

WILL AND LOVE: SHAKESPEARE, VOLITION, AND THEOLOGICAL ROMANCE

by

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*To Jen, my wife,
and to John Baxter, my supervisor,
for their support
and especially their patience.*

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines four of Shakespeare's love-plays through the lens of the medieval tradition of theological romance in order to assess the playwright's use of Augustinian psychology in his depiction of dramatic action. Most studies of the 'medieval' in Shakespeare consider only those works with clear medieval precursors or which are set in the period (i.e. the histories); those which go beyond these narrow parameters tend to focus on Shakespeare's social, material, or historical context, seeking therein, in Helen Cooper's idiom, the "deep structures of medieval culture" fueling his work. This dissertation hearkens after these "deep structures," too, but seeks them in the medieval theology of soul informing Shakespeare's concept of the human being.

My first chapter traces expressions of the idea at the heart of theological romance through the writings of Augustine, Boethius, Dante, Petrarch, and Chaucer. That idea, simply put, is that love moves the lover, mysteriously, and without diminishing his agency. Each chapter thereafter offers a close-reading of a single play which reveals both the influence on Shakespeare of theological romance's account of the soul's motion and how the playwright's reception of this account also means its transformation. Shakespeare makes clear his reliance on Augustinian psychology in *Romeo and Juliet*, ubiquitously employing metaphors of motion and engaging the Petrarchan problem of the mutual exclusivity of human and divine loves; but he also provides a Dantean resolution Petrarch never could. In *Troilus and Cressida* and *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare interrogates that resolution. In the former text, as essential value degrades into perceived worth and love is reduced to lust, action becomes inaction, and readers are left to wonder whether any beloved is worth the love of their lover; in the latter, Shakespeare examines the difficulty posed by the imagination, which, dissociated from reason, is shown to engender immobility; and yet, the play's conclusion suggests imagination's essentiality to love's movement. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare again takes up the themes of the beloved's worth and the power of the imagination, but he also allots his mature lovers a singular mutuality of love, which can only be understood in terms of a volitional mysteriousness, and which, despite its clearly unorthodox expression as passion rather than love, hearkens back to Augustine's own characterization of the mystery at the heart of love's movement.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

David Schalkwyk begins his 2005 essay, “Love and Service in *Twelfth Night* and the Sonnets,” with the surprising claim that “[l]ove has all but vanished from current critical discourse” (76). He accounts for the disappearance of love thus:

A pair of terms that now regularly do service in its place—*power* and *desire*—have replaced love. The word is impossibly general and vague, while *power* and *desire*, properly theorized, have promised to strip *love* of its murkiness and sentimentality. They have enabled us to shift our attention from a relatively naïve and common-sense obsession with what characters feel to the structural conditions that allow such feelings to be manipulated in relations of power and subjection. *Desire* and *power* thus assure entry into the history and politics of sexual relations that *love* positively debars. Their critical keenness permits them to reveal the structural reality underlying talk of love. (76)

Despite the implied benefits of using more precise and theoretically appropriate terms like power and desire instead of love, Schalkwyk’s remark is obviously a critical one; some might even take it as a lament. Love or, at least, a working definition for love needs to be recovered; this is the task he sets for himself in his essay.¹ Rather than hearkening back to the “impossibly general and vague,” though, he seeks his working definition in “a network of meanings, each of which may in turn be related to other words” (76-77). To put it more simply than is just, instead of “power” or “desire,” he suggests “service”—though not

¹ Schalkwyk expands on the argument of his essay in his book *Shakespeare, Love and Service* (2008).

service, as in the cases of power and desire, to the exclusion of love. Rather, service mediates between love and an appropriate meaning for love in a given circumstance. (Service has a “network of meanings.”) It is the interaction between service and love, Schalkwyk argues, that reveals something about the nature of love that power and desire never—or never entirely—can: “[w]hereas love and service, in Shakespeare and his contemporaries, are related to power and desire, they cannot be reduced to them” (77).

Schalkwyk is to be commended for his efforts to recover the categories of Shakespeare and his contemporaries in a way that is practical for the modern critic, but I do not begin with him because his approach is my own. Rather, it is because his assessment of “current critical discourse”—the privileging of power and desire, the undeniable appeal of the “history and politics of sexual relations,” and the ultimate recourse shown by critics to the “structural reality underlying talk of love”—points to a bias yet more fundamental than that which is simply *contra* love.

In the past three decades, much criticism has been dedicated to discovering and fleshing out the realities of Shakespeare’s cultural and historical context. Knowledge of these realities has helped guide our understanding of both the poet and the possibilities of his work. The work of New Historicism—the dominant critical approach for these last three decades—has, indeed, been characterized by an impulse to dig deep into the sundry artefacts of culture and history. If it is not always known for its precise analysis of, say, Shakespeare’s works, it is at least very good at precisely analyzing the historical ‘texts’ that reveal the culture which gave birth to those works. There is little doubt that New

Historicism has been a boon to those who would inhabit the world of England's greatest poet, who would feel that world with him, see it, smell it, touch it.

But there has been a downside to New Historicism's dominance, and a certain way of reading Shakespeare and his contemporaries has fallen victim to its essential bias, that is, to its materialism. When I asserted earlier that New Historicism seeks to discover and flesh out Shakespeare's cultural and historical context, I meant, by necessity, *material* culture and "historical" in much the same way Marx and the mass of modern men mean it. All of this is simply to say that we literary critics of the last thirty years tend to think of materiality as our principal (if not only) reality, and for this reason power and desire are more precise—or practical—terms for love than *love*. Indeed, even "service" is more precise and practical; otherwise it would not serve Schalkwyk's aims, namely, "to explore ways in which love is [...] connected to social concerns—to the inequalities of political or economic power" (77). Power, desire, and service are concepts made manifest in materiality (and they are seen everywhere), whereas love is or is taken to be more ephemeral, associated, as Schalkwyk avers, with mere feeling. Or is it possible there is no love? Perhaps it is only a word the naïve and optimistic use because they are inattentive to the true influence of power and desire on them and their society.² There is a great irony in attempting to inhabit the world of Shakespeare by immersing oneself in materiality alone—or in only that which can *most evidently* be expressed materially. It is an irony to which I am particularly sensitive, for my

² It is worth noting that Schalkwyk's essay is a qualification of the New Historicist approach: love is not wholly reducible to power and desire, but power and desire are still useful categories for thinking about love. While "service" is, perhaps, in some ways preferable, at least in a consideration of *Twelfth Night* and the Sonnets, it too fails to grasp something essential about love as Shakespeare understood the term.

position in this dissertation is that love in Shakespeare is, first and foremost, a metaphysical reality—one to be perceived by the soul before the sense.³

Peter Milward writes that “the theme of love, which assumes such importance in the writings of the Elizabethan Renaissance, is by no means a product of this Renaissance, but a sign of its underlying continuity with mediaeval tradition” (*The Medieval Dimension* 11).

What does he mean by this, or rather what do I mean by quoting him here? Simply that love for the intellectual or literary-minded medieval was a far cry from what is now generally understood by the terms power or desire. Certainly, if the modern bias is towards the material, then the medieval one is towards the metaphysical. If we could ask a medieval iconographer whether his symbolic or allegorical and therefore, to us, unrealistic art depicts reality, he might well say that what he produces is an approximation of reality that comes significantly closer to it than what we see with our eyes. It is in just such a vein that E.M.W. Tillyard calls love the “medieval motive” (*Shakespeare’s Problem Plays* 38)—the metaphysical reality fuelling the soul.

The idea comes from Augustine, or, in any case, it was Augustine who gave it its most notable expression. In the thirteenth and final book of his *Confessions*, he famously writes, “My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me” (13.9.10).⁴ This short statement sums up all that has preceded it; it is what was *happening* when the younger Augustine stole pears from his neighbour or gave up teaching rhetoric or wept in

³ Tzachi Zamir has noted the “special popularity of interpretive approaches within early modern criticism that mostly refuse to speak of insight and knowledge.” “Such outlooks,” he continues, “favor the local, historicized strand of meaning that is considered to be inseparably tied up with non-literary manifestations of power” (“Mature Love” 120).

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from Augustine’s *Confessions* are from the Oxford World’s Classics edition, translated by Henry Chadwick.

his garden. It is the very reality of his life as he has recounted it. Love is a force that acts on or, better yet, *in* the soul like gravity or magnetism. For Augustine, who writes in his *City of God* that “we are nothing but wills” (XIV.6),⁵ when we will something—anything—what we are doing is loving. Loving is psychic inclination and affirmation long before its effects (more often taken for love) can be felt or seen with the eyes. And to what does the soul incline? What does it affirm? An introductory answer is: an apprehension of the beloved—an apprehension that is both the same as and separate from the beloved proper, and that, like inclining and affirming, also *occupies* the soul.⁶ This apprehension and those movements must precede any dominating, desiring, or even serving that follows from them.

Augustine’s proto-psychology will be taken up in detail in Chapter 2, along with the tradition of theological romance that gives expression to it. At present, I want only to confirm that it is from the medieval *in this aspect* that I approach Shakespeare. My project is, therefore, an exercise of the imagination, for the aim is partly to see Shakespeare as though through the eyes of a medieval person working with an Augustinian concept of love as a volitional force. I say “an Augustinian” rather than “Augustine’s” not only because it is difficult to establish whether Shakespeare had any actual knowledge of the church father and theologian’s work, but also because Augustine’s influence extends both centuries beyond himself and into myriad other disciplines and genres. Chapter 2 charts this influence and the exhibition of Augustinian thought in the writings of Boethius, Dante, Petrarch, and

⁵ This particular translation of *omnes nihil aliud quam voluntates sunt* is ubiquitous; the instance I cite is found in John M. McDermot’s article on the “Problem of Freedom and Grace in Augustine.” Other translations of the phrase include “none of them is anything else than the will (Dods) and “they are all essentially acts of will” (Bettenson).

⁶ There is a mystery here: apprehension signifies not only perception (*OED*, “apprehend, v.” 8.a.) but seizure (1.a.), a grasping, psychic action which overlaps with or, at least, is not mutually exclusive from inclining or affirming.

Chaucer. These figures are truly medieval—middle men—allowing us to think about Augustine and Shakespeare together.⁷

Indeed, it is Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, a work that stands at the height of the medieval romance tradition (and is duly influenced by Boethius, Dante, and Petrarch), that has governed the selection of plays to be examined here. Naturally, every Renaissance love-play, written by Shakespeare or someone else, is going to bear some similarities to the archetypal *Troilus*, but *Romeo and Juliet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* each resonates in a particularly Chaucerian frequency (a metaphor of transmission?).⁸ *Romeo and Juliet* is often thought a truer literary descendent of *Troilus and Criseyde* than Shakespeare's play of (nearly) the same name. It not only involves two lovers who become emblematic of true romance (just as Troilus and Criseyde had and, indeed, still were when Shakespeare was writing); it is also a comedy that becomes a tragedy whose tragic end never quite overpowers the redeeming quality of the lovers' love. Additionally, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare comes "very close to [the] medieval conception of tragedy whose 'central truth is that Fortune knows nothing of human deserving'" (qtd. in Thompson 96-7). In this regard, and despite the playwright's more obvious gleanings from the medieval poet,⁹ it may be the most Chaucerian of Shakespeare's plays. *Troilus and*

⁷ There are, of course, scholars who argue for a more explicit connection between Augustine and Shakespeare. Ann Livermore observes a "parallel between Shakespeare's and Augustine's works" and proceeds to cite myriad examples of Shakespeare behaving like Augustine in moments that recall episodes from Augustine's works; Roy Battenhouse detects "Augustinian roots" in Shakespeare's tragic language and imagery; Lisa Freinkel sees Shakespeare's use of *Figura* in the sonnets as derivative of Augustine's practices of textual interpretation; and Eric Plumer finds it appropriate to offer an "Augustinian reading" of *Hamlet*.

⁸ Christina Wald writes that beyond being simply the authority on love, "Chaucer for Shakespeare was [...] a mediator to the ancient world" (352), a literary store-house of ancient wisdom on innumerable subjects.

⁹ The two most notable examples are *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. See Eugene M. Waith's introduction to the former (26-29) and Peter Holland's to the latter (49ff) for more detail.

Cressida is the obvious play to consider if one is thinking about Shakespeare and the medieval, and perhaps the best too, for, in it, love is ostensibly reduced to lust, forcing readers to contend with competing and contradictory conceptions of love. The medieval and the pagan (and perhaps modern) are pitted against each other. *Twelfth Night* is less apparently kin with the medieval *Troilus* than either *Romeo and Juliet* or *Troilus and Cressida*, but insofar as it treats love as an immobilizing affliction, one that affects the imagination and, through it, the soul's volitional capacity, it, too, gestures towards Chaucer and theological romance. *Antony and Cleopatra* draws less on Chaucer than the other plays examined here, but it does draw, in important ways, on each of those plays. In revisiting aspects of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Twelfth Night*, it can be seen as a work that stands as the culmination of Shakespeare's thought about romance in its specifically Augustinian aspect.

It may seem, based on this cursory introduction, that my project is overly ambitious. Augustine, Boethius, Dante, Petrarch, Chaucer and, finally, Shakespeare: certainly, these are too many moving parts, especially given the complexity and stature of each. While one would be foolish not to acknowledge the danger, this dissertation is more straightforward than it seems. It is simply about Shakespeare's reception and treatment of a singular idea that happens to be expressed ubiquitously in the theology and literature of the millennium that precedes him: *love moves man*. Naturally, given the ubiquity of its expression over such a long period of time, this idea is not going to be one idea, exactly, so much as a metamorphosing or multifaceted idea—one that will even contradict itself. For this reason, in Chapter 2, I break the idea down to its basic elements, considering each of above-

mentioned figures only insofar as he helps to throw those elements into greater relief. The theology and literature of the Middle Ages thus become a common narrative out of which a single or, at least, a single group of similar threads may be plucked.

Before further discussing the structure of this dissertation, it is necessary briefly to address the nature of the intellectual and literary history practiced in it. It is customary when ‘doing’ either one of these histories to argue from *causality* or *direct* influence. While, in many cases, direct connections can be and, indeed, are made between the various medieval texts discussed, and between these texts and Shakespeare’s, my aim is not to identify sources or chart direct influence. Nor do I think my argument fails if I fail to do so; for no one figure or text is more important for my purposes than the cultural and literary Augustinianism that is the background and, indeed, *product* of so much of the literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. In *The Rich Manifold*, Cleanth Brooks calls literary history the “back-ground and genesis of a literary work” (34). While “genesis” may well refer to something that can be pin-pointed—a cause, perhaps—it is difficult to see how “background” can signify anything but a broad and amorphous *presence*—not simply material culture, as the historicist critics might have it, but material, literary, intellectual, metaphysical. Wendell V. Harris, who in “What is Literary ‘History’?” essentially calls Brooks a philologist, would undoubtedly refer to this project (as he does to Brooks’s work) as “historical scholarship.” That is not a slight: historical scholarship, in his view, “underlies almost the entire range of hermeneutical and critical activities, including ‘literary history’ in its more restricted meanings, but is not coterminous with any of these activities” (439). It is, in other words, a more fundamental activity, less precise, to be sure, but still a

legitimate scholarly approach. I would not disagree with Harris's assessment were it to be applied to my own work: the texts which factor in my pre-Shakespearean history are contributors rather than causes; Shakespeare's works arise *with respect to* these and his diverse circumstances rather than being *born out of* them.

Having said that, there is still a legitimate literary historical aspect to my project. One of the more "restricted" senses of literary history Harris delineates in his essay is that which "looks primarily to the historical succession of developments within a genre or type of literature" (443). Insofar as Augustine's doctrine of volition is transmitted through or, better yet, provides the governing idea for the genre of theological romance, attending to the "historical succession of developments within a genre" is exactly what this dissertation does. A distinction could be made, however: whereas a typical literary historian looks for difference—change, evolution, and their origins¹⁰—I consider primarily what remains the same, the idea integral to the tradition.

A further characterization of my work is possible. Literary historical scholar, René Wellek writes, "most histories of literature are [...] histories of thought as mirrored in literature, or a series of impressions and judgments on individual works or art arranged in a more or less chronological order" (qtd. in Harris 444). As my goal is to consider Shakespeare's reception of an idea originally expressed theologically, the first part of Wellek's determination of literary history obviously holds true. But so does the second: while a definitive chronology of Shakespeare's plays has never been agreed upon by scholars

¹⁰ In *The Everyman History of English Literature*, Peter Conrad writes that his "aim is to demonstrate how history happens within the literature" (ix). Alistair Fowler, in *A History of English Literature*, maintains, "I mainly trace [...] changes in kinds and forms" (x).

of the poet, my dissertation partially relies on the assumption that Shakespeare wrote *Romeo and Juliet* before *Troilus and Cressida* and *Twelfth Night*, which he wrote at more or less the same time, and that *Antony and Cleopatra* follows these. On these plays in this order do I offer “impressions and judgments.” My dissertation, then, not only assesses Shakespeare’s use of Augustinian psychology in treating the issue of human agency; it also charts the evolution of his treatment over the course of his career and in different dramatic genres.

Chapters 3 through 6 examine the plays in the chronological order just suggested. Chapter 3 establishes Shakespeare’s reliance on the Augustinian psychology which governs theological romance and, in later romance especially, finds expression principally in images and metaphors of movement. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the playwright is clearly thinking about love in terms of motion. By attending to Shakespeare’s thought and to these terms, I argue that we can come to a fuller understanding not only of the lovers’ tragic descent, but of the causes of that descent. Critical to those causes is the Petrarchan concept of love, which Shakespeare partially adopts for his lovers—a concept that is ultimately untenable or, at the very least, ever tends towards contrary ends. Chapter 4 examines Shakespeare’s exploration of a problem arising specifically from the tension of Petrarchan love. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare asks how (or perhaps whether) any beloved is worth the love of her (or his) lover. What happens to the lover’s potential for action when the beloved turns out to be not only *not* ideal—a worthy object of love—but actually debased? What happens to the lover’s integrity as an individual, his identity, if he can find no object for his love? As Augustine says, “we are nothing but wills.” *Troilus and Cressida*, I argue, offers an idiosyncratically Shakespearean critique of his earlier portrayal of love in *Romeo and Juliet*.

In Chapter 5, I examine Shakespeare's further exploration of the relationship between love and volition, this time focusing not on the problems associated with the beloved, the object of that love, but on the processes occurring within the lover himself. *Twelfth Night* offers a portrait of the anatomy of love's movement, movement that is itself not without difficulties, notably, the phenomenon of love sickness. In particular, I focus on the play's treatment of the imagination, which, Shakespeare suggests, *has the potential* to save the lover from falling into passivity and a kind of narcissism. In Chapter 6 I revisit, via *Antony and Cleopatra*, elements of the plays already discussed, providing a natural conclusion to the argument(s) of this dissertation. In his late tragedy, Shakespeare takes up again the themes of the beloved's worth and the power of the imagination, fashioning a pair of lovers whose love, like Romeo and Juliet's, is transcendent, but who also enjoy a singular mutuality in love which finds expression in terms of a volitional mysteriousness—a mysteriousness that hearkens back to Augustine's own characterization of the mystery at the heart of love's movement. *Antony and Cleopatra*, while naturally raising new problems of its own, answers some of those raised, in particular, by *Troilus and Cressida* and *Twelfth Night*.

Only one thing remains to be addressed in this introduction: my dissertation's contribution to the vast and multifaceted critical conversation about Shakespeare. It seems to me there are three streams of Shakespeare scholarship which are either relevant or adjacent to this study. The first is that which deals with 'Shakespeare and love.' This stream may, of course, subdivide into 'Shakespeare and romance,' 'Shakespeare in the love plays,' 'Shakespeare in the love tragedies,' or even 'Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*.' Indeed, that this last sub-category exists validates, at

least, in part, my critical endeavours. Of the ‘Shakespeare and love’ stream, which is the most significant by far in terms of my actual argument, I will say nothing here, for its critics are omnipresent in the chapters that follow. The second stream is that which has been labeled ‘the religious turn in Shakespeare criticism.’ Though there would seem to be an affinity between my work and that of scholars writing in this stream, the difference is actually striking; it is the difference between religion and theology. Religion in Shakespeare is an interesting subject, for there are manifestations of it everywhere—rituals of religious life and practice—but those who study Shakespeare from a religious point of view are often less interested in theology or intellectual history than I am. For example, while there is much of great interest and worth in Sarah Beckwith’s *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness*, it is a book that ultimately takes as its starting point the “*practice of forgiveness*” (11, my emphasis). Likewise, David Scott Kastan’s *A Will to Believe* is in some ways less a study of Shakespeare’s will and more a study of *ours* to know what Shakespeare believed. This, of course, isn’t to say there aren’t similarities between those working on religion and those working on theology, but our work is often parallel rather than intersecting. Kastan writes, “I am not claiming him [...] as a believer. I don’t know what or even if he believed” (2), and I agree. I don’t make any assertions in this dissertation about Shakespeare’s religious disposition or beliefs; a poet does not need to be religious for his work to be theological—or theologically-inflected.

The third stream is that which deals with ‘Shakespeare and the medieval.’ Though I do cite criticism linking Shakespeare and Chaucer many times in the following chapters, the

concept of the medieval insofar it relates to things that are *not* love does not really come up again. What this study offers to medieval studies of Shakespeare, though, is a question.

In the last decade, significant critical attention has been given to the medieval Shakespeare. Much of this attention is the result of the work of Helen Cooper. In addition to writing “Shakespeare and the Middle Ages,” a lecture she gave in 2005 after assuming her post as Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English at Cambridge, and her 2010 monograph, *Shakespeare and the Medieval*, she has co-edited a collection of essays under the title *Medieval Shakespeare: Pasts and Presents* (2013). In her monograph, Cooper sets the stage for much work to come, stating definitively, “The world in which Shakespeare lived was a medieval one” (1). Her book’s aim, she writes, is “to demonstrate the pervasiveness of those deep structures of medieval culture in Shakespeare’s work and his times, and how they affected the world he lived in and the way he conceived his plays” (2).

Cooper’s work has forced critics to look again at the Middle Ages and to acknowledge that “we can’t fully understand the early modern world, or the literature it produced, without understanding where it comes from and what it carries with it” (*Shakespeare and the Middle Ages* 6). Her work has also given rise to a number of other collections of essays. In 2009, Curtis Perry and John Watkins edited a collection of essays under the title *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages*. In 2010, the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* dedicated an issue (40.1) to “Premodern Shakespeare.”¹¹ In 2012, the journal *Shakespeare* (8.4) did likewise. And in 2013, editors Martha W. Driver and Sid Ray published *Shakespeare and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Performance and Adaptation of the Plays*

¹¹ Editors Sarah Beckwith and James Simpson.

with *Medieval Sources or Settings*. Indeed, the subtitle of this last work indicates the kind of subjects critics considering Shakespeare's relationship to the medieval typically explore. Much of the work in this stream is, for obvious reasons, dedicated to Shakespeare's history plays.¹² Another line of inquiry traces the religious institutions of Shakespeare's day and in his works back to their medieval origins.¹³ Yet another takes up Shakespeare's innumerable allusions to medieval literature, culture, and politics.¹⁴ Finally, there are those critics who seek to discern the influence of the medieval in Shakespeare's thought about drama and literature, about history, and about authorship.¹⁵ Ironically, there has not, even among these 'medieval Shakespeareans,' been much attention paid to love. Perhaps this has much to do with Schalkwyk's assessment of current critical discourse, the view that love is too vague a term and defies critical categorization. Even Peter Milward, whose *Medieval Dimension in Shakespeare's Plays* (1990) was published two decades earlier than this recent spate of criticism, does not address love directly, choosing rather to focus either on more concrete subjects such as practices of exorcism or the medieval homiletic tradition in the Middle Ages or on explicitly theological topics, such as grace. If, as Tillyard claims, love is the "medieval motive," this simply will not do. Thus, in the following chapter, I seek to define love in a way that is both faithful to the metaphysics of medieval psychology and

¹² See, for example, Catherine Sanok's "Good King Henry and the Genealogy of Shakespeare's First History Plays," Brian Walsh's "Chantry, Chronicle, Cockpit: *Henry V* and the Forms of History," or Ruth Morse's "Shakespeare and the Remains of Britain."

¹³ See, for example, Heather Hirschfeld's "'And he hath enough': The Penitential Economies of *The Merchant of Venice*," Brian Cummings's "'Dead March': Liturgy and Mimesis in Shakespeare's Funerals," or Elizabeth Fowler's "Towards a History of Performativity: Sacrament, Social Contract, and *The Merchant of Venice*."

¹⁴ See, for example, Seth Lerer and Deanne Williams' "What Chaucer Did to Shakespeare: Books and Bodkins in *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*," Alex Davis's "Living in the Past: Thebes, Periodization, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," or Margreta de Grazia's "'King Lear in BC Albion.'"

¹⁵ See, for example, Thomas Fulton's "Shakespeare's Everyman: Measure for Measure and English Fundamentalism," A.E.B. Coldiron's "The mediated 'medieval' and Shakespeare," or Patrick Cheney's "The Voice of the Author in 'The Phoenix and Turtle': Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser."

useful to the critic. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate that it is not only the obviously medieval in Shakespeare that deserves consideration from those interested in Shakespeare's relationship with the Middle Ages.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL ROMANCE

2.1 Overview

This chapter aims to give a focused account of theological romance by exploring three critical ideas at its core: (1) that love moves the lover; (2) that love's movement does not diminish the lover's agency; and (3) that love is good. These ideas derive from the thought of Augustine¹; they are distinct yet, at the same time, may be thought of as a single idea in three aspects. As such, my analysis of them, though sequential in nature, will require me to introduce certain thoughts or concepts only to defer fully fleshing them out until later in the chapter. In providing my analysis, I will also map out, with respect to these three ideas, some interconnections between the principal theologian-poets, who, following Augustine, give the tradition its shape: Boethius, Dante, and Petrarch.² Having done this, I will turn my attention to the *Englishing* of theological romance, highlighting key aspects of Chaucer's "litel [...] tragedye," *Troilus and Criseyde*, a work of narrative poetry that, if not the fulfilment of this tradition, is undeniably a culmination of it.³ This chapter should provide a sense of both the depth and pervasiveness of the Augustinian psychology that, structurally integral to theological romance, was a major component of Shakespeare's

¹ Augustine (354-430)

² Boethius (c. 480-524), Dante (1265-1321), Petrarch (1304-1374)

³ Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from Chaucer are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson. Chaucer (or his narrator) calls *Troilus and Criseyde* "litel myn tragedye" at 5.1786.

medieval inheritance, the *matter* out of which he crafted character and in terms of which he explored love's relationship to human agency and action.

2.2. On Terminology

The term “theological romance” is not my own; nor is the idea I take it to signify. That said, what “theological romance” stands for in this dissertation is bound to be somewhat different from what others have understood by the term. Kristin Noone calls theological romance “a type of romance [...] that makes use of the frameworks and structures of theology in order to achieve its secular, romantic aims.” The hero of the medieval *Gast of Gy*, whom she cites as her prime example, is “a romantic hero [...] transplanted into a theological setting and using [that theological setting] to complete his mission on the spiritual plane.” The text is, she says, “explicitly Christian and theological” with very apparent religious tropes.⁴ While Noone’s conception of theological romance as a genre using the “frameworks and structures of theology” bears some similarity to my own, she seems to take the term to denote romance-onto-which theology has been imposed. Theology, for her, while ‘structural,’ is, in actual fact, secondary, a means to an (admittedly theological) end. It is not, as is my contention, *essential*.

In some ways, Noone is thinking like Benedetto Croce in his seminal work, *The Poetry of Dante*. That is to say, she, like the Italian critic, wants to differentiate between what is theological or allegorical and what is romantic or aesthetic in a given text. Croce calls

⁴ By contrast, Noone calls *Sir Orfeo* a “secular romance” because it “privileges the romantic concerns over the theological.”

Dante's *Comedy* a "theological romance" (91) in order to emphasize the poem's incapacity to be read in a single, unified way. In one moment, it is Dante's allegorical theology that takes centre stage; in the next, the passionate love of Paolo and Francesca—a love which is compelling not because of the pair's sin, its theological significance, so to speak, but on account of the beauty and pathos of Dante's poetry. In these moments, writes Croce, "it is a sophism to suppose it necessary first to obtain the allegorical explanation, in order to understand" (20).⁵ Still Croce ultimately claims that the *Comedy* is a theological text, just one with bits of allegory-displacing high poetry scattered here and there; its end, in other words, remains the resolution of a theological argument. While I by no means deny such a characterization of the *Comedy*, it also seems to me that what makes theological romance *theological* is not solely its explicit theology or even its explicitly theological end, but its characterization of the human being at its core. In his 2012 dissertation, Ian Michael McConnon suggests that "theological romances [...] use the concept of providence to explain the special place of man" (v) in the universe; they "transpose traditional romance narrative elements onto a more universal sphere" (82). For this reason, there is an obvious alignment between theological romance and medieval allegory, but as McConnon indicates, not all theological romances are allegories (85).⁶

⁵ Croce writes, "Among certain critics, especially Italian, the first extreme prevailed. In poetry, and in Dante, they celebrated loftiness of concept and high morality shown in solemn and splendid forms. But this was not the more modern, the richer or more weighty of the two tendencies. Romantic criticism inclined to the other extreme, owing to the influence of contemporary currents opposed to the old classicist, didactic, oratorical, and rhetorical literature. It set great store by passion" (34).

⁶ McConnon, similar to Croce, calls Dante's *Comedy* "the most celebrated heir of the theological romance tradition" (240).

I align myself, in thinking about theological romance, with two notable critics of medieval literature: Charles Williams and C.S. Lewis. The former, in his influential study of Dante, *The Figure of Beatrice*, espouses a theology of romantic love.⁷ Just as there is a mystical theology, which is applied to mystical experiences, Williams argues, there is a romantic theology, which is or may be applied to romantic experiences (29). Romantic love—according to Williams, “sexual love between a man and a woman, freely given, freely accepted, and appearing to its partakers one of the most important experiences in life”—“demands the attention of the intellect and the spirit for its understanding and service” (*Outlines* 7). Moreover, “[i]t has been the work of Christianity in the world to make men aware of the spiritual significance of certain natural experiences” (*Outlines* 9). In Dante, romantic theology is born when the poet first sees Beatrice⁸ and culminates in his encounter with the Trinity at the end of *Paradise*. Williams writes, “That quality of love which is the beginning of the *New Life* is to become a quality of the final Consummation” (*Figure* 29). In a truly Anglo-Saxon moment, Williams calls “the way of romantic love” a “particular mode” of the “inGodding of man” (*Figure* 16). Through love’s transformation of the will, the soul of the lover becomes divine.⁹

⁷ Lewis calls Williams “a ‘romantic theologian’ in the technical sense which he himself invented for those words.” “A romantic theologian does not mean one who is romantic about theology but one who is theological about romance, one who considers the theological implications of those experiences which are called romantic” (*Essays Presented to Charles Williams* vi).

⁸ Romantic Theology maintains that the particular beloved (i.e. Beatrice, in the flesh) “is there seen in her proper and heavenly perfection [...] that such a perfection is implicit in every human being, and (had we eyes to see) would be explicit there” (*Figure* 47).

⁹ It is important to note, here, Williams’s acknowledgement that “[t]o students who do not accept the doctrine of the Incarnation,” his claims “will probably appear fanciful” (*Outlines* 8). For in uniting the spiritual and the physical, the incarnation of Christ is the very thing that *allows* for the possibility of a *theology* of romantic—what might be called *earthly*—love.

What Williams claims of Dante—admittedly, the poster boy of theological romance—Lewis applies in his way to the mass of western medieval literature. In *The Allegory of Love*, he writes of a “noble fusion of sexual and religious experience” (21), which pervades much of the poetry of the Middle Ages and is appropriately conceived under the heading of “theological romance.” In works of medieval poetry, Lewis detects a growing tendency in poets to shake off the convention of speaking of romantic love in strictly allegorical terms, to attend, rather, to the psychology of the experience of love, for in this experience divine truths may also be perceived. “As the source of all worldly goodness,” Lewis writes, “love must be thought of as a state of mind” (35), which is to say, for the medieval poet, it is in the mind that love is *animate*, that a lover encounters his beloved.

When I speak of theological romance, I am thinking of mostly medieval texts in which there is a romantic relationship which parallels or is similar to the relationship, as conceived by Augustine, between the individual human soul and God. Not surprisingly, then, ascent is a central motif. Northrop Frye notes the importance of “ascendency” (*Anatomy* 186) in his discussion of romance in the *Anatomy of Criticism*, not to mention the “quest” (187), which is required to realize that ascendency, but I do not think that my conception of romance, and specifically of theological romance, is his—nor, for that matter, do I think Lewis’s is Frye’s. For though the journey to a beloved (God or another individual) in theological romance may be understood as a quest, it is more properly a relationship that requires negotiation. Frye also writes that “romance is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream” (186), and that the nature of this “dream” is down to the “ruling social or intellectual class” to “project its ideals [onto literature] in some

form” (186). Frye’s statement suggests to me that he and Lewis are coming at romance from opposite directions, and additionally, given Frye’s identification of the many conventions of romance, that Lewis’s conception is far broader, far more fundamental. Frye’s characterization of romance as “wish-fulfillment” suggests the *humanness* of the genre, that it is a kind of organic expression of the devices and desires of people in a particular time and place. To be clear, I am not making some kind of anthropological (or anti-anthropological) argument here, but simply speaking to how the genre is *conceived*: for Lewis and, similarly, in my view, romance represents a kind of diminishment. A theological conception about the nature of the relationship between a divine and human beings that has been clothed in flesh, and the result is *romance* that conceives of human love *theologically*—which is not to say anything of the orthodoxy or unorthodoxy of that theology.

What makes certain romances *theological* is the essentially theological conception of love at their core. That is to say, the theology in theological romance is, as Noone suggests, “structural,” but it is not necessarily explicit, for ultimately what gives all romance its shape is the figure of the lover. And what gives the lover his shape—what *makes* him a lover—is his soul. In some ways, I have simply added (though am by no means the first to do so) an adjective—theological—to an established genre and, thus, have highlighted the centrality of a particular conception of love in texts that constitute a subset of that genre. In his *Allegory*, Lewis writes of a literature that is “[o]f romance, of reverence for women, of the idealizing imagination exercised about sex” (10), which is to say, texts both like Dante’s *Comedy*—in which there is “romance” and “reverence for women” but not really any “idealizing imagination [...] about sex”—and Chaucer’s *Troilus* or Chrétien de Troyes’s *Lancelot* or

even the poems of Wyatt, Surrey, and Sidney—which have *all* these features—are those that constitute this genre.

The passage from Lewis quoted above comes from his chapter in *The Allegory of Love* on “Courtly Love,” and, undeniably, there is some overlap between theological romance and courtly love. But there is also a clear difference, for theological romance is not *solely* a literary genre—which is, admittedly, what most people mean by “romance.” It is, rather, a category that helps us to think about Augustinian intellectual history, in particular, Augustinian psychology, and medieval literary history together. This is, after all, what categories are for; they are useful only insofar as they *clarify* or throw into relief; we use them to help us understand, and then, in some cases, we let them go. There may be some objection to my claim that theological romance is an actual *tradition*, but I’m not sure what else to call it when there are a number of texts in different languages and from different centuries that share the same characteristics—which I am about to describe.

2.3 Love Moves the Lover

The first of the three ideas at the core of theological romance requires the least involved explanation: love moves the lover. Consider, again, Augustine’s account of love’s bearing on human agency: “My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me” (13.9.10). Three bare facts present themselves: there is movement, there is a mover (that is, one who is seen to move¹⁰), and there is a ‘moved-toward.’ Disregarding for

¹⁰ This first idea is largely descriptive; analysis of it does not require delving beneath appearances or what is, in a given case, *seen* to be the case. Distinctions between being moved and moving oneself will be taken up later in the chapter.

the moment the paradigm of movement, we are left with a more familiar formulation: there is love, a lover, and a beloved. These three bare facts suggest three further ideas: first, love not only moves the lover but is, in a sense, the *moving* of that lover. Second, *that* moving necessitates a relationship; movement is, in fact, the very thing that relates the mover and the moved-toward. A lover and a beloved are only so-called on account of love relating them; without love, these figures have little or nothing to do with one another. Third, there can be no movement without a moved-toward; that there could is as illogical as the proposition that love could exist without a beloved, an object of love. To put this all in volitional terms, having been presented with an object, the will in *willing* (moving toward) an object is *de facto* in relationship with it. These are, simply, the constituents of love.

It is to be noted that Augustine, in the above lines, speaks equivocally about his object, his destination or moved-toward. While the broader context of these lines and, specifically, of his “wherever” qualifies this equivocation, I would like to suggest that it is not un-Augustinian to conceive of movement itself, regardless of the moved-toward, as a categorical good. While the notion of love’s goodness will be taken up later in this chapter, it is worth considering here how Augustine might have arrived at such a view. Here are his words in context:

Love lifts us there [to God’s peace], and ‘your good Spirit’ (Ps. 142: 10) exalts ‘our humble estate from the gates of death’ (Ps. 9, 15). In a good will is our peace. A body by its weight tends to move towards its proper place. The weight’s movement is not necessarily downwards, but to its appropriate position: fire tends to move upwards, a stone downwards. They are acted on by their respective weights; they seek their own place. Oil poured under water is drawn up to the surface on top of the water. Water poured on top

of oil sinks below the oil. They are acted on by their respective densities, they seek their own place. Things which are not in their intended position are restless. Once they are in their ordered position, they are at rest.

My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift we are set on fire and carried upwards: we grow red hot and ascend. (13.9.10)

In his edition of the *Confessions*, Henry Chadwick notes that Augustine is likely thinking here about Plotinus, who proposes a “[s]imilar analogy for the soul finding its proper habitat” (278 n. 12).¹¹ Speaking of the soul’s kinship with fire, Plotinus offers the following comfort to “anyone that dreads [the soul’s] falling” or “lingering below”: “the circuit of the Soul provides against any declination [...] since fire has of itself no downward tendency.” Fire, he continues, is “keen and swift,” and it “cooperates [with (its) nature] by its upward tendency” (*Enneads* 2.1.3). While Chadwick’s note is apt (indeed, this notion of the soul’s upward tendency will arise again), an equally helpful gloss might have acknowledged the debt of Augustine’s characterization of love in terms of the motions of fire, a stone, oil and water to, say, Aristotle’s description of the movement of bodies in his *Physics*.¹² Étienne Gilson sums up the philosopher on natural phenomena: “every [physical] body is drawn to a given place in the universe by a kind of natural weight”; without this “weight in bodies, the universe would immediately become inert, utterly immobile, dead” (*Christian Philosophy* 134). Augustine would say, rather simply, that without weight—or love—in the soul, the

¹¹ John Burnaby writes that “[i]n Plotinus, Eros is universal in the sense that ‘all that exists aspires towards the Supreme by a compulsion of nature’; it is part of the necessary constitution of the universe, equivalent to the movement by which potency on every rung of the ladder of existence tends to actuality” (*Amor* 89).

¹² It is not necessary that Augustine knew Aristotle first hand; the Neo-Platonic philosophers he would have read held more or less the same views, as did Cicero, with whom Augustine was undoubtedly familiar. Philip Cary writes that “Augustine turns Cicero’s materialist account of the soul into a metaphor [...] meaning not only that the desire for earthly things can weigh us down like the heaviest of elements, but that there is also a desire that lifts us up like the lightest. The weight of charity, the love of God, pulls us upward with a motive force like fire seeking its place of rest in the heavens” (27).

human would likewise be inert, immobile and, therefore, dead. For motion, in Aristotle's view, is not simply proof of life; it is the fundamental characteristic of the living. He asserts that every natural thing is capable of "locomotion" or has within it the "principle of movement" (*On the Heavens* 268b.15-17). For Augustine, love *is* that "principle of movement"; to borrow a phrase from Augustinian scholar John Burnaby, it "cannot be inactive in a lover, it cannot but lead him in some direction" (*Amor* 93-94). It is perhaps only stating the obvious to say that for Augustine, *all* humans are lovers—that the human being, by definition, is one who loves and moves, these two actions being essentially one. It is in this sense of synonymy (human = lover = mover) that Augustine could have arrived at his understanding of movement as categorically good. For he is not speaking in the above passage principally about the potentiality of psychic movement but to the basic truth—the given—that when one considers the human soul, what one is considering is motion.

It is not surprising, then, to encounter Augustine writing about the "foot" of the soul, which is "well understood to be its love" (*Exposition on the Book of Psalms* 9.15), or encouraging his readers to "bear [themselves] aloft on the wings of twofold love" (*Exposition* 139.8).¹³ If, in the soul, love and motion are one, it is highly appropriate that Augustine invokes as metaphors parts of the body notable for their facility in moving. Sometimes his metaphors, employed in different contexts, even speak to one another: in a sermon on the Gospel of John, Augustine writes, "Consider a man's love: think of it as, so to say, the hand of the soul" (*Sermon* 75.7); and, elsewhere, in his commentary on Psalm 86, he urges the

¹³ "Twofold" refers to the dual commandment to "love the Lord thy God" and "thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 22.37, 39). Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the Bible are from the *Authorized King James Version* (Oxford).

Christian to “lift up thy heart to heaven.” “And how can I, dost thou say?” asks his interlocutor; “What ropes are needed? what machines? what ladders?” Augustine responds: “Thy affections are the steps; thy will the way. By loving thou mountest” (*Expositions* 86.6). Love is a hand grasping a rope, or perhaps it is the rope, the rung on the ladder, which is the lover’s love: these metaphors affirm in their own ways that the soul is fundamentally a loving/moving thing.

The broader tradition of theological romance takes up this association of love and psychic movement in a number of ways. In the *Consolation of Philosophy*,¹⁴ Lady Philosophy clarifies for Boethius, her student, the kind of movement specifically enjoyed by humans:

Mere sensation without any other kind of knowing has been given to animals that have no power of movement, like mussels and other shellfish which grow on rocks. Imagination has been given to animals which do have the power of movement and which appear to have some will to choose or avoid things. Reason belongs only to the human race. (Watts trans. 5.Pr.5)¹⁵

While love does not figure in this passage, Lady Philosophy clearly delineates two kinds of movement, external and internal. Mussels and shellfish, in her view, move neither externally nor internally. Dogs, to take a random example, move externally (they run, jump, bark, etc.) and “appear” to move internally, to will or to choose (presumably, where to run, when to jump, what to bark at, etc.). This apparent movement, however, insofar as it is movement, is limited. Humans move externally and, insofar as reason “belongs” to them, internally in a way no lesser being is capable of. They experience the fullness of

¹⁴ According to Henry Chadwick, Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* is “a work written with the consciousness of Augustine standing behind the author’s shoulder” (*Boethius* 249). Boethius, like Augustine, understands God as an “absolute Being, from whom descends the great chain or continuum of derived entities, each grade having slightly less being and therefore less goodness than the grade above” (*Boethius* 249-50).

¹⁵ Quotations from Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* are either from the Penguin edition, translated by V.E. Watts, or from the Dent edition, translated by W.V. Cooper. The translation cited will be specified in the parenthetical.

internal or psychic motion. It is only because of humanity's capacity for this type of movement that Lady Philosophy can encourage the dejected Boethius to turn his mind away from earthly things and fix it, instead, on the divine. "I will give your mind wings on which to lift itself," she promises, before proceeding to sing: "For I have swift and speedy wings / With which to mount the lofty skies ..." (Watts trans. 4.M.1).

A brief consideration of what Boethius means by "mind" might be useful. While there are distinctions to be made between *mens*, the term Boethius employs above, and *animus*, the typical rendering of "soul" in Latin, the terms are overlapping; in this passage, "mind" denotes "soul" or, more precisely, "rational soul." For Aristotle, whose influence on Boethius and on medieval philosophy and theology generally, is immeasurable, the soul has three aspects or powers: the vegetative, the sensitive, and the rational. Plants have a vegetative soul, animals have a sensitive soul, and humans have a rational soul. And just as the animal soul contains the vegetative, the human soul contains the sensitive and vegetative. What is interesting about these powers is that each experiences its own particular kind of love or desire. Like mussels and shellfish, plants, at least in Lady Philosophy's view, desire their continued existence; but, given the nature of that existence, very little volition is required for it to continue. Thus, they go on *passively* receiving into them sun, rain and earth (and all the accompanying nutrients). A dog's desire for continued existence manifests itself in accordance with its sensitive soul: it will eat food, which is necessary for its sustenance, but it will also choose those foods that appeal most to its senses, what smells or tastes best. Humans' desires go beyond continued existence or even the preference of beef over pork (this is a 'choice' I imagine dogs can make); in accordance

with their rational souls, considerations of health (to stay with the food example) become a factor in their choices. The rational human eats not simply that which is appealing to his senses, but that which will benefit him in other meta-sensual ways—that which will help him achieve what his mind desires or loves. In Boethius's view, the highest desire of the rational soul is to be united with the divine; hence Lady Philosophy's attempt to compel Boethius to "mount the lofty skies."

Even though Boethius does not foreground love in these passages, love's presence must be assumed. Indeed, elsewhere in the *Consolation*, Boethius is taught to conceive of love as the power that holds the moving universe in a kind of harmony (see 2.M.8); it is the fabric of the cosmos, and the mind is a metaphysical entity which has both a place and a trajectory in it.

Love—specifically, love conceived as movement—is central to Dante's project, a fact about which the poet leaves little doubt. In the first line of his *Divine Comedy*, Dante likens life to a "journey" (*Inferno*, Esolen trans. 1.1),¹⁶ and in his earlier, quasi-introductory text, *The New Life*, he recounts the moment when his life, in particular, began: "I saw her almost at the end of my ninth year" (547).¹⁷ Life—what Dante might call a fully human life—begins when the soul starts loving, when one starts journeying: "from that time forward," Dante writes, "Love [...] governed my soul" (548). Over the course of his journey to Beatrice and Paradise—down the *Inferno*, up Mt. Purgatory, and up further into the celestial spheres—Dante encounters both sinners and saints, all of whose actions,

¹⁶ In this dissertation, I quote from a number of different translations of Dante's *Comedy*; for each quotation, therefore, I will specify in the parenthetical which translation I am citing.

¹⁷ Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from *The New Life* are from D.G. Rossetti's translation in *The Portable Dante*.

vicious or virtuous, stem from their loves: loves out of proportion or in, wrongly directed or rightly.¹⁸ Notably, as Dante journeys, as he moves steadily toward his beloved, his own love becomes proportionate and rightly directed. In a passage highlighted by Chadwick in his note on *Confessions* 13.9.10 and, indeed, one in which Dante is thinking quite explicitly of Augustine and the nature of love, Beatrice says: “In His will is our peace—it is the sea / in which all things are drawn that it itself / creates or which the work of Nature makes” (*Paradise*, Musa trans. 3.85-87). It is a significant moment for at least two reasons: first, it signals that the *Divine Comedy* is a kind of literary working out of the assertion that weight (or will) is love; and second, it characterizes love’s movement in a way that is not simply vertical or ascending in nature. Dante’s journey is conventionally thought of as an upward one, but a distant sea can only be traveled to by a ship—horizontally or, if you like, terrestrially. The above passage is only one of a number in which Dante employs a naval or marine metaphor to describe his journey; notably, these lines from *Paradise* are anticipated in the opening lines of *Purgatory*: “For better waters, now, the little bark / of my poetic powers hoists its sails / and leaves behind that cruelest of the seas” (Musa trans. 1.1-3).

One last element of the *Comedy* deserves note: when Dante and Virgil encounter Satan at the very pit of the Inferno, he is encased from the waist down in ice—ice which his wings by seemingly involuntarily flapping and circulating the frigid air effectively maintain; he is also weeping freezing tears from all six of his eyes, and gnawing senselessly on three great sinners, Cassius, Brutus, and Judas, one in each of his mouths. It is a portrait of a

¹⁸ Dante divides the seven ‘deadly’ sins into three categories according to the nature of their loves: loves that are excessive (lust, gluttony, avarice); loves that are defective (sloth); and loves that are perverted (wrath, envy, pride).

figure who retains only a semblance, if that, of his rational soul, who has been reduced to the animalistic, the monstrous. Further, it is a portrait of one who has done everything he can to subvert and root out love from his being (for such is the nature of rebellion against God, who is himself Love). Fittingly, then, Dante portrays him, as well as those sinners who occupy places near to his, as immobilized, unmoving except perhaps just barely in his sensitive soul, incapable of real movement.¹⁹

Petrarch, writing a generation after Dante, adopts the characterization of love's movement as an ascent or climb in his famous letter to Dionisio da Borgo San Sepolcro, more familiarly known as "The Ascent of Mount Ventoux." Bringing together his spiritual and literary mentors, he writes that upon reaching a certain height on the mountain, it occurred to him to look into his copy of Augustine's *Confessions*; after reading a short passage, he finds that he is ashamed "that I should still be admiring earthly things who might long ago have learned from even the pagan philosophers that nothing is wonderful but the soul" (Robinson trans.).²⁰ It is a revelation similar to the admonition Lady Philosophy offers to Boethius: love that which is higher, *with* what is higher, and ascend. Indeed, in his *Rime sparse*, Petrarch speaks of the queen (Reason), who is "enthroned at [the] summit" of "the divine part of our nature," and "holds" him (Petrarch), refining him and his desires "like gold [...] in the fire (360.1-8).²¹ In a kind of mock-trial, Love argues before this queen that it was he who gave Petrarch "wings to fly above the heavens through mortal things, which

¹⁹ Philip Cary writes that Dante's frozen hell "is deeply traditional, growing out of a complex of interrelated Augustinian language, conceptuality, and metaphor that had already shaped the thinking of the West for nearly a thousand years" (15).

²⁰ I quote from two different translations of the "Ascent" in this chapter: Robinson's (cited above) and Bernardo's in Petrarch's *Letters on Familiar Matters I-VIII*. Volume I. The translation cited will be specified in the parenthetical.

²¹ The line numbers here and in all references to Petrarch's *Rime sparse* correspond to the appropriate stanza(s) of the Italian poem. The page-facing English prose translation gives no line numbers.

are a ladder to the creator” (360.136-143). Elsewhere, Petrarch contemplates those “amorous wings” that lift and “part him from every low thought” (71.7-15); as he himself asserts, it is “[f]rom thought to thought, from mountain to mountain [that] Love guides me” (129.1-3).

But Petrarch also diverges from Dante, Boethius, and Augustine in that the love he describes is increasingly a human or, better yet, a romantic love—that of a man for a woman. This is, no doubt, a perplexing assertion, given Dante’s clearly romantic attachment to Beatrice, as well as Petrarch’s self-admonition to turn away from “earthly things.” While it is true that Dante’s love for Beatrice in the *New Life* is, arguably, a predominantly human love, over the course of his journey in the *Comedy*, it is incorporated into his love for God; thus, he is, in some ways, very much in the camp of Boethius and Augustine. While Petrarch does not reject the notion of the soul’s loving ascent to the divine, his thoughts, at times, tend to linger on the human object of his love, Laura. Consider his employment of the marine metaphor: whereas Dante has Beatrice speak of the sea that is God’s peace, Petrarch tells Laura, “Lady, you have both keys of my heart in your hand, and of that I am glad, ready to set sail with every wind” (63.11-14).²²

By now the basic characterization of love as mover—or as the *moving* of the lover—has been established. I have commented on the nature of this movement, that it is a “*moto spiritale*” or a “spiritual motion, the motion of Amor,” in the words of Robert Crouse (“Birth” 8), or, in those of Philip Cary, “movement not in space but in the will, [in] a psychological rather than corporeal dimension” (16). It should be clear, though, that much

²² The two keys are Laura’s “lovely eyes” and her “angelic sweet voice” (63.5-10)

more needs to be said, in particular, about the *manner* of love's movement. How does love *do* its moving, exactly? What initiates the lover's movement? How is that movement maintained? These questions invite an examination of what we might call the *anatomy* of love's movement, in which the forces and agencies at work are precisely delineated. To begin this examination, let us turn to the second idea at the core of theological romance: that love's movement does not diminish the lover's agency.

2.4 Love's Movement Does Not Diminish the Lover's Agency

I began with Chadwick's translation of the *Confessions* because it is highly literal.²³ It is also, at least with respect to the passage in question, very similar to the nineteenth-century theologian Edward Pusey's translation, which reads: "My weight, is my love; thereby am I borne, whithersoever I am borne" (233). But literal translations have their limitations, specifically in terms of bringing the author's meaning to the fore. Consider R.S. Pine-Coffin's rendering in the popular Penguin edition: "In my case, love is the weight by which I act. To whatever place I go, I am drawn to it by love" (317).²⁴ Immediately, differences are apparent: "In my case," "by which I act," "I go," and "drawn" all constitute fairly significant departures from the letter (if not the spirit) of the original. The first of these, it seems to me, is largely superfluous; the second and third, rather shockingly, posit Augustine as the active subject of their respective phrases—rather than the passive object,

²³ "My weight is my love" is exactly Augustine's wording (minus the assumed "is"): *pondus meum amor meus*. The sentence's second phrase, *eo feror, quocumque feror*, might be rendered, word for word, "by it (which) I am carried, wherever I am carried."

²⁴ Pine-Coffin's translation gives no line numbers, so I have provided the page number. I have done the same for Pusey's translation, which also gives no line numbers and is cited above. The passage referred to is, of course, *Confessions* 13.9.10.

which, grammatically speaking, he appears to be—and the fourth looks like a teasing out of one of the implications of being ‘weighty.’ Because ‘who is the actor here?’ is, really, the all-important question, let us begin by considering the fourth of these departures, and the differences between being “carried” or “borne” and being “drawn.”

If one is being carried or borne, the implication is that the one doing the carrying, the one bearing the load, is *with* that load in some way, perhaps underneath it. If one is being drawn, however, it does not seem necessary, at least, on the surface of things, that the one doing the drawing must be in such a position. In fact, one rarely draws from below: one draws water from a well; one draws smoke from a cigarette; one draws a potential lover with a look (but we are getting ahead of ourselves). While gravity—the theory of which Newton would not propose for some twelve centuries—draws apples to the ground, it does not do so in the sense of ‘carrying’ or ‘bearing.’ An apple is said to “fall,” but one carried or borne is not allotted, grammatically speaking, that freedom of movement. Drawing leaves the question of agency open; though one is undeniably drawn in a certain direction, he is not forcibly moved. We might say, then, that whereas Pine-Coffin makes explicit Augustine’s meaning, Chadwick requires his reader to infer from “weight” the appropriate meaning of “carried.”

When Augustine refers to his “weight,” he is indicating a quality of his person, something intrinsic rather than externally determined (Gilson calls it a “natural tendency” (135)). We know this because when Augustine speaks of oil and water, he emphasizes their “respective weights,” which, given their disparate trajectories, must also be different; their weights “act on” them variously. This kind of ‘acting on’ is also significantly different in

nature from that of a man who forcibly throws another over his shoulder. In fact, to take advantage of this example, Virgil illustrates just such a difference when he describes his hero, Aeneas, lifting the burden of his father onto his back before himself fleeing Troy. Anchises plays no part in this episode except to submit to being lifted up: *cedo*, he says, “I yield” (2.704).²⁵ Moments later, Aeneas, with his father on his shoulder, his son holding his hand, and his wife following behind, is on his way to safety, to his new home, to Rome. David West translates this being-on-his-way in the following manner: “we moved along, keeping to the shadows” (2.720-730).²⁶ But a quick glance at Virgil’s Latin reveals something more interesting: *Ferimur per opaca locorum*, literally, “We are borne through the dark places” (2.725). I am perhaps moving somewhat too liberally from Augustine to Virgil in order to make this point, but, the fact is, Augustine knew Virgil exceedingly well; he would most certainly have been aware of this moment in the epic. Aeneas and his family (excluding his wife, Creusa) are *carried* out of Troy; does this mean that they (excluding Anchises, who is more literally carried) do not walk, that they, perhaps, hover or float with the help of Aeneas’s goddess-mother, Venus? Of course not, and yet the poet is compelled deliberately to use an apparently passive verb, leaving, very much as Augustine does, an ambiguity concerning the actor’s agency.

An additional point might helpfully be made. Latin, the language in which Augustine writes, uses ‘middle-form’ verbs or verbs in the ‘middle voice.’ These verbs look passive but are typically taken actively. There are grammatical reasons for employing such verbs, to

²⁵ If no translator is specified, then it is to be assumed I have translated the passage myself.

²⁶ West’s prose translation gives line numbers corresponding to the Latin; this passage falls within the referenced ten-line block.

describe an individual acting *for* or *on* himself—reflexively, as it were—or to convey that one participates, though is perhaps not the *only* participant, in a given action.²⁷ Linguist Emile Benveniste asserts that the subject of a middle-form verb “is the center as well as the agent of the process; he achieves something which is being achieved in him” (149). Perhaps the most famous example of a middle-form verb, one that is always (at least, in translations of the following line) taken actively is the Latin *movemur*. Consider Calvin’s rendering of Acts 17.28: “For in him we live [*vivimus*: active], and move [*movemur*], and have our being [*sumus*: active].”²⁸ It is, in truth, an example that strikes at the heart of the matter I am exploring: God, who is Love, encompasses human existence, activity, and essence. In light of this verse, the question, *do* we move or *are* we moved, poses a legitimate problem, especially given Benveniste’s description of the middle-voice as “a verbal category which seems designed to confuse our usual habits of thought” (145). In the New Testament, as well as in Augustine, it is grammar that signals this volitional ambiguity.

In his time, Augustine was intensely engaged in debates about the freedom of the will, about the “the concurrence of the divine action with created activity” (Portalié 180). On one side of the debate were Pelagius and his followers, who denied such a concurrence. They argued, instead, for the “absolute independence of human liberty in relationship to God and its unlimited power for good as well as for evil” (Portalié 186). On the other side were, among others, the Manicheans (Augustine’s former sect), who rejected the notion of “freedom in the individual personality,” asserting, instead, that a “special act of God” (Tillich

²⁷ According to Georges de Plinval, “une *voix moyenne* destinée à exprimer, sous des désinences identiques à celles du passif, l’intérêt spécial que le sujet, l’auteur ou l’opérateur porte à son action proper” (17).

²⁸ The Latin is from Jerome’s *Vulgate*. The formulation—active, middle, active—is also reflected in the Greek New Testament.

128) is required to ensure human action. Augustine attempted to cut a path in between these two positions, not simply because each seemed too extreme, but because he recognized that there was something mysterious about volition. Indeed, we need only glance at the terms Chadwick employs in translating the passage from *Confessions* 13 to see that Augustine thinks this is so: bodies (e.g. fire and a stone) “tend,” and while being “acted on,” they “seek,” a point that is emphasized by repetition. Oil is “drawn up,” but water “sinks.” Augustine himself is “carried” but then “grows” and “ascends.” If we were to pull back further, we would see that the entire passage in which these few lines are found is characterized by an oscillation between the active and passive voices.²⁹ While this oscillation may seem on the surface to suggest variation or alternation of passive and active voices rather than the kind of ambiguity I speak of above, it must be taken as fundamentally indicative of the balancing act Augustine is attempting to perform; it is his way of conveying on a larger scale what he communicates in a particular instance’s use of the middle voice.

I have not yet noted Augustine’s partiality for the verb *feror*, “I am carried”—the same verb, notably, that Virgil employs in the passage from the *Aeneid* cited above (though in a different conjugation). There are resonances of *Confessions* 13.9.10 throughout Augustine’s writings; in *The City of God*, for example, he says, “For the specific gravity of bodies is, as it were, their love, whether they are carried [*ferimus*] downwards by their weight, or upwards by their levity. For the body is borne [*fertur*] by its gravity, as the spirit of love, whithersoever it is borne [*fertur*]” (Dods trans. 11.28). And in a letter to Januarius, he includes the following passage:

²⁹ I make this claim not about the translations of this passage of *Confessions* 13, but about Augustine’s own Latin.

Now the souls of men, whether good or bad, love rest, but how to attain to that which they love is to the greater part unknown: and that which bodies seek for their weight, is precisely what souls seek for their love, namely, a resting-place. For as, according to its specific gravity, a body descends or rises until it reaches a place where it can rest,—oil, for example, falling if poured into the air, but rising if poured into water,—so the soul of man struggles towards the things which it loves, in order that, by reaching them, it may rest. There are indeed many things which please the soul through the body, but its rest in these is not eternal, nor even long continued; and therefore they rather debase the soul and weight it down, so as to be a drag upon that pure imponderability by which it tends [*fertur*] towards higher things. (*Confessions and Letters* Ep.55.18)

J.G. Cunningham's translation of this second text is particularly useful as it renders *fertur*, which elsewhere is translated as "is borne," as "tends." Its usefulness, though, extends beyond simply one word; the passage is laden with activity: "a body descends or rises"; "the soul of man *struggles*" in order that it may 'reach.' This is not Augustine equivocating; he advocates the simultaneous influence of love and the freedom of the human will; as he says more explicitly in another letter, *imus autem non ambulando, sed amando*, "we go not by walking, but by loving" (Ep.155.4; qtd. in Sims-Williams 309).

Whether there are motions of the soul in which love is more implicated than others or than the individual himself is (or vice versa) is a question to be explored, but one better left for my discussion of the third idea at the heart of the tradition of theological romance. Let us now turn to another element of love's *mysterious* movement, one implied in Augustine's above-quoted letter to Januarius: the role of the beloved in inspiring or, perhaps, compelling movement. "There are indeed many things which please the soul," he writes, but what does that "please" mean exactly? What is the difference between an object being pleasing and being loved (or moved toward)? Since Augustine's metaphor of choice is

“weight,” and by this he means something like gravitational tendency, we might want to think in terms, specifically, of “attraction” (a synonym for love). The theologian says, “You show a green branch to a bird, and you attract it. Candy is shown to a child, and he is attracted; he is attracted by what he runs to, attracted by loving it” (qtd. in Portalié 203). These examples are both illuminating and perplexing. A bird, presumably, has a kind of intuitive connection with a green branch; it is attracted by something in itself that is not separate from its essential nature. It seems a stretch to suggest that a child’s attraction to candy is equally intuitive, but perhaps Augustine’s point is simply that the child’s attraction remains, to some degree, pre-rational. Both objects are simply posited; no *reason* is given for the attraction that either ‘lover’ undeniably experiences.³⁰ That the child is “attracted by what he runs to” and “attracted by loving it” is a challenging conjunction of ideas, but as long as being “attracted by” and “running to” are understood as separate (though related, and perhaps even overlapping) ‘events,’ it seems to me we are thinking like Augustine. Presumably a child by running toward candy both reveals or confirms that he *is* attracted to it *and*, at the same time, fuels that attraction (for moving is loving).

There is a volitional gap in between an object of love compelling a lover—being the thing that actually moves him—and offering itself, so to speak, as an object of his *love*, which is, more properly speaking, his mover. Indeed, Portalié argues that Augustine always conceives of the attractive object—the branch or candy—as “an appeal, an invitation which

³⁰ Little can usefully be said about why a lover finds a particular object attractive. We might infer that, since all humans are lovers, they are bound to love something; and since all things that exist are good simply by virtue of their existence—in that they are *things*—any of these is worth loving to some degree. Charles Taylor writes, “why do we love the cosmic (or any other) good? [The] answer points not to the intrinsic loveability of the object but to certain inclinations implanted in the subject” (256).

allures and *seeks* to persuade” (203, my emphasis). In other words, what an object’s capacity to attract *does*, at least, ideally, is compel the lover into a rationality upon which his loving-movement is predicated. In *On Free Will*, Augustine writes that “the will is not enticed to do anything except by something that has been perceived. It is in man’s power to take or reject this or that, but it is not in man’s power to control the things which will affect him when they are perceived” (qtd. in Haren 49-50).³¹ An individual will be attracted to a multitude of objects—that is what it means to be a lover, one predisposed to loving, regardless of the object—but he will only truly love if he employs, as Augustine puts it, his “power to take.” This process may sound rather too straightforward, but it must not be forgotten that moving (or loving or ‘taking’) is something that one seemingly both does and undergoes. The line between these ‘separate’ events remains hazy.

Once a lover has perceived an object—one that has the potential to become, but is apparently not yet, an object of rational love—there is a sort of psychic process that is initiated. An image of that object comes to reside in the lover’s mind; that way, even if the object is withdrawn, its “likeness remains in the memory.” There, Augustine writes, “the will may [...] direct its eye” (*On the Holy Trinity* 11.3.6); doing so, we might say, serves to secure that image’s place. It is this directing of the eye that marks the metamorphosis of an attraction into a love—or, perhaps, a disposition or readiness to love into a moving love.

Gilson writes:

³¹ What in Haren’s account is rendered “entice” is translated elsewhere as “attract.” Further, Risto Saarinen writes in *Weakness of Will* that the “‘commonplace Augustinian’ model treats desire and consent as separate faculties. Impressions and impulses/desires may represent preliminary judgements, but they emerge spontaneously and remain beyond our immediate control” (27). Saarinen also writes that *voluntas* means “a desire or an impulse to do something. [...] [I]n some sense this inner division is involuntary, but in another sense, the *ego* remains a partial subject of the different impulses concerned” (21).

The will's action on the whole man is exercised through the meditation of the images and ideas over which it has control. In Augustinian psychology, the will is not a 'generator' of representations, but it does bind them together. In other words, it applies our powers of sense, imagination and thought to their acts or turns them away from them. Whence the dominant influence it exercises by setting all of man's activities to work in the direction of his dominating love. (310 n. 30)

Based on this description, it seems possible to conceive of love's influence on the lover not as a force so much as a predisposition toward certain objects (or images of objects), for his affections or attractions are not, according to both Gilson in the above passage and Augustine in the passage from *On Free Will*, under his "control." This implies that when the will does decide either to reject or to take, it does not do so in a volitional vacuum; to reject requires effort, as an inclination to move in a certain direction, toward a certain object, already exists; to take, by contrast, means moving in the same direction as one's inclination, but still, no doubt, necessitates an active aligning of one's will with one's attraction, a process requiring the image of the object in one's mind to be considered more closely. It is worth noting that even in the above passage Gilson implicitly invokes the notion of love's movement, employing the prepositional phrase, "in the direction of."

To move from Augustine to the broader tradition of theological romance, Canto 18 of Dante's *Purgatory*, the last of three cantos literally at the center of the *Comedy*, offers further insight into this volitional process. There, Virgil vocalises the poem's grand theme:

The soul, which is created quick to love,
once readiness is wakened into act,
will move toward anything that pleases it.
Now when cognition, from some outward fact,
draws forth a lovely image to display
within your soul, with power to attract,
And when your soul is turned and bends that way,

such leaning of the soul is natural love,
binding itself to you initially
Through the delight of beauty. Then, as fire
rises according to its inborn form,
that in the fiery realm it may endure,
So the rapt soul arises in desire—
a motion of the spirit that will not rest
so long as the beloved brings it joy. (Esolen trans. 18.19-33)

On the surface of things, it would seem the “power to attract” lies not, strictly speaking, in the outward object, the “fact,” but in the image produced by that object within the soul. To speak of an image being ‘produced,’ though, is to miss the crucial point; that image is itself ‘drawn’ into the soul by “cognition” or, as Charles Singleton puts it in his translation of *Purgatory*, by one’s “faculty of apprehension.” There is, in other words, an organic or, not to be anachronistic, a metaphysical connection between the object and the image of the object contemplated in the mind or rational soul. As Charles Williams writes, “there is no point in Dante’s thought at which the image of Beatrice in his mind was supposed to exclude the actual objective Beatrice” (*Figure 8*).

It is also clear from the above passage that before one moves toward an attractive object, or an object whose image is attractive—before one “arises”—he first “is turned” and then “bends.” Here, once again, we encounter the passive and the active, this time, though, more precisely related to one another than in the Augustine we have considered. The first stage in a volitional process is represented by Dante as a passive event (being turned), whereas the second (arising) and, indeed, the seeming space between the first and second stages (bending), are represented actively. This is perhaps the best that a language without a middle-voice can do.

In the *New Life*, Dante recounts his psychic experience after seeing Beatrice for the first time: “And though her image, which remained constantly with me, was Love’s assurance of holding me, it was of such a pure quality that it never allowed me to be ruled by Love” (590). He asserts the potency of Beatrice’s image, apparently a correlative of its purity, as well as the fact that love does not *simply* turn or move him. It does not ‘rule,’ him, he claims, suggesting that he retains his capacity to consider her image rationally and, therefore, also his agency.

An image of the concurrence of divine action with created activity can be seen in Canto 7 of *Purgatory*. Dante and Virgil encounter a certain soul, Sordello, who informs them that “no one can go up the hill at night” (44). “Do you see this [...] little line?” he asks them,

you couldn’t cross it once the sun’s gone down
And nothing but the darkness of the night
would pick a quarrel with your going up,
thwarting the will with inability. (Esolen trans. 7.53-57)

The reason for their inability to ascend in darkness is not made explicit in the text, but Philip Cary writes that the “connection between light and love [...] explains why, no matter how far up souls are in purgatory, they cannot climb except in the daylight. Our ascent is impossible without the prior descent of light from above” (31). It is not simply, then, that the human is ‘solar powered,’ or that he needs light to see where to place his steps, but that *in* his climbing God’s descending is implicated: God did not come down, once and for all; rather, he continually descends, here, in the form of light, and in so doing sets the stage for or enables in an immanent way Dante’s ascent. The poet is also clearly employing light as a

traditional symbol of the intellect; one must *know* one's beloved—contemplate her image in his mind—in order to move toward her.³² On this score, Cary also has something to say: “It is as if the light of the intellect kindles fire in the will” (30); it reveals or further reveals the pleasing qualities of the attractive object.

The intellect also plays an important role in Petrarch's exploration of love's progress. Giuseppe Mazzotta writes that Petrarch “is essentially a poet of the thought of love.” He clarifies, “Th[is] statement has to be understood in a particular way to mean that [Petrarch] discovers the *event* of thought. The event of thought means not that thought is necessarily triggered by a material fact; the event is imaginary and this in turn suggests that thought is at one with the imagination” (50). There is perhaps more in Mazzotta's statement than can be considered at present; worth highlighting are the notion that a thought of love is an event, something, presumably, with stages, not unlike what I have described in both Augustine's and Dante's conception of psychic motion, and the assertion that when love moves, that movement is prompted by something wholly within the lover's soul—the image of the beloved—even if, we might say, the presence of a physical beloved seems to have been required at some point in the past. Robert M. Durling, translator of Petrarch's lyric poetry, affirms that “Petrarch accepts the traditional conception of love as an obsession with the mental image of the lady, imposed on the fantasy at the moment of falling in love” (18). Years before Marlowe, it seems both Dante and Petrarch were well aware of the fact that no one ever loved “that loved not at first sight” (*Hero and Leander* 1.176).

³² Williams writes, “[M]ental knowledge of her [Beatrice] is the only way by which she herself can be known” (*Figure 8*). In the previous lines, I have intentionally represented both God and Beatrice as beloved, for they are, at this point, not wholly distinguishable to Dante: Williams also says “she herself is (for Dante) the only way by which that other Power [God] can be known” (*Figure 8*).

What Mazzotta does not say explicitly in the above statement, but what is evident from even a cursory glance at the *Rime sparse* is that Petrarch is not only a poet of the thought of love but one who regards his poetry *as* his thought; to put it another way, his poetry is not the representative but the *thinking* of his thought. In *Rime* 127, this becomes evident: “Toward where love spurs me I must turn my sorrowful rhymes” (127.1-6).³³ Here, again, we are presented with the passive (he *is spurred*) and the active (he *turns*). What is more interesting than this familiar conjunction, though, is that the loving-movement Petrarch speaks of—the turning toward—is his rhyming. Elsewhere in the *Rime* he writes, “When I *move* my sighs to call you and the name that Love wrote on my heart, the sound of its first sweet accents is heard without in LAU-ds” (5.1-4, my emphasis). While sighs generally denote passion, literally, the suffering of certain kinds of thoughts, here it is Petrarch, the *sigher*, who claims responsibility for his sighing; indeed, he wilfully fashions his sighs in the form of the first syllable of Laura’s name. And yet, elsewhere in his *Rime*, his soul also *suffers* being drawn (even violently, as we may infer from the simile): “I recognize that the being I have is from [your lovely eyes and your angelic sweet voice], for they, as one rouses a lazy animal with a rod, so awakened in me my heavy soul” (*Rime* 63.5-10). That his soul is “heavy” will be addressed later in the chapter.

It has perhaps become evident by this point that there is a disturbing element in Petrarch’s thought about love that does not seem to be present, at least, in the same way, in Dante’s, Boethius’s, or Augustine’s. It is evident even in the previous paragraph: Petrarch’s rhymes are “sorrowful”; he moves his “sighs”; and Laura’s eyes and voice awaken him, in

³³ All quotations from Petrarch’s *Rime sparse* are from Durling’s translation.

much the same way that an animal beaten “with a rod” is roused. There is an association, in other words, between love and suffering. Of course, Petrarch’s forerunners all speak of suffering: Dante, at the beginning of the *Divine Comedy*, suffers from loneliness and confusion; he is lost in a dark wood and estranged from his beloved Beatrice. Boethius suffers from despair throughout the *Consolation*—until, that is, Lady Philosophy’s instruction leads him into hope.³⁴ And Augustine, in the opening lines of the *Confessions*, identifies the quality of all human suffering (of which he recounts partaking more than a little): “our heart is restless until it rests in you” (1.1.1). What makes the suffering of these figures different from that described by Petrarch is that their loving was the remedy; by loving they moved out of suffering. Petrarch—or, at the very least, the Petrarch of the *Rime*—would undoubtedly say that his loving led him into it. How can love produce such different results? One response might be to suggest that the question itself is flawed: I speak not of love but of loves. Petrarch’s love, unlike his predecessors’, is simply a bad love. This qualification can mean only two things: either Petrarch’s love is not fitted for its object, which is to say that he loves not enough or too much (both of which are possibilities), or its object is not fitted for it. To suggest the latter (and stare the problem in her lovely eyes) would be to say that it is Laura herself who is bad, an inadequate or too-base object of love.³⁵ Neither implication sits well with readers, who, let us imagine, cry out for someone to say: “well, that can’t be right, because love is good.” In order to discuss this natural objection, let us turn to the third idea at the core of theological romance.

³⁴ His very first words are: “I who once composed with eager zest / Am driven by grief to shelter in sad songs” (1.M.1).

³⁵ Ultimately there is only one possibility: for to suggest that Petrarch loves *too much* is to say that his love requires an object more worthy of it, a greater object for a greater love. So, Laura is still the problem.

2.5 Love is Good

In this third idea, it might be said that theological romance becomes less theological, or perhaps just less theologically sound, that it becomes un-Augustinian, or perhaps just Petrarchan (which is not, perplexingly, not Augustinian). That love is good is a simple idea but one that is also highly problematic, most of all because it isn't actually true. Love is not always good. A more accurate rendering of this third idea, then, though one that undoubtedly loses something of the spirit of romance, is that love *is maintained* to be good despite both the illogic of such a contention and the evidence to the contrary. This is not to say that writers of later—what we might call, Petrarch-inflected—romance are unwilling, exactly, to countenance the possibility of love's being bad; it is rather that they—or, rather, the narrators they employ as proxies in their works—have a tendency emphasize its goodness, even to the point of lying by omission. To get a better sense of this paradoxical or, quite possibly, contradictory third idea, let us return to Augustine, from whom, ironically, it can be seen to issue.

Augustine naturally has no illusions about love's capacity to be bad as well as good. Shortly before the passage in the *Confessions* from which this dissertation draws its theme, he writes, “To whom can I expound, and with what words can I express, the weight of cupidity pulling us downward into the precipitous abyss” (13.7.8). Employing again the weight metaphor, he characterizes his love in starkly negative terms. Indeed, the species of love he speaks of here—*cupiditas*—is rarely conceived of positively; it is most often defined as lust or carnal desire and implies an earthly, *fleshly* object. Augustine himself opposes *cupiditas* to *caritas*:

I call 'charity' the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and of one's neighbour for the sake of God; but 'cupidity' is a motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of one's self, one's neighbour, or any corporal thing for the sake of something other than God. That which uncontrolled cupidity does to corrupt the soul and its body is called a 'vice.' (*On Christian Doctrine* 3.10.16)

The key phrase here is "for the sake of." This phrase may seem to imply that the problem with cupidity is not its object—for the same "neighbour" (let's imagine Beatrice lives next door) can be loved with both kinds of love—but rather the lover's intention. If we take a step back, however, it becomes clear that that intention, that "for the sake of," always speaks to a more fundamental object. If a love is charitable, then its object is God, always God. Indeed, to love something for the sake of God is simply to love it according to its deserts, not too little, not too much.³⁶ (God is the only beloved, it would seem, who cannot be loved too much.) If a love is cupidinous, however, the object is anything but God. Thus, the trajectory of *caritas* is always toward God; that of *cupiditas*, away from him. As Augustine says in *The City of God*: "the right will is, therefore, well-directed love, and the wrong will is ill-directed love" (Dods trans. 14.7).

More than once in the *Confessions*, Augustine speaks of his cupidinous weight. In Book IV, he writes, "I wanted to stand still and hear you [God] and rejoice with joy at the voice of the bridegroom. But that was beyond my powers, for I was snatched away to external things [...] and under the weight of my pride I plunged into the abyss" (4.15.27). In Book VII, he confesses, "I was not stable in the enjoyment of my God. I was caught up to you by your beauty and quickly torn away from you by my weight. With a groan I crashed

³⁶ By doing so, the lover affirms its value, 'assigned' by God.

into inferior things. This weight was my sexual habit” (7.17.23). Whether it is pride or habitual lust, Augustine conceives of his cupidity as dragging him away from the true object of his love; the result is a kind of suffering, a restlessness. James O’Donnell affirms Augustine’s view of cupidity as “the wrong love, charity gone haywire, spiritual life turned fleshly, ethereal love turned sexual” (66). But his comment also points to something only implied in the above passages, to the Augustinian notion that cupidity is not a different love from charity, but rather charity metamorphosed, charity in potentiality.

Here is one cause, if we understand the term quite loosely, of theological romance’s turn away from theology or, at least, theological soundness.³⁷ Whether Augustine is speaking of *caritas* or *cupiditas*, *agape* or *eros*,³⁸ the love he is describing is *amor*. Robert Crouse writes that, for Augustine, all loves “are embraced within the concept of *amor*,” the “*caritas* synthesis” (“Love and Friendship” 136).³⁹ While *caritas* and *cupiditas* are opposed species of love, they are both, generically, *amor*. It is not surprising, then, to learn that Augustine does not always conceive of cupidity in negative terms; indeed, as he implies in the above passage from *On Christian Doctrine*, there is a distinction between “cupidity” and “uncontrolled cupidity.” Gilson confirms this distinction and, by consequence, the interactions of various species of love, saying, “*cupiditas* does not necessarily mean disorder of the will (although this is its commonest meaning).” He continues, “There can be a good cupidity if the love [i.e. the object] corresponding to it is good” (135). John Burnaby goes

³⁷ It is a “cause” in the sense that it is an idea easy to misconstrue.

³⁸ Generally speaking, *caritas* is to *cupiditas* as *agape* is to *eros*. Paul Tillich writes that “agape is the element of love in the New Testament sense of the personal, forgiving character of God. Eros represents the longing of all creatures for God as the highest good, the desire to be united with it to fulfill itself by intuiting eternally the divine abundance” (115).

³⁹ For a contrary view, see Anders Nygren, who contends in *Eros und Agape* that “if [these disparate loves] come together, the result is an artificial mixture” not a synthesis (qtd. in Burnaby 18).

further yet, claiming that for Augustine all loves are essentially cupidinous: “Love, so far as it is human, is *eros*, a desire which always and necessarily seeks its own satisfaction, whether in heaven or on earth” (92). Desire, he says, is the “stamp” of all that is made (93).

While it is clear there are distinctions between species of love, these distinctions do not hold up absolutely; one species may be transformed into another. Burnaby notes that in a letter to Hilarius, Augustine speaks of the potential for a “transference of weight” (qtd. in Burnaby 94). In this letter, the theologian writes, “The mind [...] is carried along by love as by a weight, but wherever it is carried we are ordered to withdraw from the weight of passion [*cupiditatis*] what is to be added to the weight of love [*caritatis*], until the one has disappeared [*consumatur*] and the other is completed” (*Letters* Ep.157). As is evident from the Latin for “disappeared,” Augustine speaks not of the eradication of cupidity but its incorporation into charity. Centuries later, Bernard of Clairvaux would describe the process thus: “since we are carnal and born of carnal desires, it is unavoidable that our desire and love should begin with the body, and if it is rightly directed, it will then proceed by grace through certain stages, until the spirit is fulfilled” (qtd. in Crouse, “Love and Friendship” 146)—in Augustinian terms, until the soul is perfected or finds its resting place. Augustine, though, was not the first to espouse the notion of love’s progress, though his expression of this notion in terms of weight may well be unique. Plato writes in the *Symposium* that “[w]hen a man has been [...] tutored in the lore of love, passing from view to view of beautiful things, in the right and regular ascent, suddenly he will have revealed to

him, as he draws to the close of his dealings in love, a wondrous vision” (210e).⁴⁰ Earthly objects of love or “things sensible,” to quote Burnaby, “are no longer merely an obstacle to the spirit: they can and ought to be the means of its advancement” (105). We have already heard Augustine characterize a lover’s loves as rungs on a ladder. But there is an important difference between Plato’s conception of the ‘ladder of love’ and Augustine’s. Whereas for the former, one leaves his lesser loves (or beloveds) behind in the course of his ascent,⁴¹ for the latter, “all loves, earthly and heavenly, cohere in their source and end, the love of God” (Crouse, “Love and Friendship” 152). Just as Dante’s desire for Beatrice is taken up into his desire for God, all earthly loves are (or have the potential to be) incorporated into the heavenly.

Turning again to the broader tradition, it is to the coherence of love that Boethius alludes when he speaks of that *amor* which “has its empire in the heavens” (Cooper trans. 2.M.8) and “all things [...] with motion stirs” (Watts trans. 4.M.6). By this same imperial love, he asserts, are “peoples too kept bound together by a treaty which they may not break. Love binds with pure affection the sacred tie of wedlock, and speaks its bidding to all trusty friends” (Cooper trans. 2.M.8). Little is required here in the way of commentary: there are not multiple loves governing the various spheres of metaphysical and physical reality; there is one that concerns itself with the highest and the lowest things. As theologically orthodox as this assertion may be, it is not difficult to see how it might be taken to suggest that all loves, by virtue of their participation in *amor*, are good loves.

⁴⁰ The speaker, here, Socrates, is quoting his teacher, Diotima.

⁴¹ In a Platonic scheme, these loves are less real, only poor images of the forms.

To put the problem in terms Dante could appreciate, what later romance does is deliberately fail to distinguish between natural and rational loves. Consider, again, the *Comedy*, but this time, Canto XVII of *Purgatory*, in which Virgil says:

Neither Creator nor creature, my son, was ever without love, either natural or of the mind [rational], and this you know. The natural is always without error; but the other may err either through an evil object, or through too much or too little vigor. While it is directed on the Primal Good, and on secondary goods observes right measure, it cannot be the cause of sinful pleasure. But when it is turned awry to evil or speeds to good with more zeal, or with less, than it ought, against the Creator works His creature. (Singleton trans. 17.91-102)

Much, here, has already been discussed, but the distinction between “natural” love and the love “of the mind” has only been implied. Natural love, as we know from Canto XVIII of *Purgatory*, is the movement of love “toward anything that pleases [the soul]” (Esolen trans. 18.21). It is a ‘being turned,’ a ‘bending,’ or a ‘leaning’ without “error”—without the *incapacity*, we might say, to be inclined or even move in the wrong direction. This inability to err derives from two facts: first, that all objects are intrinsically attractive and therefore worthy objects of love, at least to some degree, and second, that being attracted to an object does not constitute the fullness of psychic motion. It is one thing for Virgil to say, in Canto XVIII of the *Purgatory*, that “cognition” (Esolen trans. 18.22) *draws* an image from an outward object, but another for Augustine to write that to this image “the will may [...] direct its eye” (*On the Holy Trinity* 11.3.6). This directing of the volitional eye may be seen as the beginning of rational love.

Gerald Morgan describes the stages in love’s progress: “If [a] particular object of sensation is congenial to the [...] sensing subject, it will give pleasure and so necessarily

become the object of sensitive appetite, for the sensitive appetite is determined to particular goods” (328). He continues: “But the standard or measure of virtue is to be found not in the power of sense cognition, but in reason, and the reason will judge the object not by a particular but by a universal criterion of goodness” (328). In other words, the rational lover’s love is not that of sensual pleasure, which cannot be experienced apart from the particular instance of the beloved, but rather the pleasure he experiences once he begins to *think* of that beloved—to consider its image in his mind and its qualities. This new class of pleasure is derived not from the particular beloved’s idiosyncrasies, but from the lover’s knowledge of its quality, its goodness.

Whereas natural love, then, according to Morgan, is the “inclination of created nature to the good [...] which proceeds from no internal principle of knowledge” (322), rational love can only follow from *being cognizant* of an object. The problem with this statement is, of course, that to know an object’s quality or goodness, and consequently to love it according to its deserts, one must also know that object *metaphysically*; one must be able to discern how close a particular instance of anything comes to perfection, where it falls in the hierarchy of beloveds. This problem, though, only confirms what Dante is claiming: that rational love, unlike natural, can err. One can judge—and judge wrongly—that an object is worthy of more love than it actually is. This is true whether one knows he is judging wrongly or not.

Here is the distinction later romance fails adequately to make. In essence, it desires that the intrinsic goodness and inability to err of natural love be ascribed to all loves. Is such a desire so blameworthy? Is it surprising that one could subscribe to such a view? As

Morgan writes, even to Dante-the-pilgrim before Virgil explains it to him, “it is not at all evident in the light of the goodness of natural love how love can be a source of evil [...] as well as good” (Morgan 321). Despite the fact that for Dante-the-poet (and for Augustine before him) there is a fundamental difference between natural and rational loves—the latter being “the exercise of choice by an intellectual being in the light of its natural inclination” (323)—there is a tendency in later romance to conflate them. That “there are not three souls in man, but the one [...] exercising rational, sensitive, and vegetative functions” (325) only helps advocates of love’s categorical goodness make their case (however fallaciously), for if there is but one soul, there must, correspondingly, be only one love. This inclination to conflate rather than distinguish might also be understood as an unwillingness to allow the concept of love to mature or move beyond the view of love that corresponds to passionate and undiscerning youth; indeed, rational love is essentially natural love grown up, burdened with the responsibility of having to choose and choose rightly.⁴² That the lover ought to transfer or transform his affections as his knowledge of both his beloved and other superior beloveds grows (unless, of course, he got it right in the first place) is a difficult dictate to accept. It seems far more natural, if he desires to love *more*, to bestow more love on the beloved he already has than to find one more worthy of love.

No doubt, the kind of calculation requisite for the rational lover seems cold and heartless, especially when the beloveds in question are people, even literary characters. It is

⁴² Castiglione acknowledges the danger of enlarging the scope of natural love, and yet, in his *Book of the Courtier*, a virtual compendium of the rules and guidelines of romance, his Messer Pietro Bembo maintains “that since human nature in youth is so greatly given over to the senses, the Courtier may be permitted to love sensually while he is young” (346). In doing so, though, he “must firmly resolve to avoid all ugliness of vulgar love, and must enter into the divine path of love with reason as his guide” (347). As Bernard of Clairvaux asserts, a human love gives way to a divine (Crouse, “Love and Friendship” 146).

one thing to say, love the better flower more than the worse (though even this seems impossible); it is something else entirely to say, to Dante, for example, love Beatrice more than the “young and exceedingly beautiful” lady he recounts spying through a window at the end of the *New Life* (640).⁴³ That, however, is exactly what the *Comedy* is about: Dante has no problem with the assertion that one must learn to love the better, even when the better is a *soul*; that is what it means to have one’s loves become orderly. Because, by the time he reaches Paradise, his love for Beatrice has been perfected, even the incorporation of that love into his love for God causes him no great anxiety. He does not understand himself, we must recall, as being forced to relinquish it; rather his love is fulfilled. This is Augustine’s transference of weight *par excellence*.⁴⁴

As I have said, Petrarch’s experience of love is markedly different from Dante’s, and it is this difference of experience that sets the stage for later romance’s departure from what I have termed theological soundness. Despite the fact that Laura, like Beatrice, dies (conveniently) before her lover, allowing for the spiritualization of his love for her, Petrarch does not find the process of transference so straightforward. What in Dante is a tension which finds resolution in ascent, in Petrarch is an “opposition” between sense and reason, flesh and spirit, actual and ideal, earthly and heavenly—an “inner dissonance which [he] is powerless to resolve” (Crouse, “Birth” 9). Petrarch’s writings exhibit his soul’s

⁴³ That said, Dante believes this is exactly what is called for. This lady, whose “sight,” the poet admits “had now brought me to the point that my eyes began to enjoy the sight of her too much” (642), is thought by some to be the reason for Dante’s despair and disorientation at the beginning of the *Comedy*, the instance of his going astray.

⁴⁴ Charles Williams offers a helpful analogy in his *Outlines of Romantic Theology*: “The distance between an ordinary meal and that nourishment which is communicated in the Eucharist should lessen, as it were, until perhaps to the devout soul every meal is an actual Eucharist in the theological sense” (9). If the analogy holds, Dante’s love for Beatrice—while transformed into his love for God—*remains* his love for Beatrice. How this works exactly is, of course, not entirely clear, though Williams does also say, “Love can only see the next world by virtue of that eyesight which sees and is not afraid to see the flaws in this; all other vision is blindness, all other faith superstition” (12).

incessant oscillation between his two objects of love, Laura and God; these beloveds never seem to align for him, to metamorphose into one. To put it another way, Laura is for Petrarch ever the beloved who both can and cannot be loved too much; his love for her is at one time a human love with acknowledged limits, and at another time one that cannot err. In Mazzotta's words, Petrarch's desire is not only for an ascent of the soul but for "horizontal transcendence" (qtd. in Cachey 13). Because his characterization of love differs from his predecessors', it is prudent to see the tradition of what I've called 'later' romance beginning in earnest with this irresolvable tension. Though Petrarch himself does not seek to overlook this difficulty—in fact, he not only countenances but further problematizes the irresolvability of his loves—his exhibition of himself being torn in two by his two categorically good loves does set the stage for many romance writers to come.⁴⁵ There are two texts, in particular, that exemplify the Petrarchan problem; the first is the *Rime sparse*, from which we have already encountered passages, and the second, the *Secret*, a dialogue in which 'Franciscus' and 'Augustinus' debate, among other things, the virtues of loving Laura.

In *Rime* 129, the poet offers the following portrait of himself:

Where a tall pine or a hillside extends shade, there I sometimes stop, and
in the first stone I see I portray her lovely face with my mind.

When I come back to myself, I find my breast wet with pity and then I
say, "Alas, where have you come to, from what are you separated?"

But as long as I can hold my yearning mind fixed on the first thought, and
look at her and forget myself, I feel Love so close by that my soul is satisfied
by its own deception; in so many places and so beautiful I see her, that, if the
deception should last, I ask for no more. (129.27-39)

⁴⁵ I will say this later, but it sets the stage by: 1) allowing romance narrators to attribute the goodness of a rational love inclined toward the highest object to a love directed at an earthly beloved; and 2) by allowing the tension of Petrarchan irresolvability to animate romance texts in an understated way.

In this passage, Petrarch relates not only the fact of Laura's death, which he readily forgets, even if only fleetingly, but also his ability, in considering her lingering image in his mind, to forget himself. It is both a statement of fact and an admission of guilt, for to forget one's self is also to forget the thing for which one's soul exists, the loving, ultimately, of God. (That forgetting oneself is one possible effect of loving *badly* suggests that the lover's sense of himself, his identity, is implicated in important ways in his loving.) To remember this proper object of love is to acknowledge that his "old sweet cruel lord" (360.1-8) has, in his own words, "made me love God less than I ought and be less concerned for myself; for a lady I have equally disregarded all cares" (360.31-38). In Durling's translation, the emphasis falls appropriately on "equally,"⁴⁶ for the poet's point is that his attentiveness to hierarchy—the relative worthiness of beloveds—is the casualty of his loving Laura. Despite both his confession and raillery, however, he is incapable of repudiating his 'bad' love. According to Durling's Introduction, though Petrarch "must pray for grace to heal the split in his will [...] the unambiguous experience of grace never comes, and the *Rime sparse* ends not with victory achieved but with the longest and most poignant of the many prayers for help" (21). Petrarch's torment is that he believes that he can do little more than anticipate the moment when the pendulum of his love swings back in the other direction, and he is burdened, once again, by that "pitiless yoke [...] most fierce to the most submissive" (62.9-11). Of course, it should be noted, this yoke, which holds his "yearning mind fixed on the first thought" of Laura—is also a burden he welcomes with arms open wide.

⁴⁶ As far as I can tell, the placement of *equalmente* at the beginning of the line (360.34) confirms this reading.

The poet splits himself in two in the *Secret*, where he assigns his two beloveds (Laura and God) to his two interlocutors. Franciscus is quick to defend himself from all forthcoming attacks: “I did not entrust, as you think, my soul to a mortal thing [Laura]. You know that I have loved not so much her body as her soul” (108); later, he claims, “she called my young soul back from all turpitude. She dragged it back, as they say, with a hook and compelled it to desire higher things” (110). Here the imagery denotes a moving love, drawing (or, in this case, dragging) his soul upward. It is both Augustinian and Dantean, but at the same time tinged with a more violent quality. As Mazzotta says, few poets “have represented, as Petrarch has [...], the insight into love as simultaneously passion and force” (54). Though Franciscus argues for the benefits—the virtue—of loving Laura, his imagery ultimately undercuts his defence. Nor does his ambivalence help: “not *so much* her body as her soul.” Augustinus makes a more compelling case: “perhaps she dragged you back from many perils, but she pushed you into still more” (111); “she has kept your soul aloof from the love of heavenly things, and she has turned your desire from the creator toward a mere creature” (112). Finally, he says:

[T]here is nothing that so produces indifference and contempt for God as love of temporal things. And especially this thing that people call by the name “love” or even (the greatest sacrilege) call God, so that heavenly sanction assents to human madness, and a great crime becomes somehow permitted because it is imagined to be divinely inspired. (115)

The crime Augustinus accuses Franciscus of *is* that of the later romance tradition: the attribution of divinity—of an unqualifiedly-upward psychic trajectory—to a human love that is not ‘for the sake of’ God. While, in this dialogue, Franciscus maintains that his love for Laura *is* for that sake, Augustinus seems to see the truth, the implication of Franciscus’s

defence: his belief that whether one has the love of God as an end in loving his earthly beloved has little bearing on that love's goodness. While it is true that Petrarch's Augustinus is not quite representative of the actual Augustine—for Augustinus's espoused view of love as a madness, for example, is better attributed to the pagan poets and philosophers—there is little doubt that Franciscus's defence of his love for Laura must be understood as highly problematic. The real Augustine would undoubtedly agree that human love is divine, at least, in the sense that it is humanity's God-given disposition; he would disagree, though, that Petrarch's love for Laura (as expressed at times in the *Rime* and by the *Secret's* Franciscus) can *alone* ennoble him metaphysically. There is no such thing as “horizontal transcendence,” at least as Petrarch conceives it. Such is Petrarch's love, Augustine might say, that it both ennobles him and causes him to suffer at the same time—or, in terms of psychic movement, that it both raises him up and drags him down. To employ an image ubiquitous in Petrarch's corpus, it is a love best represented by a ship tossed back and forth among the waves.

Given the arrival of this image, it seems an appropriate moment briefly to say something about the concept of weakness of will. In both the *Rime* and the *Secret*, Petrarch (or Franciscus) claims to experience something like *akrasia*—the phenomenon of acting against one's will. The poet claims that in certain circumstances—when, for example, he is being driven by his old cruel master “through fields and across hills” on “weary feet” (*Rime* 125.7-13)—he is, in fact, not willing his actions. Love, in these instances, dominates him rather than mysteriously implicating itself in his actions. In claiming to experience such a thing, Petrarch diverges from Augustine and Dante, who, as we have seen, argue that

though love—even *cupiditas*—is ever and essentially a factor in human action, it is never so to the diminishment of the actor’s will. In other words, there is no such thing as *not* willing. Mazzotta writes that “few poets have caught, as much as Petrarch has, love’s disabling power” (54), but in an Augustinian view, love only *enables*. If one finds himself experiencing a kind of psychic stasis, it is not because he has no will, but rather because he is being pulled or pushed—impelled, perhaps—in opposite, even multiple directions; he has, instead of a *telos* for his single will, *teloi*. The weights of his fragmented loves hold him in an akrastic state. If one finds himself (for this is how it seems) moving in a direction against his will, it is actually the fact that in his “inner discord,” the “weightier part of the will [has] prevail[ed]” (Saarinen 52).⁴⁷

It still may not be wholly clear why Petrarch’s love for Laura cannot simply cohere with his love for God, why, to use Augustine’s terms, his *cupiditas* has not been made *caritas*. One answer may be found in the “Ascent of Mt. Ventoux,” where Petrarch asserts that “[b]etween these inclinations a very insistent and uncertain battle for control of my two selves has been going on for a long time in my mind” (Bernardo trans. 177). To understand the significance of this assertion, let us once more consider Augustine:

⁴⁷ The example of Dante’s Satan would seem to suggest a third possibility, namely, that the more one chooses *not* to love (what he should)—in Augustinian terms, to will *will-lessness*—the more he finds himself incapable of psychic motion. Even this example, though, may be seen to accord with the notion of *akrasia* as described above. Having free will means that one can conceivably will oneself into will-lessness. In his oration *On the Dignity of Man*, the Renaissance neo-Platonist Pico della Mirandola asserts that God in creation gave the human “no fixed seat, no form of thy very own, no gift peculiarly thine” in order that he might become “molder and maker of thyself.” The human may “sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul’s reason into the higher natures which are divine” (4-5). Obviously, to become a brute is to lose the faculty of choosing to become a brute or anything else, for that matter. Even though once one arrives in a will-less state, one’s experience will seem to be akrastic, of being driven by other forces and agencies, Augustine would argue that, at some point, one decided on this consequence. As in tragic drama, one cannot extricate himself from a fall at the last moment; it is the culmination of the choices he has made.

[T]here is no monstrous split between willing and not willing. We are dealing with a morbid condition of the mind which, when it is lifted up by truth, does not unreservedly rise to it but is weighed down by habit. So there are two wills. Neither of them is complete, and what is present in the one is lacking to the other. (*Confessions* 8.9.21)

Whereas Petrarch asserts the existence of his “selves,” Augustine speaks only of wills, which given his belief in the potential for a transference of weight, may, ultimately, become one. It is not at all clear that Petrarch’s selves can similarly be reconciled, especially when the poet takes pains to assert the distinct goodness of (the beloved of) each. Here we see that identity, for Petrarch, is implicated in agency. In fact, what Petrarch describes may well be a ‘crisis of identity.’

It is easy to see how, given this opposition of selves, a writer of later, Petrarch-inflected romance might be inclined to portray a lover with an earthly *beloved* but a divine love—a love that not only moves him without diminishing his agency, but is also *good*. The problematic nature of this stance is made evident simply by the fact that “beloved” and “love,” typically interchangeable, cannot here cohere. That the lover’s actual experience of love does not accord with the love he espouses further bears out this difficulty. That is to say, later romance lovers still experience the Petrarchan tension. In fact, it is arguably this tension which serves as the principal animator of later romance texts. The lover sighs and suffers but does not know why. His conclusion is that it is because he does not possess his beloved. This is, of course, true, though ironically, as should now be clear, he’s thinking of the wrong beloved.

Before moving on to consider some elements of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, a late medieval romance—or romantic tragedy—in which the ideas outlined above find

expression, I would like to offer one last way of thinking about this third idea at the core of theological romance.⁴⁸ It might be argued that the Petrarchan problem is easily resolved if only Petrarch's love for Laura could be considered allegorically. That is to say, in allegory, one can conceive *as good* a love for a particular beloved—even an immoderate or rapturous love—without explicitly showing recourse to the divine hierarchy of loves. D.W.

Robertson, a critic of medieval literature (and translator of Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*) is notable for maintaining that many medieval romances can, in fact, be read wholly allegorically, that even a text like *Troilus and Criseyde*, which, in many respects, resembles Dante's *Comedy* very little, ought to be read almost as an ethical treatise.⁴⁹ C.S. Lewis opposed the kind of didactic interpretation offered by Robertson, suggesting that what Chaucer really does in his poem is employ the *power* of allegory to mean, but at the same time recount a story which is not meant allegorically (at least, in Robertson's conception). Lewis writes that despite its "guise of allegory" (*Allegory* 235), we find in Chaucer's poem "allegory abandoned [...] in favour of a direct delineation of love" (234). *Troilus and Criseyde* is a narrative which realistically describes human psychology and experience. To my initial point, we might say, then, that the inclination to maintain that

love is good despite the illogic of such a contention and the evidence to the contrary seems

⁴⁸ Even though the epithet "theological" has largely been dropped in my discussion of this third idea, my claim is that all romance is, in essentials, theological romance. The notion of love's moving the lover, and of that movement's mysterious implication in the lover's soul, is an idea that has its origins in theology—as is the notion that love is good, however misconstrued or misapplied it may be in particular instances of theological romance.

⁴⁹ In *A Preface to Chaucer*, Robertson writes that "it is improbable that Chaucer wrote either to titillate the young or to supply pap for the fancied appetites of the aged. He had instead a philosophical message of some profundity to impart, a message, if properly elaborated, could be just as moving as any celebration of romantic love" (502). What exactly is the nature of that message? In one instance, Robertson claims that the five books of the text represent stages of development and "Book V is a picture of Hell on earth, the Hell which results from trying to make earth a heaven in its own right" (496). In another, character-specific example, Robertson maintains that the poem's religious imagery "serves to show the corruption of the higher reason in Troilus as it submits completely to the wiles of the lower reason in pursuit of sensual satisfaction" (487). His reading treats the *Troilus* as above all an ethical and religious text.

to accord with an inability on the poet's (or narrator's or even reader's) part to say definitively whether a given text is allegorical or not.⁵⁰

2.6 Chaucer

Invoking Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, here, serves three primary functions: first, as I say in the Introduction and will explore in the following chapters, the plays discussed in this dissertation share certain kinships with Chaucer's poem; they resonate in a particularly Chaucerian frequency. Second, as the *Troilus* is a work of literature in which the ideas of theological romance find expression, it helps to narrow the generic gap between the theology of Augustine and the plays of Shakespeare, as well as between the theologically-explicit poetry of Dante and Petrarch and the bard's doctrinally-reticent drama. Third, as it is a work not only of literature but of *English* literature, it offers a useful comparison for discussing theological romance as it pertains to poetry both *in* English and *of* England. In Shakespeare's day, Chaucer was regarded not just as an English poet, but as the first great English poet, his influence extending from Spenser and Wyatt to Donne and Jonson.⁵¹ *Troilus and Criseyde*, in particular, "was prized as [Chaucer's] central achievement" by Renaissance readers, prompting, as Barry Windeat claims, "a range of allusion and

⁵⁰ A further tension arises, of course, when a love that is ostensibly allegorical trespasses into areas conventionally thought of as vicious. For example, it's one thing to think of Lancelot's love for Guinevere as allegorical (vassal and lady), but when that love seeks expression not in sex (which might be thought of as appropriate) but in adultery, things become more complicated.

⁵¹ Spenser and Wyatt's indebtedness to Chaucer is indubitable; for Chaucer's influence on Donne, see John F. Plummer's "Did John Donne Read Chaucer, and Does It Matter?"; and for his influence on Jonson, see Robert Evans's "Ben Jonson's Chaucer." Indeed, in this last essay, Evans writes, "Like many of Jonson's own works, [Chaucer's poetry] raise[s] the possibility of people falling victim to their passions, being driven by irrational desires they seem powerless or unwilling to control" (340). Commenting on Evans's work, Seth Lerer and Deanne Williams add, "we would suggest, further, that for Shakespeare in his Jacobean mode, the [Chaucerian] tales of integrity and defiance, of will and wilfulness, were similarly appealing" (406).

rewriting” (xi).⁵² Ann Thompson likewise says, “*Troilus and Criseyde* was admired by the Elizabethans above all Chaucer's other works. They referred to it more frequently than to any of the others, they singled it out for praise, quoted from it and often used it as the basis for their own poems, ballads, and plays” (26). Indeed, in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, Theresa M. Krier argues that our modern conception of Chaucer owes much to the Renaissance’s view of him as “master and teacher,” “white-haired father of England’s youngest poetry” (2).

It is not only as wise, old pedagogue that Shakespeare and his contemporaries viewed Chaucer, though. Seth Lerer and Deanne Williams argue that Shakespeare “reads Chaucer as less the prime mover of the English literary tradition than as a conduit to the ancient world” (400). In defence of this claim, they offer a compelling reading of the following excerpt from the Prologue to *The Two Noble Kinsmen*:

[This play] has a noble breeder, and a pure,
A learnèd, and a poet never went
More famous yet ’twixt Po and silver Trent.
Chaucer, of all admired, the story gives:
There constant to eternity it lives. (10-14)

“To find his fame between the Po and the Trent,” write the critics, “is to go back to the old metaphors of poetic inspiration in the sources of great rivers (a figuration that begins with the *Clerk’s Tale* in its praise of Petrarch). But it is, as well, to locate Chaucer as the mediator between the classical, Italian past and the contemporary English, vernacular (if not regional) present” (400). In light of Lerer and Williams’s assertion that the poetry of Chaucer may be

⁵² Lerer and Williams concur that *Troilus and Criseyde* “had an enduring readership throughout the seventeenth century” (405).

viewed—indeed, may have been viewed by Shakespeare—as a gateway to the world of classical literature, specifically, to Virgil and Ovid, I would naturally claim that that gateway might be further widened to include paths to such figures as Petrarch, Dante, and Augustine.

Just as Renaissance readers understood themselves to be the happy recipients of Chaucer's poetry, Chaucer saw himself as the inheritor of a great poetic tradition. Even though in the *Troilus* he calls his narrative poem a "litel bok" (5.1786) and expresses but a humble desire to "kis the steppes" (5.1791) where greater poets have passed, it is clear he feels a certain kinship with these poets and, as some scholars have claimed, with Dante and Petrarch in particular.⁵³ Winthrop Wetherbee, writing of Chaucer's poetic ambitions, argues that "Dante is not only a model but a standard by which the quality and seriousness of his own [work] may be measured" (21). According to Robin Kirkpatrick, Boccaccio's bawdy tale becomes "far more philosophical" in Chaucer's hands, "as monumental and comprehensive in its philosophical range as the *Commedia* itself" (55, 44). The *Troilus* "begins and ends with allusions to the *Commedia*" as well as employs "a quotation from the climactic prayer of the *Paradiso* [at] the high point of Troilus's ecstasy in Book 3" (Wetherbee 145).

Chaucer also quotes Petrarch, and in an equally significant moment, just after Troilus's first sight of Criseyde.⁵⁴ Petrarch, for Chaucer, is the great "lauriat poete" "whos rethorike sweete / Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie" (31-33), or so says the Clerk in the Prologue to his Canterbury tale. William T. Rossiter notes a further similarity between

⁵³ The poets Chaucer names specifically in this passage in Book V are Virgil, Homer, Lucan, and Statius.

⁵⁴ *Rime* 132.1-4: "If it is not love, what then is it that I feel?" For the entire sonnet, see n. 69.

Chaucer and Petrarch, this one quite telling given the third idea at the core of theological romance. He thinks that in the poets' "literary attempts to make a good end in accordance with the *ars moriendi*, both Chaucer and Petrarch occupy the same impulse" (192), namely, to repent of their "giltes" (1082) and "enditynges of worldly vanitees" (*Parson's Tale* 1083-1084). Just as Petrarch ultimately repudiates his love for Laura in the *Secret*, Chaucer disclaims those works of his own that he deems unedifying; he confesses to and asks forgiveness for having loved what is worldly more than one ought.⁵⁵

There are four moments in *Troilus and Criseyde* that bear specifically on my treatment of Shakespeare's love-plays: (1) Troilus's first sight of Criseyde; (2) the aftermath of his seeing, including his 'conversion'; (3) the lovers' consummation of their love; and (4) Troilus's ascent at the end of the poem. While these moments, as well as a few others, will be considered in the discussion of the following chapters, it seems appropriate now to delineate them briefly.

In the poem's opening scene, we find Troilus 'guiding' (1.183) his knights through the temple where a crowd has assembled to hear the service. He and his young companions behold the ladies of the town, praising and disparaging them as they see fit, their eyes roaming "now here, now there" (1.187). It is at this moment that Troilus first sees Criseyde, whom the poem's narrator has already described, very much in Dante's idiom, as "aungelik," "a thing inmortal," and "an hevenyssh perfit creature" (1.102-104). These,

⁵⁵ C.S. Lewis notes the conventionality of such a pose: "[t]he authors [of courtly love texts] are all going to repent when the book is over" (*Allegory* 43). While there is scholarly debate over whether Chaucer's retractions represent genuine penitence, in my view, the fact that there are possibilities to debate only illustrates my point. It seems to me that Petrarch's condemnation of his own love for Laura was very decidedly both a pose and not, which is to say, if his love for her is good, a repudiation of that love must in some sense be a pose.

though, are not yet Troilus's thoughts; he is still gathering images, allowing the multitude of attractive objects to impress themselves upon him. Then, writes Chaucer, "thorugh a route his eye percede, and so depe it wente, / Til on Criseyde it smot, and ther it stente" (1.271-273). Fittingly, Troilus's seeing is not wholly his own, for the god of love, having loosed an arrow, has hit him "atte fulle" (1.209). To make clear that this is a moment of love's movement, an example of the concurrence of divine and human action, Chaucer describes Troilus's gaze in much the same terms one might use to describe an arrow flying through the air; like an arrow, his gaze "stente," having found its target. Chaucer also characterizes the moment of Troilus's seeing in terms Petrarch would appreciate:

Though he a worthy kynges sone were,
 And wende nothing hadde had swich myght
 Ayeyns his wille that shuld his herte stere,
 Yet with a look his herte wex a-fere,
 That he that now was moost in pride above,
 Wax sodeynly moost subgit unto love. (1.226-231)

Not only does love act 'against' Troilus's will (or such, in any case, is his perception), but he, a mighty king's son, is made subject to it. That his heart is set aflame is also conventionally Petrarchan but also speaks to Augustine's assertion of the soul's predilection for ascent. Troilus's response in this moment is one of disorientation; he is "astoned" (1.274). But he also, writes Chaucer, "gan [Criseyde] bet biholde in thrifty wise" (1.275). This is, or, at the very least, seems to be what Augustine means when he speaks of the will 'directing its eye.' Troilus's first thought is a banal one, 'where have you been all my life?' but having had that thought, "his herte gan to sprede and rise" (1.278). Troilus continues to

regard Criseyde and “in his herte botme gan to stiken / Of hir his fixe and depe impressioun” (1.297-298).

After the service is over, Troilus leaves the temple “awhaped” (1.316) or stunned. He repents that he had ever made fun of lovers and does his best to disguise his emotion from his companions. Once home, he goes straight to his chamber and begins to

make a mirour of his mynde
In which he saugh al holly hire figure,
And that he wel koude in his herte fynde,
It was to hym a right good aventure
To love swich oon. (1.365-369)

Here, Troilus considers the image of Criseyde reflected in what Chaucer calls the mirror of his mind. It may be helpful to recall, at this time, Williams’ assertion that “there is no point in Dante’s thought at which the image of Beatrice in his mind was supposed to exclude the actual objective Beatrice” (*Figure 8*). This is a significant moment in Chaucer not only because it calls to mind Dante’s (or Virgil’s) assertion that, once the soul is “wakened into act,” cognition “draws forth a lovely image to display / within your soul, with power to attract” (*Purgatory*, Esolen trans. 18.19-24), but also, as will become clear in my discussion of *Twelfth Night* in Chapter 5, because it alerts us to a complexity in Chaucer’s treatment of love’s movement in the soul.

Troilus’s contemplation of Criseyde’s image leads him to sing. The *Canticus Troili* represents the one moment in Chaucer’s poem where Petrarch is quoted directly:⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Here is Durling’s prose translation of *Rime* 132:

If it is not love, what then is it that I feel? But if it is love, before God, what kind of thing is it? If it is good, whence comes this bitter mortal effect? If it is evil, why is each torment so sweet? If by my own will I burn, whence comes this weeping and lament? If against my will, what does lamenting avail? O living death, O

If no love is, O God, what fele I so?
And if love is, what thing and which is he?
If love be good, from whennes cometh my woo?
If it be wikke, a wonder thynketh me,
When every torment and adversite
That cometh of hym may to me savory thinke,
For ay thurst I, the more that ich it drynke.

And if that at myn owen lust I brenne,
From whennes cometh my waillynge and my pleynte?
If harm agree me, whereto pleyne I thenne?
I noot, ne whi unwary that I feynte.
O quike deth, O swete harm so queynte,
How may of the in me swich quantite,
But if that I consente that it be?

And if that I consente, I wrongfully
Compleyne, iwis. Thus passed to and fro,
Al sterelees withinne a boot am I
Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndes two,
That in contrarie stoned evere mo.
Allas, what is this wondre maladie?
For hote of cold, for cold of hote, I dye. (1.400-420)

While Troilus's rendition has notable inaccuracies (assuming, that is, a straightforward translation was intended), both poems speak to the experience of love and what that experience might communicate about the nature of love, namely, its goodness or badness. Both poems are punctuated by questions and, not surprisingly, neither reaches resolution. Indeed, how could "quike deth" or "swete harm" be resolved? These conventionally Petrarchan oxymora reflect Petrarch's problem maintaining the categorical goodness of his two loves.

delightful harm, how can you have such power over me if I do not consent to it? And if I do consent to it, it is wrong of me to complain. Amid such contrary winds I find myself at sea in a frail bark, without a tiller, so light of wisdom, so laden with error, that I myself do not know what I want; and I shiver in midsummer, burn in winter.

Troilus's song falls into the category of medieval complaint or, as Chaucer has it, "pleynte" (1.544). Ironically, the singer is unable to pinpoint the reason for his complaint. But the *Canticus Troili* does produce a specific and telling result: a prayer to the God of Love: "O lord, now youres is / My spirit, which that oughte youres be" (1.422-423). These words represent Troilus's conversion to the religion of love; as such, they confirm that he conceives of his experience of love as something metaphysical in nature. As Patricia Thomson writes, "That Troilus should address the God of Love, that he should think love a 'swete harm' and feel it as a heat-cold sensation, that he should compare himself to a ship at sea—all these Petrarchan features conform to Chaucer's own knowledge of the code of love" (326). To put it differently, they confirm the poet's knowing participation in the tradition of theological romance.

Troilus's conversion to love produces a perplexing though quintessentially Petrarchan effect: for the next 600 lines he languishes on his bed in the agony of his newly-discovered love. Kirkpatrick suggests that this sequence ought to be seen "as a parodic diagnosis of the intellectual and spiritual malaise which Chaucer has observed in Petrarch," that Troilus is "in the grip of a malady, a 'swete harm' arising as much from intoxicating phrases and mental languor as from moral confusion" (55). Whatever the cause (and it is not my intention to discuss it here), this languishing has a clear end: "But Troilus lay tho no lenger down, / But up anon upon his stede bay, / And in the feld he pleyde tho leoun" (1.1072-1074). What prompts this rise is the pledge of his friend Pandarus, Criseyde's uncle. For much of this 600-line sequence, Troilus is in conversation with Pandarus, at whose urging he eventually reveals the name of his beloved, and into whose hands he

ultimately places his fate. Pandarus's "Have here my trowthe" (1.1061) provides Troilus with the hope that has so far proved elusive.

And Pandarus, true to his word, does not disappoint. He orchestrates a clandestine night-time meeting of the lovers, during which their love is eventually consummated.⁵⁷

After a number of false starts, the most notable being Troilus's swoon (3.1092), prompted by his shame at having feigned his doubting of Criseyde's fidelity, the lovers are brought into "hevene" (3.1204):

This Troilus, with blisse [...] supprised,
Putte al in Goddes hand, as he that mente
Nothing but wel; and sodeynly avysed,
He hire in armes faste to hym hente. (3.1184-1187)

A couple of things are worth noting, here: the first is the narrator's explicit association of sex and heaven. This association is, of course, highly conventional, but it is so for the very reasons outlined in this chapter.⁵⁸ Second, Troilus links his religious faith, his 'putting all in God's hand,' with his ostensibly good intentions. Here we see the later-romance inclination to conceive of love as categorically good. Medcalf asserts that Chaucer subscribes, at least, in the *Troilus*, to the view that "when love exists, it manifests God; if it ceases it falls away from God" (298). Of course, were Troilus examined as Petrarch examines himself in the *Secret*, the inconsistencies in his thinking would no doubt be revealed. But Troilus is just a

⁵⁷ Obviously a great deal happens between the end of Book I, at which point Pandarus offers Troilus his pledge to help, and the end of Book III, when the lovers come together. Pandarus spends much of Book II encouraging Criseyde to think well of Troilus, to take pity on him, and emboldening Troilus to act as a lover.

⁵⁸ C.S. Lewis writes of the medieval religion of love: "It is as if some lover's metaphor when he said 'Here is my heaven' in a moment of passionate abandonment were taken up and expanded into a system. Even while he speaks he knows that 'here' is not his real heaven; and yet it is a delightful audacity to develop the idea a little further. If you go on to add to that lover's 'heaven' its natural accessories, a god and saints and a list of commandments, and if you picture the lover praying, sinning, repenting, and finally admitted to bliss, you will find yourself in the precarious dream-world of medieval love poetry" (*Allegory* 21). On this subject, Medcalf argues that "Chaucer does his best to suggest that love may form a bridge between earth and heaven" (298-9).

character; we do not expect such consistency from him. It is far more striking that the poem's narrator exhibits the same inclination when he says, just prior to this moment, "for every wyght, I gesse, / That loveth wel, meneth but gentillesse" (3.1147-1148). In a characteristic gesture of evasion, the narrator only barely registers his anxiety about the claim he's making with: "I gesse." So, despite claiming love's categorical goodness, "it seems Chaucer gives two explicitly authorial views of love" (Hillman 61). Thompson also notes this implied juxtaposing of loves, and writes, "Chaucer is careful to give the maximum value and attractiveness to his presentation of romantic love while simultaneously reminding us through his constant irony that it is not the highest good" (160).

The consummation narrative is in two parts; the first part concludes with Troilus, in "hevene" (3.1251), hardly knowing what to do "for joie" (3.1253). Thereafter follows an interlude, during which Troilus (between kisses?) says the following:

O Love, O Charite!
 Thi moder ek, Citheria the swete,
 After thiself next heried be she—
 Venus mene I, the wel-willy planete!—
 And next that, Imeneus, I the grete,
 For nevere man was to yow goddes holde
 As I, which ye han brought fro cares colde.

Benigne Love, thow holy bond of thynges,
 Whoso wol grace and list the nought honouren,
 Lo, his desir wol fle withouten wynges;
 For noldestow of bownte hem socouren
 That serven best and most alwey labouren,
 Yet were al lost, that dar I wel seyn, certes,
 But if thi grace passed oure desertes.

And for thow me, that koude leest disserve

Of hem that noumbred ben unto thi grace,
Hast holpen, there I likly was to sterve,
And me bistowed in so heigh a place
That thilke boundes may no blisse pace,
I kan namore; but laude and reverence
Be to thy bounte and thyn excellence! (3.1254-1274)

In this hymn, Troilus not only equates love—the love, we presume, he is at that moment experiencing—to Charity; he also calls Venus Charity’s mother. Further, in a clear allusion to Boethius, he implicates divine love in the human—indeed, the domestic—sphere by invoking Hymen, the god of marriage. Further still, in the second of these three stanzas, Chaucer quotes directly from St. Bernard’s entreaty to the Virgin Mary in the final Canto of Dante’s *Paradise*.⁵⁹ As Windeatt writes in his end-note, in this stanza, “Troilus expresses an understanding of love in terms of the Christian language of grace” (172). To desire Love’s grace, claims Troilus, without first properly honouring Love is like “trying to fly without wings.”⁶⁰ Troilus, of course, knows himself to be a recipient of that grace; were he not, he could not be “bistowed in so heigh a place.” This is, in both a literal and a figurative sense, Troilus’s moment of climax, his ascent.

It is not his *only* ascent though. At the conclusion of the poem, after much has happened—Criseyde’s exodus from Troy, her betrayal of Troilus, her turning to Diomedes, and Troilus’s pursuit of Diomedes on the battlefield—Troilus dies. He is killed by Achilles, a moment the narrator seems reluctant to recount. He quickly moves on: “And whan that

⁵⁹ Here is Musa’s translation of *Paradise* 33.13-18

Lady, you are so great, so powerful,
that who seeks grace without recourse to you
would have his wish fly upward without wings.
Not only does your loving kindness rush
To those who ask for it, but often times
It flows spontaneously before the plea.

⁶⁰ Windeatt’s modernization of 3.1263.

he was slayn in this manere, / His lighte goost ful blisfully is went / Up to the holughnesse of the eighth spered” (5.1806-1809). Most critics agree that the eighth sphere is the sphere of the fixed stars,⁶¹ which means that Troilus has passed out of the world of change and becoming, the world in which, for example, Criseyde may ficklely transfer her affections from Troilus to Diomedes. Such a contention is strengthened by the presence of a similar passage in Dante’s *Paradise*. There, the poet, having similarly achieved the sphere of fixed stars, says, “My vision travelled back through all the spheres, / through seven heavens, and then I saw our globe; / it made me smile, it looked so paltry there” (Musa trans. 22.133-135). Chaucer goes on to write, “And down from thennes faste he gan avyse / This litel spot of erthe [...] And in hymself he lough right at the wo / Of hem that wepten” (5.1814-1815; 1821-1822). While it seems obvious that only love’s movement can account for Troilus’s ascent, making such a claim is difficult given that when Troilus looks down at the world he has just left, he “dampned al oure werk that foloweth so / The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste, / And sholden al our herte on heven caste” (5.1823-1825).⁶² It is not clear that Troilus did, in fact, cast his heart on heaven. While Troilus maintains he cannot “withine [his] herte fynde / To unloven [Criseyde] a quarter of a day!” (5.1697-1698),⁶³ that he cannot, in essence, stop loving her despite her betrayal, the fact that he characterizes all human “werke” as the result of “blynde lust” is perplexing and not a little problematic.

⁶¹ The alternative is that Troilus ascends to the sphere of the moon, the eighth sphere counting backwards from the sphere of fixed stars, rather than forward from the sphere of the earth.

⁶² Windeatt’s modernization: he “condemned all our actions that are so much in pursuit of blind pleasure, which cannot endure, when we should turn our whole heart towards heaven” (153).

⁶³ By contrast, Boccaccio’s Troilo, after his beloved’s betrayal, can only “keep the image of thy fair face, against my will, in bitter grief” (122).

Perhaps I should say, it is perplexing and problematic unless one (the narrator, for instance) conceives of lust as a species of love, a *moving* that is, in essentials, the same. Troilus's lust must be *good*—it must be love—if it ensures his ascent. With this conclusion—what critics call the palinode because it seems to some, like Chaucer's retractions, to be at odds with what precedes it—Chaucer does what Petrarch cannot conceive of: he collapses two contrary conceptions of love into one. This collapse is, in one sense, the result of bad thinking, bad theology; in another sense, though, it is a manifestation of Chaucer's partiality for Dante and Augustine, for the tradition of theological romance proper. In Lewis's famous essay on the *Troilus*, "What Chaucer Really Did to *Il Filostrato*," he writes that "the process which *Il Filostrato* underwent at Chaucer's hands was first and foremost a process of *medievalization*" (27). Though Lewis is writing of the difference between Chaucer and Boccaccio, the same notion may be applied to Chaucer and Petrarch, for the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* is, without a doubt, a Dantean and thus an Augustinian end.

CHAPTER 3

ROMEO AND JULIET

3.1 “Traffic,” or Samson and Gregory, Moved

Even before the action of *Romeo and Juliet* begins, Shakespeare clearly privileges the concept of motion in the play. Using words now familiar to most tenth-graders, the Prologue speaks of a “pair of star-crossed lovers [who] take their life” (6).¹ But he says more: “The fearful passage of their death-marked love [...] is now the two hours’ traffic of our stage” (9, 12). The Prologue enlists two terms associated with movement: “passage” and “traffic.” In a play that is about the “course” (5.3.287) of Romeo and Juliet’s love, the presence of these terms, here, at the beginning, cannot be a coincidence. Though only the first would have explicitly denoted movement in Shakespeare’s day, “passing to and fro” being a more recent rendering of the second (*OED*, “traffic, n.” 5.a.), both are mercantile terms, associated with “transportation” (1.a.), especially for the sake of trade. These words alert audiences—even audiences made up of unlettered tenth-graders—to the fact that what they will literally be seeing on the stage before them are motions—back and forths—which in drama ought always to be taken, if not as symbolic, then at least as suggestive of other motions—psychological motions—occurring in the characters’ souls.

¹ All quotations from the play are from *The Oxford World’s Classics Romeo and Juliet*, edited by Jill L. Levenson.

Confirming the privileged status of motion in the play is the opening scene. *Romeo and Juliet* begins with a conversation between two Capulet serving men; their banter, characterized principally by sexual innuendo, is suggestive in more than just one way:

SAMSON I strike quickly being moved.

GREGORY But thou art not quickly moved to strike.

SAMSON A dog of the house of Montague moves me.

GREGORY To move is to stir, and to be valiant is to stand: therefore if thou art

moved thou runn'st away.

SAMSON A dog of that house shall move me to stand. (1.1.5-10)

While the Prologue gives an account of what's to happen in the play, it is this dialogue that points to a key vehicle of the drama's meaning. It should be noted that this scene and its characters are entirely of Shakespeare's creation; no such episode exists in Brooke's *Romeus and Juliet*.²

What we learn from Samson and Gregory about motion is, a bit surprisingly, not inconsequential. In their first two lines, for example, a distinction is made between psychic and physical movement—or, conceived in other terms, between earlier and later stages of action. The type of movement Samson excels in is the physical movement which follows from a prior psychic motion: once moved, he claims, he strikes *quickly*. His friend Gregory is quick to point out, however, that Samson is actually rather slow when it comes to that prior psychic motion—that movement of soul which enables him to strike in the first place. Given the relationship between these two types of movement or, rather, stages of action, it seems reasonable to say that the prior is more fundamental than the latter. This is implied

² Arthur Brooke's *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet*, an English verse translation of Boaistuau's French translation of Bandello's Italian novella, was published in 1562 and is generally accepted as Shakespeare's primary source.

when Samson speaks of being moved to “stand” (10). Because standing, here, can signify both activity (in this passage, in more than one sense) and inactivity—because it is, potentially, many actions rather than one—logically it must follow from a motion or stage of action that is less differentiated, a motion of greater integrity.

A third thing we learn from Samson and Gregory’s conversation is that motion requires a catalyst: “A dog of the house of Montague moves me” (7). In this case, the mover is an antagonist, an object of hatred rather than of love; and yet it ought not to be overlooked that both Capulet serving men, here and in the lines that follow, speak of the Montagues in strangely erotic terms: Samson asserts, “I will push Montague’s men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall” (15-16). One last element of this conversation deserves note: Gregory’s claim that “[t]o move is to stir” (8). In addition to signifying, potentially, both activity and passivity (i.e. one stirs and is stirred), ‘stirring’ suggests a category of motion that is, somehow, less orderly. Stirring could be the result of being subject to other motions forcing one in various directions. According to Gregory, were Samson to “stir,” he would do so as a result of an encounter with the *moving* Montagues.

3.2 Introduction

This chapter has two aims. The first is to establish that Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet* is thinking about drama in the terms of theological romance—simply put, that he conceives of love *dramatically* as a kind of motion. Samson and Gregory’s conversation points to this *motional* paradigm, but more is required and, indeed, will be said. The second aim is to demonstrate that by considering Shakespeare’s relationship to the tradition of

theological romance, we can appreciate more fully *Romeo and Juliet*'s tragic action—the trajectory of its lovers. This relationship manifests itself most evidently in images and metaphors of movement—images and metaphors which call to mind those employed by the theologian-poets discussed in Chapter 2. Though Romeo's reliance on these largely Petrarchan figures is typically seen by critics of the play as emblematic of his entrenchment in a highly artificial practice of love or as the context of the transformation he undergoes when he meets Juliet, Shakespeare's employment of these images and metaphors aligns *Romeo and Juliet* with the medieval, and with the medieval romance, which is concerned, either implicitly or explicitly, with the soul's movements. The playwright, though, also diverges from medieval convention by having his lovers wed.³ Curiously, this divergence has the effect of resolving the Petrarchan tension between earthly and heavenly loves, a tension initially introduced into the play in the person of Romeo's first love, Rosaline. Juliet, it becomes clear, is no Rosaline, and when Romeo's gaze is moved from one to the other, it is as though he himself has changed, become ennobled by his love for a heavenly beloved. Indeed, the lovers' relationship is characterized in entirely different terms. By virtue of its sacramental nature, marriage links the lovers' souls in a way that calls to mind the integrity of love found in Dante's *Comedy*; marriage also establishes the pair as inhabitants of a metaphysical world.

The Petrarchan tension revives, however, as a result of Romeo's confrontation with what we might call the relentless drag of materiality. This tension gives rise to the

³ As will be discussed later, C.S. Lewis claims that one of the characteristics of courtly love in the medieval tradition is adultery" (*Allegory* 2).

opposition of love and hate—ubiquitously expressed in the play—which, while not exactly oxymoronic, provides the key to understanding Romeo’s murder of Tybalt: an act of hatred that is born of love. This deed, which shackles Romeo to the material world of external motions, leads to a second, one that invites, in Ann Thompson’s words, a “double response” (Thompson 97) from Shakespeare’s readers: the suicides of the lovers. Though undeniably blasphemous from both Catholic and Protestant perspectives, a detail that cannot be overlooked given the play’s emphasis on sacrament and the metaphysical, the manner of the lovers’ deaths does not prevent readers from conceiving of their love as *good*. Tragedy of Fortune though the play may be called, Romeo and Juliet are *moved* by their love to their excellent and lamentable ends. Very simply, the play portrays their souls *in transport*.

There is so much critical commentary on *Romeo and Juliet*, it is difficult to know where to begin. If we are to take recent scholarly editions of the play as emblematic of the kind of criticism now being written, then it seems what interests critics most are lines of enquiry and interpretation that fall under the headings *ideology* and *sexuality*. Jill Levenson, editor of the Oxford World’s Classics edition of the play—the edition I use in this chapter—begins her substantial introduction by considering the “socio-economic and cultural” (10) experiences which gave rise to and shaped Shakespeare’s and others’ versions of the story, the various accounts, in her words, of “the sexually charged enactment of adolescence” (17). The “sexual energy” (17) and “unsettled hormones” (18) of Romeo find expression in his highly conventional language of love—a language that gives “material forms to his desire which rationalize and contain it” (28). Like the courtiers of Shakespeare’s day who sought preferment from their female sovereign, Romeo addresses

his beloved in the Petrarchan idiom “to express [his] aspirations to power” (54). The power he seeks is not over Juliet but to be employed against the “patriarchal system of family and state” (40), which poses a threat to the lovers’ relationship. Unable to extricate himself from the feud between his and Juliet’s families, though—a feud that “surrounds the protagonists with an ideology which affects the way they think and act” (31)—Romeo succumbs to the “violence determin[ing] all forms of expression in Verona” (35), ultimately prompting his and Juliet’s tragic downfall. Juliet, less ruled by convention, desires “connectedness” (30) but is still ultimately subject to the power structures governing her life (e.g. inheritance, marriage); her desire for connectedness is all the more ironic given Romeo’s banishment and finally her death, alone in the tomb.

Levenson’s view of the lovers as subject to external forces from which they are unable to escape fits well with the reading of another recent editor of the play, Dymphna Callaghan. “It is tempting,” writes Callaghan in her Introduction, “to read the play as evidence of the capacity of love and Shakespeare to transcend time” (1)—to “posit desire as transhistorical” (87), she says in “The Ideology of Romantic Love: The Case of *Romeo and Juliet*”—but such an interpretation obscures the degree to which the play is “immersed in the dominant rhetorical and lyrical tropes of the 1590s” (Introduction 1). Petrarchism, she argues, while “ostensibly dedicated to extolling female beauty” (14) is ultimately an “excuse for exalting a densely aestheticized, tormented masculinity” (14). It objectifies women by putting them on a pedestal, and thus immobilizing them. According to Callaghan, though Juliet still manages to exercise “considerable agency” (18), her experience of love is like unto a “fatal wounding” (18), one which undercuts any actions she takes. Callaghan

highlights the play's role "in the cultural construction of desire" ("Ideology" 86). The lovers' marriage, which seems to them ideal, turns out only to be an extension of the world they seek to flee. Rather than liberating them, their marriage "merely continues the feud" (95), re-conceiving politics and power relations in new terms: Shakespeare's depiction of marriage in the play stresses "less the evils of voracious female sexuality, as earlier writings had done, and more the benefits of pliant femininity" (99).

While my accounts of Levenson's and Callaghan's readings are bound to be partial, it is fair to say that for both critics, love in *Romeo and Juliet* ought to be treated "as a social science" (Introduction 20). "Romantic love," Callaghan says, "is a classic instance of false consciousness" ("Ideology" 86). One element of this false consciousness, this 'romantic ideology,' is the stipulation that lovers "must be willing to die for love" (Levenson, "Definition" 30). Indeed, this stipulation—this linking of love and death—is picked up by a number of critics. Julie Kristeva suggests that the play's lovers "spend less time loving each other than getting ready to die" (69), that, indeed, their love—"a passion carried along by its opposite" (74)—is born not in spite of their families' antagonism but because of it. The hateful name of "Romeo," a theme of Juliet's speech in 2.2, "triggers" and "determines" both her and his passion (71). Death is their inevitable end. More recently, Clayton G. Mackenzie has argued that the play "speculate[s] about the possibilities of sex *through* death, and evolves into a discourse on sex *as* death" (23); he claims that "sexual union in marriage and union in death [...] become completely and finally, indistinguishable" (23). Paul Kottman, even more recently, notes the tendency of critics, given the "familiar interpretation of the lovers' fates as a kind of *Liebestod*" (2), to affirm that because their

“desires cannot be reconciled to the life of the family or society from which they spring, they must extinguish themselves” (2). His argument, however, is that Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet* “raises” the “dialectical tension” (3) between love-as-ideal and love-as-ideology “to a fever pitch—unto death” (3). Citing a number of modern philosophers (most notably, Hegel) who “have understood the ‘tragic’ to be essential to understanding the fate of modern subjectivity” (5), he reads love in the play as “the struggle for freedom” (5): “it is the story of two individuals *who actively claim* their separate individuality, their own freedom, in the only way that they can—through one another.” Kottman goes on: “[Romeo and Juliet’s] love affair demonstrates that their separateness or individuation is not an imposed, external necessity, but the operation of their freedom and self-realization” (6). In her response to his article, Julia Reinhard Lupton suggests that Kottman “eschews historicization,” the shackles of ideology, in order to “draw us closer to Romeo and Juliet and the dilemmas posed” by their “mutual recognition, acknowledgements that individuate and divide each lover in the very act of joining their gazes, palms, lips, and rhyme words” (40). The two become one ... and one.

Kottman’s attempt to see the play as depicting the struggle for freedom and self-consciousness represents a new take on an old debate, namely, whether Romeo and Juliet’s love is to blame for their tragic end. Barbara Parker in *A Precious Seeing* argues that “nowhere in the canon is there portrayed a love more clearly and relentlessly irrational” (140). “[I]t is possible,” she further writes, “to explicate [the lovers’] downfall in terms of the irrationality and consequent sinfulness [...] of their love” (140). She contends that Romeo and Juliet’s tragedy “springs from their wholesale reliance on externals”; “the lovers never ‘see’ each

other” (142). The irrationality of the lovers, as well as of their world, tellingly, ceases after their deaths, prompting “not only the restoration of reason, but of reason’s adjuncts, justice, order, and law” (159).⁴

Parker’s characterization of the lovers’ love is atypical in its extremity—just as atypical as critical commentary that sees the play as subscribing to “Christian and society attitudes against suicide (legally a felony” (Kirkland 664) and undeniably an irrational act). More common is the view that Shakespeare depicts a love which is, for various reasons, admirable (if still problematic). Marianne Novy writes that in their love Romeo and Juliet “may achieve a mutuality in which both are active and genders are not polarized,” where “masculinity is [not] identified with violence and femininity with weakness” (100). She notes that both lovers “use the image of woman as property in a way that transcends its source in female social subordination” (105). Martha Tuck Rozett similarly writes that the play affirms “the power of love to resolve differences” (153). Though the final scenes of the play are “tragic in outcome,” they are “comic by nature” (154); Romeo and Juliet’s love “elevate[s] the human spirit” (153). Peter Milward goes further, saying that “what Shakespeare represents is an ideal love [...] particularly in his depiction of Juliet’s character” (*Papist* 72). Hers, he claims, “is the divine love of giving, or *agape*, while [Romeo’s] is the human love of desiring, or *eros*” (73). One could go on *ad infinitum* citing critical commentary which holds the lovers’ love to be admirable. Harold Bloom finds in the play

⁴ In some ways, Parker’s reading of *Romeo and Juliet* is similar to D.W. Robertson’s reading of *Troilus and Criseyde*: the lovers are exemplary, the text a kind of how-not-to guide.

the “largest and most persuasive celebration of Romantic love in Western literature” (qtd. in Aliakbari and Abjadian 15).

How then do we account for the tragic end of the lovers? Franklin M. Dickey, hedging his bets, argues that *Romeo and Juliet* is a “carefully wrought tragedy which [...] makes fortune the agent of divine justice without absolving anyone from his responsibility for the tragic conclusion” (64). H.A. Mason writes that “commonplaces about Fortune [...] never have a serious shaping force” in Shakespeare’s plays, and that “Romeo in fact creates the fate he dreads” (22). Kiernan Ryan argues that Romeo is “exiled from actual experience and emotions” because of his reliance on, as was earlier forecasted, “ clichéd paradoxes and inert metaphors” (74). Richard Fly suggests that “the inability of well-meaning mediators to ‘incorporate two in one’ [which] informs and structures the play” (25) produces the tragedy’s unfortunate end, that Romeo and Juliet’s admittance of the Nurse, the Friar, and others into their private world seals their fate. Irving Singer argues that there is not so much love in *Romeo and Juliet* as there are *loves*. The lovers re-invent “love” countless times over the course of the play, and “each variety of love, involving its special object, has its own phenomenology, its own iridescence within the spectrum of human experience” (qtd. in Aliakbari and Abjadian 21). H. Aliakbari and A. Abjadian, taking Singer’s lead, cite the play’s paradoxes and contradictions as giving true expression to these varieties of love: “love is always death and life, joy and sorrow, bitterness and sweetness, madness and discretion, heaven and hell, angel and daemon, immortality and mortality” (20-21). These varieties of love naturally contend with one another, much as Romeo contends with himself when fighting Tybalt, his dear enemy.

Paul Siegel, also gesturing towards a multiplicity in love—or, at least, a doubleness—sees *Romeo and Juliet* as affected by “the ideas of the religion of love that persisted from the Middle Ages” (371). Citing Boccaccio and Bandello who proclaimed that “[p]assionate love brought destruction and death, but at the same time glorified this love and [...] presented faithfulness in it as the highest virtue” (372), he argues that in Shakespeare’s play, as in Brooke’s forerunner, “the God of Christianity and the god of love are [...] confused” (376). This, in part, accounts for the almost non-existent condemnation of the lovers’ suicides by the play’s readership, for such an act is virtuous given the proper context. Siegel goes on to say that even though these “mutually contradictory attitudes are transformed into a complexly unified attitude” (372) and the play is resolved, at least in a sense, they still tend to invite a dual vision of the tragic action, the “double response” suggested by Ann Thompson in her seminal *Shakespeare’s Chaucer*.

Indeed, it is with Ann Thompson that I wish to end this review, she who both literally and figuratively wrote the book on Shakespeare’s relationship to Chaucer, the medieval work that provided poets of the Renaissance with a kind of primer on love. Thompson is not the first to note that there is a relationship, if that is the right word, between the *Romeo and Juliet* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. J.W. Hales wrote in 1873 of the “striking” (qtd. in Shaw 2) influence of Chaucer’s poem on the play. J.J. Munro, editor of Brooke’s poem, submitted in 1908 that the two texts’ “parallelism [...] is too apparent to require pointing out” (xii). Nevill Coghill more recently and more precisely notes a number of corresponding passages in the two narratives (passim), and Priscilla D. Shaw does likewise before shifting her focus to “general thematic similarities” (28). Ann Thompson

remains circumspect about direct influence; she, like many scholars, is more comfortable asserting that Chaucer's *Troilus* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* are alike on a number of levels and, as such, usefully serve to illuminate one another. Though she does say that "a case can be made for a general and pervasive use of Chaucer as at least a subsidiary source" (94) for the play, her focus is on the fact that *Romeo and Juliet*, like *Troilus and Criseyde* before them, are

not only patterns of love but patterns of tragic love—indeed one might say that Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* succeeded Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* as the single most important and influential love-tragedy in English poetry, the archetype to which situations in both life and literature were referred. (95)

While she undoubtedly means a number of things by this statement, perhaps the most pertinent, which has been alluded to twice already, is that both works

require a double response from their audience: we need simultaneously to sympathize with the lovers who are irresistibly savaged by their passion and to acknowledge that such a neglect of traditional teachings about the need for man to be governed by the higher faculties can only lead to disaster. (97-8)

Thinking about "patterns of love" and the "double response" Thompson speaks of naturally calls to mind Petrarch, whose particular difficulty is doubleness: two beloveds, two trajectories of soul, an impossibility of resolution. It is remarkable that critics of *Romeo and Juliet* tend so uniformly to condemn Romeo's reliance on Petrarchan conceits in his wooing, to see its hyperboles and oxymora as emblematic of an outdated rhetoric of love. For, in truth, Petrarchism both provides the context for the tension in the lovers' relationship and, perhaps even more importantly, allows Shakespeare access, through Petrarch, to the tradition of theological romance. The play's Petrarchism, its reliance on those well-

entrenched “patterns of love,” is the very thing that tells readers what it is about, what it portrays: once again, souls in motion.

I am compelled, before going on, to consider one last essay that did not fit neatly into the critical narrative of the preceding pages. In “Motion and Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*,” Daryl W. Palmer argues that the play “takes up an ancient conversation about *motion*, a dialog that originates with the pre-Socratics” (541). Beginning with the notion that the “Greeks thought of any change as motion” (544), Palmer suggests that “Shakespeare’s drama qualifies and extends an ancient interrogative tradition” (541). The motion he speaks of, then, is that of the intellect, of the process of changing one’s mind or having it changed dialogically. Though Palmer readily admits that “the play is [not] ultimately about motion” (541) and that his goal is to produce “neither a ‘reading’ of the play nor an allegory” (541), it is worth noting that he, too, sees motion everywhere in *Romeo and Juliet*, from Samson and Gregory’s introductory conversation—a “dialog devoted to motion” (545)—to Juliet’s inquiry into “what’s in a name” (544) to the Friar’s “inability to make motion answerable” when in great anxiety he tells Juliet in the tomb, “Come go” (547). *Romeo and Juliet* contains what he describes as “codified motion” (546). In order to think about what such a phrase could mean, let us return, briefly, to Petrarch and to the “patterns of love.”

3.3 Petrarch

Romeo and Juliet is laden with Petrarchisms. Perhaps the most obvious instance of Petrarchan influence is Montague’s characterization in 1.1 of his son’s recent behaviour:

Many a morning hath [Romeo] been seen,
With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs;
But all so soon as the all-cheering sun
Should in the farthest east begin to draw
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,
Away from light steals home my heavy son,
And private in his chamber pens himself. (1.1.127-134)

Here, as Levenson rightly points out, Montague “adopt[s] the topoi of Petrarchism, verbalizing a portrait of the sonnet lover: the pre-dawn secret wanderings, the restlessness, solitude, sleeplessness, tears, and sighs” (Introduction 56). It is all extremely conventional, and yet the effect produced by this conventionality is not parody, as is the case in many of Shakespeare’s sonnets⁵—indeed, as is the case in other instances of Petrarchan influence in the play⁶—but rather familiarity. Readers find in these lines an experience of love that resonates with their own, or, in any case, with their view of love. The concern Montague expresses for Romeo also serves to undercut any comedic or mock element his description might have. When Romeo sees Juliet for the first time, his own speech has a distinctly Petrarchan flare: “O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!” (1.4.157). Fire imagery is, of course, ubiquitous in Petrarch’s *Rime sparse*; in Petrarch’s *Rime* 90, the very poem taken up by Shakespeare in Sonnet 130, the poet writes, “I, who had the tinder of love in my breast, what wonder is it if I suddenly caught fire” (90.5-8). That Capulet earlier in 1.4 had just instructed his servants to “quench the fire” (1.4.141) suggests Julie Kristeva is on to something when she asserts opposition to their love fuels the lovers’ romance. Indeed, it is

⁵ Arguably, the most famous anti-Petrarchan sonnet is “My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun” (130). All quotations from Shakespeare’s non-dramatic poetry are from the *Oxford World’s Classics* version, edited by Colin Burrow.

⁶ Romeo’s speech at 1.1.172, “O brawling love, O loving hate,” seemingly reduces Petrarchan oxymoron to absurdity. Richard Fly calls it “uninformative oxymoronic babble” (5); whether it is only this will be determined in due course.

only 50 lines later that Romeo—despite Tybalt’s best efforts—speaks to Juliet for the first time, and the result is a second display of fireworks, these ones verbal. In alternating passages, the lovers speak a sonnet.

If it is true that Shakespeare receives from Petrarch the “patterns of love,” one question is to what end does he employ these patterns in his play? Levenson’s answer is suggested in her statement that “every feature of the Petrarchan situation became a metaphor for something else: the unreachable lady stood for impossible goals; flattery of her charms disguised supplication for patronage; and desire itself represented ambition for advancement, its range benign to wilful” (54). The editor thus reads Shakespeare’s invocation of the Petrarchan idiom as signalling his intention to express a meaning in accordance with the demands of his age’s material culture. She is not wrong; as Leonard Forster writes in *The Icy Fire*, his study of European Petrarchism, writing poetry in praise of a queen, Elizabeth I, “was not [...] merely a convenient device to enable courtiers to turn graceful compliments. It had practical political importance” (127). This importance, interestingly, was not only for the courtiers but the queen. As J.E. Neale writes, the

adulation [the courtiers] would have given to a king quite naturally became tinged with the admiration, flattery and coquetry which they used towards an attractive young woman. Thus [Elizabeth’s] reign was turned into an idyll, a fine but artificial comedy of young men—and old men—in love [...]. It secured service, which it was a monarch’s function to do. (qtd. in Forster 132)

Still, to suggest that Shakespeare had ‘upward mobility’ in only a material sense in mind seems narrow-minded. For Chaucer, who also received from Petrarch (along with Dante) these “patterns of love,” they expressed something entirely different: a genuine experience

of love which the lover himself does not fully understand: “And if love is, what thing and which is he?” asks Troilus, literally speaking Petrarch’s words (1.401). Harmon and Holman’s *Handbook to Literature* explains that the Petrarchan conceit “rests on *exaggerated* comparisons expressing the beauty [...] of the beloved” (390, my emphasis). Could these exaggerations not express more than a thinly veiled desire for preferment? Might they not be exaggerations at all, but attempts to express the surprisingly perceivable but inexpressible ideal? When Petrarch writes in *Rime* 72, “My noble Lady, I see in the moving of your eyes a sweet light that shows me the way that leads to Heaven” (72.1-4), he is not flattering his beloved (or solely flattering her) but, rather, giving her what he sees as her due; he is worshipping her, and through her the divine. Levenson’s reading, then, reveals only one side of the coin: Petrarchism provided the vocabulary and syntax for conveying one’s desire to ascend—not just the social ladder, but the heavenly one too, the ladder of love.

3.4 Images, Metaphors, and Motions

To pick up where we left off with Samson and Gregory, after the fighting that ensues when Capulets encounter Montagues, and after the “movèd Prince” (1.1.85) puts an end to it, Lady Montague wonders where her son is. Benvolio reveals that he saw Romeo earlier:

[A]n hour before the worshipped sun
Peered forth the golden window of the east,
A troubled mind drive me to walk abroad,
Where underneath the grove of sycamore
That westward rooteth from this city side,

So early walking did I see your son.
Towards him I made, but he was ware of me,
And stole into the covert of the wood.
I, measuring his affections by my own,
Which then most sought where most might not be found,
Being one too many by my weary self,
Pursued my humour, not pursuing his,
And gladly shunned who gladly fled from me. (1.1.114-126)

Like Romeo, Benvolio is a lover. That we learn nothing of his particular situation is both strange and fitting, for if, as Levenson claims, Shakespeare “imagines a city where everyone speaks or enacts the Petrarchan idiom” (Introduction 56), there is no need for explanation; everything can be assumed. Benvolio loves and suffers in not being able to act on his love. Benvolio’s words in the above passage also register movement. In addition to noting East and West, markers of directionality, Benvolio himself moves. When he sees Romeo, his friend, he quite naturally ‘makes towards him.’ Romeo, becoming aware of Benvolio, reacts differently: he ‘steals’ into the woods, moving away rather than towards. Benvolio understands his friend perfectly well, and both men thereafter ‘pursue their humour.’ Humour, here, can be taken as “mood” (*OED*, “humour, n.” II.5.a.) or “inclination” (II.6.a.), the latter fitting perfectly with what follows. Benvolio’s account of this almost-encounter prompts the following response from Montague: “Black and portentous must this humour prove, / Unless good counsel may the cause remove” (1.1.136-137). Though Montague does not know Rosaline to be the “cause” of his son’s humour, he asserts, curiously, that ‘curing’ (1.1.151) Romeo also entails a type of movement, a *removal*. It may be helpful to consider the motional portrait that emerges in this exchange: Romeo is seen to pursue or move towards his humour, which itself pursues or *inclines* towards Rosaline. This

may seem a strange formulation—Romeo’s humour being posited as *in pursuit*, almost as a go-between—but if we understand “cause” in the sense of *telos* or end, then surely it is appropriate. That removing the cause (Rosaline) would also cure Romeo also seems a logical proposition, for were Rosaline simply excised from this portrait, Romeo’s humour would lose both its object and, one assumes, its capacity to move him.

When Romeo appears later in the scene, he confirms what Montague and Benvolio earlier suspected. To Benvolio’s question, “What sadness lengthens Romeo’s hours?” he responds, “Not having that which, having, makes them short” (1.1.159-160). Benvolio easily decodes his friend’s riddle: “In love” (1.1.161). Here Rosaline plays the conventional role of inaccessible beloved, but there is also a sense in which she has already effected her removal from the portrait. Romeo himself confesses, he is “out of her favour” (1.1.164). Responding to Benvolio’s attempt to sympathize—a rather banal assertion of love’s cruelty—Romeo laments, “Alas that love, whose view is muffled still, / Should without eyes see pathways to his will” (1.1.167-168). While he, like Petrarch in his *Rime*, imagines a Cupid-figure whose “will” is bent on his suffering, his words offer an ironic commentary on what will soon be revealed as his blindness in loving Rosaline.

There is no shortage of critics who think Romeo’s love for Rosaline a foil for his love for Juliet, “dotage” as opposed to “true love” (Dickey 78). Though she disagrees with the allegation, Parker acknowledges that “it is generally alleged that Romeo’s ‘true’ love for Juliet supplants his ‘false’ love for Rosaline” (149).⁷ The suggestion, found in Aliakbari and

⁷ Parker’s own argument is that “[i]n its moral quality and implications [...] Romeo’s love for Rosaline precisely parallels that for Juliet” (149).

Abjadian, that Romeo's love for Rosaline is actually a love of being in love (19) fits well with the image of Romeo pursuing his humour, for if Rosaline has effected her removal from the motional portrait, then Romeo's humour *has* lost its object, and he, in a twisted and perhaps paradoxical way, is left pursuing his humour—not a proper end—for its own sake. In a different sense, it is apt that Romeo's pursuit of his humour coincides with his love for Rosaline, for though, as I have already said, "humour" would seem to denote "mood" or "inclination," the term originates in physiology. Ultimately, humour always refers to the body, the flesh. Peter Milward makes the distinction I am implying when he writes, "however remote and heavenly Rosaline may have appeared to Romeo in his Petrarchan *mood*, he never uses the word 'grace' of her, but in reporting his new love to his 'ghostly father,' Friar Laurence, he insists that 'she whom I love now / Doth grace for grace and love for love allow'" (*Papist* 73, my emphasis).⁸ In accordance with Milward, Callaghan states that "mutuality [...] signals the crucial difference between Romeo's infatuation with Rosaline and his love for Juliet" (Introduction 101). If one thing is clear, there is no mutuality in the portrait of Romeo pursuing his humour.

Still in 1.1 and in his mood, Romeo characterizes love as "a smoke made with the fume of sighs, / Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes, / Being vexed, a sea nourished with loving tears" (1.1.186-188). Here, unwittingly giving something of an account of his "fearful passage" in the play,⁹ Romeo introduces three metaphors for love, all Petrarchan: smoke, fire, and the sea. Smoke and fire, in Augustinian terms, tend upward,

⁸ Milward misquotes Romeo, who, in Levenson's edition, says, "Her I love now" (2.2.85).

⁹ Romeo sighs after Rosaline until he sees Juliet. His eyes thereafter burn with love for her. And the play ends with him in great vexation. (I will comment later on Romeo's use of the nautical metaphor shortly before his death.)

while the sea suggests movement of a more chaotic kind, something akin to Gregory's 'stirring.' Taken together these metaphors express the tension of Petrarchan love; Romeo too embodies that tension, thinking at this moment Rosaline divine but experiencing, as a result of his love, great vexation rather than peace.

Romeo employs the fire metaphor in the next scene. When Benvolio urges him to abandon all thought of Rosaline, he swears:

When the devout religion of mine eye
Maintains such falsehood, then turn tears to fire;
And these who, often drowned, could never die,
Transparent heretics be burnt for liars. (1.2.93)

In an attempt to reiterate to Benvolio the seriousness of his devotion to Rosaline, he curses his eyes ("heretics") with fire should they turn from their religion. Yet Romeo's words, unwittingly, again, suggest a transformation from worse to better. At present, his eyes are full of tears—*seas* of tears, we might say. When they are 'tempted' by an object other than Rosaline, they will burn—in Romeo's view, a negative consequence. But Romeo has just called love "a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes." He, then, would seem to be foretelling his own ascent to love.

This prophecy is or begins to be fulfilled in 1.4 when Romeo sees Juliet for the first time and she teaches not only the torches to burn bright but his eyes too: "I ne'er saw true beauty till this night" (1.4.166). But let us not get ahead of ourselves. Before even arriving at the Capulet's that night, Romeo exhibits difficulty in moving. Benvolio and Mercutio believe the evening will raise his spirits, but Romeo wants none of it: "I am not for this

ambling,” he says; “Being but heavy I will bear the light” (1.4.9-10).¹⁰ The pair insist, “we must have you dance” (1.4.11), but he is steadfast: “You have dancing-shoes / With nimble soles; I have a soul of lead / So stakes me to the ground I cannot move” (1.4.12-14). It would be difficult for Shakespeare to be more explicit; not only does he allot Romeo a soul of lead—a substance significantly heavier than Augustine’s stone; he also associates by pun the soul and a literal means of movement—feet. This characterization of Romeo’s incapacity for motion cannot help but colour our view of his love for Rosaline.

Romeo himself clearly attributes his heaviness to Rosaline. Responding to Mercutio’s suggestion that he borrow Cupid’s wings, he says,

I am too sore empièrèd with his shaft
To soar with his light feathers, and so bound,
I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe;
Under love's heavy burden do I sink. (1.4.17-20)

Romeo attributes not only his heaviness, but heaviness itself to love. Such an attribution is, at first glance, strange, and does not conform to any of the metaphors Romeo invokes above. Whereas smoke and fire suggest the lifting power of love, and the sea the tumultuous experience of the lover, Romeo’s characterization of love as a burden, something that weighs one down, more properly accords with the Augustinian view of lust, which, like the humours, tends to be associated with the body, the flesh. For Augustine, it is the “weight of cupidity pulling us downwards into the precipitous abyss” (*Confessions* 13.7.8). We know little about Romeo’s dealings with Rosaline, but when asked by

¹⁰ Levenson explains in her gloss that “torch-bearers [...] did not participate in the masquerades they attended.”

Benvolio, “Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?” his answer, “She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste” (1.1.213-214) speaks volumes.

To leap over the lovers’ first encounter (for the moment), Romeo’s insistence on his heaviness in 1.4 makes his actions in 2.1 all the more remarkable. It is not simply that Romeo, as Benvolio tells it, “ran this way and leapt this orchard wall” (2.1.6)—that is, the orchard wall Juliet later calls “high and hard to climb” (2.1.105)—or that he attributes his ability to do so to “love’s light wings” (2.1.110), but that his heaviness itself has metamorphosed into something entirely new, something ‘gravitational’; a transference of weight has occurred. “Can I go forward when my heart is here?” Romeo asks, having left the party and Juliet; “Turn back, dull earth, and find thy centre out” (2.1.1-2). In these lines, both “heart” and “centre” constitute the principle of animation, the source to which body and “dull earth,” respectively, must return or be proximate if they are to remain animate. “Dull,” as Levenson helpfully points out in her gloss, means “sluggish, inert, heavy, *slow of motion*” (my emphasis). Despite his clear compulsion to “turn back,” Romeo’s question (“Can I go forward ...?”) would seem to confirm this is a moment of choice, or at least a moment in which Romeo can question whether he has a choice. To his mind, he can “turn back” to his source, affirm his animation, or he can “go forward” and, presumably, increase the heaviness that afflicted him in 1.4 (one thinks of an elastic band stretched to its limit). The importance of this moment is signalled in a couple of ways: first, by the stage direction, which reads “He turns back,”¹¹ and second by the metre. “Turn back, dull earth, and find

¹¹ There is no stage direction in *Q* so I will not go so far as to suggest that these are Shakespeare’s directions. Still, that editors have seen fit to write “He turns back” rather than having him already “*exit*” is noteworthy.

thy centre out” is a pair of spondees followed by three iambs. The first two feet convey the laboriousness of Romeo’s movement away from Juliet; but as soon as he acknowledges his “source,” and that he ought to return to it, the rhythm of the line again becomes regular, his movement more fluid and easy.

It is fitting that both Benvolio and Mercutio misinterpret Romeo’s behaviour in this scene, for the only Romeo they know is the one who has been in love with Rosaline. As John Vyvyan states, “The Romeo they are looking for, in fact, exists no more” (156). “He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not” (2.1.16), says Mercutio when he gets no response after “conjur[ing Romeo] by Rosaline’s bright eyes” (2.1.18). Benvolio cautions Mercutio against making jokes at Romeo’s expense, but the joker jokingly replies, “I conjure only but to raise up him” (2.1.30). While the tenor of the pun is clear, and exceedingly typical of Mercutio, in this moment of heightened action (pun intended), its incongruity makes clear that whatever power Romeo’s attraction to Rosaline held, it had not the force—the magnetism—of his attraction to Juliet.

All of this is, of course, preamble to what Harley Granville-Barker refers to as the Bodleian First Folio’s “best thumbed [scene] of all” (2.1 n.). Michael Hall calls 2.1 an “[e]therialized portrait of the lovers” (84), and Mason comments on the “predominance” in this scene of what he terms “the *sacred*” (46). “But soft, what light through yonder window breaks? / It is the east, and Juliet is the sun” (2.1.45-6), begins Romeo, unwittingly recalling his father’s earlier description of him.¹² In that speech, Romeo moves decidedly

¹² 1.1.130-133: “But all so soon as the all-cheering sun / Should in the farthest east begin to [rise] ... Away he steals home my heavy son.”

westward, away from the sun. Here, he is drawn to it. The sun metaphor is commonplace, but, again, if we are attentive to the way Shakespeare's words register movement, we see that what it does is provide Romeo with a trajectory, one that is not earthly but heavenly. Hall writes that 2.1 is "full of beautiful and generally quite conventional Petrarchan poetry," that it is "straightforwardly Petrarchan without a hint of irony" (83). Mason, along the same lines, asks, "Why don't I take offence at Romeo's string of conceits? I think it is because of the *function* of the speech at the opening of the scene" (46). That function, he goes on to say, is to provide context, "background music" for the lovers to sing, presumably, their arias. Romeo and Juliet's confessions of love in 2.1 are not set *against* this Petrarchan background music; they do not 'play off it' so much as it provides the base from which they may ascend.¹³

Shortly after comparing Juliet to the sun, Romeo employs another Petrarchan metaphor: "Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven . . . do entreat her eyes / To twinkle in their spheres till they return" (2.1.58-60). Thus ever higher does Romeo tilt his soul. In fact, the stage business of this scene necessarily makes patent what is occurring on a metaphysical level: like Dante looking at Beatrice looking towards the divine in *Paradise*, Romeo looks up at his "bright angel" (2.1.69) as she gazes towards the heavens. Of this

¹³ A number of critics are quick to point out that Romeo's reliance on Petrarchan conceits and language remains constant throughout the play and, additionally, that that constancy qualifies any difference between Romeo's love of Rosaline and his love of Juliet. Aliakbari and Abjadian write that Romeo's "idealistic infatuation with Rosaline's love does not change when his love switches towards Juliet" (19). Dickey argues that Romeo's "terms at the first correspond to those of the Petrarchan amorists; they do not change greatly later. Juliet is the sun, she is an angel, her eyes are like stars" (78).

moment, John Vyvyan says, “I wish to establish a direction. [The lovers] are moving *towards* what Plato calls ‘the pure blaze of being’” (159).¹⁴

3.5 Ships and Seas

The metaphors of love enlisted by Romeo in 2.1 are not exclusively solar or celestial. When Juliet asks by whom Romeo was shown into the Capulet garden, he answers:

By love, that first did prompt me to inquire:
He lent me counsel, and I lent him eyes.
I am no pilot, yet wert thou as far
As that vast shore washed with the farthest sea,
I should adventure for such merchandise. (2.1.123-127)

Romeo’s first two lines imply he has found the “counsel” his father hoped would cure him of his humour. Love, Romeo suggests, counselled him to “inquire,” a revealing choice of word insofar as it signifies a seeking of knowledge rather than, simply, a superficial appreciation of the beloved. Romeo’s desire to know Juliet is exhibited in his pooling of resources, so to speak, with love; he gives up his ability to *see*, a faculty essential for a courtly lover. Here, for the first time, we glimpse love’s mysterious union with the soul. Needless to say, no middle-man is required in their pursuit of Juliet. That this pursuit is expressed in nautical terms is also significant. No longer is love simply taking Romeo; it is a matter of his ‘adventuring.’

¹⁴ It perhaps needs to be said: while Vyvyan’s reading privileges the Platonic and mine the Augustinian (and there are distinctions between the two), for all intents and purposes, what Augustine conceives as the metaphysical owes much to Plato. Vyvyan also says, “Romeo is now in a state that corresponds, but is not identical with that of Dante at the opening of the *Vita Nuova*” (152).

Perhaps just as important as Romeo's assertion of will is the vehicle of the metaphor itself. This is not the play's first invocation of the nautical. In 1.4, as Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio make their way to the Capulet feast, Romeo says:

[M]y mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels
...
But he that hath the steerage of my course
Direct my suit. (1.4.104-111)

Romeo's friends have been discussing the wind, which, in Mercutio's view, is "inconstant" like "fantasy" and "puffs" wherever it will, and for Benvolio "blows us from ourselves"—in this context, keeps them from the feast. Neither is having a serious conversation. Romeo, however, is clearly not in the mood for jesting, and reconceives the wind as fate: "he that hath the steerage of my course." While not explicitly nautical, some fairly obvious contrasts can be drawn between this passage and the one in 2.1. Here, Romeo attributes his movement to "[s]ome consequence" and is seemingly resigned to the fact that his "course" has little to do with his will. It is 'directed' by an entity "hanging in the stars," which are themselves always moving.¹⁵ In the garden scene, it is Juliet only who 'directs' Romeo's 'course'; that she may be as far as a "vast shore" is inconsequential, for her presence on that shore is a certainty. And while Romeo's "consequence" does, in fact, seem to bring him to Juliet, it is not unreasonable to see Romeo's 'adventuring' in 2.1 as an evolution in terms of both his movement and the way that he thinks about his movement.

¹⁵ A comparison might be made to humours, which themselves are always circulating in the body and, by definition, inconstant.

Notably, a similar evolution occurs in Chaucer's *Troilus*. When Troilus first experiences the pangs of his love for Criseyde—indeed, when he is ignorant and has yet to discover what love is—and feels compelled to translate his experience into song, he sings:

Thus passed to and fro,
Al sterelees withinne a boot am I
Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndes two,
That in contrarie stonde nevere mo. (1.415-419)

The two winds here are pleasure and pain. Love catalyzes these contrary feelings, which effectively remove from Troilus his agency; his passions, united in a generally unhelpful Petrarchan paradox (e.g. “swete harm” (1.411)), move him or, in any case, fail to.¹⁶

Troilus's state, here, is not unlike Romeo's earlier in the play when pursuing his humour. Later, though, once Troilus has confessed his love—and his sins against love—and once his relationship with Criseyde becomes more than just a possibility, the poem's narrator enlists the metaphor again:

Owt of thise blake wawes for to saylle,
O wynd, O wynd, the weder gynneth clere;
For in this see the boot hath swych travaylle,
Of my connyng, that unneth I it stere.
This see clepe I the tempestuous matere
Of disespeir that Troilus was inne –
But now of hope the kalendes bygynne. (2.1-7)¹⁷

Significant are Chaucer's use of the past tense—“that Troilus *was* inne”—and the implications of hope: “the weder gynneth clere” and “[b]ut now of hope . . .” Chaucer's

¹⁶ Curiously, this passage in Chaucer is echoed in Brooke's *Romeus*: “In stormy wind and wave, in danger to be lost, / Thy steerless ship (O Romeus) hath been long betossed” (799-800). Presumably these words describe Romeus's state before Juliet, for the narrator then goes on to say, “The seas now appeased, and thou, by happy star, / art come in sight of quiet haven” (801-802). This parallels the second instance from Chaucer I cite.

¹⁷ It is somewhat curious that the metaphor speaks both to Troilus's situation and the narrator's in telling Troilus's story. That said, it is completely in line with Petrarch's own use of the nautical metaphor to describe his own poetic difficulties. See, for example, Sonnet 189: “My ship, full of oblivion, sails / on a bitter sea.”

narrator follows this passage with an imprecation to Clio to be his “speed fro this forth” (2.9), meaning, of course, help or success, but perhaps also “quickness in moving” (*OED*, “speed, n.” II.5.a.).

3.6 Juliet

I have until now focused almost exclusively on the nature of Romeo’s love, but to conceive of *Romeo and Juliet* solely in terms of the male lover is really to misconceive the play. We must then turn our attention to Romeo’s beloved, for it is when we do that we realize ‘beloved’ utterly fails to encapsulate her. Unlike Chaucer’s Criseyde, whose requital of Troilus’s love is predicated entirely on his bestowal of his on her, Juliet is a lover from the start.¹⁸ In 2.1, her role as lover is made patent when she professes her love for Romeo: “Deny thy father and refuse thy name; / Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, / And I’ll no longer be a Capulet” (2.1.76-79). Though she is unaware of Romeo’s presence when she speaks, and though these lines do not constitute a profession in the conventional sense (she employs the conditional and is, in truth, simply giving voice to her thoughts), there is little doubt that Shakespeare would have us understand her uttered thought as a significant movement of love. She not only speaks her desire before Romeo speaks his—a fact that places her firmly in the role of actor—but Romeo himself responds in a manner consistent with that of a conventional beloved: “Shall I hear more,” he asks, “or shall I speak at this?”

¹⁸ It is true that Chaucer’s Criseyde loves Troilus, that their love for each other is mutual, at least to some degree. A better comparison to make might be that whereas Juliet’s love is an active one, Criseyde’s is passive. Even though all love, in theological romance is ‘responsive,’ Criseyde’s love may more easily be thought of as movement away from a certain instability rather than toward Troilus himself. She is compelled by Pandarus to love Troilus, and though the narrator assures his readers that slowly she came to love him, Chaucer is careful to characterize her love differently from Troilus’s.

(2.1.80). Like the inaccessible lady of Petrarch's, Wyatt's or Sidney's poetry, he must weigh whether he ought to respond—choose to relieve or, at least, mitigate the vulnerable lover's suffering. He chooses, curiously, to remain silent. Juliet's next speech, therefore, ups the ante and is successful (with Juliet, of course, still unwitting) in prompting Romeo's response; invoking the "dear perfection which [Romeo] owes," she pleads, "Take all myself" (2.1.89, 92). These words, in which she ascribes a kind of divinity to her beloved, could well be Petrarch's or Dante's; Juliet's speech-act is her humble submission to Romeo's will.¹⁹

But Juliet is still the female protagonist of a love-play the very matter of which is conventional, and when she realizes what she has said, and to whom, she is embarrassed; it is as though Shakespeare has tricked her into the role of lover. She acknowledges her shame:

Thou knowest the mask of night is on my face,
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek
For that which thou hast heard me speak tonight.
Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny
What I have spoke. (2.1.128-132)

Unlike Criseyde, however, who even after admitting to loving Troilus resists that love's consummation,²⁰ Juliet quickly owns her words; to the above speech, she adds, "but farewell, compliment. / Dost thou love me?" (2.1.132-3). It is a moment that anticipates Miranda's own "Do you love me?" in Act III of *The Tempest* (3.1.67), except that, here, Juliet knows well the social faux-pas she is committing; indeed, it would be surprising, given her relationship with her nurse, if she were not aware of the view Cressida subscribes

¹⁹ C.S. Lewis points out in the *Allegory of Love* that humility is one of the four characteristics of the courtly lover (2).

²⁰ See 3.799ff.

to in Shakespeare's *Troilus* that "men prize the thing ungained more than it is" (1.2.265).²¹ Nonetheless she confesses her love, even employing the intimate "thou" when she speaks to Romeo rather than, to take the above example, Miranda's formal "you." It is an appropriate gesture, given she has just eschewed "compliment" or, as Levenson's gloss suggests, "formality." Her eschewal, of course, must also account for her willingness to inhabit, unconventionally, the role of lover in this episode. Earlier in the scene, when Romeo begins to swear that he loves her by "yonder blessed moon" (2.1.150), she interrupts him, saying, "O swear not by the moon" (2.1.152). Her reason for forswearing his swearing is that the moon is inconstant—a legitimate reason, to be sure—but it also speaks to her aversion to his Petrarchan rhetoric. One cannot help but recall the way this scene begins, with Romeo likening Juliet first to the sun (2.1.46) and then to the stars (2.1.58). Instead of receiving Romeo's love, allowing him to 'prove' it via hyperbole, she makes a case for *herself* as lover, assuring *her* beloved, "thou mayst think my behaviour light; / But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true / Than those that have the coying to be strange" (2.1.142-4).²²

In these words, just as in those constituting Juliet's initial proclamation of love, Shakespeare is himself at work. Juliet is naturally anxious that Romeo may think her behaviour "light," that is, either flippant or insubstantial. Her anxiety is not surprising given the speed with which her love comes on. Later in the same speech, she asks her beloved "not [to] impute [her] yielding to light love" (2.1.148). While her meaning is clear,

²¹ All citations from the *Tempest* are from *The Norton Shakespeare*.

²² Of this moment, Lucking writes, "when Juliet interrupts him with the injunction not to swear by the moon, depriving him suddenly of the literary coordinates which are all he has to orientate himself by, he is left completely at a loss, and rather pathetically inquires: 'What shall I swear by?'" (10). To this I say, while it is true that "Juliet remains more rational than her lover" (Dickey 87), a rationality, I imagine, which goes hand in hand with her aversion to Romeo's hyperbolic love-rhetoric, here, Juliet's *reason* for cutting him off is not to 'leave him completely at a loss' so much as to redeem his love by hers.

Shakespeare is clearly also riffing on “light.” For in Augustinian terms, “light” love is exactly what a lover wants; a love that rises rather than sinks is the love Romeo invokes when he explains how he got into Juliet’s garden so easily. It does not seem likely that Juliet is aware of this alternate meaning when she speaks (though, given the characters’ abilities to pun in this play, it would be appropriate if she were); if she is, however, it would mean that the specifically Petrarchan problem of love—the notion that the same love can be conceived of as both lesser and greater, sinful and divine—is already in her consciousness. If that seems a stretch, consider Juliet’s instruction to Romeo only a few lines later that he should swear not by the moon but by his “gracious self,” which is, she adds, “the god of my idolatry” (2.1.156-7). It is an astounding comment, both revealing Juliet’s intense love for Romeo—the degree to which she loves him *and* to which she thinks he deserves to be loved²³—and, at the same time, acknowledging that such a love is potentially problematic. For while, to her, loving Romeo seems good—it arises naturally, we can imagine her saying—bestowing such a love upon an idol, a thing not to be loved as much as the *real* thing, is rarely beneficial.²⁴

While I have no wish to complicate things unnecessarily, it is clear that “light” takes on a third (and perhaps even a fourth) meaning in this scene. Expressing her reluctance to commit herself to Romeo and to what may be, in retrospect, an imprudent act, Juliet says,

Although I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract tonight:

²³ Levenson’s note cites Naseeb Shaheen, who writes in *Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Tragedies*, that Shakespeare may be alluding to Hebrew 6:13, in which the author writes, “For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself” (KJV).”

²⁴ Here is evidence, in Paul Siegel’s words, that in *Romeo and Juliet*, “the God of Christianity and the god of love are [...] confused” (376); nevertheless, they are confused to good effect.

It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,
Too like the lightning which doth cease to be
Ere one can say 'It lightens'. (2.1.159-163)

Her meaning is clear here as well: light love can come and go as quickly as a flash of lightning.²⁵ Romeo's love for her, as well, presumably, as her love for him, could simply be a function of the moment. That said, given Shakespeare's use of sun imagery in the play—both at the beginning of this scene where Juliet *is* the sun and later in the consummation scene where the morning literally 'lightens' as the sun rises—even a love that 'lightens' in this sense may be understood as good.

Juliet's occupation of the role of lover is confirmed by her physical movements in this scene. At line 179, she hears a noise within (the folio offers the following stage direction: "Cals within"); at this point, she exits, telling Romeo, "Stay but a little; I will come again" (2.1.181). Romeo speaks three lines, and she returns. At line 191, a voice again calls from "within" (the folio, again), and Juliet again exits. It is at this point that Romeo utters a simile which analogizes what an audience would see being played out on stage: "Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books, / But love from love, toward school with heavy looks" (2.1.202-203). He, reluctantly, moves to exit the stage too, but Juliet returns yet again, calling "Hist, Romeo, hist!" (2.1.204). Though he has been given no exit, it is helpful to imagine Romeo on the verge of exiting, far enough away, in any case, for Juliet's own metaphor to make sense: "O for a falc'ner's voice / To lure this tassel-gentle back again" (2.1.204-5). He, of course, returns, and the lovers, finally, say

²⁵ Dickey writes that Juliet is "much less subject to the gusts of passion which blind Romeo. Romeo never examines the consequences of his actions, but Juliet fears that their love may be 'too rash [...].' Romeo never shares Juliet's insight" (105).

their final goodbyes. In essence, what is *seen* in this scene is the constant movement of the lovers back and forth; each may be observed moving quickly toward and then slowly away from the other (and then again). The pertinent point here is that Juliet's movement is no different from Romeo's; she too is a lover, drawn as though by her weight to her beloved.²⁶

A more accurate statement, I suppose, would be that Juliet, like Romeo, is both lover and beloved simultaneously. This is evident in her falconry metaphor and taken up again by her at line 222. Now expressing her reluctance to let Romeo leave, she says:

I would have thee gone;
And yet no farther than a wanton's bird,
That lets it hop a little from his hand,
Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,
And with a silken thread plucks it back again. (2.1.222-225)

Here, she posits herself as the object of love, the one moved toward by Romeo, but at the same time assumes her own agency in being able to "pluck" him back to her. Though the result of her plucking may look to a third party like Romeo's movement alone, it must be both his and hers. For Shakespeare, then, it is not simply that each character occupies simultaneously the roles of lover and beloved, but that Romeo's or Juliet's movement cannot be conceived of as wholly separate from the other's. Hall writes, "we must see the [lovers'] relationship as [...] mysterious and not of the earth, in much the same sense that Donne (and dozens of other Renaissance poets) defines love" (79). Donne and those Renaissance poets, it need hardly be pointed out, are commonly called the 'metaphysicals.'

²⁶ David Lucking writes of this scene, "Juliet's physical oscillation between the house interior and the garden, between the promptings of the Nurse's voice and those of Romeo's, is vividly suggestive of the tension between worlds of public and private identity that have come into collision in this play, a tension which, at least at the overt level of material events, is destined to be resolved in favour of the former" (11). The opposition of public and private worlds accords well with a historicizing reading of the play; I feel compelled only to point out that the opposition might be between material and metaphysical.

This notion of the lovers' mutuality is particularly apt when considered in the context of their marriage. Before I say more on this subject, however, it is worth noting that even though it is in 2.1 that Juliet emerges in the role of lover, her occupation of that role actually begins in 1.4, at the lover's first meeting.

The sonnet (plus quatrain) the two speak to each other is itself an indication of the mutuality and interconnectedness of their loves, but, in Augustinian terms, it is what Juliet says that is of interest. At the beginning of the sonnet, Romeo takes for himself the role of lover and places Juliet decidedly in the role of beloved, deifying her as audiences will later see her do to him in 2.1: "If I profane with my unworhiest hand ..." (1.4.206), he begins, and it is abundantly clear where he is going. Indeed, Juliet knows where he is going and, parrying his lover's thrusts, does her best to play, both for his and convention's sake (we imagine), the inaccessible beloved. At line 216, he expresses, unsurprisingly, his wish for her to kiss him, and she decorously refuses to satisfy him, saying that "[s]aints do not move" (1.4.218). Here, thoughtfully adopting his earlier assertion of her divinity, she enlists the Augustinian notion that when one is divine (or with the divine, as in the case of a saint), one is at rest. Having secured her position, though, Juliet appears not to be satisfied with her conventionally-assigned role, and having restively received one kiss from him wants one of her own choosing. How she *enacts* this second kiss this is rather ingenious.²⁷ Invoking Romeo's initial caution of profanation, she claims that by means of his kiss, she has taken on his own admitted sinfulness. To have his sin, she well knows, is *not* to be a saint, not to be

²⁷ There is much praise of Juliet in this scene. Dickey suggests that "Juliet retains many of the characteristics of the witty court ladies of *Loves' Labours Lost*" (86); Ryle writes, "She sees how Romeo has fashioned their opening exchange, itself an enchanting display of courtly wit, but perhaps only intuitively she also perceives his wit has offered her a novel experience" (58).

divine; it is, rather, to be one who moves, and who *must* move in order to attain the desired rest. She has, in essence, granted herself the freedom (or submitted herself to the necessity) of kissing him. And while there is nothing explicit to suggest that this kiss is *hers* rather than his, her rebranding of herself as imperfect assures us that she, too, is an active participant in this exchange.²⁸

3.7 Marriage

It should be evident that Romeo and Juliet are not only lovers who move, but who speak (and think) of their love in terms of movement. This is the case even in their brief but all-important discussion of marriage at the end of 2.1. Juliet informs Romeo,

If that thy bent of love be honourable,
Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow,
By one that I'll procure to come to thee,
Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite,
And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay,
And follow thee, my lord, throughout the world. (2.1.186-191)

Juliet's statement of her willingness to "come" and then "follow" Romeo "throughout the world" would seem to constitute, at first glance, the motional content of the above passage.

While this content is not to be overlooked, the key term for our present purposes is actually "bent." Two straightforward synonyms for bent, those, for example, offered by Levenson in her gloss are "(a) inclination, (b) object," both of which she takes from the *OED*. Dympna Callaghan suggests "purpose," essentially treating the first two lines of the

²⁸ Lucking points out that, in this scene, Juliet "is no less inextricably immersed in the world of language than Romeo himself" (7). She may well be right, but Juliet's use of language typically employed by the male lover rather than the female beloved is the more pertinent point.

passage as a tautology. Greenblatt's Norton edition provides no gloss at all. Though Levenson's suggestions are the best of the three editors', a more thorough reading of these lines must acknowledge that "bent," like its synonym "inclination," is a word that registers movement. The *OED* also gives "tendency of motion" or "course" ("bent, n.²" 6.d.) as possible definitions. "Object," then, ought not to be read narrowly as "purpose" but rather the "thing to which a specified action [...] is directed" (*OED*, "object, n." 3.). "Bent," essentially, expresses *telos*, an end. Juliet is asking Romeo to confirm his trajectory. As she is willing to follow him *anywhere* "throughout the world," it is clear that the trajectory she invites him to confirm is not a physical (or geographical) one but a metaphysical; she wants to know if his soul is 'inclined' and moving toward an object that is honourable and good.

Because she phrases her enquiry in the conditional, it does not seem wholly necessary for Romeo to respond immediately; his response, rather, will be his sending of the details of their marriage ceremony (which she already trusts he will do). Here, Juliet is again like Miranda, whose "My husband then?" (3.1.88) proposes the subject of marriage while at the same time placing the ball squarely in the male lover's court. It is yet another signal that Shakespeare would have his readers conceive of Romeo and Juliet's love as a motion not only in which they mutually participate, but which is fuelled by their participation.

That said, the singularity of Juliet's proposal of marriage itself must be considered, for, strictly speaking, romance or courtly lovers do not wed. Petrarch does not wed Laura; neither does Dante Beatrice. In what may seem like an entirely incongruous way of expressing the same or, at least, a similar truth, C.S. Lewis argues that adultery is one of

the four tenets of courtly love (*Allegory* 2). The connection between these two anti-marriage literary practices is, quite simply, the notion that love is divine. In the cases of Beatrice and Laura, the beloved remains literally and figuratively beyond apprehension, just like God. In the courtly romances to which Lewis refers, works in which sexuality is romanticized, sex *is* or stands in for the divine mystery. For this reason, if a sexual relationship is not adulterous in a medieval romance or courtly love text, it had better be at least secret (like all mysteries). This is, of course, the case in Chaucer's *Troilus*, which, curiously, employs both of these methods of signalling the divinity of the lovers' love.

At the beginning of Book III of Chaucer's poem, Troilus, in bed and half-feigning illness, talks with Criseyde for the first time. His sickness is mostly a ruse meant to produce pity in his beloved, and Pandarus has told her that if she does not pity Troilus, he will die. To Pandarus's reiteration of his friend's mortal necessity, she responds, "I wolde hym preye / To telle me the fyn of his entente – / Ye wist I nevere wel what that he mente" (3.124-6). It is a request similar to Juliet's in 2.1, even employing the word "fyn," which, like "bent," implies movement or trajectory, but Troilus's response is very much that of a courtly lover: he desires that Criseyde would look upon him in a friendly way, acknowledge his honest and virtuous service, judge him according to his deserts, grant him the honour of being at her beck and call, allow him to be her loyal, humble, true, and secret servant, and be ever desirous of his service (3.1.127-147). Notably absent from this list is sex, though that does indeed come later. In *Chaucer and the Law*, Joseph Allen Hornsby writes that the "vows Troilus and Criseyde exchange explicitly mimic those exchanged by vassal and lord when they enter into a feudal contract" (137-8). Though these contracts were mutual, it is

notable that the lord's vow is significantly less onerous than the vassal's. There is, therefore, a parallel between the feudal relationship of a vassal and his lord and the Dantean conception of the relationship of the lover and beloved: one aims to please and the other is either pleased or displeased. This is decidedly not what Shakespeare gives us in *Romeo and Juliet*. Criseyde agrees that *if* she can do Troilus good, she will; Juliet tells Romeo she will follow him anywhere. It is telling that when Troilus and Criseyde's relationship does become sexual, everyone is adamant that it is kept secret.

When Romeo meets with Friar Laurence in 2.2, he describes his and Juliet's love in egalitarian terms three times in less than 40 lines. He confesses that "one hath wounded me / That's by me wounded" (2.2.50-1), that as his "[dear heart's love] on hers, so hers is set on [his]" (2.2.57, 59), and that Juliet, unlike his previous beloved, Rosaline, "doth grace for grace and love for love allow" (2.2.86). His exuberance may be seen in the context of Rosaline's reluctance to requite his love, but it is clear there is something more going on. It is important that Romeo describes his relationship in these terms to the friar, the man "within [whose] help and holy physic lies" the "remedies" for the lovers' love (2.2.51-2), who "must combine [the two] / By holy marriage" (2.2.60-61), and who is, in his capacity as priest, the transmitter of grace when "holy church incorporate two in one" (2.5.37).²⁹ Neither Juliet nor Romeo—especially given the latter's characterization of his and Juliet's love and his consequent requests of the friar—believes that their love alone is enough: they need a 'remedy' for it, even though it seems to be wholly without problem. To put it in motional terms, Romeo and Juliet require assurances that their love can carry them where

²⁹ The term sacrament derives from a word meaning, simply, mystery.

they need to go. The friar must play his role and confer upon them that thing—grace, in theological terms—which ensures their metaphysical trajectory.³⁰ This conferral makes it possible for Romeo to say with accuracy, “Heaven is here / Where Juliet lives” (3.3.29-30), for without what marriage brings, heaven is *not* or not wholly there. Dickey confirms the way in which marriage in the Early Modern period ‘took on’ the responsibilities of divinization:

The Renaissance modified medieval attitudes considerably. Where courtly love and the love of heaven were basically at odds [...] the Renaissance manages to harmonize earthly and heavenly love. Where courtly love all but demanded adultery as one of its conditions, English Renaissance literature hymns the chaste joys of matrimony. (20-21)

While his assessment that “courtly love and the love of heaven were basically at odds” has been taken up with more nuance in the previous chapter, as well as by Siegel, quoted earlier in this one, Dickey is right about the harmonizing effect attributed to marriage. And while his “chaste joys” are not necessarily divine, as I suggest when introducing the above passage, Shakespeare clearly feels marriage, in which the “mystery” that “two shall be one flesh” is “great” (Eph. 5.31-32), to be a fitting dramatic choice in this tale of metaphysical love.

3.8 Metaphysical and Physical

Just as there are critics who read *Romeo and Juliet* through a materialist lens, who regard the concept of the metaphysical simply as a facet of the ideology of Shakespeare’s time, an abstract expression of more concrete realities, there are characters within the play

³⁰ It strikes me that the notion of Romeo and Juliet’s love being “wholly without problem” and yet still needing something more—the friar’s sacramental conferral of grace—accords well with Mason’s claim that the Petrarchan conceits of 2.1 constitute “background music.” In that scene, the lovers must build their relationship on a Petrarchan foundation—a foundation that is not deficient, necessarily, but has a limited capacity.

who tend to trust only what they can see, touch, or experience themselves. While, it is true, the friar is initially sceptical about the transcendent nature of Romeo and Juliet's love, the nurse is utterly without the concept of marriage as a metaphysical institution. She is, of course, devoted to Juliet, but her devotion manifests itself in an eagerness not so much for Juliet's nuptials, but for what comes after: the sex—indeed, regardless of whom her charge's husband might be. Before Romeo enters the scene, the nurse urges Juliet to see “if looking [...] move” her to like Paris (1.3.100)³¹ and, if so, to “seek happy nights to happy days” (1.3.107). Later, after Juliet meets Romeo, the nurse seems more concerned with the fact that his face, leg, hand, foot, and body “are past compare” (2.4.41) than that he is, at first glance, “not the flower of courtesy” (2.4.42). She goes on to speak blithely of the “burden” (2.4.75) Juliet will bear later that night. And then, coming full circle, after Romeo and Juliet have been married, and after the former has been banished from Verona, she again urges Juliet to consider Paris:

Then, since the case so stands as now it doth,
I think it best you married with the County.
O, he's a lovely gentleman!
Romeo's a dish-clout to him.
[...] Beshrew my very heart,
I think you are happy in this second match,
For it excels your first; or if it did not,
Your first is dead, or 'twere as good he were,
As living here and you no use of him. (3.5.216-219, 221-225)

The nurse sees the value of a suitor in terms solely or, at least, primarily of the material benefits conferred upon Juliet. She privileges the pleasure of physicality and the ‘givenness’ of the imminent, that which is ‘at hand.’ She is short-sighted in soul. Anticipating her

³¹ These are Juliet's words.

charge's second marriage, she predicts, "for the next night, I warrant, / The County Paris hath set up his rest / That you shall rest but little, God forgive me" (4.4.31-3). While she apologizes for her risqué remark, she does proceed to say, "let the County take you in your bed; / He'll fright you up, i' faith" (4.4.36-7). Not only is she fixated on this particular element of Juliet's connubial life, however; she clearly understands marriage differently from the lovers. Romeo being 'as good as dead' releases Juliet, in her opinion, from any obligation she may have to him; it frees her to enjoy new pleasures, and to satisfy, as the nurse comments earlier, her "wanton blood" (2.5.69).

A number of critics have described the nurse in terms that accord with my characterization of her. Barbara Everett in "*Romeo and Juliet: The Nurse's Story*" argues that the "nurse is a product of this comfortable and recognisable world. Shakespeare has taken Brooke's sketch of a conventional character-type and given it a dense human solidity" (154). Her function in the play, Everett goes on to say, is "to provide a *natural* context" (155) for Romeo and Juliet's love. Both of these comments speak specifically to the materiality—the this-worldedness—of the nurse's character and outlook. Also gesturing towards concrete- or short-sightedness is Mason, who asserts that the nurse is "a vehicle for various 'moments' and some of the best are moments of prose speech" (35). In a slightly different vein, Dickey comments on the nurse's "patent sexuality," which, he argues, "serves to set off Juliet's tender and legitimate rapture" (75).

Juliet, legitimately rapt by her heavenly love, is naturally disconcerted by the nurse's advice to embrace Paris and asks her, "Speak'st thou from thy heart?" (3.5.225). The nurse's response, "And from my soul too" (3.5.227), ironically reinforces her disregard

(or just plain ignorance) of the metaphysical consequences of Romeo and Juliet's marital bond. Shakespeare's inclusion of such a narrow-minded figure is neither without purpose nor precedent. As readers of *Troilus and Criseyde* undoubtedly recognize, Pandarus is a clear forerunner of the nurse—Pandarus who speaks to his 'charge' Troilus with a strikingly similar lack of concern for the metaphysical in a strikingly similar episode.³² In Book IV of the *Troilus*, the eponymous hero struggles with the absence of his beloved (traded to the Greeks for the prisoner-of-war Antenor), even though he imagines he will see her again soon. Intending to mitigate his friend's sorrow, to mute his "sorwful noise" (4.374), in the narrator's words, Pandarus asks, "But telle me this: whi thow art now so mad / To sorwen thus? Whi listow in this wise, / Syn thi desir al holly hastow had [...]" (4.393-395). Whatever it is that Troilus and Criseyde *have*, has, in Pandarus's view, been had. He can only be speaking of the physical element of the lovers' relationship, which had a very decided conclusion and to which, at least in one case, he was a party. But Pandarus goes on:

[A]s day comth after nyght,
 The newe love, labour, or oother wo,
 Or ells selde seyng of a wight,
 Don olde affeccious alle over-go.
 And, for thi part, thow shalt have oon of tho
 T'abregge with thi bitter peynes smerte. (4.421-426)

Like the nurse, his guidance consists simply of urging Troilus to move on, and implies a similar understanding of the lovers' relationship as nothing more than a physical conjunction that, once had, has reached its limit, so to speak. The narrator's qualification that Pandarus

³² Fly, citing Philip Edwards's *Shakespeare and the Confines of Art*, explicitly links the two figures: "Like her medieval associate, Pandarus, the Nurse appears at times to function almost as a paradigm of external agency, of process and instrumentation" (10).

says everything “for the nones alle” (4.428),³³ a claim he makes two times in the poem,³⁴ does not change the fact that throughout the *Troilus*, Pandarus’s aim is always and only to bring Troilus to an extremely narrowly conceived experience of ‘heaven.’³⁵ This stated intention, like the nurse’s “from my soul,” ironically acknowledges the very limited scope of Pandarus’s mind. Or, at the very least, it reveals Pandarus to have no trouble manipulating Troilus (and Criseyde) with his words while giving no thought whatsoever to their veracity—which is itself a metaphysical concern.

It is revealing that both Chaucer and Shakespeare include as one of the primary characters in their works, a figure for whom the metaphysical is not a concern. If anything, this inclusion emphasizes the tension that exists between the material or physical ends of a romantic relationship and the metaphysical. Chaucer’s Pandarus and Shakespeare’s nurse, then, call to mind the distinctly Petrarchan (in the context of this study), and the problem of love’s duality. Though Troilus and Juliet do not themselves seem to experience love as moving them towards different ends, the presence of their ‘materialist’ counterparts identifies for readers a potential problem. It is notable that both Troilus and Juliet reject their advisors’ advice for specifically metaphysical reasons—or reasons they express using metaphysical concepts. Troilus begins by telling Pandarus that his advice may well have helped were he (Troilus) a “fend” (4.437), a spiritual being, in other words, known for eschewing the metaphysical. Troilus asserts, “I wol nat ben of thyn opynyoun / Touchyng al this” (4.453); for “[i]t lith nat in my power” (4.458) to let Criseyde go. “[F]ro [his] soul,” he

³³ I.e. just on the occasion, for the purpose of helping his friend. The implication is that Pandarus does not think of the consequence of his words, or their veracity, but only their immediate effect.

³⁴ At 1.561, the narrator makes the same claim.

³⁵ At 1.622, to Pandarus’s assurances, Troilus asks, “How devel maistow brynge me to blisse?”

concludes, employing the language of the narrator when he describes Troilus's first sight of his beloved, "shal Criseydes darte / Out nevere mo" (4.472-473).

Juliet does not disagree with the nurse to her face, saying, rather, "Amen" (3.5.228) to her advice. This is either her way of keeping the nurse from learning her plans, or a solemn word on the end of their relationship, a 'so be it,' or, most likely, both. It is only after the nurse departs that Juliet launches into her scathing reproach:

Ancient damnation! O most wicked fiend!
Is it more sin to wish me thus forsworn,
Or to dispraise my lord with that same tongue
Which she hath praised him with above compare
So many thousand times? Go, counsellor;
Thou and my bosom henceforth shall be twain. (3.5.235-240)

The similarities between Juliet's and Troilus's rejections are striking. Both employ the figure of the fiend to describe one who either betrays or encourages betrayal. And both reveal a tendency on the part of the lover to think of love as encompassing more than the physical. Troilus is quite explicit about this, locating Criseyde's 'dart' in his soul, and confessing his inability to let her go or, in Augustinian terms, to incline or move in a direction opposed to his weight. Juliet's recourse to the metaphysical is less explicit, discernible principally in her damning of the nurse but also in her stated intention, which follows her speech, to go to the friar, a "counsellor" who is, to her mind, appropriately attentive to the metaphysicality of Romeo's and her love.

The contrast between metaphysical and material may be discerned in other oppositions in both Chaucer's poem and Shakespeare's play. One of these oppositions is between love and hate. While the link between the metaphysical as I have been discussing it

and love is quite evident, it is not at all clear how or even that hatred goes with materiality. Both the nurse and Pandarus encourage, if anything, a construal of love that simply accords with the material, the physical or imminent—in other words, lust not hate. But Pandarus does exhibit hatred in the *Troilus*, and it is worth considering that episode. In Book V, once Troilus has realized that Criseyde isn't coming back, that she has, in fact, betrayed him, he is prompted by Pandarus to disavow her or his love for her. True to his assertion in Book IV that it lies not in his power to do so, he claims, "I cannot unloven her but a day" (5.1698). He proceeds to speak of his sufferings to Pandarus, and after three stanzas' worth, his friend, finally, can take no more: "What sholde I seyen? I hate, ywis, Criseyde; / And, God woot, I wol hate hire evermore!" (5.1731-1732). Though Pandarus is only, at least in his view, expressing solidarity with Troilus, it is after this outburst that Troilus cuts his friend out of his life; he has seen into the shallow and fickle soul of Pandarus and will no longer be led by him. That this is Pandarus's only exhibition of hatred should be mentioned, and perhaps qualifies the association between materiality (or inattentiveness to the metaphysical) and hatred that I am trying to make. Nonetheless, insofar as the nurse prompts Juliet to take her pleasure where she finds it, she too opposes herself to love, and to be opposed to love is, in a sense, to hate.

3.9 Love and Hate

It is the association of an inattentiveness to the metaphysical and hatred that informs 3.1 of *Romeo and Juliet*, the crucial scene which marks the play's transition from comedy to tragedy. Given the debate over the play's genre (conventional tragedy or tragedy of

fortune), this scene must be scrutinized. What is happening in Romeo's soul that he is prompted to kill Tybalt? Of course, on the surface of things (what the short-sighted can see), it is abundantly clear what has happened: Tybalt has killed Mercutio, Romeo's friend, and Romeo takes revenge. His revenge might even accord with the notion that love moves the lover, for surely Romeo loves Mercutio. Complicating this account of action and (re)action are two things: first, Romeo blames himself—or quite simply *is* to blame—for Mercutio's death; he steps between the two fighters and the result is Tybalt's thrust. Second, among the last things Mercutio says to Romeo is "O calm, dishonourable, vile submission!" (3.1.72), words meant to shame his friend for his unwillingness to enter the fray. Romeo could, then, be ashamed: there are worse motives.³⁶

There is, however, more going on 'behind the scenes,' so to speak, in this scene than the above account suggests. When Tybalt first enters in 3.1, his intention is to provoke: "Gentlemen, good e'en, a word with one of you" (3.1.37). He is quickly followed by Mercutio, pushing him to "couple [his word] with something; make it a word and a blow" (3.1.38-39). At Mercutio's prompting, then, the scene moves very quickly past words to actions. Benvolio is the first to say to Mercutio and Tybalt: "Either withdraw unto some private place, / Or reason coldly of your grievances, / Or else depart" (3.1.50-52). In other words, he makes clear their options, given the earlier decree of the prince that

³⁶ It is worth remembering that Mercutio is not a Montague; he is not, except in solidarity with his friend, at war with the Capulets. In fact, he is included in the list of invitees to the Capulet party (see 1.2.69). So, according to this logic, for Romeo to be unwilling to fight his *own* battles when Mercutio, who has no reason to fight, *is*, then he ought to be ashamed. Interestingly, Harold Goddard offers a view counter to this (which, admittedly, is not so much mine as it is one possible view); he says it is not Romeo who ought to be ashamed, but Mercutio, who as "a kinsman of the Prince who rules Verona [...] is under special obligation to preserve a neutral attitude between the two houses" (125).

violence will be met with punishment, even death. It is at this point—once the options have been laid out—that Romeo enters.

Tybalt's first words to Romeo foreground the play's love/hate motif: "Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford / No better term than this: thou art a villain" (59-60). Ironically employing the word "love" to convey his hatred for Romeo, he figuratively bites his thumb at his enemy. Romeo's response is all-important:

Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage
To such a greeting. Villain am I none.
Therefore farewell; I see thou knowest me not. (3.1.68-71)

Two things stand out here, and both point to a critical difference between the way Romeo on the one hand and Tybalt and Mercutio on the other understand what's happening.

Romeo's reference to "reason" and his claim that Tybalt 'knows' him not point to his new perspective: he now sees everything, including the feud, from a metaphysical standpoint (for what are *reasoning* and *knowing* if not motions of the soul?). Though it may well be that Romeo's temperament is more in keeping with seeking peace than it is with making war—even Capulet knows him to be a "virtuous and well-governed youth" (1.4.181)—Romeo chooses, here, to privilege the actions of his rational soul (for what is love but a movement of the soul in accordance with reason) rather than those of his body, namely, violence.

According to Siegel, when Romeo says "that he loves the name of Capulet as his own, we see at work that cosmic love which makes use of sexual love to knit together the fragmented portions of what should be a unified social organism" (386). Romeo's relationship with

Juliet, yet to be consummated though it may be, has enacted an ennobling in him.³⁷ Though Tybalt is not privy to the movements of Romeo's soul, or even aware of the distinction between movements of soul and movements of body (e.g. an arm with holding a rapier), Romeo, having become habituated to the metaphysical, now only perceives what he perceives.

If such a reading of the exchange seems a stretch, consider what happens next: citing the "injuries / That thou hast done me," Tybalt tells Romeo to "turn and draw" (3.1.65-66). Entirely disregarding the injuries to which Tybalt refers, Romeo becomes more explicit, saying, "I [...] love thee better than thou canst devise / Till thou shalt know the reason of my love" (3.1.68-9). To us, perhaps, the words do not seem so strange, for we are privy to the birth of Romeo and Juliet's love and know what Romeo means when he proclaims his love for Tybalt. Tybalt, though, must be utterly perplexed. In fact, it is very possible Romeo's last comment has given him, for reasons quite beyond his comprehension, pause; he may himself be *thinking* or on the verge of doing so.³⁸ If only we could perceive the motions of Tybalt's soul in this moment, but Shakespeare and Mercutio do not give us the chance: "O calm, dishonourable, vile submission" (3.1.72) cuts in Mercutio, and Tybalt is back to considering external motions, Mercutio's thrusts.

Harold Goddard's excellent reading of this scene is worth mentioning here, for it is in 3.1 that the critic sees Romeo standing, as it were, on the knife's edge. 3.1 presents the

³⁷ Interestingly, in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, the ennoblement of Troilus on account of his love for Criseyde manifests itself in martial prowess and valor, a willingness to make war rather than peace.

³⁸ Mackenzie clearly would disagree with this assertion; he argues that Tybalt, "who all too well comprehends the patterns of physical affray, can only respond bloodily to the offer of conciliation. He has no other mind-set available to him" (27).

“crisis of Romeo’s life,” the “moment when two totally different universes wait [...] on the turning of a hand” (129). Those universes are, in Goddard’s conception, the universe of love and the universe of force;³⁹ I might say they are the metaphysical and the physical—or, at least, ways of seeing informed by these two realities. Romeo’s refusal to fight, for which he is chided by Mercutio, has proven him “according to the world’s code, a mollycoddle” (128). But “if Romeo is a mollycoddle,” Goddard qualifies, “then Jesus was a fool to talk about loving one’s enemies” (128). So, again, it seems Romeo chooses love and therefore, opts for a metaphysical perspective.

After the fray, and after Mercutio’s accusation—“I was hurt under your arm” (103)—Romeo’s words are telling: “I thought all for the best” (104).⁴⁰ Seemingly a banal assertion of his good intentions, Romeo’s line becomes suddenly interesting when the emphasis is shifted from “best” to “thought.” It is a jarring revelation for him: not everyone lives metaphysically; *thinking*, in everyone’s opinion but his own, is not what the situation called for. The ‘good’ imagined by Mercutio and Tybalt does not culminate in an ascent, but a descent, a death. Of how perplexing this all must be, Mackenzie writes, “Romeo’s supposition that love is a force for goodness is confounded by the death of Mercutio. When Romeo intervenes in the contest between Mercutio and Tybalt, his actions are driven by a romantic exchange between himself and Juliet that has brought him to a different view of

³⁹ Romeo, Goddard says, is “free to act under the compulsion of force or under the compulsion of love” (129).

⁴⁰ Fly notes that Romeo’s intercession re-enacts the attempt of Benvolio (literally, good will) in 1.1 to stem the violence (8). Parker too highlights the import of Benvolio’s name when discussing 1.1: he “personifies the will regenerate in Christ. Benvolio consistently stands on the side of *caritas* and of its attributes, reconciliation and peace (peace, as we have seen is the pivotal characteristic of rightly ordered love)” (157). She also hears echoes of Christ’s “supreme expression of his love for man” in Benvolio’s “Put up your swords, you know not what you do” (1.1.157).

the world” (27). I would add that that exchange has produced in him a different way of moving too—one that doesn’t lend itself to violent acts.

It is in this moment of perplexity, of dislocation, that Romeo retreats into his former life; he laments that Juliet’s “beauty hath made me effeminate, / And in my temper softened valour’s steel” (114-115). In Siegel’s words, in this moment, “the forces of disorder are too strong” (386), and Romeo (in my words) succumbs to being stirred. In some ways, this is Petrarch’s problem re-contextualized: Romeo is pulled by his weight from the heavenly to the earthly, taking now the motions of physical bodies as realities to be met for a good end. Benvolio, the voice of good will, attempts to draw Romeo’s attention back to the metaphysical: “brave Mercutio is dead. / That gallant spirit hath aspired the clouds, / Which too untimely here did scorn the earth” (3.1.116-118). It is a speech that calls to mind Troilus’s ascent—an ascent that posits Chaucer’s hero as *all soul*, freed from his earthly body and contemptuous of earthly pursuits—but Romeo is having none of it: he has “give[n] up love for hate” (Siegel 385), saying, “The day’s black fate on more days doth depend; / This but begins the woe others must end” (3.1.119-120). Though his words are ambiguous, they clearly signal a return to his pre-Juliet perspective in which fate moves all to some consequence.⁴¹

When Tybalt returns to the scene of his crime, Romeo explicitly eschews metaphysical considerations, saying, “Away to heaven, respective lenity, / And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now.” Contradicting Benvolio’s claim of Mercutio’s ascent and shackling his dead friend, at least, for the moment, to the physical world—in essence,

⁴¹ 1.4.105-107.

weighing him down—he adds, “Mercutio’s soul / Is but a little way above our heads, / Staying for thine to keep him company” (123-28). Romeo has adopted fury for his guide. It is a significant assertion, for Benvolio has just said, “here comes the furious Tybalt back again” (121). Fury, if it is anything, is irrational, thoughtless; no longer will Romeo *think* all for the best. The movements on stage are now chaotic, stirred up, and thoroughly *physical*. “This shall determine that” (3.1.131), Romeo says, reduced to demonstrative pronouns and pointing.

Goddard is, again, worth considering. He explains Romeo’s violence by saying that “[t]he spirit of Mercutio [...] enter[s] Romeo’s body, and though it is Tybalt who is to go with the slain man literally, it is Romeo who goes with him in the sense that he accepts his code and obeys his ghost” (131). Without knowing exactly what Goddard means by Mercutio’s “code,” we may be able to infer something from the critic’s claim that “[s]ensuality and pugnacity are the poles of [Mercutio’s] nature” (126). These two—sensuality and pugnacity—are manifestations of the physical and might both be thought of as perversions of love: the one is love reduced and the other love reversed. Goddard writes that in 3.1, we see a “symbolic picture of life itself, of faith surrendering to force, of love trying to gain its end by violence” (130).⁴² He goes on to say, “It is as if Dante’s *Divine Comedy* were compressed [...] and presented in reverse—Romeo in an inverted ‘pilgrimage’ passing from Paradise, through Purgatory, to the Inferno” (132). While in that poem, Dante-the-poet’s love for Beatrice, who is good (and thus makes his love good), enables his ascent, here, Romeo’s love for Mercutio, who tends towards sensuality and

⁴² The faith Goddard speaks of is Romeo’s that love, in Juliet’s idiom, “is boundless and infinite” (128).

pugnacity, brings him down. It makes him, once again, heavy. For Mercutio is an unworthy object of love and, as such, transforms Romeo's love for him into something less than love. And by changing the nature of Romeo's love, he also changes the way and the end to which that love moves him.

But Romeo's love for Mercutio is not the only love in this scene. His love for Tybalt, however newly acquired, must also be considered as a potential prompt for Romeo's actions. Chaucer's *Troilus* may again provide a useful point of reference. There, in Book V, we find the poem's protagonist also moved—furiously even—to take up arms.

Chaucer writes:

[H]is ire, day and nyght,
Ful cruwely the Grekis ay aboughte [paid for],
And alwey moost this Diomed he soughte.
And ofte tyme, I fynde that they mette
With blody strokes and with wordes grete,
Assayinge how hire speres weren whette;
[...]
But natheles, Fortune it naught ne wolde
Of oothers hond that eyther deyen shoulde. (5.1755-1764)

Clearly the situations are quite different with the only obvious similarity being the fighting and the emotion accompanying that fighting. Indeed, here, Chaucer's narrator even attributes force to Fortune, though in this instance it relates, more conventionally, to the deaths of the fighters. But there is, I think, another connection that can tentatively be made—namely the motive for the fighting. *Troilus* ostensibly fights out of hatred for Diomed, whom, he's learned, has received Criseyde's favour; in actuality, though, his hatred is secondary, the result not of Diomed's stealing Criseyde, but of Criseyde's

betrayal. Though Troilus does not hate Criseyde, the sting of her disloyalty undoubtedly fuels his action.

As we have already seen, Romeo feels Juliet has made him effeminate, which in his mind, perhaps, is a sort of betrayal, but certainly not the one that accounts for his actions in 3.1. Another betrayal, however, is made manifest in the pivotal scene—namely, Tybalt’s. Though they have never been friendly, and though Tybalt has never known any reason for being friendly to Romeo, the two are now kin. *Romeo* knows this (and it is his actions we are exploring); he has indeed expressed his love, however perplexing that expression might have been. For Romeo to have done so, and to have done so after being habituated, so to speak, to having his love returned, Tybalt’s response, however fitting given the circumstances of the play, must be seen as a betrayal. That is what it means for one who is loved—a beloved—to move against his lover. And in that moment, Romeo’s love for an object unworthy of it becomes hate; it is in fact the ground of hate.

The love/hate opposition is expressed a number of times in the play. In 1.1, when Romeo arrives after the initial skirmish, he says, “Here’s much to do with hate, but more with love” (1.1.171). He does not explain his words, but it is possible they refer to the origins of the feud between his family and the Capulets. When Juliet learns in 1.4 that her beloved is a Montague, she says, “My only love sprung from my only hate” (1.4.251), and later, she takes her father’s command that she marry Paris as “hate that is meant love” (3.5.147). Finally, when Capulet believes his daughter dead on the day that she was to be married, he says, “all things change then to the contrary” (4.4.115). His words might well be a description of materiality, ever the realm of change and becoming, but there’s a more

precise relationship between love and hate that can be delineated, and it has much to do with betrayal: love answered with hate rather than love is changed to hate. As the friar says while tending his garden in 2.2, “Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied” (2.2.21). He is talking about the potentiality of an herbal remedy to be made into a poison (which naturally foreshadows events to come), but his words apply more broadly; they are the interpretive key to 3.1. There, Romeo’s love for both Mercutio and Tybalt is “misapplied.”⁴³

Once Romeo has vanquished Tybalt, prompting the action of the rest of the play, he seems to achieve some clarity—but only some, meaning he sees the consequences of his actions, but not so much the cause of them. According to Hall, “[t]his accident brings Romeo face to face with the inapplicability of his newfound values to the outside world” (88), but whether he recognizes what exactly he’s lost is not clear. In an eschewal of thinking about himself as mover or as moved by love, he calls himself, again, “fortune’s fool.” It is a curious utterance, given what’s just happened, given what he’s *done*, and the question is: should Romeo be believed?⁴⁴ It seems more likely that Romeo has, in Mason’s words, “create[d] the fate he dreads” (22).

3.10 The End

Love “misapplied” is exactly what Augustinus would accuse Franciscus of in Petrarch’s *Secret*, what Dante would call one of the categories of sin. And in the latter’s work, especially, to misapply love is to allow love to be perverted and twisted away from

⁴³ I imagine this claim to parallel Hall’s about the “inapplicability” of Romeo’s “newfound” view of the world.

⁴⁴ That Hall calls the events of 3.1 an “accident” suggests the temptation to attribute all to fortune is a strong one.

its original end. The original end of the lovers is heaven, both in a figurative and literal sense; from that end, too, they turn as a result of the events of 3.1. As can be seen in the very next scene, 3.2, Romeo's killing of Tybalt has an effect on Juliet. Having learned of the events, she calls her new husband a "Beautiful tyrant, fiend angelical, / Dove-feathered raven, wolvis-ravens lamb [...] A damned saint, an honourable villain" (3.2.75-9), falling into "the same rash of paradoxes that we see Romeo articulate early in the play" (Aliakbari and Abjadian 20-21). Characterizing her beloved thus may be seen as evidence of a similar regression in Juliet—a stirring or disorder⁴⁵ allowing for the intermingling of love and hate (like oil and water stirred)—but here the opposition does not hold. Siegel and Hall agree, stating (respectively) that "this aberration from love is only momentary" (387) and that "her recovery is almost immediate" (90). In the end, Juliet's original view is reaffirmed: "Back, foolish tears, back to your native springs" (3.2.102), she says, reversing the motions of her tears.

That Romeo is banished is a sorrow and eventuality that must be met, but before that happens, the lovers must have their consummation. For this Romeo, too, must recover, at least temporarily. "Heaven is here / Where Juliet lives" (3.3.29-30), he asserts, again thinking metaphysically, but also conceiving of himself as exiled from that heaven. When the nurse arrives at the friar's cell, she discovers Romeo "[t]here on the ground" (3.3.83), and relates of Juliet: "Even so lies she" (3.3.85). The nurse describes the scene in Juliet's chamber:

O she says nothing, sir, but weeps and weeps,

⁴⁵ It is Hall who refers, in this moment, to the "disorder in Juliet's mind" (89).

And now falls on her bed, and then stands up,
And Tybalt calls, and then on Romeo cries,
And then down falls again— (3.3.98-101)

Neither lover can maintain a single position, either up or down. Their movements, still, are chaotic; they have become infected with a doubleness, which brings us to suicide.

Still at the friar's cell, Romeo offers to kill himself. The significance of this moment is great because it necessarily informs our reading of the play's conclusion. The friar's initial response to Romeo is "Hold thy desperate hand! / Art thou a man?" (3.3.107-108).

Although it seems the Friar is seeking to shame Romeo by appealing to conventional gender roles and the effeminacy of women, it actually turns out that his ridicule is directed more particularly at Romeo's "unreasonably fury"—a quality, in his view, exhibited not by women but beasts.⁴⁶ The friar aligns irrationality with passivity—literally, Romeo's lying on the ground.

The friar's assertion of Romeo's rational soul leads to the question: "Wilt thou slay thyself, / And slay thy lady, that in thy life lives, / By doing damned hate upon thyself?" (3.3.115-117). If it is true that marriage, a "holy act" (2.5.1), "incorporate[s] two in one," then the friar's question means not only that Juliet will take Romeo's death hard, but that, in the deed, she too will die—if not physical death, then a psychic one. Having foregrounded, then, the metaphysical, the friar advises Romeo to "get thee to thy love" and "[a]scend her chamber" (3.3.145-146). Even now at this point at which everything has been

⁴⁶ Novy points out the friar's reliance on "gender polarization" and his repeated use of "womanish" as a synonym for "weak" (107). Still, taking into account the changes Shakespeare makes to Brooke in this moment, it becomes clear where the playwright's and even the friar's emphasis lies. Though, as Levenson's note suggests, "[t]he opening of Friar Laurence's admonition closely parallels Brooke," Brooke's friar actually only mentions a "brutish beast" in passing. Shakespeare's and the friar's elaboration of this concept is the point: "Thy tears are womanish; thy wild acts denote / The unreasonable fury of a beast. / Unseemly woman in a seeming man, / And ill-beseeming beast in seeming both" (3.3.109-112).

stirred up, there is still an integrity to the lovers' love, one that may be expressed in the fundamental image of theological romance—ascend. That the lovers consummate their love “above” in terms of staging couldn't be a clearer indication of this. But the lovers have but one night (and morning), and at the end, Romeo says, “I'll descend” (3.5.42), a clear indicator of what is to come. Romeo will go down not only in a literal sense; he will become again subject to the world of materiality and multiple ends.

The events of the ensuing scenes are well known: the friar concocts a plan to give Juliet a “death” potion to help her escape from her impending marriage to Paris. He does this, in part, because she, too, has threatened suicide. To her threat, the friar responds by asking whether she will undertake “a thing like death” (4.1.74). She says, “O bid me leap, rather than marry Paris, / From off the battlements of any tower” (4.1.77-8). Employing words that convey action, she asserts she would “walk,” “lurk,” “hide” or even “go into a new-made grave, / And hide me with a dead man in his tomb” (4.1.84-5). Ironically, those actions all end with her in the tomb. Her language suggests her belief that though she may be immobile—“like death”—she will be so *actively*. By contrast, when she thinks Romeo is dead in 3.2 (instead of Tybalt), she vehemently apostrophizes the earth: “end motion here” (3.2.59). It seems she recognizes better than her beloved that one of their deaths means the other's. When the nurse first brings Juliet news of Tybalt's death, and Juliet believes her to be speaking about Romeo, she asks her to say “Ay” if it be so. She then puns on the response she's afraid of receiving, saying, “And that bare vowel 'I' shall poison more / Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice. / I am not I if there be such an 'I'” (3.2.45-8).

To return to the drama, the friar sends word to Romeo of the plan, but his letter is waylaid and Romeo learns from his man Balthazar that Juliet is dead. Romeo's response is not surprising: "Well, Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight. / Let's see for means. O mischief, thou art swift / To enter in the thoughts of desperate men" (5.1.34-6). That Romeo seeks to "lie with" Juliet is perhaps typical of the desire of the living to be physically proximate to the dead, but it also shows how little, at this point, having been exiled from his metaphysical realm, Romeo still thinks of himself as a soul. His conversation with the apothecary (a materialist foil of the friar) is punctuated by references to the "world" and the "flesh" (5.1.72-3; 84). Later, after having arrived at the tomb, he tells Balthazar the reason for his "descent into this bed of death" (5.3.28) is to retrieve a "precious ring" from Juliet's "dead finger" (5.3.31, 30). Though he is lying, the content of his lie is suggestive. He calls the tomb a "womb of death, / Gorged with the dearest morsel of the earth" (5.3.45-46), highlighting both the grotesque physicality of the site, but also the doubleness emblematic of his divergent motions. A womb gives life; a tomb receives death.

A brief encounter with Paris follows.⁴⁷ Romeo entreats Juliet's "betrothed" to "fly" from him and not "put another sin upon my head / By urging me to fury" (5.3.60ff), but the encounter nonetheless ends with Paris, whom, Romeo claims, "I love [...] better than myself" (5.3.64), dead. That this encounter is so forgettable—that audiences of *Romeo and Juliet* often fail to consider it when speaking of the lovers' love—highlights the alignment of Shakespeare's play with those works of medieval romance which treat the acts of ostensibly irrational love, or of an ostensibly irrational lover, as admirable. Romeo goes on to

⁴⁷ A curiosity: Levenson notes that "the confrontation between Romeo and Paris [...] is Shakespeare's invention" (33).

anticipate his “everlasting rest,” (5.3.110)—an eventuality every audience member knows, indeed, even Romeo himself knows, to be unlikely given the manner of his death. He has just acknowledged to Paris the sins already upon his head.

His last speech—his last metaphor—is a motional one: “Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on / The dashing rocks thy sea-sick weary bark” (5.3.117-8). It is a moment that calls to mind Chaucer and through Chaucer Petrarch and through Petrarch Dante, except that where Chaucer’s and Petrarch’s boats are rudderless in the midst of the sea, between two contrary waves, Romeo’s is dashing itself upon the rocks.⁴⁸ Romeo’s wreck reveals something of his final thoughts about himself and about his and Juliet’s love.

Departing from the conventions of theological romance, Romeo (not necessarily Shakespeare) seeks not ascent, to be with Juliet again, but rather oblivion. He is like Marlowe’s Faustus, who hopes only to be naught. Mason writes, all Romeo “sees are bodies minus life; but for Romeo the substance is the body. [...] And when Romeo thinks of himself as dead, he sees himself as ‘out’, a mere nothing” (53). Romeo’s regression is complete; perhaps this is the consequence of his murder of Tybalt, perhaps the result of Juliet’s death (in which his death is implicated). But, of course, Juliet is not dead.

Juliet has from the start been the steadier of the two lovers (a motional characterization); she saw past the conventional expressions of Romeo’s love to their implication: love’s motion in the soul. She saw that his death necessitated hers—not out of despair so much as by necessity. She saw that death—or something “like death”—had no

⁴⁸ The metaphor, notes Levenson, may derive from Brooke, though Brooke doesn’t use it in this moment. Elsewhere, she writes, “Romeo’s final speech gathers together several key Petrarchan motifs”: the nautical, dream, madness, light, and canker (“Definition” 33).

effect on “motion.” In the tomb, she wakes to discover the friar and Romeo’s dead body. The friar, in cowardice, flees, but Juliet remains steady. Unlike her lover who was dragged to the tomb by his rapidly degrading love, by her dead body, by his humour maybe, and has dashed himself into oblivion, Juliet’s staying is clearly an *action*: “I will not away” (5.3.160). Rozzett writes of the “extreme act of will” (157) exhibited by Juliet in this scene. She kisses Romeo’s lips to see if “some poison yet doth hang on them” (5.3.165), but there is none there. She hears a noise and says, “Then I’ll be brief” (5.3.169). A seemingly inconsequential line, Juliet’s need to be brief actually recalls a series of moments in the play in which the quickness of love is emphasized. “Love’s heralds should be thoughts, / Which ten times faster glides than the sun’s beams (2.4.4-5)” she says, when her nurse is slow to return from meeting Romeo. She adds, “nimble-pinioned doves draw Love, / And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings” (2.4.7-8). Like the arrow shot from Love’s bow in Chaucer’s *Troilus*, love is quick. Granville-Barker famously spoke of the “sense of swiftness” (qtd. in Fly 3) of *Romeo and Juliet*; this sense is no doubt the result of such a characterization of love’s movement. To be quick is to be alive; quickness is a consequence of lightness, and Juliet’s love is a light love, like lightning.

Without delay, then, Juliet identifies the vehicle of her death: “O happy dagger” (169). She says, “There rust, and let me die” (5.3.171), and buries it in her chest. If the suicides of the lovers are redeemed by the transcendence of their love, it is because of the impression left by Juliet’s death. Her dagger is “happy”; this means fortunate but also characterizes the experience of death for Juliet, distinguishing it from Romeo’s dashing upon the rocks. Hall sees, in her suicide, Juliet “decline to return to the ordinary world”

(94), but more evident by far is her desire to reside forever in the metaphysical one, to fulfill her love rather than escape the “ordinary.” Critics are keen to point out the sexual innuendo in this scene, and they do well to do so. But just as with Samson and Gregory’s conversation in 1.1, there is more going on here. It is worth noting that “rust” is only one of two textual options here; it is the one favoured, according to Levenson’s gloss, by “recent editors.” Early commentators preferred “rest.” Indeed, in the First Quarto Juliet says, “O happy dagger, thou shalt end my fear; / Rest in my bosom. Thus I come to thee” (5.3.116-17).⁴⁹ In the earlier text, then, two things are made explicit: first, Juliet conceives of what she is about to do as producing “rest.” Rest, not incidentally, is what is achieved, in Augustine’s and Dante’s view, when one has ascended. Restlessness, for Augustine—a being stirred, really—is the nature of human suffering. Second, by saying, “Thus I come to thee,” the Quarto’s Juliet says what is only implied in the Folio, namely, that her final act will produce a reunion with her beloved. It is fitting, in this moment, to recall the famous balcony scene, in which we first perceive the “spiritual plane” of Romeo and Juliet’s love. Of that scene, Mason insightfully says, that it is not, like its source, “Italian” by nature; “it is the winning of serenity not of tumult” (48). The peace the lovers find there is here the peace Juliet seeks. The friar, before leaving in 5.3, tells Juliet that “[t]hy husband in thy bosom there lies dead” (5.3.155). Presumably he means something like thy bosom’s (or soul’s) husband there (on the ground) lies dead, but Juliet may legitimately understand his meaning otherwise: that if her husband *is* anywhere, he is in her bosom. Stabbing herself,

⁴⁹ The Oxford edition contains the text of the First Quarto (pp. 361-429). In the First Quarto, Romeo’s last words are unchanged.

then, represents a motion towards him and, in him, her rest, a motion radically different from his ship's.⁵⁰

Even if later editors are to be credited and the reading ought to be “rust” rather than “rest,” this too points to a metaphysical claim.⁵¹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy [...] but lay up treasures in heaven [...] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” reads the Gospel of Matthew (reference). Juliet’s last metaphor redeems Romeo’s; by it she asserts that she “should adventure for such merchandise,” such treasure, even were Romeo “as far as that vast shore washed with the farthest sea” (2.1.125-7).

Largely on account of Juliet’s last speech, neither she nor Romeo seems to bear the stigma of suicide. A page and the watchmen enter the tomb “where the torch doth burn” (5.3.171), the Friar explains what has happened, condemning *himself* for “this direful murder” (5.3.225), and Montague and Capulet promise to create golden statues of their children—idols of love, we might say, for that is what Juliet made of Romeo. Stanley Wells claims that critics interpret the fathers’ final gesture as “revealing false, materialistic values,” as emblemizing “a deepening of irony” (Ryle 63), and on one level that is certainly true. But if *Romeo and Juliet* is to be considered a work of theological romance—a play in which romantic love is conceived as motion, as mysterious, and as good—then it must, despite the potential for a double response, be able to maintain the primacy of the metaphysical in the material, to assert an integrity in the irony.

⁵⁰ When Juliet repudiates her materialist nurse, she “banishes” her from her “bosom.”

⁵¹ George Walton Williams argues that the image of the knife rusting in disuse is so traditional that Shakespeare uses it to imply disuse or rest (332). Thus, whichever reading is ‘correct,’ both are quite possibly intended.

CHAPTER 4

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

4.1 In the Beginning ... and the End

Troilus and Cressida is a perplexing play. It is perhaps especially so for those who come to it from *Romeo and Juliet*, but even for those who don't, it is still very much "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma."¹ On this—its capacity to perplex—almost all critics agree; what they disagree about, of course, is where to find the key.² E.M.W. Tillyard calls the *Troilus* "a play about which opinion is so divided no extrinsic help in interpretation can be spared" (53). Kenneth Muir writes that it is "something of a puzzle" (28), having been described variously as a History and a Comedy and placed, inexplicably, at the beginning of the Tragedies in Shakespeare's First Folio (though excluded from the Table of Contents or "Catalogue"). The play has also been referred to as a "comical satire" (Muir, Introduction 28). Michael Hall points out that *Troilus and Cressida* "has had almost no stage history," adding that it "may not have been produced at all before the late nineteenth century" (115). Charles Williams, perhaps accounting for that odd stage history, claims that it "has always been a problem," adding, "[i]t has the signs of a great play, yet it hardly succeeds in being one; indeed it hardly succeeds in being a play at all" (*English* 53). Hyder

¹ From a different perspective, Harold Goddard asks, "How could Shakespeare produce one of the most unblushing glorifications of war ever written [*Henry V*] and then face right about and utter an equally extreme denunciation of it?" (1).

² Churchill's phrase is: "It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key."

Rollins says it's "unattractive" (383) and A.D. Nuttall that it's "just too nasty" (207); and yet, according to Vivian Thomas, it is nothing less than "breathtakingly original" (81).

There are those who echo Thomas's characterization of the *Troilus*, and it is worth noting that some of these are critics who find in the "problem play" a work of more *modern* than *early* modern sensibility. George Bernard Shaw famously saw the play as evidence that Shakespeare was "ready to start the twentieth century" (qtd. in Thompson 160-1); he (Shaw) is also "reported to have considered Cressida Shakespeare's first real woman"; he found her "enchanting" (Donaldson 86). Linda Charnes has more recently described the *Troilus* as "neurotic" with a "deformity that gives [it] its power" (71). She goes on to say, if "*Hamlet* utters a first demand for the modern subject,' that demand is *enacted* in *Troilus and Cressida*" (84).³ It is difficult to say exactly what "modern" as a characterization of Shakespeare's play connotes, but it may mean something like "ironic." Though many, as we shall see, have described the *Troilus* as cynical, it is more fundamentally ironic, for though it tells the tale of two famous lovers, it's only *barely* a love story.

Tillyard claims that "the character of a play [...] is determined by its opening scenes" (51), so before I proceed to introduce the argument of this chapter, I would like to glance at those opening scenes, as well as at the play's closing lines.

The Prologue of *Troilus and Cressida* literally sets the scene: in "Troy, within whose strong immures / The ravished Helen, Menelaus' queen, / With wanton Paris sleeps" (Prologue.8-10).⁴ In this version of the Troy story, as indeed in most, the "quarrel"

³ Charnes is quoting Francis Barker in *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection*.

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from *Troilus and Cressida* are from the Oxford World's Classics text, edited by Kenneth Muir.

(Prologue.10) between the Greeks and the Trojans stems from Paris's decision to kidnap Helen. Unlike in most versions, however, there is no mention here of any potentially mitigating circumstances, either Helen's great beauty—a passable justification in *that* world for her abduction—or the Judgment of Paris, whereby the young Trojan shepherd is awarded Helen for choosing Venus as the fairest goddess over Juno and Athena. No, here we have only “ravished” Helen (a double meaning, to be sure), Menelaus's “queen” (or perhaps even queen), and “wanton Paris” in bed together. We have the Trojan War reduced to its basest, most physiological motive: sex.

What is perhaps only implied in these opening lines becomes clearer as the Prologue continues. This tale, we are told, “Leaps o'er the vaunt and firstlings of these broils, / Beginning in the middle; starting thence away / To what may be digested in a play” (Prologue.26-29). “Digested,” according to Kenneth Muir's gloss, is “[t]he usual word for reducing material into dramatic form,” and on one level, that is exactly how it is meant to be taken here. Shakespeare is making a distinction between drama and, say, the poetry of Homer, or Chaucer, or even the prose of Caxton.⁵ On another level, however, “digested” points to appetite. Shakespeare is commenting on what a playwright must do to poetry or prose to make it not only drama but dramatically appetizing. In this particular case, he has literally and figuratively had to reduce epic material into a form more palatable to his ‘consuming’ audience. “Digested,” though, points beyond appetite in this more abstract sense to desire—to lust, we might say—though this does not become fully apparent until

⁵ It is perhaps worth thinking about that no such comment about ‘digestion’ is offered by the playwright in *Romeo and Juliet*, despite the fact that Brooke's poem is also much longer than Shakespeare's play.

the play proper begins. In 1.1 (really, just lines later), Troilus and Pandarus have a conversation about, of all things, cake. Troilus is hungry—starving, he would undoubtedly say—and wants to eat. Pandarus, his advisor, urges patience; if Troilus would satisfy his appetite, he must abide the grinding, boulding, leavening, kneading, baking, and cooling of the cake (1.1.14-26). It is, admittedly, a strange conversation with which to begin a tale whose substance is the heroic matter of Troy. And, indeed, it wouldn't be at all suggestive of lust were it not for the fact that the cake the two men are discussing, and that Troilus longs to eat, is Cressida.

Lust, we might say, begins as subtext. By the end of the play, when Pandarus, who has fallen out of Troilus's favour, performs the epilogue, it is text. The archetypal pander laments, "O world, world, world!—Thus is the poor agent despised" (5.10.36). The 'agency' he refers to is, of course, his work procuring Cressida for Troilus, and he unashamedly goes on to proclaim how his current state is emblematic of the common and unfortunate lot of all pimps, namely, that they must deal with their clients' inevitable resentment after the excitement is over, after, as Shakespeare says elsewhere, "[t]he expense of spirit in a waste of shame" (Sonnet 129.1):

Full merrily the humble bee doth sing
Till he hath lost his honey and his sting;
And being once subdued in armèd tail,
Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail. (5.10.41-44)

In their double-entendres, these light and lyrical couplets go some way to securing *Troilus and Cressida's* place among Shakespeare's Comedies: the lover as the bee, his sting, her tail, and the general sweetness of their encounters (before the honey fails, that is). But then, to

use Nuttall's phrase, things turn nasty—too nasty for comedy. Having already noted his service, Pandarus now likens the audience to himself and Troilus (pimp and john, respectively), calling them all “[g]ood traders in the flesh” (5.10.45). He asks for their pity, disreputable figure that he is, but also requests that they “give some groans” for their own (if not actually his) “aching bones” (5.10.48-49), a fairly explicit reference to the venereal disease he avers they all carry. Finally, he anticipates his death: “Till then I'll sweat and seek about for eases, / And at that time bequeath you my diseases” (5.10.54-55). These are the play's last lines, expressing something radically different from woe, as does the Prince in the tale of Juliet and her Romeo. If Shakespeare begins *Troilus and Cressida* with a gesture towards lust, here he declares not only its enduring thematic presence, but quite possibly its dramatic centrality; for lust seems to have left Pandarus and, as we will see, many of the other characters of the play palpably world-weary.

4.2 Introduction

This chapter will show that Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida* continues to explore volition through love, but in a different way or, perhaps, from a different perspective than he does in *Romeo and Juliet*. *Romeo and Juliet* may be seen as a work in which Shakespeare tests out the lovers paradigm given expression in theological romance; it is, thus, his attempt to achieve the same kind of effect Chaucer does in his *Troilus*, to resolve the tensions inherent in a story which treats romantic or sexual love as ennobling in a metaphysical sense. In *Troilus and Cressida*, it is as though Shakespeare seizes upon those

tensions and rather than seeking to resolve them, goes out of his way to make them into problems—indeed, to make them as problematic as possible.

It is not simply, though, that Shakespeare makes the Petrarchan objection to Dante's and Chaucer's projects, namely that earthly and heavenly loves do not and ultimately cannot cohere, but rather that he finds one particular challenge to their coherence and makes that the subject of his work. That challenge is the incapacity of the earthly beloved to be ideal, to be worth a divine love. Despite the fact that Dante's Beatrice is human (and therefore not God) and that Chaucer's Criseyde betrays Troilus (and is therefore not good), both medieval poets are able to maintain—instruct upon, even—the goodness or integrity of their lover's love. For the Shakespeare of *Troilus and Cressida*, this insistence is foolishness and therefore a stumbling block.

But I do not wish to argue that Shakespeare takes a definitive stance on the incapacity of an earthly beloved to be ideal or worthy of a divine love, to be whatever she (or he) needs to be in order to make her (or his) lover's weight good; it is rather that Shakespeare is exploring how an unideal beloved might affect agency, an individual's capacity or incapacity for action. Because Shakespeare's treatment of the lovers can only be understood in the context of the greater circumstance of the Trojan War, I begin there, highlighting how the war-plot, very much like the love-plot, is concerned with action and value. But if the war-plot makes anything clear, it is not simply that human beloveds are not or cannot be ideal; it is that they are uniformly debased;⁶ thus, if they are to remain

⁶ And thus, the strangeness of *Troilus and Cressida*. Though this is not a line of argument I pursue, it might be said (without saying anything about influence or transmission) that in this play Shakespeare assumes something like a Calvinistic perspective: if one is sinful—that is, *not* perfect—one is utterly sinful. According to Calvin in his *Institutes*,

‘beloved,’ their lovers must *force* their love rather than be carried by it. Though Shakespeare offers a glimpse of the kind of carrying love depicted in *Romeo and Juliet*, ultimately in *Troilus and Cressida*, that love fails to endure; it turns out to be lust, which is itself a kind of force. All of this—debased beloveds and forced loves—produces an effect on the lover, on his identity and his ability to act. In loving Cressida, who betrays him, Troilus finds himself both divided—dis-integrated, so to speak—and at a stand-still. Ultimately, the play itself becomes a parody of action, its every event less the result of a given character’s choice and more something that just seems to have happened—and to which all so-called *actors* are subject.

Not surprisingly, scholarship on *Troilus and Cressida* begins and ends with literary history. But it is not just Chaucer that needs to be considered. In addition to Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, Vivian Thomas names the following as principal sources: Robert Henryson’s fifteenth-century *Testament of Cresseid*, “William Caxton’s *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (c. 1474), John Lydgate’s *Troy-Book* (1513) and George Chapman’s translations [...] of Homer: *Seaven Bookes of the Iliades*. (The first instalment was published in 1598.)” She adds that Shakespeare may also have drawn on Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Golding’s translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1567).⁷

“The will is so utterly vitiated and corrupted in every part as to produce nothing but evil” (2.2.26). Calvin also says, “Original sin therefore appears to be an hereditary pravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all the parts of the soul: rendering us obnoxious to the Divine wrath, and producing in us those works which the Scripture calls “*works of the flesh*.” (2.1.8, emphasis added).

⁷ Others making claims about Shakespeare’s reliance on medieval sources include Tillyard, who argues that “we shall never get *Troilus and Cressida* right unless we think of Shakespeare steeped as a youth in the antique and venerable and quaint world of Lydgate’s *Troy*” (44); Rollins, who highlights key passages from Lydgate, Caxton, and Henryson, which bear on the *Troilus*; Palmer, who also looks at Lydgate and Caxton; and Crocker, whose focus is the “late medieval poetic tradition, which highlights the problematic consequences of virtue’s performativity for idealized women” (303).

Since my argument does not rely on a literary-historical approach, little more at this time needs to be said of these sources. Of Chaucer's *Troilus*, however, much needs to be considered. Critics who write about the relationship between the two *Troiluses* tend to compare three things: structure, characters, and tone or, if you will, the overall meaning of the works. I will say something about structure in Section III, so let us begin with characters.

Critics are divided in how they view the differences between the two Troilus-characters. Some, like G. Wilson Knight, highlight similarities: Shakespeare's Troilus, like Chaucer's, "is shown to us as an ardent and faithful lover, faithful [...] to 'simplicity'" (68). Michael Hall writes that Shakespeare's Troilus, also like Chaucer's, "is sometimes portrayed as a serious Petrarchan lover and sometimes as a parody of one" (118). But Hall, like many, is of two minds, saying that whereas "Chaucer's Troilus becomes much more manly and honorable when he falls in love," Shakespeare's "is an entirely different creation" (119). Kris Davis-Brown, while acknowledging that "critics frequently see [Shakespeare's Troilus] as a naïve idealist like his predecessor," asserts that the latter Troilus has "far more concrete desires than does his Chaucerian counterpart" (21). If Davis-Brown is right, then perhaps it stands to reason that Shakespeare's Troilus would be attracted to a different sort of woman. Such, most would say, is Cressida. Many think that whereas Criseyde is an "innocent victim," Cressida is "a hardened sexual game player" (Davis-Brown 19). Knight calls her "shallow and indirect in her thinking and behaviour," graciously adding, "though we need not suppose her love for Troilus, whilst it lasts, to be insincere" (68). Davis-Brown mounts something of a defense the play's heroine, saying, "While Cressida is close to Criseyde in

temperament, inheriting both her sensitivity and her fears, Shakespeare places his character in a more difficult situation, intensifying her vulnerability on social, familial, and psychological levels” (21).⁸ Donaldson claims that “Criseyde’s qualities appear both refracted and reflected in Shakespeare’s Cressida,” and he quotes John Bayley, who believes that what the two characters “chiefly have in common is that neither of them know what they want, and so they both become victims of what other people want” (84). It is perhaps on this account that Hall argues Cressida is not in fact “one character at all”; she is, rather, “equally serious in each of her roles in the play—Petrarchan mistress, faithful wife (when she promises to remain true), and whore” (135).

Hall’s comment is striking and seems to suggest that there is more going on in Shakespeare’s characterization than simply the creation of dynamic figures. Indeed, there are a number of critics who conceive of Shakespeare’s lovers as meta-theatrical, as constructed out of tradition itself. McInnis may put it best when he says, “the characters reluctantly go through the motions with a self-conscious, heightened awareness of their inability to move outside the prescribed roles that Fortune *and literary tradition* have allocated them” (39, emphasis added). What he means is, both Troilus and Cressida, and even Pandarus to a lesser degree, seem to be aware of their existence *outside* of the play—their existence in Chaucer and Henryson but also in the other authors who subsequently took up their story—and they resent it. Donaldson makes a number of remarks conveying this sentiment: for example, “Ulysses has apparently been reading Chaucer” (74) and

⁸ On the subject of Chaucer’s Criseyde’s vulnerability, C.S. Lewis maintains in *The Allegory of Love* that she is “neither very good nor execrably wicked [...] But there is a flaw in her, and Chaucer has told us what it is; ‘she is the ferfullest wight that mighte be’. If fate had willed, men would have known this flaw only as pardonable, perhaps an endearing, weakness; but fate threw her upon difficulties which convert it into a tragic fault, and Criseyde is ruined” (189-90).

“Cressida [...] seems to know her Henryson as well as her Chaucer” (101). Such assertions are easily made when the characters are given speeches such as these:

TROILUS

[A]fter all comparisons of truth
As truth’s authentic author to be cited,
‘As true as Troilus’ shall crown up the verse
And sanctify the numbers. (3.2.170-173)

CRESSIDA

If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,
[...]
Yea, let them say, to stick the heart of falsehood,
‘As false as Cressid’. (3.2.174, 185-6)

PANDARUS

If ever you prove false one to another, since I have taken such pains to bring you together, let all pitiful goers-between be called to the world’s end after my name – call them all Pandars. Let all constant men be Troiluses, all false women Cressids, and all brokers-between Pandars. Say ‘Amen’. (3.2.188-194)

Linda Charnes’s thesis in *Notorious Identity*, in which she addresses not only *Troilus and Cressida* but also *Antony and Cleopatra*, is that the characters of these plays “are notoriously ‘known.’ And yet, it is precisely these legendary figures who are at great pains to secure their own and each other’s identities as they try to lay to rest a haunting sense that they are, and are not, ‘themselves’” (71). In other words, not only do the characters seem aware of their existence outside of the play and resentful of it; their identity and, thus, their agency as dramatic figures are threatened by this existence. According to McInnis, because of the massive cultural baggage associated with the lovers and their ‘known’ actions, the characters’ resistance of fate “generate[s] something bordering on ridicule, not pathos” (40)—which brings us back to the strangeness of Shakespeare’s play.

One reason for this strangeness is that the play itself is a meta-theatrical experiment.⁹ Charnes argues that *Troilus and Cressida* “calls attention to itself at every level as a construct, a made thing, a deliberately badly made thing, in fact a monstrosity” (71). Shakespeare, she continues, “takes on the task of giving mimetic spontaneity to, and representing viable subjectivity in, characters who are already deeply encoded in their meaning” (74). Hillman somewhat more moderately claims that *Troilus and Cressida* “not only rewrites its most significant precursor but metadramatically depicts the process of such a rewriting” (58). Shakespeare, it might be said, is interested in what it means for him to be telling *Chaucer’s* story.

Keeping the notion of meta-theatricality in mind, let us consider some differences between the two *Troilus* texts. And let us begin with Ann Thompson, who, while maintaining that “there can surely be little serious doubt that Shakespeare read Chaucer” (*Shakespeare’s Chaucer* 2), asserts that “[i]t is the complete contrast in tone which makes the works so different in their final effect” (149). It is not just the tone, however, that marks the contrast, but rather the “unity of tone,” which Thompson believes Shakespeare achieves in his play “by treating both the romantic and heroic materials with the same deflating cynicism, exposing self-interest, and sordid intrigue on all sides” (153). One possible reason for this cynicism has already been implied—the restrictions placed on Shakespeare by literary and cultural tradition—and, indeed, Thompson does go on to suggest that

⁹ Meta-theatricality aside, there are a number of critics who claim that *Troilus and Cressida* is experimental, that in it Shakespeare is ‘testing’ certain ideas out. Tillyard calls the play “an experiment in the middle ground between comedy and tragedy” (87); Milowicki and Wilson conclude that *Troilus and Cressida* “demonstrates that Shakespeare was adventurous and, in the modern sense, experimental” (qtd. in McInnis 35); Thompson says that Shakespeare “was testing ideas and values which were important for him” (164); and Donaldson asserts that Shakespeare may have chosen to “re-create Cressida because she was the prototypical unfaithful woman” (78), which admittedly may be less an experiment than a challenge the playwright set for himself.

Shakespeare's "bitterness [...] seems to be directed against Chaucer" specifically because the medieval poet's "retreat into a total unquestioning acceptance of Christianity is not as easily available for him" (165). Presumably what Thompson means is that Chaucer's ability to reconcile earthly and heavenly loves, an ability located in his understanding of theological romance, allows him to find a resolution for his poem that Shakespeare is denied. Stephen Medcalf suggests that what Shakespeare finds inaccessible is actually Chaucer's "Boethianism" (302). Medcalf himself thinks that the loss of recourse to the Boethian has a clear result in *Troilus and Cressida*: "the sense of eternity is altogether gone" (302). Medcalf cites T.S. Eliot, who claims that while Chaucer's story is "the sober statement of a man who was a member of a spiritual [...] community who had already arrived as far as he was to go," Shakespeare's play is "the passing fury of a prodigious and, for the moment, irresponsible Titan, working almost blindly through destruction towards his own ends" (291). Bombast aside, Eliot rightly characterizes Shakespeare as one who must deal with the challenges of his text on his own, without the benefit of an all-encompassing theology.

There are, of course, those whose delineations of the difference between Shakespeare's and Chaucer's texts are more concrete. M.C. Bradbrook says that "Shakespeare was doing to Chaucer what Chaucer had already done to Boccaccio" (312), in other words, "correcting" him. But she also says that what that 'correction' entails is a replacing of Chaucer's ending, in which the "human tragedy, while subsumed into something greater, remains beautiful in itself," with "a reference to the celebrated brothels of Bankside" (316). This ending, she goes on to say, "completes [Shakespeare's] lacerative destruction of Chaucer's whole vision" (316), making patent not the "grandeur but the

pettiness of evil” (319). Along the same lines, Davis-Brown writes, “Chaucer’s poem has a definite moral goal, the placing of Troilus firmly beyond earthly cares”; by contrast, “Shakespeare’s characters are never more than victims, victims of themselves, victims of one another, but they are also victims in general wandering around the battlefield, lost in chaos” (30). Rollins says that “in Chaucer one thinks of the ardent devotion of the lovers; in *Troilus and Cressida* the details are so coarsened that one thinks only of the animal nature of their love” (384).

For many critics, what redeems *Troilus and Cressida*, what makes it read-able, is that it is a ‘philosophical’ play. *Troilus and Criseyde*, writes Ann Thompson, “was famous as a philosophical poem and *Troilus and Cressida* has been seen as the work in which Shakespeare comes nearest to discussing abstract philosophy, and most deeply questions the meaning of life” (154). Joseph A. Longo calls the play “a philosophical curiosity piece” (1); A.D. Nuttall asserts that in the *Troilus* “Shakespeare is more intellectual, more technically philosophical in the full meaning of the word, than in any other [play]” (207); Knight characterizes *Troilus and Cressida* as “a philosophical argument perfectly bodied into poetry and the forms and fictional incidents of drama” (78). He notes, additionally, its “peculiarly analytic” language (51).¹⁰ The nature of Shakespeare’s philosophy—or his argument—has been variously described. W.R. Elton, for example, writes that in *Troilus and Cressida* “there occurs a particular pattern of parallels with Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* regarding ethical-legal questions surrounding an action” (331). He is not wrong to draw attention to what we

¹⁰ Charles Williams also notes *Troilus and Cressida*’s “Latinized vocabulary, sometimes used with an awkwardness which is unlike the normal Shakespeare and at times becomes almost funny” (*English* 57).

might call the play's ethical discourse. Gary Spear in "Shakespeare's 'Manly' Parts" argues that Shakespeare explores the ethical in the context of conventions of masculinity and femininity. Gayle Green says that *Troilus and Cressida* is concerned with the "breakdown of order" and the result of this breakdown is that "ethical concepts become meaningless" (271).

The notion that the play constitutes an ethical discourse accords well with my argument, for that is what poets of theological romance are doing when they write about love: exploring a particular kind of action that is ethical, 'good' or 'bad' in metaphysical terms. What makes the play so curious is that while Troilus is "a metaphysical lover" (Knight 69), one who actually "analyses the metaphysical implications of his love" (Knight 52), the world of the play is clearly one where "the Platonism of the Middle Ages (mediated through Augustine and Boethius) [...] has lapsed" (Medcalf 296). In other words (and taking Knight's and Medcalf's claims as complementary), Shakespeare appears to be exploring a decidedly metaphysical conception of ethics in a dramatic world which is characterized and, indeed, understands itself in decidedly physical terms.

This is, in an important sense, the opposite of what Shakespeare does in *Romeo and Juliet*. For in that play, even though the "world" challenges and, in some ways, defeats the lovers, the play itself ultimately affirms their love's goodness and the integrity of (most of) their actions. This is an important distinction to make because, according to David McInnis, *Troilus and Cressida* is "Shakespeare's rewriting of *Romeo and Juliet*" (37). The earlier play, he asserts, is "a textual precedent which has yet to be considered in any sustained, scholarly manner" (35). In his essay, "Repetition and Revision in Shakespeare's Tragic Love Plays,"

McInnis suggests that Shakespeare in revisiting his “earlier, more experimental tragedy,” approaches it now “from a different angle” (55). He does not claim that Shakespeare’s *Troilus* is a “refining [of] his previous work” (56), just that the two plays employ a number of *topoi* or motifs in interestingly divergent ways.

McInnis’s argument is clearly a key influence on my own and will be taken up again later in this chapter. For the moment, all that remains is to foreground a few themes that Shakespeare explores in his play. These are (1) value, (2) unity and division, and (3) time. These themes, as will become clear, bear on one another as well as on Shakespeare’s ethical discourse; it may be observed, additionally, that Shakespeare’s exploration of them is not in any way limited to *Troilus and Cressida* but is already in evidence in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Many critics have highlighted the prominence of the concept of value in the *Troilus*. Marcus Nordland notes a number of passages in the play that distinguish—or attempt to distinguish—between “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” worth (135). Indeed, the question of Helen’s worth as an object for whom (or which) both the Trojan and Greek armies fight is not simply thematic but actually a subject for debate *in the play*. Vivian Thomas points out that “the frequent references to value suggest a contrast between attempting to assess the moral worth of something compared with the value or price that emerges in the market place” (118). Along these lines, Tillyard wondered, years earlier, whether “the lowered tone of the play” was in any way associated with “the spread of [what he calls] the new commercialism” (90). Nordland actually goes on to suggest that it is not value exactly that the play explores but rather “overvaluation.” The *Troilus* creates a world, he argues, where “*esse* is truly *percipi*” (145), where perception is *what is* and ultimately determines value.

Not incidentally, Nordland's words are also suggestive of the theme of unity and division, for when *what is* is reduced to what is seen, all notions of unity are lost; perception is *being* fragmented into an infinite number of perspectives. Vivian Thomas highlights Shakespeare's preoccupation with "weight, size, speed" (82) and all manner of categories into which *things* may be broken down; she says, "[t]he most striking omission in critical appraisals of the play relates to the matter of division, calculation and fragmentation [...] the process of disintegration" (82).

Knight calls time in *Troilus and Cressida* the "arch-enemy [...] that kills values" (71). Along the same lines, Nordland, noting Shakespeare's "structural speeding up of time" (144), calls value a "slave to time." "[C]hoice," he further argues, "presupposes comparison, comparison directs desire, desire is a form of valuation, and value is a slave to time" (139). But how exactly, it might be asked, does time enslave or oppose itself to value? In David Kaula's words, "the movement of history, as a constant flux of accidental events [...] deprives all human effort of final meaning" (280). Nuttall accordingly calls the world of the play "fractured, chaotic, indefinite." He adds, "The passage of days here confers no shapeliness on the succession of events" (210). And yet, according to Thomas, there is still hope of some meaning:

Time itself is relative: we seek immortality in a world which affords only fleeting existence; all monuments decay and collapse; but that is not a reason for despair. Rather it should provoke a recognition that time is not a single element or concept: it is both an expression of the imagination and a practical tool to be used in the process of living. (Thomas 138)

Thomas's claim smacks of existentialism, which is, perhaps, appropriate given the play's 'modernity.' J. Oates Smith would agree with her assessment; he says that the *Troilus* "one

of the earliest expressions of what is now called the ‘existential’ vision” (167). Existence, then, precedes essence. While Shakespeare is no existentialist, in *Troilus and Cressida*, it seems that he takes on a similar dictum, seeing for himself whether such could actually be the case.

4.3 In Love and War

The most obvious difference between the two *Troilus* texts, other than the tone, is that what amounts to more or less three years in *Troilus and Criseyde* becomes something like three days in *Troilus and Cressida*. Bradbrook says that “compression and inversion direct Shakespeare’s use of Chaucer” such that “each of Chaucer’s five books is represented by one or two scenes in Shakespeare” (313). We have already heard the Prologue’s speech about ‘digestion,’ so this comes as no surprise. What *is* surprising, though, is that Chaucer’s “poem yields the action of a third of the play at most” (Palmer 26). In other words, the love-plot—“those scenes [...] in which Troilus and Cressida appear *as lovers*”—occupies only “33 percent of the play” (Palmer 39). This is extreme digestion and to see clearly what it means let us consider some context.

C.S. Lewis calls Chaucer’s *Troilus* a “medievalization” of Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato* (“What Chaucer Did” 17). Such a claim, while certainly apt, has the additional effect of making readers overlook the fact that Boccaccio’s version of the story is itself, at least in certain respects, medieval. For what *Il Filostrato* does is take a single love-episode from a medieval version of the Troy story, and make it into the only story. To be clear, I am not suggesting that Lewis is wrong about what Chaucer does to Boccaccio, for certainly

Boccaccio's treatment of love may be thought of as 'too modern' for Chaucer; it is simply that Boccaccio in choosing to write about love rather than war effectively characterizes his work as 'medieval.' In the medieval version of the Troy story that served as Boccaccio's source, the *Roman de Troie*, Benoît de Sainte-Maure privileges the war plot, allowing the love-plots he includes (and, admittedly, invents) to play a secondary role.¹¹ What this means is that Shakespeare's *Troilus* takes us back to the early medieval or even antique, for he brings war, which had been ushered into the background by Boccaccio and Chaucer, back to the fore.

There is evidence to confirm this assertion, for the two-thirds of *Troilus and Cressida* which do not feature Troilus and Cressida *as lovers* are constituted of war-matter, either of Shakespeare's own invention or from Chapman's translation of Homer or from elsewhere.¹² While the war-plot is by no means absent in Chaucer, it is very decidedly a secondary consideration, only rising to primacy in key moments, such as when the Trojans decide to trade Criseyde to the Greeks for Antenor. The war-plot in Chaucer is, then, principally a frame. Shakespeare's Prologue would seem to confirm the primacy of the war-plot when he states that the play begins *in medias res* or "in the middle" (Prologue.28), a gesture to the epic genre of the *Iliad* and its late-antique or early medieval derivatives. Certainly a lot of scholarship has been produced on the war aspect of Shakespeare's play. Wilson Knight began a critical conversation by seeing the differences between Trojans and Greeks as the

¹¹ Benoît is himself relying on source texts that are *all* war-plot (the Latin recensions of Dares and Dictys). He is, in fact, credited with the invention of the Troilus love story.

¹² Having said this, Walter Cohen still thinks that "[a]udiences or readers who come to *Troilus and Cressida* [...] from the *Iliad* are in for a shock" (Introduction to the Play, *The Norton Shakespeare* 1847), for the manner in which Shakespeare treats the matter of Troy is atypical to say the least.

interpretive key of the work, and many have since joined in. For example, thinking about the playwright's "attitude toward his material," Camille Slights asks, "Did Shakespeare portray the Trojans more favorably than the Greeks?" (42). Shakespeare's emphasis on the war-plot, then, might be seen on a grander scale as a *displacing* of love. Indeed, John Bayley writes that in *Troilus and Cressida*, there are "no characters of love" (qtd. in Nuttall 217).

But what Shakespeare is doing in the *Troilus* is not so straightforward, and we know this in part because in the play, unlike in Chaucer's poem, in which the narrative essentially begins when Troilus first sees Criseyde, the love-plot also begins "in the middle." Shakespeare's lovers are not only already known to each other; Troilus's intentions have actually been communicated to Cressida. Thus, it is possible to take the Prologue's line as signalling—as equally billing, in any case—both plots. There are a number of places one could go from this claim, but what I'm suggesting, strange as it may sound, is that Shakespeare makes both of his plots *love*-plots. Slights notes that "[t]he war story and the love story are not closely linked narratively, but the design of their presentation unifies them in tone and theme" (48). More to the point, Longo argues that the relationship of Paris and Helen, which, as has been implied by the Prologue, is the cause of the war, "clearly foreshadows and adumbrates the Troilus and Cressida love story" (3). This parallel, it is worth noting, is not one Chaucer chooses to make.¹³

¹³ There are those who note the parallel, but take its significance differently: McInnis argues that "the love plot is divested of any of the romantic charm which might have offset the tragedy of war" (34), saying, at least in a sense, that *neither* plot is a love-plot. Charnes suggests that in the play "'personal' or private desire is a myth, one built out of the same structures that constitute public desire" (96). So Troilus can only feel about Cressida as Paris—or the Greeks and the Trojans collectively—can feel about Helen.

A love plot might be understood as dramatic action viewed or understood in terms of the lovers paradigm: a lover, a beloved, and love (functioning as a kind of weight). It is true that while Troilus's beloved is Cressida and Paris's is Helen, Helen is also the beloved of both the Greeks and the Trojans insofar as they are moving or being moved *for* or *by* her. According to Carol Cook, "the desire for Helen is the energy that drives the vast enterprise of the war" (38). That said, after looking closer, it becomes evident that Helen is in some ways more properly the beloved of the Trojans, not only because she is with them, but because the Trojans are the more courtly of the two warring tribes (Wilson Knight 51). In Troilus's words, Helen is "a queen, whose youth and freshness / Wrinkles Apollo's and makes stale the morning" (2.2.77-78) and a "pearl / Whose price has launched above a thousand ships" (2.2.80-81).¹⁴ Perhaps more in the Petrarchan vein, Helen is "the mortal Venus, the heart-blood of beauty, love's invisible soul" (3.1.31-32).¹⁵ That Pandarus mistakes these words, offered by one of Paris and Helen's servants, as a description of his niece, Cressida, further confirms the link between the two plots.

Helen is not the war-plot's only beloved, however, for on each side of the war, there are those who stand as paragons of, say, honour or integrity, those who are admired. On the Trojan side, there is Hector, and on the Greek, both Achilles and, if Ulysses is to be believed, Agamemnon.¹⁶ Hector and Achilles will be discussed later; it is Agamemnon who, strangely, bears a resemblance to Helen in her role as the particular beloved of the Trojans.

¹⁴ This is Shakespeare's take on Faustus's "Is this the face that launched a thousand ships?" I will return to this passage later.

¹⁵ This characterization of Helen, noteworthy, is spoken in prose.

¹⁶ In some ways, a more appropriate pairing for Agamemnon would be Priam, but Priam features so little in the play, there is little choice besides Hector.

Agamemnon, in Nestor's words, occupies a "godlike seat" (1.3.30) and, in Ulysses's view, is a

great commander, nerves and bone of Greece,
Heart of our numbers, soul and only spirit,
In whom the tempers and the minds of all
Should be shut up. (1.3.54-57)

While reverence and admiration are not quite the same thing as we typically take love to be, their volitional function in this play is not dissimilar to love's.

4.4 Value

The Agamemnon-Helen parallel is most credible when conceived in terms of "value." Value, as noted earlier, is a recurring theme in the play—quite possibly the dominant theme—and Shakespeare signals his treatment of it with certain terms: for example, "worth" and "degree." Indeed, even in those few passages already quoted from the play, Shakespeare's emphasis on value is evident: it is not Helen's "face," as Marlowe has it, that has launched the Greek fleet, but rather her "price." "Price" is another synonym for value. Additionally, whereas Marlowe asserts that the Greek fleet amounted to "a thousand ships," Troilus is quick to point out that the number is in fact "above a thousand." An emphasis on value, then, seems to entail a concern with quantity: the greater the quantity the greater the value. In terms of the lovers paradigm, what we are talking about when we speak of value (or worth or degree or price) is *love-ability*. Nordland points out that "love" in Shakespeare's time had "two different, almost opposite meanings"; it could mean "either

personal affection or the estimation of value” (127).¹⁷ Clearly, Shakespeare is making something of this dichotomy or perhaps overlap; he is suggesting that there is for his characters, something like a hierarchy of values that dictates what or who ought to be loved or loved most.

The first act of *Troilus and Cressida* is laden with comparisons. In 1.1, Pandarus remarks of Cressida, “an her hair were not somewhat darker than Helen’s—well, go to—there were no more comparison between the women” (1.1.41-43), and Troilus, employing Petrarchan hyperbole, speaks of Cressida’s “hand, / In whose comparison all whites are ink” (1.1.54-55). In 1.2, during a long conversation between Cressida and Pandarus, the latter asserts, “Troilus is the better man of the two [Troilus and Hector]” (1.2.58-59), and Cressida facetiously replies, “There’s no comparison” (1.2.60). In each of these conversations, which are about love, no matter how disingenuously the comments are offered, Shakespeare’s characters are measuring value.¹⁸

But Shakespeare takes things further than simply considering value in this abstract sense; he makes his characters—specifically, Hector, Troilus, and Paris—debate Helen’s worth. In 2.2, the Trojans consider a motion brought forth by Hector to return Helen to the Greeks and, by so doing, end the conflict once and for all. “Let Helen go,” Hector begins:

Since the first sword was drawn about this question,
Every tithe soul ’mongst many thousand dismes

¹⁷ Nordland is actually pointing out that Terrence Hawkes points out this double-meaning in his discussion of *King Lear*.

¹⁸ In some ways, the motif of arguing for the superiority of one’s beloved (which implies the existence a hierarchy of beloveds) is typical of the sonnet tradition in English literature. The sonnet sequences published in the late sixteenth century, for example, are essentially arguments in favour of the poets’ beloveds over others’.

Hath been as dear as Helen – I mean, of ours.
If we have lost so many tenths of ours
To guard a thing not ours, nor worth to us,
Had it our name, the value of one ten,
What merit's in that reason which denies
The yielding of her up? (2.2.16-24)

Here, Hector, like Troilus, Cressida, and Pandarus earlier, makes a comparison—this one, between the worth of Helen and the worth of all those Trojans who have died fighting for her. But his comparison is not what's most striking about this passage; it is, rather, the Trojan prince's diction: "tithe," "thousand," "dismes," "tenths," "worth," "value," "one," "ten," and "merit" (another synonym for value) all speak to the prominence of value as a theme or, better yet, as a lens through which the characters view their world.¹⁹ Troilus's response to Hector's speech is immediate: "Weigh you the worth and honour of a king, / So great as our dread father's, in a scale / Of common ounces?" (2.2.25-27). He is outraged and rebukes Hector for thinking of "weigh[t]" and "worth" in terms of "scale[s]" and "ounces." Troilus asserts that Hector's valuation of Helen bears on the valuation of their father. He accuses Hector of speaking from "fears and reasons" (2.2.31), which, in his view, are like "spans and inches"—in other words "so diminutive" (2.2.30)—in comparison with their king and father's "waist most fathomless" (2.2.29). In other words, Troilus, here, is magnanimous. But Hector is persistent; he continues in the same vein, stating, bluntly, "Brother, she is not worth what she doth cost / The keeping" (2.2.50-51). As the debate continues, it becomes clear why Helen is so important, not just in terms of Trojan pride, but, more broadly, as concerns the relationship of love and volition. Helen, says Troilus, is

¹⁹ It is also a lens through which readers increasingly view the play's characters.

valuable because she is “a theme of honour and renown, / A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds” (2.2.98-99). She has proved herself thus by launching those thousand-plus ships. Now Troilus is speaking Hector’s language, and Hector, after 100 lines or so, surprisingly, relents—or is won to the side of his brothers. He cites the Trojans’ “joint and several dignities” (2.2.192), and, no doubt, in doing so is weighing in his mind his own and his people’s worth. The purpose of this scene—which “advances the action not at all,” according to Tillyard—is to “depict the minds of the two principal Trojans, Hector and Troilus” (69). If such is the case, much more will need to be said, but let us first consider the Greeks and their great commander Agamemnon.

In 1.3, though the Greeks evaluate Agamemnon, it isn’t clear to anyone other than Ulysses that this is, in fact, what they are doing. What most of them, including Agamemnon, think they are discussing is their failure to take Troy. Agamemnon begins by assessing the position the Greeks are in, their hopes having “fail[ed] in promised largeness.”

He goes on:

Checks and disasters
Grow in the veins of actions highest reared,
As knots, by the conflux of meeting sap,
Infects the sound pine and diverts his grain,
Tortive and errant, from his course of growth. (1.3.4-8)

Like a politician, Agamemnon says very little. If taking Troy is an “action highest reared,” then it is to be expected that they will be met with “[c]hecks and disasters,” that they will be “divert[ed]” from their course. The imagery is compelling, but the poetry is as “[t]ortive and errant” as the point he’s making, which is perhaps Shakespeare’s point. Nestor follows Agamemnon by also not saying much at all: “In the reproof of chance / Lies the true proof

of men” (1.3.32-33). Both Agamemnon and Nestor are basically just trying to keep spirits up. Ulysses takes a different approach. He argues that the “speciality of rule hath been neglected” (1.3.77)—Agamemnon’s rule, in particular, though he does not say this—citing the example of Achilles who, in addition to *not* fighting with his fellow Greeks,²⁰ has been “mocking [their] designs”:

With him Patroclus,
Upon a lazy bed, the livelong day
Breaks scurril jests,
And with ridiculous and awkward action,
Which, slanderer, he ‘imitation’ calls,
He pageants us. (1.3.145-150)

Agamemnon, Ulysses had claimed earlier in his speech, is (or should be) the “hive, / To whom the foragers shall all repair” (1.3.80-81), but Achilles’s refusal to “repair” and his rumoured reduction of the Greek leaders to ‘pageant’ figures, represents a challenge to Agamemnon’s value. The situation is this, then: the Greeks have a “great commander” whose value is denied by their greatest warrior, and they are—or, at least, have been—unable to move against Troy. Why Troilus insists upon the great value of Helen perhaps now becomes clearer.

But there is more to 3.1: the scene develops into an exploration—mostly Ulysses’s exploration—of what actually happens when “degree” is disregarded. “Take but degree away,” Ulysses posits, again, without employing the concrete examples of Agamemnon, whose degree is being disregarded, and Achilles, who’s disregarding it, and “discord follows” (1.3.109). Ulysses speaks from a cosmological perspective:

²⁰ Unlike in the *Iliad*, no reason is given until much later in the play for Achilles’s refusal to fight. In some ways, this makes his inaction of greater interest than it might have been had Shakespeare foregrounded the reason for it. Even when the reason does come out, it is decidedly not because of a feud between Agamemnon and Achilles over Briseis.

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
 Observe degree, priority, and place,
 Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
 Office, and custom, in all line of order.
 And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
 In noble eminence enthroned and sphered
 Amidst the other; whose med'cinable eye
 Corrects the influence of evil planets,
 And posts like the commandment of a king,
 Sans check to good and bad. But when the planets
 In evil mixture to disorder wander,
 What plagues, and what portents, what mutiny,
 What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
 Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors,
 Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
 The unity and married calm of states
 Quite from their fixure! O, when degree is shaken,
 Which is the ladder of all high designs,
 The enterprise is sick! (1.3.84-102)

Ulysses, like Aristotle in his *Physics*, describes the cosmos in terms of motion. The nature of that motion is that it is orderly and observes degree. He is thinking, of course, of the concept of the spheres. “Sol” or the sun, Ulysses posits as ruler of the cosmos, its role essentially to govern, to keep all other motions orderly.²¹ There is also, he suggests, an inclination in the heavenly bodies towards disorder, a desire to “wander,” and the result of this wandering, which is itself the result of an “evil mixture,” is catastrophe: plagues, portents, raging seas, and a shaking earth. Ulysses also puts it like this: “[c]ommotion.” Ulysses concludes by returning to the now familiar language of economics: “O, when degree is shaken [...] [t]he enterprise is sick!”²² All of this is to say, Achilles’s denial of

²¹ Muir notes that “in several of the books suggested as possible sources of the speech, it is Love, rather than Order or Law, which preserves the universe from chaos. It is so in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*” (“*Troilus and Cressida*” 36).

²² The word “enterprise,” it hardly needs pointing out, contains the word “price,” which itself derives from the Latin *aprehendo*, to take or to grasp—in this case, presumably, merchandise.

Agamemnon's value, which is given voice to by Ulysses in this scene, seems to stand—to be the case—and the result has been that the Greeks' efforts have been thwarted.

To put it another way, the Greeks' problems have nothing to do with the difficulty of “actions highest reared.” Though Agamemnon is called a “[g]reat commander,” he is *not* a great commander. This reality is highlighted at the end of the scene when Aeneas, an embassy from the Trojans, arrives with a challenge from Hector to any Greek who would assert his lady's worth to be greater than Andromache's. (Even here, comparison is present.) Aeneas, having been ushered into the council, fails to recognize the “imperial looks” (1.3.22) of the Greek commander and actually asks Agamemnon himself to point out the “head” (1.3.22). Aeneas requires this knowledge, he explains, so that at the appropriate moment he

might waken reverence
And bid the cheek be ready with a blush
Modest as morning, when she coldly eyes
The youthful Phoebus. (1.3.224-227)

Like Ulysses, Aeneas connects the Greek “head” and the sun, but a sun should shine, should be unmistakable, and Agamemnon clearly does and is not. Even if, as is possible, Aeneas does recognize Agamemnon but feigns ignorance, this too is an example of degree being neglected insofar as it is emblematic of disrespect. Further, Aeneas's use of courtly language to describe what an appropriate response to seeing Agamemnon would be also confirms that Shakespeare would have us think about Agamemnon not only in terms of value but also as a beloved.

1.3 helps us understand the significance of 2.2 better. The debate over Helen's worth, it turns out, has not been simply an intellectual exercise or a question in theory for the Trojans. For when in 3.1, Pandarus visits Paris and Helen, he finds not "love's invisible soul," the woman whose face or price launched the Greek fleet, but rather "Nell." Twice in 3.1, Paris refers to his and the Trojans' beloved using this surprising diminutive (3.1.49 and 3.1.129) and, with each utterance, effectively destroys the Helen of legend. According to that legend, Helen is sometimes a great beauty to be admired and at other times a licentious and shameless seductress, but she is *never* Nell. Here is no Beatrice, no Laura; neither is she Criseyde or even Cressida (more on this later). Cook writes that Helen's "presentation on stage [...] confronts the spectator with the disparity between the idea and its embodiment in the flesh" (40). That the critic puts it in terms of spectatorship is, of course, appropriate, for Helen is known not simply for being beautiful but for being *seen* as beautiful. In addition to this shocking reduction, 3.1—the only scene in which Helen actually appears—is written almost entirely in prose. The conversation between Paris, Helen and Pandarus is given to joking and sexual innuendo and the climax comes when Helen compels Pandarus to sing a song entitled "This love will undo us all" (3.1.102). In that song, as though Shakespeare could not make it any more explicit, Pandarus is reduced to making the noises (the Os) of a sexual encounter; his words literally become groans. So the problem of fighting under the banner of Helen, so to speak, becomes a fair bit more problematic when what the Trojans really have is "Nell," a woman whose actions, like "help[ing] unarm our

Hector” (3.1.141), which Paris entreats her to do, are at best “trivial” (Tillyard 58) and at worst prostitution.²³

4.5 Force

The problem of degree, as Ulysses puts it in 1.3, or of worth or value, as the Trojans put it in 2.2, turns out to be a problem not so much with those who respect, admire, or love, but rather with the potential objects of their respect, admiration, or love. Agamemnon is not great and Helen is not fair. The response of both Greeks and Trojans to this reality is critical to understanding Shakespeare’s exploration of love’s relationship with volition. Knowing, at least, to some degree, that their chances of success are worsening due to the increasingly neglected degree or plummeting value of their respective collective beloveds, certain characters take steps to move—or, rather, force—things forward. For example, while asserting the importance of respecting Agamemnon’s degree, Ulysses effectively steals the scene from his leader. 1.3 is Agamemnon’s opportunity to show his quality, and after allowing him just one speech, Ulysses usurps the opportunity for himself, in essence, subverting what he has suggested is the right course of action in this—and, indeed, in all cases. But that is not all: after the council ends, Ulysses cuts Agamemnon out of the decision-making process entirely by proposing to Nestor that they create a ruse that will get Achilles onto the battlefield. Knowing that “the challenge that the gallant Hector

²³ Paris “woo[s]” (3.1.140) Helen to help unarm Hector, saying, “His stubborn buckles / With these your white enchanting fingers touched, / Shall more obey than to the edge of steel,” adding “You shall do more / Than all the islands kings – disarm great Hector” (3.1.141-3, 144-145). On the surface of things, there is nothing necessarily untoward about Paris’s wooing, but that he understands the action he invites Helen to take as a kind of reward for Hector makes that action highly suspect.

sends [...] [r]elates in purpose only to Achilles” (1.3.317, 319), Ulysses suggests that they choose who will fight Hector by lottery. Leaving the decision to chance, as Ulysses seems initially to be proposing, is the very epitome of not respecting degree, for surely the Trojans’ best warrior should fight the Greeks’. But Ulysses isn’t actually proposing this: he’s proposing something worse. He explains to Nestor that they will rig the lottery so that Ajax wins and then proclaim that fate has chosen the best warrior after all. Not only, then, will it be impossible for the actual best warrior to be chosen; Ulysses will knowingly proclaim one to be the best who clearly is not.²⁴

Ulysses refers to this plan, his “young conception” (1.3.308), as a “blunt wedge” that will “rive [a] hard knot” (1.3.312), recalling the imagery of Agamemnon’s speech at the beginning of the scene, the Greek leader’s claim that “Checks and disasters / Grow in the veins of actions highest reared, / As knots, by the conflux of meeting sap” (1.3.4-6). In addition, though, to asserting by virtue of his similar diction the appropriateness of his actions, his words are also suggestive of force. This, like his efforts to side-step the problem of Agamemnon’s degree, is ironic. For in that same speech in which he compares Agamemnon to the sun, he also says the following:

Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark what discord follows. Each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
And make a sop of all this solid globe;
Strength should be lord of imbecility,
And the rude son should strike his father dead.
Force should be right; or rather, right and wrong,

²⁴ The aim of this ruse is to touch Achilles’s pride, for Ajax is decidedly no Achilles. Ajax is described as “blockish” (1.3.370), “dull” and “brainless” (1.3.376), but his stupidity is exactly what Ulysses requires to pull off his plan: “Give [Ajax] allowance for the better man; / For that will physic the great Myrmidon [Achilles]” (1.3.372-373).

Between whose endless jar justice recides,
Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
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 performe an universal prey,
And last eat up himself. (1.3.108-123)

Ulysses's claim here is that if degree is taken away—if, in other words, authority is not respected or, more broadly, the notion of hierarchy itself is rejected—it is not only that “discord follows” but that “strength should be lord of imbecility” and “[f]orce should be right.” The imbecility reference points almost directly at Ajax,²⁵ but the notion that force should be right, that it should determine what or whom should be valued, is far more broadly applicable.

Forcing the action is exactly what Ulysses is doing in 1.3, for his goal is to produce a specified though unlikely result—Ajax fighting Hector in single combat.²⁶ This event, in turn, is meant to prompt the Greeks' great warrior, Achilles—he whose degree, at least, in terms of martial prowess, would seem to be undeniable—to take up arms. But one must ask whether Ulysses doesn't subvert his chances of producing this good end by going about it in the way that he does.²⁷ In Troy, Troilus is also trying to force a particular end, though “force” is not necessarily a word the more courtly Trojans would use. When Hector claims that Helen is “not worth what she doth cost / The keeping” (2.2.50-51)—a claim that we

²⁵ In addition to being “blockish,” “dull,” and “brainless,” Ajax is characterized by his physical strength, his forcefulness. This is most evident in 2.1 where he is reduced to responding to the Greek slave Thersites's slanders by striking him repeatedly. He cannot hope to respond with words, so blows it is.

²⁶ In addition to being unlikely, the result might also be called unnatural, in the sense that Ajax and Hector are related and therefore not ‘natural’ enemies. Indeed, when the two do face off, the combat is halted for this very reason (4.5.119ff).

²⁷ To be clear, the particular ‘goodness’ of this end is that the actual best warrior from the Greeks would be fighting the actual best warrior from the Trojans.

now know, having read 3.1, to be absolutely true—Troilus’s response is to ask “What’s aught but as ’tis valued?” (2.2.52). It is a question that calls to mind Hamlet’s “there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so” (2.2.244-245),²⁸ and also one that puts Troilus in a decidedly defensive position. Hector dismisses his brother’s rhetoric (for certainly Troilus did not want an answer), stating that “value dwells not in particular will” (2.2.53). This rebuttal prompts Troilus to offer the following case:

I take today a wife, and my election
Is led on in the conduct of my will;
My will enkindled by mine eyes and ears,
Two traded pilots ’twixt the dangerous shores
Of will and judgment. How may I avoid,
Although my will distaste what it elected,
The wife I chose? (2.2.60-66)

This is, not surprisingly, a speech on which many critics of the play have offered comment. Wilson Knight provides the following paraphrase of Troilus’s words: “dormant desire in me has been awaked by my discovering a sensuous image or symbol of that desire, which image serves to bridge the gulf between consciousness and unconsciousness—between mind and soul” (59). His claim that “the lover sees his own soul reflected in what he loves” (59) may well be true, for if *Troilus and Cressida* depicts the reduction or perversion of love, then surely narcissism is going to be present. Nordland says that Troilus’s words are “instrumental in prompting critics to draw the distinction between ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’

²⁸ I am citing the *Hamlet* of Stephen Greenblatt’s *Norton Shakespeare*. It’s worth pointing out that the connection between *Troilus and Cressida* and *Hamlet*, which has already been highlighted by Linda Charnes, has also been noted by other critics. A.D. Nuttall writes, “The drama itself, meanwhile, is like the Prince of Denmark himself, systematically unclassifiable” (206). He goes on: “In *Hamlet* only the Prince is made ill by thought. In *Troilus and Cressida* the whole world is sick with intelligence. [...] In *Troilus and Cressida* we find no one anxiously trying to alleviate the condition because all are infected. Where there is no health there can be, in a way, no consciousness of sickness. All this accords perfectly with the conceit: ‘Hamlet wrote *Troilus and Cressida*.’ But Shakespeare, the real author, knows they are sick” (207).

conceptions of value” (135). Both of these comments are useful—and perhaps especially the latter, for in a play about value, knowing where value is to be located is critical—but both also seem to overlook the fact that Troilus’s argument doesn’t actually stand up. Knight does say that Troilus is “not consistent. For, once having made a choice, he says, it must be a point of honour to keep to it. Yet [...] if immediate values are everything, why not let one value succeed another?” (59). This, though, is not where Troilus’s principal fallacy lies.

Troilus’s logic—like the syntax of the passage quoted above—is “tortive and errant,” at least by the criteria of theological romance. His first mistake is to conflate taking and electing, which are distinct actions. He also emphasizes the ‘leading’ role of his will, explicitly in “led,” but also implicitly in “conduct.” His will, he says, is “enkindled by mine eyes and ears,” something, admittedly, we see in *Romeo and Juliet* and will again in *Twelfth Night*. We also see it in Dante and Petrarch. But any attentive reader (perhaps I should say, any attentive reader of the first chapter of this dissertation) will recognize that in privileging the role of the will, Troilus has overlooked a key factor in this sequence, namely, rational choice. According to W.R. Elton, Troilus “invert[s] the [traditional] relation of ‘election’ and ‘will’” (335). He elaborates:

Rather than submitting election to will [which is exactly what Troilus does] Aristotelian commentators insisted on the distinctive superiority of election (or discriminating, rational choice) to will. [...] If Troilus’s ‘election is led on’ by his will, which is ‘enkindled by mine eyes and ears’ [...] he lacks the reasoned deliberation Aristotelians attributed to election. (335)

In Troilus’s speech, judgment and will are two different shores—dangerous shores—between which his eyes and ears travel. Neither shore is granted superiority. Their relative importance, therefore, is not clear. For Elton, not only is Troilus’s understanding of the

volitional process bad, it creates a sort of vicious cycle in which the faculty responsible for enacting ethical decisions—that is, the will—is also tasked with the determination of what is ethical. According to Troilus, value *does* live in the particular will: the will determines value, and that value, in turn, provides the key factor in determining right action. To put it another way, what validates a given choice is the choosing itself. Cook writes that “Troilus’s speech contains a notable absence: the drive has an aim – the execution of ‘the act’ – but no object” (35), and she is right. It doesn’t matter who the beloved is. Nuttall puts it this way: “For Troilus, Helen is like a flag. It does not matter that a flag is only a bit of cloth fixed to a stick; once you have made it your flag, honour requires absolute devotion” (215). To suggest, as Hector does, that Helen is not worth keeping is to invalidate the process by which the Trojans arrived at and enacted their ethical—their good action—in the first place. Because the Trojans have ‘chosen’ Helen, “Helen must needs be fair” (1.1.88).²⁹

To be clear, to assert the value of a particular object, and to understand that object’s value as something that is ascribed in its very assertion, is to *force* that value. Like Ulysses who seeks a “blunt wedge” to “rive [a] hard knot,” Troilus must force his bad logic into what seems like logic. Troilus speaks of the “goodness of a quarrel / Which hath our several honors all engaged / To make it gracious (2.2.122-124). It is really a shocking thing to say: the war for Helen—which is ‘good’ by virtue of the Trojans’ assertion of its goodness in the form of martial acts—is not just good but “gracious.” It is shocking because if there is anything that one might say about grace, it is that it cannot be compelled; it cannot be asserted or forced. By contrast, love’s movement of a lover towards his beloved could easily

²⁹ These are Troilus’s words.

be understood as gracious motion. Speaking to the seeming impossibility of asserting what Troilus asserts in 2.2, David Kaula writes,

Troilus seems to moved [...] by two wills: the one which in Elizabethan usage commonly refers to a strong desire, usually sexual in nature, which overrides rational control; and the one which signifies the deliberate exercise of choice, or in teleological terms, the movement of an intelligent being toward the object it conceives as the highest good. (272)

It is not clear that Troilus is, in fact, moved by will in the second conception, though perhaps the philosophical trappings of his argument are informed by his (or Shakespeare's) familiarity with it. Either way, he must force his way through the intellectual confusion. But Kaula's comment also calls to mind the passage in the *Confessions* in which Augustine writes,

[T]here is no monstrous split between willing and not willing. We are dealing with a morbid condition of the mind which, when it is lifted up by truth, does not unreservedly rise to it but is weighed down by habit. So there are two wills. Neither of them is complete, and what is present in the one is lacking to the other. (*Confessions* 8.9.21)

If Kaula is right, then this comment on "a morbid condition of the mind" seems applicable to Troilus. He is the *Secret's* Franciscus imagining that he's Augustinus.

To emphasize the degree to which Troilus's argument does not follow, Shakespeare has Hector reverse his initial position. Ironically, just before he does so, Hector offers his clearest assessment of the problems with Troilus's argument, namely, that his reasons "do more conduce / To the hot passion of distempered blood / Than to make up a free determination / 'Twixt right and wrong" (2.2.167-170). These words could be Augustinus's, urging Franciscus to repudiate his desire for Laura. But Hector-as-Augustinus does not endure, and thus he says:

Yet ne'ertheless,
My sprightly brethren, I propend to you
In resolution to keep Helen still;
For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence
Upon our joint and several dignities. (2.2.188-192)

As in the case of Troilus's speech, a number of critics have weighed in on Hector's choice. Charles Williams suggests that "we are not meant to blame Hector for this" because he is, first and foremost, a soldier; we must understand his choice thus: "his own desire for personal glory is to be supposed to overcome his intellectual beliefs" (57). Tillyard, with more judgment, puts it in strikingly similar terms: "Hector, for all his nobility, stands for a double ineffectiveness: [...] for a mind divided between reasonable, realistically moral action and unreasoning insistence on a point of honour" (70). Both critics frame Hector's reversal, then, as emblematic of the same kind of division from which Troilus himself unwittingly suffers.³⁰ That we all know what happens to Hector, either from Shakespeare's play or from tradition, makes his reversal more poignant, for the death he receives at Achilles's hands is decidedly not honourable. It is possible Hector forecasts this death when he asserts shortly before reversing his position: "Thus to persist / In doing wrong extenuates not wrong, / But makes it much more heavy" (2.2.185-187). That word, heavy, has a number of connotations, but in terms of theological romance, it means Hector will descend.

³⁰ Additionally, we might understand Hector's choice as a dramatic necessity, given that tradition does not allow for a Hector who doesn't fight. There are a number of instances like this in the play, where Shakespeare seems to be carving out some space for a character to act—or even just propose to act—in a way everyone knows he doesn't, only to reverse the situation and return the character to his familiar role. Linda Charnes asks the question: "What exactly does it mean, that the teleology in the play is entirely retro-textual? That while looking 'forward' it points only back, to preceding texts?" (75). One possible answer is that it means Shakespeare generates more sympathy for characters who are not only imprisoned tradition, by their literary precursors, but who are also, somehow, aware of their imprisonment.

4.6 Glimpsing the Ideal

It is against the backdrop of Helen's and Agamemnon's inadequacies and the consequences of these inadequacies—namely, the perception that action or value must be forced—that we now consider the love-plot and the play's eponymous characters. One might expect, given the dismal and ironic depiction of the world of the war-plot, that the lovers would stand out in relief. And they do, for a time, though more Cressida than Troilus. In *Troilus and Cressida*, readers may discern the same patterns of love that Ann Thompson suggests Shakespeare evokes in *Romeo and Juliet*, patterns the playwright may have himself discerned in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

In 3.2, the lovers come together for the first and, really, only time. Things do not begin well: Troilus, pacing outside Cressida's door, says to Pandarus,

O, be thou my Charon,
And give me swift transportance to those fields
Where I may wallow in the lily beds
Proposed for the deserver! O gentle Pandarus,
From Cupid's shoulder pluck his painted wings
And fly with me to Cressid! (3.2.9-14)

Immediately, a number of things give us pause. Though Elysium may have been taken by Shakespeare's original audiences to stand for the Christian Paradise, the fact that Troilus may only get to "those fields" by means of Charon's transportation seriously qualifies the kind of 'reward' he anticipates receiving there. Mention of Charon reminds us that while Elysium may be paradisiacal, it is still very much the underworld—to which one must *descend*. Perhaps more problematic than Troilus's destination, though, is the means by which he must travel according to his second metaphor. Unlike Romeo, who borrows

“love’s light wings” (2.1.110) to help him get over Juliet’s orchard wall, Troilus imagines a scenario in which Pandarus, having ‘plucked’ the “painted wings” of the god of love, flies him to Cressida. The image is decidedly comic (a precursor, perhaps, to Antony’s death-scene, which shall be considered in Chapter 6), and it becomes even more comic when we consider that unlike Romeo, who must literally scale a high wall, Troilus is simply waiting anxiously outside Cressida’s door.

When Pandarus and Troilus enter, it is Pandarus who does all the talking. Even having been prompted, Troilus can only say, “You have bereft me of all words, lady” (3.2.51)—after which, Pandarus speaks some more before finally exiting. Troilus’s next few speeches are characterized by cliché and Petrarchism; like Juliet, Cressida wittily denies his hyperbolic claims. Indeed, the scene is much like the initial conversation between Romeo and Juliet in the orchard. “O, let my lady apprehend no fear: in all Cupid’s pageant there is presented no monster” (3.2.69-70), claims Troilus, before going on to assert, “when we [men] vow to weep seas, live in fire, eat rocks, tame tigers” (3.2.72-73), the only thing monstrous is that “the will is infinite and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit” (3.2.76-78).³¹ It is not that lovers are liars, then, when they make their claims in hyperbolic terms, but rather that their ability to execute, to act in accordance with their will or desire (if these are distinct) is limited. They are human, after all. Cressida, admirably, pops Troilus’s balloon, asking, “They that have the voice of

³¹ David Kaula parses the passage like this: “the monstrosity [in Troilus’s view] lies not in the lover’s extravagant will but in those circumstances of reality which thwart his aspiration for the infinite. Cressida, on the other hand, does locate the monstrosity in the will, specifically in the deliberate failure of lovers to adhere to their promises” (275). This distinction in thinking about the infiniteness of the will naturally has repercussions for intrinsic or extrinsic conceptions of value.

lions and the act of hares, are they not monsters?” (3.2.82-84). And she is right, though she, like Hector in 2.2, will act *discordantly* when she nonetheless professes her love for Troilus.

If it has not been noted from the quotations in the preceding paragraph, all of Troilus and Cressida’s dialogue thus far has been delivered in prose. 3.2 follows that pivotal scene in which audiences see Helen for the first and only time, and it seems Shakespeare would have us continue in the same vein. But then Cressida says this: “Boldness comes to me now and brings me heart: / Prince Troilus, I have loved you night and day / For many weary months” (3.2.106-108). It is an eruption into verse, and all the dialogue that follows is likewise elevated, like this:

Sweet, bid me hold my tongue;
For in this rapture I shall surely speak
The thing I shall repent. See, see, your silence,
Cunning in dumbness, from my weakness draws
My very soul of counsel! Stop my mouth. (3.2.122-126).

It is not simply that Cressida, like a Petrarchan lover herself, has suffered long, thus proving her devotion, but that she prompts the lovers’ first kiss with a speech that (like Juliet’s in 1.4) employs religious or even metaphysical diction: “rapture,” “repent,” and “soul.” Of this scene, Michael Hall writes, the lovers “may satirize themselves earlier, but here both their words and their relationship are serious representations of the Petrarchan type” (123).

Perhaps just as revealing is the fact that 3.2 “is the only scene in the love plot into which the war, the surrounding pressures of public affairs, do not intrude” (Kaula 275). One might say, then, that it is not that Shakespeare limits the love-content of Chaucer’s poem to 33% of his play, but to this one intense scene.

E.T. Donaldson points out that while “Cressida’s confused but still eloquent profession of love does not [...] draw a reciprocal profession from Troilus,” it does “enable him to start talking on what is to become his favorite subject, which is his own high potential for maintaining constancy in love” (98). Troilus’s fondness for speaking about himself necessarily qualifies much that occurs in this scene, but that is no reason to dismiss his declarations, which, though unrealistic and offensive, are clearly sincere. He even invokes the concept of weight, wishing

that persuasion could but thus convince me
That my integrity and truth to you
Might be affronted with the match and weight
Of such a winnowed purity in love,
How were I then uplifted! (3.2.154-158)

Though some might take umbrage at Cressida’s gracious response to Troilus’s wish—“In that I’ll war with you” (3.2.161)—Shakespeare likely intends her words both to stand as a defense and to raise Troilus’s own poorly expressed declarations (emblematic of his narcissistic intellectual tendencies) to a higher plane. By virtue of her love and her far more measured claims, she redeems his love, and in these respects she is like Juliet. But Troilus’s assertions of his truth and fidelity prompt an unfortunate thought for readers, for Cressida responds to his assertions with her own: “If I be false [...] let them say, to stick the heart of falsehood, / ‘As false as Cressid’ (3.2.174, 185-186). And we are back to ‘false Cressid.’ Whereas, in Donaldson’s words, “Chaucer’s sleight-of-hand managed to keep [Criseyde’s bad side] hidden behind the good one until the very last book” (94), it seems Shakespeare can’t even distract us from Cressida’s future betrayal for this entire scene. Nor, one might argue, does he want to. If it is true that “Cressida [...] receives a much more positive

presentation in this scene than commentators usually allow her” (Hall 122), then her declarations of love are doubly unfortunate. One might even say tragic. For in 3.2, at the moment in which she is at her best, in which she gives us a glimpse of what she might be, Shakespeare forces us to see her through the lens of literary tradition; he forces us to doubt her love.

But it is not simply that Cressida is at her best, here; it is that for fleeting moments in 3.2 and then again in 4.2 and 4.4, she is *better* than Chaucer’s Criseyde. Indeed, in 4.2, when Pandarus tells her that she is to be traded to the Greeks, her first response is: “O you immortal gods! I will not go” (4.2.92). In this line, despite the fact that we see clearly that her “execution [is, in fact] confined,” we believe, based on her words, that her “will is infinite.” This is not hyperbole. Chaucer’s Criseyde, upon hearing of her imminent removal from Troy, says nothing, but the narrator tells us that she “[f]ul bisily to Jupiter bisoughte / Yeve hem meschaunce that this tretis brought” (4.669-670). While Criseyde will eventually ‘pleyne’ for many lines of verse, she can only bring herself in this moment to wish misfortune on those who brokered the deal. Cressida, by contrast, invokes the gods and stakes her claim with four simple words: “I will not go.” These words are reminiscent of Juliet’s “I will not away” (5.3.160), the utterance of which Rozzett calls an “extreme act of will” (157). In response to Pandarus’s “Thou must” (4.2.93), Cressida asserts:

I will not, uncle. I have forgot my father;
I know no touch of consanguinity;
No kin, no love, no blood, no soul so near me
As the sweet Troilus. O you gods divine!
Make Cressid’s name the very crown of falsehood,
If ever she leave Troilus. Time, force, and death,
Do to this body what extremes you can,

But the strong base and building of my love
Is as the very centre of the earth,
Drawing all things to it. (4.2.94-103)

I.A. Richards praises Shakespeare's "language of great power" (367) here, but then says the playwright gives that language to a "natural putter-on of possible passions" (367). In that vein, but with a more generous view of Cressida, Davis-Brown suggests that while her "loyalty reminds us of Juliet's situation, the poetry here is something like Cleopatra's after she has lost Antony" (25). And, perhaps most to the point, Fly submits that this scene "contains not a dram of suggestion that Cressida will capitulate so quickly and shamefully." Rather, her "expressions of love and constancy are [...] impressive" ("Suited" 280). Cressida's words are no doubt meant to remind us of Romeo's after he leaves the Capulet feast but finds he cannot leave Juliet: "Turn back, dull earth, and find thy centre out" (2.1.1-2); given this association, we might easily locate Cressida's declaration among the great pronouncements of love in Shakespeare. And yet, these words ultimately do Cressida no good. (Perhaps this is why Shakespeare has her speak them to herself.) When in 4.4 she sees Troilus again, her opportunity for great declarations has clearly passed, for Troilus, unlike his precursor in Chaucer, has already accepted that Cressida must go the Greeks.³²

4.7 The Failure of the Ideal

Indeed, it is the manner of Troilus's acceptance that, in part, signals the unsustainability of both the lovers' romance and the *ideal* of romance in this play. In

³² There is more to admire in Cressida in 4.4. For example, despite the fact that we know Cressida will betray Troilus, it becomes clear that Troilus is unjust to his beloved by calling for her to be true so many times (4.4.57, 65, 73). Cressida is, in this scene, *trueer* than Troilus.

Chaucer, after it has been announced that Criseyde must leave, Troilus and she speak at length about what they might do. Criseyde maintains that she will persuade her father to let them be together, and that she and Troilus *will* be together again within ten days. Troilus, like his Shakespearean counterpart, is uneasy about this arrangement, and it is true that he doubts Criseyde's commitment to him. But rather than calling for Criseyde to be true like Shakespeare's skipping record, he proposes something more extreme: "But for the love of God, if it be may, / So late us stelen priveliche away; / For evere in oon, as for to lyve in reste" (4.1600-1602).³³ Criseyde appropriately takes this proposal as, at least, in part, a sign of Troilus's distrust, but perhaps the point, here, is that Shakespeare's Troilus proposes nothing at all; he acquiesces all too easily to the political will.³⁴

Indeed, at the same time Cressida shines, at least, intermittently, Troilus exhibits some rather suspect behaviour for a lover. When in 4.2, Aeneas brings the news of Cressida's removal, Troilus's response is to exclaim, "How my achievements mock me!" (4.2.68). It is a telling phrase. Unlike Chaucer's Troilus, who rebukes Pandarus for suggesting he's all wholly had his desire with Criseyde (4.393-395), Shakespeare's Troilus seems to be thinking exactly that. It is not, of course, that he thinks he has 'got' what he desired of Cressida—not even Troilus is that coarse—but no doubt he understands 'getting' as a gateway to unlimited access. This view accords well enough with others'

³³ Troilus's distrust is not his only motive; nor is it necessarily his primary one. He offers Criseyde an alternative, that they might 'live in rest,' which may well suggest a desire to escape his social or political obligations and to live a life a leisure with his beloved (Windeatt's modernization of the *Troilus* does offer 'peace' instead of "reste"), but 'rest' also signifies, in the terms of theological romance, the proper end of love. Augustine writes: "Things which are not in their intended position are restless. Once they are in their ordered position, they are at rest" (13.9.10).

³⁴ Nordland cites Yoder, who thinks that Troilus is "calmed, even relieved" when he learns that Cressida is to be traded, for once she is gone he will be able to return "to his public role" (142). Nordland asks, "Cressida betrays Troilus by giving herself to Diomedes, but has Troilus already betrayed *her* at that point by falling very quickly out of love?" (140).

assessments of Troilus: Davis-Brown, for instance, writes that Shakespeare's hero "transforms Chaucer's courtly love object of reverence [Criseyde] into a sex object" (21). Thompson writes that Shakespeare's lovers, both, "talk about the 'execution' and 'performance' of love in a manner quite alien to Chaucer's characters" (128).³⁵

This substitution of concrete desires for love is also evident earlier on in 4.2. This scene mirrors 3.5 of *Romeo and Juliet*, in the sense of both portraying a similar scenario and reversing that scenario—or, in any case, its tone. The opening line, Troilus's "Dear, trouble not yourself; the morn is cold" (4.2.1), lets us know that the lovers are just waking up. We are not wrong to imagine that Troilus is already out of bed, despite the coldness of the morning. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo also feels compelled to be gone, but his reasons are entirely different. Also different is that Romeo concedes to Juliet's request to stay—a request couched in the lovers' debate about which bird it is they hear singing. Romeo is willing to "be put to death" (3.5.17) if Juliet would have it so, but at such a prospect, she reverses her request and urges him to depart. The mutuality in the lovers' relationship discussed in Chapter 3 is evident in this exchange. In *Troilus and Cressida*, by contrast, Troilus not only has no explicitly stated reason to be gone, but he urges Cressida to stay in bed, ostensibly so that she cannot hinder him from leaving. The temperature, noted by Troilus, may be incidental to the action but not the tone of the overall scene. Whereas it's easy to *feel* like the morning in *Romeo and Juliet* is warm, here it is undeniably cold. It is fitting, then, that Nuttall writes, "[i]f we think of the great aubade in *Romeo and Juliet*, where

³⁵ In making this claim, Thompson is thinking of Cressida's "calculating soliloquy" (125) in 1.2: "Yet I hold off. Women are angels, wooing ..." (1.2.273ff).

the lovers must part at daybreak, we shall find the parting of the lovers in *Troilus and Cressida* lifeless” (219).³⁶

Cressida asks Troilus, “Are you awearry of me?” (4.2.7), expressing an anxiety that is worlds away from Juliet’s concern for Romeo’s safety.³⁷ And while Troilus assures his beloved that he isn’t, his claims that the “lark hath roused the ribald crows” and that the “dreaming night will hide our joys no longer” (4.2.9, 10) seem somehow inadequate.³⁸ Nowhere in this scene does Troilus exhibit the reluctance to leave Romeo experiences in both the aubade scene (3.5) and the balcony scene that precedes it (2.2). In those scenes, leaving means moving against one’s weight. Troilus seems to express concern, telling Cressida to get back into bed lest she “catch cold” and “curse him” (4.2.15). But these words, like his earlier remark about his achievements, have little to do with Cressida. Her death would be a curse for *him*; in death, she would be taken away from *him*, which, ironically, is about to happen anyway. Tellingly, Troilus’s last words of the scene—his “how my achievements mock me”—aren’t even spoken to Cressida, but to Pandarus, who has arrived, presumably to see how the lovers’ first night together went.

That Troilus conceives of his relationship with Cressida—or perhaps just his night with her—as an achievement accords well with the play’s concern with value. For to

³⁶ He adds that what, in the absence of love, makes this scene moving is “residual humanity” or “weakness” (219).

³⁷ Nordland quotes Adelman in *Suffocating Mothers*, who writes that both Romeo and Antony, who find themselves in similar morning-after scenes, have “more pressing reasons for leaving than Troilus” and that “neither Juliet nor Cleopatra responds to the parting with the sense of betrayal” (141).

³⁸ The irony is that the “dreaming night” didn’t hide their joys anyway. Aeneas who comes with the news of Cressida’s removal knows exactly where to find Troilus, despite the fact that this is the first night the lovers have spent together. Whereas in Chaucer’s poem, the lovers’ relationship remains more or less a secret—this secrecy reflecting something of the transcendent nature of their love—there is no such secrecy here in Shakespeare. Here is an example of Shakespeare’s structural reduction feeding a reduction of another kind: an uncommon and metaphysical love becomes a notorious one-night stand.

ascribe value is by definition to objectify; it implies the possibility of possession. “No sooner got but lost?” (4.2.73) is Pandarus’s response to Troilus’s remark, and it tells us something important about the difference between Shakespeare’s and Chaucer’s Troiluses. Whereas in the poem, Troilus’s idealism is always countered by Pandarus’s materialism, here both male characters are thinking materialistically. We might consider Troilus’s assertion earlier in the play that Cressida’s “bed is India; there she lies, a pearl” (1.1.98). In that same scene, Troilus figures himself the merchant and Pandarus his ship; the space between Troy and where Cressida is to be found, he adds, “Let it be called the wild and wand’ring flood” (1.1.100). In addition to turning his beloved into merchandise, Troilus seems to ascribe value to her *through* his journeying. Of this moment, McInnis writes, “it seems to me that a deliberate refinement of *Romeo and Juliet*’s innovative use of the Petrarchan hero-boat imagery is at play” (48). Romeo says, “I am no pilot, yet wert thou as far / As that vast shore washed with the farthest sea, / I should adventure for such merchandise” (2.1.125-127). But his speech is more about his *willingness* to do anything to be with Juliet than it is about ascribing her any particular value; Romeo *perceives* her value, and his words are his response. That Troilus uses far more specific mercantile diction is emblematic both of Shakespeare’s different preoccupations in *Troilus and Cressida* and Troilus’s “more concrete desires” (Davis-Brown 21). According to Douglas Bruster, when in 2.2, Troilus “substitutes ‘price’ for [Helen’s] ‘face,’” he is asserting that “ascribed worth replaces essential value” (104). The same thing is happening here. Troilus’s use of the jussive subjunctive in “let” makes his statement *creative*.³⁹ In other words, by *making* the journey to Cressida more

³⁹ The opening of the book of Genesis is laden with jussive subjunctives, e.g. “Let there be light.”

difficult (or dangerous, to echo his speech about election), he makes her worth it. It is worth noting that before illogically reversing his position in 2.2, Hector speaks specifically to this notion, saying, “’Tis mad idolatry to make the service greater than the god” (2.2.57). And there is no doubt Shakespeare would have us believe him—though no one else seems to.

When Troilus returns to Cressida in 4.4 and the lovers take their leave of each other, the moment is again qualified by mercantile diction: “We two,” says Troilus, “that with so many thousand sighs / Did buy each other, must poorly sell ourselves” (4.4.38-39). While there is a mutuality of sorts in his statement, what is just as evident is the sense that Troilus and Cressida have ‘taken a loss’ on the ever-fluctuating market. The irony is that in 2.2, Troilus argues that Helen must be kept, because, despite her Nell-iness, the Trojans have ascribed her great value. Bruster writes of that moment, “the laws of the marketplace govern commodity, and so demand her retention” (105). Cressida, despite showing herself essentially valuable, must go.⁴⁰

There are those, of course, who see Cressida in the scenes discussed above as less ‘essentially valuable’ than I have made her out to be. If this is true then the failure of the ideal is not something that can be attributed to Troilus’s actions or feelings alone. Ann Thompson, for instance, thinks that “Shakespeare’s version of the [consummation] scene is coarsened by the lack of innocence or honesty on the part of Cressida. She is [...] treating love as a power-game, and betrays her knowledge (or experience) in such words as, ‘You

⁴⁰ Medcalf may note the crucial distinction between Chaucer’s and Shakespeare’s works that pertains to Troilus’s willingness to let Cressida go. He says, “Chaucer’s Troilus [...] calls love ‘a bond perpetually duryng’”; he “means by this the love that exists whether or not men receive it, because it holds the universe together” (297).

men will never tarry” (133).⁴¹ Thompson also suggests that “if anyone is the victim it is Troilus, whose ideals and language about love are misunderstood and mocked by his lady” (128). The ideals the critic refers to are perhaps those akin to Troilus’s assertion that, though his execution is confined, his will is infinite. Whether the Cressida we see in 3.2, 4.2, and 4.4 treats love as a “power-game” may be debated *ad infinitum*, but what is clear is that the Cressida greeted by the Greeks in 4.5 exhibits markedly different behaviour. Her proclamation that the “strong base and building of [her] love / Is as the very centre of the earth, / Drawing all things to it” (4.2.101-103) proves almost literally to be the case, when, upon her arrival at the Greek camp, she is surrounded by a welcoming party consisting of Ajax, Agamemnon, Achilles, Patroclus, Ulysses, Menelaus, Nestor, and Diomedes (who has been her guide). But this is not just any welcoming party; all these men want a kiss.

At first Cressida says nothing while each man in turn kisses her (while also commenting on his doing so). She first speaks in response to Menelaus, who says, “I’ll have my kiss” (4.5.35). Cressida asks the famous cuckold, “In kissing do you render or receive?” (4.5.36), playfully engaging in banter and at the same time employing her own mercantile metaphor. He says, “both” (4.5.37), and she insists, “the kiss you take is better than you give” (4.5.38), and thus decides against the transaction. But she is not done: embarrassing him further, she brings up Paris, joking that while Menelaus is “odd,” Paris is “even with [him]” (4.5.44). Thompson writes, Cressida’s “witty and crude replies to the Greeks are in total contrast to her stunned silence in Chaucer and again show Shakespeare taking the

⁴¹ Cressida says this shortly after Troilus gets out of bed (4.2.16).

worst possible view of the medieval character” (139).⁴² Thomas notes that this scene has “fueled the debate over interpretation of Cressida.” “The nub of the question,” she writes, “is whether the Greeks audaciously treat Cressida as a prize of war, to which she eventually reacts with considerable vigour, or whether she has such an inviting eye that they merely respond to what they detect in her – looseness” (54).⁴³

Ulysses clearly takes the latter view. After asking for a kiss and then curiously deciding against it, he says of Cressida (after she has exited the scene):

There’s language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,
Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out
At every joint and motive of her body.
[...]
Set [women like her] down
For sluttish spoils of opportunity
And daughters of the game. (4.5.55-63)

Donaldson notes that Ulysses’s characterization of Cressida is “unsupported by evidence” (113), but that hasn’t stopped readers from taking a similar view. In the 1960 Royal Shakespeare Company production, for example, Cressida was portrayed as “a rippling wisp of carnality that [was] almost unbearably alluring” (Dobson and Wells 489).

While everything Ulysses says of Cressida will be confirmed for Troilus in 5.2, it’s worth noting that we actually see Cressida acting similarly much earlier in the play. In 1.2, when Pandarus is wooing on behalf of Troilus but finds himself exasperated by her evasions, he tells her, “you are such a woman, a man knows not at what ward you lie” (1.2.245-246).

To this Cressida replies, “upon my back, to defend my belly; upon my wit to defend my

⁴² Thompson adds that Shakespeare foreshortens “events to make her seem even more fickle and heartless” (139).

⁴³ Davis-Brown certainly has his opinion: “the Greek welcome ‘stuns’ Cressida. Shakespeare, placing his character at the mercy of the chief Greeks, increases her vulnerability tremendously” (28). He notes that once Cressida does begin speaking, “she is not kissed” (29) again.

wiles; upon my secrecy to defend mine honesty; my mask, to defend my beauty; and you, to defend all these” (1.2.247-250). In Chaucer’s poem, by contrast, Criseyde’s initial response to Pandarus’s wooing is thus: “she gan hire eighen down to caste” (2.253) and, later, “she began to breste a-wepe anoon, / And seyde, ‘Allas, for wo!’” (2.408-409). Even if it is true that the feelings *behind* these two responses are similar, those feelings still manifest in radically different ways. Cressida’s dialogue with Pandarus ends with her assertion that his actions will make him into a “bawd” (1.2.267), which is a curious thing to say, for, as it turns out, Cressida wants what Pandarus wants *for her* more than he does.⁴⁴

Perhaps the clearest signal that the ideal of romance has failed in Shakespeare’s play is Cressida’s acceptance of the view that “men prize the thing ungained more than it is” (1.2.275). Despite the fact that her assertion implies a belief in intrinsic value (she uses the word “is”), her choices suggest that she regards perceived value as the value that really matters. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet entertains such a view (see 2.1.138ff) but quickly eschews her fears, and she is never given cause to doubt Romeo’s prizing of her. In 1.2, Cressida is working under the assumption that she can manipulate, through Pandarus, Troilus’s valuation of her by remaining or appearing to remain aloof. Joseph Longo says that, in contradistinction to Criseyde in Chaucer’s poem, Cressida’s concern is for “reputation not chastity” (7). At the end of the scene, she maintains, “though my heart’s content firm love doth bear, / Nothing of that shall from mine eye appear” (1.2.280-281). Here, indeed, is Cressida treating love as a “power-game.”

⁴⁴ Certain qualifications can be made to my characterization of Cressida’s bawdy repartee in 1.2. The most significant of these is that once Pandarus leaves, she admits, in soliloquy, to loving Troilus: “more in Troilus thousandfold I see / Than in the glass of Pandar’s praise may be” (1.2.270-271).

But it's not just Cressida. Despite the assertions of characters like Ulysses and Hector, the play depicts a world in which all ultimately subscribe to the notion that perception is reality, that perceived value is all there is. Thus, the ideal fails because there is no ideal. If this is true, then the function of individuals—indeed, the function of the will—in this world can be nothing else but to ascribe value to objects—or to force that value, for, when it comes right down to it, that is what it is when the will plays the role of valuator. When the Trojans declare Helen valuable, they do so on the basis of their actions, but, in reality, their actions only make it easier for them to make that declaration; their actions are not *required*, for they function only to help the Trojans (and others) *see* Helen as valuable. Nordland highlights the mob-mentality nature of ascribing value in the play or, in his words, the “tendency of individual desire to collapse into social appraisal, so that love becomes a fleeting assessment of a personal relative value” (128). The only thing that determines how a social group appraises a given object is the strength (or force) of the assertion of individual desire. In 2.2, Troilus simply out-asserts Hector, which is decidedly not to say that he out-argues him. Troilus is more passionate, and his assertions better align with how the Trojans see or *want* to see themselves. But something different happens with Troilus's valuation of Cressida, and instead of the Trojans acquiescing to Troilus's view, he acquiesces or, at least, appears to, to theirs. In truth, Troilus has done nothing in terms of actual deeds to make it easier for others to see Cressida as valuable and therefore worth keeping. Had he perhaps fought for her to stay in Troy, the case might be different. But the only thing Troilus has done to ascribe value to Cressida is *imaginary*: he has sailed (with Pandarus as his bark) “the wild and wand'ring flood” (1.1.100). This ‘action,’ while it may

help Troilus to see Cressida as valuable and is, in truth, no less legitimate than a ‘real’ action in terms of ascribing value to her, does nothing at all for others.

Ulysses takes advantage of the fact that everyone subscribes to the importance of perceived value in his plot to get Achilles onto the battlefield. He tells Achilles that “no man is the lord of anything, / Though in and of him there be much consisting, / Till he communicate his parts to others” (3.3.115-117). This communication—the display of, in Achilles’s case, martial prowess—is the actual prerequisite to owning that prowess.⁴⁵ Achilles is surprisingly receptive to this view, and this is because (assuming Ulysses is right in his assessment)

[i]maged worth
Holds in his blood such swollen and hot discourse
That ’twixt his mental and active parts
Kingdomed Achilles in commotion rages
And batters down himself. (2.3.166-170)

There are three things I want to highlight in this passage, and each speaks to a fundamental problem in the play with treating perceived value as the only value. First, Achilles’s view of himself, his “imagined worth,” prompts a conflict between his “mental and active parts.” What this means is that he suffers from the same problem Troilus does with Cressida, namely, his valuation of himself (like Troilus’s of Cressida) stands opposed to his actions, which are generally (and illogically) understood to ascribe value.⁴⁶ Despite his legendary status, Achilles is not a great warrior because he has not been warring. Second, the effect of

⁴⁵ Nordland writes that “our sense of who we are is highly dependent on what people think of us.” He quotes Lyons, who suggests that the “ambiguous exploration of value conducted by the characters in *Troilus and Cressida* seems to be an attempt to determine their personal identities” (133). The relationship of value and identity in the play will be discussed further in Section VIII.

⁴⁶ To be perfectly clear, actions are illogically understood to ascribe value because they are the *consequences* of willing, which is a motion of the soul, not willing itself.

this discourse in Achilles is that he “rages” in “commotion.” Not only is “commotion” the word Ulysses uses in 1.3 to describe the consequences of degree being neglected; it suggests a motion of the soul that is wholly counterproductive, “movement hither and thither,” according to the *OED* (“commotion, n.” 1.). So imagined worth produces commotion. This obviously bears on Shakespeare’s treatment of volition in the play. But we might ask, if imagined or perceived worth—forced value—produces commotion, what produces the imagination or perception in the first place? The answer to this question bears just as much or perhaps even more on the playwright’s exploration of will. Ulysses gives us his answer when he says that imagined worth’s “swollen and hot discourse” is ‘held’ in Achilles’s “blood.”

4.8 Blood

In a play that is more explicitly philosophical than every other Shakespearean play and that invites us to consider volition from a decidedly metaphysical perspective (even if it seems to eschew that perspective), “blood” makes a surprising number of appearances.⁴⁷ And these appearances are not incidental. This is clear from just one scene: 3.1. Making fun of Pandarus after he’s sung his song of love, Paris tells Helen: “He eats nothing but doves, love, and that breeds hot blood, and hot blood begets hot thoughts, and hot thoughts beget hot deeds, and hot deeds is love” (3.1.121-123). Nowhere has the volitional process, the movement from the conception of an action to its outward performance, been laid out

⁴⁷ The word “blood” appears in the play more than 30 times, but in addition to “blood,” Shakespeare’s characters employ various adjacent terms: for example, “guts” and “bowels.” There are, in truth, myriad references to the body and its parts. Additionally, “characters frequently refer to each other in the play in terms of their blood” (Thomas 85).

more clearly. While Paris's delineation would seem, at first, to be a parody of the volitional process, what with its origin in dove-eating, this *is* generally the way action happens in the play: the origin of action is not in thought but in blood. We might take "blood" to denote something like instinct or even just "will," in Troilus's idiom. In a curious moment of clear-sightedness, Pandarus responds to Paris's joke: "Is this the generation of love? Hot blood, hot thoughts, and hot deeds? Why, they are vipers. Is love a generation of vipers?" (3.1.124-126). By "generation," he, of course, means both the manner in which love is generated and the 'younger' generation. Pandarus, while a materialist bawd, is generally unwitting with respect to the implications of his actions. Thus, though Paris's characterization of love, here, is little more than the logical conclusion of Pandarus's own actions procuring Cressida for Troilus, the older man is appalled by the prince's reduction of love to the decidedly physiological blood. Chaucer's Pandarus is also unwitting; the difference between the two, though, is that whereas in the medieval poem, Pandarus is simply an unwitting materialist, in Shakespeare's play, he is the *only* unwitting materialist; everyone else, in other words, knows that he or she is one.

In the war-plot, there are a number of references to blood. In 2.2, Hector, still of the opinion that Helen ought to be returned to the Greeks, asks his "youthful" brother Troilus, "is your blood / So madly hot that no discourse of reason [...] / Can qualify the same?" (2.2.112, 114-117). He follows this question with an assertion—aimed at both Troilus and Paris: "the reasons you allege [for keeping Helen] do more conduce / To the hot passion of distempered blood / Than to make up a free determination" (2.2.167-170). Whether there are distinctions to be made between tempered and distempered blood

(perhaps analogous to whatever distinctions can be made between good and bad *cupiditas*) is not clear. But it does seem unlikely that a love conceived in blood can be a good love in the terms of theological romance. In the words of the Greek slave Thersites, “With too much blood and too little brain, these two may run mad” (5.1.47-48).⁴⁸

Indeed, it is Thersites who makes patent blood’s volitional role in the play.

Thersites has been described in a number of ways, though none of these is so colorful as his descriptions of others. Palmer writes that Thersites is a “romantic gone sour” (92).⁴⁹ Knight sees him as a kind of moralizing figure who is “disgusted at man’s uncontrolled instincts and passions (‘blood’) which assume proportion to his lack of intellect” (64). Along the same lines, Vivian Thomas writes that Thersites is most engaging “in his characteristic activity of stripping everything and everybody down to bare essentials” (86). Thersites is, then, both a natural and a deeply perplexing choice as the play’s choric figure; while he comments on everything he sees, all that he sees when he looks at the play’s other characters is blood. “Let thy blood be thy direction ’til thy death!” he says to Patroclus, issuing what he takes to be “the common curse of mankind” (2.3.28, 24-25).

When Thersites first appears in 2.1, he muses to Ajax: “Agamemnon – how if he had boils, full, all over, generally?” (2.1.2-3); and then, “And those boils did run? Say so, did not the general run then? Were not that a botchy core?” (2.1.5-6); and then finally, “Then would come some matter from him; I see none now” (2.2.8-9). While Thersites’s statements represent another instance of Agamemnon’s degree being neglected, it is the

⁴⁸ Thersites is speaking of Achilles and Patroclus.

⁴⁹ By contrast, he writes, Pandarus is a “romantic gone rotten” (92).

slave's disgustingly physiological diction to which I draw attention.⁵⁰ The physiological is never far from Thersites's thoughts. He goes on to call Ajax a "thing of no bowels" and, then, one who "wears his wit in his belly and his guts in his head" (2.1.20-21). There's more to his preoccupation with the physiological, though: it's not just disgusting; it's sexual, too. Thersites's words to Patroclus in 5.1 make this clear. He calls him Achilles's "masculine whore" before issuing another curse:

Now the rotten diseases of the south, the guts-griping, ruptures, catarrhs, loads o' gravel i'th'back, lethargies, cold palsies, raw eyes, dirt-rotten livers, wheezing lungs, bladders full of impostume, sciaticas, lime-kilns i'th' palm, incurable bone-ache, and the rivelled fee-simple of the tetter, take and take again such preposterous discoveries! (5.1.17-23)

Here the physical is ensnared with the sexual; according to Walter Cohen's gloss in the *Norton Shakespeare*, nearly all the diseases mentioned "can [...] be symptoms of venereal disease."

"Lechery" is a common refrain for Thersites. In 5.1, commenting on Diomedes and his "Trojan drab" (that is, Cressida), the slave exclaims, "Nothing but lechery!" (5.1.93, 94). In 5.2, while observing Troilus, who is himself observing Cressida with Diomedes, he cries "Fry, lechery, fry!" (5.2.56), addressing all three characters at once. And later, at the end of that scene, he offers his final word: "Still wars and lechery! Nothing else holds fashion" (5.2.192-3).

Lust, according to Étienne Gilson, is a vice "attributable [...] to the soul, which, for want of temperance, perversely prefers bodily pleasures to spiritual realities, whose beauty

⁵⁰ Bradbrook traces Thersites' disgusting imagery—the "imagery of disease"—to Henryson's portrait of Cresseid as a leper (313).

is more lasting and whose enjoyment purer” (136). Thersites’s preoccupation with lust speaks to the absence in the play of that beauty and enjoyment that comes from spiritual realities. At the same time as he reduces everything to lust, Thersites not surprisingly reduces humans to animals. He calls the cuckold Menelaus a “bull” (5.1.50) and then Paris a “dog” (5.7a.10) and then, as though to show his lack of bias, he also calls himself a “bear” (5.71.18).⁵¹ In assigning these epithets, he is similar to *Othello*’s Iago, who, as Michael Hall notes, also has a penchant for animalizing people (117). Iago figures the consummation of Othello and Desdemona’s marriage as a “making [of] the beast with two backs” (1.1.118); Othello he imagines as a “Barbary horse” (1.1.113) or an “old black ram [...] tuppung [Desdemona, Brabantio’s] white ewe” (1.1.88-89).⁵² Iago also, not surprisingly, holds that there is no such thing as love. He speaks to Roderigo of “our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts,” saying to his companion, “I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion [of these]” (1.3.325-327). But Iago is not done: love, he maintains, “is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will” (1.3.329). By reducing humans to animals Iago and Thersites both not only reduce love to lust or, to put it in the terms of *Troilus and Cressida*, “appetite,” but also confirm that in the love-less world of Shakespeare’s play it is ultimately “will” that reigns. On that note, let us recall the conclusion of Ulysses argument in 1.3:

Then everything includes itself in power,
 Power into will, will into appetite;
 And appetite, an universal wolf,
 So doubly seconded with will and power,

⁵¹ Pandarus, it may be recalled, also calls Paris and Helen—or at least their generation—“vipers.”

⁵² I am citing *Othello* in *The Norton Shakespeare*.

Must make performe an universal prey,
And last eat up himself. (1.3.118-123)⁵³

In this speech, Shakespeare brings together the major themes of his play: power (or force), will, and appetite.⁵⁴ He also, by virtue of Ulysses's animal metaphor, tells us something about the nature of action in the world he has created. The carnivorous wolf, which has eaten everything there is to eat must, in the end, consume itself. Likewise, the lover, whose love is in essentials lust (for that is the nature of a love with a bad object, a beloved onto which one must irrationally force value), moves ultimately towards self-destruction and, if not immobility, perverse action.

4.9 Identity and (In)Action

This penultimate section explores the relationship between the beloved, the lover (particularly his self-integrity or sense of self), and his ability to act. Nowhere is the relationship between these three more clearly evoked than in the climactic 5.2. In this scene, Troilus, having been smuggled into the Greek camp by Ulysses, spies on Cressida as she pledges herself to Diomedes. Here, it is not only Troilus and Ulysses who spy, however; Thersites sees (and comments on) everything. From the stage business alone, one could reach the conclusion that 5.2 depicts a kind of fragmentation, a dis-integration.

Audiences observe an observer (Thersites) observing observers (Troilus and Ulysses)

⁵³ Another connection to *Othello* is worth noting. In 3.3 of that play, Othello says, "Perdition catch my soul / But I do love thee [Desdemona], and when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again" (3.3.91-93). Here, also, Shakespeare implies an association between love and order.

⁵⁴ While I will discuss appetite again, briefly, in the context of Troilus's anticipation of his night with Cressida, I want to take this opportunity to highlight a number of critical remarks on the theme. Muir notes that there are 75 food images in *Troilus and Cressida* (30). Thomas writes that appetite is "seldom natural in the play: it is excessive and focuses on scraps or dregs" (129). Kaula submits that the "imagery of tasting, satiety, and revulsion" in the play "indicates [a] sense of the highly unstable, deceptive nature of experience in the real world" (274).

Those critics who find in the play the depiction of an existential crisis naturally see things coming to a head in this scene. Troilus watches as Cressida ‘reveals’ her worth, and the result is that he falls to pieces. In this moment, the consequences of his question in 2.2 rise up before his eyes: “How may I avoid / Although my will distaste what it elected / The wife I chose?” (2.2.64-66). But not only *he* falls to pieces; his world does too. Charles Williams submits that after Troilus perceives “Cressida’s mutability,” he “undergoes an entire subversion of his whole experience” (*English* 58, 59). Such a subversion is inescapable once it becomes clear to him that his will—which is, in truth, the only mediator between him—or any individual—and the world is found to be fallible, to have *valued* badly. Linking this moment with the one in 2.2 where Ulysses speaks about degree, Williams writes, “the plagues, portents, and mutinies [of Ulysses’s speech] have begun to ‘divert and crack, rend and deracinate’ [Troilus’s] being” (61).

Troilus’s first response to Cressida’s betrayal is perplexity; he asks, “Was Cressid here?” (5.2.123). He denies it: “She was not, sure,” and in response to his denial, Ulysses affirms, “Most sure she was” (5.2.124). Troilus asks again, “This she?” and once again answers his own question, “No.” The person he saw is, rather, “Diomed’s Cressida” (5.2.135). And how can Diomed’s Cressida also be his? Troilus’s reasoning in this moment is revealing:

If beauty have a soul, this is not she;
If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies,
If sanctimony be the gods’ delight,
If there be rule in unity itself,
This was not she. (5.2.136-140)

It is a stunning set of conditionals, both because of what we know about Troilus and because it seems so foreign to this play; it belongs, rather, in *Romeo and Juliet*. When Juliet learns that Romeo has killed Tybalt, her difficulty assimilating this knowledge manifests in a series of Petrarchan oppositions: “Beautiful tyrant, fiend angelical,” “Dove-feathered raven, wolvis-ravening lamb,” “A damnèd saint, an honourable villain” (3.2.75, 76, 79). These oppositions, which describe Romeo, express the same inability to reconcile two things that Troilus’s words do above. But in *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet’s mind is moved from Petrarchan oppositions to a Dantean conception of metaphysical love by virtue of which the lovers may be reconciled in “soul.” Juliet realises that her relationship with Romeo—a relationship requiring “vows” and clearly conceived of in the play as ‘sanctified’—supersedes her kinship with Tybalt: “My husband lives, that Tybalt would have slain, / And Tybalt’s dead, that would have slain my husband. / All this is comfort” (3.2.105-107). While it may be argued that Shakespeare allows Juliet too easily to find her comfort, to solve the Petrarchan problem of the two beloveds (human and divine, Laura and God, kin-slaying Romeo and husband Romeo), this is the end towards which the tragedy has been tending from the beginning.

Though Troilus’s words show recourse to the metaphysical, his own trajectory of love has been decidedly different from Juliet’s. While it may be true, as David Kaula suggests, that “[w]hen Troilus envisions the object of his yearning, he does so in [a] clear, rarified, quasi-mythical imagery” that “implies a complete escape from the intricacies of [the] profane [...] world” (273), his yearning has not in any way been metaphysical. In anticipation of his first night with Cressida, Troilus reflects on “[w]hat will it be / When

that the wat'ry palate tastes indeed / Love's thrice repurèd nectar?" (3.2.18-20). Again, answering his own question, he says:

death, I fear me,
Swooning destruction, or some joy too fine,
Too subtle-potent, tuned too sharp in sweetness,
For the capacity of my ruder powers.
I fear it much, and I do fear besides
That I shall lose distinction in my joys. (3.2.18-25)

Critics generally condemn Troilus for his sentiments in this speech. He is, typically, considering himself rather than Cressida. But that is not the point I want to make: it's rather that Cressida only features in this speech as "nectar," which is perhaps a step up from "cake" (as in 1.1), but still very much something to be consumed. Additionally, while Chaucer's Troilus also experiences fear in the moment of what will ostensibly be the loss of his virginity and, indeed, even swoons when he is forced to confess that he perpetuated a lie to get Criseyde to pity him, Shakespeare's Troilus is only afraid that he will not be able to *fully* experience his "joys." Joys, of course, functions euphemistically, here, signifying something rather less ideal than "joy." As Thomas writes, in the love-plot of *Troilus and Cressida*, the "urgent drives of sex and luxury obliterate signs of finer feelings" (124). Despite what Troilus says, even what he feels, all he wants is sex.⁵⁶

Thus, Troilus's metaphysical complaint in 5.2 does the opposite of reconcile the two Cressidas; rather, it aggravates the problem. Medcalf puts it this way: "If value exists [...] Cressida is his, and not the Cressida he can see, who is Diomedes's" (296). What he

⁵⁶ Longo writes of "Troilus's ironic relationship to love: he thinks himself to be a romantic idealist whereas he is really erotic and sensual" (5). Thomas similarly says that "the romantic Troilus wants to see the world in terms of wholes and absolutes" but that, in contradistinction to those wants, that the world he lives in—as well as those characters who inhabit it—insist "on breaking everything down into fragments (87). In this conception, Troilus is both of his world and not of it.

means is that were Troilus Juliet, were he a lover whose love is born of a beloved's essential value, indeed, were he one actually *drawn* by love, then his love (and beloved) would remain intact. This is arguably what happens in Chaucer's poem, for though Criseyde betrays Troilus, Chaucer has shaped the narrative in such a way that Criseyde cannot be 'unloved'; the terms in which Troilus's love was conceived make that love necessarily enduring. A *deus ex machina* conclusion to Shakespeare's play is not possible, for, here, there are no *dei* to intervene; essential value doesn't exist. Troilus's terms in 5.2 are not rooted in his experience of love; they are foolishly idealistic and fall flat.

Troilus's most famous line in 5.2 comes directly after his conditional set:

This is, and is not, Cressid.
Within my soul there doth conduce a fight
Of this strange nature, that a thing inseparate
Divides more wider than the sky and earth. (5.2.144-147)

Troilus cannot conceive of a Cressida who pledges herself to Diomedes. We should not blame him, for because Shakespeare has collapsed the plot, it's only been one night since Cressida and he were in bed together. Hall writes, "from a Petrarchan point of view it is simply impossible that a woman could sincerely pledge love in the morning and then have a new lover by evening, but that is exactly what we see" (137). Hall's comment is telling, for even though Troilus, as I have asserted, is dealing with the 'Petrarchan' problem of two beloveds, Petrarch never imagined such an extreme dichotomy. *The Secret's* Franciscus believes that he has not entrusted his "soul to a mortal thing"; that he *has* is only slowly

revealed to him. Here, the revelation that Troilus *has* is both sudden and undeniable.⁵⁷ But Cressida is not just a “mortal thing”; she is a debased mortal thing.

Troilus continues reasoning:

Instance, O instance, strong as Pluto's gates:
Cressid is mine, tied with the bonds of heaven.
Instance, O instance, strong as heaven itself:
The bonds of heaven are slipped, dissolved and loosed,
And with another knot, five-finger-tied,
The fractions of her faith, orts of her love,
The fragments, scraps, the bits and greasy relics
Of her o'er-eaten faith are given to Diomed.

Troilus cannot maintain both views of Cressida; he cannot reconcile them as Dante or Juliet; nor can he repudiate the mortal Cressida and turn to the gods like Petrarch's Franciscus, for the “bonds of heaven are slipped.” There is, above, a passing allusion to Chaucer: the knot “five-finger-tied.” In *The Parson's Tale*, Chaucer references the five fingers of the devil, each of which signifies a vice. The fifth finger “is the stynking dede of Leccherie” (861).⁵⁸ As this allusion makes clear, Troilus can't even maintain the mortal Cressida as his beloved, for she no longer exists; her lecherous actions with Diomedes have effected in Troilus's eyes the loss of her value.

Curiously, it is Cressida who pinpoints where Troilus went wrong. After Diomedes exits and she is left alone (with Troilus, Ulysses, and Thersites watching), she says,

One eye yet looks on thee [Troilus],
But with my heart the other eye doth see [Diomedes].
Ah, poor our sex! This fault in us I find,

⁵⁷ Bradbrook writes that “while Chaucer dwells on the pangs of suspense, and of ebbing hope [...] Shakespeare uses an extreme form of shock, of dramatic reversal and recognition” (317).

⁵⁸ “The firste finger is the fool looking of the fool woman and the fool man [...] The seconde finger is the vileyns touching in wikkede manere [...] The thridde, is foule words, that fareth lyk fyr that right anon brenneth the herte. The fourthe finger is the kissing” (851ff).

The error of our eye directs our mind;
What error leads must err – O, then conclude
Minds swayed by eyes are full of turpitude. (5.2.110)

Despite what she says about her sex, the fault is a human one. Troilus, who earlier speaks of his “will “enkindled by [his] eyes and ears” (2.2.62) allows error to direct his mind. The specific error, we might say, is asserting that value dwells in particular will, that will determines value, and that value, in turn, provides the key factor in determining right action.⁵⁹ Cressida’s conclusion, that “[w]hat error leads must err” is confirmed in Troilus in this scene.

There are two consequences of Troilus’s erring: the first is the disintegration of his self. This is seen in his interactions with Ulysses in 5.2. To Ulysses’s urging that he leave the Greek camp (Ulysses fears that Troilus will ‘make a scene’), Troilus says, “There is between my will and all offences / A guard of patience” (5.2.55). Five lines later, Ulysses feels compelled to remind Troilus, who is becoming animated, that he has promised to be patient, and Troilus responds, “I will not be myself, nor have cognition / Of what I feel. I am all patience” (5.2.60). And, then, once more, at Ulysses’s prompting, Troilus says, “I will be patient; outwardly I will” (5.2.68). Later, after a particularly violent outburst, Ulysses is compelled to say, “O, contain yourself; / Your passion draws ears hither” (5.2.178-179). What all of these speeches have in common is that they characterize Troilus as unnaturally separated from himself. He cannot “contain” himself, both in the colloquial sense Ulysses intends, but also in psychological terms. His most telling remark is that in which he states he will not have “cognition” of his feelings; here, he essentially says he will

⁵⁹ I also say this on page 30.

shut off his reason. It is a significant assertion because his reason, in this particular circumstance, and in a properly configured soul, might call for action.

But Troilus cannot act, and this is the second consequence of his erring. Indeed, there is more than one way in which Troilus *can't* act. First, he is in the Greek camp (past curfew, as it were), and were he to take action against Diomedes (an action Ulysses would undoubtedly resist), it would be his end. More significantly, though, Troilus seems unable to do anything in this scene except to watch. He stands rooted to his spot while the drama of Cressida and Diomedes unfolds before him. Ulysses, whose repeated attempts to calm Troilus go unheeded, urges him multiple times to depart. But always Troilus's response to this urging is the same: "stay" (5.2.42, 43, 52). Finally, in response to Ulysses's question, "All's done, my lord [...] Why stay we then?" (5.2.113), Troilus explains his inability or unwillingness (if these are ultimately different) to leave; he stays, he says, "[t]o make a recordation to [his] soul / Of every syllable that here was spoke" (5.2.114-115). It is no doubt significant that Shakespeare makes his climactic scene one in which Troilus does nothing at all and Cressida does only that which everyone knows already she must do. The meta-theatrical subject, here, is inaction rather than action. One might go further and suggest that Shakespeare depicts in 5.2 a kind of *akrasia*. Mazzotta, whom I quote in Chapter 2, writes that "few poets have caught, as much as Petrarch has, love's disabling power" (54); as I have made clear, *Troilus and Cressida* is a thoroughly Petrarchan play. But, as I also say in the first chapter, according to an Augustinian perspective, it is not that love disables the lover so much as a lover may have multiple objects of love, and the weights of these loves function to hold him in an akrastic state. Here, in 5.2, the case is different.

Troilus does not have multiple objects of love; he has none. He is not, in this moment, a lover and therefore does not move.

Immobility is emblematic of Troilus's subsequent behaviour. In Chaucer's poem, Troilus's response to Criseyde's betrayal is to seek out Diomedes on the battlefield. And while he is unsuccessful in killing the Greek, his "knyghthod and his grete myght" (5.1754) are both very much in evidence whenever he encounters him. Troilus is, of course, slain by Achilles (5.1806), and we know the rest of the story: his soul, freed from his body, ascends to the heavens. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Troilus intends to visit "vengeance" (5.3.47) upon Diomedes and, indeed, encounters him twice in battle (in 5.4 and 5.6), but all these encounters afford him is the ridicule that issues from Diomedes's mouth, for the Greek knows from whom he's taken Cressida. Troilus does not kill Diomedes, and Diomedes does not kill him. Neither, crucially, does Achilles. In perhaps the clearest indication of Shakespeare's intention in his play, Troilus doesn't die. This may, at first glance, be seen as a victory: Troilus survives beyond the bounds of the text; he is freed from literary traditional constraint. But what Shakespeare does by *not* killing Troilus is effectively prevent him from experiencing that final and all-important movement he does in Chaucer's poem.

This end for Troilus does not come as a surprise. In fact, Shakespeare has been signalling from the beginning that there are problems with both the lover's integrity of self and his capacity for action. In 1.1, Troilus's opening line is "Call here my varlet: I'll unarm again. / Why should I war without the walls of Troy / That find such cruel battle here within?" (1.1.1-3). Thompson, who notes that "drama must concentrate on deeds" (149), finds Troilus's first speech "a deliberate anti-climax to the play's prologue, and a warning to

the audience that this play [...] is not going to take the ideals of heroism and romance at their face value” (116).⁶⁰ Indeed, in 1.1, in addition to ‘unarming’—to gearing down rather than up—Troilus claims to be “weaker than a woman’s tear” (1.1.9). This self-characterization is certainly suggestive of the relationship between how he understands himself and what he thinks himself capable of doing.⁶¹

There is, additionally, Troilus’s famous admission that he “cannot come to Cressid but by Pandar” (1.1.93), and we see something of how Troilus’s inability functions in 1.2. This is the scene in which Pandarus does his best to praise Troilus to Cressida at the expense of Hector. At the conclusion of the scene, the Trojans return from the field of battle (to which Troilus eventually went at the end of 1.1), and Pandarus urges Cressida not only to look for Troilus but to look kindly upon him. Why should she do so? Because, according to Pandarus, Troilus is not himself:

PANDARUS Well, I say Troilus is Troilus.

CRESSIDA

Then you say as I say; for I am sure

He is not Hector.

PANDARUS No, nor Hector is not Troilus in some degrees.

CRESSIDA

’Tis just each of them: he is himself.

PANDARUS Himself? Alas, poor Troilus! I would he were –

CRESSIDA So he is.

[...]

PANDARUS Himself? No, he’s not himself. Would a were himself!

(1.2.64-74)

⁶⁰ She adds, whereas Chaucer’s “first book ends triumphantly with a eulogy on how love has improved Troilus in every way,” the play’s opening scene, “although ending with Troilus’s return to the battlefield, seems to illustrate his inconsistency in this rather than his renewed valour” (118)

⁶¹ Troilus’s phrase, “weaker than a woman’s tear,” calls to mind Patroclus’s “vivid figure” (Thomas 102): “like a dew-drop from the lion’s mane [...] shook to air” (3.3.223-224). Whether it is a tear or a drop of dew, the insubstantiality, the capacity to dis-integrate, of Troilus’s identity is made patent.

Pandarus means that Troilus is out of sorts, but his and Cressida's repeated use of 'self' suggests an alternate reading. Troilus, in loving Cressida, is not himself.⁶² It may be a minor point, but it is bolstered by what happens in the scene—or, rather, what doesn't. The Trojans returning from battle parade by Cressida's house, and as they pass Pandarus points out both the notable warriors and how they are inferior, in one way or another, to Troilus. When Troilus does pass, Pandarus fails, at first, to note him, and Cressida takes advantage of her opportunity, saying, "What sneaking fellow comes yonder?" (1.2.214). That Pandarus falls for her trick, agreeing, at least, temporarily, that Troilus *is* a sneaking fellow, reinforces the claim that Troilus is, somehow, not himself. *Were* he, surely Pandarus would have recognized him sooner. But there's something more fundamentally problematic about this stage-setting scene, and it speaks volumes about the nature of action in the play. The Trojans are *parading*. Parading is movement without will; it is artificial action, choreographed movement. One parades for no other reason than to be seen. What Shakespeare gives us in 1.2, then, is an action that accords with the view that perception is reality.

In 3.1, Shakespeare shows us again that the kind of love depicted in this play does not move lovers as it does in *Romeo and Juliet*. In this scene, Paris says, "I would fain have armed today, but my Nell would not have it so" (3.1.128-129). Like Troilus in 1.1, love makes Paris take off his armour, just as he bids Helen do for Hector at the end of the scene. Palmer writes, "Accidie is surely there in Helen's apartment, when Venus has again

⁶² It occurs to me that both "loving" and "Cressida" in this sentence could be put in scare quotes, for my point has been that Troilus's love is something less than love and that Cressida is something less than (he imagines, at least) Cressida is.

disarmed Mars” (77).⁶³ But Paris is not the only ‘Mars’ to be ‘disabled’ by his love; Achilles has a beloved, too, the Trojan princess Polyxena. In something of a unique twist, Shakespeare has Polyxena write her lover a letter, as Achilles explains to Patroclus in the following passage:

I am thwarted quite
From my great purpose in tomorrow’s battle.
Here is a letter from Queen Hecuba,
A token from her daughter, my fair love,
Both taxing me and gaging me to keep
An oath that I have sworn. I will not break it.
[...]
This night in banqueting must all be spent. (5.1.36-45)

We might recall Agamemnon’s characterization of the challenges met by those who participate in “actions highest reared” or, as here, in a “great purpose.” Those challenges are “[c]hecks and disasters”; Achilles figures them as a ‘thwarting’ (admittedly, prompted by an “oath”). But Agamemnon has not the wherewithal to see or solve the Greeks’ problems, and, similarly, Achilles seems unconcerned with the effect of his love on him. Palmer writes, he “becomes inert, slothful and treacherous, for he betrays the Greek cause by withdrawal from fighting” (91). Curiously, Patroclus sees Achilles’s situation far better than Achilles himself. He urges him to “throw down Hector [rather] than Polyxena” (3.3.207), proceeding to say:

A woman impudent and mannish grown
Is not more loathed than an effeminate man

⁶³ Acedia denotes “physical or mental slothfulness” or the “condition leading to listlessness and lack of interest in life” (*OED*, “accidie, n.”). The Latin suggests a lack of care, which certainly describes Paris, here. The concept of acedia is seemingly related to the concept of akrasia, which is defined as “weakness of will” or the “state of tending to act against one’s better judgement” (*OED*, “akrasia, n.”). One might theorize that Paris, in repeatedly acting against his better judgement, has been reduced to his current state of acedia. Acedia in Christianity is sometimes thought of as a ‘capital’ sin. The figure of Dante’s Satan, while employed in Chapter 2 as an example of akrasia, may also be thought of as experiencing both acedia and its consequences.

In time of action.

[...]

[R]ouse yourself, and the weak wanton Cupid

Shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold. (3.3.217-222)

While it is not clear that Achilles does rid himself of the Cupid burdening him, he does eventually take up arms. He is prompted to do so, as in Homer's epic, by the death of Patroclus, his "masculine whore" (according to Thersites).⁶⁴ While Achilles fighting may seem to qualify my claims about the disabling or immobilizing effects of 'love' in this play, if we attend to the warrior's subsequent actions, we will see there is something askew about them, even perverse.

In the *Iliad*, after Achilles kills Hector, he drags the Trojan's body from his chariot for all to see as he drives before the walls of Troy. It is not the noblest action, but what happens in 5.7 and 5.8 of Shakespeare's play is action of another category entirely. In 5.7, Achilles instructs his Myrmidons, "when I have the bloody Hector found, / Empale him with your weapons round about; / In fellest manner execute your arms" (5.7.4-6). This is bad—the "gang leader" (Thomas 123) seems to be planning an unfair fight—but it could be worse. Not surprisingly, in 5.8, when Achilles and his men do encounter Hector, it becomes worse. For they find him unarmed. Hector, in this play, a courtier through and through, says, "I am unarmed; forgo this vantage, Greek" (5.8.9). Muir notes that the "fair play' proper to a medieval tournament is unsuitable in war. Hector, for all his charm and heroism, is doomed: he does not realize that the age of chivalry is dead" (34). But Hector's failing may be more precisely delineated than that; it is, rather, that despite his decision to

⁶⁴ So perhaps he is moved by a different love than that for Polyxena.

embrace perceived value by agreeing to keep Helen, he clearly still holds that some things are essentially valuable and, therefore, worthy of admiration or respect. He, in his unarmed state, is afforded neither by Achilles and his men.

There is nothing noble about Achilles's slaughter of Hector; indeed, even if there were, even if somehow it were a fair fight, Achilles isn't actually the one who slaughters him. According to Thomas, Achilles "appears near the foot of the ladder of human worth in this play" (123), a characterization his subsequent actions confirm: he proclaims that "Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain" (5.8.14). It is not true, but that is hardly of concern to the 'great' warrior, for he has been taught by Ulysses that "no man is the lord of anything [...] [t]ill he communicate his parts to others" (3.3.15, 17). Achilles knows that his declaration—whether the substance of that declaration accurately portrays "his parts" or not—will make it(self) true, and he is right: in the next scene, Diomedes says, "The bruit is Hector's slain, and by Achilles" (5.9.5). It is not incidental that "despite Achilles's reputation as a fighting machine, [Shakespeare provides] no descriptions of his performance on the battlefield" (Thomas 123). Like the parading of Trojans in 2.2, Achilles has achieved the appearance of action without the reality.

4.10 In Sum

"All the argument is a whore and a cuckold," says Thersites, "a good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death upon!" (2.3.68-70). Critics tend to seize upon the first part of Thersites's pronouncement. It is, indeed, the same pronouncement made by the Prologue, though in less couched terms. And it seems to be true: according to Bayley, "[n]o

one can stand up against Thersites because all unknowingly share the same conviction with him, the conviction that everything is meaningless except the present moment” (202). And just as the present moment does not endure, value does not either—this despite the best attempts of the naïve lover’s will to make it do so. Value is ultimately only a passing “fashion” (Bayley 202).

That word, fashion, invites us to consider the second part of Thersites’s pronouncement, for it is just a different way of saying “faction,” a “doing” or the “action” of making, according to the *OED* (“faction, n.¹” 1.b.). Now when Thersites speaks of “emulous factions,” our first thought is naturally of the Greeks and the Trojans, the two ‘dissenting groups’ (“faction,” n.1 2.a.) of the Trojan War. These groups are necessarily ‘rivals’ (“emulous,” adj. 1.a.). Eric S. Mallin sees Shakespeare’s inspiration for these two groups in the noblemen and gentlemen rivalling for preferment in Elizabeth I’s court: “Emulous factions,” he writes, “were a familiar construct of the Elizabethan cultural system” (173 n. 23). In *Troilus and Cressida*, Mallin argues, we see that “emulous, furious male desire is its own and only object” (158). Achilles does not seek out Hector because he desires to fight a rival equal in *value* to himself; he does so because he desires fame. Hector, therefore, becomes a means to the end of feeding Achilles’s appetite.

The rivalry between the Greeks and the Trojans, like the rivalry between Achilles and Hector, ends in blood. This is both fitting and ironic, for that, according to Shakespeare, is also where it begins: in instinct, in passion, in lust. For this reason, “emulous factions” must connote more than simply ‘dissenting rivals’; it must gesture towards the nature of ‘doings’ or ‘actions’ in the play. What *Troilus and Cressida* presents us

with its 'imitations' ("emulous," adj. 1.b.) of actions—imitations in the sense of 'false,' actions that do not live up to the ideal of action. If it sounds like I am alluding, here, to Aristotle's concept of mimesis, I suppose I am, though it is a perverted mimesis. John Bayley puts it well, saying that Shakespeare's *Troilus* "becomes virtually a parody of representation and action, the Aristotelian concept of the play" (192). According to Palmer, for most the play's "dramatic action, it is *trivial* things that are done—games, rituals, mere paradigms of serious act. Greeks and Trojans alike [...] perform no actions of weight" (66). The irony, here, is that by *forcing* outcomes (which is, itself, predicated on the forcing of value onto particular objects), these would-be actors accomplish less than those who are genuinely moved by the love of (theological) romance. Palmer further asserts that if a given character does perform an action of seeming significance, it ends up being the case that he (or she) has either acted treacherously or become the victim of treachery (65). Tillyard says that Shakespeare "choose[s] to show things happening rather than men so making things happen" (91) and Palmer that the play "deals with inaction" (40). I would say, it is rather that there is action in the play, but at a certain point it ceases, that the potentiality for action exists but that potentiality is ultimately lost.

Donaldson, ever the advocate for Cressida, writes that

for us to see from the beginning of the play no potentiality in Cressida for a better future than the one we know she will have—something we grant readily to Chaucer's Criseyde—is to reduce the play's vision to that of Thersites. And that is a vision beyond faith, beyond hope, beyond the charity of the imagination, and beneath humanity. (118)

Here, the critic of medieval literature suggests that Shakespeare's *Troilus* is less a 'problem' than it is tragic. Davis-Brown, who also happens to be a critic sympathetic to Cressida,

believes that in the end, Troilus “finally chooses to act [...] but certainly knowing his actions can have little meaning given Troy’s position” (31). He does say, “As much as I do Cressid love, / So much by weight hate I her Diomed” (5.2.165-166). The ending of *Troilus and Cressida* may be likened to the ending of *King Lear* what with all its bleakness and nihilism. The difference, of course, is that if Troilus has a moment of recognition, he does not recognize anything like what Lear does.

In 5.10, the play’s last scene, Troilus says to Aeneas:

Go in to Troy and say there ‘Hector’s dead’.
There is a word will Priam turn to stone,
Make wells and Niobes of the maids and wives,
Cold statues of the youth, and, in a word,
Scare Troy out of itself. (5.10.17-21)

In three different instances, Troilus conjures an image of immobility: Priam turned to stone, youth made into statues, and Troy scared out of itself. This last reference also speaks to the city’s loss of identity, for its hero, its beloved, Hector is no more. There is additionally that same chill, which is present the morning after Troilus and Cressida’s first and only night together. Troilus, though, is not done: “Hector,” he says again, “is dead” and then “there is no more to say” (5.10.22). Like Hamlet, he tells us when we’re at the end. This last word of Troilus, not surprisingly, has a precedent in Chaucer. In Book V, just after he famously confesses that he hates Criseyde (5.1732), Pandarus says “And fro this world, almighty God I preye / Deliver hire [Criseyde] soon! I kan namore seye” (5.1741-1742). Pandarus calls for Criseyde’s death, and that, he lets us know, is *his* last word. Shakespeare’s Troilus, in the end, aligns himself with Chaucer’s Pandarus, with the

materialist bawd with no eye for the metaphysical, he who could never imagine the ascent
his friend experiences shortly after shuffling off his mortal coil.

CHAPTER 5

TWELFTH NIGHT

5.1 Antonio

There is no better Shakespearean example of a man moved by love than *Twelfth Night*'s Antonio. The first time we encounter Antonio (in 2.1), he and Sebastian have just arrived in Illyria. They have been, we later learn, three months at sea, and during this time Antonio has developed more than an ordinary attachment to the youth he “snatched [...] out of the jaws of death” (3.4.351).¹ Indeed, upon arriving in a country that poses so many dangers to him—he is wanted for crimes against the Duke Orsino—Antonio’s only concern is that Sebastian desires to part ways. “Will you stay no longer? Nor will you not that I go with you?” (2.1.1-2) he asks his young friend to no effect. And when Sebastian does leave—for Orsino’s court, of all places—Antonio resolves, “Come what may, I do adore thee so, / That danger shall seem sport, and I will go” (2.1.42-43).

When next we meet Antonio (in 3.3), he has re-united with Sebastian and is mid-confession of his inability to stay behind. A notable discrepancy exists between 2.1’s portrayal of Antonio’s resolution to follow Sebastian and his accounting for it here:

My desire
More sharp than filed steel, did spur me forth,

¹ All quotations from *Twelfth Night* are from the Oxford World’s Classics text, edited by Roger Warren and Stanley Wells.

And not all love to see you – though so much
As might have drawn one to a longer voyage –
But jealousy what might befall your travel,
Being skillless in these parts, which to a stranger,
Unguided and unfriended, often prove
Rough and unhospitable. My willing love
The rather by these arguments of fear
Set forth in your pursuit. (3.3.4-13)

Whereas in the former scene Antonio chooses (saying “I will”) to pursue the young man, clearly aware of the implications of his actions (“I have many enemies in Orsino’s court” (2.1.40)), in this speech he attributes the agency for his movement to his “desire.” It “did spur” him—the grammatical object of his phrase—to follow Sebastian. Reiterating this sentiment at the end of his speech (and, while doing so, replacing “desire” with “willing love,” a phrase that in itself makes the central idea of theological romance explicit), Antonio takes things further, removing himself almost entirely from the syntactical and, thus, volitional equation. While it is certainly possible to read his words, “My willing love ... set [me] forth in your pursuit,” that is not precisely what he says. His grammar rather seems to indicate that his love set *itself* forth. Antonio’s use of the verb “drawn” to describe the manner of in which he is moved is, of course, decidedly Augustinian.

The last time we see Antonio (in 5.1), he portrays himself as even less an agent of his movement than in 3.3. Explaining to Orsino how he came to venture so boldly into enemy territory, he says, “A witchcraft drew me hither” (5.1.70). As before, he enlists the verb *to draw* or, rather, *to be drawn*, but now, surprisingly, he seems to understand his *mover* not only as separate from himself but as hostile. He denies, in essence, that his situation exhibits any volitional ambiguity at all. What makes his claim remarkable is that only

moments after making it, and for reasons largely unexplained, Antonio abruptly returns to something far nearer his original statement in 2.1. He says, “For [Sebastian’s] sake / Did I expose myself, pure for his love” (5.1.76-7). Whether he is, here, rejecting his earlier eschewals of responsibility or simply mystified by the manner of his movement (which would be perfectly appropriate), it is clear that his actions exhibit a high degree of volitional ambiguity. It is not only, then, as Carol Thomas Neely submits, that Antonio is “the play’s most passionate, expressive, and constant lover” (289); he is also the one whose actions most accurately convey the notion that love—the force, mysteriously, both one with the lover and separate from him—functions as will.

5.2 Introduction

In Antonio, Shakespeare provides readers of *Twelfth Night* with an especially useful paradigm, for none of the play’s other characters is so straightforwardly moved by love. Orsino and Olivia are both curious examples of lovers. The former languishes on his couch, stricken by his love for the latter; his love, strangely, does not move him but actually appears to inhibit his movement. The countess is in a state of similar immobility at the play’s beginning: the Captain tells us, Olivia “[h]ath abjured the sight / And company of men” (1.2.37-8), though out of love not for a conventional beloved but rather for her late father and brother; she no longer, we might say, *moves* in society. Her encounter with ‘Cesario’ changes that to some degree, though her consequent movement is still not without its problems. Viola, who expresses her desire to be Orsino’s wife not long after becoming his page, *does* move on account of love, but, unexpectedly, away from her

beloved (that is, to Olivia) rather than towards him. The question of whose love moves her—Orsino’s or her own—is also intriguing. And then, of course, there is Malvolio. While Olivia’s steward is plainly moved by love—to the end of making a spectacle of himself, which, it must be acknowledged, is not all that uncommon for lovers—he seems impelled more by self-love than by any devotion to his mistress. Does such a love fit into theological romance’s lovers paradigm? Whether it does or doesn’t, these few and superficial observations suggest that, in addition to the example of Antonio, *Twelfth Night* offers a complex and complicated exploration of the notion that love functions as will.²

Critics have long noted *Twelfth Night*’s unique focus on love. Harold Jenkins puts it well, writing that in the comedy Shakespeare “gives chief attention to the delineation of romantic love” rather than “delighting in the jolly mix-up of mistaken identities, not to mention their consequences of broken pates” (172). These mix-ups and mistaken identities, and even the broken pates, are, of course, still to be found in the play; they simply do not enjoy the same emphasis as in, for example, *The Comedy of Errors* or *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Neely points to this same disregard for the stock conventions of the genre: “There is no older generation [...] no emphasis on lineage [...] no anticipation of reproduction or the accompanying fear of cuckoldry” (290). The play also contains, as C.L. Barber notes, “little direct sexual reference” (131). It is conceivable that in *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare sets out to explore love—the thing itself—rather than lovers or their foibles.

² A further suggestion of Shakespeare’s interest in volition in *Twelfth Night* may be found in Carol Thomas Neely’s “Lovesickness, Gender, and Subjectivity,” in which she draws attention to both the play’s subtitle, *What You Will*, as well as its “symbolically named willful characters, Viola, Olivia, and Malvolio,” whose names are “all anagrams of their ‘volition’” (286).

The play resembles, at times, a kind of experiment in love.³ Its events take place in what a psychologist might call a ‘controlled environment.’ Illyria, which Viola linguistically links with Elysium, suggests an other-worldliness similar to that of the ‘green world’ in *As You Like It*, but with even less of a connection to reality. ‘Foreigners’ like Viola and Sebastian may enter this strange land, but the concerns of the real world may not. It is no coincidence that shortly after the pair arrive (separately), they become entangled in love relationships and thereafter give little thought to the Messaline of their past. Even the country’s own politics rarely intrude: Orsino, who is a man of some consequence, is portrayed almost exclusively as a lover. Time, too, is strangely absent in Illyria.⁴ Barbara Everett suggests something like this when she writes that the play “lacks any quality of poetic and dramatic ‘urgency’” (195). Viola’s first thought upon learning where she’s washed up is “what shall I do in Illyria?” (1.2.2). And a similarly stymied Sebastian spends his first day in the country wandering around aimlessly; he asks Antonio, “What’s to do? / Shall we go see the relics of this town?” (3.3.18-19). Remarking more pointedly on this timelessness or lack of urgency, Barber writes, “It is amazing how little happens in *Twelfth Night*” (113), and his comment is not without merit. It is only when Olivia realizes, for example, that “[t]he clock upbraids me with the waste of time” (3.1.128) that the thought occurs that some things might need to happen before a conclusion can be reached. It is because of this marked inactivity that we, as the conductors of this experiment (along with

³ Everett compares Orsino’s court, where there is much musing about love, with the court of Castiglione’s in *The Book of the Courtier* (204), in which there is much exploring of love.

⁴ I have already implicitly noted a number differences between *Twelfth Night* and *Troilus and Cressida*: (1) the absence of sexual references; (2) the inability of the outside—the political—world to intrude into the lives of the lovers; (3) the fact that Orsino, in stark contrast to Troilus, is portrayed almost exclusively as a lover; and (4) that time is largely absent in this play’s world.

Shakespeare), ought to pay attention when someone does move, or is moved, for there is, in truth, very little in *Twelfth Night* to prompt anyone to do anything *except* love.

It may be useful to think of my analysis of *Twelfth Night* as an anatomizing of love. There are two reasons for this: first, much of the action of the play is inward rather than outward—psychic, in other words; in order to understand it, we must not only examine the actions of the characters, but (as in the case of Antonio) listen to the way they talk about those actions. Second, Shakespeare’s portrayal of his lovers is shaped in part by the fact that they are all, to one degree or another, afflicted with love-melancholy. If we are to think of love’s movement as a sequence of motions within the individual, which, as my discussion in previous chapters suggests, it is, love-melancholy might be understood as an obstacle standing in the way of normal progress (that is, moving in sequence). Sufferers of the affliction in *Twelfth Night* are characterized outwardly by immobility, among other things, and inwardly by flights of fancy or fantasy: or, in stronger terms, by an imagination unmoored. It is worth recalling, here, Antonio’s claim that a “witchcraft drew [him] hither” (5.1.70), for what does a witch do but cast spells—spells that delude the mind and inhibit one’s faculties. Antonio, in this respect, too, then, is a quintessential lover. While meditation on the beloved is understood in romance as an integral part of love’s movement—though, admittedly, one with the potential to engender a kind of melancholic immobility—it is generally assumed that such an immobility will be overcome. In what follows, I will argue that Shakespeare complicates such a view by casting into doubt the overcome-ability of this obstacle. In doing so, in his exploration of the problems of volition, he makes *Twelfth Night* a companion piece of *Troilus and Cressida*. Here, though, the problem

is not with the beloved, with her value or “imagined worth” (*Troilus* 2.3.166), but with the imagination itself. The *Troilus* even forecasts this problem when Troilus, in anticipation of his night with Cressida, says, “Th’imaginary relish is so sweet / that it enchants my sense” (3.2.17-18).⁵ Shakespeare suggests in *Twelfth Night* that the relish of the unmoored imagination and even the immobility that tends to follow from it are, oxymoronically, and perhaps even paradoxically, an essential part of love’s movement. If it occurs that the play’s characters’ imaginations don’t produce an indefinite immobility, it is, as Olivia says in 5.1, “most wonderful!” (5.1.219). In any case, it would seem that doing ‘what you will’ may not be quite as straightforward as the play’s sub-title makes it sound.

There is not a great deal in the way of criticism that treats *Twelfth Night* as a companion work to the other love plays examined in this dissertation, but some connections have been made. David Schalkwyk thinks of the play not only as “a study of service and master-servant relations” (“Love and Service” 86), in which, for example, “Viola’s abject submission of her will to Orsino’s desires [...] opens the space for an intimacy that encompasses more than the mere social advancement of a favored servant” (90), but also as a work which, along with *Antony and Cleopatra*, reveals that “love is *not* an emotion, even though it does involve emotions.” In “Is Love an Emotion?” Schalkwyk argues that in these two plays, “Love is a form of behavior or disposition over time; it involves [...] ‘commitment and attachment’” (102-103)⁶; in other words, it is *active*. William Bowden, arguing that “human beings do not live by [the doctrine of reason] and never have done so,”

⁵ We might likewise say that Shakespeare forecasts the problem of the value of the beloved in *Romeo and Juliet* when he has Romeo eschew his metaphysical love for Juliet for his ‘furious’ love for Mercutio.

⁶ Schalkwyk is quoting Paul Elkman’s “An Argument for Basic Emotions.”

cites both *Troilus and Cressida* and *Twelfth Night* as plays in which Shakespeare “sees human beings as they are, accepts and loves them as they are, and presents them as they are” (176). Just as we are not to condemn Hector or Troilus for their irrationality, we are not to judge the characters of *Twelfth Night* for succumbing to blind love. Such a reading, however, fails to address the consequences of human beings *being* as they are, especially given that those consequences tend to be either problematic actions or a lack of action. Ruth Nevo distinguishes between Romeo and Juliet, who suffer “on account of their love,” and Viola and Troilus (among others) who “suffer love,” its “frustrations and involvements” (254). Nevo’s view accords with my own that both *Twelfth Night* and the *Troilus* address problems associated with love’s movement. Goddard calls *Twelfth Night* “the culmination and consummation of something [Shakespeare] had been saying almost from the beginning,” adding that the tragedy, which “emerges fully in *Romeo and Juliet*,” is “only hinted at” here (296).

It is hinted at, though, and this marks an important distinction between *Twelfth Night* and Shakespeare’s other comedies. Beneath the surface of the play, there is a lingering sadness or spirit of regret. Paul Dean writes of the play being “steeped [...] in a melancholy which could have turned into something more painful” (503). Barbara Everett speaks of the “fusion of joy and sadness which the play comes to communicate” (197), calling *Twelfth Night* “an elusive work, which [...] seems to resist critics’ attempts to explain or define or even describe the work as a whole, to say how or why it succeeds and why we value and admire it so” (199-200). This could be taken as way of saying that readers or audiences, too, experience the same blind love as the characters. Everett’s comment also gestures implicitly

towards the role of music in the play, for music, while it affects the individual who hears it, is rarely communicable in or reducible to words. Orsino is a case in point: he is “not a poet,” writes Barry Adams, but “a sentimentalist given to musing on poetical subjects like love and music” (58). He revels in music that reflects his melancholy, but thinks the music speaks for itself. Michael Witmore highlights the importance of music in the play, citing Francis Bacon, who conceived of the “refined substance or subtle vibration” of music as something that “penetrated the senses and moved directly to affect the [...] soul” (72). Bacon, notes Witmore, not incidentally, speaks of music as “manifest Motion” that ‘alters’ not when “the Object is removed” (72).

Everett also says that the play “is not without affiliations with the great and complex learned body of Christian-classical materials that in the Renaissance sought to define human love in terms of the spiritual life” (200). This is very much the line of my argument, so I won’t comment on Everett’s claim now, but I do want to note she is not the only one to say such a thing. Dolora Cunningham writes that the “harmony that prevails in the final scenes of [...] *Twelfth Night* consists of a strange and admirable transfiguration of minds which, though not miraculous, is explicitly ascribed to the realm of wonder, beyond the scope of human reason to understand fully” (263). And Dean, in “*Twelfth Night* and the Trinity,” sees a likeness in the play and the poem, “The Phoenix and the Turtle,” in which Shakespeare depicts a mystic union of lovers. He writes, “Shakespeare had a close knowledge of the Platonic tradition as it had been transmitted by the Renaissance, and [...] was also well acquainted with Augustinian theology, if not specifically with the treatise on the Trinity. *Twelfth Night* is a characteristic fusion [...] of these ideas” (504).

This chapter begins by laying out in some detail a number of romance conventions associated with seeing, and then proceeds to document Shakespeare's adherence to these in *Twelfth Night*. Next, it examines the phenomenon of immobility in the play, linking this with the lover's experience of love-melancholy. A more comprehensive exploration of love-melancholy follows, taking into account medieval and Renaissance views of the condition; special attention is given to the condition's mental and spiritual implications, in addition to the physical. The discussion then turns to love-melancholy's 'inner' element, the unmoored imagination, and Shakespeare's various ways of treating it in his play. To put this treatment into context, I return to Chaucer. Thinking like an Augustinian, Chaucer takes up the notion of 'Sweet-Thought,' found in *The Romance of the Rose*, to show the difficulty of remembering one's beloved without slipping into imagination. Returning to *Twelfth Night*, I attempt to highlight an analogous linguistic slippage from "remembrance" to "imagination" or "fancy," "folly," and ultimately, "madness." I conclude with some thoughts on Shakespeare's qualification to theological romance's understanding of love-melancholic immobility and the obstacle it poses to volition.

5.3 Seeing

Everything begins with seeing. That love functions, mysteriously, as will would seem a perfectly valid theological claim, but that seeing precedes love in a *theological* sense, this is perhaps more difficult to accept. And yet, recall Augustine in *On Free Will*, who writes, "the will is not enticed to do anything except by something that has been perceived" (qtd. in Haren 49). Eugene Portalié puts Augustine's claim like this: "Nothing attracts the

will to action unless it is seen” (199). Portalié elaborates, saying that “[t]he will never determines itself without a motive, without the attraction of good perceived in the object” (199). We might say, then, that seeing is theologically and, perhaps, personally necessary for “the will’s inspiration in determining itself” (200). It is easy to see how such an idea lends itself to romance. Robert Crouse writes, “The first moment in the pattern of romance is that in which the lover, beholding the good, is moved, by the beloved’s grace, to plumb the depths of his own unworthiness” (“Love and Friendship” 151-152). This plumbing of depths is arguably one way of describing the will’s determining of itself or, at the very least, one step in the process of its determination. For is there any doubt that the moments in which Dante first sees Beatrice, and Petrarch Laura, are moments of both self-reflection and re-orientation? Even a cursory analysis of key passages from these two poets suggests such a duality.

Dante recounts his first glimpse of Beatrice in *The New Life*:

Her dress, on that day, was of a most noble colour, a subdued and goodly crimson, girdled and adorned in such sort as best suited with her very tender age. At that moment, I say most truly that the spirit of life, which hath its dwelling in the secretest chamber of the heart, began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith; and in trembling it said these words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi*.⁷ At that moment the animate spirit, which dwelleth in the lofty chamber whither all the senses carry their perceptions, was filled with wonder, and speaking more especially unto the spirits of the eyes, said these words: *Apparuit iam beatitudo vestra*.⁸ (547-548)

Here, a few things deserve our attention. First, Dante’s emphasis is not only on the way Beatrice looks, though he does describe her ‘suitable’ attire, but on his seeing of her. The

⁷ “Behold, a god stronger than I; who, coming, shall rule over me.” If no translator is specified, then it is to be assumed I have translated the passage myself.

⁸ “Your happiness has now appeared.”

word *ecce* alerts us to the fact that this is a spectacular moment about both seer and seen, subject and object of the imperative *behold* (if the phrase were in English). Second, Dante explicitly has the “animate spirit,” significant for its role in volition, speak directly to the spirits of his eyes. The eyes receive both the image of the beloved as well as the knowledge that that image represents—knowledge which aids reflection and engenders action. Third, Dante’s happiness, both immanent and anticipated, suggests the re-determination of his will indicated by the work’s title and its first line: “In that part of the book of my memory before the which is little that can be read, there is a rubric, saying, ‘Here beginneth the New Life’” (547). It is only because of the poet’s new life-purpose and, consequently, new temper to his existence, that this happiness is possible for him.

The following account of Petrarch’s first glimpse of Laura is similarly evocative of both self-reflection and re-orientation:

Blessed be the day and the month and the year and the season and the time and the hour and instant and the beautiful countryside and the place where I was struck by the two lovely eyes that have bound me; and blessed be the first sweet trouble I felt on being made one with Love, and the bow and the arrows that pierced me, and the wounds that reach my heart. (*Rime sparse* 61.1-4)

Petrarch, like Dante, emphasizes the seeing and seer over the seen. The result of the poet’s first sight of Laura, curiously, is that he is “struck” by the two instruments with which *she* sees, her “lovely eyes.” While she is, in an important sense, the author of this moment, that is, its primary actor, the emphasis is clearly on his reaction to her. The connection between seeing and knowing is less explicit here than in Dante; no ‘message’ is delivered to Petrarch’s eyes. The poet does, however, suggest two ‘mysteries’—first, eyes that can bind

and, second, the possibility of being “made one with love”—which suggests that there is some cognitive element to this seeing. In other words, something *is* being communicated, but it is a thing not fully understood. Lastly, the blessing Petrarch writes of follows, as it does in Dante, from his seeing/knowing and consequent re-determining of his will. We know this because the poet’s sonnet marks the precise moment and even place at which his ‘new life’ begins.

Seeing is, thus, for both Dante and Petrarch, a literal precursor to spiritual conversion. By the time we arrive at Chaucer, however, the theological elements explicit in the Italian poets have become more muted. Seeing is, of course, still very important, but the knowing accompanying it, as well as the certainty of any beneficial—or action-engendering—self-reflection, no longer seem quite such necessary components. While these differences may be attributed, in part, to the passing of time and to the diverse cultures in which the poets wrote, there is also something to be said for the varying genres. Both Dante and Petrarch are writing, for lack of a better term, *personal* poetry—poetry in which each man is the primary actor. Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* is a narrative poem, lending itself less easily to explicit theological explication; moreover, its lover (Troilus) has not the benefit of hindsight; he is not the poet and, therefore, does not look back on the moment he saw Criseyde similarly cataloguing for his audience the ways in which it was *a moment*.

The narrator of Chaucer’s poem tells us in Book I that Troilus comes to the temple, as was his custom, to view the beautiful women. Among these women is Criseyde, and, as we may recall, she’s “an hevenyssh perfit creature” (1.102-104). The narrator also tells us at

this time that the god of love is not particularly pleased with Troilus: in addition to his gawking at the beautiful women—his looking with no intention of loving—he regularly ridicules lovers for their foibles. In order to teach the young knight a lesson, the god looses an arrow that hits Troilus “at fulle” (1.209), and it is at this precise moment that he sees Criseyde for the first time. Chaucer writes, “thorough a route his eye percede, and so depe it wente, / Til on Criseyde it smot, and ther it stente” (1.271-273). It is a significant moment: like an arrow from the god of love’s bow, which, as we have already seen, plays a role in the passage above from Petrarch, Troilus’s gaze flies through the crowd until it stops on Criseyde. Here we may observe not only the emphasis on seeing found in Chaucer’s predecessors but a conflation of divine and human action: is Troilus’s gaze being directed or does it ‘fly’ of its own accord?

There is more of the ‘meta-visual’ to Troilus’s seeing of Criseyde. At the very moment he looks at her, she has just

let falle
 Her lok a lite aside in swich manere,
 Ascaunces, ‘What, may I nat stonden here?
 And after that hir lokyng gan she lighte
 That nevere thoughte hym seen so good a syghte. (1.290-294)

That Chaucer draws attention not only to Troilus’s seeing of Criseyde but to his seeing of her seeing (or “lokyng”) points to the importance of this essential step in love’s progress. Indeed, the narrator is more explicit, saying that “Love hadde his dwellynge” not in Criseyde, exactly, but in the “subtile stremes of hire yen” (1.304-5). Here, the allusion to Petrarch is difficult to miss.

The conflation of the movements of Troilus's gaze and the god's arrow is likewise not the only thing signaling Chaucer's exploration of volition in this moment. First, Troilus is "astoned" (1.274) by the sight of Criseyde; his reaction is akin to the response of wonder, a precursor to worship. Second, the narrator tells us that as he looks at his beloved more closely, his "herte gan to sprede and rise" (1.278). Given the earlier characterization of Antonio, it might be said that Troilus's heart is drawn both outwards and upwards.

The first time Criseyde sees Troilus is notably different, subtler and described in less detail, but significant nonetheless. At the beginning of Book II, Pandarus visits his niece with the intention of winning her to Troilus's love. She is understandably resistant and does not look fondly upon the possibility of an encounter. After many attempts to elicit the desired response from her, Pandarus leaves, having only provoked her to say that she wishes Troilus *not* to die. Shortly after Pandarus departs, Troilus, returning from the battlefield, passes by her residence. As in the scene in Book I in which Troilus sees Criseyde, the narrator here describes Troilus's appearance:

This Troilus sat on his baye steede
Al armed, save his hed, ful richely;
And wounded was his hors, and gan to blede,
On which he roode a pas ful softly.
But swich a knyghtly sighte trewely
As was on hym, was nought, withouten faille,
To loke on Mars, that god is of bataille.
So lik a man of armes and a knyght
[...]
It was an heven upon hym for to see. (2.624-37)

Troilus is a "sighte." Just as Criseyde is the most beautiful woman in the temple, a "hevenyssh perfit creature," Troilus is, here, both a paragon of chivalry and a "heven" to

look upon. Taking in his “chere” (2.649), Criseyde betrays a response similar to Troilus’s in that it is instantaneous, yet the effect of his appearance on her is also interestingly different: “Who yaf me drynke?” (2.651), she says, not astonished exactly but, apparently, experiencing something like drunkenness. What accounts for the difference in response is not clear, but as I will later show, what happens to Criseyde in this moment is not unlike what happens to Olivia in *Twelfth Night*.

The motif of seeing in *Twelfth Night* is clearly important. In fact, a reference to the phenomenon of love at first sight appears before 20 lines of the comedy have elapsed. Orsino recounts, “O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first / Methought she purged the air of pestilence” (1.1.18-19). His description of the event leaves little doubt that it was an important moment for him, but the juxtaposition of sight with, perhaps, smell (or, in any case, air, which cannot be seen) is at first perplexing. According to Roger Warren and Stanley Wells’s note on the passage, Shakespeare’s contemporaries may have thought “that illnesses were caused by bad air.” While interesting, this notion does little to make Orsino’s statement comprehensible. The duke may indeed be suggesting that Olivia’s presence prompted a dispersal of malignant air particles, but what has that to do with his seeing of her? An answer may be found in Carolin Biewer’s “The Semantics of Passion in Shakespeare’s Comedies.” She writes that “[t]he Elizabethans believed that love entered the body through the eyes in the form of invisible vapours” (506). Thus, Orsino’s seeing of Olivia was also a receiving of specific air particles—particles which in their passage through the atmosphere from her to him dispersed others of a meaner and, obviously, less powerful sort.

The effect the sight of Olivia has on Orsino (as opposed to the environment around him) is similarly convoluted, involving another juxtaposition, though this one perhaps less unfamiliar. He says, “That instant was I turned into a hart, / And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds, / E’er since pursue me” (1.1.20-22). What we might expect is Orsino being transformed into a conventional lover who pursues rather than is pursued. Indeed, the reference to a hart conjures such poems as Wyatt’s “Whoso List to Hount,” in which the speaker also chases a deer. Wyatt’s sonnet, which, notably, is a ‘translation’ of Petrarch’s *Rime* 190, points to a volitional problem: the speaker cannot “[d]rawe [his mind] from the Diere” (5-6); despite his desire to stop, he keeps following, “[f]aynting.” Wyatt’s poem, however, is not likely Shakespeare’s intended reference. The actual allusion is to the legend of Actaeon and Diana, according to which the former sees the goddess bathing and as a punishment is, first, transformed into a stag and, then, pursued and torn apart by his own dogs. Shakespeare’s invocation of this legend serves to portray Orsino not as one acting against his will (as in Wyatt’s poem), but rather as one who is acted upon—the *object* of love’s movement or perhaps even hostility. And yet, as with Antonio earlier, it is Orsino’s own desires, which are like hounds, that pursue him. In other words, the duke effects an artificial separation of himself and his desires, attributing volition to the latter.

It is difficult to know how to take Orsino’s account of his experience of seeing and being pursued. He certainly seems sincere in his love, yet there is some indication that he should not be wholly trusted, for it is clear he *likes* to think of himself as a lover. A similar difficulty exists with Olivia, though the thoughts that lie behind her words are more discernible. While we are told something about the countess in each of the first four scenes

of the play, we do not actually see her until 1.5. In this scene, Orsino has sent Viola, whom he believes Cesario, to woo on his behalf. After a number of attempts on Viola's part to gain entrance, Olivia admits her, but before doing so, conscious of her appearance, she asks her servant to "[g]ive me my veil, come throw it o'er my face" (1.55.158). This gesture points to Olivia's awareness of the importance—the romantic significance—of seeing. While the veil is undoubtedly symbolic of Olivia's grief, it also represents a very practical way in which she might "abjure" (1.2.37) the sight of men—that is, lovers seeking to see their beloved. If she would not be loved, so her reasoning may go, she ought not be seen.

When Viola is admitted into her presence, she is confused by the veil (since she has never seen Olivia) and seeks to discover to whom she should address her message.⁹ After some witty repartee during which she acknowledges herself the countess, Olivia says, "But we will draw the curtain and show you the pictures" (1.5.224). It is a surprising gesture given the trouble she took to cover her face. Yet, as she knew earlier the significance of not being seen, she clearly knows now that of being seen. Her phrase, "draw the curtain," alludes to the spectacular—indeed, theatrical—nature of the move. The theatre exists to be seen. Making the revelation of herself all the more shocking, she asks Viola rather impropriously, "Is't not well done?" (1.5.224). And rather than being struck down by Viola's unconventional reply, "Excellently done, if God did all" (1.5.226), Olivia is emboldened to call attention to her particularly notable features: "*item*, two lips, indifferent red; *item*, two grey eyes, with lids to them; *item*, one neck, one chin, and so forth"

⁹ There are echoes (or prefigurations), here, of Aeneas at the end of 1.3 of *Troilus and Cressida* seeking to address Agamemnon.

(1.5.236-237). While her self-blazon is, at least, partially performed in parody (as such, it is in prose), she recognizes that Viola has been sent from Orsino to “praise her” (1.5.238); thus, she offers these, the ‘materials’ of conventional praise.

It is ironic that while Olivia seems so consumed with being seen, she hardly recognizes that she, too, is seeing in 1.5.¹⁰ After Viola departs from her, she confesses to herself, “Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit / Do give thee five-fold blazon” (1.5.262). This speech is wholly free of parody. Even more telling than her itemizing of Viola’s physical—that is, visual—qualities, though, is the effect having seen her (or him, for she ‘saw’ a young man) has on her. “How now?” she asks herself,

Even so quickly may one catch the plague?
Methinks I feel this youth’s perfections
With an invisible and subtle stealth
To creep in at mine eyes. (1.5.284-287)

Not only does Shakespeare, here, call to mind the theory of vapours evoked by Orsino in 1.1; he likens Olivia to Criseyde, who herself became disoriented after having first seen—or, at least, noticed—Troilus. Olivia, too, feels the effect of an outside agent, and like Orsino, who one might imagine lying prostrate on his couch, she feels it physically.

It is worth noting that there is a tendency in both *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Twelfth Night* to see the moment in which the lover first sees the beloved as a fated event, this despite evidence of some willful involvement on the part of the lovers. In Chaucer’s poem, the narrator tells us Troilus’s gaze just happened to rest on Criseyde: “upon cas bifel” (1.271), he says. While there is some truth to this, the narrator seems, conveniently, to

¹⁰ In *To Analyze Delight*, Gary Taylor suggests that Orsino, well aware of the importance of seeing, “sends a messenger as a rehearsed, perfected image of himself” (97); unfortunately for the Duke, Olivia fails to see past the signifier to the signified.

forget a number of things he's already told us about the circumstances: first, that Troilus comes to the temple specifically to gawk at the beautiful women; and second, that Criseyde is dressed in "blak" (1.309)—that is, in the distinctive clothing set aside for those mourning (something else that connects Olivia with Criseyde). Isn't it likely, rather than fated, that Troilus's eyes would fall on the figure who's dressed differently from everyone else? In *Twelfth Night*, while we don't have a narrator to try to discredit human involvement in 'fated' things, the characters themselves do so. It is fairly clear that Orsino regards himself as one over whom love has control, but Olivia, too, after she's seen Viola, twice attempts to attribute the responsibility for her response to fate. First casually, she says, "Well, let it be" (1.5.288) and then much more earnestly: "Fate, show thy force, ourselves we do not owe. / What is decreed must be; and be this so" (1.5.300-1). Again, while fate may be seen as orchestrating this event, it must not be forgotten that Orsino chose to send Viola, that Olivia did what she had refused to previously and admitted her into her presence, that she withdrew her veil, and even participated in witty banter with Orsino's boy. Whether her "be this so" means that it *is* so, or that she wants it to be so (i.e. subjunctively, *let* this be so), it is clearly an assertion of fate's responsibility for both bringing Cesario into her life and her feelings.¹¹

¹¹ It is possible that the concept of fate is treated differently in tragedy and in comedy, as a hostile force in the former and as Providence, which might be construed to be synonymous with love in the latter. So even though Romeo seems to be suggesting the same thing as Olivia, above, when he says, "But he that hath the steerage of my course / Direct my suit" (1.4.110-111), the implication regarding fate's "force" might be significantly different.

5.4 Immobility

The most immediate response, conventionally, to the type of seeing discussed in the previous section is wonder or amazement, stupefaction. Chaucer's poem aptly portrays such a response: Troilus is "astoned" (1.274) by the sight of Criseyde: literally, he is become like a stone, unmoving. Criseyde's response differs to some extent: she is not completely immobilized, but we may imagine (anachronistically) that her 'drunkenness' causes her to experience the moment in something like slow motion.¹² We may also imagine Orsino's response to have been in accordance with the example set by his Chaucerian predecessor, for although the Duke's metaphorical metamorphosis into a hart suggests a degree of mobility (less active than reactive, however), his description of the event is unquestionably evocative of the wondrous. Olivia's response is singular. Not quite astonished in the way that Troilus and Orsino are, she is, like Criseyde, physically disoriented. This disorientation, however, is not akin to anything so benign as drunkenness; rather, she has been struck with the plague, which, insofar as it *kills*, has the power to render one wholly and ultimately immobile. The extremity of Olivia's characterization of her response, though, only accounts for a part of its singularity. Equally curious is the fact that unlike Troilus, Criseyde, and Orsino, Olivia doesn't descend into a protracted experience of immobility as a result of her seeing. Instead, she does what a lover, in Augustine's view, ought to do: she acts. She is moved by her love, in this particular moment, to send a ring after Viola. While sending Malvolio to perform this task rather than doing it herself does

¹² Incidentally, only seconds *before* she sees Troilus, though after she's been told of his love by Pandarus, she "into hire closet went anon, / And sette here down as stille as ony stone" (2.599.600).

perhaps suggest a degree of inactivity (Orsino, let us recall, does much the same thing with Viola), this is nothing compared with the duke, whose own immobility is in some ways the first indication that something in the world of Shakespeare's play is not right.

If Trevor Nunn's 1996 film version of *Twelfth Night* is to be credited, the first time we see Orsino, he is in a fully recumbent position.¹³ While there are no stage directions that suggest this, surely such a posture—sprawled out on his couch, a limp arm draped across his forehead—is consistent with the mood of the opening lines. Orsino's words, like we might imagine the man himself doing, languish. His first speech offers no hope of imminent change: he asks the musicians to give him "excess" of their music so that his "appetite may sicken and so die" (1.1.2-3).¹⁴ What is surprising is that Orsino's physical state is not significantly altered until the play's final scene, at which point he, for the very first time, actually leaves his residence. Indeed, the duke's inactivity in the play is such that he doesn't even make an appearance in the play's third and fourth acts.¹⁵

Orsino's behaviour in 1.1 is not unique. Troilus's response to seeing Criseyde is to retreat to his room and collapse on his bed (1.358-9). And while it is not clear how long he stays in such a state, it must be some time—long enough, in any case, for him to compose the *Canticus Troili*, his song on the subject of his love. While Troilus does rise from his bed before the poem's end, he returns (always with a collapse) to it a number of times over the

¹³ This scene occurs after he first sees Olivia, though how long after it is impossible to say.

¹⁴ It is worth noting that, despite the reference to appetite, here, there are very few indications in the play that love ought to be thought of in terms of lust, or that the immobility experienced by the characters has anything to do with lust. Even if a given love object (for example, Olivia) is taken or turns out to be 'improper,' Shakespeare's emphasis tends to be on the lover's imagination and its role in his loving.

¹⁵ By saying this, I do not mean to suggest Orsino is not moved *inwardly* before the final act; indeed, I will discuss a moment in which he is so moved shortly.

course of the narrative such that we might call the action his signature move.¹⁶ It is particularly telling that his first meeting with Criseyde takes place while he feigns illness and is confined to a bed (not his own).

Orsino's immobility manifests itself in his general unwillingness to engage in public life. He is a duke and has, no doubt, certain ducal responsibilities, yet we do not see him acting in his capacity. In 2.4, he speaks of his aversion to engagement with the world, telling Feste that the song he performed on the previous evening "did relieve my passion much, / More than light airs and recollected terms / Of these most brisk and giddy-paced times" (2.4.5). What "giddy-paced times" Orsino is referring to can only be guessed at, perhaps, from his past situation with Antonio, for they certainly do not exist in *Twelfth Night*. More explicit still is the Duke's assertion to Viola and his courtiers: "I myself am best / When least in company" (1.4.37-8). That is to say, Orsino is not only reluctant to participate in public life; his preference above all is for privacy and solitude.

Neither is his preference unique. One of the first things the narrator says of Troilus after he's retreated to his room and sung his song about Criseyde is: "So much, day by day, his owene thought / For lust to hire gan quiken and encesse, / That every other charge he sette at nought" (1.442-4). But it's not just the narrator who's aware of Troilus's alteration in behavior; Pandarus charges Troilus with shirking his responsibilities. "O mercy God," he says, "what unhap may this meene? / Han now thus soone Grekes maad yow lene?" (1.552-3). Troilus is one of Troy's princes and, therefore, despite his youth, has an important

¹⁶ In addition to his retreat in Book I, Troilus throws himself onto his bed after he learns that Criseyde is to be traded for Antenor to the Greeks: "withouten wordes mo, / Unto his chambre spedde hym faste alone [...] And hastily upon his bed hym leyde" (4.219-224).

military role to play, in addition, we assume, to boosting morale by being a paragon of chivalry. To lie on his bed while his countrymen fight and die is not only unacceptable to Pandarus; it is unthinkable.

Orsino's situation recalls Troilus's in one further aspect. Each lover's immobility is seen as a problem needing to be remedied. Orsino's man, Curio, asks his master, "Will you go hunt, my lord?" (1.1.16). It is a question meant to rouse Orsino from his stupor. The Duke brings himself to answer his servant, but his response ("What, Curio?" (1.1.16)) is ambiguous and could mean either that his attention has, in fact, been momentarily diverted by the decision of what to hunt or that he simply wasn't listening. Hoping, no doubt, that it is the former, Curio offers, "The hart" (1.1.16). And we all know what happens next: Curio's attempt to 'activate' Orsino ends with the Duke re-entrenching himself in his immobility.

While Pandarus is hardly more successful in rousing his friend, the scene in which he attempts to do so is instructive for readers of *Twelfth Night*. The narrator's account of Pandarus's own 'activating' tactics confirms that the problem of Troilus's (and by comparison, Orsino's) immobility is, first and foremost, a volitional one. Pandarus begins by ridiculing Troilus for his apparent cowardice; he praises the Greeks for their ability to lay a Trojan prince so low. The narrator informs us at this point that Troilus's friend is being sarcastic; he doesn't actually mean what he says, but speaks primarily to enrage:

These wordes seyde he for the nones alle,
That with swich thing he myghte hym angry maken,
And with an angre don his wo to falle,
As for the tyme, and his corage awaken. (1.561-564)

It is essential to note that Pandarus's intention is to awaken Troilus's "corage." In addition to meaning, simply, 'courage' or 'valor,' this word in Middle English signifies "the heart as the seat of [among other things] volition" (*MED*, "corage, n." 1.a.). We might say, then, that Pandarus's diagnosis of Troilus's problem is accurate insofar as he's locating it in the right place: while not knowing the cause of the problem, at least at this point, he's trying as best he can to jump-start his friend's will. Since nothing quite so articulated may be found with respect to Orsino in *Twelfth Night*, Pandarus's diagnosis of the 'seat' of Troilus's problem might well be regarded as an apt way of thinking about the duke.

5.5 Love-Melancholy

I have, thus far, been speaking about immobility as though it were an inexplicable phenomenon in these texts, only vaguely related to love or to the suffering with which it so clearly is linked. This is because I wanted to foreground the volitional importance of the condition afflicting many of the play's characters in one degree or another before considering the lover's immobility in its appropriate context—as an outward sign of love-melancholy.¹⁷

In the *Viticum* of Constantine the African, an influential medieval text on melancholy, there is a short passage on love-melancholy (or *amor hereos* in Constantine's idiom), which among other things affirms the condition's connection with immobility.¹⁸

¹⁷ I do not come close to addressing the love-melancholy of all of the play's characters. A more extensive cataloguing of the various causes of the characters' afflictions can be found in Paul Edmondson's "Melancholy and Desire in *Twelfth Night, Or What You Will*."

¹⁸ The term is problematic, for it seems to have fallen out of use in the Renaissance or to have been metamorphosed incorrectly into 'heroic love,' as, for example, in Burton's *Anatomy*. But, according to Wack, "'Hereos' is a corruption

The twelfth-century monk succinctly writes that in those suffering from love-melancholy “the action of the soul and body is damaged” (qtd. in Wack 189). Interestingly, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, written five centuries later, Robert Burton says much the same thing, though perhaps in less philosophical prose: “Howsoever his present state be pleasing or displeasing, ’tis continuat so long as he loves, *he can do nothing*, think of nothing but her” (731, my emphasis). John Livingston Lowes, who provides a far more comprehensive list of the symptoms of love-melancholy in his seminal work, “The Loveres Maladye of Hereos,” points not to medical texts but rather to Chaucer’s description of Arcite in *The Knight’s Tale* as an exemplary portrait of the sufferer:

His slep, his mete, his drynke, is hym biraft,
 That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft;
 His eyen holwe and grisly to biholde,
 His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde,
 And solitarie he was and evere allone,
 And waillynge all the nyght, makynge his mone;
 And if he herde song or instrument,
 Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.
 So feble eek were his spiritz, and so lowe,
 And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe
 His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.
 And in his geere for al the world he ferde
 Nat oonly like the loveris maladye
 Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,
 Engendred of humour malencolik. (1361-1375)

Such an ample list could be considered at far greater length than is possible for this section; let me simply call attention to a few symptoms exhibited by three of *Twelfth Night’s* characters. Orsino’s desire for solitude has already been discussed. His special relationship

of ‘eros’” (*Lovesickness* 267 n.1). For an fuller explanation of *amor hereos*, see Lowes “The Loveres Maladye of Hereos.” It was Lowes who discovered that Chaucer’s allusion in *The Knight’s Tale* refers to “the medical tradition of *amor hereos*” (Wack, *Lovesickness* 267 n.1).

to music has not, but songs are clearly important to the duke (and the play); whether he weeps at the sound of them depends largely on a director's choice, as does, it must be admitted, the presence of a number of these 'visual' symptoms. It is enough to say that many of the above suit the Duke very well. One curious detail present above and in the majority of descriptions of love-melancholics is 'hollow eyes.' While nothing is said of Orsino's eyes, an interesting application can be made. Carol Falvo Heffernan, referring to a fourth-century medical text, writes that the author's "description of the eyes of those made melancholy by disappointment in love [...] resembles what he says about the eyes of those suffering wolf madness: their eyes were hollow, tearless, filled with a voluptuous look, and their eyelids blinked continuously" (16).¹⁹ While it may seem a stretch to claim that Shakespeare was aware of such a resemblance, the canine quality of Orsino's early metaphor is suggestive.

Additionally suggestive is Olivia's behaviour both before and after her encounter with Viola. In her first meeting with 'Cesario,' she admonishes Orsino's messenger for her 'sauciness,' saying, "'Tis not that *time of moon* with me to make one in so skipping a dialogue" (1.5.192-193, my emphasis). Later, her melancholy becomes less wolfish; disappointed by Viola's non-requital of her love, she sends for Malvolio to relieve her a while from the solitude of which she's had her share. He, she says, "is sad and civil, / And suits well for a servant with my fortunes" (3.4.5-6).

It is really Viola, though, whose behavior and description (insofar as we have one) denote an authentic melancholic lover. In 2.4, the play's most intensely emotional scene,

¹⁹ Oribasius of Pergamon (325-403), Byzantine physician

Orsino calls for Feste to sing a song. While they wait, the musicians play the music (without words) in the background. The Duke asks Viola, “How dost thou like this tune?” and her response, “It gives a very echo to seat / Where love is throned” (2.4.19-20), reveals both her sensitivity to the music and the fact that in her mind, as in Orsino’s, music and love are bed-fellows. When Feste arrives, he sings the sorrowful “Come away, come away death” (2.4.50), providing the catalyst for the following speech in which Viola describes her ‘sister’s’ history. It is, she says,

A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i’th’ bud,
Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed? (2.4.110-115)

Not only is Viola’s sister’s imagined state melancholically immobile (doubly immobile, in fact, being both patience *and* on a monument), for she can *do* nothing but smile and *think* of nothing but her love, but her cheek, once red, is now pale and wan. Moreover, also as in the description of Arcite, her voice has quite literally been so ‘changed’ by her love that no one could possibly recognize it.

While the conventional signs of love-melancholy are physical, the condition itself was regarded in a number of ways. In her thorough study, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*, Mary Wack calls her subject “the eros experienced as illness” (5). Her characterization, while intentionally a simplification, suggests the two extreme views relative to which the malady was understood. At one end of the spectrum is the “transcendent view of love as a

divine illness,” which found its expression, among other places, in the works of Plato.²⁰ At the other end is a wholly “somatic understanding of the malady” (8). In other words, love-sickness had been considered either a passion of the soul (having both positive and negative connotations) or an affliction of the body, or some combination of the two. The ancient physician Galen, for example, regarded it as the former, yet believed that “the operations of the soul are a function of the body’s humoral composition” (8). Viola, in the above speech, also points to a view of love-melancholy incorporating both physical and psychic: her “concealment,” which may, of course, refer to the physical disguise she wears, but also most certainly signifies her unwillingness to utter the thoughts of her mind and the desires of her heart, is transformed by simile into a thoroughly physical “worm” responsible for the equally physical paling of her cheek.

This two-fold understanding of love-melancholy is helpful, but the malady can be further delineated. Surprisingly, Pandarus’s initial assessment of Troilus’s state points to a more nuanced view. Still attempting to rouse his friend, Pandarus cries, “‘Awake!’ full wonderly and sharpe; / ‘What! Slombrestow as in a litargie?’” (1.729-30). Again, it is diction that alerts us to the possibilities: “litargie” (lethargy) in Middle English has three related but distinct meanings: “a disease characterized by prolonged unconsciousness or coma; a mental disorder accompanied by passivity or stupor; [and] mental or spiritual inertia” (*MED*, “litargie, n.” a.) The first is thoroughly physical: it is a “disease”; the second is what people today would generally refer to as ‘psychic’: it is “mental” or psychological; and the third is “spiritual.”

²⁰ See, for example, the physician Eryximachus’s speech in Plato’s *Symposium* (186ff).

Current literary scholarship on melancholy, whether it be love-melancholy or not, tends primarily to be focused on the aspect suggested by first of these meanings. Critical interest in the material world, the physical realities of life and their influence on the mind, say, of a poet, necessitates such an approach. The body is a hot topic. There is also considerable critical attention being paid to the second meaning of “litargie,” the relationship between mind and body being generally acknowledged.²¹ Thinking about love-melancholy (or even just plain melancholy) in terms of the third meaning of “litargie” isn’t all that common. Heffernan writes, “[i]mportant to medieval and Renaissance artistic and medical thinking on melancholy is *acedia*, a theological concept [...] which began as a deadly sin and evolved into a psychiatric syndrome” (9-10). In other words, what was once conceived of as having its own category—‘spiritual’ or ‘theological’—now tends to be grouped in with the “mental.” This is unfortunate, for the term *acedia* suggests that immobility is a spiritual and theological problem, first and foremost. To understand it as neither of these is to misread centuries of intellectual history. In the following pages, I intend to move away from the physical-mental conception of melancholy, and take up instead the mental-spiritual.

Before I do so, however, it is worth noting how notions of a decidedly physical love-melancholy are at play (alongside other notions) within these texts. Orsino’s first sight of Olivia is undoubtedly meant to be understood as a moment in which “love entered the body through the eyes in the form of invisible vapours and infected the body with love-sickness”

²¹ See, for example, Marion A. Wells *The Secret Wound: Love-Melancholy and Early Modern Romance* (Stanford, 2007) or Vera Lind’s “The Suicidal Mind and Body” in *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe* (Cornell, 2004).

(Biewer 506). To see the moment solely thus, however, discounts the possibility that the beauty of Olivia, which is abstract and, perhaps, even spiritually transcendent, unlike “vapours,” could impress itself on a mind and produce an effect more than physical, more even than mental. Likewise, love-melancholy in *Troilus and Criseyde* might easily be seen strictly as a physical ailment. Indeed, Wack writes that Troilus’s description of his woeful state in the *Canticus Troili* accords well with diagnoses of the illness: Troilus “doesn’t know why he faints ‘unwery’ (1.410), he suffers from a ‘wonder maladie’ (1.419), and for ‘hete of cold, for cold of hete’ (1.420) he dies.” She goes on to say that all the “medical terms for his incipient love are additions or changes of Petrarch’s sonnet” (57-8). The physicality of Troilus’s illness is further highlighted by the fact that Pandarus’s remedy for it is sex with Criseyde. Interestingly, this cure is medically approved: for Avicenna, for example, the “prescribed cure for *amor hereos*, when other remedies fail, is union with the object of desire”: “coitus is the cure for the disease” (Heffernan 77, 78).²² But if Troilus’s malady were able to be cured simply by the sexual act, if it only affected his body, what would account for the fact that his suffering continues for the rest of the poem, or for the undeniably spiritual ascension he experiences at the conclusion? Further, Wack points out that the “medical dimension of Troilus’s love is [...] emphasized at times when Troilus is confronted with the need to choose a course of action. Their narrative placement suggests that the medical allusions function to develop the problem of free will and determinism” (57-8). The suggestion, then, is that Chaucer’s use of the physical is meant to point us towards, in this case, the conceptual or spiritual.

²² Avicenna (c. 980-1037), Iranian physician and philosopher

Paired with the notion of a physical cure for Troilus is that of love-melancholy being understood as “wholly objectal rather than dispositional – not a *part* of oneself but something *that happens* to the self” (Trevor 13).²³ Pandarus believes that by providing Troilus with what he lacks, he will cure him of his ailment. What his good friend fails to recognize, however, is that Troilus lacks more than a warm body beside him in bed. Such may satisfy him temporarily or, more precisely, may satisfy his bodily desires, but his first sight of Criseyde awakes in him mental and spiritual desires too, though these he only discovers or becomes aware of as the narrative continues (for, as I intimated earlier, he doesn’t have the poetic insight of Dante or Petrarch). These desires, interestingly enough, do not require the presence of Criseyde—that is, her physical presence—but they do seem to require her existence, even, that is, if she only exists in Troilus’s mind.

5.6 Imagination

While I have not stated it explicitly, it should be apparent by now that love-melancholy not only causes immobility, in addition to any number of the physical symptoms listed above, but also afflicts the mind. For early physicians, Heffernan writes, “Persons suffering from *amor hereos* become so obsessed with thoughts of the beloved object that they are unable to do anything but be lost in reverie” (81). Lowes, quoting from a medieval Arabic text on the subject, writes: “the imagination of the ardent lover is never free from the object of his love” (517). Although more or less the same idea is expressed in these two

²³ This is the way that Claudius, incidentally, views Hamlet’s protracted experience of non-love-melancholy; it is the result of having lost an object—in this case, a father—and may be remedied simply by a replacement object (or so Claudius hopes).

quotations, it is worth noting that the former conceives of love-melancholy as a sort of vagrancy of the mind (implied by “lost”) whereas the latter, as its enslavement. Bernard of Gordon says something yet more suggestive: because the lover is “continually meditative,” he writes, “his worry is called melancholic” (qtd. in Heffernan 84).²⁴ The suggestion, here, I think, is not simply that love-melancholy results in ‘meditation,’ as he puts it, but that the two are concurrent; they are, in essentials, the same thing. Love-melancholy *is* being lost in reverie; being transfixed by one’s imagination is both a symptom of the condition *and* the condition itself. If such is true, love-melancholy poses a very serious difficulty for volition. For in Augustine’s view, not to mention that of the entire romance tradition, the imagination plays an absolutely integral role in love’s movement. ‘Meditating’ on the beloved is the continuation—the necessary consequence—of seeing her. It should not lead to immobility, then, but to mobility. Before considering the traditional causal relation between imagination and love’s movement (which I will do in the section entitled “Sweet-Thought”), I would like to examine Shakespeare’s treatment of the imagination in *Twelfth Night* and its potential volitional implications.

There are plenty of examples in the play of characters using their imaginations. To return to a familiar scene, Orsino in 1.1 speaks of seeing Olivia for the first time. The Olivia he sees in his mind’s eye, however, is not quite the same as the Olivia that, so to speak, exists. We know this because Orsino’s description of the ‘event’ cannot possibly be accurate; only in his *fancy* (or in very, very strange circumstances), could Olivia actually have “purged the air of pestilence.” As 1.1 continues, it becomes clear that Orsino’s sea of

²⁴ Bernard of Gordon (1260-c. 1318), French physician

an imagination (his metaphor; see 1.1.9-15) is unsatisfied and hungers for more images of his beloved. He is at this moment, we may recall, waiting for a response from Olivia, to whom he has sent Valentine to profess his love. Strangely, the message his aptly-named servant returns with (a rejection) provides great satisfaction:

The element itself till seven years' heat
Shall not behold her face at ample view,
But like a cloistress she will veiled walk
And water once a day her chamber round
With eye-offending brine. (1.1.25-9)

This picture, painted with what are apparently Olivia's words communicated through Maria (her "handmaid" (1.1.24)), accords perfectly with Orsino's conception of the true lover—indeed, with his conception of himself. It is an image, in other words, that he cannot refuse; and it sets his mind to work: since Olivia behaves thus out of love for a brother, think how she will conduct herself when her "affections [...] are all supplied, and filled [...] with one self king!" (1.1.38).

Olivia's imagination plays a significant role in her admitting Viola into both her presence and her heart. Interestingly, the admission occurs even before she sees 'Cesario,' thus giving imagination a heightened prominence in this scene. Maria brings word to Olivia that "there is at the gate a young gentleman much desires to speak with you" (1.5.94). As we know, she refuses to admit this gentleman, whom she rightly believes to be another one of Orsino's messengers, and is subsequently told that *he* refuses to leave. Curious, she asks Malvolio, whom she sent to dismiss him, "What kind of man is he?" To this, she receives a response offering her little to go on: "Why, of mankind." Intrigued, she probes further: "Of what personage and years is he?" and, again, receives an entirely ambiguous answer: "Not

yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy” (1.5.143-151). At this point, there can be no doubt that the gears of Olivia’s imagination are turning: what a strange figure, we might imagine her thinking; this not-man-not-boy must be seen! And so *she* is. Once admitted, Viola refuses to communicate her message in the presence of Olivia’s servants. “What I am and what I would,” she explains, “are as secret as maidenhead: to your ears, divinity; to any others’, profanation” (1.5.206-9). There is nothing like a secret to fire the imagination, and this one consists not only of “what [Viola] would” but more importantly of “what [she is],” that which truly interests Olivia. Later, once Viola has gone, it is clear that Olivia’s imagination remains active; before emblazoning ‘Cesario’ in soliloquy, she rehearses their conversation: “‘What is your parentage?’ ‘Above my fortunes, yet my state is well. I am a gentleman.’ I’ll be sworn thou art” (1.5.279-81). Mary Joyce Hays writes of this scene that Olivia “is in reality responding to the power of an imagination [Viola’s] that echoes the definition of love that resides within her own heart and mind” (11). If she is right, then the effect of her seeing Viola may be likened to that of Orsino’s reception of Valentine’s message: both lovers are responding to an image bearing a striking resemblance to themselves. We can only imagine what occurs in Olivia’s mind between this moment and the next time she meets Viola in 3.1 (as well as in Orsino’s mind between 1.1 and 5.1); it is sufficient to say, enough to produce a “passion”—denoting both love and love-melancholy, a passive suffering—“nor wit nor reason can [...] hide” (3.1.150).

Hays’s notion that what lovers respond to in their beloveds is actually their imagined selves is taken to an extreme in 2.5. Here, for the first time, we venture into the play’s subplot and its central event, the duping of Malvolio. Two things must be noted: first,

Malvolio's beloved is only superficially Olivia, his mistress; his real love-interest is himself—or, in any case, himself *as* Olivia's husband with all the benefits of such a status;²⁵ and second, like Olivia before she sees Viola, Malvolio's imagination is already active before he finds the letter. Indeed, Fabian's comment on the recently-arrived steward is: "O, peace. Contemplation makes a rare turkeycock of him" (2.5-28-29). Malvolio's subsequent remark, "To be Count Malvolio!" (2.5.32), prompts an intensification of Fabian's comment: "O, peace, now he's deeply in. Look how imagination blows him" (2.5.39-40). Malvolio, it would seem, is eminently ready to find what Toby and the others have placed in his path. When he does, he first notes, "this is my lady's hand" (2.5.82-83), then makes what could be a couple of lewd references, reads a little more, and then, finally, stops on "M.O.A.I. doth sway my life" (2.5.102). He puzzles over these apparent initials: "Nay, but first let me see, let me see, let me see" (2.5.106-7). His mind moves him a little further along, and then he offers this telling statement: "If I could make that resemble something in me. Softly—'M.O.A.I.'" (2.5.114-115). It hardly needs comment: Malvolio is quite overtly looking to find himself in what is here, in any case, the object of his gaze. If Orsino and Olivia are caricatured lovers, Malvolio is a full-on burlesque. This is emphasized, in part, by the similarity of his response to the letter and Olivia's to Viola, for after Orsino's servant departs in 1.5, Olivia attempts to figure out how she might make their love work: "Not too fast. Soft, soft," she says; "[u]nless the master were the man" (1.5.283-4). While

²⁵ Olivia is a fixture of Malvolio's fantasy, but she never actually appears. The scene Malvolio conjures in his imagination begins when, "having come from a day-bed where [he has] left Olivia sleeping," he asks to speak with his "kinsmen" Toby so that he may tell him to "amend" his "drunkenness" (2.5.45-69).

“softly” and “soft” are fairly ubiquitous terms in Shakespeare, in both scenes they point to the rather delicate mental manipulation typical of the love-melancholic.

In 3.1, the imagination, again, is a primary focus. Viola returns to Olivia once more as Orsino’s ambassador of love, saying this time, “Madam, I come to whet your gentle thoughts / On his behalf” (3.1.104-5).²⁶ It is a revealing statement: Viola recognizes (along with her master, quite possibly) that the battle for Olivia’s heart must be won in her mind; it is Viola’s task to conjure an image of Orsino capable of moving Olivia, this despite the fact that the latter has already said, “Your lord does know my mind, I cannot love him” (1.5.257). Olivia’s statement reveals that she, too, recognizes both the mind’s importance in love as well as, by consequence, the state Orsino is in: of him, she says (not necessarily without sympathy), “For his thoughts, / Would they were blanks rather than filled with me” (3.1.101-2). A blank mind, a mind with no object to contemplate, may be, in Olivia’s view, a free mind.

In 3.1, we also find the following exchange:

OLIVIA

I prithee tell me what thou think’st of me.

VIOLA

That you do think you are not what you are.

OLIVIA

If I think so, I think the same of you.

VIOLA

Then think you right, I am not what I am.

OLIVIA

I would you were as I would have you be. (3.1.136-140)

²⁶ There is a possible allusion, here, to *Troilus and Criseyde*. When Troilus is in a state similar to Olivia’s in this scene, Pandarus offers his services to the young man, comparing himself to a whetstone (1.631)—that is, one that may help to sharpen Troilus’s romantic purposes, or at least those purposes Pandarus perceives Troilus to have.

The power of the imagination to commandeer, as it were, one's perception of reality is particularly expressed in Olivia's last line. She would have Viola be as she no doubt has been imagining her to be since her departure in 1.5. But, indeed, the whole conversation pivots on the idea that perception and reality rarely accord with one another. In this instance, it would seem Viola has the upper hand, knowing something about herself that Olivia does not, namely that she is not a man. Her statement, however, only suggests a rather superficial self-knowledge and, given Hays's notion that lovers tend to see themselves in their beloveds, it is not wholly satisfying. Viola may know that 'she is not what she is,' but does she actually know *what* she is? On that note, it must be asked, what does she *see* in Orsino—a man who, despite Valentine's claim that he is not "inconstant" (1.4.7), has thus far exhibited great changeability?²⁷

Turning the coin over, let us ask another question: assuming Orsino's marriage proposal in 5.1 is genuine, what compels him to love Viola? Hays has an answer; she conceives 2.4, in which Orsino "is moved by Cesario's description of a sister's grief for love" (2.4.9), as the beginning of a love-process. And it makes sense to do so, for if there is anything that can be said about Orsino, it is that he is attentive to images of love—or, as in this case, of love-melancholy. In this scene, a few things seem to be happening: first, the image of a girl sitting "like patience on a monument, / Smiling at grief" is replacing—indeed, usurping the place of—another image in Orsino's mind, that of a veiled cloistress weeping as she walks around her chamber. A second thing, at least in Hays's view, is that

²⁷ Jenkins notes Orsino's changeability in "*Twelfth Night*": "Orsino's love is repeatedly compared to the sea—vast, hungry, but unstable, while his mind appears to Feste like an opal, a jewel of magical but ever-changing colors. The changeable man is there ..." (173).

the facade of Orsino-the-most-melancholic-of-all-lovers is beginning to crumble (9). He asks Viola, “But died thy sister of her love, my boy?” (2.4.119) and with her response (“I am all the daughters of my father’s house” (2.4.120)) comes his shocking recognition of a genuine love-melancholy that puts his own to shame—a love-melancholy-unto-(seeming)-death. Hays’s reading of this scene is suggestive, but whereas she sees Orsino’s love melancholy as something that does “not go deeply into his identity,” in other words, as a “pose” (9), I think it is possible that he has legitimately been drowning in the sea of his own imagination. What Viola’s image of her ‘sister’ offers him, then, is a life-raft (to maintain the metaphor), an opportunity to step outside of himself (or to not) and consider an image that is, at least, to some degree, *other*. Though the image of Olivia as a mourning cloistress is compelling, Shakespeare makes sure to give Viola, here, the most potent image of the play. Her portrait of herself is a revealing mixture of the abstract and the concrete: patience (abstract) is personified as suffering from a green and yellow melancholy (concrete, at least insofar as the colors are involved) and stares at grief (abstract), but she does so while sitting on a monument, a (concrete) representation of suffering, of being ‘patient.’ (Additionally, it is worth highlighting that the function of such a monument is memorial; remembrance is a concept that will be discussed in the next section.)

Orsino is clearly moved by Viola’s portrait, both in the sense that he is affected by it and in the sense that it seems to catalyze some psychic motion in him. Indeed, simply the fact that he asks Viola whether her sister died of her love suggests there has been a shift in his attention; we might say, Orsino is moved in this scene from self-pity to pity, which as

Olivia later says, is “a degree to love” (3.1.121).²⁸ And this may well be Viola’s intent: she is in the unique position of influencing Orsino as a fellow man, and she takes advantage, saying, “We men may say more, swear more, but indeed / Our shows are more than will; for still we prove / Much in our vows, but little in our love” (2.4.116-118). She is, essentially, redefining love for Orsino. A true lover “pine[s] in thought” (2.4.112), she suggests; she does not *revel* in it, as Orsino does in 1.1. and 1.4.²⁹

And yet there is something in Orsino’s psychic motion in 2.4 that should give us pause. The image he is taken by is only an image; he has no first sight of Viola to rely upon, to govern, as it were, what his imagination does with that image. Indeed, the offering of Viola’s image is even more problematic, for it is actually a false image: Viola’s ‘sister’ did not die of her love, which, though not what she says, is what Orsino takes her statement that she is “all the daughters of [her] father’s house” to mean. What exactly is to be made of Shakespeare’s treatment of the imagination in *Twelfth Night*, then? Is the accuracy of a mental image an important element? Does it matter if the imagination is engaged before the lover sees the beloved? Is the discovery of the lover’s self in the beloved a good thing? A natural thing? An inescapable thing? How do all of these questions bear on volition? For the time being, I will answer only this last question, though, with another question: can a lover be imaginative without being lost in reverie? Even more pointedly, can a lover truly love

²⁸ In conversation with Olivia, Viola seems to deny that pity is “a degree to love”; not a “grece,” she says, meaning something like ‘step.’ Viola supplies as evidence the fact that “very oft we pity enemies” (3.1.123), but even while she is convinced, it is not clear that Shakespeare wants his readers to be. Viola, too, is afflicted by her imagination; she may not be able to imagine that Orsino’s pity (if such it is) in 2.4 could lead to the eventuality of 5.1.

²⁹ “Pine” suggests both “to suffer” (*OED*, “pine, v.” 2.) and “to become exhausted or wasted” (4.a.), both of which result in the immobility suggested in my earlier discussion of this moment.

without experiencing, without being subject to love-melancholy? To answer this, we need turn back once more to Chaucer.

5.7 Sweet-Thought

In the *Troilus*, after collapsing on his bed for the first time, yet before composing the *Canticus Troili*, Troilus begins to “make a mirour of his mynde, / In which he saugh al holly [Criseyde’s] figure” (1.365-366). The idea of making a mirror of one’s mind was obviously a significant one for Chaucer, for he refers to it at least two other times in his writings: specifically, in his translations of *The Romance of the Rose*, arguably the most influential medieval romance text, and *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius’s Augustinian philosophical dialogue. In the former work, he raises the idea in a scene in which the god of love announces to the lover that he will give him three gifts. The first of these is “Swete-Thought,” a means by which the lover may to call to mind the image of his beloved whenever she is absent. Chaucer writes,

Whanne ony lover doth compleyne,
And lyveth in distresse and in peyne,
Thanne Swete-Thought shal come as blyve
Awey his angre for to dryve:
It makith lovers to have remembraunce
Of comfort and of high pleasaunce. (2796-2801)

At this point in the original *Roman*, the deity moves on to the naming of the second and third gifts, but Chaucer’s god lingers over Sweet-Thought. He cautions the lover (though never quite explicitly) that the gift he gives is a dangerous one: he who makes “a mirroure of his mynde; / For to biholde he wole not lette” (2806-7). In other words, once one starts

looking, it will be difficult, perhaps even impossible, to look away; this certainly returns us to the notion that the melancholy lover is either lost or enslaved, as well as to the consequence of immobility. Further, the god goes on to describe something very much like Orsino's insatiable hunger for love-images; he says that the beloved's "lymes" and various "fetures" will "fede" (2814) the lover's eyes.

The reason for Chaucer's emendation, which seemingly runs counter to the romantic purposes of the *Roman*, is nowhere stated, but likely has to do with a passage in the *Consolation* in which Boethius uses a mirror as a metaphor for the undiscerning mind. In Chaucer's *Boece*, Philosophy teaches her pupil about the Stoics who regarded the mind as a receptacle of 'images' from the physical world; she says, in brief, that they believed these images impress themselves upon the mind and thus become thoughts. The lesson Philosophy would have Boethius learn, however, is not that of the Stoics; she wants him to understand, rather, that the mind is an active faculty capable of doing more than passively having images implanted in it. She says,

But yif the thryvyng soule ne unpliteth nothing (that is to seyn, ne doth nothing) by his propre moevynges, but suffrith and lith subgit to the figures and to the notes of bodies withoute-foorth, and yeldeith ymages ydel and vein in the manere of a mirour, whennes thryveth thanne or whennes comith thilke knowynge in our soule, that discernith and byholdith alle thinges?
(5.M.4.22-30, my emphasis)

The mind that receives as a mirror, in other words, cannot know itself, cannot discern between things (or images), and, most importantly, cannot inform a properly moving soul. Interestingly, Heffernan's discussion of the love-melancholic's fixation on the beloved is couched in very similar terms: "The result [of seeing] is that the pleasing form of the

beloved object, even after it may have left, becomes imprinted in memory to the extent that it becomes an obsessive presence. This [...] is a primary aspect of the pathology of the disease of love” (73). Thus, a distinction exists between the mind of the melancholic lover which simply receives images and the mind of the non-melancholic lover, which engages in discernment.

One of the keys to Chaucer’s treatment of “Swete-Thought” and the idea of making a mirror of one’s mind is the distinction between imagination and remembrance.

“Imagination,” a relatively new word in Middle English in Chaucer’s time, denotes either “internal images [...] of] remembered objects and situations” or “those [images] constructed by mentally combining or projecting images of previously experienced qualities, objects, and situations” (*OED*, “imagination, n.” 1.a.).³⁰ By contrast, “remembrance,” given its etymology, signifies only the former of these two. While the passage from his translation of the *Romance* uses the word “remembraunce” rather than “imagination,” the Chaucer’s emendation forces us, I think, to distinguish between the kind of Sweet-Thought that is a necessary part of love’s movement (remembrance) and the kind that tends to immobilize a lover (imagination). Remembrance may be thought of as that which calls the beloved to the lover’s mind and spurs him on to action; and imagination as that which, by facilitating the perpetual “combining” and “projecting” elements of the beloved, prevents the lover from ever ‘leaving’ his mind.

Let us return to Augustine and consider what this discussion of remembrance and imagination has to do with the exercise of the will. According to the theologian, the answer

³⁰ The *OED* finds the first extant instance of “imagination” in 1340, the year in which Chaucer may have been born.

is everything. First, recall that in Augustine's view, while seeing is exceedingly important for the will's determination of itself, humans are not in control of the things they see. Portalié writes, "He [i.e. man] can influence the course of his reflections, but he himself cannot determine the objects, the images, and consequently the motives which are presented to his mind" (199); he cannot manipulate, in other words, his "first thoughts" (199). What humans can do, to quote Michael Haren, is to "take or reject this or that," on the basis that "the mind is affected by perceptions both of superior things and of inferior things" (49), and, presumably, the superior are the ones to be 'taken.' According to Augustine in *On The Trinity*, once these are taken—here, we see his doctrine differs significantly from the Stoics in allowing for human discernment—"the will searches within the memory and finds the images it has fixed there" (qtd. in Gilson 133). Gilson speaks of the will's power *not* to generate images (as imagination), but to "bind them together" using the "powers of sense, imagination and thought" (135). In the commentator's words, "if the will to feel should grow in intensity, the result will be no mere sensation, but a love, a desire, a veritable passion for feeling, and the whole body may be affected by it" (Gilson 133). Thus, we return to movement, in which the lover's mental responsibility may now be identified as his distinguishing superior from inferior and, in addition, trusting that the former come from God, who "send[s] at His pleasure the illuminations and enticements which are the will's inspiration in determining itself" (Portalié 200).

What Troilus views in his 'mirror' would seem to accord with the notion of remembrance offered above, as well as with that of the discernment of superior things, for in seeing "al holly [Criseyde's] figure" (1.1.365-6) he is imagining both a "remembered

object” and a (Chaucer’s pun intended) ‘holy’ one. “Holly,” according to the *MED*, means “complete” and “undivided” (“holli, adj.” c.) and not, obviously, an ill-proportioned or exaggerated part of the whole. Troilus remembers no more, nor less than Criseyde’s figure. “Holly” may also denote something (or someone) “divine, sacred, to be revered or worshiped” (“holi, adj.² 1.). Criseyde, then, is a kind of Beatrice, a superior being placed in sight of the lover that his love for her might move him. I might say, move him to better things, but such a qualification is unnecessary, given that movement is, in itself, a good.

The problem, however, poses itself: if Troilus’s imagining of Criseyde is, as it were, by the (romance) book, what is the cause of his immobility—an immobility which he clearly references just 50 lines after making a mirror of his mind? He speaks of himself as being

possessed to and fro,
 Al sterles withinne a bot ...
 Amyd the see, bytwixen wyndes two
 That yn contrarye stonden evere mo. (1.1.415-18)

This image of perpetual immobility comes at the end of his *Canticus Troili*. It has already been noted that the song is a translation of Petrarch’s *Rime* 132, though with important differences.³¹ Most significantly, Troilus’s assertion of his immobility is far more desperate than Petrarch’s, who regards his difficult situation as one of indecision that, for all intents and purposes, could be remedied by a choice (a choice, granted, that is difficult to make).³² The possibility of Troilus choosing is weakened by his last two absolute words: “evere mo.”

In “Lovesickness in *Troilus*,” Mary Wack describes Troilus’s malady, here, as granting him “a

³¹ See my discussion of Chaucer in Chapter 2 for a full prose translation of Petrarch’s lyric.

³² Petrarch: “Amid such contrary winds I find myself at sea in a frail bark, without a tiller, so light of wisdom, so laden with error, that I myself do not know what I want” (132.9-14).

fatalistic passivity” (57), the kind that, unlike Petrarch’s, cannot be remedied—or, in any case, does not seem like it can to Troilus.

There is very little between Troilus’s making a mirror of his mind and his singing of this song; notably, Chaucer writes, he begins “[i]magenynge” (1.372) that any labour or pain endured for Criseyde’s love would be worth it. He also ‘argues’ (1.377) that should his love be known he would be “up-born” (1.375) above all lovers before.³³ Lastly, directly before composing his song, he begins to think about the strategies he might enlist to “arten hire to love” (1.388), that is, to induce her to love him. None of these is terribly damning, but a couple of mental shifts may be detected. First, there is a movement away from ‘making a mirror’ and quite explicitly to ‘imagining.’ Second, the focus of his thoughts moves from Criseyde to himself and how he might be viewed by others. And third, his notion of winning her love for himself begins to gain prominence. While the last of these is an eventuality Troilus understandably desires, conventionally, it has no place in the volitional equation. Troilus, if he is moved, will be moved by his love—by love itself—and not by her love for him. Indeed, in romance, the figure of the disdainful and distant woman is far more common than the one who returns the moving lover’s affections.

Troilus’s love-melancholy, his imaginative reverie, persists well into the poem’s final book. Even Robert Burton in his *Anatomy* calls attention to his repeated trips “to the City gates, to look for his Creseid” (727) as an example of the lover ‘lost’ in his mind. Indeed, it is only when Chaucer’s hero recognizes that Criseyde will not be returning that

³³ This could mean either in comparison with how he loved before or with all lovers who came before him.

he seems again to find his way. The narrator recounts Troilus's response to Criseyde's last letter:

This Troilus this lettre thoughte al straunge
Whan he it saugh, and sorwfullich he sighte;
Hym thoughte it lik a kalendes of chaunge.
But fynaly, he ful ne trowen myghte
That she ne wold hym holden that she hyghte. (5.1632-6)

It is significant that, in the letter, Criseyde refuses to say explicitly that she will not return. She writes, rather, "For that I tarie is al for wikked speche" (5.1610), a lie that Troilus, interestingly enough, can see through. Indeed, the above passage goes out of its way to emphasize Troilus's active mind: he "thoughte" the letter very strange; he "thoughte" it was a harbinger of change; he did not 'believe' ("trowen") that she would return.

But Troilus does not stop loving Criseyde. Pandarus, who is shocked by her betrayal, says, of course, that he hates her (5.172-173), but no such curse falls from Troilus's lips. While he remains sad, indeed miserable (cf. 5.1744), his immobility disappears, and he throws himself into battle. That the physical object of Troilus's love is no longer so "hevenyssh" is true, but, at this point, volitionally inconsequential. Wack writes,

Although he comes very close to adopting Pandarus's attitude toward Criseyde, that is, viewing her primarily as a remedy for his lovesickness, Troilus finally transcends a material view of love through memory, dematerializing it and transferring it to a realm beyond time and change. [...] Instead of driving the old love 'out of remembrance' with a new, since he has "fully had all his desire," as Pandarus puts it [...] Troilus loves Criseyde even more intensely. ("Lovesickness" 59)

The assertion that memory plays a pivotal role in Troilus's 'transcendence,' as she puts it—his consequent love-engendering mobility, as I do—could not accord better with my argument. If Troilus's seeing is a theologically romantic moment, then what he sees and, by

consequence, what he remembers must be more than the physical Criseyde; in other words, when his gaze flies like an arrow, it lands upon an object far more worthy of love than the woman who eventually betrays him; we might say, it locates Criseyde's essential worthiness. Beatrice and Laura were, for Dante and Petrarch, their truest selves, *images* of the superior, of the divine.

5.8 Fancy, Folly, Madness or What You Will

The final act of *Twelfth Night* seems to provide readers with the resolution for which they've been waiting. Characters presenting symptoms of love-melancholy appear to shake off their immobility, either giving voice to their secret thoughts or acting on their hidden (even unconscious) desires. Orsino, notably, is active in this scene in a way he hasn't been at any point in the play thus far. Indeed, just the fact that he's left his residence suggests something new is going on. Significantly, his first order of business is dealing with the "[n]otable pirate" Antonio (5.1.63).³⁴ The Antonio-situation involves and, moreover, is prompted by Viola: "Here comes the man, sir, that did rescue me" (5.1.44), she tells the duke as Antonio is brought forward. Viola comments, additionally, "He did me kindness, sir" (5.1.60), and following her plea, Orsino, rather than condemning the man outright (seemingly his right), inquires into Antonio's motives for returning to Illyria. Antonio identifies Viola, "[t]hat most ingrateful boy" (5.1.71), as the cause of his quite literal transgression, and Orsino again applies himself to discovering more. "When came [Viola] to town?" he asks (5.1.88), attempting, it seems, to discover what relationship, if any, exists

³⁴ In his defense, Antonio claims not to be a thief or pirate but does confess himself "Orsino's enemy" (5.1.70).

between the two. While the situation is resolved soon enough (though not in Antonio's favour, for his claims about Viola are clearly false), the duke's attentiveness to this situation is striking. He was attentive in 2.4 to Viola's portrait of her 'sister' and even asked her a question then, but here there are multiple inquiries, and these seem motivated by a genuine interest in Antonio's presence. Moreover, the nature of these inquiries is both specific and public; for the first time in the play Orsino is fulfilling his ducal responsibilities.

Orsino, having been moved inwardly, is now moving outwardly; Shakespeare, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, most notably, allows the motions of the actors on the stage to reflect the motions in their characters' souls. Indeed, this theatrical motion may further be observed in what happens next: Olivia enters the scene. Orsino, turning his attention to Olivia (and, no doubt, his head, too), reassumes the posture of a courtly lover, crying, "Here comes the Countess, now heaven walks on earth" (5.1.92), but immediately following his assertion, he *turns back* to Antonio: "But for thee, fellow—fellow, thy words are madness. / Three months this youth hath tended upon me" (5.1.93-94). Earlier in the play, the prospect of Orsino looking *away* from Olivia would have been incredible (unless, perhaps, he had looked *inward*); here, we see, both by his physical motions and by the content of his speech, him thinking of something else.

Given this new rational element in Orsino, it is not surprising the scene proceeds as it does, with something other than simply hyperbolic speech: "Gracious Olivia—" Orsino begins, having turned back to the countess—but he is rather ungraciously cut off by her question, which is not even directed towards him: "What do you say, Cesario?" (5.1.100-

101). As is the case with Troilus in Book V of Chaucer's poem and Antonio at the end of 3.4, recognition and disillusionment begin to set in:

You uncivil lady,
To whose ingrate and unauspicious altars
My soul the faithfull'st off'rings hath breathed out
That e'er devotion tendered—what shall I do? (5.1.108-111)

Orsino perceives that a relationship exists between Olivia and his 'boy' and, feeling desperate, threatens to "[k]ill what I love" (5.1.115) and "tear [Olivia's "minion"] out of that cruel eye" (5.1.121-123). He is speaking of Viola, and does so again even more explicitly: "I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love / To spite a raven's heart within a dove" (5.1.126-127). His sentiment is surprising, likely both to himself and everyone else.

While Shakespeare does not make explicit what prompts this surprising confession, it is clear that Orsino has recognized that the Olivia he has seen with his imagination's eye is not quite the same as the Olivia he's just met. That is to say, though the real Olivia is disdainful (like the image of her formerly in his mind), she is not melancholic; in fact, in this scene, she's playfully witty. Her response to his question, "what shall I do?" is telling: "Even what it please my lord that shall become him" (5.1.112). But clearly there is more going on, and, in part, it seems to have to do with memory. When, earlier, Antonio is brought before Orsino, the duke's first words are "[t]hat face I do remember well" (5.1.45). Later in the scene, after Viola's true identity has been revealed, he again shows the accuracy of his 'remembrance': "Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand times / Thou never shouldst love

woman like to me” (5.1.261-2).³⁵ These are the words of a man whose mind is working, putting the pieces together that before this lay scattered in his chaotic imagination. Thus, not only Orsino is uncharacteristically active in 5.1; his memory is too. What makes this situation remarkable is that the things he remembers, here, are not those which prompted his imagination; it is rather that his imagination, engaged by Viola’s portrait of herself, has prompted these remembrances.

Viola is an interesting case. She is not physically immobile in the play; she *moves* both as Orsino and Olivia’s go-between and in the sense that she is integral to at least three of the play’s four plotlines (without actually being the central figure in any of them); she moves through these plotlines moving others. Without her, Orsino would not recognize a love other than his own, would not experience the revelation of his love in 5.1; without her, Olivia would not save Sebastian from Toby’s sword and subsequently marry him; and without her (and the threat she represents), the action involving Toby and Andrew would not occur.³⁶ And, yet, despite this movement—this excess, almost, of motion—Viola is not free. She is trapped by her disguise, which prohibits her from having a romantic relationship with either Olivia, should Viola herself desire such a relationship, or Orsino. Thus, in 5.1, when Orsino, “thoughts [...] ripe in mischief,” threatens to “sacrifice the lamb that I do love” (5.1.125-126), she offers this reply: “I most jocund, apt, and *willingly* / To do you

³⁵ Schalkwyk also comments on different ways of understanding this moment: “it is precisely through the redirection of his violent anger at Viola that Orsino discovers that she is the real object of his love. The question then arises as to whether he has loved her all along, or whether he begins to love her only now [...]. If we regard love as a state of the body, then we will need to say that he begins to love her only now. But that doesn’t make sense. Orsino *recognizes* something that he has *misrecognized* all along: that Viola, not Olivia, is the person he loves and has loved” (“Is Love an Emotion?” 111).

³⁶ The exception, of course, is Malvolio, whose plotline only parallels Viola’s: she receives from Olivia what he desires for himself: a proposal of marriage effecting a change in his social status.

rest a thousand deaths would die” (5.1.128-129, my emphasis). It is a strange response, given that Orsino’s words suggest violence, but his words offer Viola a singular opportunity to move freely, to willingly follow her love in a way she simply could not have conceived of doing earlier in the play.

In a sense, Orsino has compelled Viola to make a choice. At this moment, as she is literally moving towards the duke and away from Olivia, Shakespeare is explicit: Olivia asks, “Where goes Cesario?” and Viola’s response is: “After him I love / More than I love these eyes, more than my life, / More by all mores than e’er I shall love wife” (5.1.130-132). Here, she adopts the hyperbolic language of a romance lover (though more genuinely than Orsino does earlier) and, like the Antonio of 2.1, 3.3, and parts of 3.4, risks all for her beloved. But this is still not to say what compels her to make such a choice. To say what does, the nature of Orsino’s threat must first be considered.

When, having uttered his threat, Orsino says, “Come, boy, with me, my thoughts are ripe in mischief,” he is essentially asking more of Viola than she—or any servant—should be required to give. For Viola, granting she perceives the threat he poses to be real, the safe thing to do would be to seek refuge with Olivia. Thus, by not doing so, by giving Orsino what he wants, she does so willingly, by choice. *His* breach of decorum, in other words, allows *hers*. But the breach is not simply the violence implied; behind Orsino’s threat seems to lie a suggestion of his desire for a less socially acceptable form of love. The “mischief” he mentions could well be a sexual relationship with his ‘boy,’ for this would assuredly “tear [Cesario] out of [Olivia’s] cruel eye” (5.1.123); such a relationship would also follow from his admission of love earlier in the scene. This reading, while tentative, is

consistent with Viola's response, that she is willing to "die" a "thousand deaths" (5.1.129). Thus, if there is an opportunity for her to unite her outward movement with her inward, this unconventional moment is it.³⁷

Olivia's revelation in 5.1 is on the surface of things significantly more shocking than either Orsino's or Viola's, for the countess discovers that she's not actually married to the person she thought. As already discussed, Olivia does not have the same problems of immobility as the other characters; she allows herself, rather, to be moved by love—indeed, almost too willingly; like Antonio she attributes, at times, the agency for her actions wholly to an outside influence. For example, she says in 1.5, "Fate, show thy force, ourselves we do not owe" (1.5.300). While I have tried to demonstrate imagination's role in her love's progress, it is significant that her revelation in this scene is more accurately the consequence of disguise. Viola confesses at the end of 3.4 that her brother "went / Still in this fashion, colour, ornament" and that "him I imitate" (3.4.373-4). Thus, Olivia, having been moved by her sight of the *image* of Sebastian, finds she is married to the real Sebastian. The result is clearly happy, but it must be acknowledged that the perception that moves her to this end is not wholly unproblematic, even if Sebastian and Viola are conflated to a large degree in the play.³⁸ The question must be asked: is there anything in the play that guarantees Olivia's imagining of Sebastian will be so fulfilled?

³⁷ Earlier I referenced Bacon's notion of music as "manifest Motion" that 'alters' not when "the Object is removed" (qtd. in Witmore 72). Here, it is as though the reverse is actually the case: Viola has been moving (unnaturally, one might say) throughout the play without an object—or a feasible object; in this moment, Orsino gives her one.

³⁸ They are conflated not only by the other characters, but even in their own minds—or, at least, in Viola's mind, for the very reason she suggests above: "him I imitate."

Disguise is absolutely integral to the movement of the plot in *Twelfth Night*. It is also Shakespeare's primary metaphor for the imagination. To put it bluntly, both disguise and imagination deceive or are capable of deceiving. Tellingly, Viola says, "Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness / Wherein the pregnant enemy does much" (2.2.27-28).³⁹ Her statement comes after Malvolio has brought her Olivia's ring and she has recognized her 'role' in conjuring a love that may never be—a false love, insofar as its object doesn't exist (Viola's assumption at this point is that Sebastian is dead). Joseph H. Summers picks up on the notion of disguise in *Twelfth Night*, saying that "the assumption of the play is that no one is without a mask" (16); in other words, disguise is ubiquitous—like imagination's influence. To return to Viola, as with her earlier confession, "I am not what I am" (3.1.139), this comment on disguise does not go quite far enough, for its "wickedness" may not be found wholly in the object being seen but also in the seer, who is, to some degree, involved in the charade. Indeed, the entirety of Olivia's courtship of Sebastian points to such an involvement, a temptation to *imagine* that what one hopes to be true is actually true.

The scene in which Olivia first meets her soon-to-be husband (4.1) begins, interestingly enough, with an exchange between Sebastian and Feste. "Will you make me believe that I am not sent for you?" Feste asks, thinking he's talking to Cesario, and Sebastian responds, "Go to, go to, thou art a foolish fellow" (4.1.1-2). He reiterates this same sentiment just lines later: "I prithee vent thy folly somewhere else, / Thou know'st not me" (4.1.8-9). While on one level, the folly Sebastian points to is simply that associated

³⁹ There is a kind of resonance between the "witchcraft" which draws Antonio and the "wickedness" ascribed to disguise.

with an “allowed fool” (1.5.80), as Olivia calls Feste, on another level, it suggests that those who see what is not there are themselves foolish. When Sebastian meets Olivia and she treats him with surprising intimacy, he experiences a disorientation not unlike Olivia’s upon first seeing Viola (as Cesario): he is struck, amazed, and hardly knows what to think:

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. (4.1.58-61)

Sebastian’s choice of words in this brief soliloquy points to the hazy boundaries between imagination—or fancy—and dream, and between dream and madness. The qualifying factor, here, is that Sebastian seems to recognize the dangerous slippage between these: his opening question, “What relish is in this?” suggests the rational at work. Warren and Wells’ note on “relish” offers “taste, i.e. meaning,” which is itself interesting; “taste,” in this context, connotes a testing of the seemingly implausible, a distinguishing, but it also implies that there is sensual element to Sebastian’s rationality. Perhaps this is stretching things, but his experience of Olivia in 4.1 is not unlike Orsino’s own experience of the countess, which he memorably recounts in 1.1.⁴⁰

In 4.3, after things have progressed with Olivia and the pair’s marriage is imminent, Sebastian, still struggling with the incredibility of it, the prospect that he may well be mad, expresses his thoughts thus:

For though my soul disputes well with my sense
That this may be some error but no madness,
Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune

⁴⁰ There is also Shakespeare’s employment of the term in *Troilus and Cressida*: “Th’imaginary relish is so sweet / that it enchants my sense” (3.2.17-18), says Troilus, anticipating his first night with Cressida.

So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
That I am ready to distrust mine eyes
And wrangle with my reason that persuades me
To any other trust but that I am mad,
Or else the lady's mad. (4.3.9-16)

Despite the fact that his reason (“soul”) and sense together tell him that he’s not mad, that his mind is yet moored to reality, Sebastian is tempted to accept madness (either in himself or in his beloved) if that is what loving Olivia requires. This opposition of “soul” and “sense” with “madness” reveals the problems associated with the imagination in the play, the uncertainty of a given character about whether he is deluded or there is simply something he does not (yet) understand. Though readers know both Sebastian’s and Olivia’s perceptions—their fancies—will be fulfilled, Sebastian himself has no recourse to such a certainty. While his tentative conclusion that there is something “deceivable” (4.3.21) in the situation may betoken a desire to be undeceived, the fact that he is willing to be moved before being so is telling. As Hays writes, *Twelfth Night* “is a play about characters whose imaginations are infected” (7). To employ an anachronistic metaphor, even if these characters are inoculated against such an infection, that infection will always be with them to some degree (in the form of the vaccine); the mind is never exclusively rational, for reason is never free from the imagination.

The most straightforward example of an infected imagination in the play is that of Malvolio, ironically, the character who most vehemently insists that he is in his right mind: to Feste masquerading as Sir Topaz, he says, “I am not mad, Sir Topaz, I say to you this house is dark” (4.2.41-42) and then, again, to Feste, who is no longer masquerading, “I am well in my wits, fool, as thou art” (4.2.88). In each of these instances, Malvolio’s insistence

paired with his glaring references to the “dark” of his prison cell and his sanity, which is like that of a ‘fool,’ invites skepticism. In 2.5, the scene in which he finds ‘Olivia’s’ letter, he says confidently, “I do not now fool myself, to let imagination jade me” (2.5.154-155), but earlier in that same scene we see him fail utterly to distinguish between his own imagination and remembrance. He muses, “Maria once told me she did affect me, and I have heard herself come thus near, that should she fancy it should be one of my complexion. Besides, she uses me with a more exalted respect than anyone else that follows her” (2.5.21-25). That he ‘remembers’ Maria so badly is evidence enough that he is also wrong about letting imagination fool or “jade” him. Indeed, that word, “jade,” is significant, too. For “to jade,” which most commonly means “to befool, trick, or deceive” (*OED*, “jade, v.” 3.), also signifies “to exhaust, wear out, fatigue, tire” (1.).⁴¹ In other words, by putting that word into his mouth, Shakespeare essentially has Malvolio bespeak his perpetually immobile state, a state evinced by his stay in prison later on.⁴² Malvolio’s failure to *see* stands in stark contrast, then, to Sebastian’s awareness of the potential of the imagination to deceive and his desire to know what he does not and, in truth, may never.

To return to Hays’s claim that all the characters’ imaginations are infected, it is worth noting that many critics speak of the end of the play in terms of a remedy; if only the characters can restore their imaginations to relative health, the future is bright. Jenkins writes of the *dénouement* possible only when the “characters have grown in insight” (172), when “Olivia, who self-confessedly abandons reason, and Orsino who avidly gives his mind

⁴¹ This meaning is usually used with reference only to horses; the fact of its existence, however, is nonetheless striking.

⁴² Dolora Cunningham refers to Malvolio as “frozen in the insatiable demands of the ego” (265).

to all the shapes of fancy, are permitted to pass through whatever folly there may be in this to a greater illumination” (188). Barber likewise speaks of the “approaching moment when delusions and misapprehensions are resolved by the finding of objects appropriate to passion” (116). And most optimistically, Palmer writes, “When the disguise is dropped, the termination of Cesario’s existence allows a new set of relationships to come into being, based on truth and harmony” (219). Such views are not surprising, considering *Twelfth Night* is a comedy and comic resolution tends to come in the form of revelation and, consequently, love and marriage, but if disguise is dropped at the end of the play, does that mean that imagination, which I have associated with it, is also dropped, that what the characters now experience is love *without* imagination, ‘rational’ love?

It is necessary, at this point, to return to an earlier moment in this chapter, in which I quoted Dante, who writes in *The New Life*, “At that moment the animate spirit [...] was filled with wonder, and [...] said these words: *Apparuit iam beatitudo vestra*” (547-548), your happiness has now appeared. In 5.1 of *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare is not so heavy handed, but he does give Olivia the following line in response to Sebastian’s appearance: “Most wonderful!” (5.1.219). According to Dolores Cunningham, Shakespeare seems “to have seen the harmonious transformation of minds that occurs in his plays [...] as more and more closely linked to the miraculous connotations of wonder” (263). In other words, the experience of wonder in 5.1 coincides with or perhaps even prompts the healing process. Wonder becomes the fulfillment of imagination; it provides not only “greater illumination,” in Jenkins’s words, cited above, but also “objects appropriate to passion,” in Barber’s.

When Viola and Sebastian first speak, the former says, “If spirits can assume both form and suit / You come to fright us,” to which the latter responds: “A spirit I am indeed, / But am in that dimension grossly clad / Which from the womb I did participate” (5.1.229-232). Not only are Sebastian’s words reminiscent of the Dantean, suggesting the metaphysicality of the beloved, but they speak to an object of love that is not subject to changeability, but is stable and trustworthy. Cunningham notes the transition in *Twelfth Night* from “excessive, unstable feeling to ‘something of great constancy’” (266). What’s wonderful about this moment is not simply the appearance of Viola’s long-lost brother but the revelation (to readers, at the very least) that Sebastian is “grossly clad” not only in his own body but in Viola’s ‘Cesario’ disguise, that these are *both* disguises—and, moreover, disguises which lead (or have led) to the reality.

The movement of the characters at the end of the play is implied in the concept of wonder, which is sometimes conceived of as a stepping outside of oneself. This is what Orsino does, in some measure, in 2.4, but here, in 5.1, everyone is subject to the experience. Cunningham writes that “those who participate in the happy ending must be ready to set aside their human *confinement* to the probable and accept an intrusion of the improbable” (263, my emphasis). Malvolio’s absence from this scene is thus not simply a dramatic necessity; it is logical, for he is ‘confined’ to his very self.

Having arrived at such a *freeing* conclusion, it is incumbent upon me to offer a cautionary note: just as wonder is sometimes conceived of a stepping outside of oneself, it is also often thought of as synonymous with “astonishment.” And, here, rather than recurring to Dante, I must call back Chaucer’s characterization of Troilus at the moment he first sees

Criseyde: he is “astoned” (1.274), a Middle English precursor to ‘astonished’ that ought to give us pause. Isn’t it possible that the imagination, here, at the end of this play, is not wholly fulfilled in wonder, but still retains the power to immobilize? Critics often point to the fact that Viola is still in disguise, and that Orsino, even after he knows her true identity, calls her “boy” (5.1.261) and “Cesario” (5.1.375). Everett, for instance, writes, “Because we never do see Viola again in her woman’s garments, there is a sense that as long as the play lasts she remains un-embraced, the action never absolutely confirmed” (209). It is a good point, and it speaks to the very fine line between the kind of imagination that immobilizes and that which is fulfilled and prompts motion, but Everett is conceiving of action only in terms of the physical. In a certain sense, it matters not at all to Orsino that Viola is still ‘Cesario,’ still ‘boy,’ for that is what she was when he first professed his love; his love is not one that finds its object with the literal eye, but rather with the mind’s. For this reason the duke calls Viola “Orsino’s mistress, and his fancy’s queen” (5.1.378); she governs his imagination such that it may be fulfilled. From the perspective of Shakespeare’s original audience, Shakespeare is making an interesting claim about the nature of his theatre: there are always male actors playing female characters; his original audience could, in fact, never see the ‘real’ Viola. That said, those audience members have a choice; they can trust Shakespeare; they can yield their imaginations to him, and trust him to govern and fulfill those imaginations. The problem, of course, is that not all playwrights can do this; imagination is not always fulfilled.

CHAPTER 6

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

6.1 Introduction

In *Shakespeare and the Ambiguity of Love's Triumph*, Charles Lyons writes:

The ambiguity of *Antony and Cleopatra* is basic to the play's sprawling grace, and any critical reading which ignores that ambiguity by focusing upon only one aspect of the relationship between the lovers, only one evaluation of the quality of their love, must necessarily distort rather than illuminate. (160)

With these words in mind and some trepidation, I offer this final chapter. In it, my aim is less to provide a definitive reading of Shakespeare's late tragedy than to show how the poet-playwright revisits and revises his earlier treatments of the concepts and themes of theological romance in *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.¹ To be more precise, the concepts and themes I will consider are (1) value (of lovers and beloveds) in love-relationships and its bearing on volition; (2) the role of the imagination in the volitional process and the difficulties or dangers associated with it; and (3) the mysterious nature of love as it relates to agency and action. I do not know that my focus here is on "one aspect of the relationship between the lovers" or three distinct but related aspects, but I readily acknowledge that my argument avoids much in the play or, while it may refer to certain themes, problems, or characters, ultimately passes these by without much in the

¹ The order, here, reflects that in which they appear and are considered with respect to *Antony and Cleopatra* in this chapter.

way of comment or discussion. *Antony and Cleopatra* is a vast and difficult play; I cannot conceive of doing it justice, and so, in some respects, I do not try.

My argument is predicated on the theory that in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare returns again to the matter of *Romeo and Juliet*—his early approximation of the medieval mode of theological romance—but with the considerations of *Troilus and Cressida* and *Twelfth Night* at the fore of his mind. Thus, we might understand the late tragedy as a kind of summing up of Shakespeare's thoughts on love and the validity of the Augustinian claim that love functions as will. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare gives us a pair of pagan lovers whose love is problematic for some of the same reasons *Troilus and Cressida's* love is; most significantly, their relationship is generally taken to be emblematic of lust or, given the pagan context, hedonism. The play also seems to reject the notion of the ideal (at least in a conventional sense) and to eschew measure, hierarchy, and therefore reason. And yet, at the same time, its lovers are under constant evaluation and scrutiny and are often found lacking in some way. *Antony and Cleopatra* may also be seen as a continuation of Shakespeare's exploration of the imagination's role in love and agency in *Twelfth Night*. In his comedy, the playwright reveals how imagination may be exchanged for remembrance, how it is capable of displacing reality, and how it has the potential to immobilize a lover. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, the lovers and others frame their relationship in imaginative if not hyperbolic terms—terms, one might say, that cannot possibly reflect the reality. There is, in the play, a vast divide between what the lovers say about themselves and what their actions or lack thereof seem to communicate. Lastly, in his 'mature' lovers, Shakespeare conveys something of the mutuality of *Romeo and Juliet*, and yet that mutuality is qualified

not only by each lover's unremitting desire for independence and, indeed, power, but by the fact that the pair are often 'at war' with one another. Antony and Cleopatra may be moved by their love, but it is difficult to know exactly how to take that movement, whether to consider it good.

It is not, though, that Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra* simply *complicates* the relationship of his young lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*. It is rather that for each of his late tragedy's interactions with his earlier plays, Shakespeare takes his portrayal of love in a surprising new direction. While in the world of *Troilus and Cressida*, Antony and Cleopatra would be confronted by the same loss of (their) value and therefore suffer the same fate as that play's lovers, in their own world, they thrive not in spite but seemingly because of their ostensible 'baseness.' To use an admittedly problematic analogy, like the gay man or woman who takes up the label 'queer' with pride, Antony and Cleopatra understand their greatness—their quality—in terms of their 'hedonistic' romance. But that is not all: Shakespeare forces us, readers and audiences both, to reject the rationalistic (and undeniably accurate) evaluations of Octavius and other Romans and ally ourselves with the lovers. He compels us, in other words, to be Hectors, but this is somehow a good thing. Likewise, though we balk at the hyperbolic characterizations of the lovers, their potent imagery overwhelms us, and we are tempted to believe against our better judgment that they are what they say they are, that they somehow exist *in reality* in fantasy. But that, too, is not all: Shakespeare gives us in Antony and Cleopatra lovers who not only *are* imaginative in their love, but who understand the role of imagination in volition and consciously employ it to their ends. Lastly, in the strange mutuality of Antony and Cleopatra, in which they are

just as often at odds as in solidarity, Shakespeare depicts lovers who are not simply moved by their love for each other, but who are mutually moved, whose agencies are, in many cases, indistinct. This may not be motion with a ‘good’ end (as per *Romeo and Juliet*), but it is motion that *seems* good—which is to say, it captures something of the mystery of Augustine’s original characterization of love’s movement.

To return to the passage with which I began this chapter, Lyons’s cautionary note highlights what is probably the most notable line of enquiry in the critical conversation about *Antony and Cleopatra*. Ambiguity, Lyons submits, is to be found everywhere in the play but is perhaps most evident at the conclusion in Shakespeare’s juxtaposition of an “apocalyptic vision of [Antony and Cleopatra’s] celestial union” and the “realization that these vital lovers [...] shall be committed to the ‘dungy earth’” (183). Seeing both of these eventualities is crucial to understanding the play. Indeed, Lyons criticizes G. Wilson Knight for being so one-minded. Knight’s assessment of the conclusion of the play is thus:

So Cleopatra and Antony find not death but life. This is the high metaphysic of love which melts life and death into a final oneness; which reality is indeed no pulseless abstraction, but rather blends its single design and petalled excellence from all life and all death, all imperial splendour and sensuous delight, all strange and ethereal forms, all elements and heavenly stars; all that is natural, human, and divine; all brilliance and all glory. (qtd. in Lyons 163)

The only reason Knight can so confidently assert the transcendence of the play’s concluding scenes, according to Lyons, is because he is tracing “image ‘strands’ which work to justify his interpretation” (163) rather than seeing the tragedy in its entirety. Janet Adelman, whose essay on the play, *The Common Liar*, wields an uncommon influence over critics, would likely agree. Writing that “[a]lmost every major action in the play is in some degree

inexplicable” (15), she submits that *Antony and Cleopatra* is a “complex play [which] insist[s] that we see it several ways at once” (11). Michael Hall calls it “Shakespeare’s most effective love tragedy,” asserting that it “never establishes a particular perspective of the [lovers’] relationship as the true one against which others can be evaluated” (140). Ronald Gray notes that the lovers’ relationship can be seen as both debased and divine and writes that Shakespeare allows “the opposed meanings to reflect [...] like the gleam on shot silk, now one, now the other appearing, yet both contained in the one surface” (64).

Ambiguity is present not only in Shakespeare’s characterization of the lovers, though. Peter Berek calls *Antony and Cleopatra* a play “in which mighty opposites meet, struggle, and embrace” (296), and he’s not just talking about the eponymous characters. Carol Thomas Neely notes that the “generic boundaries of *Antony and Cleopatra* are expanded to include motifs, roles, and themes found in Shakespeare’s comedies, histories, problem plays, and romances” (137). Tzachi Zamir says that “what some see as a celebration of love, others see as the story of a fool falling from power due to the operations of a crafty teaser” (132). And Linda Charnes, perhaps elucidating how such different views of the play can be arrived at, argues that “revisionism [...] has transformed it from what it was in Shakespeare’s time—a notorious story about politics on every level—to what it is now: a ‘legendary’ love story about Great Individuals in Love” (138).

And she is right: even if *Antony and Cleopatra* was once regarded, first and foremost, as a political tragedy—one, perhaps, that needed to be amended in order for it to be

considered a proper love tragedy²—it is primarily taken to be about love now. In fact, Schalkwyk writes that *Antony and Cleopatra* is “an exception to [his] earlier claim that love has disappeared from the critical vocabulary of Shakespeare critics in the past two decades” (*Love and Service* 197). This is not a surprise, for the play is often considered alongside *Romeo and Juliet* and *Troilus and Cressida*.³

Delineating the different categories or “representational patterns” of love in a number of Shakespeare’s plays, Hall makes both of these connections explicit while also highlighting the tragedy’s ambiguity. He writes, “unlike *Romeo and Juliet*, where we know that the Ascetic view of the relationship is wrong [...] and *Troilus and Cressida*, where we know that both the Epic and Petrarchan are defective views of the reality of the play, *Antony and Cleopatra* never conclusively discredits any of its four types” (140), namely, the Ascetic, Etherealized, Epic, and Emasculating.⁴ Hall adds that *Antony and Cleopatra* is a play “that tries to force us to accept the kind of divided unity that destroys Troilus’ universe: the idea that a relationship can be a contradiction to itself and that love can be its most decadent at the same time that it is most nearly ideal” (140). Gray calls Troilus “the very reverse of Antony” because he ultimately rejects “all talk of combined opposites” (64); he rejects, by necessity, both the ideal Cressida lodged in his mind and the material one who betrays him. Lyons

² Dryden’s *All for Love* is a case in point.

³ There are also a number of critics who highlight connections between *Antony and Cleopatra* and the Sonnets. Gray submits that “there can be no doubt that Shakespeare was expanding in the play ideas that had no substantiation in the Sonnets, being presented merely as affirmations” (56). Schalkwyk notes that in both the Sonnets and *Antony and Cleopatra* “love and reiterative representation go hand in hand” (208). Lyons also makes the connection (169). In another line of enquiry, Julian Markels writes that the “effort to reconcile public and private values locates *Antony and Cleopatra* on the central line of Shakespeare’s development, where he is markedly concerned with this conflict of values” (10), as in, for example, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *The Tempest*.

⁴ These types are fairly straightforward. Hall says the “Ascetic image of Antony [is] as a ‘strumpet’s fool” (140); it is, in other words, the view an ascetic might take of Antony and Cleopatra’s love.

writes that in "*Troilus and Cressida*, love's brevity is part of a painful and embittered experience of Time itself in which the 'deed' of love has reality only during the instant in which it is committed"; he goes on to say, in the *Troilus*, "there is no fiction of love's infinity" (161).

That there is a fiction of "love's infinity" in *Antony and Cleopatra* is clear; the question, though, is whether it is *only* a fiction. In this respect, the late tragedy recapitulates Shakespeare's early one, *Romeo and Juliet*. Martha Tuck Rozett writes that both "end with a resounding affirmation of the power of love to resolve differences and elevate the human spirit, leaving the audience feeling that what they have just experienced is not altogether tragedy" (153). Rozett highlights a number of parallels between the two plays: "[b]oth [...] conclude with a tragic sequence consisting of the feigned death of the heroine"; "each lover indirectly and inadvertently brings about the death of the beloved, and each dies nobly by his or her own hand" (152); and each is a love story "in which women share the protagonist's role with men" (153). Neely makes a critical distinction: "in *Romeo and Juliet* the love death is painfully poignant"; in *Antony and Cleopatra* "it is profoundly satisfying" (161). Zamir, too, notes a difference: Antony and Cleopatra's "mature love is a relationship that is preoccupied with the question of its own existence. Such worry sets it apart from romantic love of the Romeo and Juliet kind" (126); he also says, despite this claim about the anxiety emblematic of mature love, that "Romeo and Juliet never laugh" (122). Such could certainly not be said about Antony and Cleopatra.

One last element of the critical conversation deserves note: the emphasis on Antony himself. This emphasis is indicated by the numerous lines in the play like the one at the end

of 1.1, in which Antony's 'self' seems somehow separable from him: "Sir, sometimes when he is not Antony / He comes too short of that great property / Which still should go with Antony" (1.1.59-61).⁵ Charnes writes that "[t]he real battle in the play [...]—that between Caesar and Cleopatra—is staked out across the terrain of Antony's 'identity'" (112), and this is certainly true insofar as he is the singular link between Rome and Egypt. This emphasis on Antony's identity is, of course, significant with respect to the play's exploration of love; my discussion of the lover's identity in *Troilus and Cressida* should make this clear. Lyons notes the contradiction in *Antony and Cleopatra*: "[l]ove provides the keenest realization of identity and the most acute awareness of the disintegration of identity" (162). Using similar language, Schalkwyk writes that "[w]e are invited [...] to view *eros* [...] as a force that dissolves identity itself" (198). And along the same lines, J. Leeds Barroll suggests, "[v]arious points of departure could serve for an inquiry into the characterization of Antony, but one of the more convenient *loci* is the emotionalism rather carefully depicted in the Roman hero" (160). Indeed, it is with Antony's "emotionalism"—or his *perceived* emotionalism—that I want to begin.

6.2 Value

The concept of value, worth, or beloved-ability is integral to *Antony and Cleopatra*. Though these terms aren't bandied about as in *Troilus and Cressida* and the play is not so explicitly philosophical, Shakespeare's tragedy clearly holds a debate. The question of this

⁵ All quotations from *Antony and Cleopatra* are from the Oxford World's Classics text, edited by Michael Neill. Neill's edition spells 'Anthony' thus; for the sake of consistency, and because the majority of the criticism I have consulted uses 'Antony,' I will use it also.

debate may be rendered in a number ways; one of these is simply *who is Antony?* Another might be *what is Antony worth?* As becomes clear, neither of these is as simple as it looks, for each entails asking (and answering) another question: *who is Cleopatra?* And, then, *what are Antony and Cleopatra?* That this or these are questions the play asks is evident even from its opening scene, where, at the same time as Antony's measure as a lover is being taken by the Egyptian Cleopatra, two of his own Roman soldiers are assessing the apparent down-turn in his worth as their General. Philo begins:

Nay, but this dotage of our General's
O'erflows the measure: those his goodly eyes,
That o'er the files 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. (1.1.1-6)

Antony is or, at least, has been great, and that greatness has most clearly manifested itself in action. That he is a triumvir of Rome is down to his martial prowess in the service of his republic and people. But if he no longer serves, or if he is no longer able to exhibit his martial prowess, then what is his value?⁶ It is a question all the Romans are asking, especially Octavius, for if Antony is no longer Antony, Octavius's "great competitor" (1.4.3) will be all the easier to defeat.

In 1.4, in his first appearance in the play, Octavius calls Antony a "man who is the abstract of all faults that men follow" (1.4.9-10). Then, focussing his attention on one of those faults, he notes that Antony's 'confounding' (1.4.28) of his time has resulted in the

⁶ This is essentially the question Ulysses puts to Achilles in *Troilus and Cressida* (3.3.115ff) to encourage the warrior to fight.

fact that “we,” Octavius, “do bear / So great weight in his lightness” (1.4.24-25). Finally, he returns to the abstract and speaks about “the ebbd man” who,

ne'er loved till ne'er worth love,
Comes deared by being lacked. This common body,
Like a vagabond flag upon the stream,
Goes to and back, lackeying the varying tide
To rot itself with motion. (1.4.43-47)

Octavius's assessment of Antony is not surprising. This is the same view taken by Philo at the beginning of the play. What is worth noting is the language Octavius uses: first, he speaks of the “weight” he bears as a result of Antony's “lascivious wassails” (1.4.56), which he later tellingly contrasts with one of Antony's great victories (1.4.56ff); second, he implies—actually using the word “worth”—that Antony as a beloved of the “common” people produces in them a kind of mindless or unintentional (“lackeying”) motion the end of which is “rot.” Octavius even calls Antony a “flag,” which should remind us of Nuttall's comments that “Helen is like a flag” and “[i]t does not matter that a flag is only a bit of cloth fixed to a stick” (215). Octavius clearly has no respect for the *vulgus*; his words implicitly draw a distinction between *them*, subscribers to a value they incorrectly *perceive* in Antony, and *himself*, the objective seer. Octavius subscribes to the notion of essential value; it is just that Antony has little, as his actions demonstrate.

This is not only Octavius's view. Pompey utters the following wish (while at the same time seeming to live vicariously through the “ne'er lust-wearied” (2.1.38) Antony):

Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both,
Tie up the libertine in a field of feasts,
Keep his brain fuming! Epicurean cooks
Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite,
That sleep and feeding may prorogue his honour,

Even till a Lethe'd dullness—. (2.1.22-27)

But Pompey, too, desires power for himself, so, aside from noting his emphasis on appetite, we may pass over his sentiments. What is remarkable is that even Antony's right-hand man, Enobarbus, questions Antony's value. After Antony's infamous retreat at the Battle of Actium, Enobarbus is seemingly both resolved and conflicted: "I'll yet follow / The wounded chance of Antony, though my reason / Sits in the wind against me" (3.10.34-36). He is, in this moment, like the Hector who reverses his position or a more knowing Troilus, one who understands his choice of will or desire over reason. But Enobarbus's resolve disintegrates (or strengthens, depending on one's perspective), and his reason reasserts itself. He says, "[a] diminution in our captain's brain / Restores his heart" (3.13.198-199), which is an apparent deal-breaker for the soldier. Indeed, Enobarbus is yet more specific at the beginning of this scene, where he claims that "Antony only [...] would make his will / Lord of his reason" (3.13.3-4).

Even Antony, at times, finds himself lacking. Markels writes that "no major Shakespearean hero is so eloquent and severe in judging himself as [...] Antony" (132). What is revealing is that almost all of Antony's self-criticism comes in the context of his relationship with Cleopatra. He admits, early in the play, "These strong Egyptian fetters I must break, / Or lose my self in dotage" (1.2.116-117). Antony's remark, here, points to two things he believes: that there is still a true 'Antony' who retains his former value and that Cleopatra's effect on him is constraining. He, like Paris and the Troilus of 1.1 and 5.2 is immobilized, chained, by his love.

While judgment of Antony is the norm throughout the play, Cleopatra naturally receives the worst of it. She is reduced by Philo to “a tawny front” (1.1.6) in the opening scene and thereafter defamed consistently and repeatedly. After Antony abandons Octavia, Octavius says, “Cleopatra / Hath nodded him to her. He hath given his empire / Up to a whore” (3.6.65-67). And the would-be emperor is right, at least about Cleopatra’s ability to move Antony. On the subject of her motives, Charnes writes, “so long as Cleopatra can reinforce the pleasures of their life in Egypt, she can disrupt Octavius’ efforts to reclaim Antony” (111). But that “life in Egypt” is really what we’re interested in now. Lyons suggests, “the attraction of Cleopatra for Antony is conceived in terms of infinite appetite and consumption” (167), and his suggestion is borne out by the lovers’ activities. Together they endlessly pursue “sport” and “pleasure” (1.1.49) and “wander through the streets, [...] not[ing] / The qualities of people” (1.1.55-56); these two would no doubt find willing and like-minded companions in the Paris and Helen of Shakespeare’s earlier play.

But Cleopatra wears her decadence, if that is the word, in a curious way. She recalls with amusement the time she “drunk [Antony] to his bed— / Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst / I wore his sword Philippan” (21-23). She speaks of her “salad days, / When [she] was green in judgment, cold in blood” (1.5.73-74). It is a strange formulation, for usually we consider one’s (often regrettable) youth as a time of hot-bloodedness, something we see in the lovers of *Troilus and Cressida*, whose love is actually characterized in terms of blood. Cleopatra, against convention, is hot-blooded *now*, and her being so somehow coincides or accords with her acquisition of judgment; as she ages, as her judgment increases, her passions grow in strength and intensity. In a number of instances,

she rails against Antony only to turn and embrace him moments later, and this she seemingly regards as appropriate. She is, in acting so, *herself*. Schalkwyk calls her performance “protean” (202)—a characterization Antony (but no other Roman) would seem to approve of:

Fie, wrangling Queen,
Whom everything becomes—to chide, to laugh,
To weep—how every passion fully strives
To make itself in thee fair and admired! (1.1.50-53)

Antony’s is a striking assertion in light of the exploration of value in *Troilus and Cressida*. Rather than the qualities of a particular beloved functioning to make her worthy or, better yet, to *reveal* her worthiness, Antony is claiming that Cleopatra’s qualities find their perfection *in her*; they become “fair and admired” only in her performance of them.⁷ This is a radically new idea—a way of side-stepping, we might say, the problem of the beloved’s value.

On the one hand, it seems as though Antony and Cleopatra, in turning value on its head thus, are actually eschewing the concept altogether. In the play’s opening scene, Cleopatra demands of Antony, “If it be love indeed, tell me how much” (1.1.14). His reply is: “There’s a beggary in the love that can be reckoned” (1.1.15). When she again invokes measure, “I’ll set a bourn how far to be beloved” (1.1.16), he goes further: “Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth” (1.1.17).⁸ Here, his hyperbolic claims would seem to communicate his view of the inapplicability or inappropriateness of the concept of

⁷ Cleopatra will later say of Antony: “Be’st thou sad, or merry, / The violence of either thee becomes, / So does it no man else” (1.5.59-61)

⁸ There is good reason to see Cleopatra’s invocation of measure, here, as disingenuous, a means only to frustrating Antony. She is, in some respects, like Chaucer’s Pandarus who speaks only for effect. But I will say more on this topic later.

measure with respect to love.⁹ But there is another way of understanding Antony and Cleopatra's romance in light of earlier discussions of worth. It may be that the lovers actually measure worthiness in terms of passion. Antony's remarks, then, do not need to be accurate but only to convey the intensity of his feeling. In saying such a thing, I am returning, I suppose, to the religion of love—of which we see evidence in *Romeo and Juliet*—but suggesting that what Shakespeare does in *Antony and Cleopatra* is transform that medieval fixture into something markedly different, the religion of passion. In this religion, it is not devotion or humility that is virtuous, that makes one worthy; it is spiritedness.

Passion trumps reason in a number of instances in the play. In 1.1, Antony says to Cleopatra, "The nobleness of life / Is to do thus" (1.1.38-39), an assertion which most editors take to suggest the stage direction: [*embracing Cleopatra*]. Adding credence to this suggestion is the fact that there is a similar instance in 2.2 where Antony ostensibly embraces Octavius: "Were we before our armies, and to fight, / I should do thus" (2.2.26-27). Unlike *Troilus and Cressida*'s Ajax when beating Thersites or even *Romeo and Juliet*'s Mercutio in combat with Tybalt, both of whom are reduced to gestures because they either cannot find the words or have simply opted for force, Antony transitions from word to gesture in order to convey something that words (and, by consequence, reason) have not the capacity to communicate. It is an *ascent* into action that is born of Antony's magnanimity, his passion. Likewise, there are moments in which Cleopatra does what characters in other plays do, but is understood to be doing something different. For

⁹ Notably, he does *not* assert either Cleopatra's great worth (as Romeo might do) or the strength of his love (as Troilus might).

example, when she is informed by a messenger that Antony has married Octavia, her response is to strike him, not once but twice, drag him up and down (2.5.65, stage direction), and then draw a knife (2.5.74, stage direction) and threaten him with it. Her servant Charmian's response to these histrionic displays is: "Good madam, keep yourself within yourself" (2.5.76). Like Troilus's passion in 5.2, which Ulysses urges him to "contain" (5.2.178), Cleopatra's passion overflows. But is this bad? Do we condemn her for her reaction to the news of her lover's marriage to another? Qualifying or, better yet, recasting this moment in another shape is Cleopatra's claim at the end of the play, "I have / Immortal longings in me" (5.2.279-280). Passion like Troilus's, in a circumstance like Troilus's, ought arguably to be controlled, but immortal longings, in a play like this, these must be expressed. Charmian's urging is, perhaps, an unwitting reference to Cleopatra's own suicide-enacted ascent at the end of the play. What is happening in this moment is well expressed by Mason, who says, Cleopatra "somehow brings the qualities we associate with the spirit to bear centrally on matters we normally classify as of the flesh" (275).

Now despite the fact that we know certain of Antony's and Cleopatra's passion-induced actions are going to be problematic and that their behaviour can be characterized in much the same way as the behaviour of the 'debased' characters of *Troilus and Cressida*, the effect of these actions and this behaviour in *this* play is different, and we need to consider why.

As I have already asserted, both *Troilus and Cressida* and *Antony and Cleopatra* hold a debate about value. To be clear, in the case of the former, I do not refer to the debates of 1.3 (in which the Greeks contemplate their failure to take Troy) or 2.2 (in which the

Trojans consider Helen's worth), but rather to the play itself; the play *is* the debate. While it is perplexing that all the play's characters ultimately subscribe to a conception of value as perceived or willfully-imposed—this despite the fact that at various moments, Ulysses, Hector, and Cressida seem to express views to the contrary—that they do, that the world of the play is one in which there is no intrinsic or essential value, necessarily posits the *reader* as the opponent in the debate. *We* see not only that intrinsic or essential worth exists but also the consequences of living in a world where it does not. *We* become the advocates of reason, hierarchy, and value. In truth, we have no choice, for if we don't, we must accept the world of the play as our world.¹⁰ By contrast, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the advocate of reason, hierarchy, and value already exists: he is Octavius. The debate is *in* the play.

Octavius—and by extension all 'Romans' in the play—might be likened to the rational lover conjured in the Introduction of this dissertation, he whose carefully made calculations determine whom he ought to love. That figure was, admittedly, something of a caricature, in that we imagined him as cold and heartless. Octavius, I am ready to admit, has *some* heart.

We have already observed Octavius judging Antony and the "whore" to whom he gave his kingdom. It is worth noting that his evaluation of his fellow triumvir accords with Hall's characterization of the "Ascetic" view of romantic love, which, as the critic points out, is in essentials the misogynous view. In 3.12, we see both Octavius's privileging of reason and his cold rationality clearly displayed; in that scene he sends Thidias on an embassy to Antony, telling him to "observe how Anthony becomes his flaw, / And what

¹⁰ Obviously there are those who have no trouble with such a consequence. The premise of my argument is simply that Shakespeare was not the 'modern' some critics took him to be and, thus, intended for his readers to take such a perspective. Or, if 'intended' is too strong a word, he might have simply expected that readers would.

thou think'st his very action speaks / In every power that moves" (3.12.35-7). The "flaw" he refers to is Antony's retreat during the Battle of Actium, but as Octavius no doubt regards that retreat as emblematic of Cleopatra's influence on Antony, the flaw more generally stands for the lovers' relationship. It is a curious instruction: not only does Octavius wish (Thidias) to *read* Antony as though he were an easily interpreted book; his (or Thidias's) reading is predicated on Antony's own inability, due to his passionate nature, to conceal his true feelings. But it isn't just his feelings Octavius wants to know about. Citing Case, Neill's note on Octavius's speech suggests that "power that moves" could mean "faculty of mind and body that is put in action." If this is the case, then it could mean Octavius is trying to assess not only Antony's feelings, but what his next move will be. He is, not unlike me in this dissertation, breaking down Antony's 'moving parts' in order to understand his potential for action.

Octavius's rationality is fittingly most evident in his relationship with his sister. Octavia is clearly a foil for Cleopatra in the play; indeed, Cleopatra invites the comparison herself in 3.3. Octavia, we are told, is "admired" (2.2.125), an innocent Miranda,

whose beauty claims
 No worse a husband than the best of men,
 Whose virtue and whose general graces speak
 That which none else can utter. (2.2.134-7)

She is also "the piece of virtue" (3.2.28) set between Antony and Octavius to make peace.¹¹ Her ability to make peace is predicated on her being just the sort of beloved a man might be ennobled by in loving. But Octavia is too perfect; she is boring. According to Enobarbus,

¹¹ The phrase, "piece of virtue" is Octavius's.

she is of a “holy, cold, and still conversation” (2.6.121-122), a characterization that can be taken in three ways, all of which highlight her difference from Cleopatra.¹² As such, Octavia cannot move Antony. According to a messenger come to Cleopatra, Octavia “creeps: / Her motion and station are as one” (3.3.18-19). These words, as well as the messenger’s that “[s]he shows a body rather than a life, / A statue than a breather” (3.3.20-1), recall Juliet’s claim to Romeo that “[s]aints do not move” (1.4.218), thus reinforcing not just Octavia’s perfection, but also her inability to enter into a relationship of mutuality with Antony. (Juliet, we may recall, repudiates her sainthood.) Given these characterizations, it is no surprise when Octavius says his sister is “a great part of [himself]” (3.2.24) or when we hear Enobarbus say, the “sighs of Octavia blow the fire up in Caesar” (2.6.126).¹³ Shakespeare’s portrait of Octavius and Octavia caricatures the paradigm of lovers in theological romance. In many ways, the two are more similar to Romeo and Juliet than Antony and Cleopatra are. What unifies them is their rational love.

Thus we account for the different effects produced by the pairs of lovers, Antony and Cleopatra and Troilus and Cressida (or Paris and Helen). Having played the advocate of reason in *Troilus and Cressida*, we readers find we cannot do so here, for to occupy that role would be to align ourselves with Octavius; it would be to accept a rationality that is almost inhuman. Reading rationality as a fixture of authority, Charnes writes that “Rome is [...] the play’s ‘original’ center of the narrative imperative” (107). What she means is that all the

¹² (1) Octavia is not an engaging conversationalist; (2) Octavia is not active during “sexual intercourse” (*OED*, “conversation, n.” 3.); and (3) Octavia is one who exists in her “spiritual being” (“conversation, n” 1.). Additionally, that Octavia is “cold” contrasts her with Cleopatra, who has already implied that in her maturity, she has become ‘hot-blooded.’

¹³ Enobarbus’s phrase is a prediction, but one that seems to hold true.

characters of the play ultimately find “their histories and ‘characters’ [...] constructed in Roman report” (107). This is, of course, Octavius’s plan; he desires, in modern parlance, to control the narrative—not just in the play but *of* the play. Thus Cleopatra is always ‘whore’ for her actions in seducing a Roman and forcing him to repudiate reason and hierarchy (read: Octavius’s authority). Despite the fact that it is hard to disagree with many of Octavius’s judgments—for instance, Antony’s end would have been much different had he remained with Octavia—we simply cannot take his side in the argument.

This does not mean we ally ourselves, blindly or wholeheartedly, with Antony and Cleopatra, that we necessarily accept Enobarbus’s claim that Cleopatra’s “passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love” (1.2.145-146), but insofar as we cannot take Octavius’s position, we repudiate reason—or, at least, a reasonable love; we become *Troilus and Cressida*’s Hector, who doesn’t lose the debate or acquiesce ultimately to Troilus’s ‘argument’; he simply stops debating. He repudiates reason (and thus debate) and simply attends to a different part of himself, his desire or will. Indeed, ultimately, we may even reject the notion that the play holds a debate, for debate is a necessarily rational medium. To put it differently, we may accept that rationality and passion are no longer opposites. When Cleopatra says that Antony was “disposed to mirth, but on the sudden / A Roman thought hath struck him” (1.2.81-82), she does not mean to imply that there is such a thing as an ‘Egyptian’ thought. All thought, as my discussion of 3.3 in *Romeo and Juliet* tries to show, is rational thought. Thus, if the “narrative imperative” lies with Octavius, to see Antony and Cleopatra in any way other than the way he sees them is to oppose him; according to his own view, we are either wholly with him or against him. To put it yet

another way, even though “greatness” and “whore” are both “accurate words for Cleopatra” and, further, words, which, in Cleopatra’s view, “do not cancel each other’s meaning [or] fuse in a third meaning” (Markels 6), one cannot say such a thing and be *partially* of Octavius’s position. While Octavius agrees that Cleopatra is a “whore,” his view of reason will not allow for her to be “great” in being “whore.”

We are invited in *Antony and Cleopatra* to attend to our sympathies for the play’s lovers and are compelled to give them the benefit of the doubt. In Gray’s terms, we see the fact that “none of the Romans is aware what Antony mean[s] to Cleopatra, or she to him” (62). The claim of the next section of this chapter is, in some ways, that none could, for doing so requires imagination.

6.3 Imagination

In *Twelfth Night*, lovers encounter beloveds in their mind, and the nature of that encounter, be it memorial or imaginative, bears on their potential for action. Remembrance seems to play an integral role in Orsino’s recognition that he loves Viola even though it is his imagination, which is initially inflamed by her self-portrait in words: “She sat like patience on a monument / Smiling at grief” (2.4.114-115). While his recognition is accompanied in the play’s last scene by a newfound mobility, it must be acknowledged that immobility was always a possibility, for Orsino had been *imagining* for most of the play, and it *got* him nowhere. *Antony and Cleopatra* is, like *Twelfth Night*, a play in which Shakespeare explores imagination’s role in volition; the difference between the two works, though, is that in the tragedy, it is not *only* Shakespeare who is thinking about imagining. Both Antony

and Cleopatra show an awareness of imagination's potential for moving lovers too. Both characterize their beloved and themselves in highly imaginative terms, doing so in a way that (Octavius would certainly say) fails to reflect the reality. According to Schalkwyk, though, the lovers' 'investment' of "love's vision [...] in the imagination makes it possible for [them] to embody their vision in public, performative terms" (*Love and Service* 211). In Shakespeare's late tragedy, Antony and Cleopatra would seem to "stand up peerless" (1.1.42), not because they are ideal and therefore also catalysts (like Beatrice or Juliet) for a 'good' love, but rather because they incline to and inspire hyperbolic praise.

We see this just after Antony's claim that he and Cleopatra "stand up peerless." Cleopatra's response, given in the same line of verse, is "Excellent falsehood!" While it is his response that fails to reflect reality, for they have a kind of 'peer' in Octavius, her response is more of interest; it is an oxymoron, of course, but Neill's gloss points to Puttenham's description of the "loud liar," hyperbole. According to Puttenham, "when I speak that which neither I myself think to be true, nor would have any other body believe, it must needs be a *great dissimulation*" (Neill's emphasis). What this tells us is that the truth or falsity of a given claim offered by either of the lovers is always subject to its 'greatness'—in this case, the 'excellence' of the falsehood.

Hyperbole is at the heart of Antony and Cleopatra's communication in the play; their repeated use of the figure speaks to the divide not only between reality and the language that we take to reflect or describe it but between Antony and Cleopatra's view of language—and how it relates to the world—and others' views. "Let Rome in Tiber melt," begins Antony in 1.1, "and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall!" (1.1.35-36).

Likewise, Cleopatra says in 2.5, “Melt Egypt into Nile! And kindly creatures / Turn all to serpents!” (2.5.79-80). The context is in some ways irrelevant; what matters is the passion, the extremity these statements express. And, indeed, extremity seems to mark the lovers’ responses to the world and each other. Schalkwyk notes that Antony in 3.13 “rages irrationally at Cleopatra’s allowing her hand to be kissed by Caesar’s messenger,” and yet in 4.15 “receives the news that she pretended to be dead with complete equanimity” (*Love and Service* 211). Both of these responses are incongruous and therefore a kind of non-verbal hyperbole, which lies loudly about what Antony truly means.¹⁴

In examining what Antony and Cleopatra do mean by their use of highly imaginative and often hyperbolic language and, moreover, how it figures volitionally, we must first acknowledge that there is another character in the play who employs language in a similar way: he is Enobarbus. Enobarbus, like his master, is a Roman soldier gone Egyptian; he alone, according to J.L. Simmons, “sees a proper place for Cleopatra and Egypt in the soldier’s life” (499). In 1.2, he tells Antony, whose frustration with Cleopatra has reached a peak, that the queen’s “passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love. We cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears: they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report” (1.2.145-148). Most critics agree that he is joking, but his language nonetheless conveys the same inclinations the lovers’ does.¹⁵ If we were to take Enobarbus seriously (for certainly Antony and Cleopatra take themselves seriously), it would mean—

¹⁴ It is worth saying that nothing about the lovers’ hyperboles in the play is Petrarchan, for the Petrarchan is a response to what might be called a universally recognized ideal; the lovers’ hyperboles are particular only to them.

¹⁵ Simmons also claims that Enobarbus, while seeing the proper place of Cleopatra and Egypt in Antony’s life, still tends to privilege Antony’s soldiering: “[w]hen a soldier’s activity is required, women are reduced, if not quite literally to nothing, to their most naturalistic and unsentimental function” (500). Enobarbus seems to confirm this in his preceding speech: “Cleopatra catching but the least noise of this, dies instantly—I have seen her die twenty times upon far poorer moment” (1.2.139-141).

just as Antony's observation earlier in the same scene, "every passion fully strives / To make itself in [Cleopatra] fair and admired" (1.2.52-53)—that there is something divine about Cleopatra, that she is a saint in the earlier mentioned (though non-existent) religion of passion.

Cleopatra certainly seems to think of herself and Antony in these terms:

Eternity was in our lips and eyes,
Bliss in our brows bent; none our parts so poor,
But was a race of heaven. They are so still,
Or thou, the greatest soldier of the world,
Art turned the greatest liar. (1.3.35-39)

Here, as in her earlier assertion, "Excellent falsehood!" she invokes hyperbole to the end of calling her beloved a liar—the "greatest liar" (which could be a compliment)—more than to assert that eternity was really in their lips or bliss in their brows.

And yet, even after Antony dies, Cleopatra's rhetoric remains the same; indeed, it may intensify. Significantly, both the previously quoted speech and the one that follows are spoken in the past tense: eternity *was* in the lovers' lips; his legs *bestrid* the ocean. It may be that Shakespeare is complicating what seems, at first glance, to be a wholly imaginative vision by making it memorial. Given the interactions of imagination and remembrance in *Twelfth Night*, this must, at least, in theory, add legitimacy to the lovers' hyperbolic claims. Telling Dollabella in 5.2 that she "dreamt there was an Emperor Antony" (5.2.76), she says,

His legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm
Crested the world; his voice was propertied
As all the tuned spheres—and that to friends—
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,

There was no winter in't—an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping. His delights
Were dolphin-like; they showed his back above
The element they lived in. In his livery
Walked crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates dropped from his pocket. (5.2.82-92)

Here, though grief may qualify the legitimacy of Cleopatra's description, as does her question ("Think you there was, or might be such a man / As this I dreamt of?" (5.2.93-94)), Dollabella's response ("Gentle madam, no" (5.2.94)) strikes us as wrong, as somehow missing the mark. It strikes the no longer-meditative Cleopatra as wrong, too: "You lie to the hearing of the gods!" (5.2.95), she says, accusing him of blasphemy. She goes on to say,

Nature wants stuff
To vie strange forms with Fancy, yet t' imagine
An Antony were nature's piece 'gainst Fancy,
Condemning shadows quite. (5.2.97-100)

While Dollabella may be tempted to think that "a diminution in [Cleopatra's] brain / Restores [her] heart," in Cleopatra's view, the fact that Nature has produced Antony, who in himself exceeds what "shadows" Fancy can conjure, proves that her imagining (or perhaps remembrance) cannot be so easily discounted. She is claiming, in other words, that her portrait of Antony bestriding the Ocean actually fails to capture (rather than exceeds) the true Antony.

According to Rozett, Dollabella is "won over by [Cleopatra's] poetry" (161), prompting him to reveal Octavius's plan for her, but it is not just her poetry; he tells her earlier, "Your loss is as yourself, great, and you bear it / As answering the weight" (5.2.101-102), a claim that, whether he fully means it or not, affirms both Cleopatra's and Antony's hyperbolic stature. For Cleopatra's love expressed, here, as grief, equals her loss,

which is to say it equals Antony. To say this is to affirm the truth of her claims. Had Antony not been such as she describes him, her response could not be thus. Indeed, had Antony not been such as she describes him, she could not later feel “[i]mmortal longings” (5.2.280). Her description of Antony, then, inflames her imagination, prompting action. Seeing Antony “rouse himself / To praise [her] noble act” (5.2.283-284), she says, “I am fire and air—my other elements / I give to baser life” (5.2.288-289), and we see in *our* imaginations Cleopatra’s fire-like ascent. One actually wonders whether Shakespeare hadn’t read his Augustine, though the image is no doubt ubiquitous.

This is the end of the play, but the pattern of employing hyperbolic (which is not to say false) descriptions to inflame love through the imagination is evident much earlier in the play. On a domestic level, it is there in Cleopatra’s instructions to Charmian in 1.3: “If you find him sad, / Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report / That I am sudden sick” (1.3.3-5). This is not Cleopatra (simply) being passive aggressive; these little falsehoods are meant to produce images in the mind of her lover—images which are themselves meant to produce a certain effect or motion.

Cleopatra is called a “witch” once in the play. In a moment of great vexation for Antony, after, it seems, Cleopatra has betrayed him, he declares: “The witch shall die! / To the young Roman boy she hath sold me, and I fall / Under this plot—she dies for’t” (4.13.47-49). Here, Antony seems to be employing the term in its most generic sense, a sense which may even speak to Cleopatra’s notable ‘maturity,’ but its more specific connotations cannot be dismissed. In the speech of Pompey, quoted earlier in this chapter, in which he seems himself to *conjure*, “Let witchcraft join with beauty, lust with both”

(2.1.22), the implied source of that witchcraft is Cleopatra. His possibly unwitting association of beauty and witchcraft with lust is striking, given the power of certain images to produce effects in this play. Charnes quotes Kenneth Burke in her discussion of imagery in *Antony and Cleopatra*; he defines “glamour” as

a charm affecting the eye, making objects appear different from what they are; witchcraft, magic, a spell; a kind of haze in the air, causing things to appear different from what they really are; any artificial interest in, or association with, an object, through which it appears delusively magnified or glorified. (124)

This definition certainly captures what Scarrus thinks he saw at the Battle of Actium:

Cleopatra “once being luffed, / The noble ruin of her magic, Antony [...] flies after her”

(3.10.17-20). For how could Antony think retreat was better or more ‘glorious’ than engaging with Octavius’s forces? Only Cleopatra could put such a spell on him. But if we take Antonio’s claim in *Twelfth Night* that “[a] witchcraft drew [him] hither” (5.1.70) as signalling love’s movement of the lover, then witchcraft and magic in *Antony and Cleopatra* need to be taken or, at least, considered in this way too. Conjuring images produces effects, and this is something that Cleopatra, clearly recognizes. As will be seen, Antony, too, sees that this is so.

We see one effect of such imagery in 2.2. Or, rather—this is a convoluted moment—we see the effect of *actual* imagery on Antony (and others, including Enobarbus) through Enobarbus’s remembrance of Antony’s first sight of Cleopatra, which he (Enobarbus) recounts for the Romans Agrippa and Mecenas, on whom his recounted remembrance also has an effect. Cleopatra, he says, “pursed up his heart upon the river Cydnus”:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
 Burned on the water; the poop was beaten gold,
 Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
 The winds were lovesick with them; the oars were silver,
 Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
 The water which they beat to follow faster,
 As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
 It beggared all description: she did lie
 In her pavilion—cloth-of-gold of tissue—
 O'er-picturing that Venus where we see
 The fancy out-work nature; on each side her
 Stood pretty, dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
 With divers-coloured fans, whose wind did seem
 To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
 And what they undid did. (2.2.198-212)

It is, ironically, almost an ekphrastic moment.¹⁶ That Cleopatra has 'arranged' to be seen in exactly this manner seems clear; though *she* utters no words in this moment, she is communicating, and her communication is typically hyperbolic; it 'beggars' words, just as she claims Antony does (or did) to Dollabella. That we see fancy "out-work nature" in Cleopatra's "o'er-picturing" of Venus, and that there are "smiling Cupids" standing about her signal the moment's—the image's—capacity to move those who experience it. There is mystery or paradox, here, too. The wind from the Cupid's fans "did seem / To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool." It functions—again, an irony, given the Roman Philo speaks these words—like Antony's "captain's heart," which "is become the bellows and the fan / To cool a gypsy's lust" (1.1.9-10).¹⁷

¹⁶ For some reason, ekphrastic representations seem to be livelier than life (in poetry) itself. Perhaps it is because they necessarily pile imagination on imagination.

¹⁷ According to Simmons, the "tribute is dazzling because, confining himself entirely to the level of lust, Enobarbus projects Antony's transcendentalism while reveling in the sensual" (500). I don't know that I agree with Simmons; it seems to me that while Enobarbus is no Antony, having been in Egypt with Antony for as long as he has effected a change in him. As will be seen, that he later regrets abandoning Antony speaks to his capacity for imagination on more than just the "level of lust."

Perhaps more striking than Enobarbus's description, however, is the effect of it. I do not mean Agrippa's "O, rare for Antony!" (2.2.212) or "Rare Egyptian!" (2.2.225) or even "Royal wench! / She made great Caesar lay his sword to bed, / He ploughed her, and she cropped" (2.2.233-235), but rather the effect, in that moment, of the spectacle of Cleopatra:

The city cast
Her people out upon her; and Anthony,
Enthroned i'th'market-place, did sit alone,
Whistling to th'air, which but for vacancy
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
And made a gap in Nature. (2.2.220-225)

Whether it be the "strong base and building of [Cleopatra's] love" or not, something in her is "as the very centre of the earth, / Drawing all things to it" (*Troilus and Cressida* 4.2.101-103).

It is exactly for this reason that hyperbolic language is employed in the play. In 4.9, Antony tells his men, whom he loves and who love him, "You have shown all Hectors" so that he might encourage them to "[e]nter the city, clip your wives ..." (4.9.7-8). It is for this reason that Antony allows his name to stand as "[t]hat magical word of war" (3.1.31).¹⁸ For though 'Antony' is but a name, that name has "effected" the defeat of the "ne'er-yet-beaten horse of Parthia" (3.1.31, 33). When Enobarbus, having abandoned his commander, is told by a nameless Roman soldier that Antony "hath sent all [his] treasure, with / His bounty *overplus*" after him (4.6.20-21, my emphasis), when he is told that his "Emperor / Continues still a Jove" (4.6.27-28), his response is not only to will himself to death ("heart-

¹⁸ There are only two instances of the word "magic" in the play; the other is the one already noted, in Pompey's speech about Cleopatra's witchcraft.

break” might be the word), but to show recourse to hyperbole in doing so: “I am alone the villain of the earth” (4.6.29).¹⁹

I have already spoken of Cleopatra’s language in 5.2, in the moments approaching her suicide, but there is one moment—one more speech—which deserves mention because of its potential to qualify the lovers’ trust in and use of imagination in the play. Having applied an asp to her breast, Cleopatra asks Charmian, “Dost thou not see my baby at my breast, / That sucks the nurse asleep?” (5.2.308-309). Charmian’s response, “O, break! O, break!” (5.2.309), conveys the servant’s emotional state at the prospect of her queen’s death, but also seems to signify the final breaking of Cleopatra’s sanity. According to Rozett, in Cleopatra’s mind, the asp “is metamorphosed from an instrument of death to a symbol of new life” (162); and, indeed, according to Knight, we find in this moment “an imaginative parallel in the Crucifixion” (qtd. in Mason 275), the snake, of course, being a symbol of salvation; but there is still something jarring about this moment of fantasy, something decidedly more Cleopatrian than Antonian. Charnes writes that in the play’s language of hyperbole the lovers discover a “shared fantasy,” but Cleopatra’s image from the conclusion seems to suggest that each lover is ultimately either herself or himself. The line between mutuality and independence is explored in the next section of this chapter.

¹⁹ Enobarbus’s suicide, if it may be called that, has a significant effect on how readers or audiences view Antony and, I suppose, by extension Cleopatra. Worthen quotes actor Michael Redgrave who says, “Antony is described as ‘noble’ [...] but [...] Antony is never *shown* to do a noble thing.” He continues, “Enobarbus creates Antony’s nobility and Cleopatra’s fascination as much as the protagonists can hope to do” (296). It is a striking though not uncommon comment, and suggests that what the lovers are doing in the play by virtue of their rhetoric, Shakespeare is doing to us.

6.4 Mutuality and Motion

The mutuality of Antony and Cleopatra's relationship is not remarkable, but to consider it in the light of the play's exploration of value and the imagination as they relate to volition is, hopefully, to see it anew. Shakespeare marks the unique mutuality of his lovers—the "mutual pair" (1.1.38), a phrase which may or may not be redundant—by highlighting indistinctions between them in the play.²⁰ In 1.2, he has Antony's right-hand man, Enobarbus, literally mistake his commander for Cleopatra. At the beginning of the scene, Enobarbus says, "Hush, here comes Antony"—to which Charmian replies, "Not he, the Queen" (1.2.78). Later, in 1.4, Octavius acknowledges rumours that Antony "is not more manlike / Than Cleopatra, nor the queen of Ptolemy / More womanly than he" (1.4.5-7). And in 2.5, in a passage already quoted in this chapter, Cleopatra recounts the night she "put [her] tires and mantles on [Antony], whilst / [she] wore his sword" (2.5.22-23). Even though each of these instances might be taken (or is actually intended) as evidence of Philo's claim that "this dotage of our General's / O'erflows the measure" (1.1.1-2), the play allows us to take them otherwise. We do not have to read Enobarbus's failure to recognize Antony in the same way Shakespeare invites us to read Pandarus's of Troilus; nor do we need to understand Antony's effeminacy as a comment on his potential for action.²¹ Though Neely claims that in the play "gender roles are not exchanged or transcended, but are *played out* in more variety than in the other tragedies" (137, my emphasis), she seems to

²⁰ We distinguish *between*, of course, but when *indistinguishing*, is this the right preposition to use? Perhaps "of"? I ask this question both because I'm not sure of the answer but also because this inability to speak to the unique mutuality of the lovers.

²¹ We *can*, of course, see these indistinctions as emblematic of Antony's failures or inaction, if we choose; indeed, Antony himself, thinking his "Roman thought" (1.2.82), might see them this way.

overlook the fact that if there is such a thing as transcendence for the lovers, it is achieved only through the performance—the hyperbolic performance, if you will—of their passions. Thus in *performing* the exchange of gender roles, they actually exchange them. Though it is not quite the same thing, it is clear in *Antony and Cleopatra* that there is no one lover and no one beloved.²²

In addition to these moments of indistinction, the lovers often find themselves in parallel situations; sometimes they even say the same things, as we've already seen in their "Let Rome in Tiber melt" and "Melt Egypt into Nile" speeches.²³ Additionally, both Antony and Cleopatra contemplate their own mutability before death; both are predeceased by a faithful servant, at whose death they feel shame and express their regret for not dying so willingly; both die by their own hand, but neither successfully on their first attempt; and, in those moments when (they think) the other has died, both desire to "o'ertake" (4.15.44) their lover in death.²⁴

Shakespeare also gives us moments in which the lovers' capacity for action seems causally related. In 1.1, Cleopatra, feigning resignation, says, "Antony / will be himself"—to which Antony responds, completing her line of verse, "But stirred by Cleopatra" (1.1.45). Cleopatra's comment is meant to be derogatory; Antony, though, refuses to take it as such, and combines their words to create a new thought, which belongs to neither her nor him independently. A similar intermingling occurs in 1.3. Cleopatra says, "But sir,

²² This is a point I make in reference to *Romeo and Juliet*, but the effect is clearly more pronounced in *Antony and Cleopatra*. One can imagine Romeo and Juliet agreeing that they are each lover and beloved (as Romeo's characterization of their relationship for the Friar suggests), just as we can imagine Antony and Cleopatra balking at any attempt to categorize their 'roles.'

²³ Even the structure of these parallel phrases suggests complementarity.

²⁴ The actual word is Antony's but the sentiment is expressed by Cleopatra too (see 5.2.286).

forgive me, / Since my becomings kill me when they do not / Eye well to you” (1.3.96-98). Even though the “becomings” Cleopatra refers to are ‘hers’—her changeableness—these only “kill” her when Antony sees them in a particular way, in other words, as Plato, that great advocate of the world of Being, or (with apologies to Plato) his ambassador of reason, Octavius, would see them. What is happening here is similar to what Ronald Gray discovers in the Sonnets. He argues that Cleopatra is the ‘dark lady’ of Shakespeare’s sonnets fully formed, and suggests that the indistinctions of Antony and Cleopatra, as I have called them, are made of the same stuff as the “confusion of identities [which is] almost impossible to comprehend” in certain sonnets.²⁵ To take one more example, upon finding out that Antony has married Octavia, Cleopatra says, “I myself / Have given myself the cause” (2.5.84-85). She does not explain her comment, but we might take it as a reference to her antagonism to Antony before he leaves for Rome. She says she has “caused” Antony to choose to marry Octavia.

Shakespeare uses “paradoxical metaphors” to characterize Antony and Cleopatra’s relationship. In a passage already alluded to, Philo laments that Antony’s “captain's heart [...] is become the bellows and the fan / To cool a gypsy's lust” (1.1.9-10). While Philo’s intent is clear, Benjamin T. Spencer, from whom I took the “paradoxical metaphor” phrase, notes that “[w]e should have expected here some such verb as inflame instead of cool” (373). His consequent claim is that Philo's mistake or confusion is the result of the Roman mind being disturbed by Egyptian irrationality. But there is something else going on here.

²⁵ Gray’s example is Sonnet 24. His take on the confusion: “The beauty of the lover is in the poet's heart, but to see it one must look through the lover's eyes, which are windows to the poet's breast.”

Philo's line suggests the difficulty, even for those who take a negative view of the lovers' relationship, to define it in conventional terms; Philo's claim is a causal one—Antony's bellows cause Cleopatra's lust to cool—but causation, in this case, is subverted by that word "cool," which shouldn't follow but inexplicably does. It's worth noting that in 2.6, Enobarbus, more conventionally, speaks of the "sighs of Octavia" which "blow the fire up in Caesar" (2.6.126). There, I suppose, we are to assume, is a relationship functioning 'normally.' Antony and Cleopatra are anything but.

A key difference between Octavius and Octavia and Antony and Cleopatra, which also speaks to the nature of the lovers' mutuality, may be seen in their treatments of spectacle, a concept that brings us to performance and action. When Octavius learns that Octavia has come to Rome without the fanfare that ought to accompany a great lady, he says,

But you are come
A market-maid to Rome, and have prevented
The ostentation of our love; which, left unshown,
Is often left unloved. (3.6.50-53)

Given what we know about how Octavius feels about his sister, his sentiments here are not surprising. But insofar as these words reveal something of his thinking about spectacle, the visible display or communication of some reality, they are remarkable. Neill's gloss on the line makes sense: "left unshown, / Is often left unloved" he renders as "if not shown is often *assumed* not to exist" (my emphasis). This seems to fit with what we imagine Octavius's view would be; he is a thoroughly decorous man and no doubt feels something was amiss in the absence of ostentation that greeted Octavia. But Octavius could actually mean that in

not ‘communicating’ his love, his love is in danger of not existing.²⁶ Regardless of the way Octavius’s words are taken, they highlight a difference between him (and Octavia) and the lovers. That is to say, if Octavius’s concern for “ostentation” is simply emblematic of his desire for decorousness, then he is, in truth, not one for spectacle at all. Clearly, Octavia is not. But if he would have preferred to create a spectacle for his sister and failed, that too is significant—not just because it confirms that he is bad at spectacle while the lovers are clearly good, but because it is not the only time he fails. After Antony is dead, Octavius plans to “lead [Cleopatra] in triumph” (5.2.109); she would be a symbol of his victory for all to see. Cleopatra imagines the scene: “Antony / shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I’th’posture of a whore” (5.2.218-221). But because of Dollabella’s intelligence, Cleopatra is able to subvert Octavius’s plans.²⁷

In creating spectacle, in writing themselves or their actions large for all to see, Antony and Cleopatra exhibit the mutuality of their motion, the indistinctness not simply of their roles or persons (as if those were simple) but of their agencies. At Actium, Cleopatra famously turns her ships around and Antony, inexplicably, follows. Everyone watching is appalled; in the same speech as Scarus calls Antony the “noble ruin of [Cleopatra’s] magic,”

²⁶ I am thinking, not surprisingly, of Ulysses claim that “no man is the lord of anything, / Though in and of him there be much consisting, / Till he communicate his parts to others” (*Troilus and Cressida* 3.3.115-117).

²⁷ There is another instance that deserves note: not one in which Octavius fails, exactly, to create a spectacle, but rather in which his inexpertise also happens to be on display. When in 5.1 word comes that Antony is dead, Octavius’s response is to say, “Look you sad, friends? The gods rebuke me, but it is tidings / To wash the eyes of kings” (5.1.26-28). Neill notes that “Look you, sad friends” is a variant text, and this makes sense, for what Octavius is doing, here, what he feels compelled to do, is draw attention to the fact that he—now a king—is crying. As anyone who’s ever created a spectacle knows, one doesn’t need to draw attention to it; everyone will already be looking. Agrippa’s “Caesar is touched” (5.1.33) and Mecnas’s comment which follows it are part and parcel with Nestor’s obsequious words following Agamemnon’s speech in *Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.

he declares, “I never saw an action of such shame— / Experience, manhood, honour, ne’er before / Did violate so itself” (3.10.21-23). It is an appropriate response from an honourable, rational Roman soldier. When Cleopatra asks Enobarbus if she is to blame for Antony’s retreat, he responds, “Antony only is to blame [...] that would make his will / Lord of his reason” (3.13.3-4). That he two lines later attributes the action to the “itch of [Antony’s] affection” (3.13.7) tells us what he means by “will”; it is an assessment that accords with Simmons earlier-noted claim that Enobarbus can only perceive the sensuous in what, for Antony, is transcendental.²⁸ But there is another meaning for “will,” and, it seems to me, it is always at play in Shakespeare’s use of the term, for there is good and bad *cupiditas*.

Antony himself characterizes his action in at least two different ways: he says, first, “I have fled myself” (3.11.7), and then, to Cleopatra: “Egypt, thou knew’st too well / My heart was to thy rudder tied by th’strings, / And thou shouldst tow me after” (3.11.55-57). Like his namesake in *Twelfth Night*, Antony cannot seem to decide where to locate the cause of his movement; his first assertion locates it with himself: *he* fled. The syntax implies that Antony fled *from* himself, and such a reading is certainly consistent with the way that he and others have spoken about his *self* throughout the play.²⁹ But that “myself” could also be read as emphatic: I, myself, have fled. Though a less likely reading, it is telling that Antony follows it with this: “Let that be left / Which leaves itself” (3.11.19-20). He owns his action

²⁸ See note 17.

²⁹ Philo says at the end of 1.1: “sometimes when he is not Antony / He comes too short of that great property / Which still should go with Antony” (1.1.59-61). Cleopatra, after she and Antony have reconciled after the Battle of Actium, says, “since my lord / Is Antony again, I will be Cleopatra” (3.13.186-187). Clearly, though they both believe in an ‘Antony,’ Philo and Cleopatra have radically different ideas about *who* Antony is.

and its consequences, offering his men the opportunity to desert him with honour. And yet, his words to Cleopatra suggest another agency at work: she *knew* he would follow if she fled. Markels says of this moment, “she apologizes and says she did not think he would have followed. But she must have hoped so” (131). It is a curious thing to say, even though it has likely crossed most readers’ minds. Why would Cleopatra desire this end? Is it simply to test those heart-strings, to see how tightly they are tied to her rudder? Though she asks him in 1.1 to tell her “how much” (1.1.14) he loves her, she does not care to have a real answer. Her question is not even a question; it is an assertion of her love for him that calls for a hyperbolic response—a response that can be seen. Though we do not know whether Antony and Cleopatra know they are being observed by Philo and Demetrius in 1.1, they act as though they are. Cleopatra turning her ships around, then, is an opportunity for her and Antony to show everyone not only what it is to love, but to *move* together. This reading makes it sound as though the action is still ultimately Cleopatra’s choice, but Antony decided to go to war *with* Cleopatra, knowing, as she did, that if she chose to turn her ships around, he would follow. Cleopatra is wrong when she says in 1.3, “I have no power upon” (23), for insofar as they “trade in love” (2.5.2), one of them is always bound to have it—or both, but perhaps not in all instances.

After Actium and after Antony reconciles with Cleopatra, he and Cleopatra return to hyperbolic expressions of their love. To her, he says,

O thou day o’the’ world,
Chain mine armed neck; leap thou, attire and all,
Through proof of harness to my heart, and there
Ride on the pants triumphing!

—to which she replies, competing his line: “Lord of lords!” (4.9.13-16). In this image, Cleopatra rides in triumph on the pants of Antony’s, no doubt, throbbing heart. It is a reversal of Actium’s spectacle: here, rather than Antony being tied to Cleopatra’s rudder by his heart-strings, she stands, as though in a chariot, holding the reins ‘chained’ around his neck. It is also a moment which recalls Juliet’s suicide, for in stabbing herself, she travels to Romeo in her bosom.

But the most spectacular moment of the play comes in 4.16 when the nearly-dead Antony is lifted up to the monument in which Cleopatra has enclosed herself. It is a moment that verges upon farce, one in which, according to Worthen, the “exigencies of the theatre threaten a slapstick catastrophe, as Antony plummets to the stage” (295-296).

Despite this comedic potential, though, it is one of the clearest evocations of the Augustinian conception of weight as love. Here is the fiery ascent, the being drawn up. In Cleopatra’s words:

Here’s sport indeed! How heavy weighs my lord!
Our strength is all gone into heaviness—
That makes the weight. Had I great Juno’s power,
The strong-winged Mercury should fetch thee up
And set thee by Jove’s side. Yet come a little—
Wishers were ever fools—O come, come, come. (4.16.34-39)

It is, perhaps, not what an Augustinian would expect. Nowhere are the powers responsible for Troilus’s ascent to the spheres; nowhere is there any reference to the metaphysical “rest” Juliet seeks by traveling to Romeo through her bosom. In fact, Cleopatra could use a rest: she notes how heavy Antony is and is, no doubt, worn out by her labours. And unlike in Chaucer’s poem, where someone needs to be responsible for drawing Troilus, Cleopatra

can only wish for help from the gods. The significance of this moment is likely best grasped in the theatre, despite the difficulties of actually staging the scene: this is Antony's ascent—another way of saying he's *heavy* is to say he has a *great weight*—and it takes everything Cleopatra has got. Whose love, then, moves? The agency undeniably belongs to both lovers. That it is 'good' movement is clear when Antony reaches the top, for it is not death he finds, but life: "Die when thou hast lived! / Quicken with kissing!" (4.16.40-41). There are the quick and the dead, and Antony's ascent gives him life.

Offering a solution to the problem signalled at the end of the last section of this chapter—Cleopatra's aspic imagining—may now be possible. Markels writes that "when Antony is hoisted aloft to die in her arms, we see a new Cleopatra" (141): "let me speak, and let me rail so high / That the false huswife Fortune break her wheel, / Provoked by my offence" (4.16.45-47). According to the critic, Cleopatra "admits for the first time that she has committed an offense" (142). For this reason and, I would suggest, because of her participation in Antony's ascent, she is changed. She becomes, as she says later, in 5.2, "marble constant," having "nothing / Of woman in me" (5.2.240, 238-239). This is a strange assertion, given the aspic's later metamorphosis into a baby, but it is perfectly characteristic of Cleopatra to defy expectation and category. Markels calls her death a 're-enactment' of Antony's (147); if this is so, there must be for her, too, new life—a quickening; thus, the baby. And since Cleopatra's new life could not have come about without Antony, his agency must also be understood to have created this child. Just before her death, therefore, Cleopatra declares, "Husband, I come" (5.2.286). Schalkwyk calls it a "performative cry"; she "embraces marriage as a condition of [...] loyalty and devotion by

sacralising their relationship” with these words (*Love and Service* 203). Cleopatra’s death, then, is not like Juliet’s, in which she follows after her husband, but one in which something new is created by virtue of the mutual agency of the play’s lovers. This is not an orthodox theologically romantic conclusion, but Shakespeare could not have written it without the medieval tradition; indeed, it is what he inherited from that tradition that makes it great.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Shakespeare is not a theologian. If that hasn't been made clear in the six preceding chapters, let me make it so now. Shakespeare is not even a theologian-poet in the manner of Dante or Petrarch, or of Chaucer, whom I would call a theologian-poet only with great qualification—this despite the fact that Chaucer gave us Boethius in Middle English. If Shakespeare is neither theologian nor theologian-poet, then it is reasonable to assume that the plays discussed in this dissertation are themselves not theological romances. This is a claim I vigorously affirm. What *Romeo and Juliet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, are, though, are plays informed by the tradition of theological romance specifically with respect to the agency of their characters. And because agency is a subject of such great consequence, especially in drama, theological romance's influence naturally penetrates all manner of other subjects not obviously or explicitly theological. Does this mean, then, that Shakespeare was interested in theology? Yes, at the very least insofar as he could not have thought of agency without thinking of the soul, and he could not have thought of the soul without doing so theologically. Does this mean that Shakespeare was *actively* thinking theologically when writing these plays? No, not necessarily, but as A.D. Nuttall has pointed out, Shakespeare was a *thinker*, and I would not be so bold as to suggest that he was unaware of or indifferent to the implications of his dramatic choices.

Further, that Shakespeare was thinking theologically when he wrote these four plays does not entail that he was thinking in a theologically orthodox way. That has never been my claim, though I maintain that, in some instances, his dramatic choices do seem to be theologically orthodox. They are just as often, it seems to me, unorthodox. As I attempted to show in Chapter 2, Petrarch himself didn't think in a theologically orthodox way, at least from what we might imagine was Dante's perspective. Indeed, the section of that chapter entitled "Love is Good" outlines a series of Petrarchan moments which are highly theological and yet, in an important sense, quite indifferent to God—to the notion of an actual divine being. A competing 'good' arose and usurped—for a time, at least, until Petrarch wrote his *Secret*—the good place allotted to God. In theological romance, lovers (souls) treat beloveds (other souls) in a way similar to that in which Augustine or Dante or Petrarch (sometimes) treat God. The point of Chapter 2 was to show that theological romance, insofar as it is a category that helps us to think about how Augustinian psychology was manifested in authors such as Boethius, Dante, Petrarch, and Chaucer, is neither restrictive nor prescriptive. Nor is it an 'authoritative' in the sense of demanding fidelity from a given author. To participate in or borrow from that tradition—or just to inherit key concepts from it—meant only accepting that on some level literary lovers are emblems of the will. If there is one idea Shakespeare took from that tradition, this is it.

Beginning with *Romeo and Juliet* made sense not simply because it is the most theologically orthodox of the four plays I discuss (which is to say, the most medieval), but because its lovers *are* emblems of the will; the metaphysical motions of their souls are made patent in their actions (and, often, in those of the actors too). The play's lovers marry, and

Shakespeare treats their marriage as a mystical union that, to some degree, mitigates their suicides, transforming them into a final, transcendent movement to be together. The love of Romeo and Juliet is very intentionally *ideal*, and this fact is duly emphasized by Romeo's falling away from that ideal when, for instance, he denies Mercutio's recently departed spirit its ascent by saying to Tybalt: "Mercutio's soul / Is but a little way above our heads, / Staying for thine to keep him company" (3.1.126-128). By simply saying these words, he highlights the play's pattern of prioritizing metaphysical over physical.

In my chapters on *Troilus and Cressida* and *Twelfth Night*, my aim was less to 'chart' movement than to explore obstacles to that movement. Shakespeare's *Troilus* is a complex play, perhaps even more complex than *Antony and Cleopatra*, not least because it is, in the opinion of some, a "rewriting of *Romeo and Juliet*" (McInnis 37). It is not just a rewriting, though: *Troilus and Cressida* turns *Romeo and Juliet* upside down: where there was love, there is now lust; where there was spirit, there is now flesh; where there was motion, there is now none or, at least, only motion that, from the standpoint of theological romance, is highly problematic. Even adding this qualification, in some ways, gets at what's interesting about the play, for the claim has been made a number of times over the course of this dissertation that motion ought to be seen as good in itself. The *Troilus* is full of contradictions, some of these intentional and some, perhaps, not. In grouping the play with other "problem" plays, Tillyard suggests as much. In retrospect, the most important section of my *Troilus* chapter is the one entitled "Glimpsing the Ideal," for if the world of the play is as inverted as I have suggested, as starkly cynical, then the ideal shouldn't be perceivable at all. And yet the lovers are admirable in fleeting moments. In 3.2, Cressida lifts Troilus from

prose into verse and from his preoccupation with his coming “relish” (3.2.17) into a desire that his “integrity and truth to [Cressida] / Might be affronted with the match and weight / Of such a winnowed purity in love” (3.2.155-157). He concludes: “How were I then uplifted!” (3.2.158). But the tragedy of *Troilus and Cressida* is that Troilus cannot be uplifted: he has no recourse to Chaucer’s Troilus’s spiritualizing of his beloved but can only say, experiencing something like cognitive dissonance, “This is, and is not, Cressida” (5.2.144). This amounts to the same thing as saying that Cressida both has “weight” and doesn’t. Indeed, this view of Cressida is akin to the view of both lovers that Shakespeare invites his readers to take: the characters themselves are inconsistent, contradictory.³⁰ Troilus’s warring at the end of the play, which ironically echoes Chaucer’s hero’s similar action (which, notably, precedes an ascent) is contradictory too: it is self-defeating—teleologically speaking, to no end—like the wolf that eats itself up. *Troilus and Cressida*’s difference from *Romeo and Juliet* may clearly be seen in the fact that the earlier play’s lovers’ suicide is *not* treated as self-defeating when that is by definition what suicide is.

My discussion of value in *Troilus and Cressida* aimed at but did not always succeed in making patent how integral the concept is to motion, both psychic and otherwise. Part of the difficulty was that the play itself treats value in different ways: it is suggested, for example, that value follows from or is the consequence of action, of the actor’s imposition of will (a view a number of the characters seem to accept), but, in some scenes, action

³⁰ An objection to this claim might be that the characters are not, in fact, “contradictory” but simply make choices that have consequences, that they *change*. In some ways, the argument of Chapter 4 is that not only do they not change, but they cannot change. The basis of their actions remains the same throughout; their later actions are their former actions unmasked, consistent with what they (and the play) have suggested is the root of action all along.

seems to issue from a value already posited or even innate, one inspiring that action. For this reason, distinctions between how the value of the beloved bears on the value of the lover and how the lover's value bears on his potential for action were not made as clearly as they could have been. Both lovers and beloveds are thought to have value (of a kind), but *Troilus and Cressida* presents a kind of feedback loop, in which the source of value becomes the recipient which, then, again, becomes the source. That such a loop is evident in the play is not inappropriate given my claim that action in the play is self-defeating, but it does present a challenge for those writing about it, trying to achieve clarity of argument.

In my discussions of *Troilus and Cressida* and *Twelfth Night*, and even of *Antony and Cleopatra*, to some degree, it must be said that I have not been wholly consistent in maintaining a distinction between psychic motion and dramatic motion—or action. In the real world, motion of a psychic nature naturally precedes anything that is typically thought of as 'action.' In drama, though, motions may also be seen *in* actions. That is to say, in drama, actions are taken both to imply prior motion and to *stand for* that motion, to signify it. For example, in the previous paragraph I equated "action" with "imposition of will" when, in truth, a distinction ought to have been made. Imposing one's will is a psychic motion and most often results in what we typically think of as "action," but the two motions are not the same. Because, as I've said, Shakespeare is not a theologian, it is unreasonable to hold him to the standard of one who actually *intends* to make these distinctions. So, while a critic might always be more meticulous, make more or clearer distinctions, the difference in Shakespeare's drama between psychic and dramatic motion cannot be delineated absolutely; sometimes there is a distinction to be made, sometimes there is not. This fact

speaks to the ever-present tension between drama and theology, which, as I've suggested, is a good thing. It is this tension that animates my work, for it is not *obvious* how Shakespeare might take theological ideas latent in his vocabulary and play them out.

Twelfth Night explores the imagination's role in love; indeed, the play goes so far as to conflate imagining and loving in the word "fancy," which appears only four times in the play though two of these happen to be in its opening and closing speeches. Orsino begins by highlighting the instability of fancy, how "full of shapes" (1.1.14) it is, and ends by shifting his focus to the recently 'unveiled' Viola and calling her his "fancy's queen" (5.1.378). Put like that, and given that *Twelfth Night* is a comedy, such a beginning and end seem completely straightforward. Comedy moves from disorder to order, from disharmony to harmony. But the journey from beginning to end in *Twelfth Night* is not so entirely straightforward, as imagining has the potential not only to free but to enslave—and yes, both of these characterizations have motional implications. What is it, ultimately, that distinguishes Malvolio from the other 'lovers' in the play? If we say his self-absorption, how is it that Orsino who is himself clearly self-absorbed does not end up in the same state at the play's conclusion? It would seem that there is a particular kind of imagining that is, to borrow a phrase from my discussion of *Troilus and Cressida*, self-defeating. Perhaps it is that Malvolio's imagination does not have a proper object, but if this is so, are we quite sure that Orsino's at the beginning of the play does? In some ways, my chapter on *Twelfth Night* only scratches the surface of Shakespeare's treatment of the imagination in it.

There is more to be said about *Twelfth Night*, but first: a few things about *Antony and Cleopatra*, a play which, I said in my Introduction, "stands as the culmination of

Shakespeare's thought about romance in its specifically Augustinian aspect." This is a claim that requires qualification, for certainly there are different kinds of culminations, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, if one, may be only one. It is, of the four plays discussed in this dissertation, the most radical in its treatment of the ideas central to theological romance, not least of which because of the curious context it provides for those ideas: a pagan play with irreverent, passionate—indeed, hedonistic—characters. Readers might well expect a conclusion more like that of *Troilus and Cressida*. It is not at all surprising that references to Dante, Petrarch, and Chaucer are less ubiquitous in my discussion of this play. What is surprising, though, is that despite its difference from these authors' earlier texts of theological romance, the Augustinian notion of love as "weight" is given not only a prominent place in it but explicit expression; the moments in *Antony and Cleopatra* in which Shakespeare is markedly Augustinian are moments of spectacle—moments in which there is motion to be seen. Shakespeare takes two characters known for their histrionics and makes what is arguably their *most* dramatic moment an ascent.

But it is not simply the outward trappings of ascent that Shakespeare offers his readers; he does not only borrow from theological romance 'tools' useful for the stage; he gives us ascent's inner workings too. Despite the Egyptian context, Shakespeare would not have us consider Antony and Cleopatra gods, monarchs deified by doctrine; rather, he wants us to see the pair as humans whose greatness is manifest in a dynamic agency, which is itself made potent by love. What is remarkable in this agency (in, for example, a scene like 4.16) is that it is difficult to ascribe to one source; the characters' wills intermingle, and one's action is not clearly distinguishable from the other's. To put it in an entirely different

way, Shakespeare seems to be eschewing to a certain degree the notion of human essentialism. In the value-less world of *Troilus and Cressida*, the play's characters, in the process or as a result of discovering their incapacity for motion, also *fail* to find themselves (and others). But in *Antony and Cleopatra*, even though a definitive "Antony" cannot be found (despite the fact that everyone is 'looking' for him, including Antony himself), he *is* "stirred by Cleopatra" (1.1.45), brought into existence, as it were, by his lover. She, like Juliet, has "immortal longings" (5.2.280), but these longings cannot be thought of as separate from her seeing Antony "rouse himself / To praise [her] noble *act*" (5.2.283-284, my emphasis); she, too, in this moment of high dramatic action comes into being.

The implications of such a claim are significant and, perhaps, speak to the potential value of this dissertation. The great discovery of our age is the fundamental instability or ephemerality of the self. Such a discovery—or, perhaps, 'claim' is a better word—to some, means that the self simply *isn't* and to others, that the self is 'constructed'—in whatever manner, religiously, culturally, performatively. What my preceding characterization of the lovers in *Antony and Cleopatra* suggests, though, is that there is another, less anachronistic way of thinking about the self's instability, that it is not constructed, a patch-work of various influences and conditions, or even reified, a concept that privileges concrete over abstract or, if it exists, immaterial reality, but rather *becomes substantial*; the self is substantiated in its loving and being loved. I use the term "substantial" tentatively because of its theological implications, but because of these implications, it is clearly worth considering. Indeed, there are grounds for doing so in that Shakespeare himself speaks about

lovers in similar terms in his short work, “The Phoenix and the Turtle,” a work James P. Bednarz calls “the first great published metaphysical poem” (117).

“Substance,” in a *theological* sense, is “[t]he divine essence or nature, especially as that in which the three persons of the Trinity are united as one” (*OED*, “substance, *n.*” I.1.). A *philosophical* denotation of the term is “[a] being that subsists by itself; a distinct individual entity” (I.2.). In “The Phoenix and the Turtle,” Shakespeare writes of two birds who “fled / In a mutual flame” (23-24) and “lov’d, as love in twain / Had the essence but in one” (25-26). In the words of J.V. Cunningham, “here is stated in exact, technical, scholastic language the relationship of the lovers” (82). He continues: “the doctrine of the poem is not sanctioned by the scholastic doctrine of human love” but by the “doctrine of the Trinity” (86, 87). It is unlikely that Thomas Aquinas would appreciate Shakespeare’s employment in his poem of terms like “essence” and “property” (37), but it was he who provided the language the poet found most appropriate to describe his lovers.

Tom Bishop, reading Cunningham on Shakespeare’s poem, highlights the difficulties of writing about ‘character’—in his words, “after ‘theory’” (65). “Character,” he points out, is not a word Shakespeare himself uses “in the modern moral or psychological sense we usually employ” (65); rather, in most instances, when Shakespeare uses the word, he does so to refer to handwriting. Similarly, humourism, a concept that has enjoyed a great surge of critical interest in recent years and which would seem a gateway to character, is something Shakespeare relied on only when he wanted to “denote automatism or the bias of a comical disposition” (66-67). “Ethos” or “habits of moral choice” (67), too, claims Bishop, do not provide a particularly apt paradigm for thinking about character, for they privilege

“those habits or traits that motivate choice” (67), and character in Shakespeare is not so “truncated” (67). What Bishop concludes is that Cunningham is onto something when he sees a likeness between Shakespeare’s characterization of the birds in his poem and the traditional characterization of the Trinity; they are both of one substance.

Thus Bishop proposes that ‘character’ may fruitfully be thought of in terms of the theological concept of personhood. That in Shakespeare’s poem “‘character’ as we normally think of it is largely eliminated” (68) does not problematize such an approach, for personhood remains; it is just “that it might extend over more than one ‘person’” (71):

Property was thus appalled
That the self was not the same:
Single natures, double name,
Neither two nor one was called. (37-40)

The idea of these four lines is not dissimilar to what I’ve already argued about *Antony and Cleopatra*, that the lovers’ motions (and thus the lovers) are, in key moments, indistinct; while they remain themselves, they are not wholly themselves without the other. Bishop argues that “‘character’ might not be at all a robust thing, not a deep-rooted essence or engraved mark, but rather [...] a shifting array of comminglings and openesses” (71). In this vein, he points out that Augustine himself makes the connection between the ‘comminglings’ of the persons of the Trinity and human psychology, the “internal complexity by which the mind is, knows, and loves, itself” (72).³¹ It is thus not surprising when Bishop goes on to say that the ‘self’ or ‘person’ is “a complex relational effect [...] pushed about by forces it knows little of” (71-71). The first half of this this passage reflects

³¹ Bishop cites Book 9 of Augustine’s *On the Trinity*.

the ways the persons of the Trinity are understood to interact with each other, but the second too is suggestive for *Antony and Cleopatra*: its lovers experience a series of “comminglings and openesses,” but they are also not always aware of the “force” that moves them, as, for example, when Antony is perplexed by his actions at Actium.

But to speak of the “complex relational effect” of lovers only in terms of Shakespeare’s late tragedy is to miss something remarkable, for if *Antony and Cleopatra* represents a culmination of Shakespeare’s theologically romantic thought, then so too must *Twelfth Night*. Indeed, in Chapter 5, Harold Goddard is cited saying this very thing, that the play is “the culmination and consummation of something [Shakespeare] had been saying almost from the beginning” (296). Whereas in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare shines the spotlight on a *pair* of lovers whose love moves them in an Augustinian (and possibly even Trinitarian) way, in *Twelfth Night*, he gives us multiple lovers functioning in terms of multiple pairings, and all are in some manner moved by their loves.³² In other words, *Twelfth Night* reveals that thinking of ‘character’ in terms of love’s movement does not entail thinking only of conventional romantic pairings—pairings which, say, intimate a (potential) sexual relationship. Viola may be paired with Orsino, but also with Olivia and her brother, Sebastian. Sebastian may be paired with Olivia, of course, but also with Viola and Antonio.³³ Each of these pairings works in terms of the paradigm of theological romance, but at the same time their existence obliterates the conventional categories of

³² Suggesting that any lover is moved by his or her love in an Augustinian sense does not entail that he or she is *always* or categorically being moved in that way; in other words, while the paradigm of theological romance is *useful*, lovers (or even Shakespeare himself) clearly resist it at times. An example of such resistance might be Antony’s insistence on separating himself from Cleopatra, his desire for his independence, or Troilus’s warring at the end of his play.

³³ Additional complications may be added by considering Viola and Cesario distinct characters, which, in some ways, they are to the other characters of the play.

“lover” and “beloved.” In *Romeo and Juliet*, we get a glimpse of such a possibility, but here the lack of distinction is arguably essential to the play. There are no lovers who are not beloveds in *Twelfth Night*—with the very notable exception of Malvolio. And here, perhaps, is the puritan’s fundamental difference from Orsino; unlike even the foppish Sir Andrew, who “was adored once” (2.3.169), Malvolio is never loved.

Additionally, any absolute boundaries that might exist between opposite-sex and same-sex lovers are largely disregarded. I began my chapter on *Twelfth Night* by calling Antonio the character most straightforwardly moved by love. He is also the most admirable character in the play. Why this is so is not wholly evident, but the possibility that he, in anticipating no requital of his love, loves more selflessly, is enticing. Antonio is shown to attend so wholly to Sebastian that he, in more than one instance, subordinates his own desires to his friend’s (when he follows Sebastian into ‘enemy’ territory and when intercedes in the ‘dual’ between Viola and Andrew, and is subsequently arrested). Perhaps “largely disregarded” is not the best way of characterizing the distinction between opposite-sex and same-sex lovers in *Twelfth Night*, for Antonio is in some ways the ideal at which all the other pairs of lovers aim or, perhaps, ought to be aiming. We might imagine, then, that Antonio, in seeking the good of Sebastian, would say to the revelation of his friend’s marriage to Olivia, “be this so” (to borrow Olivia’s words at 1.5.301).³⁴

³⁴ I have not, admittedly, dealt directly with the motif of same-sex love in my consideration of these plays. In some ways, that is because I don’t think Shakespeare treats it much differently than he treats opposite-sex love. Additionally, according to my argument, Shakespeare is regularly gesturing towards the kind of motions that takes place in the soul, in which all kinds distinctions, like the ones highlighted in “The Phoenix and the Turtle,” tend to fall away. Antonio’s love, while perhaps more ideal, is still treated in much the same way as the other characters’ loves are treated in the play; it does not strike me as of a different *kind*. Likewise, Enobarbus in *Antony and Cleopatra*, who clearly loves Antony, is moved in much the same way Antony is moved—that is to say, histrionically. His death in a ditch may be seen as a movement that is prompted by his thoughts upon realizing that Antony has sent his “treasure” (4.6.20) after him, his

In *Twelfth Night*, “comminglings” or “opennesses” between lovers and between pairs of lovers raise all sorts of questions, perhaps most notably: if lovers *become substantial* in the motion of loving, if in *acting* together, lovers become themselves, does the Viola who loves her brother enjoy a different ‘existence’ from the one who loves Orsino, or even Olivia? Bishop suggests the relevance of such a question when he identifies Othello and Iago and Lear and his fool as pairs emblematic of the “shifting and mutually shaping relations of selfhood and identification” (72); his claim seems to be that the relations of these characters are transformative, but not just superficially; they are transformative on the level of the essential. Does such an approach to ‘character’ allow for the possibility of the emergence of a true self? Viola’s reunion with her brother, whom she images, suggests the answer is yes; and hers does seem to be the love that moves *Twelfth Night*, for what else could have compelled her to don her disguise in the first place? The romance of soul and soul is one in which, according to Shakespeare, “division grows together” (“Phoenix” 42).

broken heart, the natural consequence of moving against his love. *Troilus and Cressida*’s Patroclus is an interesting case, for he seems to have insight into the nature of human action: he tells Achilles that the Greeks “think my little stomach to the war / And your great love to me restrains you thus” (3.3.219-220). Seemingly acknowledging that this is true, he urges Achilles to “rouse” himself and the “weak wanton Cupid [Patroclus?] / Shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold” (3.3.221-222). But even though Patroclus’s speech, here, may suggest a selflessness akin to Antonio’s, his love for Achilles’s is ultimately characterized by what the play allows, by what Achilles is *worth*; all loves in *Troilus and Cressida* tend toward perversion. Indeed, Shakespeare gives Achilles’s a particular perversion in that it is his counter-productive love for the Trojan princess Polyxena that inhibits his action in 5.1. And when Achilles’s does join the battle, it is likely because his “wounds have roused [Achilles’s] drowsy blood” (5.5.32). It is certainly true that more could be written on this subject; practicality urged the drawing of a line.

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