciousness is present and provides an objective interpretation of the scene. He also provides immediate evaluations of particular episodes and scenes (comic or tragic), thus helping the audience to be aware of the effects achieved. Not only does he provide ample commentary on the behaviors of his characters, but he also offers interpretations of the inter-reactions of the characters involved in particular situations. Occasionally he provides applied criticism dealing with the subject of stage acting; overtly or by implication, there are suggestions concerning speech and action--what should or should not be done or said. The comprehensiveness of Shakespeare's observations related to dramatic criticism is also manifested by the attention given to analyses and

interpretations of certain attitudes and their impact on the characters involved. Thus, the bulk of the comments Shakespeare made that can be grouped in the category of dramatic criticism are interpretative ones rather than abstract theorizing on dramatic art per se. Since his concern was not to propound a theory of dramatic art in abstract terms, the dramatic criticism appearing in Shakespeare's works took the form of interpretative comments.

II

One encounters several passages which can be read as Shakespeare's own interpretative observations on the substance of a play or a group of plays. These observations are uttered by his characters in the course of dramatic action; and, indeed, they appear to be only passing comments. Shakespeare does not, as a student writer would do, give a "thesis statement" at the beginning of a play; if he had done so, it would have been much too pedestrian a method. His plays usually open with scenes in medias res; and the observations that touch upon the substance of a play appear in the garb of dramatic speeches.

A typical example is found in Hamlet, Act I, Scene IV. Hamlet makes his visit to the battlement to verify the nightly appearance of his father's ghost. After a brief exchange of comments on the cold weather, Hamlet and his fellow watchmen hear the noisy merrymaking going on inside the palace. Upon Horatio's inquiry, Hamlet gives an account of the detestable Danish custom of intemperate drinking (11.

8-22). Characteristically, Hamlet goes on to philosophize on the general attributes of human nature, and makes the following statement, which is in effect a thoroughgoing analysis of his own tragedy:

So oft it chanceth in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth--wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin--
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens
The form of plausive manners, that these men--
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being Nature's livery, or Fortune's star--
Their virtues else--be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo--
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault. The dram of eale
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
To his own scandal. (I, iv, 23-38)

Hamlet makes this observation as an afterthought of his comment on the swinish custom of the Danish court; the transition is smooth, and the speech fits into the context of this particular scene. Yet, in this passing observation uttered by the speculative protagonist, Shakespeare gives an overall interpretation of the theme of the play. Shakespeare introduces this brief scene, in which the watchmen hear the revelling inside and exchange comments on it, for the purpose of providing an occasion to give utterance to his own interpretation of the substance of the tragedy of Hamlet. Moreover, technically it is a superb way of filling the time gap between the entrance of the watchmen and the appearance of the Ghost. The first encounter between Hamlet and the Ghost, if Shakespeare had not inserted this brief passage (ll. 7-38), would have been less effective. Horatio announces that it is 'near the season/ Wherein the spirit held his wont to talk' (ll. 5-6); and

the suspense should be kept for a while before the Ghost actually appears. Shakespeare thus achieves dual effects here: filling the time gap, thereby increasing the suspense, and providing an occasion for his own interpretative observation on the substance of the play to be made in the meantime.

The speech itself is a continuation of Hamlet's comment on the custom of revelling; but in it the theme of the play is succinctly summarized. If we apply Hamlet's analysis of human nature to Hamlet himself, the speech is a lucid summary of the tragedy of Hamlet. The 'o'ergrowth of some complexion' (1. 27) and the 'habit that too much o'erleavens' (1. 29) are both Hamlet's own defects of character: Hamlet's overly speculative temperament is allowed to overbalance the rest of his good qualities, and his habit of scrutinizing the issues involved ad nauseam and his justified yet unreasonable procrastination are responsible for his tragedy. Hamlet is the tragedy of intellect, one of the prime virtues of man; and Shakespeare clearly states that 'the stamp of one defect' (1. 31) put upon Hamlet's noble character--the overgrown habit of speculation and procrastination--does indeed bring about the catastrophe to the whole Danish court. Hamlet's virtues are indeed 'as pure as grace,/ As infinite as man may undergo' (11. 33-34); but, owing to the 'dram of eale' Hamlet was born with, 'all the noble substance' (1. 37) of his character becomes futile and wasted, which is the essence of the tragedy of Hamlet,

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword--
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,

The glass of fashion and the mold of form,
The observed of all observers. (III, ii, 159-62)

In the same manner, Friar Laurence's speech, which opens Scene III of Act II of Romeo and Juliet, interprets the essence of the tragedy in the play. The scene is set to provide an occasion for Romeo to confess his love for Juliet to his confidant Friar Laurence and for the secret marriage to be conceived by the latter. Although a brief scene between the two characters, it initiates the real tragedy of the play, for the fatal marriage is conceived here. Shakespeare opens the scene with Friar Laurence making his philosophical observation on the duality of things in nature while carrying his basket to be filled with herbs and weeds, the commonest of nature's objects. Shakespeare, one must note, uses here a technically perfect method in introducing his own interpretative observation into the play. No curtain is provided on the Elizabethan stage; and the meeting of Friar Laurence and Romeo has to be done in a natural manner. The two men walking unto the stage simultaneously or one of them waiting for the entrance of the other would be extremely awkward on the stage. Hence, Shakespeare uses this occasion to make Friar Laurence utter his own overall thematic interpretation of the essence of the tragedy:

The earth that's Nature's mother is her tomb,
What is her burying grave, that is her womb.
And from her womb children of divers kind
We sucking on her natural bosom find,
Many for many virtues excellent,
None but for some, and yet all different.
Oh, mickle is the powerful grace that lies
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities.
For naught so vile that on the earth doth live,
But to the earth some special good doth give;

Nor aught so good but, strained from that fair use,
 Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse.
 Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied,
 And vice sometimes by action dignified.
 Within the infant rind of this small flower
 Poison hath residence, and medicine power.
 For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part,
 Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart.
 Two such opposed kings encamp them still
 In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will;
 And where the worser is predominant,
 Full soon the canker death eats up that plant. (II, iii, 9-30)

In this passage Friar Laurence philosophizes on the duality of all the animate and inanimate objects in nature: nothing is either absolutely good or absolutely bad, and even the baleful weeds have virtues in them, while the graceful flowers can turn out to be poisonous. Depending on the circumstances and the methods of application, the two extremes can exchange their apparent roles and effects. From this general statement the speech moves on to expound on the danger of absolutism and the redeeming virtue of relativism. The last four lines of the speech more specifically allude to the tragedy in Romeo and Juliet. In the Prologue to the play the Chorus defines the tragedy as a story of

A pair of star-crossed lovers...
 Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
 Do with their death bury their parents' strife. (ll. 6-8)

It is a chorus-like statement covering only the factual event of the play; the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet is deeper than that. Friar Laurence's speech gives a thorough interpretation of the meaning of the tragedy. The uncompromising attitude of the two families stands for absolutism. Both the Capulets and the Montagues are unable to see the meaninglessness of their inveterate hatred until the catastrophe

awakens them to the truth of human existence--the virtue of forgiveness and understanding. Their absolutist attitude is offset by Friar Laurence's relativistic philosophy; and Shakespeare, through Friar Laurence's speech, gives us his interpretation of the meaning of the tragedy. If, as Friar Laurence says, even a stone, even a plant has virtues and vices, and if their virtues and vices are, after all, relative to circumstances and methods of application, then what virtue is there in man's preconceived opinions and stubborn adherence to circumstantially brewed opinions? Indeed, the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet is a process of man's awakening to the truth of the co-existence of opposites, a lesson both Capulet and Montague learn after paying a high price--the extinction of their posterity. The restoration of social (or moral) order comes only after the conflicting forces have exhausted each other. A major theme of the play is the contrast between the purity of the uncontaminated lovers and the corruption of the sordid, mundane, self-seeking society; and Friar Laurence's speech provides an interpretation of this central theme.

The major irony of the play lies in the fact that the well-meaning Friar, who arranges the secret marriage in the hope that 'this alliance may so happy prove,/ To turn your households' rancor to pure love' (ll. 91-92), turns out to be directly responsible for the catastrophe-- 'We are not the first/ Who with best meaning have incurred the worst,' says Cordelia (Lear, V, iii, 3-4); and the final scene ironically achieves what Friar Laurence hoped for: their 'rancor' turns to 'pure love' and reconciliation through the 'alliance' of Romeo and Juliet in

death. Friar Laurence's speech is Shakespeare's own interpretation of the essence of tragedy in Romeo and Juliet.

It would be superfluous to cite here the much disputed line--'Fair is foul, and foul is fair' (Macbeth, I, i, 11)--as another example of Shakespeare's subtle comment on the theme of his play. Although not a critical comment in itself, it gives a distinct tone-color to the central theme of Macbeth, the ambivalence of good and evil and the restoration of moral order achieved through the subversion of it. It is indeed a continuation of the philosophy of relativism and the co-existence of opposites revealed in Romeo and Juliet.

A noteworthy passage appears in King Lear, which can only be read as Shakespeare's own interpretative observation on the essence of the tragedy. In a brief scene made up of only eleven lines (V, ii) Shakespeare sums up the meaning of the tragedy of King Lear. Edgar in disguise briefly appears to inform the blinded Gloucester of the defeat of Lear's party in final battle against the evil force led by Edmund, the son of Goddess Nature (cf. I, ii, 1ff). As Gloucester, in his despair, refuses to flee any further--'A man may rot even here' (1.8)--Edgar, the symbolic figure in the play, utters these lines:

What in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither.
Ripeness is all. (V, ii, 9-11)

Shakespeare elsewhere expresses the same stoical view of life:

There's special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If
it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will
be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness
is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is
't to leave betimes? Let be. (Hamlet, V, ii, 230-35)

Acceptance of the scourge of God and the providential arraignment is the final wisdom man must achieve in a world where evil forces can and do win. Edgar has already said, 'Pray that the right may thrive' (1. 2); but the providential decision does not always answer our prayers. Indeed, the unrelieved stark pessimism of the play notwithstanding, Edgar's passing comment should be read as Shakespeare's own interpretation of the essence of the tragedy in Lear. Earlier in the play Gloucester's unripe philosophy of life makes him utter the lines:

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport. (IV, i, 38-39)

The lines echo Lear's words: 'I am a man/ More sinned against than sinning' (III, ii, 59-60). When they utter these words, both Lear and Gloucester have not yet matured into truly tragic characters who see their original sins; and these lines are not manifestations of Shakespeare's own outcry against the injustice of God's will. Set against this bitter pessimism, Edgar's passing comment is a soothing ointment that relieves the pain of the knowledge that human existence is, after all, nothing more than being stretched 'upon the rack of this tough world' (V, iii, 314). Despite its briefness, Edgar's comment interprets the substance of the tragedy of Lear.⁴

I have quoted a few passages which can be read as Shakespeare's own interpretative observations on the central themes of his plays. Within the limited space the few instances cited above should prove the point. As I recall, Sir Laurence Olivier's film production of Hamlet begins with the epigraphic statement: "This is the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind." Shakespeare does not give such

flat statements at the beginning of his plays; his interpretative observations on his works appear in the course of dramatic action and are spoken by his characters at suitable moments.

In addition to general thematic observations on his plays, Shakespeare makes numerous observations on particular scenes and episodes. These comments are often immediate evaluations of the scenes or episodes, the dramatic effects achieved, and the atmosphere and tone of the scenes in progress. Often present is Shakespeare's attention given to the impact of certain points of view or attitudes upon the characters involved in particular dramatic situations. All these interpretative observations reveal to what extent Shakespeare was conscious of the decorum and effectiveness of the scenes he was creating. This presence of critical awareness that accompanied his creative faculty throughout the corpus of his writings entitles him to be a critic of his own works.

In Twelfth Night a major episode is the fooling of Malvolio, a hypocritical 'Puritan... a timepleaser; an affectioned ass' (II, iii, 159-61). This conceited fellow is ruthlessly crucified by the wit of Maria, who plots with Sir Toby to get him into trouble with Olivia. As anticipated by Maria and Sir Toby, Malvolio appears wearing stockings cross-gartered and smiling perpetually in Olivia's presence, and plays an antic that puzzles his lady and amuses the knowing conspirators. The fooling itself is highly comical, yet even in a fiction it appears implausible. To forestall the audience's reaction, Shakespeare uses a delightful trick by making Fabian comment: 'If this

were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction' (III, iv, 140-41). A subtle way of disarming the audience it is, for the audience is aware that the scene is being played on a stage now; and by boldly bringing the obvious into focus, Shakespeare secures the audience's acceptance of the scene. One might even say that the romantic credo of "the willing suspension of disbelief" is enacted here.

A similar type of comment appears in Richard III, Act I, Scene II. The simple funeral procession of Henry the Sixth led by Anne, his widowed daughter-in-law, is crossed by Gloucester, who killed both her husband and her father-in-law. To Lady Anne, Gloucester is the devil incarnate (ll. 34-35); but by the time she is leaving the stage, her bitter hatred is subdued by his guileful tongue, and she even responds to his wooing. The scene is highly implausible: the sight of a deformed man wooing a woman, who has been widowed by him and now is leading the coffin of her father-in-law also killed by him, is indeed morbid and grotesque. Yet one of Shakespeare's ways of achieving highly dramatic effects is to attempt the highly implausible. One may even suspect that Shakespeare purposefully chose this bizarre setting as an occasion for Gloucester's wooing, for the whole picture of gloom and morbidness works like a foil for the image-engraving of Gloucester. Shakespeare is aware of the improbability of the scene, and makes Gloucester utter the lines:

Was ever woman in this humor wooed?
Was ever woman in this humor won? (ll. 228-29)

Shakespeare is forestalling the audience; and, by making Gloucester

utter what the audience would have said, Shakespeare turns their disbelief of the improbable scene into an admiration for the particular dramatic effect achieved in the scene. Having secured the audience's willing suspension of disbelief with the couplet, Shakespeare moves on to emphasize the dramatic irony of the scene by bringing the whole picture into high relief:

What! I, that killed her husband and his father,
 To take her in her heart's extremest hate,
 With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes,
 The bleeding witness of her hatred by--
 Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me,
 And I nothing to back my suit at all
 But the plain Devil and dissembling looks,
 And yet to win her, all the world to nothing!
 Ha!
 Hath she forgot already that brave Prince,
 Edward, her lord, whom I, some three months since,
 Stabbed in my angry mood at Tewksbury?
 A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman,
 Framed in the prodigality of nature,
 Young, valiant, wise, and no doubt right royal,
 The spacious world cannot again afford.
 And will she yet debase her eyes on me,
 That cropped the golden prime of this sweet Prince
 And made her widow to a woeful bed?
 On me, whose all not equals Edward's moiety?
 On me, that halt and am unshapen thus? (ll. 231-51)

It may very well be that in this soliloquy Shakespeare is not only emphasizing the dramatic irony but also projecting the chilling image of Gloucester, who fully knows his ability to dissemble and manipulate. The dramatic improbability is subtly camouflaged by the initial couplet discussed above; and the ensuing part of the monologue, in which Gloucester analyzes the situation, enhances the audience's awareness of the dramatic effect of the scene. Hamlet's definition of womanhood --'Frailty, thy name is woman!' (Hamlet, I, ii, 146)--is enacted in

this scene; and Gloucester's words, 'I'll have her, but I will not have her long' (l. 230), augment the pathetic image of Anne, who is widowed, orphaned, gulled, and eventually sacrificed by him.

Later in the play Richard persuades Queen Elizabeth, whose two sons he has murdered, to be a go-between in his courtship to her daughter. The catechism between Richard and Elizabeth is a supreme example of improbability enacted:

- Q. Eliz. Shall I be tempted of the Devil thus?
 K. Rich. Aye, if the Devil tempt thee to do good.
 Q. Eliz. Shall I forget myself to be myself?
 K. Rich. Aye, if yourself's remembrance wrong yourself.
 Q. Eliz. But thou didst kill my children.
 K. Rich. But in your daughter's womb I bury them,
 Where in that nest of spicery they shall breed
 Selves of themselves, to your recomforture.
 Q. Eliz. Shall I go win my daughter to thy will?
 K. Rich. And be a happy mother by the deed.
 Q. Eliz. I go. Write to me very shortly,
 And you shall understand from me her mind.
 (IV, iv, 418-29)

As in the scene with Anne, Richard not only interprets the action but gives credibility to it by making this comment: 'Relenting fool, and shallow, changing woman!' (l. 431).

Use of this technique reveals Shakespeare's stage-consciousness. In Act I, Scene II, of King Lear Edmund gulls Gloucester into believing that Edgar is indeed an infilial villain; when Gloucester leaves the stage, the innocent victim conveniently enters to complete Edmund's plan. The artificiality of this convenient disregard of dramatic motivation is too obvious; but Shakespeare puts the following comment into Edmund's mouth and smoothens up the awkwardness: 'And pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy. My cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam' (ll. 145-48). By calling

attention to the unlikelihood of Edgar's entering at the dramatically convenient moment, Shakespeare secures the audience's acceptance of the scene. The play is set in the ancient days of the pagan king Lear; Shakespeare here deliberately risks the anachronism of making Edmund allude to the Roman or Tudor comedy to fulfil his purpose. Edmund's reference to a particular detail of dramatic technique, in fact, does not fit into his character: he worships the pagan goddess Nature (I, ii, 1ff), not art. By way of diverting the audience's attention from the improbability of Edgar's pat appearance, Shakespeare quotes the case of old comedies in which dramatic motivation was freely disregarded. This trick is a good example of Shakespeare's make-believe technique; and in the comment Shakespeare reveals his stage-consciousness as well as his critical awareness. One must also note that Edmund's allusion to Tom o' Bedlam in this comment gives the audience foresight and prefigurement of the role Edgar will eventually assume in the play.

In the comment by Edmund is a passing reference to a characteristic of Tudor drama, although the allusion is made to avoid the bother of motivating the appearance of Edgar. Likewise, a comment found in The First Part of King Henry the Fourth reveals both Shakespeare's response to a particular literary mode and his awareness of the effect he achieves by parodying it. In Act II, Scene IV, Falstaff, trapped in his lies, proposes that he and Prince Hal have a rehearsal of the upcoming meeting of the latter with the King. The 'play extempore' begins with Falstaff reaching for a cup of sack to make his eyes red,

that it may be thought I have wept; for I must speak in
 passion, and I will do it in King Cambyses' vein.
 (ll. 423-26)

King Cambyses is the chief character in an early drama, which is known
 to be a marvelous specimen of ridiculous rant.

Falstaff. And here is my speech. Stand aside, nobility.
 Hostess. Oh Jesu, this is excellent sport, i' faith!
 Falstaff. Weep not, sweet queen, for trickling tears are vain.
 Hostess. Oh, the father, how he holds his countenance!
 Falstaff. For God's sake, lords, convey my tristful queen,
 For tears do stop the floodgate of her eyes.
 Hostess. Oh Jesu, he doth it as like one of these harlotry
 players as ever I see! (ll. 428-37)

Falstaff is parodying the artificial style of earlier plays, of the
 kind still being acted by the rival company; and as the Admiral's Men
 were the only other company then playing in London,⁵ the parody of their
 heavy style was obvious even to the Hostess. The ensuing passage spoken
 by Falstaff (ll. 440-61) is a parody of the elaborate style of Lyly's
Euphues. But what matters here is not how Shakespeare reacted to this
 kind of heroic style or the Euphuistic language but the way he handles
 the material to achieve intended dramatic effect. Even the Hostess'
 comment--'Oh Jesu, he doth it as like one of these harlotry players as
 ever I see!' (ll. 436-37)--should be taken as Shakespeare's attempt to
 make his audience see the dramatic effect of the scene he is creating.
 Reference to the literary mode current during his age is made here--
 not for the purpose of disparaging it, but to enhance the audience's
 awareness of the effect achieved: the portrayal of Falstaff as a man
 who, despite his craven pomposity, can enchant his friends with his
 humorous mimicry of a particular literary mode. Through the comment
 uttered by the Hostess, Shakespeare helps the audience to see the full

picture of Falstaff, a man of versatile humor and with sense enough to vivify certain aesthetic qualities.

The scene of the 'play extempore' (l. 309) ends with Falstaff, now in his role as Prince Hal, beseeching the King, played by Hal, not to banish Falstaff (ll. 520-26), and Hal, in his role as the King, answering, 'I do. I will' (l. 527). Despite the roles assumed respectively by Falstaff and Hal, each of them is indeed speaking in his own voice. Shakespeare does not clearly say so; but the awareness of the scene he is drawing comes through, and the audience cannot miss it. The subtlety of the dramatic irony achieved here will become obvious later: Hal as King Henry the Fifth indeed banishes Falstaff (The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth, V, v, 51-76). In effect, the final exchange between Falstaff as Hal and Hal as the King (ll. 526-27) is a prefiguration of what will happen later.

The above few instances of Shakespeare's interpretative comments on dramatic action in progress can by no means be an adequate account of the innumerable observations on the dramatic scenes and episodes. I have discussed only a few of them in the hope that a rather careful study of selected instances will prove that Shakespeare's critical awareness of the dramatic effects achieved is seen in his unobtrusive yet revealing comments.

In watching, while creating, the inter-reactions among his characters in various dramatic situations, Shakespeare is aware of the "realism" of human psychology. ("Realism" is not a term that best describes the quality that Shakespeare imparts to the inter-reactions

among his characters; but I cannot think of a better word.) After all, the dramatic effect achieved at any given moment depends on the degree of the audience's absorption in the dramatic scene in progress. And without the audience's wholehearted approval and recognition of a scene as truthful depiction of the chemistry of human psychology, any dramatic endeavor becomes futile. Shakespeare is aware that the intensity of the audience's reaction to any dramatic scene depends on the psychological realism the scene achieves. I will conclude the present discussion of Shakespeare's interpretation of his dramatic scenes by considering one particular kind of dramatic situation that evidences Shakespeare's critical awareness of human psychology.

Shakespeare provides interpretative comments on the inter-reactions among his characters. One particular kind of dramatic situation is the recurring situation in which one tries to console another. When Romeo, after killing Tybalt, receives the verdict of banishment from Verona, his despair drives him to a suicidal attempt. Friar Laurence then gives him a long counsel (Romeo and Juliet, III, iii, 108ff), which revives in Romeo courage and the will to endure the pain of separation from Juliet. The speech is a fine example of persuasive sermon with its appeal to reason and common-sense. When Friar Laurence has finished his speech, the Nurse comments:

Oh Lord, I could have stayed here all the night
To hear good counsel. Oh, what learning is! (ll. 159-60)

The Nurse's comment is an apt evaluation of the role performed by Friar Laurence in this particular dramatic situation. Yet it means more than that. Shakespeare is aware of the effect Friar Laurence's speech has

on both the other two characters and the audience; and he sums up their reaction in the Nurse's words. A genuine counsel coming from one's heart moves the listener; and Shakespeare does not hesitate to comment on the effectiveness of the lines, as the Nurse's words would prove. Indeed, Romeo himself says: 'How well my comfort is revived by this!' (1. 165).

But not all counsels or attempts at consolation are heart-felt ones. Benjamin Boyce has demonstrated that Shakespeare consciously utilized the forms and principles of traditional Renaissance rhetoric in several scenes where consolatory speeches appear.⁶ The awareness of the technical aspects of this particular form of speech notwithstanding, Shakespeare's main concern is to create dramatic effect by emphasizing the response to it. As briefly examined in the preceding chapter of this study,⁷ Brabantio's reaction to the Duke's perfunctory and axiom-filled consolatory speech (Othello, I, iii, 202-09) is impatience, and results in a parody of the Duke's speech pattern:

So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile,
 We lose it not so long as we can smile.
 He bears the sentence well that nothing bears
 But the free comfort which from thence he hears.
 But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow
 That, to pay grief, must of poor patience borrow.
 These sentences, to sugar or to gall,
 Being strong on both sides, are equivocal. (ll. 210-17)

At the end of this indirect criticism of the unfeeling words of the Duke, Brabantio adds:

But words are words. I never yet did hear
 That the bruised heart was pierced through the ear.
 (ll. 218-19)

One may as well take the couplet as Shakespeare's own comment on this particular scene. It is an apt summary of Brabantio's reaction to the attempt at consolation on the part of the Duke, who is well-intentioned but fails to see the futility of mere words in channeling two minds.

Likewise, when Queen Gertrude, whose face is flushed with a bride's happiness rather than with a widow's tears, gives Hamlet a counsel quite alien to her own feeling--'Thow know'st 'tis common--all that lives must die,/ Passing through nature to eternity' (Hamlet, I, ii, 72-73)--Hamlet's response is impatience and exasperation. Hamlet denounces all the behavioral tokens of grief as 'actions that a man might play' (l. 84); his deep feeling is that 'which passeth show' (l. 85). Mere words of conventional consolation only exasperate Hamlet, who despises 'the trappings and the suits of woe' (l. 86). When Claudius addresses him as 'my son' (l. 64), Hamlet says in his aside: 'A little more than kin and less than kind' (l. 65). It is an apt comment on Claudius: indeed, what can be more unnatural--'less than kind'--than an uncle who is the husband of one's mother?

Much Ado About Nothing has a speech spoken by Leonato, who impatiently denounces his brother's conventional words of consolation (V, i, 3-32). At this point of dramatic development Leonato believes that his daughter is dead. And, for him, his brother's counsel 'falls into my ears as profitless/ As water in a sieve' (ll. 4-5). Moreover, he has no patience with those who 'patch grief with proverbs' (l. 17) in an attempt to 'speak comfort to that grief/ Which they themselves not feel' (ll. 21-22); 'preceptial medicine' (l. 24) is useless to cure

his heartfelt grief.

One may wonder why Shakespeare wrote this long speech, in which Leonato rebukes his brother's attempt to console him; after all, Hero is not dead, and the audience knows it. In the two instances cited before, the losses are real: Desdemona is irretrievably lost to Brabantio, and Hamlet's Hyperion has been permanently replaced by a Satyr. But in Leonato's case, his supposed bereavement is only a misunderstanding that is required by the dramatic action. The audience knows that; and, in order to make the emotions of his character real to his audience, Shakespeare projects the true image of a bereaved father upon Leonato by assigning the speech to him. Shakespeare's conscious workmanship in handling various dramatic situations is evidenced by this effort to vivify Leonato's true feeling.

Likewise, the Duke in disguise gives a long consolatory speech to Claudio (Measure for Measure, III, i, 5-41), who is "doomed" to die, to the knowledge of everybody except the Duke. The Duke knows that Angelo's verdict upon Claudio can be repealed at any time: it is in his power. Critics have been puzzled by Shakespeare's characterization of the Duke; and, indeed, I am inclined to view the Duke as a distasteful manipulator, one who indulges in the act of peeping into others' thoughts and acts, thus committing the "unpardonable sin" of violating the sanctity of the human heart. Even after taking Isabella's hand in the final scene, the Duke, now in his own person, still plays on her heart, "consoling" her for her brother's "death." In any case, the Duke's long speech of consolation given to Claudio, at least to the

audience who knows his assumed role, does not carry with it genuine feeling of sympathy. It is rather a tedious sermon on the stoic virtue of negating death to make it powerless--as Donne's sonnet has it--and, for Claudio, who is facing physical death and, therefore, cannot be concerned about the spiritual death that comes when one succumbs to fear of death, the sermon is more a ridicule than a solace. Hence, Claudio answers with a tinge of irony:

I humbly thank you.
To sue to live, I find I seek to die,
And, seeking death, find life. (ll. 41-43)

Although Shakespeare does not directly comment on the Duke's attitude, Claudio's response as well as the fact that the whole speech of the Duke is part of his role-playing clearly indicates how Shakespeare interprets this particular situation.

I have examined a few instances which prove that Shakespeare's awareness of the workings of human psychology resulted in a careful depiction of the impact of certain attitudes or viewpoints upon his characters. Whether Shakespeare's direct comments are present or not, the awareness of the subtlety of any dramatic scene is revealed in his handling of this particular kind of dramatic situation.

III

An important element of Shakespeare's dramatic criticism is his interpretation of the dramatic roles and functions of his characters. In addition to being observations on particular individuals, these com-

ments ultimately embrace various dramatic types, stock characters, and the like. Shakespeare's interpretative comments on his characters reveal both his awareness of the dramatic functions and roles they perform in particular dramatic situations and his conscious effort to call the audience's attention to the dramatic effects achieved by their roles. The diversity of the characters and the dramatic types appearing in Shakespeare's plays is such that it is virtually impossible to encompass all the individual characters and the character types within the limited space of the present study. I can only hope that the following instances of Shakespeare's interpretative observations on his characters and their roles will prove the point: that the playwright consciously made these comments to enhance the audience's awareness of the dramatic functions of his characters.

The arch-villain in the world of Shakesperean tragedy is Iago. Professor McCullen has shown how Iago consciously manipulates the precarious borderline between belief and disbelief by resorting to proverbs in order to trammel his victim into his web of evil.⁸ The calculating mind of Iago knows how to play upon human psychology, and his skill to manipulate his auditors by consciously using verbal techniques is that of an evil genius. Not even Richard the Third or Edmund in King Lear has Iago's inexhaustible genius of scrutinizing and manipulating the human psyche. In presenting this special Machiavel of the lowest calibre Shakespeare at one point analyzes the role he plays through a soliloquy:

And what's he then that says I play the villain?

When this advice is free I give and honest,
 Probal to thinking, and indeed the course
 To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy
 The inclining Desdemona to subdue
 In any honest suit. She's framed as fruitful
 As the free elements. And then for her
 To win the Moor, were 't to renounce his baptism,
 All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
 His soul is so enfeathered to her love
 That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
 Even as her appetite shall play the god
 With his weak function. How am I then a villain
 To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,
 Directly to his good? Divinity of Hell!
 When devils will the blackest sins put on,
 They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
 As I do now. For whiles this honest fool
 Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes,
 And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
 I'll pour this pestilence into his ear,
 That she repeals him for her body's lust.
 And by how much she strives to do him good,
 She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
 So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
 And out of her own goodness make the net
 That shall enmesh them all. (Othello, II, iii, 342-68)

Many asides made by Iago give insight into his role; but in this soliloquy Shakespeare gives a thorough analysis of the role Iago plays throughout the work. The subtlety of Iago's self-justification (ll. 342-56) merits attention: even the devil himself needs full justification for his devilry, and Iago is here having catechism with himself to build up a full momentum to unleash himself from any tinge of conscience. Perhaps nowhere else is this deliberate misguidance of one's logic is effectively portrayed, unless one happens to remember Falstaff's catechetic inquisition into 'honor' (1 Henry IV, V, i, 130-43). The ensuing four lines can be taken as Shakespeare's interpretation of the role Iago plays:

Divinity of Hell!
 When devils will the blackest sins put on,
 They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
 As I do now. (ll. 356-59)

Indeed, the devil quotes the Scripture; and the preceding analysis of his case for self-justification is tantamount to theological inquisition in reverse--'Divinity of Hell!' The last three lines of the soliloquy are not only Iago's own resolution but Shakespeare's purposeful comment on the role he will play in the ensuing acts of the play.

Likewise, the initial soliloquy of Gloucester in King Richard the Third interprets the role of one of Shakespeare's stage Machiavels:

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
 Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
 I, that am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty
 To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
 I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
 Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
 Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
 Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
 And that so lamely and unfashionable
 That dogs bark at me as I halt by them--
 Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
 Have no delight to pass away the time,
 Unless to spy my shadow in the sun
 And descant on mine own deformity.
 And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
 To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
 I am determined to prove a villain
 And hate the idle pleasures of these days. (I, i, 14-31)

One can notice that Shakespeare uses the word 'I' repeatedly (ll. 14, 16, 18, 24). The use of 'I' in this passage carries with it special meaning; the repeated use of 'I,' followed by a slight pause (comma) and the explanatory clause (that am...) in each of the first three instances, as well as the final hammering of 'I' (l. 24), indicates Shakespeare's conscious effort to explain the dramatic role of the

speaker. In the last quatrain Shakespeare clearly interprets the role Gloucester will assume throughout the play. Later in the soliloquy, where Gloucester reveals his treacherous plan, Shakespeare again makes him utter a line that sums up his character: 'As I am subtle, false, and treacherous' (1. 37). What Shakespeare does here is not an immature playwright's unskilled method of characterization; it is a consciously done interpretative observation on the character and his dramatic role. The critical consciousness in establishing the role of his character is apparent in these lines.

Later in the play, while having an encounter with the Prince, Gloucester says in his aside: 'Thus, like the formal vice Iniquity,/ I moralize two meanings in one word' (III, i, 82-83). The reference to the vice Iniquity in morality plays does not fit into the character of Gloucester, as in the case of Edmund's referring to the part appearance of 'the catastrophe of an old comedy' (Lear, I, ii, 145ff). It can mean only that Shakespeare consciously interprets the role Gloucester plays at that particular moment. Buckingham's interpretations of his own roles, 'Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,' (III, v, 5) and 'I'll play the orator/ As if the golden fee for which I plead/ Were for myself' (III, v, 95-97), also manifest Shakespeare's conscious effort to define the roles this dogged pursuer of favoritism plays, only to be rewarded with privation of his life. When Buckingham gives his ingenious advice to Gloucester on details of hypocritical acting that can fool the citizens (III, vii, 45-51), Shakespeare is providing not only a stage-direction for Gloucester's part but

also making an interpretative comment on the role he plays in the ensuing scene, thus giving the audience a foresight of the dramatic scene that will follow.

It may be that, of all the characters in Shakespeare's plays, Gloucester in King Richard the Third stands supreme as a revelation of the author's awareness that thoughts and actions of human beings are, in most cases, motivated and sustained by the manipulators of mankind. Gloucester is such a manipulator, and it may be a rewarding task to explore the consciousness present in Shakespeare's early works in which Shakespeare, as a literary technician, exposed much of the manipulative element in drama. Even Iago, although a supreme example of Shakespeare's creatures of evil genius, is linked with fewer observations on literary techniques than is Gloucester.

Don John in Much Ado About Nothing makes an interpretative comment on his being a bastard and a villain, as in the case of Edmund in King Lear (I, ii, 1-22). Before he hears the news of the intended betrothal of his enemy Claudio, he confides his own view of his personality to his follower Conrade:

I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any. In this, though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain. I am trusted with a muzzle, and enfranchised with a clog; therefore I have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking. In the meantime let me be that I am, and seek not to alter me. (I, iii, 27-39).

It is a vivid self-analysis of a malcontent. The careful image building Shakespeare achieves through use of metaphors indicates that it is

more than a malcontent's confession of his personality; it is Shakespeare's conscious interpretation of the character as well.

Shakespeare's interpretative comments on the roles of his stage Machiavels are rather extensive; the comments and asides as well as soliloquies uttered by numerous stage Machiavels testify to this point.

A dramatic type that is sharply contrasted with the calculating Machiavels is the gull. Shakespeare's comments on this particular dramatic type are not so extensive as his observations on the role-playing of the manipulators. The reason is simple: the depiction of the characters being fooled does not require any ingenuity in character building. Mere description of the event suffices to prove the case. Nevertheless, Shakespeare occasionally provides interpretative comments on this dramatic type. A good example is the exchange between Maria and Sir Toby as they comment on Sir Andrew (Twelfth Night, I, iii, 20ff):

Sir Toby. He's as tall a man as any 's in Illyria.

Maria. What's that to the purpose?

Sir Toby. Why, he has three thousands ducats a year.

Maria. Aye, but he'll have but a year in all these ducats.

He's a very fool and a prodigal.

Sir Toby. Fie that you'll say so! He plays o' the viol de gamboys, and speaks three or four languages word for word without book, and hath all the good gifts of nature.

Maria. He hath indeed, almost natural, for besides that he's a fool, he's a great quarreler. And but that he hath the gift of a coward to allay the gust he hath in quarreling, 'tis thought among the prudent he would quickly have the gift of a grave. (ll. 20-35)

This passage analyzes a character type--'the natural' or fool. Sir Toby himself is the "parasite"; and at other points of the play obser-

vations by Sir Toby analyzes the "gull," illustrated mainly by Sir Andrew.

Malvolio is also presented as a gull and a fool. In Act IV, Scene II, Feste alternates his roles as the Clown and as Master Parson to fool Malvolio in darkness. When Feste talks in his own voice, Malvolio pleads with him repeatedly calling him 'Fool' (ll. 80ff). It is an ironic twist of the dramatic scene: Malvolio is simply calling the Clown, but the audience is made aware of the irony of the appellation, which indeed may as well refer to the utterer of the word himself. At another point, through Maria's comment, Shakespeare provides an interpretation of his character:

The devil a Puritan that he is, or anything constantly, but a timepleaser; and affectioned ass, that cons state without book and utters it by great swarths--the best persuaded of himself, so crammed, as he thinks, with excellencies, that it is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him. (II, iii, 159-65)

But the most effective interpretation of the character of Malvolio occurs in the eavesdropping scene in Act II, Scene V (ll. 27-195). The comments uttered by the eavesdroppers aptly evaluate the character of Malvolio. In this scene of eavesdropping Shakespeare achieves a special dramatic effect. The eavesdroppers are watching Malvolio's reaction to the mousetrap letter; and the audience is watching the whole scene enacted on stage. The eavesdroppers' comments enhance the audience's reaction to Malvolio's behavior. Shakespeare could have shown Malvolio reacting to the letter by presenting him alone on stage; but he purposefully added the comments of the eavesdroppers to this scene.

comments on the 'all-licensed fool' (Lear, I, iv, 220), it is a remark interpretative of the roles of fools; but both Feste and the Fool in Lear are different from the literal-minded gravedigger in Hamlet, who is only mimicking a fool's verbal witticism.

The fawning courtier is another dramatic type; and this dramatic type is analyzed notably in the remarks exchanged by Hamlet and Horatio on Osric (Hamlet, V, ii, 85-200). The popinjay courtier indulging in ridiculous verbal antics is, of course, an easy prey for the cynical Hamlet; and through Hamlet's comments Shakespeare analyzes this particular dramatic type. Elsewhere, in a similar situation in King Lear, Kent interprets the role of Oswald, a character comparable to Osric, by saying that he takes 'vanity the puppet's part against the royalty' of Lear (II, ii, 39-40). 'Vanity,' of course, is an evil character appearing in the old Morality plays of the early sixteenth century, which still survived in a degenerate form in puppet shows exhibited at fairs in Shakespeare's time. In his attempt to interpret the role of the wretched character Oswald, Shakespeare thus risks anachronism and compares him to a particular character well known to his audience.

More noteworthy than these comments on particular dramatic types are Shakespeare's revealing interpretations of the roles some of his major characters assume in the course of dramatic action. Prince Hal makes the following speech, in which Shakespeare consciously informs the audience of his role and dramatic intention:

I know you all, and will a while uphold

The unyoked humor of your idleness.
 Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
 Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
 To smother up his beauty from the world,
 That, when he please again to be himself,
 Being wanted, he may be more wondered at
 By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
 Of vapors that did seem to strangle him.
 If all the year were playing holidays,
 To sport would be as tedious as to work.
 But when they seldom come, they wished-for come,
 And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
 So, when this loose behavior I throw off
 And pay the debt I never promised,
 By how much better than my word I am,
 By so much shall I falsify men's hopes.
 And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
 My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
 Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
 Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
 I'll so offend, to make offense a skill,
 Redeeming time when men think least I will.

(1 Henry IV, I, iii, 218-40)

This passage includes an explication of one of the most fundamental of dramatic techniques--use of the foil. Indeed, nowhere is this device more effectively explained. By way of informing the audience of the dramatic significance of Hal's temporary guise as a dissipated young man, Shakespeare consciously uses this soliloquy in which Hal explains his temporary role. Several of Shakespeare's characters assume temporary roles in disguise, either to secure physical well-being through concealing their identities (Rosalind in As You Like It and Viola in Twelfth Night) or to indulge in spying on others' acts more freely (the Duke in Measure for Measure and Portia in Merchant of Venice). Prince Hal's temporary role-playing is different from the case of the other characters. He does not conceal his identity, but deliberately keeps the image of a dissipated youth until the

moment when he reveals his true character. The soliloquy quoted above explains his reason for subjecting himself to a self-imposed exile in lowly life. Hal is a special brew of Machiavel, in the true sense of the word: he does not have the manipulative and calculating mind of a counter-Machiavel. As his meditative soliloquies (Henry V, IV, i, 247-301; 306-22) and fiery orations (Henry V, III, i, 1-34; IV, iii, 40-67) testify, Hal has all the virtues of a true prince. While he plays the role of a dissipated youth, all his potentials remain dormant; but he is to cast away in time the lowly image and emerge as an ideal king. The dramatic effect of this transformation of Hal is of crucial importance to Shakespeare the dramatic craftsman, and in Hal's soliloquy he deliberately expounds the significance of this dramatic device.

Edgar in King Lear plays the role of a Bedlam beggar. Initially, Edgar assumes the role as a means to personal safety. In the course of the dramatic action, however, Edgar's role as a Bedlam takes a symbolic meaning. Edgar's assumed madness is different from Hamlet's 'antic disposition.' While Hamlet's feigned madness is merely a part of the dramatic scheme in the play, Edgar's role as a Bedlam serves a dual purpose: it provides physical protection, on the surface level, and makes him an intermediary between the two worlds--the world of the sane and Lear's private world in his madness. The irony is that, while the "sane" people are engaged in their mad struggle for self-interest, Lear, after going through his madness, attains a vision that enables him to see the true meaning of human existence. In assigning

to Edgar this symbolic role as an intermediary between the two worlds, Shakespeare gives the following explanation through Edgar:

Whiles I may 'scape
I will preserve myself, and am bethought
To take the basest and most poorest shape
That ever penury in contempt of man
Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth,
Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots,
And with presented nakedness outface
The winds and persecutions of the sky.
..... Edgar I nothing am. (II, iii, 5-21)

The scene consists of this single speech, and Shakespeare's intention is clear. Like Hal's soliloquy discussed above, Edgar's lines are in effect Shakespeare's explanation on the dramatic significance of the role Edgar will assume. Shakespeare gives a vivid description of the role Edgar will play on stage; moreover, the lines provide insight into the state into which Lear will eventually fall. Set against this speech is Lear's philosophy on man's dignity:

Oh, reason not the need. Our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous.
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life's as cheap as beast's. (II, iv, 267-70)

To Lear, a man's dignity depends on such flimsy symbols as clothing; but Edgar, one who is the key figure in the process of the spiritual regenerations of Lear and Gloucester, deliberately assumes the shape of a beastlike lunatic. Edgar's speech not only informs the audience of Shakespeare's dramatic intention but also furthers insight into his use of Edgar as a catalyst.

During the mad trial scene (III, vi) Edgar interprets his role in his aside: 'My tears begin to take his part so much/ They'll mar my counterfeiting' (ll. 63-64). In his encounter with the blinded

Gloucester, he utters similar remarks in aside tht continue the interpretation of his role: 'I cannot daub it further' (IV, i, 54).

While presenting Edgar playing the role of a mindless beggar, Shakespeare keeps an eye on the emotions of the real Edgar behind the disguise, and thus provides interpretations of the scenes through these comments uttered by him.

I have examined a few instances in which Shakespeare's interpretative observations on the functions and roles of his characters appear. The instances sampled here by no means represent a comprehensive study. Although a random selection, the few passages discussed above will prove that Shakespeare consciously shows to his audience, through his interpretative comments, what his dramatic intentions are in establishing the functions and roles of his dramatic characters.

IV

Even though what Shakespeare wrote as a "dramatic critic" consists primarily of interpretative observations on what appears in particular works in process of development, these remarks do relate to the nature and substance of dramatic art in general. And occasionally one encounters direct statements on the nature and function of drama as well as applied criticism on the art of stage performance. I will conclude this chapter by considering what Shakespeare says about dramatic art in general.

Matthew Arnold's dictum that "poetry is the criticism of life" sums up the traditional view of literature as the imitation of life: Aristotle used the term mimesis; Cicero called it imitatio vitae; Sidney and other Renaissance humanists repeatedly asserted the Aristotelian notion. In a passing comment uttered by Hamlet Shakespeare reveals that his conception of the dramatic art as a whole stood firmly on this tradition:

... the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to Nature--to show Virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. (Hamlet, III, ii, 22-27)

This comment is made in the course of the advice Hamlet gives to the players just before they perform the 'Mousetrap.' The word 'playing' may be read as "the drama" or "playwriting" as well as "acting." Alvin Kernan notes that the artistic self-consciousness was not yet fully developed among Renaissance artists and writers; and most writers of the age were more conscious of their finished products than of the process of artistic creation.¹⁰ If we take this fact into consideration, the ambiguity of the word 'playing' will not cause any confusion of its meaning. Shakespeare does not consciously distinguish the act of writing a play from the act of presenting it: for Shakespeare, who combined the two in his life, one is contiguous to the other. Moreover, the comment is made while Hamlet is giving advice to the players on the art of stage performance, not in the course of expounding a dramatic theory. Hence the slight ambiguity in the use of the word 'playing.'

The conception of the drama as revealed in the passage is clear enough. The function of the drama is 'to hold... the mirror up to Nature'--a concept reminiscent of the Aristotelian doctrine of mimesis. By an ironic twist of tradition, Shakespeare makes use of the metaphor of the mirror that Plato used to illustrate the unsubstantiality of imaginative literature. But the tenet revealed in Hamlet's speech clearly indicates that Shakespeare stood firmly on the Aristotelian tradition: the drama is a reflection of life and human nature.

At another point, the players are referred to as 'the abstract and brief chronicles of the time' (Hamlet, II, ii, 549-50). Shakespeare was an actor himself; but this comment by Hamlet is not simply a manifestation of Shakespeare's partisan-like feeling toward his profession. A poet himself, Shakespeare does not provide any favorable comments on poets and their profession: the unnamed poet in Timon of Athens is a time-serving wretch, and of the two poets in Julius Caesar, one is ridiculed and the other literally torn to pieces. Moreover, Shakespeare does not insert comments irrelevant to the development of dramatic action. By way of providing a touch of the character of Hamlet, Shakespeare assigns to Hamlet a speech (III, ii, 1ff) expounding the principles of stage performance that any producer would envy: Hamlet is a man of high sensibility and aesthetic judgment. Likewise, in the comment quoted above, Shakespeare's purpose is to depict Hamlet as one who can be a patron of art, has respect for the performers of art, despite the disparity in social status between them. The seriousness of the passing comment is evidenced by the strong

impact the First Player's recitation of 'Aeneas' tale to Dido' has on Hamlet, which results in an important soliloquy at the end of the second act.

The players are 'the abstract and brief chronicles of the time'; and the function of the drama is to hold a mirror up to nature--to provide 'the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.' No simpler theory can exist; yet the brief statements encompass the whole tradition of dramatic theory since Aristotle, but in the simple language characteristically Shakespearean.

Except in rare instances, such as in Hamlet's definition of the drama--'to show Virtue her own feature, scorn her own image'--Shakespeare does not allude to the dual functions of literature--to teach and to delight--as proclaimed by Horace and repeatedly asserted by Renaissance critics. The main objective of any artist is to provide aesthetic pleasure, which is the essence of any artistic endeavor; and the other function of literature is to be accomplished as the result of the impact of the aesthetic pleasure upon our emotions and sensibilities. Shakespeare nowhere expounds the dual functions of literature; his main concern is to appeal to our aesthetic sensibilities. The profoundest works of literature do not assert didacticism as their primary goal. Shakespeare's plays fall into this category. In revealing his thought on the function of the drama, Shakespeare merely says that it is a reflection of life and human nature, but the implied message is clear: mirroring life is to teach. H. J. C. Grierson explains the "amoral" aspect of Shakespeare's

drama as the playwright's rejoinder to the Church for its opposition to the stage.¹¹ Probably "a-moral" is not a word that appropriately denotes the basic quality of Shakespeare's art. Indeed, despite Professor Grierson's unhappy choice of word, Shakespeare's plays carry universal moral message; the ultimate probings into the nature of good and evil, the unsolved question of humanity, are attempted in his works. Shakespeare does not theorize on the Horatian doctrine; but his art truly fulfils the dual functions of literature. While not obsessed with the contemporary theory of the didactic function of literature, Shakespeare does provide sugar-coated pills.

At the outset of this chapter I stated that dramatic theories are not discussed in critical terms but demonstrated by the works themselves. Shakespeare's silence on the dual functions of the dramatic art is manifestation of this trait of Shakespeare the literary critic. The typically Shakespearean reserve is seen in an instance in which he analyzes one of the important theories of literature. Aristotle's Poetics contains the famous discussion of catharsis, the purging of emotions achieved through pity and fear. Shakespeare does not discuss this dramatic theory in critical terms, but at one point he enacts the theory by making it part of a dramatic speech. Edgar in King Lear makes the following comment:

When we our betters see bearing our woes,
 We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
 Who alone suffers suffers most i' the mind,
 Leaving free things and happy shows behind,
 But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip
 When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.
 How light and portable my pain seems now

When that which makes me bend makes the King bow,
He childed as I fathered! (III, vi, 109-17)

Edgar in disguise has just witnessed the pitiful scene of Lear performing an imaginary trial of his two infilial daughters. The above comment is in effect an interpretation of both the origin and ultimate development through catharsis of tragedy; it is a theory enacted. Professor A. C. Bradley, in his discussion of the substance of Shakespearean tragedy, states that, in addition to being the story of exceptional suffering and calamity, a tragedy achieves catharsis, or purgation of emotions, by showing the catastrophe befalling the protagonist, usually a conspicuous person.¹² Professor Bradley's discussion is a continuation of Aristotle's analysis of catharsis achieved through pity and fear the catastrophe instills in the spectator. Edgar, in his role as a Bedlam beggar, watches Lear, once the ruler of a kingdom, now stricken by his daughters' ingratitude, performing an imagined arraignment in his madness. The transformation Edgar has assumed is insignificant, compared with the real transformation of Lear. Moreover, in the presence of a king's misery, a mere subject's ordeal is an insignificant affair: the private calamity of Edgar looks trivial in the presence of a public calamity, a king's madness.

Edgar's soliloquy is thus an enactment of the dramatic theory of catharsis. Shakespeare does not discuss the ultimate effect of tragedy in critical terms; he enacts the theory by dramatizing the actual working of cathartic process happening in his character's mind. Edgar's speech is part of the dramatic action in King Lear; but it should be regarded as Shakespeare's statement about the ultimate purging effect

of tragedy.

Although Shakespeare thus enacts a dramatic theory, he does not provide any definitions of the diverse genres in the drama. However, Polonius' list--'tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral' (Hamlet, II, ii, 415ff)--indicates in a humorous fashion that Shakespeare was aware of the variety of drama observable in his time. As for comedy, Shakespeare at least tells us what it is not: 'Is not a comonty a Christmas gambold or a tumbling trick?' (Taming of the Shrew, Ind., II, 139-41). No palpable discussion or exposition of the dramatic art in general is offered by Shakespeare. More germane to Shakespeare's dramatic criticism than abstract theorizing is his attempt to show the actual working of the dramatic art with his use of drama-within-drama.

Drama-within-drama is a device often utilized by the Elizabethan playwrights. It enhances the sense of dramatic process and creates the illusion of reality for the main body of a play. The Spanish Tragedy, for instance, utilizes both the device of induction and drama-within-drama. The effect is somewhat like a picture-within-a-picture-within-a-picture: the audience is watching the personified figure Revenge and the soul of the dead, who are watching the main body of the play, making comments on the progress of the action; and the main play has a play-within-the-play, in which Hiernimo carries out his real revenge as part of the dramatic action of the main play as well as that of the play-within-the-play. The final effect is a nullification of the sense

of the distinction between reality and the created world on the stage: the device of the threefold watching-and-being-watched is to lead the audience to a sense that they themselves could be being watched by some unknown presence. The ultimate result is the sense that, after all, the distinction between reality and the playworld is itself doubtful. Thus, the device of drama-within-drama, while enhancing the sense of dramatic process, paradoxically creates the illusion of reality for the main body of a play.

For my present purpose, I will examine two instances in which Shakespeare uses drama-within-drama. Both Hamlet and A Midsummer Night's Dream contain drama-within-drama; and by using this device Shakespeare achieves special effects. In Hamlet the 'Mousetrap' is a crucial part of the dramatic action; in A Midsummer Night's Dream the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' rounds out the whole dramatic action of the play. Yet in these two instances Shakespeare reveals his thoughts on the dramatic process in general by providing dramatic criticism in action. My present concern is not to analyze how the two instances of drama-within-drama function in the dramatic development of the two plays, but to examine them as manifestations of Shakespeare's consciousness of the nature of dramatic art in general.

In Hamlet, throughout the performance of the 'Mousetrap,' the reaction of those for whom it is performed is carefully depicted. Although the comments uttered by them during and after the performance of 'the Murder of Gonzago' are limited to the dramatic context, the reaction revealed by these comments is an enactment of the audience's

response to the performance of a play, and ultimately relates to the nature of dramatic performance.

Before the performance of 'the Murder of Gonzago' starts, Hamlet and Polonius have the following brief exchange:

- Ham. My lord, you played once i' the university, you say?
 Pol. That did I, my lord, and was accounted a good actor.
 Ham. What did you enact?
 Pol. I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i' the Capitol.
 Brutus killed me.
 Ham. It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf
 there. Be the players ready? (III, ii, 104-11)

Apparently, the passage is only a passing exchange that has no dramatic relevance to the scene. But Shakespeare is here achieving a significant dramatic effect. The casual exchange between them imparts an illusion of reality to the scene: the audience, watching Hamlet and Polonius casually commenting on the latter's experience as a student actor, comes to be prepared to be part of the spectators of the play-within-the-play and take it as a performance with its own entity--not just as a part of the main play. With the help of this casual exchange, the audience forgets that Hamlet and Polonius are stage characters, and is made part of the spectators on the stage who will watch the play-within-the-play.

Most of the comments made during the performance of the 'Mouse-trap' are uttered by Hamlet, who, as Ophelia says at one point, interprets the play-within-the-play like a chorus (l. 255). One must note that Hamlet's comments have an effect of accelerating the response of the guilty one. The seemingly innocent words, 'The players cannot keep counsel, they'll tell all' (ll. 151-52), are the first pinch on

the nerve of Claudius. The brevity of the prologue is compared to that of a 'woman's love' (l. 164), which must be a thorny remark for Gertrude; the declamatory speeches of the player-queen, evaluated by Hamlet at appropriate moments--'Wormwood, wormwood' (l. 191) and 'If she should break it now!' (l. 234)--lead to Queen Gertrude's uncomfortable response: 'The lady doth protest too much, methinks' (l. 240). Claudius' wary question--'Have you heard the argument? Is there no offense in it?' (l. 242)--is met by Hamlet's apparently harmless answer that gives a final blow on Claudius' guilty conscience: "'Tis a knavish piece of work, but what o' that? Your Majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not. Let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung' (ll. 250-53). It is noteworthy that Polonius, who is qualified enough with his past experience as a student actor to display his judgment on the performance with his customary garrulity, remains silent all the while; indeed he is the one to say, 'Give o'er the play' (l. 279). Polonius is aware of the whole situation from the moment when the dumb-show is performed, and his unusual reticence throughout the scene is a sign that he is wary of the inflammable situation.

Shakespeare thus carefully constructs a scene which not only has a crucial relevance to the development of the dramatic action but also is a vivid picture of the actual working of a dramatic performance on the audience's emotion. Indeed, no guilty creature has ever sat at a play and has been so intensely struck to the soul by the cunning of a scene (cf. II, ii, 617-23). Shakespeare does not discuss the effective-

ness of the dramatic art in moving the auditors; he demonstrates how it works. Although set in a particular dramatic situation, the picture of the actual working of a dramatic performance Shakespeare provides in the above scene is his dramatic criticism at its best.

In A Midsummer Night's Dream the play-within-the-play 'Pyramus and Thisbe' and the accompanying comments uttered by the spectators for whom it is performed provide a thorough survey of dramatic art in general. Throughout the scene the spirit of burlesque works like a foil in heightening awareness of qualities positive and negative pertaining to dramatic art. Much has been written on the general dramatic criticism Shakespeare provides in this scene, and it will be superfluous to repeat what scholars have said about the significance of the scene: how the poor use of language is burlesqued, how literal-mindedness constitutes the cream of silliness of the lines, how the reactions shown by the spectators function as commentary upon the wretched piece presented by the hardhanded men of Athens, and so forth. I only wish to call attention to the special effect Shakespeare achieves in this final scene of the play. As in the case of 'the Murder of Gonzago' the staging of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' is Shakespeare's conscious attempt to enact the actual working of a dramatic performance. Of course, there is a big difference between 'the Murder of Gonzago' and 'Pyramus and Thisbe': despite its stilted language characterized by mechanical rhyming and declamatory style, the former is a piece that strongly affects the audience; the latter is a piece incessantly ridiculed and pilloried by its spectators. Yet in both instances Shake-

speare's awareness of the dramatic process, of the nature of dramatic art in general, is revealed.

'Pyramus and Thisbe' does not "move" the spectators, in any sense of the word; yet the ludicrous piece is presented by the 'rude mechanicals' in all seriousness. Now the total effect of the scene is somewhat like what is found in The Spanish Tragedy: the audience is watching Theseus and other characters, who are watching the silly piece presented by the dead-serious Athenian tradesmen. Theseus and other characters laugh at the ludicrous piece; but when all the lovers empty the stage, the fairies enter the stage and exchange their songs. The audience is thus made aware that the very spectators of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' who laughed so much at the silliness of the piece have been watched in their turn by the fairies. Indeed, at one point of the play, Puck refers to the behavior of the lovers as 'their fond pageant' (III, ii, 114). After all, the main characters of the play, those who play the love-quartet, are manipulated by the fairies, and their behavior is constantly observed by the supernatural beings. Thus, while Theseus and his company are laughing at the silliness of the piece presented by Nick Bottom and others, they themselves have been watched not only by the audience but also by the fairies. The intricacy of the matter does not end here; the audience is watching the fairies, who are in their turn engaged in their own tricks and love quarrels. Now where is the guarantee that the audience themselves are not being watched by some unknown being? The confidence with which Theseus and others comment on the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' is, after all, not an

infallible one: the fairies call their behavior a 'fond pageant.' But the fairies engage themselves in their own 'fond pageant' of love quarrels and tricks. Can the audience, who are watching the whole scene including the behavior of the fairies, be sure that their judgment is infallible? The ultimate message one can derive from the above speculation is that the dead-serious Athenian tradesmen who present the ridiculous piece are, after all, not to be taken as mere objects of mockery.

Of course, 'Pyramus and Thisbe' is 'the silliest stuff' (V, i, 213) that one can ever hear. But, as Theseus says, 'the best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them' (ll. 214-15). Hippolyta, who calls it 'the silliest stuff,' is not any less literal-minded than the hardhanded Athenians, for she answers: 'It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs' (ll. 216-17). The utter absence of imagination in the performance of 'Pyramus and Thisbe' is, of course, antipodal to the nature of the dramatic art, of all imaginative literature, which strives to achieve illusion of reality through its appeal to the imagination of the auditors. But their effort to please the audience, to exert their imagination in their limited way to impart credibility to the action they present, although resulting in a mockery of art, is geared to the spirit that underlies all dramatic performance, is indeed an embryonic manifestation of the very nature of the dramatic art.

The preceding discussion of Shakespeare's attempt to enact his conception of the nature of dramatic art in general leads to the ques-

tion of Shakespeare's judgment on the qualities of dramatic works. 'Pyramus and Thisbe' burlesques all the bad qualities one can think of: lack of imagination, clumsy handling of stage business, literal-mindedness, bad verse, wretched language, and what not. In the lines of 'the Murder of Gonzago' there is implied criticism of declamatory style, stilted language, and the artificiality of mechanical rhyming. The plans of the 'rude mechanicals' in A Midsummer Night's Dream (I, ii; III, i) consist in a great deal of indirect commentary on popular drama; and the exchange between Theseus and Philostrate (V, i, 40-55) evaluates the courtly and popular entertainments. Polonius' list of dramatic sub-genres (Hamlet, II, ii, 415ff) provides a glimpse of the variety of drama observable in Elizabethan England. All this indirect commentary of Elizabethan drama and courtly and popular entertainments indicates that Shakespeare was keenly aware of the contemporary trends in dramatic art and their weaknesses. The following comment Hamlet makes before asking the First Player to recite a passage from 'Aeneas' tale to Dido' lucidly summarizes the qualities a good dramatic work should have:

I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted, or if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million, 'twas caviar to the general. But it was--as I received it, and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in the top of mine--an excellent play, well digested in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember one said there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savory, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affection, but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. (Hamlet, II, ii, 454-466)

The principle of decorum as revealed in the passage is indeed what dictates Shakespeare's critical acumen throughout the corpus of his writings--indifference to the popular taste, well-proportioned distribution of scenes done with moderation and skill, avoidance of affected language, and words well suited to the content.

This concern for decorum, including awareness of excesses and deficiencies, applies not only to the composition of dramatic works but also to the presentation or delivery (pronuntiatio, the fourth element of the traditional rhetoric) of a finished work. The famous advice Hamlet gives to the players is indeed not only Shakespeare's observation interpretative of the theater of the time but also a manifestation of Shakespeare's awareness of the virtue of decorum in the stage presentation as well as in the composition of a dramatic work. The tenet Hamlet expounds in his speech is 'the modesty of nature' (III, ii, 21)--the guiding principle of all artistic endeavor as inherited by the Renaissance thinkers. The principle of decorum applies not only to the use of language, conventions, diverse techniques of dramaturgy, and classical rules but also to the stage presentation of a finished work, such as a play. In expounding this doctrine, Hamlet touches on several aspects of stage performance: he denounces 'o'erdoing Termagant' (l. 15), that is, inordinate use of voice and bodily motion, warns against falling short of the proper degree of intensity in delivery (speech and action), extolls the judgment of the judicious few, and denounces the stage-clowns' liberty in extemporizing. The principle of stage performance Hamlet expounds is geared

to the doctrine of decorum: as much as the creation of a work of art is to conform to the modesty of nature, its presentation is to be done according to the rules set down by the laws of nature.

This plain code of nature, then, was the guiding principle Shakespeare maintained as a playwright-poet-actor-critic. Because art mirrors nature, the breach of decorum, overstepping the modesty of nature, signals a failure in artistic endeavor, whether it be creation or presentation.

CHAPTER IV
THE NATURE OF POETRY

Although what may be properly termed "literary criticism" in the writings of Shakespeare are his interpretative observations on his works as they evolve individually as pieces of dramatic-poetic art, one can hardly resist a wish to get a glimpse of Shakespeare's own conception of the nature and substance of the art he practiced. It is only natural for one to feel the urge to explore the innermost thought Shakespeare had in regard to his art. Yet the subject remains ever elusive. Shakespeare makes many observations concerning the nature and the process of poetic composition in general. For instance, he regularly emphasizes poetry as the art of "feigning." But these comments are, after all, part of the dramatic speeches; and in many instances the allusions to literary theories are geared to enriching and enhancing the dramatic effects rather than being manifestations of Shakespeare's own poetic creed.

Shakespeare was not a theoretician, and there is no evidence that he adhered to any school of thought. The fact is that all shades of thought related to the nature and substance of poetry are subtly interspersed in his works, and these critical allusions have relevance to the dramatic situations in progress. The question of how Shakespeare utilizes various literary theories to enrich his works is our primary concern; however, it will be of no mean worth to review some of the critical

ideas alluded to in his works, while not losing sight of the dramatic effects achieved by these allusions.

Scholars have warned us against taking the critical comments appearing in Shakespeare's works as direct reflections of his own views. E. C. Pettet, for instance, wrote:

We must always remember (as in deducing Shakespeare's personal attitude to most things) that his writing is dramatic and also belongs to a tradition in which literature was much more social than personal, objective than subjective. It is the crudest sort of error in interpretation to take everything Shakespeare writes as evidence of his personal beliefs and attitudes. . . . On the other hand, in contrast with such subjects as politics and religion, literature was a safe topic in which Shakespeare was quite at liberty to express his personal opinions whenever he felt inclined.¹

The task of analyzing the passages where critical allusions appear thus requires readiness to detect Shakespeare's voice coming through what is actually spoken by his dramatic characters. Carl Van Doren, in his discussion of Shakespeare's view of poetry, states: "The objection that it is not he but his characters who speak, may be answered with the fact that he puts [these comments] into the mouths of all of them with no painful concern for dramatic propriety."² Shakespeare does not, as Van Doren states, put critical comments into his characters' mouths "with no painful concern for dramatic propriety"; any critical allusion is mandated by the overall dramatic process or particular dramatic scenes in progress, and Shakespeare consciously gives utterance to appropriate critical ideas in order to achieve intended dramatic effect. The dramatic contexts in which the comments appear will tell us whether they are Shakespeare's own views uttered unobtrusively or merely expressions of the ideas and attitudes he wants to question at appropriate

moments. It is a strenuous task, for, propelled by the comments he assigns to his characters, Shakespeare often subtly intersperses his own ideas even in the utterances of the ideas and attitudes he wants to put on a dramatic trial. The difficulty of detecting Shakespeare's own thoughts hidden in what is actually spoken by the dramatic characters is implied in a remark by Professor Atkins: "Shakespeare affords . . . some fragments of his conception of art in general. . . his theories by means of suggestive obiter dicta, all of which. . . may. . . be reasonably associated with the dramatist himself."³ The critical comments appearing in Shakespeare's works can and should be reasonably associated with the writer himself--but not more.

Throughout the corpus of Shakespeare's works one finds several passages and lines that provide basis for considering Shakespeare's response to literary theories, and these critical allusions have dramatic functions to perform, their purpose being to enhance the audience's awareness of the dramatic situations. It is neither desirable nor possible to allow these observations--whether we may identify any of them as revealing Shakespeare's conception of poetry--to roam out of the dramatic contexts that generate them. The famous speech of Theseus that offers an analysis of poetry and imagination has to be read within its dramatic context--a scene where a man of action and maturity, surrounded by youthful lovers and "fantastics," makes an observation upon what he has known as an activity alien to his own life. Passages like this cannot be read as literal statements of Shakespeare's personal credo--as self-sufficient fragments of thought that can step out of the dramatic contexts. When

we read Biographia Literaria, despite the borrowed ideas that Coleridge carelessly spread over the pages, the premise is that what we read there is what we should accept as Coleridge's. The case is different with Shakespeare. It is necessary for us to sustain the awareness that the critical observations Shakespeare assigns to his characters are necessary parts of the action.

Despite this consideration, one thing remains clear: the critical ideas present in Shakespeare's works must not be regarded as 'coinages of his brain,' but as reflection of the literary climate of his time. All the elements of the theories found in Shakespeare's works belonged to the age. As far as his critical theories are concerned, Shakespeare never formulated them in such a way that they may be ordered into a formal system of theory.⁴ And in this respect Shakespeare was as eclectic as Sidney: diverse notions are found in Sidney's Defense of Poesie, ranging from those of Plato and Aristotle to those of his Italian contemporaries, and he interwove them in one essay. Maybe this comparison is somewhat far-fetched; but we can find analogous cases between Shakespeare and Sidney, as far as their critical tempers are concerned.⁵ To achieve intended dramatic effects Shakespeare utilized and alluded to diverse critical ideas, just as Sidney incorporated various critical notions for the sole purpose of defending poetry.

One of the clichés of the Renaissance was that poetry was divinely inspired. Whether Shakespeare shared the notion or not, it is alluded to even in a remark casually made to refer to the contemporary fashion of composing verses for courtship: 'Much is the force of heaven-bred

poesy' (The Two Gentlemen of Verona, III, ii, 72). Although appearing in a context with an ironic vein, the passing comments reveals that it was a common notion in Shakespeare's time. The myth of 'heaven-bred poesy' of course had its origin in Plato's theory that explained poetic creation as a divinely-inspired activity. The well-known statement of Socrates in Plato's Ion reads:

For all the . . . poets . . . utter all their beautiful poems not through art but because they are divinely inspired and possessed. . . . The craft of the poet is light and winged and holy, and he is not capable of poetry until he is inspired by the gods and out of his mind and there is no reason in him. Until he gets into this state, any man is powerless to produce poetry and to prophesy. They write poetry. . . not by art but by divine gift. . . . They do not utter the words they do through art but by heavenly power.⁶

This notion of poetry as having divine origin appears over and over in the Renaissance writers' works. Henry Cornelius Agrippa's discussion of melancholy humor alludes to the theory of divine madness.⁷ Sidney did not hesitate to proclaim this theory: poets "are so beloved of the Gods that whatsoever they write proceeds of a diuine fury. . . . They will make you immortall by their verses."⁸ Puttenham endowed poets with a trace of divinity: "And this science in his perfection can not grow but by some diuine instinct. . . . It is therefore of Poets thus to be conceiued, that if they be able to deuise and make all these thinges of them selues, without any subject of veritie, that they be (by manner of speech) as creating gods."⁹

One can hardly assume that Shakespeare was susceptible to any sort of indoctrination; yet this view was a common notion of the age, dominating its literary climate. Whether Shakespeare wholeheartedly shared the

notion or not, no one can tell. I will examine the context where the phrase 'heaven-bred poesy' occurs, to demonstrate that what matters is not whether he adhered to this theory but how he used a critical allusion for dramatic effect. Proteus gives advice to the love-sick Thurio:

Proteus. But you, Sir Thurio, are not sharp enough.
 You must lay lime to tangle her desires
 By wailful sonnets, whose composed rhymes
 Should be full fraught with serviceable vows.

Duke. Aye,
 Much is the force of heaven-bred poesy.

Proteus. Say that upon the altar of her beauty
 You sacrifice your tears, your sighs, your heart.
 Write till your ink be dry, and with your tears
 Moist it again; and frame some feeling line
 That may discover such integrity.
 For Orpheus' lute was strung with poets' sinews,
 Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones,
 Make tigers tame, and huge leviathans
 Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands.

(The Two Gentlemen of Verona, III, ii, 67-81)

Critical jargon and clichés on the power of divinely-inspired poesy are fully exploited in this passage. The irony is that the recipe provided by Proteus contains one of the important critical theories, the myth of Orpheus taming the wild beasts and giving life to inanimate objects-- the myth of the archetypal founder of society having been a heaven-sent man whose words could create harmony in a demonic chaos. The ironic vein is apparent in the dramatic context: Proteus' recipe plays around the most cherished classical theories of the origin of poetry, and Plato's divine madness theory is only a step away from it. The dramatic effect achieved here is somewhat comparable to what one would feel when one sees an ass being bombarded with grave sermons. Sir Thurio, weak-minded and endowed only with his wealth and carnal desire, has nothing to do

with the Platonic concept of the divine origin of poetry or--for that matter--with the ultimate ideal of pastoralism--the myth of Orpheus taming wild creatures of nature. The allusion to the profound theory of poetry in the context should not puzzle us, for the effect aimed at is clearly dramatic irony or even satire.

Theseus in A Midsummer Night's Dream, despite his general scorn of the wild unreason and unreality of poetry, refers to the mystic origin of poetry. Theseus' speech, the most elaborate and reasoned analysis of poetry appearing in Shakespeare's works, surely contains a clue to Shakespeare's own view of the nature of poetry:

I never may believe
 These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
 Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
 More than cool reason ever comprehends.
 The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
 Are of imagination all compact.
 One sees more devils than vast Hell can hold,
 That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
 The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
 And as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name.
 Such tricks hath strong imagination
 That if it would but apprehend some joy,
 It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,
 How easy is a bush supposed a bear! (V, i, 2-22)

Theseus' main contention is that poetic creations are mere illusions, fancies, 'airy nothing' (l. 16). Theseus also groups the poet with the lover and the lunatic--an echo of Plato's idea about the madness or shaping fantasies of the poet.¹⁰ The thesis of the speech does not

quite measure up to Plato's view of madness as a form of exaltation which leads to a transcendental vision of truth and beauty. Yet within the dramatic context, Theseus has said his say, and more--the recognition of the poet's gift to scan the cosmic scenes with his mind's eye: 'The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,/ Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven' (ll. 12-13). The speech echoes Plato's theory of divine madness as the source of poetry; but should we accept this statement as Shakespeare's own conception of the origin of poetry? Did Shakespeare conceive himself as a divinely-inspired being, and is he in the lines assigned to Theseus asserting his imaginative power to scale the diapason of the cosmic view? Theseus defines poetry as 'airy nothing'--a figment of imagination. Despite the subtle tone of disparagement running through the passage, Theseus' recognition of the mystic power of imagination can be taken as a fragmentary revelation of Shakespeare's own belief, as it stands out above the general mood of the speech.

To support this speculation, we have the testimony of The Tempest, in which Shakespeare extolls the power of imagination to the degree that Prospero--to many scholars the alter-ego of Shakespeare--becomes an embodiment of creative power, indeed a god. The powerful lines of Prospero's valediction manifest this hidden truth:

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves,
 And ye that on the sands with printless foot
 Do chase the ebbing Neptune and do fly him
 When he comes back; you demipuppets that
 By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
 Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
 Is to make midnight mushrooms that rejoice

To hear the solemn curfew, by whose aid--
 Weak masters though ye be--I have bedimmed
 The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
 And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
 Set roaring war. To the dread rattling thunder
 Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
 With his own bolt. The strong-based promontory
 Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
 The pine and cedar. Graves at my command
 Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
 By my so potent art. But this rough magic
 I here abjure, and when I have required
 Some heavenly music--which even now I do--
 To work mine end upon their senses, that
 This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
 Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
 And deeper than did ever plummet sound
 I'll drown my book. (V, i, 33-57)

The renunciation of his power notwithstanding, The Tempest summarizes Shakespeare's whole creative career in the form of a fable, and in it we can see Shakespeare's view of himself as an artist, a creator, yet a mortal succumbing to the limitation of human achievement, as symbolically shown in Prospero's failure to "Arielize" the earthbound Caliban.

A brief consideration of how deeply rooted the theory of divine madness as the source of poetic inspiration was in the thoughts of the Renaissance men and how it manifested itself in Shakespeare's lines I have provided in the preceding discussion.

The means by which poets can transform their visions into concrete objects with shapes is, in Theseus' analysis, 'imagination':

And as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name. (A Midsummer Night's Dream,
 V, i, 14-17)

Imagination was equivalent to "fancy" to the Elizabethans: a mental

aberration, as defined by Pico della Mirandola in his De Imaginatione.¹¹
 The Renaissance theory of the imagination had significant influence on the Elizabethan attitude toward the subject of man's power of imagination. The theory warned against indulgence in wild fancies that may result from an irrational mental state. Puck's speech touches on the subject:

If we shadows have offended,
 Think but this, and all is mended,
 That you have but slumbered here
 While these visions did appear,
 And this weak and idle theme,
 No more yielding but a dream,
 Gentles, do not reprehend.
 If you pardon, we will mend.
 And, as I am an honest Puck,
 If we have unearned luck,
 Now to scape the serpents' tongue,
 We will make amends ere long,
 Else the Puck a liar call. (A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i,
 430-42)

The 'weak and idle theme,/ No more yielding but a dream' is the result of the strong imagination that Theseus mentions (V, i, 18). In the midst of the apology, Shakespeare's assertion of the power of imagination is equally traceable. Theseus, in the context of his speech, rejects poetic creations as mere empty illusions; and he calls them 'airy nothing' resulting from the 'tricks of strong imagination.' But this concept of 'airy nothing' is a key to the pervasive assertion of the gift of creative imagination found in Shakespeare. When Mercutio says, after his Queen Mab speech,

True, I talk of dreams,
 Which are the children of an idle brain,
 Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,
 Which is as thin of substance as the air,
 And more inconstant than the wind, (Romeo and Juliet, I, v, 97-101)

Shakespeare is both summarizing the contemporary skepticism regarding the true worth of imaginative literature and revealing his notion that these self-same idle dreams 'begot of nothing but vain fantasy' are the very substance that enables poets to attain a vision of truth and beauty. Poets' imagination is

To overthrow law and in one self-born hour
To plant and o'erwhelm custom. (Winter's Tale, IV, Chor. 8)

Not bound to the earthly and the actual, poets can attain the higher realm of truth and beauty. Poets, the unregistered legislators, claim the right to indulge in their dreams and fancies. Puttenham wrote:

for commonly who so is studious in th'Arte or shewes him selfe excellent in it, they call him in disdayne a phantasticall; and a light headed or phantasticall man. . . they call a Poet. . . . Even so is the phantasticall part of man (if it be not disordered) a representer of the best, most comely, and bewtiful images or apparances of thinges to the soule and according to their very truth.¹²

The accusation that poets merely indulge in their "fantastical" faculty of imagining things that the earth never produced is reflected in the lines by Shakespeare; yet in the same lines he proclaims, while questioning, the supremacy of imaginative power. When Prospero says,

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep, (The Tempest, IV, i, 156-58)

we hear the apology that, after all, poetic creations are figments of idle brains; yet we also hear Shakespeare's insistent voice reminding us that 'such stuff' is possible only through man's imagination. After all, 'our little life/ Is rounded with a sleep,' as Prospero says; and in this finite, imperfect world of ours--no less unsubstantial and unreliable than our fantasy world--the poet's longing for perfection and

permanence reasserts itself.

The insistently recurring notion that the world is a stage and life is but a walking shadow and men are but poor players in this transient and unsubstantial world, is in keeping with the above speculation on Shakespeare's assertion of the imaginative power in the midst of sordid, transient, earthly existence. If the dream world of poetry is unsubstantial and fleeting, as Prospero says, so is our little existence. And in the midst of the vicissitude and transience of our real life, poets' imagination and fancy create something more permanent, an image of perfection.

This speculation on Shakespeare's view of imagination as the medium of bodying forth the idealized version of nature leads to the question of how he conceived imagination as the bridge that connects the poet and the reader, the playwright and the audience. The poet's imagination is not enough to impart life to a created work. Throughout Shakespeare's works we find his insistent call for imaginative cooperation on the part of the audience. The prologues of King Henry the Fifth are Shakespeare's pleas to the audience for their imaginative collaboration, without which the poet's effort cannot fulfill its goal:

On your imaginary forces work.

• • • •
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;

• • • •
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings;
(I, Chor. 18-28)

'Play with your fancies,' 'Oh, do but think,' 'Grapple your minds,'
'Work, work your thoughts' (III, Chor. 7, 13, 18, 25); 'Yet sit and see,/
Minding true things by what their mockeries be' (IV, Chor. 52-53); 'But

now behold,/ In the quick forge and working house of thought,' 'Then
brook abridgment, and your eyes advance,/ After your thoughts' (V, Chor.
22-23; ~~44-45~~). The audience's imagination is thus as crucial as the
poet's to the fulfillment of his artistic effort. For, after all,
'The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse
if imagination amend them' (A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, i, 214).

In considering the substance of poetry as Shakespeare alludes to
it, one notices the frequency with which the word 'feign' is used in
relation to poetry:¹³

Truest poetry is the most feigning. (As You Like It, III, iii,
19-20)

Alas, I took great pains to study it, and 'tis poetical.
It is the more like to be feigned. (Twelfth Night, I, v,
206-208)

Therefore the poet
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods.
(Merchant of Venice, V, i, 79-80)

And all that poets feign of bliss and joy. (3 Henry VI, I, ii,
131)

One can see that behind Shakespeare's use of the word 'feign' there
is a conception of poetry reminiscent of the Aristotelian theory of
mimesis. How Shakespeare responded to the Renaissance version of the
Aristotelian theory, as propagated by Sidney and others, is hard to
guess, because his works show that he could easily dispense with the
principle of the Unities. But the instances in which the word 'feign'
is used to denote the substance of poetry suggest that his critical
ideas were akin to those of his contemporaries. Hamlet, in describing
the functions of the drama, says that it is 'to hold. . . the mirror

up to Nature; to show Virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure' (Hamlet, III, ii, 24-27). Plato used the metaphor of the mirror to illustrate the worthlessness of poetry as being unable to project substantial images, but Shakespeare uses it to substantiate the view that art mirrors nature. The word 'feign' is indeed a key-word in defining poetry for the Elizabethans. Thus, Sidney:

Poesie therefore is an arte of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word Mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfetting, or feigning foorth: to speake metaphorically, a speaking picture: with this end, to teach and delight.¹⁴

Also Ben Jonson:

A Poet is. . . a Maker, or a fainer: His Art, an Art of imitation, or faining; expressing the life of man in fit measure, numbers, and harmony, according to Aristotle: From the word poiein, which signifies to make or fayne. Hence, hee is called a Poet, not hee which writeth in measure only; but that fayneth and formeth a fable, and writes things like the Truth.¹⁵

Bacon wrote, burlesquing the arguments of the adversaries of poetry: poets "lyke peinters maie feigne what they list, whose studie tendeth naught els, than to fede fooles eares with mere trifles and foolishe fables."¹⁶ Thus, whether the term 'feign' was used to extol or disparage the substance of poetry, it was a word used to designate its substance.

In a non-dramatic context Shakespeare wrote:

Look, when a painter would surpass the life
In limning out a well-proportioned steed,
His art with nature's workmanship at strife,
As if the dead the living should exceed. (Venus and Adonis,
289-92)

Shakespeare is here echoing what his contemporaries said in regard to poets' right to transform and improve the actual and real. Sidney wrote:

Onely the Poet, disdayning to be tied to any such subiection, lifted vp with the vigor of his owne inuention, doth growe in effect another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite a newe, formes such as neuer were in Nature. . . . 17

Poets' art of feigning, as conceived by Sidney and Shakespeare, is not an attempt at photographic duplication of nature but a struggle for improvement of nature, for transcending the yoke of empirical knowledge. This conception is again an affirmation of imagination as the sole means to conceive the truthful image of nature--the Platonic ideal image of the ways of nature as they ought to be. But then the distinction between nature and art is in itself artificial: art has its origin in nature, is a 'feigning' of nature's ways. Shakespeare, in the catechetic lines dealing with the relation between art and nature, equivocates only to simplify the matter:

Nature is made better by no mean
But nature makes that mean; so over that art,
Which you say adds to nature, is an art
That nature makes. (Winter's Tale, IV, iii, 89-92)

One can hardly assume that Shakespeare listened attentively to what others had to say; but a passage in Sidney's essay describes not only Shakespeare's conception of poetry as the art of 'feigning' but also the characteristics of his works:

Nature neuer set forth the earth in so rich tapistry as diverse Poets haue done, neither with plesant riuers, fruitful trees, sweet smelling flowers, nor whatsoeuer

els may make the too much loued earth more louely. Her world is brasen, the Poets only deliuer a golden. 18

Indeed, the art of Shakespeare as he practiced it can be explained in these terms only: Shakespeare delivered only the "golden" world. The virtue of realism much extolled in modern literature has little, if any, place in the world of Shakespeare's art, for his drama is filled with heightening and idealization of every kind, going even beyond Hamlet's prescription--'to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to Nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure' (Hamlet, III, ii, 24-27). His conception of art in general is thus a methodizing of nature's processes: art is a means to render the ways of nature more effective than they are. Thus Touchstone's paradox, 'the truest poetry is the most feigning' (As You Like It, III, iii, 19-20), although spoken in an ironic vein, assumes a new dimension in its meaning. To put it in a prosaic way, it means that the most genuinely inspired poetry is the most imaginative.

But the above speculation is reading a profound critical theory into the context. Shakespeare, in depicting a scene in which Touchstone baffles the country wench Audrey with his "learned" talk, playfully exploits critical jargon:

Touchstone. When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room. Truly, I would the gods had made thee poetical.

Audrey. I do not know what "poetical" is. Is it honest in deed and word? Is it a true thing?

Touchstone. No, truly, for the truest poetry is the most

feigning, and lovers are given to poetry, and what they swear in poetry may be said as lovers they do feign.

Audrey. Do you wish, then, that the gods had made me poetical?

Touchstone. I do, truly, for thou swearest to me thou art honest. Now if thou wert a poet, I might have some hope thou didst feign. (As You Like It, III, iii, 12-27)

The catechism alludes to the attack on poets as "liars" which culminated with Stephen Gosson's School of Abuse. Although the hidden meaning of the passage, when considered along the line of speculation as suggested in the preceding discussion, comes through, one must not forget that Shakespeare is here purposefully playing puns, using critical jargon, in order to create a particular flavor in this scene of Touchstone's displaying verbal witticism during his amorous pursuit. As in the case of Proteus giving advice to Sir Thurio on the use of the power of 'heaven-bred poesy' in the latter's amorous campaign, the exchange between Touchstone and Audrey has a special effect: the poor country wench cannot understand the puns, and even less the critical allusions. If the play is a burlesque of pastoralism, as critics say, then in this particular scene Shakespeare is having fun bombarding it with critical clichés. Jaques' aside interprets the scene: 'Oh, knowledge ill-inhabited, worse than Jove in a thatched house!' (1. 11)

Likewise, the exchange between two churlish characters in Timon of Athens alludes to the topic:

Apemantus. How now, poet!

Poet. How now, philosopher!

Apemantus. Thou liest.

Poet. Art not one?

Apemantus. Yes.

Poet. Then I lie not.

Apemantus. Art not a poet?

Poet. Yes.

Apemantus. Then thou liest. Look in thy last work, where
thou hast feigned him a worthy fellow.

Poet. That's not feigned. He is so.

Apemantus. Yes, he is worthy of thee, and to pay thee for
thy labor. He that loves to be flattered is worthy
o' the flatterer. Heavens, that I were a lord!

(I, i, 220-34)

Apparently, Apemantus is the winner in this brief contest. But one may wonder why Shakespeare made the topical allusion in this scene: after all, obviously he himself shared the view of poetry's being the art of feigning. In depicting a scene of confrontation between the churlish philosopher Apemantus and the time-serving wretch, the poet, who is not even given a name, Shakespeare purposefully alludes to the critical theory. Shakespeare expresses the notion held by the adversaries of poetry in this exchange; but one can hardly miss the implied meaning of the passage--the triviality of the critical warfare over whether poets lie or not. Shakespeare indeed wraps his hidden meaning in a borrowed costume, the very words the opponents of poetry used.

The famous proclamation of Sidney that "of all writers under the sun the poet is the least liar"¹⁹ has become a cliché. Poets, according to Sidney, do not lie, because they make it clear that what they write is the product of their imagination and not the description of the actual. A Midsummer Night's Dream ends with Puck's speech quoted earlier. In Puck's speech (V, i, 430-42) Shakespeare offers a conventional "apology" for the figment of his idle dream and fancy; yet, with

the line, 'Else the Puck a liar call,' (l. 442) he is reaching for an answer to the charge made against imaginative literature. Shakespeare clearly says that the whole play is but a 'dream' based on an 'idle theme'; but it is also an answer to the refutation that poetry "filleth the imagination; and yet it is but with the shadow of a lie."²⁰ Through Puck, Shakespeare clearly says that the exertion of 'idle' fancy is indeed the substance of poetry and, because of it, the very existence of imaginative literature is justified. When Holofernes says poetry is 'foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes, objects and ideas. . . begot in the venticle of memory' (Love's Labor's Lost, IV, ii, 67-72), Shakespeare is putting the notions of the opponents of poetry into the mouth of the pedant, thus providing an occasion for this charge to be articulated in the vulgar and whimsical manner typical of Holofernes. Sidney's, Puttenham's, Lodge's stern-faced defense of poetry only falls short of Shakespeare's good-humored handling of the critical warfare.

The preceding discussion was not, of course, meant to project Shakespeare as an "apologist" of poetry; it was rather an attempt to prove that Shakespeare's handling of the critical theories on the nature and substance of poetry is more complex than what the critics (who advocate the view that Shakespeare was an artist not conscious of the related theories--an artist who was not even aware of his "artless art") have thought.

At the heart of Renaissance literary doctrine was the concept of the immortality of poesy, or poetic spirit--the source of all poetic

endeavor. Of the tripartite distinction--poeta, poema, and poesis, as enunciated by Horace in his Ars Poetica and transmitted to the Renaissance--poesis had the distinction of transcending the other two. Ben Jonson's definition reads:

A Poeme. . . is the worke of the Poet; the end, and fruit of his labour, and studye. Poesy is his skill, or Crafte of Making: the very Fiction itselfe, the reason, or forme of the worke. And these three voices differ, as the thing done, the doing, and the doer; the thing fain'd, the fain-²¹ing, and the fainer: so the Poeme, the Poesy, and the Poet.

One can notice a trace of strenuosity in the part where Jonson defines the term "poesy"; he finds it hard to define the term in a couple of words, as he does the other two. Jonson's main focus in defining "poesy" is the art or craft of poem-making, but he also expands its meaning to include "the reason," "the very Fiction itselfe." With the rather vague terms, "fiction" and "reason," Jonson is implying that poesy is the momentum or impelling force of poetic creation. Thus, when we come to Milton, the threefold division virtually loses its meaning: Milton asserts that only good men can write good poems because poetic inspiration and mastery of poetic art come only to them. According to Jonson, poesy is the intermediary between the doer and the thing done--not only the skill but the source of all poetic creation. Jonson also notes: "The Fable and Fiction is. . . the forme and Soule of any Poeticall worke, or Poeme."²² Poesy is not only the primum mobile in the act of poetic creation, but probably the one element that outlasts the mortal (poeta) and the transient (poema). When Shakespeare writes,

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme, (Sonnet 55)

he is extolling, with a tinge of his typical modesty, not the actual lines he is writing but the poetic spirit that impels him to write--the force that moves him to write. It is not the mere poetic skill, as Jonson's definition of poesy partly implies, but the power that lies behind the act of "rhyming." Mere versifying cannot result in poetry, since it is void of the spirit of poesy.

The Painter in Timon of Athens addresses the Poet: 'You are rapt, sir in some work, some dedication/ To the great lord' (I, i, 18).

'Rapt' is of course a common designation of the state in which poets are known to be, having been inspired by the divine spirit of poesy.

The time-serving poet answers:

A thing slipped idly from me;
Our poesy is as a gum, which oozes
From whence 'tis nourished: the fire i' the flint
Shows not till it be struck; our gentle flame
Provokes itself and like the current flies
Each bound it chafes. (I, i, 19-25)

It may be that Shakespeare is saying that poesy is the fruit of unforced inspiration. But in the dramatic context, the "poet" is posing as a master of the art of poesy, and the thesis of his speech leans toward the vulgar notion that anything written in meter is a poem:

'A thing slipped idly from me,' and poesy 'oozes' and 'flies' like an aimless current. Professor J. M. Manly notes Shakespeare's "unequalled capacity for self-criticism,"²³ and one can hardly accept the passage as a truthful description of Shakespeare's view of the poetic process.²⁴ Poesy, to quote from a different context, 'best pleases

that least know how' (Love's Labor's Lost, V, ii, 516), and Shakespeare recognizes the importance of unconsciously achieved effectiveness in artistic endeavor. Yet it entails inborn gift and the poetic spirit; a fortuitously done feat has no serious place in the art of poesy. Without the primum mobile of the poetic spirit, mere versifying becomes an object of mockery:

Tear him for his bad verses, tear him for his bad verses.
(Julius Caesar, III, iii, 34-35)

What should the wars do with these jiggling fools?
(Julius Caesar, IV, iii, 137)

When Shakespeare invokes the Muses for 'a poet's rage' (Sonnet 17) and for their 'fury' (Sonnet 100), he is paying just tribute to the spirit of poesy that can move him to write and sustain him throughout the painstaking process of writing.

Ben Jonson's eulogy provides a lucid analysis of the process of Shakespeare's poetic creation:

Yet must I not give Nature all: Thy Art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
For though the Poets matter, Nature be,
His Art doth give the fashion. And, that he,
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses anvil: turne the same,
(And himselfe with it) that he thinkes to frame;
Or for the lawrell, he may gaine a scorne,
For a good poet's made, as well as borne.
And such wert thou. ("To the Memory of my beloved, the author
Mr. William Shakespeare," ll. 55-65)

One might take Jonson's description of Shakespeare's practice of his art as the view Shakespeare himself had toward the poetic process. The impelling force of poesy must sustain him through the ordeal of turning over and over the Muses' anvil before he strikes the right note.

CONCLUSION

In this study I have tried to suggest a point of view from which the critical allusions and interpretative observations found in Shakespeare's works can be seen as manifestations of the playwright's critical consciousness that guided his creative faculty throughout the corpus of his writings and, therefore, as bases for interpretations of his works. The critical awareness which accompanied the poet's creative faculty was that of a comprehensive soul, not bound to any particular critical theories. Traditional scholarship has much too often leaned toward an attempt to extract Shakespeare's critical thoughts with a view to imposing an organized system of critical theory upon them. The apparent inconsistencies of the critical thoughts expressed in Shakespeare's works, consequently, have led to scholarly frustrations and sometimes to strong skepticism about the validity of any effort to probe the critical observations made by him. My attempt at exploration of the subject has been propelled by the belief that, despite the lack of any indisputably clear discussions of critical theories and the apparent inconsistencies in critical thoughts expressed in Shakespeare's works, a survey of the diverse shades of thoughts and the interpretative comments present in his works will provide bases for consideration of his works.

In drawing a distinction between "criticism" and "interpretation," Professor G. Wilson Knight made the following remark:

'Criticism' to me suggests a certain process of deliberately objectifying the work under consideration; the comparison of it with other similar works in order especially to show in what respects it surpasses, or falls short of, those works; the dividing its 'good' from its 'bad'; and, finally, a formal judgement as to its lasting validity. 'Interpretation,' on the contrary, tends to merge into the work it analyses; it attempts, as far as possible, to understand its subject in the light of its own nature, employing external reference, if at all, only as a preliminary to understanding; it avoids discussion of merits, and, since its existence depends entirely on its original acceptance of the validity of the poetic unit which it claims, in some measure, to translate into discursive reasoning, it can recognize no division of 'good' from 'bad.' Thus criticism is active and looks ahead, often treating past work as material on which to base future standards and canons of art; interpretation is passive, and looks back, regarding only the imperative challenge of a poetic vision. Criticism is a judgement of vision; interpretation a reconstruction of vision. In practice, it is probable that neither can exist, or at least has yet on any comprehensive scale existed, quite divorced from the other. The greater part of poetic commentary pursues a middle course between criticism and interpretation. But sometimes work is created of so resplendent a quality, so massive a solidity of imagination, that adverse criticism beats against it idly as the wind that flings its ineffectual force against a mountain-rock. Any profitable commentary on such work must necessarily tend towards a pure interpretation.¹

Of course, Professor Knight is not here making any allusion to the present issue; his discussion is of the two modes of approaching a literary work, closely related to each other but strikingly different in spirit. I have quoted the passage in its entirety, for the perspective Professor Knight has taken is akin to that which I have maintained throughout this study. Traditional scholarship on the subject of Shakespeare's literary criticism has been geared to the spirit of "criticism," as defined by Professor Knight: scholars have tried to measure Shakespeare's critical thoughts against the established body of critical theories and to put him in a certain mould, essentially preconceived,

with the critics' natural fondness for making a writer "belong" to a certain school of thought or systematizing his critical ideas according to the existing store of critical theories. This approach is not without its merit, for identifying each element of his critical thoughts will eventually help to throw light upon the overall picture of the critical awareness the poet maintained. But, to modify Professor Knight's metaphor, one cannot measure the depth of an ocean with the throw of a pebble. The myth of Procrustes, who measured his captive's height against a bed and cut his legs in order that he would fit into it, is still applicable. The principle of interpretation Professor Knight proposes, on the other hand, has the potential of enabling one to "merge into the work" and to "understand its subject in the light of its own nature, employing external reference. . . only as a preliminary to understanding." The diverse critical notions appearing in Shakespeare's works are an element that enriches them, not manifestations of any rigid critical dogma the poet adhered to. The complexity of the critical ideas woven into his works does not allow one to put them together in such a way as to build an organized system; if it had been possible to do so, scholars would not have so consistently argued that no organized system of critical thoughts can be found in his critical observations. Merging into a work, as Mr. Knight puts it, is to accept it as it is and to explore it "in the light of its own nature": one's store of knowledge of critical theories can be employed "only as a preliminary to understanding" the nature of Shakespeare's critical observations. A rigid application of "external reference"

to what appears at certain moments of dramatic development is doing injustice to Shakespeare, who freely resorted to various critical thoughts as necessity arose. The fact that the major bulk of Shakespeare's critical observations are interpretative ones rather than abstract theorizing in critical terms supports this view.

If there was one principle Shakespeare embraced and never deviated from, it was the comprehensive doctrine of decorum. In utilizing and commenting upon the use of various devices of rhetoric and language, Shakespeare reveals his concern for proper use and abuse. In his dramatic criticism, all the inquiries into diverse dramatic techniques and methods of dramatic composition are governed by concern for decorum, including awareness of excesses and deficiencies. The interpretative observations Shakespeare makes on individual dramas, scenes, characters, moods, and subtleties of dramatic conflicts, as well as the methods he employs in offering his interpretations, manifest his concern for decorum. In revealing his thoughts on the nature of poetry, Shakespeare's utilization of various critical theories is governed by a sense of decorum, concern for proper use and abuse--criteria to be judged by characters and ideas in action.

The built-in criticism in Shakespeare's works thus provides a running commentary upon the drama and poetry that he himself produced--a commentary that subtly reminds readers and auditors of techniques and ideas utilized in his writings, of intended effects or desired responses, of means whereby effects are achieved. Literary criticism written by Shakespeare is applied criticism--criticism applied primarily to the

individual work that commanded his attention at some particular time, rather than a system of thought prescriptive for either his own writings or the evaluation of others' works.

NOTES

Chapter I

¹John Dryden, An Essay of Dramatic Poesy, in English Critical Texts, ed. D. J. Enright and Ernst De Chickera (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 88.

²Carl Van Doren, "Shakespeare on His Art," in Shakespearean Studies, ed. Brander Matthews and Ashley Horace Thorndike (New York: Russell, 1962), p. 405.

³Van Doren, p. 416.

⁴J. W. H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance (London: Methuen, 1947), pp. 246-47.

⁵Arthur H. R. Fairchild, Shakespeare and the Arts of Design (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1937), p. 173.

⁶David Klein, The Elizabethan Dramatists as Critics (Westport: Greenwood, 1963), pp. 305-6.

⁷Klein, p. 306.

⁸Van Doren, p. 411.

⁹Unpublished note.

¹⁰E. g., Virgil K. Whitaker, in Shakespeare's Use of Learning: An Inquiry into the Growth of His Mind and Art (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 1953), pp. 14-44, discusses Shakespeare's grammar school training, which included the orthodox discipline in the trivium; see also Hardin Craig, "Shakespeare and the Trivium," in Shakespeare: 1564-1964, ed. Edward A. Bloom (Providence: Brown University Press, 1964), pp. 167-76.

¹¹Sister Miriam Joseph, Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), pp. 286-87.

¹²T. McAlindon, Shakespeare and Decorum (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 3. Vernon Hall, Jr., in Renaissance Literary Criticism: A Study of Its Social Content (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), pp. 208-14, limits his discussion of "decorum" to the verbal aspect of the term.

¹³John Hoskins, Directions for Speech and Style, ed. H. Hudson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935), p. 2.

¹⁴Romeo and Juliet, II, iii, 15-26. All quotations from Shakespeare in this study are from The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, ed. G. B. Harrison (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968).

¹⁵Ancient Literary Criticism, ed. D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), pp. 228-37.

¹⁶Ancient Literary Criticism, pp. 417-23: Quintilian elaborate on the elder Cato's phrase, vir bonus dicendi peritus.

¹⁷Puttenham alludes to the wisdom of an old man with experience and knowledge which would be useless unless conveyed with eloquence and persuasiveness. See Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon, 1904), II, p. 147; also, Sir Thomas Elyot, The Book Named the Governor (London: Everyman's Library, 1962), p. 45ff.

¹⁸Baldassare Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby (London: Everyman's Library, 1966), p. 261ff.

¹⁹Sir Thomas Wilson, Preface to The Arte of Rhetorique, ed. G. H. Mair (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909). It is interesting to note that a modern critic, Margreta De Grazia, explains Shakespeare's conception of language in terms of the biblical myth of the Tower of Babel; see "Shakespeare's View of Language: An Historical Perspective," Shakespeare Quarterly, 29 (1978), 374-88.

²⁰Gladys Doidge Willcock, "Shakespeare and Rhetoric," Essays and Studies, 29 (1943), 52-53.

²¹Aristotle, Rhetoric, trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), I, 1355^b.

²²Cicero, De Oratore, III, 60-61, in Ancient Literary Criticism, pp. 234-35. (italics mine)

- ²³Henry Peacham, The Compleat Gentleman, ed. G. S. Gordon (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), p. 8.
- ²⁴Joseph T. McCullen, Jr., "Renaissance Rhetoric: Use and Abuse," Discourse: A Review of the Liberal Arts, Summer 1962, 252.
- ²⁵Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, pp. 143-44.
- ²⁶William Vaughan, The Golden Grove (London: Simon Stafford, 1600), Bk. III, Ch. 41.
- ²⁷Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, pp. 174-75.
- ²⁸Ancient Literary Criticism, pp. 145-46.
- ²⁹Cf. Puttenham in Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, p. 181.
- ³⁰Elyot, p. 80.
- ³¹Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, p. 173.
- ³²Sidney's proclamation that his sincere heart, not his pen, writes his sonnets is itself a manifestation of his sprezzatura.
- ³³Thomas Wilson, p. 162.
- ³⁴Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, pp. 171-72.
- ³⁵Hall, p. 153ff.
- ³⁶See Thomas Wilson, p. 165, for example.
- ³⁷George Gascoigne, in Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, p. 51.
- ³⁸Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, p. 86.
- ³⁹F. P. Wilson, "Shakespeare and the Diction of Common Life," Proceedings of the British Academy, 27 (1941), 168-69.
- ⁴⁰Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, p. 143.

⁴¹Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, p. 143.

⁴²Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, p. 182.

⁴³Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, p. 190.

Chapter II

¹Gladys Doidge Willcock, Shakespeare as Critic of Language (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 20-21.

²Sister Miriam Joseph, in Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), provides in organized detail the general theory of composition current during the Renaissance and illustrates Shakespeare's use of it.

³Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker, Introduction to The Arte of English Poesie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), pp. lxxv-lxxviii. See also Willcock, Shakespeare as Critic of Language, p. 6: "We miss an enormous amount of what the mid-Tudor reader saw in his poetry, because we have lost interest in the figures. We absorb meanings and effects as wholes; we do not, except for special or professional reasons, apply a schematic analysis."

⁴G. Wilson Knight's The Wheel of Fire (London: Oxford University Press, 1930) was a milestone of modern criticism with its subjective and imaginative interpretation of the ideas suggested by Shakespeare's poetic imagery, even though his critical temper is characterized by eccentricity of interpretations.

⁵F. P. Wilson, p. 167.

⁶Willcock, Shakespeare as Critic of Language, p. 4.

⁷Willcock, Shakespeare as Critic of Language, pp. 6-7.

⁸Brian Vickers, "Shakespeare's Use of Rhetoric," in A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies, ed. Kenneth Muir and S. Schoenbaum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 85: "If one surveys the history of rhetoric it becomes evident that despite the occasional exhortations of an Aristotle, a Cicero, or a Quintilian that rhetoric

should become more a way of life, a culture, a public and private ethic even, rhetoric had a kind of centre of gravity which kept pulling it back towards style." Willcock gives a good summation of the Elizabethan cult of rhetoric in "Shakespeare and Rhetoric."

⁹McCullen, "Renaissance Rhetoric," p. 258.

¹⁰Winifred Nowotny, "Formal Elements in Shakespeare's Sonnets: Sonnets I-VI," Essays in Criticism, 2 (1952), 84.

¹¹Hardin Craig, The Enchanted Glass: The Elizabethan Mind in Literature (Oxford: Blackwell, 1950), pp. 156-57.

¹²F. P. Wilson, p. 169.

¹³Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, pp. 153-54: "Stile is a constant and continual phrase or tenour of speaking and writing, extending to the whole tale or processe of the poeme or historie, and not properly to any piece or member of a tale, but is, of words, speeches, and sentences together, a certaine contriued forme and qualitie, many times naturall to the writer, many times his peculiar by election and arte, and such as either he keepeth by skill, or holdeth on by ignorance, and will not or peradventure cannot easily alter into any other."

¹⁴Alwin Thaler, "Shakespeare on Style, Imagination, and Poetry," PMLA, 53 (1938), 1024.

¹⁵See notes 34 and 38 for Chapter I.

¹⁶Hereward T. Price, "Shakespeare as a Critic," Philological Quarterly, 20 (1941), 392.

¹⁷McCullen, "Renaissance Rhetoric," p. 255.

¹⁸Edwin R. Hunter, Shakespeare and Common Sense (Boston: Christopher, 1954), p. 289.

¹⁹A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 52.

Chapter III

¹Atkins, p. 246.

²See pp. 2-4 and notes 2, 5, 6, and 8 for Chapter I.

³Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 45.

⁴George Orwell, Shooting An Elephant and Other Essays (London: Secker and Warburg, 1950), p. 51: "The humanist attitude is that the struggle must continue and that death is the price of life. 'Men must endure their going hence, even as their coming hither: Ripeness is all' --which is an un-Christian sentiment. Often there is a seeming truce between the humanist and the religious believer, but in fact their attitudes cannot be reconciled: one must choose between this world and the next." McCullen, "Edgar: The Wise Bedlam," in Shakespeare in the Southwest: Some New Directions, ed. T. J. Stafford (El Paso: Texas Western University Press, 1969), pp. 43-55, interprets Edgar as a key figure who furthers the spiritual regeneration of Lear and Gloucester toward stoicism.

⁵Robert Boies Sharpe, The Real War of the Theaters (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), provides an account of the rivalry between the theaters in Shakespeare's time.

⁶Benjamin Boyce, "The Stoic Consolatio and Shakespeare," PMLA, 64 (1949), 771-80.

⁷See pp. 48-49.

⁸Joseph T. McCullen, Jr., "Iago's Use of Proverbs for Persuasion," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900, 4 (1964), 247-62.

⁹In this relation, one can recall the fact that Elizabethan dramatists often satirized the country simpletons' attempt to sound learned or witty, despite their limited store of the knowledge of vocabulary and logic.

¹⁰Alvin Kernan, "Shakespeare's Essays on Dramatic Poesy: The Nature and Function of Theater within the Sonnets and the Plays," in The Author in His Work: Essays on a Problem in Criticism, ed. Louis L. Martz and Aubrey Williams (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 175-77.

¹¹H. J. C. Grierson, Cross Currents in English Literature of the Seventeenth Century (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), pp. 118-124.

¹²Bradley, p. 3ff.

Chapter IV

¹E. C. Pettet, "Shakespeare's Conception of Poetry," Essays and Studies, n. s. 3 (1950), 30.

²Van Doren, p. 413.

³Atkins, p. 247.

⁴Klein, pp. 305-6.

⁵Alwin Thaler, Shakespeare and Sir Philip Sidney (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), further discusses the possible influence of Sidney's Defense of Poesy on Shakespeare.

⁶Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, ed. Allan H. Gilbert (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1962), pp. 13-14.

⁷Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Three Books of Occult Philosophy (London: George Moule, 1651), Bk. I, pp. 132-33.

⁸Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, p. 206.

⁹Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰Phaedrus contains the following statement of the irrationality of the poet's urge: "Gripping the delicate and untouched mind, [the possession and madness of the Muses] rouses it to frenzy in songs and other poems, and, by its adornment of innumerable deeds of the ancients, it educates posterity. He who comes to poetry's door without the Muses' madness, convinced that art will make him an adequate poet, is without fulfillment himself, and his sane man's poetry vanishes before that of the insane." Ancient Literary Criticism, p. 75.

¹¹Atkins, p. 25.

- ¹²Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, pp. 19-20.
- ¹³Henry David Gray, "Shakespeare: A Person," Shakespeare Association Bulletin, 7 (1932), 159, cites John Bartlett's Concordance, which shows that about half of the references to the word are linked to poetry.
- ¹⁴Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, p. 158.
- ¹⁵Literary Criticism of Seventeenth-Century England, ed. Edward W. Taylor (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 131.
- ¹⁶Quoted in Elizabeth J. Sweeting, Early Tudor Criticism (New York: Russell, 1964), p. 156.
- ¹⁷Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, p. 156.
- ¹⁸Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, p. 156.
- ¹⁹Elizabethan Critical Essays, I, p. 184.
- ²⁰Francis Bacon, Essays, ed. Richard Foster Jones (New York: Odyssey, 1937), p. 5.
- ²¹Literary Criticism of Seventeenth-Century England, p. 132.
- ²²Literary Criticism of Seventeenth-Century England, p. 131.
- ²³J. M. Manly, "Shakespeare Himself," University of Texas Bulletin, 1701 (1917), 10.
- ²⁴Contra Pettet, pp. 34-39. Pettet considers this passage as revealing Shakespeare's "mature theory" of the process of poetic creation. He quotes the confessions of A. E. Housman and Hilaire Belloc about their poetic composition to provide a basis for analysis of the passage. Although an admirable analysis of the passage in itself, his discussion seems to lack insight into its dramatic context. How can Shakespeare project himself even unconsciously into the person of the time-serving wretch and reveal the secret of his art in the process of providing a clue to the character of the despicable creature named a 'Poet'?

Conclusion

¹G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), pp. 1-2.
(italics mine)

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