AN EXCELLENT PLAY

Since Shakespeare is chiefly a dramatist or playwright, Shakespeare's *Poetics* must begin with his plays. Any attempt to investigate Shakespeare's understanding of a play from his own words must begin somewhere. And perhaps no better beginning can be made than in that play where Rolfe (in his preface to his edition of *Hamlet*) says that Furness does not exaggerate when he says:

> No one of mortal mould (save Him 'whose blessed feet were
> nailed for our advantage to the bitter cross') ever trod this earth, commanding such absorbing interest as this Hamlet, this mere creation of a poet's brain. No syllable that he whispers, no word let fall by any one near him, but is caught and pondered as no words ever have been, except of Holy Writ. Upon no throne built by mortal hands has ever 'beat so fierce a light' as upon that airy fabric reared at Elsinore.

But apart from the general excellence of *Hamlet*, there is good reason to begin an investigation of Shakespeare's understanding of a play from the words of Hamlet to the players in Act II, Sc. 2 and Act III, Sc. 2. This is an opportunity for Shakespeare to speak at length about the play and playing. Kittredge in his first note on Act III, Sc. 2, says:

> Hamlet's advice to the players has always been understood - and rightly - to embody Shakespeare's own views of the art of acting.

The beginning text is in Act II, Sc. 2 where Hamlet speaks of an "excellent play" to a player:

> the play, I remember, pleased not the million;
> 'twas caviary to the general: but it was (as I
> received it, and others, whose judgments in such
> matters cried in the top of mine)
>
> an excellent play
>
> well digested in the scenes,
>
> set down with as much modesty as cunning.

> I remember one said there were no sallets in the
> lines to make the matter savory, nor no matter in
> the phrase that might indict the author of affection;
>
> but called it an honest method,
>
> as wholesome as sweet,
>
> and by very much more handsome than fine.

We haved divided or separated the words of Hamlet while keeping his order so that we might discuss each part separately.

> *THE PLAY, I REMEMBER, PLEASED NOT THE MILLION; 'TWAS CAVIARY TO THE GENERAL: BUT IT WAS (AS I RECEIVED IT, AND OTHERS, WHOSE JUDGEMENTS IN SUCH MATTERS CRIED IN THE TOP OF MINE*

In Act III, Sc. 2, Hamlet also says to the players, after urging them to hit the mean, these words:

> Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve, the censure of which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others.

It is strange, perhaps, that Shakespeare should have said openly in both these key places that the ability to judge is found in few or even just one.

AN EXCELLENT PLAY

What does Shakespeare understand a play to be? The natural beginning for a consideration of this is the words of Hamlet to the players Act III, Sc. 2 of *Hamlet*:

> o’erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so
> overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end,
> both at the first and now, was and is,
>
> to hold, as ‘twere, the mirror up to nature:

> to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image,
>
> and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

Shakespeare here gives the immediate or proximate end (purpose) of playing which is very important since the end of anything is always what is most important about it. In speaking of the end of playing, Hamlet is, of course, speaking of the immediate end. Whether this immediate end of playing is ordered to some further end; and if so, what is that further end; are questions that need not detain us at present. Shakespeare has given us the immediate end which is also more known and more certain for us than any further end. (A sign of which is that men disagree more about any further end.)

And in telling us what is the end of playing and the play, he helps us to understand both words in the phrase "an excellent play." Since the end of a thing pertains to what it is, these words help to tell us what Shakespeare thinks a play is in general. And likewise, since a thing is perfect when it has achieved its end, part of the perfection or excellence of a play must consist in how it achieves this immediate end. (I say "part" because, if this immediate end is ordered to a further end, the perfection of a play must be considered even more in reference to this last end).

The play is a likeness, as the metaphor *mirror* and also the word *image* in Hamlet's words indicate. Shortly after this, Shakespeare tells us plainly in non-figurative language that the players imitate so that the play must be an imitation or likeness (*Hamlet,* Act III, Sc. 2):

> O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellow'd that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

Moreover, the beginning of these words find an echo in a couple of witnesses who were friends and fellow actors of Shakespeare and remembered in his will where he left them money to buy memorial rings and indeed the famous editors of the immortal Folio of 1623 - the single most important publication in the history of English literature, if not of world literature. I refer, of course, to Heminge and

Condell, who in their Preface To the great variety of Readers at the beginning of the Folio say that Shakespeare was

> a happie imitator of Nature...a most gentle expresser of it

Moreover, in speaking of the play as a *mirror* and an *image* and the actor as imitating men, Shakespeare is at the natural beginning of a consideration of the dramatic or poetic art as Aristotle noted in his book *About the Poetic Art*. What Shakespeare sees as the end of playing also corresponds with what Aristotle regarded as the natural starting-point for a consideration of the poetic art - that it is one of the imitative arts. (See *Poetics*, Ch. 1, 1447a 12-16) Shakespeare's longer poems, *Venus & Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece,* are also clearly imitations or likenesses. Even his *Sonnets*, taken by themselves, though they may have personal references, are small likenesses of thought and feeling. Hamlet is thus seen to speak in these two passages, first metaphorically, calling the play a *mirror* because it is a likeness, and then second an *imitation,* which is to speak properly or non-figuratively.

The Greek word for imitation, *mimesis*, did not have the pejorative sense that our word has acquired. This Greek word undoubtedly has the same root as the name for a player or actor. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Act III, Sc. 2, an actor or player is called a *mimic*. In calling a play today an imitation, however, we must be aware how this word has deteriorated in meaning. It has come to mean in our commercial society an inferior and cheap likeness. Hence, we often prefer to use more the word *likeness*. One should note, however, that the word *imitation* in Shakespeare, or in the translation of Aristotle, does not have the narrow and somewhat bad sense that it does today. Our commercial society, for example, uses the word *imitation* for what is usually a cheap or inferior copy of the original. But nothing prevents the word *imitation* in the sense in which Aristotle or Shakespeare use it from meaning a likeness that is in some way superior to the original. Again, imitation in Aristotle does not have the narrow sense of copy. Aristotle, for example, said in the book *About the Poetic Art* that the poet or dramatist can represent men as they are or as they are thought to be or as they ought to be. But because of the degradation in meaning of the word *imitation* in our culture, it may be better to use the word *likeness* which does not convey to our mind the idea of an inferior likeness or a mere copy.

We can now go forward from the beginning word of *imitation* or *likeness* to what it is a likeness of. Let us recall the words of Hamlet again (*Hamlet,* Act III, Sc. 2):

> o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is,
>
> to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature:
>
> to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image,
>
> and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

For Shakespeare, then, the play is a mirror, a likeness. But a mirror or likeness of what? We find an order that is not accidental, an order in the things of which the play is a likeness, an order which harmonizes with all our experience of his wonderful plays. Shakespeare says that the purpose of playing is first. to hold the mirror up to nature; then second, to show virtue her own feature and scorn her own image; and third, to show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. The word *scorn* here signifies by two figures of speech the opposite of virtue, namely, vice. Scorn signifies pride by metonymy for scorn is an effect of pride. And since pride is the queen of the vices, it can signify the vices by synecdoche. How careful Shakespeare is to avoid sounding like a teacher rather than a poet. Every intense student of Shakespeare's plays is aware how he constantly presents nature as the measure of what is good and bad in human action and character or of what is virtuous and vicious in them. And in turn, Shakespeare measures the character of an age by the virtues or vices that predominate in it.

Shakespeare is telling us that a play is a likeness of what is natural and (we can also understand from the plays) the unnatural; of the virtuous and the vicious (scorn is an effect of pride which is the queen of the vices); and of what is customary in an age. The order here is not accidental. Shakespeare sees that nature is the measure of what is virtuous and vicious in men's actions and their dispositions; and the character of an age is determined by the virtues or vices that predominate in it. All of these points should be considered more at length.

The emphasis on nature is not to be ignored. It is also touched upon by Heminge and Condell, the associates of Shakespeare, in their Epistle to the readers of the First Folio of 1623. There they say about Shakespeare that (quoted in Yale Shakespeare, *Shakespeare of Stratford*, n. LXIX, B, p. 90):

> he was a happy imitator of nature, was a most gentle

expresser of it.

The word gentle here reminds us also of Hamlet's words "o'erstep not the modesty of nature". But what does Shakespeare mean by the word *nature?* In his use of the word, Shakespeare always keeps in mind its root meaning of birth. In *All's Well That Ends Well* (Act I, Sc. 1), for example:

> Helena: I will stand for't a little, though therefore I die a virgin.
>
> Parolles: There's little can be said in't: 'tis against the rule of nature. To speak on the part of virginity, is to accuse your mothers; which is most infallible disobedience. He that hangs himself is a virgin: virginity murders itself: and should be buried in highways out of all sanctified limit, as a desperate offendress against nature."

And in *Hamlet* (Act I, Sc. 4):

> So, oft it chances in particular men,
> That for some vicious mole of nature in them.
> As, in their birth, - wherein they are not guilty,
>
> Since nature cannot choose his origin.....

Further, when Shakespeare is said to be "a happy imitator of nature" and the purpose of playing, "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature", the word *nature* is used by those speaking for human nature. This is clear from experience and also from the continuation of Hamlet's remarks where he criticizes the actors who have "imitated humanity so abominably." Hence, by the word *nature* here, Shakespeare means what man has by birth or from birth, what is inborn in him. This means both our common nature (what a man is) and our particular or private inborn gifts or defects. In *Macbeth*, Act III, Sc. 1, the distinction is made between the common and the private by nature:

> Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;
> As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs
> Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves are clept
> All by the name of dogs: the valued file
> Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,
> The housekeeper, the hunter, everyone
> According to the gift which bounteous nature

Hath in him clos'd, whereby he does receive
Particular addition, from the bill
That writes them all alike: and so of men.

The word *gift* is well-chosen here because one cannot earn what he has by birth. But people are also born with some particular defect, as pointed out in the quote from Hamlet before the last. To give the full quote (Act I, Sc. 4):

So, oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As, in their birth, - wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin, -
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens
The form of plausive manners, that these men, -
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star, -
Their virtues else - be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo -
Shall in that general censure take corruption
From that particular fault.....

From these passages, we can also see that our particular nature, or what we have by birth in addition to our common nature, is called a gift or a fault (or defect) by its agreement with or opposition to our common nature. For our common nature is completed by the possession of reason, as Hamlet notes in his great exhortation to use reason (*Hamlet,* Act IV, Sc. 4):

.....What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast. no more.
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused.....

Hence, Shakespeare has very significantly described those natural defects or faults as "breaking down the pales and forts of reason."

The Note of Knight (*Imperial Edition*, Volume I, p. 101) on the words of Slender "I had rather than forty shillings, I had my book of Songs & Sonnets here" are a piquant observation of particular nature:

> The exquiste bit of nature of poor Slender wanting his book of Songs and Sonnets, and his book of Riddles to help him out in his talk with Anne Page is not found in the original sketch.

In distinguishing between the universal and the singular nature of human beings, it is good to keep in mind that these are not separated in good fiction as they are in the philosopher's thinking. Some authors have spoke of the universal singularized or the singular as universalized in fiction. Charles Knight has an interesting quote from Coleridge's "The Friend" on Shakespeare in this regard and a comment on it in his Supplementary Notice to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Imperial Edition, Vol. I, p. 35):

Coleridge	Speaking of the effect, that is, his works themselves, we may define the excellence of their method as consisting in that just proportion, that union and interpenetation of the universal and the particular.....
Knight's comment	Nothing can be more just and more happy than this definition of the distinctive quality of Shakespeare's works - a quality which puts them so immeasurably above all other works - "the union and interpenetration of the universal and the particular."

Underlying all plays is the fact that we naturally love happiness and hate misery, and the natural differences between man and beast, between man and woman, between young and old, between individuals and so on, and the natural relation or order of father and son, father and daughter, mother and son, mother and daughter, brother and brother, brother and sister, sister and sister, husband and wife and so on.

It also belongs to the play, as Hamlet says, “to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image”. By virtue here is meant moral virtue which Shakespeare understands in the same way as Aristotle does in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, to be a golden mean between two vices. In *The Taming of the Shrew,* Act I, Sc. 1:

> .....for the time I study
> Virtue and that part of philosophy
> Will I apply that treats of happiness
> By virtue especially to be achieved.

And in the *Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Sc. 2, he puns upon the *mean* character of virtue which leads to happiness:

> they are as sick that surfeit with too much, as
> they that starve with nothing. It is no mean
> happiness, therefore, to be seated in the mean.

By *scorn*, Shakespeare touches upon vice or moral vice which is opposed to moral virtue. Two figures of speech are involved here. Scorn, being an effect of pride, can stand for pride by metonymy. Two passages follow where Shakespeare touches upon the connection of scorn with pride. The first is from *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act III, Sc. 1:

> But nature never fram'd a woman's heart
> Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice
> Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes.

And in *Troilus & Cressida*, Act I, Sc. 3, Hector:

> What glory our Achilles shares from Hector.
> Were he not proud, we all shou'd wear with him:
> But he already is too insolent;
> And we were better parch in Afric sun
> Than in the pride and salt scorn of his eyes.

And since pride had long been known to Christendom as the queen of the vices, it very appropriately can stand by synecdoche for moral vice. This fits in with our experience of Shakespeare's works where, of course, moral vice as well as virtue are represented (how could any great work of literature fail to do both?) and the context where scorn is juxtaposed to virtue.

Finally, Hamlet indicates that a play is a likeness of an age or that it shows "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure". This is one reason why Hamlet says that one must treat the players or actors well (*Hamlet,* Act II, Sc. 2):

> Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed?
> Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the
> abstract and brief chronicles of the time. After your
> death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill
> report while you live.

Although Shakespeare uses the words *nature*, *virtue* and *scorn* standing for vice, we should not conclude from this that he thinks that a play is more a likeness of forms or dispositions or qualities than of acts or deeds. He goes on with his thought in Act III, Sc. 2 to criticize actors:

> O, there be players, that I have seen play and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of Nature's journeymen had made men, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

In this passage, he is speaking of what they do. He uses the words *nature*, *virtue* etc. rather than natural, virtuous etc. because of the personification necessary to go well with his mirror metaphor. But since the whole passage indicates that he is concerned with the likness of deeds as well as of dispositions and this agrees with our experience of his works and it is impossible to represent dispositions except through words and deeds (hence, we divide a play into acts, not into dispositions or qualities), we can state more explicitly that a play is a likeness of what is natural and unnatural, virtuous or vicious, and customary in an age in human deeds and dispositions (or acts and qualities). We have added *unnatural* for Shakespeare often represents doing that are clearly seen as unnatural and even called so. But the unnatural should be represented as such. For example, the famous lines in *Macbeth*, Act V, Sc. 1:

> .....unnatural deeds
> Do breed unnatural troubles.

And in *Richard III*, Act I, Sc. 2:

Anne	For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood
to	From cold and empty veins, where no blood dwells;
Richard	Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural
	Provokes this deluge most unnatural

An experience of the plays reveals that nature is seen as the measure of virtue and vice. And there are many passages that touch upon this explicitly as in those just quoted from *Macbeth* and *Richard III*. Here are some other key pasages that speak most eloquently on nature as the measure of virtue and vice. It is important to recall that the word *nature* first meant birth and that Shakespeare always stays

close to the original meaning or, at least, has it in mind. A first passage is from *As You Like It*, Act II, Sc. 1 (lines 15-17):

> And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
> Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones and good in every thing.

A second passage is from *Romeo & Juliet*, Act II, Sc. 2 (lines 13-16):

> For nought so vile that on the earth doth live
> But to the earth some special good doth give.
> Nor aught so good but strain'd from that fair use
> Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse.

A third passage is from *King Lear,* Act IV, Sc. 2:

> .....O Goneril
> You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
> Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:
> That nature, which contemns its origin,
> Cannot be border'd certain in itself;
> She that herself will sliver and disbranch
> From her material sap, perforce must wither
> And come to deadly use.

And a fourth passage from *Coriolanus,* Act V, Sc. 3:

> My wife comes foremost; then the honour'd mold
> Wherein this trunk was framed, and in her hand
> The grand child to her blood. But out, affection!
> All bond and privilege of nature, break!
> Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.
> What is that curtsy worth? or those doves' eyes,
> Which can make gods forsworn? I melt, and am not
> Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows;
> As if Olympus to a molehill should
> In supplication nod: and my young boy
> Hath an aspect of intercession, whih
> Great nature cries 'Deny not'. Let the Volsces
> Plough Rome, and harrow Italy: I'll never
> Be such a gosling to obey instinct; but stand.
> As if a man were author of himself
> And knew no other kin.

And a fifth passage (as above) from *Macbeth,* Act V, Sc. 1:

.....unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles.

And war and especially fighting against one's own country are unnatural. *Henry V,* Act V, Sc. 2, Burgundy about war's effects:

And everything that seems unnatural

Henry VI, Part I, Act III, Sc. 3:

Pucelle: Behold the wounds, the most unnatural wounds,
Which thou thyself hast given her woeful breast.

The vice of avarice is seen as corrupting nature in *Henry IV, Part II,* Act IV, Sc. 4:

How quickly nature falls into revolt
When gold becomes her object

The investigation so far then has reached this point. A Shakespearean play is a likeness or imitation of what is natural and unnatural, virtuous and vicious, and customary in human deeds and dispositions. But this is not the whole truth. We must balance the statement that a play is an imitation and also the statement that it is an imitation of what is natural and unnatural etc.

Act II, Sc. 2 of *Hamlet* supplies balance to the passage in Act III, Sc. 2, that the play is a mirror and an imitation. When Hamlet upbraids himself alone at the end of the act for lacking the passion which the actor has in reciting the lines from a play, he calls the play a *dream* and a *fiction*:

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit etc.

He calls the play a *dream* and a *fiction*. *Dream* is the metaphor and *fiction* is the proper or non-figurative word for what he wants to express here about the play. *Dream* balances *mirror* and *fiction, imitation,* in the passage from Act III, Sc. 2. Shakespeare ‘s care is remarkable in these two passages to express himself both with a metaphor and with the non-figurative word.

What is the difference between calling a play a *dream* and a *mirror*? A mirror is a work of reason and art. And we expect a mirror to show us as we are. And this is the good of reason: to know things as they are, to know the truth. But the dream is a work of the imagination, not measured by the real world through the senses. We do not look for truth from dreams. As the Poet says in *Sonnet 87:*

> Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter
> In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.

And likewise, we do not look for truth from the imagination. Hence, Marcellus says in Act I, Sc. 1 of Horatio's disbelief in the apparitions of the ghost of Hamlet's father:

> Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,
> And will not let belief take hold of him.

But in the play that is called a dream, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act V, Sc. 1), the often quoted words of Shakespeare point to the imagination as more characteristic of the poet than reason:

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.

Twelfth Night touches upon the name of the above play and madness when Olivia says about Malvolio in Act III, Sc. 4:

> Why, this is very midsummer madness

And the puzzled Sebastian also says (*Twelfth Night,* Act IV, Sc. 1):

> What relish is in this? How runs the stream?
> Or I am mad, or else this is a dream.
> Let fancy still my sense in Lethe steep;
> If it be thus to dream, still let me sleep

For reasons similar to those of Sebastian, the audience also wants an *imaginative* likeness.

It is not by chance that the lover is described as blind and that Homer represents the poet as blind - for both work out of their imagination. Hence, Shakespeare also calls the play a *fiction* for a fiction is something made up by the imagination and is not true. *Fiction* and *feign* come from the same root in Latin and Shakespeare also uses the word *feigning* describing poetry as not being a true thing. In *As You Like It*, Act III, Sc. 2, the following dialogue brings this out:

Touchstone:	I would the gods had made thee poetical.
Audrey:	I do not know what "poetical" is: is it honest in deed and word? is it a true thing?
Touchstone:	No, truly, for the truest poetry is the most feigning; and lovers are given to poetry, and what they swear in poetry may be said as lovers they do feign.

But if the poet is characterized by imagination more than by reason and "the truest poetry is the most feigning," then the play is more a dream and a fiction than a mirror and an imitation. Yet every reader of Shakespeare's plays knows also that they are a mirror and an imitation. As Heminge and Condell said, Shakespeare was "a happy imitator of Nature...a most gentle expresser of it." It seems then that for Shakespeare a play should be both a dream and a mirror. What does this mean? Perhaps it could be stated briefly by saying that the play should be an *imaginative likeness* of nature etc., a made-up likeness An imaginative likeness is both a mirror and a dream. I think that all great poets have to some extent realized the necessity of making something that is at the same time both a mirror and a dream and that lesser or defective poets have not seen the necessity of both. An example of each of these. Knight quotes Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1817, Vol. II, p. 15) in a supplementary note in the second volume of the *Imperial Edition of Shakespeare* (p. 671R):

> During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry - the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination.

These two cardinal points of poetry here correspond to mirror and dream, for the mirror involves "a faithful adherence to the truth of nature" and the dream brings in "the modifying colours of the imagination." But some poets and artists attempt to avoid imitation and end up with a lifeless work. An interesting passage in the dialogues of Paul VI with Jean Guitton (*The Pope Speaks,* Meredith Press, N. Y., p. 209) - Paul VI is speaking:

> And I myself also am troubled, my heart bleeds, when I see contemporary art detach itself from humanity, from life. Sometimes certain of our artists seem to forget that art must express things. Sometimes it is impossible to know what it says. It is the Tower of Babel, It is chaos, confusion...When I said this one day to some artist friends, they replied, "Whose fault is that? You impressed on us the rule of imitation. We are not imitators, we are creators."

Whoever these artist friends were, they obviously did not understand the two cardinal points of poetry or the necessity of the play or work of art being an imaginative likeness. To try to choose between being an imitator and a creator is a great mistake for the artist. The word *creation* is opposed to imitation, just as fiction is opposed to imitation. Because it is not based on things or reality, the work of the imagination, its fiction, is sometimes called a *creation*. Creation in its theological sense gives existence to what was nothing before creation. And in the passage on the poet, the lover and the madman being made of imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Act V, Sc. 1), Shakespeare says:

> And, as the imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

When the Queen in *Hamlet* (Act III, Sc. 4) thinks Hamlet to be mad when seeing his father's ghost (which she does not see), she says:

> This is the very coinage of your brain.
> This bodiless creation ecstasy
> Is very cunning in.

The poet is not only an imitator, but also a maker by his imagination. At first sight, these two things seem to be opposed. The imitator strives to be true to his original while the one who works by his imagination strives to be original, to make something that may have nothing quite like it in the real world. Perhaps all great

poets have striven to reconcile these two aspects or to strike the proper balance or ratio of them.

The good maker of fiction knows how to make his work both a mirror and a dream, both an imitation and a fiction. Some works achieve this balance more than others. Some movies on individual men like Roosevelt, Truman or MacArthur would seem to aim more at imitation, an exact copy of the original while in the works of Edgar Allen Poe there is an emphasis on imagination. But Shakespeare combines both in a superlative way. Sometimes inferior artists want to choose, when the problem is, as Coleridge and Wordsworth saw, to combine them in the right way. Some want to choose between the imitator (who is closer to copying) and the creator (who works out of his imagination, but lacks, to quote Coleridge, “the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature."). To try to choose between being an imitator and a creator is a great mistake for the artist.

We must also balance the statement that a play is likeness of the natural, of virtue and vice, and of the customs of the age. If we consider the lines towards the end of *Hamlet* (Act V, Sc. 2), we see that the accidental and chance event are also found in the poet's work:

Hamlet: You that look pale and tremble at this chance

Horatio: And let me speak to th' yet unknowing world
How these things came about. So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on th'inventors' heads.

And the accidental points sometimes to a cause higher than nature. *Measure for Measure*, Act IV, Sc. 3:

O, 'tis an accident that heaven provides.

And in the *Tempest* (Act V, Sc. 1), Alonso says:

This is as strange a maze as ere men trod,

> And there is in this business more than nature
> Was ever conduct of! Some oracle
> Must rectify our knowledge

Experience of the plays reveals what an important role fortune plays in them. And there are many references to this in the plays themselves. But Hamlet does not mention this in his description of the purpose of playing. He does not say that the mirror is held up to fortune and misfortune. But there is a good reason for this. Fortune and misfortune do not enter into the order of nature, virtue and vice, and what is customary in an age. For nature is the measure of virtue and vice and these in turn determine the character of an age. But nature does not measure fortune, or fortune, nature. Likewise, virtue and vice do not measure fortune and misfortune or vice-versa, or determine their character. In regard to fortune and misfortune in the play, we can first consider Shakespeare's understanding of the distinction between nature and fortune and what fortune is and then some places where it is spoken of as having a role in our life or in the play. Closely related to fortune is fate and also hints to divine providence extending even to these events of fortune. The reason why fortune may be united with divine providence is that mind or reason can unite what are accidental. Reason could give a name to white logician. We can begin with a passage from *King John,* Act III, Sc. 1 where Shakespeare touches upon nature and fortune as being distinct causes:

> But thou art fair, and at thy birth, dear boy,
> Nature and Fortune join'd to make thee great:
> Of Nature's gifts thou mayst with lilies boast
> And with the half-blown rose. But Fortune O,
> She is corrupted, changed and won from thee;
> She adulterates hourly with thine uncle John,
> And with her golden hand hath pluck'd on France
> To tread down fair respect of sovereignty
> And made his majesty the bawd to theirs.
> France is a bawd to fortune and king John
> That strumpet Fortune, that usurping John!

Since nature is determined to one, nature is not at all like a strumpet. When Aufidius speaks of Coriolanus' down fall and discusses several possible causes, he touches upon nature being determined to one (*Coriolanus,* Act IV, sc. 7):

> First, he was
> A noble servant to them, but he could not
> Carry his honours even: whether 'twas pride,
> Which out of daily fortune ever taints

> The happy man; whether defect of judgment
> To fail in the disposing of those chances
> Which he was lord of; or whether nature,
> Not to be other than one thing, not moving
> From the casque to the cushion, but commanding peace
> Even with the same austerity and garb
> As he controll'd the war.....

The above text also touches on the distinction of will and reason from nature. It is not a defect of nature to be determined to one.

Another passage on fortune itself in *King Henry V,* Act III, Sc. 6:

> Fortune is painted blind, with a muffler afore her eyes,to signify to you that Fortune is blind; and she is painted also with a wheel, to signify to you, which is the moral of it, that she is turning, and inconstant, and mutability, and variation.

In the above, we see a distinction between reason, the eye of the soul, and fortune which is painted blind. Order in human life, which is an effect of reason, is opposed to the serious haps. Lucius has the last words of the play in *Titus Andronicus,* Act V, Sc. 3:

> See justice done on Aaron, that damn'd Moor,
> By whom our heavy haps had their beginning.
> Then afterwards, to order well the state,
> That like events may ne'er it ruinate.

And since order belongs to wisdom, similar lines are found in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act III, Sc. 2, (lines 80-83):

> Wisdom and fortune combating together,
> If that the former dare but what it can,
> No chance may shake it.

To the extent that something is subject to reason, it is not subject to fortune. (Thomas, I believe touches upon this in II *Natural Hearing*) If fortune is important for the emotional effect of tragedy, then the tragic character must not be expecially characterized by reason. Or if he is rather reasonable, like Hamlet, one can write some play(s) in which even such a man is unable to anticipate what happens.

And in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Sc. 5, Juliet:

> O fortune, fortune; all men call thee fickle.

And in *Hamlet*, Act III, sc. 2:

> Fortune...is a strumpet.

And in *Timon of Athens,* Act V, Sc. 1 (lines 196-197 & 202-207):

> But yet I love my country, and am not
> One that rejoices in the common wrack
>
> .....Commend me to them;
> And tell them, that, to ease them of their griefs,
> Their fears of hostile strokes, their aches, losses
> Their pangs of love, with other incident throes
> That nature's fragile vessel doth sustain
> In life's uncertain voyage, I will some kindness do them.

This is a common image for the uncertainty of life which fortune has much to do with: "nature's fragile vessel" in "life's uncertain voyage." Which is of chief interest in drama; "nature's fragile vessel" or "life's uncertain voyage"? Is not the vessel, however interesting in itself, for the sake of the voyage? Are we not chiefly interested in Columbus' voyage, not his boats? Hence also the great line in *Cymbeline,* Act IV, Sc. 3, line 46:

> Fortune brings in some boats that are not steer'd.

Life's uncertain voyage is in search of happiness which is the port we are trying to reach. In *The Taming of the Shrew,* Act I, Sc. 1:

> And happily I have arriv'd at last
> Unto the wished haven of my bliss.

But not to reach that port is to suffer shipwreck or misery. The English word *wretched* is related to shipwreck. Consider Henry's words in *Henry VI, Part One*, Act V, Sc. 1, (lines 1-9):

> Your wonderous rare description, noble earl,
> Of beauteous Margaret hath astonish'd me:
> Her virtues, graced with external gifts

Do breed love's settled passions in my heart:
And like as rigour of tempestuous gusts
Provokes the mightiest hulk against the tide,
So I am driven by breath of her renown
Either to suffer shipwrack, or arrive
Where I may have fruition of her love.

And when Romeo is about to take his life in *Romeo and Juliet,* Act V, Sc. 3, lines 116-120:

Come, bitter conduct, come unsavoury guide!
Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark!
Here's to my love.(drinks) O true apothecary!
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

And the famous lines in *Julius Caesar,* Act IV, Sc. 3 (lines 217-220):

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Again, in *Titus Andronicus*, Act II, sc. 1, Aaron about Tamora:

This Syren, that will charm Rome's Saturnine,
And see his shipwrack, and his commonweal's.

And in Act IV, Sc. 4, Tamora says:

But, Titus, I have touch'd thee to the quick,
Thy life-blood out; if Aaron now be wise.
Then is all safe, the anchor's in the port.

Sometimes fate is brought in as a cause of one's voyage, as in *Othello*, Act V, Sc. 2, (lines 265-268):

Who can control his fate? 'Tis not so now.
Be not afraid, though you do see me weapon'd.
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.

And sometimes there is a reference of God's providence, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, Sc. 5 , Romeo:

> I fear too early: for my mind misgives
> Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
> Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
> With this night's revels and expire the term
> Of a despised life closed in my breast,
> By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
> But He, that hath the steerage of my course,
> Direct my sail!

The connection between fortune and divine providence in seen in two quotes from *Cymbeline*. The first in Act IV, Sc. 3:

> Fortune brings in some boats that are not steer'd.

And in Act V, Sc. 5:

> The fingers of the powers above do tune
> The harmony of this peace.

And in punishment, the judgment of God is seen. In *King Lear*, Act V, Sc. 3, Albany says on the miserable end of Goneril and Regan:

> Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead.
> This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,
> Touches us not with pity

Sometimes a character in a play is in a position like God or the poet overseeing contingent events. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Act IV, Sc. 3:

> All hid, all hid, an old infant play.
> Like a demigod here I sit in the sky,
> And wretched fools' secrets heedfully o'er-eye.

But sometimes misfortune is attributed to the stars or planets. *Henry VI, Part I*, Act I, Sc. 1:

> What! Shall we curse the planets of mishap
> That plotted thus our glory's overthrow?

(The word "plotted" should be thought about in this quote.)

A sea-voyage was, of course, much more uncertain in Shakespeare's time than in our own. (Hence, the custom of laying down money against another's return from a voyage.) The image of the ship is very suggestive, in English especially. Our native word for misery is *wretchedness*. A wretch is orignally an exile, someone driven out. It is connected etymologically with wreck and with something driven out by the sea - a ship-wreck. The wretched Boethius, in the beginning of the *Consolation of Philosophy*, is described by Lady Philosophy as an exile, having been driven out of his true country, reason The saints refer to this life as an exile, as in the Hail, Holy queen: "and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus." We speak metaphorically of the ship of state.

A play is a likeness of human happiness and wretchedness and of the passage from one to the other. And the very words happiness and wretchedness point to the importance of fortune or luck or hap in those passages. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* Act I, Sc. 1, Proteus says:

> Wilt thou be gone? Sweet Valentine, adieu!
> Think on thy Proteus, when thou haply seest
> Some rare note-worthy object in thy travel:
> Wish me partaker in thy happiness,
> When thou dost meet good hap.....

And in *Titus Andronicus*, Act I, Sc. 1, the speech of Marcus:

> And welcome, nephews, from successful wars:
> You that survive, and you that sleep in fame!
> Fair Lords, your fortunes are alike in all,
> That in your country's service drew your swords:
> But safer triumph is this funeral pomp,
> That hath aspired to Solon's happiness,
> And triumphs over chance in honour's bed.

The opposite of happiness in English is wretchedness. OE *wrecan* means to drive out. From this comes a *wretch,* one driven out, an exile, a fugitive. Akin to OE wrecan is OE *wrek,* wrec meaning something driven ashore from the sea, a wreck, whence, in fact, wreck. These combine nicely in the metaphor of life as a sea-voyage. See the water washed grave of Timon of Athens (in *Timon of Athens*, Act V, Sc. 4):

> Here lies a wretched corse, of wretched soul bereft.

But there are many other references to wretchedness that may not use the sea-image as in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act V, Sc. 1:

> Art thou so bare and full of wretchedness
> And fear'st to die?

But it is important to see the connection of these words with unhappy or unlucky or unfortunate in life. Lady Capulet's words bring together many of these in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act IV, Sc. 5:

> Accurst, unhappy, wretched, hateful day!
> Most miserable hour that e'er time saw.

And the connection between happiness and luck or fortune or chance as in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act I, Sc. 1 (lines 61-62):

Proteus: All happiness bechance to thee in Milan!

Valentine: As much to you at home! and so, farewell.

Or in *Romeo and Juliet,* Act III, Sc. 4:

> Every good hap to you that chances here.

Or the link of unhappy and unlucky as in *Titus Andronicus*, Act II, Sc. 4, Martius says:

> The unhappy son of old Andronicus,
> Brought hither in a most unlucky hour
> To find thy brother Bassianus dead.

Happily can mean perhaps as in *The Taming of the Shrew* (Act IV, Sc. 2):

Baptista: Besides , old Gremio is heark'ning still,
And happily we might be interrupted

And in *Hamlet,* Act III, Sc. 1:

> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune

It is significant that Aristotle uses the word *eutuxia* in the *Poetics* rather than *eudaimonia* as in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. *Eutuxia* emphasizes the role of luck or fortune in human affairs and in achieving happiness. And likewise the use of the word *dustuxia* for ill fortune or misfortune or unhappiness which also indicate the role of bad luck or fortune in becoming miserable or wretched. *Eudaimonia* points to the role of a higher being. *Felicitas,* the Latin word, seems to suggest that happiness is the result of our actions and our virtue. As in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act I, Sc. 1 (lines 17-20):

> .....for the time I study
> Virtue and that part of philosophy
> Will I apply that treats of happiness
> By virtue especially to be achieved.

And in *The Merchant of Venice,* Act I, Sc. 2 (lines 5-8):

> they are as sick that surfeit with too much,
> as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean
> happiness, therefore, to be seated in the mean.

A play would be uninteresting if it simply represented the good as achieving happiness by their virtue and the bad as becoming miserable by their vice. The play may do this to some extent. (Did Plato or Socrates in the *Republic* demand this too much of the poet?) There is surely an interesting example of this summed up in the lines from *Macbeth*, Act V, Sc. 1, (lines 74-75):

> .....Unnatural deeds
> Do breed unnatural troubles.

The above line speaks of misery as the natural result of bad acts. By their fruits you shall know them. But properly speaking, we have a fruit of our actions only when they are good and in accord with nature. And thus in *The Taming of the Shrew,* Act V, Sc. 1, it is said with the brevity of wisdom by Petruchio:

> Marry, peace it bodes, and love, and quiet life,
> An awful rule and right supremacy;
> And, to be short, what not that's sweet and happy.

A fruit is something *ultimum* (last) and *delectabile* (pleasant or sweet) as Aquinas explains the word fruit in the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Woe, misery or misfortune can be called sour or bitter *(Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Sc. 2, Juliet):

.....Tybalt's death
Was woe enough, if it had ended there:
Or, if sour woe delights in fellowship...

And in Act V, Sc. 3. Romeo to the slain Paris:

One writ with me in sour misfortune's book.

A DIGRESSION ON SOME LATIN WORDS:

fors : chance, luck
forsitan (fors sit an) : perhaps
fortasse: perhaps
fortuna: luck, fortune, lot fate
fortunatus: happy, lucky, fortunate

felix: I. fruitful, fertile II, fortunate, lucky, happy
felicitas: fertility II. happiness, felicity, good fortune

misereo : to pity, have compassion on
miser : pitiable, miserable, wretched, unhappy, unfortunate
miseria: wretchedness, unhappiness, misery
misericordia:: pity, compassion, mercy

(If mercy differs at all from pity, mercy is more in the will and implies the capacity to help or relieve misery.)

The word eudaimonia, although signifying a dependence upon a superior being, is perhaps more easily combined with luck and fate than is felicity.

See *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act II, Sc. 3:

Antony: Say to me, whose fortunes shall rise higher,
Caesar's or mine?

Soothsayer: Caesar's.
Therefore, O Antony, stay not by his side:
Thy demon, that's thy spirit which keeps thee, is
Noble, courageous, high, unmatchable,
Where Caesar's is not; but near him, thy angel
Becomes a fear, as being o'erpower'd: therefore
Make space enough between you.

Antony: Speak this no more.

Soothsayer: To none but thee; no more but when to thee.
If thou dost play with him at any game,
Thou art sure to lose; and of that natural luck,
He beats thee 'gainst the odds: thy lustre thickens
When he shines by: i say again, thy spirit
Is all afraid to govern thee near him,
But he away, 'tis noble. (Exit soothsayer)

Antony: .....Be it art or hap,
He hath spoken true: the very dice obey him,
And in our sports my better cunning faints
Under his chance: if we draw lots, he speeds;
His cocks do win the battle still of mine
When it is all to nought, and his quails ever
Beat mine, inhoop'd, at odds.

But to a man like Boethius or Horatio (in Hamlet's description of him), fortune and misfortune have little power. *Hamlet* , Act III, Sc. 2:

A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingle
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave.....

We cannot have "Adversity's sweetmilk, philosophy."(*Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Sc. 3) Rather we need a man who will be affected by (Hamlet, Act III, sc. 1) "The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune". As Alcibiades seeks to excuse his friend (*Timon of Athens*, Act III, sc. 5):

It pleases time and fortune to lie heavy
Upon a friend of mine, who in hot blood
Hath stepp'd into the law.....
He is a man, setting his fate aside,
Of comely virtue.

Happiness and unhappiness are especially seen to be an effect of fortune if happiness is identified with the goods of fortune. *Timon of Athens*, Act III, Sc. 2:

Lord Timon's happy hours are done and past,

And his estate shrinks from him.

Likewise, in *Timon of Athens,* Act IV, Sc. 3, Flavius says:

O, the fierce wretchedness that glory brings us!
Who would not wish to be from wealth exempt
Since riches point to misery and contempt?

And in Act IV, Sc. 3, Timon says:

Here, take: the gods out of my misery
Have sent thee treasure. Go, live rich and happy.

The importance of luck or fortune in a plot is very prominent in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* which begins and ends on that note. In Act I, Sc. 1, of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Proteus says:

Wilt thou be gone? Sweet Valentine, adieu!
Think on thy Proteus, when thou haply seest
Some rare note-worthy object in thy travel:
Wish me partaker in thy happiness,
When thou dost meet good hap.....

And the last words of the play (in Act V, Sc. 4) are spoken by Valentine, the other gentleman of Verona:

Please you, I'll tell you as we pass along,
That you will wonder what hath fortuned...
Come, Proteus, 'tis your penance but to hear
The story of your loves discovered:
That done, our day of marriage shall be yours;
One feast, one house, one mutual happiness.

The story of love or romantic love especially lends itself to events by luck or fortune. Troilus says the famous line in *Troilus and Cressida,* Act IV, Sc. 5 (line 294):

But still sweet love is food for Fortune's tooth.

We need think only of Tristan and Isolt. The man (or woman) who lives by his passions, as does the lover especially, is food for fortune's tooth. Lodovico notes the effect of this on Othello in Act IV, Sc. of *Othello*:

Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate
Calls all in all sufficient? This the nature
Whom passion could not shake? whose solid virtue
The shot of accident nor dart of chance
Could neither graze nor pierce?

In that play that emphasizes fortune and misfortune so much, *Titus Andronicus* (Act III, Sc. 2, Titus says to Lavinia:

I'll to thy closet; and go read with thee
Sad stories chanced in the times of old.

A play represents the change for happiness to misery or from misery to happiness. The three main causes are fortune, choice and nature. (God is a cause before all three of these.) In *The Merchant of Venice*, Act III, Sc. 2:

And hold your fortune for your bliss

WELL DIGESTED IN THE SCENES

What is first to be note in the passage is that the excellence of this play is judged on the part of what it imitates and on the part of that in which it imitates. And on the part of what it imitates, the judgment is made on the basis of the plot rather than the characters. The word *digested* is explained in the Yale Shakespeare as *arranged* which clearly refers to the plot. Shakespeare himself couples indigested with deformed. in *Henry VI, Part III* (Act V, Sc. 6):

an indigested and deformed lump

And consequently he would think of digested as going with formed. But the form of a play is its order or plot, just as the scholastics called the order of a book the *forma tractatus*. And Shakespeare himself speaks this way in *Richard III*, Act III, Sc. 1:

We may digest our complots in some form.

And in *King John*, Act V, Sc. 7, lines 25-27:

Be of good comfort; for you are born
To set a form upon that indigest
Which he hath left so shapeless and so rude.

(Note 26-27 indigest ...rude. So is Ovid's description of chaos: "Quem dixere Chaos, rudis indigestaque moles." Chaos has for us the sense of something disordered unlike the plot which should be ordered. The Yale Shakespeare note on *digested* is this "*digested*: ordered")

The phrase *well digested in the scenes* then clearly refers to the excellence of the plot.

Likewise, in *Henry VI, Part III* (Act V, Sc. 1), Clifford says to Richard (the hunchback, with a withered arm, the future Richard III);

Hence, heap of wrath, foul indigested lump,
As crooked in thy manners as thy shape.

A *heap* has no order. And since order is one of the three main species of the beautiful, the foul is disordered. (Richard also lacks the other two species, lacking in symmetry and moderation - hence, *lump). Order*, is defined by before and after and these define beginning, middle and end which the plot of a play should have. (Shakespeare understood this, of course, as we can see in Signior Baptista.)

The digested plot is tying a knot (or knots) and untying it (them). In *Twelfth Night*, Act II, Sc. 2 (lines 40-41), Viola touches upon this in the very plot of that play:

O Time, thou must untangle this, not I
It is too hard a knot for me t'untie.

And in *All's Well That Ends Well*, Act I, Sc. 3 (lines 189-190), the Countess says to Helena as the plot of that story developes:

.....Speak, is't so?
If it be so, you have wound a goodly clew.

(Study the word clew - original and later meanings)

And in regard to the plot to reveal Parolles in *All's Well That Ends Well*, Act IV, Sc. 3 (lines 362-364):

Inter: You are undone, captain, all but

Your scarf; that has a knot on't yet.

Parolles: Who cannot be crushed with a plot?

In regard to Aristotle's remark that the plot is the soul of the play, the words of Cleopatra to the asp are interesting (*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act V, Sc. 2, lines 308-311):

.....Come, thou mortal wretch,
With thy sharp teeth this knot intrinsicate
Of life at once untie: poor venomous fool,
Be angry, and dispatch.

SET DOWN WITH AS MUCH MODESTY AS CUNNING

The opening words of the next phrase *set down* also refer to the plot. They are like the phrase *where we lay our scene*. which Shakespeare uses in his Prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* A plot has some resemblance to an argument in logic where something is laid down or set down, and something else follows (as in the definition of syllogism). Hence, the summary of the plot of a play is sometimes called the argument of the play. See also *The Merry Wives of Windsor*:

Act III, Sc. 2:

Good plots! they are laid

Act III, Sc 3:

I will lay a plot to try that.

Act IV, Sc. 4:

But let our plot go forward.

Reason also in argument goes forward by laying down some statement from which another follows.

The next part of this phrase that the play or its scenes were *set down with as much modesty as cunning*, reminds one with its words *with as much modesty* of the words in the passage in Act III, Sc. 2: *o'erstep not the modesty of nature*. The

reason given there is that the play is a likeness of nature. (Even in representing the unnatural, one must avoid excess as the doctor says about Lady Macbeth *unnatural deeds do breed unnatural troubles*. Even the unnatural or the wicked must have some limit or it would destroy itself.)

But one can also apply modesty to how much should be put into a plot. This is close to the vegetative use of the word. In the Prologue to *Troilus & Cressida*:

> To what may be digested in a play.

The word *cunning* refers to work of reason and art more than the imitation of nature. The Yale Shakespeare note has this: "*modesty*: moderation " and "*cunning*: skill in technique) Kittredge's note is simply this: "*cunning*: skill".

Or it can be understood to refer to the work of the imagination as in the opening words about a play being an imaginative likeness. The play is a fiction, a dream, a work of the imagination to some extent. Hamlet says:

> Is it not monstrous that this player here,
> But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,

And note the word *cunning* in the following words in *Hamlet*, Act II, Sc. 4:

> This is the very coinage of your brain,
> This bodiless creation ecstasy
> Is very cunning in.

Ecstasy, which here means madness, reminds us of the key passage from A *Midsummer Night's Dream* comparing the lover, the madman and the poet because they all work out of the imagination. The word *creation* also has become common now in speaking of the poet when he invents as it were out of nothing rather than imitating what he has seen. We see the word *creation* in the these words from *Macbeth*, Act II, Sc. 1:

> A false creation, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain.

In the magisterial words from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, lovers and madmen are said to have "such seething brains".

AN HONEST METHOD

Washington Irving, *Life of George Washington*, Part Fifth, Chapter Thirty (pp. 348-349), from Washington's Letter to Hamilton about his desire for the style of his Farewell Address:

> "My wish is, that the whole may appear in a plain style; and be handed to the public in an honest, unaffected, simple garb."

and Irving commenting on the speech writes in the same place:

> The address certainly breathes his spirit throughout, is in perfect accordance with his words and actions, and, "in an honest, unaffected, simple garb," embodies the system of policy on which he acted throughout his administration.

AS WHOLESOME AS SWEET

"As wholesome as sweet" could refer to the union or balance of what is morally healthy with what is beautiful to the senses and imagination. The plays of Shakespeare move us to the principal passions in a most healthy and reasonable way.

The art of the playwright is not like that of the cook whose purpose is to please the body while another art, the medical art, is concerned with the health or good disposition of the body. The art of the playwright aims at both pleasing the audience and leading them into what is virtuous or good through a suitable representation. But it is more necessary and more known to us and more openly spoken of by the poet that he is trying to please us.

The last lines of *Twelfth Night*:

> A great while ago the world begun
> With hey, ho, the wind and the rain;
> But that’s all one, our play is done,
> And we’ll strive to please you every day.

And the Epilogue spoken by the king in *All's Well That Ends Well*:

> The king's a beggar, now the play is done:
> All is well ended if this suit be won,
> That you express content; which we will pay,
> With strife to please you, day exceeding day:
> Ours be your patience then, and yours our parts;
> Your gentle hands lend us, and take our hearts.

And the Epilogue spoken by Prospero in *The Tempest*:

> Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
> And what strength I have's mine own,
> Which is most faint. Now, 'tis true,
> I must be here confin'd by you
> Or sent to Naples. Let me not,
> Since I have my dukedom got
> And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell
> In this bare island by your spell,
> But release me from my bands
> With the help of your good hands!
> Gentle breath of yours my sails
> Must fill or else my project fails
> Which was to please.....

Why is a Shakespearean play pleasing?

We should first recall that likeness or imitation is naturally pleasing for the reasons given by Aristotle in his book *About the Poetic Art*.

Further, since it is pleasing to the ear and the imagination and reason, it is necessarily beautiful. And since the main forms of the beautiful are order, moderation, and symmetry, we have three possible reasons why his works are pleasing. The order in a play or a narrative poem (like *The Rape of Lucrece*) is called its plot, but there is also an order in a Sonnet. In *The Two Genlemen of Verona* (Act III, Sc. 2), Shakespeare speaks of the power of poetry:

> Much is the force of heaven-bred poesy

And much of this force comes from the plot, *All's Well That Ends Well*, Act IV, Sc. 3:

> Who cannot be crushed with a plot?

Hamlet's plan to catch the conscience of the king is to catch him by the plot, as he explains to Horatio (*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 2):

> There is a play tonight before the king;
> One scene of it comes near the circumstance
> Which I have told thee of my father's death:
> I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
> Even with the very comment of thy soul
> Observe mine uncle; if his occulted guilt
> Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
> It is a damned ghost that we have seen,
> And my imaginations are as foul
> As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;
> For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
> And after we will both our judgments join
> In censure of his seeming.

Shakespeare often speaks of the importance of moderation in the play. We have seen him praise above (*Hamlet,* Act II, Sc. 2) an excellent play as "set down with as much modesty as cunning" and tell the actors"o'erstep not the modesty of nature" and how the editors of the First Folio praise him as a "a happy imitator of nature... a most gentle expresser of it." And Hamlet gives this famous advice to the players (*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 2):

> Speak the speech, Ipray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus; but use all gently, for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness...Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor.

Hegel points out how Homer's similes contribute to a certain tranquility, even in terrible things. Shakespeare has achieved the same in the beautiful simile of her

father when Juliet is found apparently dead on her wedding-day (*Romeo and Juliet*, Act IV, Sc. 4):

> Death lies on her like an untimely frost
> Upon the sweetest flow'r of all the field.

There is, of course, an obvious symmetry in the Sonnets and a more involved one in the plays.

The words of Shakespeare are pleasing because of their meter, rhyme and alliteration, and even more so on account of the metaphors, similes and other figures of speech contained in them. There are also particular charms in his arrangement of words that are hard to describe, however they are sensed or felt.

There is also the chief pleasure of a play which comes from the purgation or catharis of the emotions. This catharsis is different in different kinds of plays.

Sidney in his *Apologie For Poetrie* says that "poesie is full of vertue-breeding delightfulness" and that it "doth intende the winning of the mind from wickedness to vertue: even as the childe is often brought to take most wholsom things by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant tast...So is it in men most of which are childish in the best things." Notice the words *wholsum* and *pleasant* and compare with Hamlet's words "As wholesome as sweet"

Coriolanus, Act II, Sc. 3, Menenius to Coriolanus:

> You'll mar all:
> I'll leave you: pray you, speak to 'em, I pray you,
> In wholesome manner.
>
> [Hudson Shakespeare note. 56. *wholesome*: reasonable. Cf. *Hamlet*, III, ii, 328: "make me a wholesome answer"]

PURGATION

Purgation is a word used first in medecine. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Helen, the daughter of a physician, eventually heals the sick king. In Act II, Sc. 1, lines 75-79, Lafeu says:

..... I have seen a medecine
That's able to breathe life into a stone,
Quicken a rock, and make you dance canary
With spritely fire and motion; whose simple touch
Is powerful to araise King Pepin.....

And Helen says to the King in the same Act II, Sc. 1 (lines 113-117):

And, hearing your high majesty is touch'd
With that malignant cause wherein the honour
Of my dear father's gift stands chief in power,
I come to tender it and my appliance
With all bound humbleness.

And later in the same scene (lines 170-171), Helen says to the sick king:

What is infirm from your sound parts shall fly.
Health shall live free and sickness freely die.

Purgation drives out what is bad from the body, leaving what is left healthy. Sometimes the air is thought to be unwholesome and in need of purgation. Portia says to Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, Act II, Sc. 1 (lines 263-267):

.....What! is Brutus sick,
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed
To dare the vile contagion of the night,
And tempt the rheumt and unpurged air
To add unto his sickness?"
(Yale Shakes. - unpurged ; unpurged by the sun)

(Notice the word *wholesome* for healthy here)

The word *purgation* is then carried over to the emotions as can be clearly seen in these passages. First in *Richard II,* Act I, Sc. 1 (lines 152-159):

Wrath-kindled gentlemen, be rul'd by me;
Let's purge this choler without letting blood.
This we prescribe, though no physician.
Deep malice makes too deep incision.
Forget, forgive, conclude and be agreed;
Our doctors say this is no month to bleed.
Good uncle, let this end where it begun;

We'll calm the duke of Norfolk, you your son.

And in *Richard II,* Act I, Sc. 3, lines 302-303:

Fell sorrow's tooth doth never rankle more
Than when he bites, but lanceth not the sore.

(rankle OED inflict a festering wound)

And in *Macbeth,* Act V, Sc. 3 (lines 37-47):

Macbeth: How does your patient, doctor?

Doctor: Not so sick, my lord,
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies
That keep her from her rest.

Macbeth: Cure her of that!
Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?

Doctor: Therein the patient
Must minister to himself.

Macbeth: Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it.

(Lady Macbeth is, of course, in need of a purgation of will as well as of emotion.)

Reason is to the emotions something like a doctor to the body. See *Sonnet 147*:

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease;
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.
My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
Desire is death, which physic did except.
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,

> And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;
> My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,
> At random from the truth vainly express'd.
> For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,
> Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

Since the plot is a work of reason in its order and the playwright represents more the universal than the singular, the play is able to be a tool of reason in purging the emotions of an unreasonable element in them. More. of course, is required for this purgation than these two facts.

The emotions can be purged. In *Richard III*, Act II, Sc. 1 (line 9):

> By heaven, my soul is purg'd from grudging hate.

And in *King Henry VI, Part II,* Act III, Sc. 3 (lines 19-23), the king prays about the dying Beaufort:

> O thou eternal Mover of the heavens!
> Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch;
> O! beat away the busy meddling fiend
> That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul,
> And from his bosom purge this black despair.

(In the above two quotes, hate and despair could also be taken as acts of the will.) And the King urges Hamlet to get rid of his sadness (*Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 2):

> We pray you, throw to earth
> This unprevailing woe.

For Hamlet's sadness seems to have gone to excess, as he himself describes it (*Hamlet*, Act II, Sc. 2):

> I have of late, - but wherefore I know not, - lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon

of animals. and yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me

And later in the same scene, Hamlet says:

.....The spirit that I have seen
May be a de'il, and the de'il hath power
T'assume a pleasing shape; - yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy
(As he is very potent with such spirits)
Abuses me to damn me.

An emotion can be purged in two ways. In one way by its outward expression. In another way, by the generation of another emotion; and this in two ways: either by the generation of an opposite emotion of a different kind or by the generation of an emotion of the same kind but with a different object.

The first way of purging an emotion is by its outward expression, as sadness is relieved by crying or anger by "letting off steam". In *Titus Andronicus* (Act II, Sc. 4, lines 36-37) it is said:

Sorrow conceal'd. like to an oven stopp'd,
Doth burn the heart to cinders where it is.

And in *Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 3 (lines 215-216 and 229-230):

Let's make us med'cines of our great revenge,
To cure this deadly grief.....

Be this the whetstone of you sword; let grief
Convert to anger, blunt not the heart, enrage it.

The above quotes however might seem to be touching upon purging by opposite emotion since the one who succeeds in revenge might rejoice.

Perhaps the first way is more clearly spoken of in this passage from *Macbeth*, Act IV, Sc. 3 (lines 208-210) where Malcom says to Macduff:

What, man! Ne'er pull your hat upon your brows.
Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it speak.

An emotion can also be purged by an opposite emotion of another kind. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Sc. 5 (lines 107-110), Lady Capulet says to Juliet:

> Well, well, thou hast a careful father child,
> One who, to put thee from thy heaviness,
> Hath sorted out a sudden day of joy,
> That thou expect'st not, nor I look'd not for.

And in *Richard II*, Act I, Sc. 2 (lines 292-293):

> For gnarling sorrow hath less power to bite
> The man that mocks at it and set it light.

And in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act IV, Sc. 10 (lines 126-129), about Cleopatra in regard to Antony:

> ..... .for when she saw -
> Which never shall be found - you did suspect
> She had dispos'd with Caesar, and that your rage
> Would not be purg'd, she sent you word she was dead.

But it is also possible to purge or drive out an emotion by another emotion of the same kind but with a different object. The lines of Brutus to Antony in *Julius Caesar,* Act III, Sc. 1 (lines 165-172):

> Though now we must appear bloody and cruel,
> As, by our hands and this our present act,
> You see we do, yet see you but our hands
> And this the bleeding business they have done:
> Our hearts you see not; they are pitiful;
> And pity to the general wrong of Rome -
> As fire drives out fire, so pity pity,
> Hath done this deed on Caesar.....

In a similar way, Romeo's love for Rosalind (unreturned) is driven out by his love for Juliet.

Because of the likeness of music and poetry, we can also look at the purgation which music effects. We can purge an emotion by an excess through music. In *Twelfth Night,* Act I, Sc. 1 (lines 1-3), the Duke says:

If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken and so die.

In *Henry VIII*, Act III, Sc. 1, Shakespeare seems to touch upon the purgation of sadness by generating a joy through sweet music:

Q. Katherine: Take thy lute, wench: my soul grows sad with troubles:
Sing, and disperse them if thou canst.

In song: In sweet music is such art:
Killing care and grief of heart.

Wolsley: We are to cure such sorrows, not to sow them.

And in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act III, Sc. 1 (lines 9-14), Lucentio:

Preposterous ass, that never read so far
To know the cause why music was ordain'd!
Was it not to refresh the mind of man
After his studies or his usual pain? [pains: toils]

Again *The Tempest*, Act I, Sc. 2 (lines 387-393), Ferdinand speaks of the effect of the music upon his passions, purging them by generating something opposed to them:

Where should this music be? i'th'air, or th'earth?
It sounds no more! And sure it waits upon
Some god o'th'island; sitting on a bank,
Weeping again the king my father's wrack,
This music crept by me upon the waters,
Allaying both their fury and my passion
With its sweet air.

Perhaps the purgation spoken of in *Twelfth Night*, Act II, Sc. 4 (lines 1-5). by the Duke, touches upon purgation by generating a more noble emotion than the one experienced before:

Give me some music. Now, good morrow, friends.
Now, good Cesario, but that piece of song,

> That old and antique song we heard last night.
> Methought it did relieve my passion much,
> More than light airs and recollected terms
> Of these most brisk and giddy-paced times.

The connection between music and poetry is touched upon many times by Shakespeare. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act III, Sc. 2 (lines 78-81):

> For Orpheus' lute was strong with poets' sinews,
> Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones
> Make tigers tame and huge leviathan
> Forsake unsounded depths to dance on sands.

Again since "music is the food of love", the following words not only in themselves, but also in their connection with music are of the greatest importance (*Love's Labour's Lost*, Act IV, Sc. 3):

> And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods
> Makes heaven drowsy with the harmony.
> Never durst poet touch a pen to write
> Until his ink were temper'd with Love's sighs;
> O! then his lines would ravish savage ears,
> And plant in tyrants mild humility.

Plato in the *Symposium* has also pointed to the connection of the poet with love. The connection of disordered and unreasonable passions with tyranny is in the proportion of the *Republic*. Paulina speaks of the king's passion in *The Winter's Tale*, Act II, Sc. 3 in these words:

> Fear you his tyrannous passion...

And in the same scene she speaks of purgation:

> I come to bring him sleep. "Tis such as you,
> That creep like shadows by him and do sigh
> At each his needlesss heavings, such as you
> Nourish the cause of his awaking: I
> Do come with words as med'cinal as true,
> Honest as either, to purge him of that humour
> That presses him from sleep.

The opposite of purgation can also be caused by words (*Coriolanus,* Act I, Sc. 3):

Volumnia: Let her alone, lady: as she is now she will but disease our better mirth.

Valeria: In truth, I think she would, Fare you well then. Come, good sweet lady. Prithee Virgilia, turn thy solemnness out o'door, and go along with us.

Virgilia: No, at a word, madam; indeed, I must not. I wish you good mirth.

We should note the contrast between good mirth and a diseased mirth. Beatrice and Benedick are merry in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Much Ado About Nothing Act II, Sc. 1:

Beatrice: I was born to speak all mirth and no matter

D. Pedro ...to be merry best becomes you; for, out of question you were born in a merry hour

Leonato: There's little of the melancholy element in her.

Much Ado About Nothing Act III, Sc. 1:

Hero about She would mock me into air: O! She would laugh me

Beatrice Out of myself, press me to death with wit.

Much Ado About Nothing Act III, Sc. 2:

Claudio: Nay, but his jesting spirit; which is now crept into a lute-string, and new governed by stops.

D. Pedro Indeed, that tells a heavy tale for him. Conclude, conclude he is in love.

N. Hudson: love songs were usually sung to the lute Cf. *I Henry IV,* I, 2, 84]

And here Claudio and Don Pedro seek purgation from their melancholy. *Much Ado About Nothing*, Act V, Sc. 1

Claudio to Benedick	We have been up and down to seek thee; for we are high-proof melancholy and would fain have it beaten away. [high-proof = in the highest degree}

Shakespeare also speaks about the purgation of the will. In *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 5 (lines 9-13), the Ghost says:

I am thy father's spirit,
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg'd away.

And when Hamlet delays taking the king's life at prayer (*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 5), he says:

.....And am I then reveng'd,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?

And Lady Macbeth is more in need of the purgation of the will than of the body, Hence, the doctor says (*Macbeth*, Act V, Sc. 1, lines 61, 74-78):

This disease is beyond my practice.....
Foul whisp'rings are abroad. Unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles. Infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.
More needs she the divine than the physician.
God, God forgive us all!

Finally there is a purgation of the city or nation. Brutus sees himself thus in *Julius Caesar* Act II, Sc. 1 (lines 177-180):

.....This shall make
Our purpose necessary and not envious;
Which so appearing to the common eyes,
We shall be call'd purgers, not murderers.

And in *Macbeth*, Act III, Sc. 4 (lines 75-76):

> Blood hath been shed ere now, i'th'olden time,
> Ere human statute purg'd the gentle weal.

And in *Macbeth*, Act V, Sc. 2, lines 25-30:

> Cathness: Well, march we on.
> To give obedience where 'tis truly ow'd.
> Meet we the med'cine of the sickly weal,
> And with him pour we in our country's purge
> Each drop of us.
>
> Lennox: Or so much as it needs
> To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds.

And the words of *Macbeth,* Act V, Sc. 3 (lines 50-56) spoken by Macbeth to the doctor:

> .....If thou couldst, doctor, cast
> The water of my land, find her disease,
> And purge it to a sound and pristine health,
> I would applaud thee to the very echo,
> That would applaud again. - Pull't off, I say -
> What rhubarb, cyme, or what purgative drug
> Would scour these English hence.

AND BY VERY MUCH MORE HANDSOME THAN FINE

Much more handsome than fine could refer to the difference we see between Shakespeare's lines and those of the 18th century., such as those of Pope. See Dryden's adaptation of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Kittredge:	more handsome than fine: elegant, but not gaudy or over-decorated
New Hudson Shakespeare	more handsome than fine: really beautiful, not merely showy

Rolfe's edition:	Handsome denotes genuine, natural beauty; fine, artificial laboured beauty (Delius)
Yale Shakespeare:	handsome i.e., its beauty was not that of elaborate diction or polish, but that of structure and proportion

Washington Irving, *Life of George Washington*, Part Fifth, Chapter Thirty (pp. 348-349), from Washington's Letter to Hamilton about his desire for the style of his Farewell Address:

> "My wish is, that the whole may appear in a plain style; and be handed to the public in an honest, unaffected, simple garb."

and Irving commenting on the speech writes in the same place:

> The address certainly breathes his spirit throughout, is in perfect accordance with his words and actions, and, "in an honest, unaffected, simple garb," embodies the system of policy on which he acted throughout his administration.

Washington Irving, *Life of George Washington*, Part Fourth, Chapter Thirty-One, from Major Shaw's account of Washington speaking to the soldiers tempted to armed address of their injuries:

> Major Shaw, who was present, and from whose memoir we note this scene, relates that Washington, after reading the first paragraph of the letter, made a short pause, took out his spectacles, and begged the indulgence of his audience while he put them on, observing at the same time that *he had grown gray in their service, and now found himself growing blind.* "There was something," adds Shaw, "so natural, so unaffected, in this appeal, as rendered it superior to the most studied oratory; it forced its way to the heart, and you might see sensibility moisten every eye."

In the magisterial text AN EXCELLENT PLAY quoted above from *Hamlet*, Act II, Sc. 2, it is interesting that Hamlet refers to the plot and then immediately to the language or speech, passing over character and thought. (This reminds one of Aristotle's definition of tragedy which also refers to plot and language, but not to character or thought.) The words used in that magisterial text in speaking of the language or speech are:

> I remember one said there were no sallets in the
> lines to make the matter savory, nor no matter in
> the phrase that might indict the author of affection;
> but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet,
> and by very much more handsome than fine.

A BRIEF SELECTION OF SOME NOTES ON KEY WORDS IN THE ABOVE TEXT

Yale Shakespeare:	no sallets..savory: No ribaldry to spice the lines
New Hudson Shakespeare	sallets; salads, of spicy herbs pungently dressed. "Spicy improprieties." - Dowden. The reference is to ribald impertinences or extravagances in words or expressions

Some texts have affectation for affection and, at any rate, the commentators agree that affection here means affectation.

Kittredge: honest: gentlemanly, in good taste

Kittredge: wholesome: sound and clear

Shakespeare understands a play to be a pleasing imaginative likeness of what is natural & unnatural, virtuous & vicious, and customary mixed with the fortunate & the unfortunate in a well-digested plot, set down with as much modesty as cunning, tying a knot (or knots) and untying it (them), in words as wholesome as sweet and more handsome than fine, moving us to the principal passions in a most healthy and reasonable way.

Charles Knight, Supplementary Notice to Macbeth, *The Works of Shakspere*, Imperial Edition, Vol. II, p. 367:

> The principle which we have thus so imperfectly attempted to exhibit as the leading characteristic of this glorious tragedy is, without doubt, that which constitutes the essential difference between a work of the highest genius and a work of mediocrity. Without *power* - by which we here especially mean the ability to produce strong excitement by the display of scenes of horror - no

> poet of the highest order was ever made; but this alone does not make such a poet. If he is called upon to present such scenes, they must, even in their most striking forms, be associated with the beautiful. The preeminence of his art in this particular can alone prevent them affecting the imagination beyond the limits of pleasurable emotion. To keep within these limits, and yet to preserve all the energy which results from the power of dealing with the terrible apart from the beautiful, belongs to few that the world has seen: to Shakspere it belongs surpassingly

Charles Knight, "On Locrine" (a play wrongly attributed to Shakespeare), *The Works of Shakspere*, Imperial Edition, Vol. II, p. 679:

> Can we, then, believe that "Locrine" was the earliest work of Shakspere, as Tieck would believe? or are we to think with Schlegel that it belongs to the same class, and the same hand, as *Titus Andronicus*? We doubt much whether it is the work of a very young man at all. It is wrought up to the author's conception of a dramatic poem; it has no inequalities: its gross defects were intended to be beauties. It was written unquestionably by one who had received a scholastic training, and who saw the whole world of poetry in the remembrance of what he had read; he looked not upon the heart of men; he looked not even upon the commonest features of external nature. Did Shakspere work thus in the poems that we *know* he produced when a young man? Assuredly not. If his training had been scholastic, his good sense would have taught him to see something in poetry besides the echo of his scholarship. Nor can "Locrine" be compared with *Titus Andronicus*. The faults of that play are produced by the uncontrolled energy which, straining for effect in action and passion, destroys even its own strength through the absence of calmness and repose. Even Shakspere could not at first perceive the universal truth which is contained in his own particular direction to the players: - "In the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) the whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness."