



T.C

YEDİTEPE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

LOVE in SHAKESPEARE'S THREE PLAYS

by

Selen Bedük

Submitted to the Graduate Institute of Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

İstanbul, 2004

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## TUTANAK

**Selen BEDUK**, 30 Aralık 2004 tarihinde **LOVE IN SHAKESPEARE'S THREE PLAYS: ROMEO AND JULIET, TROILUS AND CRESSIDA AND ANTHONI AND CLEOPATRA**" başlıklı tezini savunmuş ve başarılı olduğu oybirliği ile kabul edilmiştir.



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## ABSTRACT

Mostly in Shakespeare's tragedies and in these three; Romeo and Juliet, Troilus and Cressida, Antony and Cleopatra the theme of love the beginning of civilization has been the theme of literature. It is worth noticing that the three tragedies I have mentioned, when arranged in the usual chronological as here, show the rhetoric of society as working with steadily increasing effect as the lovers themselves grow older. In this way, Romeo and Juliet are passionate but powerless children; Troilus and Cressida are young lovers oppressed by the important social roles their world imposes on them; Antony and Cleopatra are at the end of their lifetimes of infinite power and indulged eroticism. As if Shakespeare aligned himself with different age groups as he himself grew older. When we look back over this sequence of tragedies, the surprising diversity of love experience presented in order. Three plays share common themes and attitudes, among them love, war and the notion that love between two people can conquer even death issues examined by the language usage differentiation and variety.

## ÖZET

Çoğu Shakespeare trajedisin’de ki bunlar sırasıyla; Romeo ve Juliet, Troilus ve Cressida, Antony ve Cleopatra ile aşk teması medeniyetin başından bu yana her zaman edebiyatın konusu olmuştur. Bahsettiğim trajediler kronolojik sıraya konulduğunda toplumsal etkinin aşıkların yaşına oranla baskısının arttığını ortaya çıkarıyor. Bu durumda Romeo ve Juliet tutkulu ama güçsüz çocuklar; Troilus ve Cressida genç aşıklar ama toplumun yüklediği baskı altında kalmışlar; Antony ve Cleopatra hayatlarında sonsuz gücü ayrıca cinselliği en dorukta yaşadıkları yaşta. Geriye dönüp bahsi geçen trajedilerin sırasına baktığımızda, Romeo ve Juliet’in en baştan içten, çok doğal ve kendi sonuçlarına katlanılmış olduğunu görüyoruz. Sonra, Troilus’un yanılması ve son olarak Antony ve Cleopatra’nın duygusal tecrübelerinin doruğunda olmalarından görünüyor ki, Shakespeare bu oyunlardaki gruplara göre kendini değerlendirmiş olabilir. Aşkın farklılığı sırasıyla yaşanan tecrübelerle yansıtılmıştır. Böylece Shakespeare’in bahsi geçen üç oyunun ortak konuları, davranışları ve bunların arasından aşk, savaş gibi konular ve en önemlisi belki de iki kişinin arasında yaşanan aşkın ölümü bile yenebileceği olgusu kullanılan dil farklılığı ve çeşitliliği yönünden incelenmiştir.



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

‘Love is a perfect desire of the whole being to be united to same thing or some being which is felt necessary to its perfection by the most perfect means that nature permits and reason dictates’ or ‘love leads men not to sink the mind in the body, but to draw the body to the mind, the immortal part of our nature or love was not like hunger; love was an associative quality. The hungry savage is a mere animal, thinking of nothing but the satisfaction of his appetite. What was the first effect of love, but to associate the feeling with every object in nature: the trees whisper; the roses exhale their perfumes; the nightingales sing; the very sky seems in union with the feeling of love. It gives to every object in nature a power of the heart without which it would indeed be spiritless, a mere dead copy’. Love, as an emotion uniquely variable in the judgments it evokes, seems particularly appropriate to the art of variation that Shakespeare practices. We can see the range of its effects in the three tragedies which use it as a central interrelating emotion-*Romeo & Juliet*, *Troilus & Cressida*, *Antony & Cleopatra*, in each case with a strongly comic viewpoint as part of the tragic totality. Love is also a natural trigger for tragic conflict, making the reputation of social & external norms appear an inevitable prerequisite for the intense realization of self (Hunter 1982). The social worlds of the plays and the realities of political coexistence that underwrite them- these are bound to reject the claim of love & poetry to have experienced a superior reality. The rhetoric of society steadily undercuts this radiant poetry and offers a series of darkenings-satiric, realistic, philosophic, parodic-to dim its brightness and deny its independence.

It is worth noticing that the three tragedies I have mentioned, when arranged in the usual chronological order as here, show the rhetoric of society as working with steadily increasing effect as the lovers themselves grow older. *Romeo & Juliet* are passionate and powerless children; *Troilus & Cressida* are young lovers oppressed by the important social roles their world imposes on them; *Antony & Cleopatra* are at the end of lifetimes of infinite

power and infinitely indulged eroticism. It seems probable that Shakespeare aligned himself with different age groups as he himself grew older.

If we consider this sequence in the most probable chronological order- *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), *Troilus and Cressida* (1604) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607) - a very significant pattern emerges. In each case there is a background of strife which crucially affects the fortunes of the lovers; the hero's involvement in the conflict threatens the survival of the love – relationship; the amatory is set in pointed contrast to the bellicose; and there develops an extensive questioning of gender stereotypes, particularly the stereotype associating the virile with the martial.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, both lovers are young (Romeo possibly eighteen or so, Juliet thirteen); in *Troilus and Cressida*, the eponymous figures seem somewhat older: perhaps twenty and eighteen respectively and in *Antony and Cleopatra*, both protagonists are middle-aged. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet are a consequence mainly of the feud between Montagues and Capulets; had the feud not led to Tybalt's death at Romeo's hands Romeo would not have been exiled to Mantua, and several tragic miscalculations need not have occurred; indeed, if there had been no feud, Juliet might advantageously have named Romeo when declining Paris: after all, her father deems Romeo 'a portly gentleman;. . . . a virtuous and well-govern'd youth'. In *Troilus and Cressida*, the background is no mere familial feud 'bred of an airy word' but the ten-year war between Greeks and Trojans (even though Shakespeare deliberately divests it of epic grandeur). Cressida's father summons her to join him among the Greeks, and the lovers are parted; eventually, Cressida proves unfaithful to Troilus (Charney 1993). The contrast between the two plays is so telling as to seem deliberate, as if Shakespeare desired, on the second occasion, to treat both the love – relationship and its environment in a contrastingly skeptical, even cynical mode. Compared with the innocent ardor of Romeo and Juliet, who become man and wife, there is a tainted, appetitive quality in the extra-marital relationship of Troilus and Cressida; according to Charney, again

and again, imagery of food is used to describe their sexual longings; and, eventually, Troilus describes Cressida's infidelity thus;

The fragments, scraps, the bits and greasy relics  
Of her o'er-eaten faith, are bound to Diomed.

(V.ii.166-7)

*Troilus and Cressida* sometimes reads like *Romeo and Juliet* rewritten by a cynic. Juliet proves her fidelity by suicide; but Cressida, with a worldly-wise, weary resignation, acquiesces in fidelity. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet at least serve to end the feud in Verona; *In Troilus and Cressida*, the futile war between Greeks and Trojans continues, Cressida remaining alive, Troilus going out fighting; the protagonists are not even granted the dignity of a poignant death-scene. Instead of a closure which resolves the issues, Pandarus advances to the front of the stage to mock the audience and promise to bequeath it diseases. In its very structure, the play enacts the disorder which Ulysses had prophesied for and within the fictional world:

Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And hark what discord follows. Each thing meets  
In mere oppugnancy.....  
Then everything includes itself in power,  
Power into will, will into appetite;  
And appetite, an universal wolf,  
So doubly seconded with will and power,  
Must make perforce an universal prey,  
And last eat up himself.

(I.iii.109-124)

*Troilus and Cressida* was long regarded as a strangely unsatisfactory, problematic text. What critics generally overlooked was the subtle thematic co-ordination provided by that key-term, 'appetite'. For Shakespeare, 'appetite' connoted (1) ambition, particularly a greed for power ;( 2) the

alimentary appetite: greed for food and drink; and (3) the sexual appetite, particularly the desire for sensual and illicit sexual gratification. The term thus links the play's war-material (for it is Paris' abduction of Menelaus' wife which has precipitated the Graeco-Trojan war), the flawed love-relationship of Troilus and Cressida (which, on Troilus' part, is all too sensuously appetitive), the theme of false valuation based on moral judgment), the images of disease and the exceptionally large number of images of food. The disease imagery, which often invokes the venereal contagions transmitted by illicit sexuality, is thematically appropriate to a world of diseased judgment (Charney 1993). Mercutio's 'A plague o'both your houses!' re-echoes as Troilus:

Fools on both sides. Helen must needs be fair  
When with your blood you daily paint her thus.

(I.i.86-7)

The war has a 'putrefied core' at its centre (since Helen is not worth the ten years of bloodshed), and the contamination infects Troilus and Cressida too. That Shakespeare had *Romeo and Juliet* in mind, as a basis for comparison and contrast, seems evident in the 'aubade' scenes. In Act 3 Scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet* occurs the famous *aubade*, when Juliet tries to persuade Romeo that they have been awakened by the song of 'the nightingale and not the lark'; but eventually, of course, she urges him, for safety's sake, to go. The counterpart-scene in *Troilus and Cressida*, IV.ii, is similar in situation but quite different in tone; the reluctance to part is mingled with a worldly wisdom; lyrical phrasing is offset by more staccato, conversationally realistic utterances:

TROILUS

Dear, trouble not yourself. The morn is cold.....

CRESSIDA

Good morrow, then.

TROILUS

I prithee now, to bed.

CRESSIDA

Are you aweary of me?

TROILUS

O Cressida! but that the busy day,  
Waked by the lark, hath roused the ribald crows,  
And dreaming night will hide our joys no longer,  
I would not from thee.

CRESSIDA

Night hath been too brief.

TROILUS

Beshrew the witch! With venomous wights she stays  
As tediously as hell, but flies the grasps of love  
With wings more momentary-swift than thought.  
You will catch cold and curse me.

CRESSIDA

Prithee, tarry. You men will never tarry.  
O foolish Cressid! I might have still held off,  
And then you would have tarried.

(VI.ii.1-19)

‘You will catch cold and curse me’: there is note of mundane realism; and the note of unillusioned worldly experience is sounded at ‘I might have still held off, / And then you would have tarried’. The lyrically ardent commitment of Romeo and Juliet has given way to the flawed, less mutual, more worldly-wise exchange between Troilus and Cressida.

In *Antony & Cleopatra*, the rhetoric of the lovers seeks to match the scale of the enterprise in which they are involved: the fate of the Roman Empire itself. Married to Octavia but infatuated and obsessed by his love for Cleopatra, Antony fights Octavius and is defeated precisely because he lets his own military judgment be overruled by Cleopatra’s; yet, in defeat, both die defiant. The struggle of Antony and Cleopatra is not only with Caesar, and not only with and for each other; it is also a struggle to define a love in which sexual desire, jealousy, intimate affection, majestic camaraderie,

swaggering egotism, bitter remorse, and sublimely transcendent yearnings and affirmations are all interwoven. Their language invades and assails the ineffable, even in the act of declaring ‘There’s beggary in the love that can be reckoned’. As we look back over this sequence of tragedies, we see that *Romeo and Juliet* marks the beginning of an ever-deepening, ever-widening exploration of the nature of love and its tragic potentialities. From that early emphasis on poignantly innocent yet ill-fated rapture, through the dramatization of Troilus’ disillusionment to the final self-willed, self-generated apotheoses of Antony and Cleopatra, an expanding gamut of emotional experience has been peerlessly displayed.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LOVE IN SHAKESPEARE’S THREE TRAGEDIES**

Mostly in Shakespeare’s tragedies and in these three; *Romeo and Juliet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Antony and Cleopatra* the themes of love and war are important but not a surprising claim. They are big because they say that many areas of Shakespeare can be illuminated by those two ideas. They are not surprising because almost from the beginnings of civilization, love and war have been the themes of literature.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, a play based in a city in which the two leading families are virtually in a state of Civil War. The plot of Homer’s *The Iliad* is how the love of Paris for Helen led the Trojan War. Shakespeare who wrote about the Trojan War in *Troilus and Cressida* also sees the two mighty themes entwined in human affairs. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, it is within an empire. Similar to love, war is found in the shape of division and conflict in Shakespeare. Shakespeare had described this passion -love- in various states, and he had begun, as was most natural, with love in the young mind. Did he begin with making Romeo and Juliet in love at the first glimpse, as a common and ordinary thinker would do? No; he knew what he was about. He was to develop the whole passion, and he takes it in its first elements, - that sense of imperfection, that yearning to combine itself with something lovely. Romeo became enamored of the ideal he formed in his own mind,

and then, as it were, christened the first real being as that which he desired. He appeared to be in love with Rosaline, but in truth he was in love only with his own idea. He felt the necessity of being beloved which no noble mind can be without. Shakespeare then introduces Romeo to Juliet, and makes it not only a violent, but permanent love at first sight. After giving a brief description of Shakespeare's three plays, it's a crucial point to analyze the love in all these plays respectively.

Hence, the aim of this chapter is first to point out how love appears in Shakespeare's plays and, then to illustrate the connection between love and the plays that are accepted as love tragedies in that sense, and finally to give detailed information with relevant quotations which can be used for the analysis of the plays.

## **2.1 Love in *Romeo and Juliet***

The theme of love in Shakespeare is usually between the young. The energy and drive of Romeo and Juliet is the joy, exuberance and passion of young love. The schemes, dodges, bursts of fanciful poetry and even the fights are all expressions of how heady the passions of love are. It's pointless to complain that the characters are foolish. That's what love does to you. Young love can strike suddenly. Romeo and Juliet is a perfect example for the feelings put forward below;

What lady's that which doth enrich the hand  
Of yonder knight?

(I.v.41-42)

He doesn't know who she is, but he says she enriches the one whose hand she's holding in a dance. What he says in his next speech shows that he has, in a moment, undergone a very drastic change:

Did my heart love till now?...

(I.v.51)

When love strikes, the whole of your life (including your idea of your past) changes. Lovers respond by being inventive with words. Shakespeare inherited a tradition of love language that borrowed words from a range of human activities to express the feelings of love. His language displays richness. This is what Romeo says when he first sees Juliet:

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright.  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
As a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear-  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.  
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows

(I.v.43-7)

In this extract the words cluster together to suggest the value and wonder of Juliet. She is a model for how torches burn; she is like a starry jewel shining in an Ethiopian's ear; her beauty is so exceptional it can't be brought or sold, and she is as radiantly different from others as is a snow-white dove from black crows. If people feel this is all a bit excessive, they would, in one sense, be bright that the language of love is extravagant. Because love drives to find intricate ways of praising beloveds, lovers are like poets and dramatists. Shakespeare surely enjoys the lavishness of lover's language. He might even see a parallel between what he does and what they do. This is not to say that he doesn't sometimes keep his distance; he knows those in love can be comical and that excess in language can be absurd. Hart points out in his analysis of this passage that it:

suggests a sensuousness in the apprehension of Juliet that gives vitality to their relationship. Romeo is at once awe-struck, humble, physically conscious of her from this very first glance. And she in turn is always aware of him. (1964)

Perhaps Hart states it more succinctly when he says that Romeo 'changes from a moping adolescent to a young man of action.' (Hart 1964) Juliet is just as dramatically transformed. She is but a child without even Romeo's



imaginative experiences to stimulate her. Yet she is transformed by her sudden love for Romeo and develops a fullness of character which never is surrendered. She moves from obedient child and innocent little girl to an independent young woman who is committed in trust and devotion to her love.

Her actions are quite revolutionary for the time. First she speaks of setting aside her name. Then she assumes the role of one who woos the other. Unlike Rosaline, Juliet is a participant in this relationship. She is willing to speak of her love rather than coyly denying it. She immediately assumes an independence from family traditions and loyalties which will alter her life. Yet, Juliet's intense love brings with it an insight into the tragedy that awaits the lovers when she states:

It is too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden,

(II.ii.118)

Juliet ultimately follows the female tradition of the times that is to accept the lead offered by her lover, and to acquiesce to his decisions, regardless of their consequences. He will lead and she will follow. Herein lays her tragedy. Juliet must rely on Romeo to make arrangements. She must await his return and must suffer for his loyalty to his slain friend Mercutio. Even as she waits the dawn after their one night together, Juliet can do nothing but remain loyal to Romeo, even if such loyalty results in death.

Their love is so innocent, intense and perfect that it can only be destroyed by the imperfect world which surrounds it. Juliet is strong in her resolve when she must be separated from her lover. Left alone and having rejected her family in favor of her lover, she must now sacrifice everything for the sake of that love. She calmly makes the decision to take the Friar's potion and risk the results.

Yet when she finds that her commitment results in death of her lover, she accepts the fact that death will be her only triumph over life and her only means to attain her ultimate love. Hers is a realistic acceptance that she cannot have her love in this life and yet life without him is not life at all. There remains only one action to take, and Juliet willingly embraces the death which will reunite her to Romeo.

Hart points out that this relationship, the perfect love between Romeo and Juliet is pure love put into such framework that love can be believed in and accepted as the one truth in that world. The very names Romeo and Juliet testify to Shakespeare's success. (Hart 1964)

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the tragic impediment are the parents, and, beyond them, the bifurcated community, representative of tradition and the past. We understand the pathos and helplessness of these innocents by seeing their position in a world they did not ask for, which they do not endorse and which they cannot affect in life at any rate. Romeo's attempt to express a revalued relation to Tybalt is a typically ironic example of this helplessness. He seeks to embody in a social form the new individual perception that love has given him but the gesture is neither understandable nor effective; indeed it merely brings the essential conflict to the social surface and so precipitates the tragedy.

*Romeo and Juliet* is full of young people. There's Romeo and his friends-young men with money, status, the freedom to wander, to fight, to dream about girls and to take risks by visiting the enemy camp. They have about them the chic of youth-its impudence, its daring, its confidence and its swagger. There are fewer young women, and one of them-the dream woman, Rosaline-never appears; but Juliet is alive enough-passionate, energetic and sensual. Feelings run high throughout the play. There's a lightness and energy about the mercy camaraderie of the young men. Listen to Benvolio and Mercutio looking for Romeo:

Benvolio: He ran this way, and leapt this orchard wall.

Call, good Mercutio.

Mercutio: Nay, I'll conjure too.

Romeo! Humours! Madman! Passion! Lover!

(II.i.5-8)

Benvolio evokes Romeo's passion in saying that he leapt the wall, and in a mockery which is never unkind Mercutio ransacks popular beliefs about the strangeness of love and merrily turns them into alternative names for Romeo. We can see in the language that life is a game. Perhaps though the fiercest feelings come not in the great love duets (for instance, II.ii.50-135) but in the moments when they are alone (Gill 1998). Before the duet of Act 2, Scene II Juliet has speech that contains the famous words about the name of a rose not affecting its scent. That speech begins:

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy.

Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.

(II.ii.38-9)

There's no deliberate forcing of passion, no sense of trying out an emotion (something we all have to do); what's there is the sense of someone passionately working out an important meaning for the first time. There are magnificent speeches where passion and love appears together in the orchard scene. A little earlier than the orchard scene, Shakespeare stages the meeting of Romeo and Juliet with the merriment of the dance and the hatred of Tybalt contrast with the finely turned love sonnet. (I.v.92-104), which forms their first dialogue. Sonnets were Italian in origin and were often about love. Although their love is brief they reach a perfect balance of form and feeling; love that is so finely turned can only exist in the form of isolated moments; this means it couldn't exist in the everyday world.

In Shakespeare's day the orchard scene (Act 2 Scene II) would have been performed with Romeo on the stage and the boy playing Juliet on the balcony (Gill 1998). There is, therefore, no physical contact. We must

assume that Romeo believes that, and, so hears that she thinks he has in himself 'that dear perfection' (II.ii.46). She says what she feels, and he hears what he wanted to hear. What troubles Juliet is the social and political nature of love. In this she's unaware of Romeo. He's only said one thing about love across the Montague-Capulet divide (I.v.117) ; it's left to her to work out that social divisions need not prevent love, because the beloved's name- a social indicator- 'is no part of thee'(II.ii.48).Juliet takes the lead. She asks: 'dost thou love me?'(II.i.90).She also proposes marriage (II.ii.90-106). She appears as the comic heroine who ventures into danger for love. Throughout the play she's determined and decisive. Romeo, by contrast, is still playing the role of the lover. When he insists on swearing to confirm his love, Juliet is much more sensible: 'Do not swear at all' (II.ii.113).While he poses, she's aware that what she's doing isn't an act. She says she knows, she ought to 'frown, and be preserve, and say thee nay' (II.ii.96), because that's what beloveds do.But since he's heard her 'true love passion' (II.i.104), all she can say is that he won't think her yielding is due to 'light love' (II.ii.105).

Shakespeare seems keen to bring out that this love is deeply felt. He does this through a dialogue towards the end in which she admits that 'I have forgot why I did call thee back' (II.ii.170). This is what we want to see; the artless admission that her heart and head are so full, she can't control her thoughts:

I shall forget, to have thee still stand there,  
Remembering how I love thy company.

(II.ii.172-3)

That's real, natural and even embarrassingly common. Shakespeare also chooses to show sexual desire more fully present in Juliet than Romeo. This is most evident in her soliloquy, anticipating her wedding night (III.v.1-35).

It opens with a conventional symbol of desire-galloping horses- and openly talks of the act of love as a game played ‘for a pair of stainless maidenhoods’ (III.iii.14).She coaxingly says ‘Come night, come Romeo’ (III.ii.17), and gives the elevated Petrarchan language of light and love as a religion a distinctly sexual twist (Gill 1998):

Lovers can see to do their amorous rites  
By their own beauties;

(III.ii.8-9)

What Shakespeare gives Juliet is the intense sexual longing of a young girl in love and a maturity concerning the place of love in life. Juliet knows that sex is right. She has an extraordinary image of the dark night as a matron, who will conceal her in darkness till what she does in darkness will become what befits a married lady:

till strange love grown bold,  
Think true love acted simple modesty.

(III.ii.15-6)

She wants the act of love to be a natural part of her life, not something that has to be hidden. In her exploration of the language of love she plays upon the word ‘die’. In Shakespeare’s day, this had the additional meaning of sexual consummation (Gill 1998). This sense is behind:

Give me my Romeo, and when I shall die  
Take him and cut him out in little stars

(III.ii.21-2)

The meaning must be dying in her orgasm. But what we may also note is the eerie juxtaposition of love and death. Like opera and much literature, *Romeo and Juliet* is a story of love and death. This note is first struck by the Chorus:

The fearful passage of their death-marked love

(Prologue 1, 9)

'Death-marked' can mean both marked by death and marked out for death. Romeo and Juliet have marked out their passage towards their goal-death. The inseparability of desire and death surfaces in the first scene. The servants jeer at each other in sexual and military terms. On a symbolic level, this link blights Romeo in the crisis of Act 3, Scene 1; as a married man his libido should be reserved for his wife, but the death of his friend makes him use the weapon of violence (Gill 1998). By the time he comes to part from Juliet, the Petrarchan language of lover's parting as a kind of death is beginning to feel more of a reality than an image. He outlandishly says:

Come, death, and welcome. Juliet wills it so.

(III.v.24)

and she has a kind of Romeo 'dead in he bottom of a tomb'(III.v.56).When they meet in the tomb, Romeo sees that Juliet is death's bride:

Shall I believe

That unsubstantial Death is amorous,

And that the lean abhorred monster keeps

Thee here in dark to be his paramour?

(V.iii.102-5)

There may be irony here at Romeo's expense; death in this play is anything but 'unsubstantial', it's very solid presence. Our attention is directed very firmly at the precarious and fragile nature of this love, since the lovers are not even granted a single moment of completely unclouded happiness.

The love experienced by Romeo and Juliet is one section of a much larger area of experience that includes very different kinds of 'love' as well, and the lyrical intensity of their language is continually accompanied by a

polyphonic chorus of quite contradictory stylistic attitudes (Mehl 1991). One possible (and traditional) explanation is that these contrasts only serve to bring into youthful idealism, innocence and purity of these young lovers in the midst of an unsympathetic society, corrupted by internal strife; and this is certainly an important aspect of the play's effect on many readers and spectators. Romeo himself, when he first appears on the scene, seems to be the kind of romantic lover. Romeo's lovesickness appears in a more positive light after the street fight we have just witnessed. At least his illusion does not in any way threaten the peace of the community and he has no part in the family hatred:

Here's much to do with hate, but more with love.

(I.i.173)

When, however, he falls head long in love with Juliet at first sight only few hours later it seems as if one illusion is driven out by a new one, a well tried remedy recommended by Benvolio. Friar Lawrence too expresses his doubts as to whether the second love will be more permanent than the first-doubts that seem reasonable in the circumstances- and he only decides to offer his help because he hopes for reconciliation between the families through this love-union. Love, it seems, is not defeated by its own inadequacy or by some flaw in the lovers themselves; it is destroyed by an apparently arbitrary fate from outside. 'O, I am fortune's fool', Romeo cries out when he has killed Tybalt(III.i.137), and the prologue too, announcing a pair of 'star-crossed lovers' , seems to suggest a deterministic interpretation. But still, Romeo and Juliet represent the most attractive form of a mutual attachment that stakes everything on the total communion with the beloved, disregarding any worldly considerations. Within the world of Verona, the love of Romeo and Juliet appears like a utopian dream. *Romeo and Juliet* also leaves us in no doubt that romantic love can never be adequately understood from an attitude of pragmatism and cautious doubt. The lovers' death would be a meaningless farce; if it were presented to us as the consequence of misled youthful illusion and error. It proves on the contrary,

the reality and the value of a reckless commitment, prepared to sacrifice life and everything rather than be separated from the beloved. In the world of the play, this final and complete proof of love's power is rated much higher than rational wisdom and prudent self-interest. The love of *Romeo and Juliet* is incapable of coming to any arrangement with a hostile and unsympathetic world; it can only accept unconditional fulfillment or death and even the wise and by no means unrealistic counsel of Friar Lawrence proves quite ineffectual in dealing with the lovers' total and uncompromising dedication to each other. It is part of the play's stature and certainly an acceptance of its insights into the immaturities and limitations of conventional romantic love, but rather encourages them by allowing a surprising amount of room to very different concepts of love. *Romeo and Juliet* is a love tragedy not only because it tells a story of 'death-marked love', as the Prologue announces, but in a much deeper sense; it is a play about the richness and vulnerability of a particular kind of love, as movingly beautiful as it is exceptional in a world that is basically hostile and unsympathetic to it.

## **2.2 Love in *Troilus and Cressida***

The Trojan War was part of Elizabethan culture. It was the greatest of all wars. The great poets of the past-Homer and Virgil- had written about it, and those writings came to embody what people felt was the tragedy and the glory of all war. The combination of high deeds on the battlefield and the blighted love of Troilus and Cressida brings together Shakespeare's two great themes. The love of Troilus and Cressida, to be sure, is a medieval addition to the classical Homeric myth of manly exploit and valiant fighting, but Shakespeare does not take it in isolation, as a romantic novella in the manner of *Romeo and Juliet*. He leaves us in no doubt that it is only an episode within the larger historic context of the siege of Troy. Formally then, *Troilus and Cressida* belongs with the tragedies: it deals with matters of state and of historical as well as political significance, and it ends with the death of one of the heroes and the certain death of the other. There can be no doubt whatever, at the end of the play, as to which side will be the



loser. More important, however, for the impact of the tragedy is the experience of Troilus, who finds himself cruelly disappointed in everything that has made life meaningful to him: women's love and the ideals of heroism. *Troilus and Cressida* is a play about both love and war, but these two great concerns of literature are so thoroughly interwoven in Shakespeare's play that it is hard to see one without considering the other. Betrayed by Cressida, he also collapses as an inspiring fighter, and it seems unlikely that he will be a very effective support for the Trojan cause. It is this close thematic interrelationship between the love and the historical confrontation that makes *Troilus and Cressida* 'perhaps the most brilliant of all instances of the double plot' according to Mehl (1991), and partly accounts for its unique structure. Shakespeare assumed that his audience knew the story. In culture they represented the unfaithful woman, the true lover and the procurer-one who finds partners for another's sexual pleasure. In *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare is interested in love in a time of war. What Shakespeare presents is something that all countries at war have discovered- the war enters all areas of life, so that even love is colored by it: time might be short; the contrast between pain and pleasure is heightened and partings might turn out to be final. This is crucial in the main theme of the play. The first piece of action is Troilus deciding to unarm:

Call here my varlet, I'll unarm again.  
Why should I war without the walls of Troy  
That find such cruel battle here within?  
Each Trojan that is master of his heart  
Let him to field : Troilus, alas, hath none.

(I.i.1-5)

Outside Troy he fights the Greeks, but it feels pointless when his real battles are within. Here, the very first words, spoken by the hero, introduce us to the contrast between the spirit of war and the conventions of love poetry. On the other hand; Shakespeare introduces his heroine as a spirited and independent maiden. Cressida is anything but a fixed type; she is a character capable of unpredictable reactions and surprising development, though, of

course, the scene can easily be played in such a way that the audience finds her exactly in keeping with her fame, or rather defame (Mehl 1991).

Cressida as the most interesting character in the play needs to be analyzed through the four crucial scenes about her love for Troilus. In her soliloquy Cressida shows herself to be prudent and even cynical. She declares she loves Troilus, but the game of love is not a blithe. She makes her point bluntly; once you sleep with them, men are less interested.

Yet hold I off. Women are angels, wooing;  
Things won are done.

(I.ii.277-8)

It's safer to remain an angel in a young man's eyes; once he's won, you're done. Yielding, therefore, would be defeat. Another equally important scene takes place after they spent a night together. When she wakes up with him the following morning, she clearly wonders whether she's been wise. She feels he's too keen to go:

Prithee, tarry. You men will never tarry  
O foolish Cressid! I might have still  
held off,  
And then you would have tarried

(IV.ii.17-19)

In the parting scene, Cressida's problem is that she's a woman in a society in which men must make the moves. She doesn't have the freedom that most comic heroines have. Her father has deserted to the Greek Camp; he wants her with him, so she becomes a pawn in the game of war. In Act 4, Scene 5 they come to take her. All she can do is put pressure on Troilus to continue the affair. She's subtle:

Cressida: I must then to the Grecians.

Troilus: No remedy

Cressida: A woeful Cressid 'monst the merry  
Greeks!  
When shall we see again?

The crucial word is 'merry'. She used it before when talking about Helen (1.2.105). There it meant sexually inclined. It must mean the same here. She's pointing out that she'll be in a camp of lecherous soldiers; her implicit question is: and what are you going to do about it? Significantly, he expresses doubts about her faithfulness. She's angry, and he ends by promising to visit her every night. There is something romantically boyish about his talk of bribing the guards. They exchange guards. The overlooking scene is difficult. What is Cressida up to? She's overcome with guilt at giving away Troilus's token, but then she almost casually says:

But now you have it, take it.

(5.2.93.)

Perhaps the clue is the lack of feeling. It would be good if she lived in a world in which love and faithfulness thrived, she doesn't. *Troilus and Cressida* is a play in which a girl can't be a comic heroine, so she may as well act prudently and accept a Greek lover. She knows she's not in a conventional comedy so she's got to look after herself. Finally, these scenes showed us how Shakespeare saw her in the play. In 1884, George Bernard Shaw, never one to accept conventional wisdom, broke ranks with the critical consensus. In a written lecture, delivered by proxy to the prestigious New Shakespeare Society, he stoutly defended the heroine: 'Cressida is one of Shakespeare's most captivating women...She has been blamed for inconstancy; but as we may forgive Romeo for jilting Rosaline, we may forgive Cressida for jilting Troilus. She is certainly not noble, like the heroine of *Measure for Measure*, but very few men would find Isabella's company agreeable, or be disposed to share Ulysses' objection to Cressida'. I think that, in placing the words of falsehood in her utterances, and in portraying her realistically lacking the marvelous diction of a Juliet,

Shakespeare is only abiding to convention he doesn't really put her actions to invite for a moral evaluation. As D. Traversi asserts, Cressida lacks a fully realized character endowed with consistency and responsibility and she does not deserve the punishment.

It's already been noted that *Romeo and Juliet* is a love story that takes place in a virtual state of warfare between the two leading families of Verona. Even more explicit is *Troilus and Cressida*, a play in which the love of the two central characters has the Trojan War as its setting. Shakespeare's audience would recognize that what is happening outside is the most famous war of all time-that between Greece and Troy- and what is going to happen within (both within the walls and the hearts of the lovers) is one of the world's most famous love stories. Even in *Troilus and Cressida* love games are war games. This appears in their language. When they finally confess their love as a prelude to the first (and only) night together, the scene is full of military images. Troilus talks of 'hostages' (line 104) and of Cressid being 'hard to win' (line 113); in reply to this 'I'll war with you', she says 'O virtuous fight'(line 167),the war ends a dark seriousness to the language. The play closes on a savage note. There are lots of deaths reported, and Troilus, says Ulysses:

Hath done today  
Mad and fantastic execution,  
Engaging and redeeming of himself  
With such a carelss force and forceless care

(V.v.37-40)

The last line means he fought with a natural (we might say unforced) energy. We know why; his bitter disappointment in love expresses itself in 'savage execution'. There may be a hint of this in the language. 'Force' was used when writing about rape; in killing the Greeks, is he enacting his desired revenge upon the woman who's betrayed him? So, with this different usage of the language, audience may observe that there is

something inauthentic in the love affair of Troilus and Cressida. It differs sharply from Romeo and Juliet' because it is not innocent, it is not young, and it cannot be believably romantic because of the role of Pandarus, Cressida's uncle, who acts as a pimp to bring Cressida to Troilus. There is an element of calculation in the whole affair that is summed up in Cressida's soliloquy of the villain in Shakespeare when he confesses his intentions to the audience and forswears hypocrisy. Cressida tells us directly that she is playing a game that depends on her understanding of male desire:

Men prize the thing ungained more than it is:  
That she was never yet that ever knew  
Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.

(I.ii.280-82)

This is not Juliet speaking from the overflow of powerful feelings, but a woman who has spent her life trying to understand men, and the message she delivers is chilling. She says the same thing in different ways to justify her histrionic wooing:

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

(I.ii.277-86)

Later, Cressida will acknowledge that she has loved Troilus 'night and day / For many weary months'(III.ii.110-11), but this has no bearing on the way she conducts herself as a lover. So, we can see the romantic quest that is reaffirmed in Cressida's last speech. Yet, she hesitates to commit herself as

we mentioned before; her reasoning being that if she gives herself up to love, she will lose the position of power she now holds as an object of desire. Men think women are angels while they pursue them, but once desire is satisfied, men will command where once they begged. Here the idea of love as a contest, one that must be entered into seriousness, is emphasized. As in war surrender is an ignominious possibility, something to be avoided at all costs. And like the prudent general who takes the balance of forces, terrain, and supply into his strategic considerations, the prudent woman must take cognizance of male pride; hence in order to attain ultimate victory there must be retreats as well as advances.

Since Cressida fears that the value Troilus attaches to her will be dissipated by her surrender to his will, she must not acquiesce in her own desires, since this would render her powerless. Paradoxically, she must prolong the chase, while at the same time, offering herself as the prize. Like Ulysses, Cressida knows that 'things won are done' and that it is the activity of courtship, not the deed of consummation that gives the greater value. She is thereby convinced of the need not to show love: however, the actions of the upcoming scene will severely test this resolve.

The amorous discourse of Troilus is disturbing in its mixed quality. Despite his high rhetoric, he is always talking about sex in its most physical and sensual aspect. This is fundamentally different from anything in *Romeo and Juliet*, and it endows Troilus with a hypocrisy that seems separate from his high-flown speech. Why does he need Pandarus at all, and why is Cressida so totally inaccessible without her uncle? This doubleness is established in the first scene of the play, where Troilus's romantic speeches seem to fall flat. His tone is oddly lacking in equilibrium when he speaks to Pandarus as if he were a confidant rather than a pimp:

I tell thee I am mad  
In Cressid's love; Thou answer'st 'She is fair,  
Pour'st in the open ulcer of my heart  
Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice;...

(I.i.48-51)

The disease image of 'the open ulcer of my heart' is unthinkable in Shakespeare's earlier comedies, and the picture of Cressida's physical properties (which constitute her beauty) being poured liberally and irritatingly into the open ulcer of Troilus's heart makes one of the most grotesque images in the play. How can Troilus pretend to be a convincing lover? He thinks, perplexingly, of Pandarus laying 'in every gash that love hath given me / The knife that made it' (I.i.59-60). This is odd. How can the body of love be conceived as a series of gashes and the attributes of love- 'Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice'- be the knives that made the gashes? The erotic imagery seems contorted (Charney 1993).

The love theme in Troilus and Cressida has pressures from the public world. A metaphor like that used by Ulysses in describing passion... 'the universal wolf that would last eat up himself' (I.iii. line 124).

### **2.3 Love in Antony and Cleopatra**

The unusual combination of a vast historical panorama and a romantic love story also makes *Antony and Cleopatra* rather different from the major tragedies. There are good reasons why it is usually grouped with the Roman plays, but also, especially in recent times, often seen in close connection with other tragedies of love. This double aspect, classical history and exotic passion, has probably been responsible for the particular appeal of the story from the beginning: as part of Rome's history, the defeat of Antony marks the final victory of Caesarism over the republican ideals of men like Brutus; as lovers, Antony and Cleopatra are the most famous couple in classical history, rivaled by Aeneas and Dido, with whom they were often compared. More even than Caesar's fall, the ruin of Antony by Cleopatra's fatal charms had been retold and variously interpreted by poets and playwrights. Plutarch and many after him portrayed Antony as the brilliant

triumvir and general deflected from his heroic duties by his own weakness and the allurements of a seductress. Shakespeare's chief source, Plutarch's life of Antony, whom he follows fairly closely even to the details of particular phrases, anecdotes and little scenes, already gives an intriguingly complex account of the two main characters and does not force its verdict on the readers even though there is no mistaking its emphatic condemnation of the love affair. Plutarch is really more interested in the fascinating appeal of the unusual and unpredictable characters than in moral censure, and his biography of Antony is a splendid portrait, recreating the cover of two unique personalities in a most impressive manner and with all the traditional devices of narrative rhetoric. No other Shakespearian tragedy keeps so closely to its source even though it is in other ways very independent of it. The rich and resourceful dramatic poetry which is perhaps the play's most astonishing achievement, owes very little to Plutarch's circumstantial prose.

The structure of Antony and Cleopatra, as has often been observed, mirrors the fundamental contrast between Rome as the centre of an emerging world empire and Egypt which represents a completely different way of life. Between these two mutually exclusive worlds Antony finds himself torn by conflicting loyalties and impulses. He is bound to Rome by birth, nature, ambition and many duties, but he is fascinated and disorientated by Egypt. The continual "ascillation" between the two contrasting worlds is a reflection of Antony's dilemma and provides a visual image of inner conflict. There is no other tragedy in which the antagonism between characters and attitudes is translated into dramatic structure in such a spectacular way. This was, of course, partly suggested by the nature of the story and by Plutarch's account, but it still needed the deliberate decision of the dramatist who could have found very different means to prevent a tragic conflict. It is worth noting that other forms of characterization which are quite typical of the major tragedies are largely absent here, such as the soliloquy which, in comparison with Hamlet, Othello and Macbeth, plays a very insignificant part in this play and never conveys to the audience any of the intensity of the dilemma expressed by other means elsewhere. The hero's development is not presented in terms of psychological introspection and insight into his lonely meditations, but rather by changing point of view, surprising action, and detached comment. This has probably in large part contributed to the controversial nature of critical assessments many of which



have supplied by personal conviction and confident simplification what the text appears to be lacking in explicitness.

Shakespeare begins his tragedy with an uncompromising condemnation of Antony's love:

Nay, but this dotage of our general's  
O'erflows the measure. Those his goodly eyes,  
That o'er the flies and musters of the war  
Have glowed like plated Mars, now bend, now turn  
The office and devotion of their view  
Upon a tawny front. His captain's heart,  
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst  
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,  
And is become the bellows and the fan  
To cool a gypsy's lust.

(I.i.1-9)

With the stylized intensity of 'Roman' rhetoric, Antony's past greatness is contrasted to the present aberration. For the Roman soldier, anything that deflects the tried general from his glorious military career can only be evil and contemptible, but the particular dramatic technique of this scene leaves no guessing whether this is an authorial, chorus-like comment or a one-sided, at best limited voice of an individual observer.

The first scene is felt to be a confirmation, a qualification, or a refutation of this initial statement. What the scene does confirm is Antony's determination to turn his back on his former identity as a representative of Rome, and his public commitment to a new loyalty, in particular, his new conception of 'nobleness' and of a meaningful life:

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

(I.i.34-40)

This declamation, combining love-poetry conventions and political rhetoric, seems to oscillate between irresponsible bragging and heroic claim to an exceptional stature. This conviction it carries is largely determined by the context. Cleopatra's words alone hardly justify his idealized image of her; they rather suggest that it is the fancy of the words which are blinded by passion, not informed by objective judgement:

Fie, wrangling queen!  
Whom everything becomes-to chide, to laugh,  
To weep; whose every passion fully strives  
To make itself, in thee, fair and admired.

(I.i.49-52)

Some of the lovers in Shakespeare's comedies use similarly hyperbolic language and they are ridiculed for it by their rather more sober lovers, nor is Antony taken quite seriously by Cleopatra in this instance: 'Excellent falsehood!'(I.i.42).

This scene does not really make clear what Antony's newly defined 'nobleness' consists in and whether it really has any positive value. Nor does he present any sexual alternative to the traditional Roman virtues; rather he celebrates his personal decision, without any regard for the general fate of Rome or his own reputation.

The first three scenes, all set in Egypt, make the contrast between irresponsible indulgence and the soldier's duties appear comparatively simple and unambiguous. Egypt is a place of levity and thoughtless present whereas Rome stands for the appeal to a sense of responsibility and loyalty towards family and state. Cleopatra herself is aware of the limits of her influence in these terms:

He was disposed to mirth; but on the sudden  
A Roman thought hath struck him.

(I.ii.87-88)

This simple contrast becomes more problematic as soon as our first impressions are qualified in surprising ways by the swift changes of perspective between the worlds of Rome and of Egypt. In a way, Caesar's first appearance on stage confirms what we have seen of Antony so far, his heroic part, his irresponsible infatuation and the hopes still

placed in him, but Caesar's cool and self-righteous condemnation of the 'great competitor'(I.iv.3) gives a rather personal slant to the political confrontation. There is a clash of two irreconcilable temperaments as well as a contrast of political convictions. Antony's greatness, and the undisguised spontaneity of his Egyptian 'dissipations', so free from any shrewd political calculation or intrigue, are brought home to the audience more forcefully by Caesar's disapproving analysis than by Antony's own behaviour and professions, especially since we know that Antony has already severed himself from the Egyptian allurements and has made his decision in favor of Rome. On the other hand, the scene which follows makes the intensity of the love union more credible and convincing than the lover's meetings at the beginning have done. The bond that unites them becomes even more real through the separation and it is made very clear that Antony means much more to Cleopatra than a political pawn or a lover who merely fatters her vanity. She evidently sees in him, and he in her, the exceptional personality who justifies all the conflicts arising out of their love. Her proud memories of the two other great Romans who lay at her feet, Julius Caesar and Pompey, also suggest a concept of love that has left behind its romantic indefiniteness and is founded on more stable as well as rational qualities. In Shakespeare's play, it is Cleopatra herself who makes this comparison with her 'salad days,/ When I was green in judgement, cold in blood'(I.v.77-8), but it is characteristic of Shakespeare's dramatic presentation of his protagonists that this happens only after the exposition in which the Roman point of view seems to be taken for granted. The exceptional vitality of their mutual love is gradually unfolded after first and, for all we know, final parting, by memories, imagination and irrational action.

Acknowledging the exceptional nature of Cleopatra can be described in terms of conventional love poetry or of moral evaluation:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale  
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy  
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry  
Where most she satisfies; for vilest things  
Become themselves in her, that the holy priests  
Bless her when she is riggish.

(II.ii.245-50)

This glowing description can hardly be interpreted as either a celebration or a condemnation of Antony's love. It merely attempts to give an idea of her more than unusual qualities, her 'infinite variety'. For the Roman, Cleopatra represents the experience of exotic strangeness, but at the same time she combines in her person elements far beyond all the conventional female charms. Although the food metaphors, used in other places as well ('his Egyptian dish'(II.vi.128)), suggest sexual indulgence and a purely sensual appeal, Enobarbus also singles out Cleopatra's amazing ability to confer majestic dignity on what in others would be common and trivial. Such unorthodox resourcefulness and enchanting unpredictability is quite different from Shakespeare's other love tragedies. Juliet is not a fascinating partner in this sense. She is not credited with 'infinite variety' as a particular virtue.

For Antony, Cleopatra means the possibility of a complete partnership, even though it seems only for the purpose of unlimited pleasure, a partnership not necessarily founded on the reliable harmony of mutual agreement but on the continual fascination of unexpectedness and contradictory personalities. In addition, the whole play implies that the two lovers are above their surroundings by virtue of their exceptional intensity, vitality and unorthodox courage and are thus, in a way, predestined for each other.

The play, underlines the dangerous and destructive aspects of this love as much as its potential happiness and its exemplary character. Thus, the most emphatic assertions of the glorious union usually come from one of the two lovers when he or she is separated from the partner and only one of them is on stage. Apart from the scene of Antony's death there are practically no love scenes in the conventional sense, nothing like the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. In nearly every case the encounters between the two protagonists are marred by irritation, scorn, distrust or coquetry. Those who want to read the play as a glorification of unconditional love can only point to its ending, and even there the dramatist has put in some jarring notes.

On the other hand, Shakespeare rather plays down the unprincipled brutality of Antony's disloyalty towards Octavius and his sister whom he has accepted as his wife. Though Antony gives his consent to the politic marriage arrangement proposed by Octavius, his acquiescence, if it is sincere, lasts only a very short time. In the very next

scene he remembers the powerful attractions of Egypt and already seems to have changed his mind:

I will to Egypt;  
And though I make this marriage for my peace,  
I'th'East my pleasure lies.

(II.iii.37-39)

'My pleasure' can hardly be interpreted as an expression of disinterested love or even pure loyalty to the beloved. But Antony is neither presented as one tormented by a tragic dilemma or a conflict of irreconcilable loyalties nor as a deliberate hypocrite and cheat, even though his actual behavior strongly suggests insincerity. His evident betrayal of Octavia and of Caesar is only shown as a fact, not as a gradual mental process or a conscious decision. His marriage to Octavia is hardly felt to be a real union in the play.

It is Cleopatra's influence on the Roman general that is the main theme of the tragedy, not her own complex personality by itself. Her fascination and her caprices are of interest mainly for the effect they have on Antony. Thus, her double-tongued dealings with Thidias are bound to irritate Antony into white fury because he begins to doubt her loyalty and even her protestations of love, teasing him into renewed hysterical euphoria, hardly convince us of the sincerity of her affection even though they may make Antony's infatuation more understandable. Their decision to indulge in a last orgy 'one other gaudy night' (III.xiii.188), forgetful of themselves before their final ruin, can hardly be interpreted as a regaining of lost nobility or as a manifestation of exemplary love, but seems little more than a blind refusal to admit defeat. The conventional simile of death as love-act is reminiscent of Romeo and Juliet, though here it is an expression of desperate defiance rather than of dedicated love, ready to meet death:

The next time I do fight,  
I'll make Death love me, for I will contend  
Even with his pestilent scythe.

(III.xiii.197-199)

Like Romeo, Antony takes his own life because he cannot bear the thought of surviving his love; but by her deception Cleopatra is at least partly guilty of his death and Antony's suicide is not simply a confirmation of his Roman nobleness but also a final triumph of her seductress power. With her death everything that had motivated his disastrous actions is at an end. He can neither enjoy the reward of his passion nor is a return to his Roman dignity possible except by a 'Roman' death that saves him from public disgrace and unites him with Cleopatra. Antony dies with a renewed belief in Cleopatra's love. For him, the false report of her death acts as an example demanding emulation, an instance of free courage that denies the enemy his last triumph. He is ashamed of lacking her nobility and determination:

Since Cleopatra died,  
I have lived in such dishonour that the gods  
Detest my baseness. I, that with my sword  
Quartered the world, and o'er green Neptune's back  
With ships made cities, condemn myself to lack  
The courage of a woman; less noble mind  
Than she which, by her death, our Caesar tells  
'I am conqueror of myself'.

(IV.xiv.56-63)

The loss of his soldierly honor and the humiliation by Cleopatra's suicide play a more prominent part in this scene than grief at being separated from the beloved. The idea of a reunion after death is, however, stated with more emphasis than in Shakespeare's other tragedies of love:

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

(IV.xiv.51-55)

Antony tries to create a myth of himself and Cleopatra meant to exceed and to replace the fame of the classical lovers; but even in his suicide, the heroic stance is not as unqualified and wholly admirable as it is in the case of Brutus because Antony does not succeed in killing himself at once and feels he has made bad work of his last great effort.

Shakespeare has deliberately extended this part of the action because the lovers' union in death is not only, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, the woeful end and, at the same time, the final triumph of their love, but a lost attempt to recapture a glorious harmony that from the start was threatened by the nature of the partners themselves, not only from outside. It is not alone the conflict between Rome and Egypt that prevents us from ever really believing in the permanence of the union. Antony's divided character and Cleopatra's capricious unpredictability, her 'infinite variety', also make these lovers very different from *Romeo and Juliet*. In contrast to earlier tragedies, love is not presented as an ennobling relationship, but rather as a potential threat to one's own personality, as a tormenting succession of affection and disappointment, dream and disillusion. In parallel to this, in Shakespeare's sonnets, we can see the irrational attraction and the corrupting power of love are described even more explicitly in the famous sonnet 129:

Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame  
Is lust in action, and till action, lust  
Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,  
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,  
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight,  
Past reason hunted, and no sooner had,  
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait,  
On purpose laid to make the taker mad;  
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so,  
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme,  
A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe,  
Before, a joy proposed, behind, a dream.  
All this the world well knows, yet none knows well  
To shun the heav'n that leads men to this hell.

There is little point in trying to interpret this autobiographically and to indulge in speculations on Shakespeare's mistress. A closer look at this sonnet may well help to understand the way love is presented in *Antony and Cleopatra*. It is clearly distinguished from Petrarchan idealization, religious moralizing, or cynical levity by its disillusioned honesty and the variety of emotions produced by it. Antony does not

deceive himself by a false picture of the beloved, as Troilus does. For him, she is neither ‘merely’ his wife nor just his mistress in any conventional sense. She is much more than simply an evil influence, like Lady Macbeth; yet the play does not finally refute Rome’s conviction that she has ruined his life.

Antony tries to comfort her and is concerned about her future, but he does not reaffirm his love with any particular emphasis and he views his own death above all as a means of restoring his Roman honor and reputation. He wants to leave a memory that preserves his greatness before his tragic fall. Not as a lover, but as an unvanquished Roman, as ‘the greatest prince o’th’world, / The noblest (IV.xv.56-7) does he want to be remembered. Cleopatra’s last words to him are an acknowledgement of this image of himself, ‘Noblest of men’ (IV.xv.62) and of his claim to have been the greatest of soldiers:

O, withered is the garland of the war,  
The soldier’s pole is fall’n; young boys and girls  
Are level now with men. The adds is gone,  
And there is nothing left remarkable  
Beneath the visiting moon.

(IV.xv.66-70)

Her praise of the dead implies that she does not contradict the public opinion which she sees Antony’s love as an unnatural aberration from his true self. His death restores, though not without qualification, his heroic dignity and stature whose loss was deplored in the very first scene of the tragedy, but it is not celebrated as a final affirmation of his love, as is the death of Romeo who dies with a kiss. This form of love-death is, in Shakespeare’s last love tragedy, reserved for Cleopatra whose suicide is the centre of the final and makes use of a number of traditional motifs absent from Antony’s death. The separation of the two death scenes was already a feature of Shakespeare’s source as well as of previous dramatic versions. It enabled him to prevent side by side the Roman’s heroic suicide and the romantic pathos of the lovers in death. Antony’s tragedy as the triumvir who throws away a whole empire, and the complaint of the bereaved lover, a favorite literary theme in the English Renaissance, are the subject of two separate acts, and this may well be one of the reasons for the play’s complex effect. Cleopatra’s lament for Antony is a powerful expression of her determination to become worthy of his own Roman greatness. Whereas, near the beginning of the play, she



referred rather slightly to his 'Roman thought' (I.ii.84), she now explicitly adopts his own values and strives to emulate him:

We'll bury him; and then, what's brave, what's noble,  
Let's do't after the high Roman fashion,  
And make death proud to take us.

(IV.xv.85-7)

In her death, at least, she wants to prove that her love is compatible with Roman nobleness.

The last act of the tragedy is mainly concerned with the working out of this heroic endeavor and with the battle of wits between Cleopatra and Octavius. They are the two survivors and representatives of the two worlds between whom Antony was finally crushed. During the whole of the last part, his spirit is as present as was the spirit of Caesar in the second half of Julius Caesar and though there is no doubt of his political defeat, it is his reputation and his memory that are at stake and they are closely linked with the fate of Cleopatra. Her death is meant to demonstrate to all the world that Antony's love which cost him his share in the domination of the world, was not, as it was presented in Rome, a shameful infatuation and dotage, 'To cool a gypsy's lust'(I.i.10), but the mutual union of two exceptional individuals who cannot live without each other. Cleopatra's public humiliation by a triumph through the streets of Rome would also destroy Antony's reputation. Only by her deliberately 'Roman' death is he able to make Caesar acknowledge the lovers' greatness and indeed Cleopatra's equal rank as a worthy lover by a monument in their honor. As lovers they will be remembered and form part of Rome's history, but the funeral, with all military rites and honors also pays tribute to Antony's greatness as statesman and general. Through his victorious, Octavius Caesar concedes equal greatness to these whose ruin he brought about:

No grave upon the earth shall clip in it  
A pair so famous. High events as these  
Strike those that make them; and their story is  
No less us pity than his glory which

Brought them to be lamented.

(V.ii.357-61)

Antony's death is thus invented with a dignity it at first seemed to lack, and this undoubtedly contributes to the impression, shared by many spectators and critics, that Cleopatra's death is a kind of triumph rather than a tragic loss. This seems to me possible only because from the beginning Cleopatra's fate is so closely linked to the personality of Antony that, as an independent dramatic character, she plays only a minor part and is not a tragic protagonist in the same sense as he is. There is no scene, before the pathetic last act, that shows her in a moral dilemma or any serious internal conflict. If there is a certain abruptness in Cleopatra's transformation from fatal seductress to dedicated loving wife it is quite compatible with the dramatic structure and does not need any realistic justification.

Love, as the dying Cleopatra understands it, is equality of nobleness and courage, not sensual infatuation or bondage:

-methinks I hear

Antony call. I see him rouse himself  
To praise my noble act. I hear him mock  
The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men  
To excuse their after wrath. Husband, I come,  
Now to that name my courage prove my title!

(V.ii.282-7)

By joining her husband in death, she vouches for the reality and truth of what at first seemed a purely rhetorical gesture:

The nobleness of life  
Is to do thus- when such mutual pair  
And such a twain can do't,...

(I.i.36-8)

This cautious wording points out that she is becoming worthy of her lover and puts the emphasis rightly on the affective aspect of the scene and the essentially emotional effect of the rhetoric.

The play does not suggest that a happy fulfillment of this love, a conventional marriage and a political settlement to accommodate the lovers, would have been a possibility, as it certainly is in *Romeo and Juliet*. Nor is Antony's love, like Romeo's, seen as an element of reconciliation and peace in the midst of a loveless society.

Shakespeare knows that Cupid can make the old suffer the pangs and craziness of love. There's something crazy about Antony giving up his responsibilities as one of the leaders of the world of Cleopatra. This isn't something we can explain or understand; it's strange and rather frightening. That's why the play opens with one of his soldiers saying that:

this dotage of our General's  
O'erflows the measure...  
(I.i.1-2)

'Dotage' is the crucial word; in Shakespeare's plays it can mean feebleness of mind and excessively strong feelings. In Antony's case it means both. In him Venus (love) is in conjunction with Saturn (old age). Nevertheless, the words about Venus and Saturn also touch on the folly and the pathos of love in old age.

In *Antony and Cleopatra* love and adultery goes together most of the times. If one say that the play is about adultery he can't be wrong. 'new heaven, new earth' (I.i.17) can be excellent example of this thought. Caesar speaks of 'th'adulterous Antony' (3.6.93). When the play begins Antony is married to Fulvia; after her death, he marries Octavia. He's unfaithful to both of them with 'Egypt's widow' (II.i.37). Furthermore, although it's not adultery, Cleopatra feels so strongly that Antony is hers that his second marriage is felt as a betrayal. Antony feels the pull of Rome, but doesn't feel guilty about deceiving his wives. For the married or those who are getting old (Caesar calls him 'the old ruffian' -IV.i.4), it seems the only way to rediscover the exhilarating joy of love is adultery. Cleopatra is a rediscovery of love's essentially youthful adventure.

It's easy to see *Antony and Cleopatra* as a play praising love at the expense of public duty. Egypt is warm, playful and romantic; it's a place of love and revelry. Rome is cold and hard; duty to the state is always more important than anything in our personal lives.

If we view the play in those terms, opting for Egypt and love is natural. But love can be destructive, so we might want to escape from it. Antony feels something like this in the early scenes when he tries to break away from Egypt. In the speech in which he laments the death of his wife, this resolution interrupts his thought:

I must from this enchanting queen break off.

(I.ii.122)

‘Enchanting’ must be given its full force—he’s under a spell, which for his own safety and sanity he must break. The play shows that he, Mars, is incapable of making this break. Venus is much stronger than Mars, but that makes her as terrible and dangerous as the god of war. Because Cleopatra represents Venus to Antony’s Mars, she must be seen as sexually desirable. There was a view in Shakespeare’s day that the love of Venus and Mars was a symbol of the taming of a war-like man by a woman. There is, therefore, an ominous note in Mardian’s words. Antony might be entrapped and made harmless. When in the sea-battle Antony flees after Cleopatra, Scarrus says:

The noble ruin of her magic, Antony  
Calps on his sea-wing and, like a doting mallard,  
Leaving the fight in height, flies after her.  
I never saw an action of such shame-  
Experience, manhood, honour, ne’er before  
Did violate so itself.

(III.x.18-23)

This is done in a number of ways. For instance, virtually every man Enobarbus meets in Rome wants to hear about her. What Shakespeare chooses not to do is show her alone with Antony. That might have been a way of bringing over her fascination, but he sticks instead to the language she uses. Like that of her court, it’s often bawdy. Her reveries naturally turn to thoughts of sexual activity:

Or does he walk? Or is he on his horse?  
O happy horse, to bear the weight of Antony!

(I.v.20-1)

She pictures him walking and then riding, and then imaginatively substitutes herself for the horse as she bears his weight and he rides her. Water is the province of Cleopatra, a sexual temptress, who is intended to embellish a Roman triumphal procession. Water is traditionally associated with woman being identified as the source of all life in various cultures. Shakespeare makes the association with the dark lady;

‘the bay where all men ride’ according to Sonnet 137. Her insatiability is stressed in Sonnet 135: ‘The sea, all water, yet receives rain still’ a sentiment recalled in *The Costly Whore* (c.1620) III.i, where the duke seems intent on marriage with one ‘whose body is as common as the sea / In the receipt of every lustful spring’. Lustful is the minimal gloss usually provided when Pompey describes Egypt’s queen as ‘Salt Cleopatra’ (II.i.21). But this meaning, from Latin saltus (leap), surely links with the sexual sea-figure by way of the chemical compound sense.

As soon as Shakespeare’s play shifts back to Alexandria, reminiscence of the prank played on Antony by Cleopatra adds another dimension

Twas merry when  
... your diver  
Did hang a salt fish on his hook, which he  
With fervency drew up.  
(II.v.15)

Although this episode derives from Plutarch, Shakespeare gives new emphasis through that erotically charged ‘fervency’, as well as the preceding speech where Cleopatra determines to:

Betray  
Tawny-finned fishes.  
...and as I draw them up,  
I’ll think them every one an Antony.

Cleopatra was seen first by Antony as a goddess on the water, Plutarch detailing the care which she devoted to this grand appearance. It was a power play, since she answered Antony’s summons by deliberately choosing a slow means of transport. But this touch of rebellion was greatly strengthened by the calculated eroticism. Enobarbus

has no doubt of Cleopatra's power as sexual enchantress, and Antony too (IV.ix.12) calls her 'this great fairy'; or in IV.xiii 'This grave charm', 'gipsy', 'spell', and 'witch'.

By reason of its unusual structure and its ambivalent effect, *Antony and Cleopatra* is not easily compared with Shakespeare's other tragedies although there are, of course, a number of important parallels.

## CONCLUSION

Shakespeare's plays *Romeo and Juliet*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Antony and Cleopatra* share common themes and attitudes as I mentioned above, among them love, war and the notion that love between two people can conquer even death.

The change from one relationship to another is a forced change from childhood innocence to adult awareness. Hence, Northrop Frye refers to *Romeo and Juliet* as a play whose theme is love, bound up with and part of, violent death (Frye 1986). As the lovers meet and find themselves bound by love, they are surrounded by the intruding world which brings with it a feud, family pride, loyalty for friends and the tragic death of the lovers.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the tragic impediments are the parents, and beyond them, the bifurcated community, representative of tradition and the past. We understand the pathos and helplessness of these innocents by seeing their position in a world they did not ask for, which they do not endorse and which they cannot affect in life at any rate. Romeo's attempt to express a revalued relation to Tybalt is a typically ironic example of this helplessness. He seeks to embody in a social form the new individual perception that love has given him but the gesture is neither understandable nor effective; indeed it merely brings the essential conflict to the social surface and so precipitates the tragedy. The love between Juliet and Romeo 'is no mere infatuation, but love indeed in its finest sense' is clear from the beginning. Between Antony and Cleopatra, however, there is passion, and an outspoken sensuality which tends to mask the deeper strains of devotion and love. While *Romeo and Juliet* allows the reader to trace the beginnings and growth

of young love from beginning to untimely end, Antony and Cleopatra does not, until the final act, reveal the extent to which the pleasure-seeking lovers have matured their love. It is difficult to decide which pair of lovers meets a more tragic end, although as one critic has noted 'the injurious gods cannot cheat Cleopatra as the stars cheat Juliet, because she has known years of love and revelry with Antony'. On the other hand, Romeo and Juliet die before having to face the inevitable disillusionments of life together. Troilus and Cressida might appear equally helpless, but the blocking agency here (the Trojan War) has a crushing inevitability about it very different from the haphazard quarrels of the Montagues and Capulets and powerlessness seems to be more like the natural condition of man. The power of this war to undermine and devalue life is, moreover, not simply presented as an external force distorting action; it eats also into the minds of those who act and love, compromising their thinking no less than their doing. 'Innocence' is harder to accept as a natural quality in *Troilus and Cressida* than in *Romeo and Juliet*. It seems to be touched by self-consciousness and calculation when found in the world of Menelaus or Helen, not to mention Pandarus as a 'matchmaker' with motives quite remote from the idealistic benevolence of Friar Lawrence. The ease with which idealism here turns into jealous rage, weakness into deviousness, cannot be blamed entirely on the external events; the lovers themselves must share the blame. We are bound to imagine that Cressida (in particular) could, if she chose, be more like Juliet and not to allow a change of circumstances to become a change of mind. The collapse of strong idealistic assertion into compromised action brings the tragic emotions of Troilus and Cressida very close to bitter comedy. Shakespeare's generic brinkmanship is carried here to an extreme, heroism and incompetence alternate so rapidly that puzzlement finally tasks over from perception.

Much more central to Shakespeare's treatment of love in *Antony and Cleopatra* is the blocking force created by their public prominence and by the pressure of the public roles on supposedly private emotions. In Antony and Cleopatra the rhetoric of idealizing faith always hovers on the edge of mere rhetoric; even the lovers' kisses (as in I. i.37) have something of the quality of lip-service to the images of public greatness which both of them want and need. The movement of the love tragedies from Romeo and Juliet to Antony and Cleopatra has carried Shakespeare's tragic lovers from political nonentity to political dominance. It is a first natural assumption that this enlargement of power must also be an enlargement of love. Certainly the great can exercise the greatest

freedom in their choices; they are the least liable to become the victims of other persons' wills. But this escape into one freedom is achieved only by accepting servitude. The emotions that such characters are free to display publicly are pressed to assume the form that will give them the best publicity. And so the route that carries the forbidden love of Romeo and Juliet through the well-known secret of Troilus and Cressida, to the world-renowned love of Antony and Cleopatra; is not pattern of increments but one of compensating gains and losses. Balancing of this kind rules out irony we should notice, as a principal effect.

Shakespeare does not say, in Antony and Cleopatra, that love between great persons is necessarily great love, nor does he allege that the change faith into falsehood. He allows truth in both these positions, and keeps the comic potential of the deceived lover story as one of the play's recurrent features; Cleopatra is, in fact, one of the great comic roles in Shakespeare- all the greater because the comedy is only part of her story. Yet the comedy of love which shows the innocent self-betrayal of the lover and the limitation in his grasp of reality is not, in Antony and Cleopatra, shown in any simple alternation with the tragic potential in love's fiction of privacy and invulnerability (as in Romeo and Juliet).

In this play the two aspects are found inside the same moments and at many points seem to be the same thing, love being shown as simultaneously innocent and sophisticated, heartfelt and calculating, true and deceptive, worldly and other-worldly. In the other love-tragedies love is discovered as a new and transforming emotion that renders unimportant all other aspects of life.

Love is not a new emotion for Antony or more especially Cleopatra, nor does it render the rest of their experience. It is, in fact, an integrated part of lives lived through many other spheres, so that questions about identity- 'Who is this I who is in love' and 'Who is this you I am in love with?' are not given a sufficient answer by the simple fact of being in love, but have to be treated also as questions about history and politics and power and publicity. Even when Antony imagines the Elysium of love after death it is characteristic that he imagines it in terms of rivalry for reputation:

Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,



And all the haunt be ours.

(IV.xiv.53-4)

Cleopatra too, even in the final scene when there is nothing left to lie for, sets up a scenario of love which is both splendid and suspect: 'I am again for Cydnus / To meet Mark Antony' she tells Charmain. Her death will re-enact her greatest triumph, her ensnaring of Antony. She kills herself, certainly to establish against Caesar's hegemony the supremacy of his rival as a great lover; but she is also self-pleasing in the sense of power it gives her to be able to call Caesar 'as unpolicied'. Shakespeare does not allow us to separate the desire for the love from the desire for power but shows that it is the tragedy of mature love that these two desires must destroy one another.

The play's first half contains rather fewer hints of the final catastrophe and less genuinely tragic conflict than most of his other tragedies. Antony's moral and political dilemma is more implied in the dramatic structure than realized in the intensity of characterization, and the end is tragic chiefly in a formal sense: by the death of the protagonists, not so much by the experience of heroic defeat, irreparable loss or tormenting disillusionment. Neither the dynamic nature of evil nor the destructive power of uncontrolled passion are central themes of this tragedy, and this is only partly due to the story material, which combines in a particularly provocative manner love romance with a context of historic dimensions without reducing them to an individual dilemma and a clear-cut moral decision. The conflicting loyalties are too unequal to sustain the impression of a tragic impasse and the comic or satiric perspective that suggests itself with regard to the love-plot is emphasized by Shakespeare rather than suppressed. The nagging question whether this love is really worth the existential price paid for it, remains open right to the end. Antony's heroic stature is asserted by the play in distinctly less unequivocal terms even than that of Macbeth. Nor is the lovers' freely chosen death presented simply as the last and final proof of mutual affection, as in the case of Romeo and Juliet, or a pathetic, exemplary 'fall' as in many other Elizabethan tragedies, but leaves as ambiguous effect, even though it may satisfy the audience's desire for poetic justice. Critics have repeatedly made use of the term 'reconciliation' in this context. What they mean is that each of the main actors finally accepts the role they have chosen for themselves and its accompanying fate. No other ending seems possible as a convincing or even desirable alternative. No serious crime has to be expiated;

murder, intrigue and deceit, which for many Elizabethan playwrights seem to have been the indispensable hallmarks of tragedy, play a comparatively insignificant part here, less prominent, for instance, than in *Romeo and Juliet*. This also argues against a particularly significant thematic relationship between Antony and Cleopatra and Shakespeare's romances, such as has occasionally been suggested, because in those later plays, the nature of evil and human corruptibility is examined with for greater intensity.

The play's unusual structure and its ambivalent ending do not, however, seriously affect its place among Shakespeare's tragedies, which probably none of his contemporaries would have questioned, but they make any too narrow definition of what we consider to be the essence of Shakespearian tragedy rather problematic. There were, to be sure, a number of traditional criteria of form and content, such as the protagonist's death, a vaguely historical or mythical background, and social rank of the chief characters, as well as some loosely defined sub-types, like revenge tragedy or tragedy of love.

The surprising diversity of love experience presented here which makes the play so different from Shakespeare's other love tragedies. In *Romeo and Juliet*, love and marriage are more clearly and predictably defined, whereas in *Troilus and Cressida* there is a noticeable absence of that mutual affection which is necessary for love's fulfillment. It is only in *Antony and Cleopatra* that the ennobling and the destructive potentialities of love are so inextricably linked; Cleopatra combines the characteristic qualities of Juliet and Cressida, of the ideal beloved and the humiliating seductress. Whereas Cressida is at first introduced as a comic heroine, without any of Juliet's innocence and unqualified loyalty, but again, Shakespeare has reduced her behavior to the unadorned essentials. Shakespeare's Cressida is allowed but one brief moment of happiness with Troilus, enjoyed only with some reservations, because she has no deep faith in happiness achieved and desire fulfilled. Shakespeare is even less concerned with moral censure. His Cressida is not for a moment presented as an innocent object of male worship, as an ennobling influence on her lover, or as unquestioningly dedicated mistress and wife, like Juliet. Nor does she have any of Cleopatra's majestic capriciousness and 'infinite variety'. She is simply what men make of her, a striking example of the relativity of most values or, in Hector's words, of the 'mad idolatry/ To make the service greater than the god' (II.ii.57-8).

More important even is the heroic and ideal aspect of this kind of artificial value set on persons and things:

She is a theme of honour and reknown,  
A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,  
Where present courage may beat down our toes,  
And fame in time to come canonize us;

(II.ii.200-3)

The same applies to Cressida, but in both cases the illusory foundation of such valuation will become evident. Love and heroism are equally vulnerable when they are based on such arbitrary values.

The pearls may well be worthless as soon as there is no buyer to appreciate their particular qualities. Helen has become a myth, powerful enough to move armies and lead to the destruction of whole city, while Cressida's value exists mainly in the mind of Troilus.

In *Troilus and Cressida*, the love plot, after its swift introduction in the first two scenes does not return for some time. Meanwhile, we see Troilus as a prominent speaker in the Trojan debate(II.ii), where, for all his naïve idealism, he appears to convince even Hector; but there is no mention of his infatuation, and when Cressida is next referred to, it is on the context of a decidedly frivolous domestic scene involving Paris, Helen and Pandarus. When the lovers themselves enter the stage again, their first night together has already been arranged by mutual consent, with Pandarus as the prurient stage-manger (III.ii). Many readers and critics have had difficulties with this scene, and to compare it with the love scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* is to become aware of the difference between a more conventional wooing and the strikingly joyless coming together of these two lovers. They both seem to be afraid of imminent disappointment rather than happily expectant and this is not just because Troilus' love is merely sexual appetite or because Cressida is a wanton. Their vague apprehensions link the scene with the political debates in both camps, because they both have no real trust in the possibility of rewarding achievement and lasting happiness. The dramatist does not give us any deep insight into the true thoughts of the lovers: they seem to be performing their

parts in a prepared script rather than acting out of a genuine impulse, and I think this deliberate withholding of reliable information and authorial verdict is an important part of the play's dramatic technique.

In scene IV, yet the whole tone of the scene is not one of mischievous satire and cheap ridicule, but of detached knowingness. There is no youthful enthusiasm in this love scene nor the conviction that this moment is really the fulfillment of their desires. The lovers can hardly be blamed for their subdued mood and their foreboding because they are overtaken by the swiftness of destiny at the very moment when they have finally come together. It seems to me most remarkable that Shakespeare has altered the time-scheme of his source in a way very similar to *Romeo and Juliet*. The whole play has shown that Troilus' idea of Cressida and of love's achievement was founded on an illusion, and the contrast between rhetoric and reality was at times so glaring as to be no longer tragic. Troilus' infatuation has not been presented to the audience with the full pathos and intensity of Romeo's passion. The play would be much less disturbing if all the rhetoric were sincere, if Troilus' love had been all pure and idealistic, if Cressida's betrayal were no more than what is to be expected of a whore.

In order to define and test the mutuality of love, Shakespeare's dialectical imagination deploys a changing context of lethal hatred and belligerence. The innocent intensity of *Romeo and Juliet* establishes a model by which the more complex yet corruptible relationships can be gauged. Furthermore, a familiar yet perilous stereotype of virile conduct is repeatedly dramatized and questioned. Is truly virile conduct brave, heroic, aggressive, martial? Is sexual love a fulfillment of virility or a feminizing enfeeblement? At a crucial moment in *Romeo and Juliet* (III.i.115), Romeo complains:

O sweet Juliet,  
Thy beauty hath made me effeminate  
And in my temper soften'd valour's steel.

Marriage to Juliet has made him Tybalt's kinsman; yet friendship with Mercutio makes him Tybalt's foe. Opting for the aggressive stereotype of virile conduct, he kills Tybalt and precipitates disaster for Juliet and himself. In those subsequent plays, Troilus,

Antony all experience the fear that martial identity may be undermined and 'made effeminate' by the love-relationship; Antony offers Cleopatra the bitter reproach:

You did know  
How much you were my conqueror, and what  
My sword, made weak by my affection, would  
Obey it on all cause.

Judged by the criterion of poetic quality, the conception of martial virility often received as much imaginative assent from Shakespeare as did the contrasting conception of amatory virility; so it is not the least achievement of *Romeo and Juliet* that eventually the former is so clearly linked to futile destructiveness and the latter to civilized harmony.

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