

A STUDY OF CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN WARRIOR HEROES IN SHAKESPEARE'S
TRAGEDIES, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE INFLUENCE OF EARLIER
ENGLISH DRAMA AND CLASSICAL LITERATURE ON THE HEROIC IDEA
IN SHAKESPEARE.

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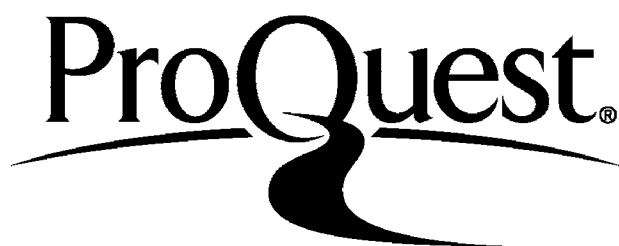
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ABSTRACT

The thesis comprises eight chapters. The first three investigate the development of an anti-heroic attitude towards mankind in general, and the warrior archetype in particular, in Augustinian theology, the mystery cycles and the Tudor morality play respectively. In the fourth chapter this humanistically minimizing, essentially tragic, vision of the heroic protagonist is contrasted with the more overtly heroic attitude towards the epic hero found in Elizabethan poetic theory and heroic poetry and also operative in Henry V. It is suggested, however, that the heroic image developed in Henry V is atypical of Shakespeare's depiction of the warrior, particularly in his heroic tragedies, where the career of the protagonist more significantly echoes the formal experience of the morality protagonist in its insistence on the moral ambivalence of the warrior and the failure of the world or his heroic ideals to live up to the faith that he put in them. The second half of the study goes on to develop this intuition concerning the formal debt which the Shakespearean tragic hero owed to the heroic metaphor of the morality tradition. It is further suggested, however, that the anti-heroic awareness fostered by the early drama helped to alert Shakespeare to the anti-heroic elements which were also latent in classical literature, so that he not only showed himself to be aware of the ideas which underlay the classical anti-heroic, but he was able to make use of the formal expression of that anti-heroic aspect of classical literature in his own tragedies. Thus the succeeding chapters seek to illustrate the formal and intellectual influence of Ovid's Metamorphoses on Titus Andronicus, of the Aeneid on Hamlet, the Iliad and the medieval matter of Troy on Troilus and Cressida and Seneca's Hercules Furens on Macbeth. The method employed is typically the illustration of significant-perhaps symbolic-episodes of earlier literature, and how they can be seen to shape the themes and forms of Shakespeare's plays. In effect it is sugg-

ested that the morality metaphor unites with classical metaphor(s) to produce complex heroic images befitting Shakespeare's status as a morally aware artist living during the convergence of medieval-Christian and Renaissance culture. It should be stated, however, that one further theme of the study is that Shakespeare acknowledged the distinction between Christian and classical-pagan civilizations, and (along lines first outlined by Augustine) recognized the differing social, moral and eschatological imperatives which each milieu put on its warrior figures. Thus it is argued, although he was quite willing to adapt morality play forms to pagan plays and pagan forms to Christian plays, he did so alongside the recognition that for the heroic protagonist the metaphorical implications of his heroic career were radically different, in a Christian world than in one where revelation and the possibility of salvation had no place.

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INTRODUCTION

In a recent review of critical attitudes towards Shakespeare's depiction of the ancient world J.W.Velz deplored the widespread failure of scholarship to investigate the possibility that the Roman and Greek plays represent a conscious attempt by Shakespeare to portray classical civilization as a separate entity, as "a world apart" from Elizabethan England or Renaissance Europe.¹ As an example of the imprecision which can result from this lack of clear distinction between the classical and the non-classical part of the canon, Velz cites Reuben Brower's Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition,² in which the author seeks to find analogues for the classical warrior hero in Shakespeare's 'own classically based plays, and also in Othello, Hamlet, and King Lear, without making any attempt to consider whether such warrior heroes were viewed differently by Shakespeare when they were set in their own classical milieu than when they were located in the post-classical civilizations of Christian Europe.³

Velz goes on to observe how one modern study has attempted to prove that such a distinction did, in fact, exist for Shakespeare, and that it was based on the implications for mankind of Christ's incarnation. He regrets, however, that the logic which justified the treatment of the last three Roman tragedies under this pre-Christian heading was not extended to include the other 'pagan' plays :

It can . . . be argued that Rome is a place apart to Shakespeare, a world whose mystique he attempts quite deliberately to depict. Such an argument appears in J.L.Simmons's Shakespeare's Pagan World: The Roman Tragedies. Simmons proposes that the distinguishing characteristic of Shakespeare's Rome is its secularity; the civitas Dei is not yet available as a transcendent absolute,

1) "The Ancient World in Shakespeare: Authenticity or Anachronism? A Retrospect," Shakespeare Survey, XXXI, 1978, p.7.

2) Oxford, 1971.

3) See Velz, pp.7-8, cf. also Brower, pp.1-29.

and Shakespeare's Roman heroes grope in a relative world for a moral certainty that can never be accorded them in the same sense that such certainty is available to a protagonist in Christian drama. Perhaps because Augustine contrasted his heavenly city very directly and specifically with the temporal city, Roma, it seems not to have occurred to Simmons to ask whether his thesis might be applied to Shakespeare's Greek characters; they too, after all, operate sub specie temporis. Much greater limitations than the omission of Greeks from the pagan world are the casual dismissal of Titus as under the umbrella of the thesis but not worth discussing, the scanty treatment of Cymbeline, and the total neglect of Lucrece. 1

The conclusions arrived at below would endorse Velz's suggestion that there is a need for a collective examination of all of Shakespeare's plays set in a pagan society with a view towards establishing the extent and development of his awareness of the implications of the unavailability of Christian absolutes for the behaviour and attitudes of the characters in those plays, be they comic, tragic or otherwise.

Indeed, throughout what follows an attempt has been made to seek a more exact distinction between warriors in Christian plays and those in pagan plays than that achieved by Brower. As, however, such an attempt demanded contrasting analyses of Christian and classical plays, then the number of works of each type treated had, of necessity, to be limited. Thus, both to avoid undue repetition and also to go some way towards a partial rectification of the limitations of his work noted by Velz, the two classical plays which receive detailed treatment (Titus Andronicus and Troilus and Cressida) are the two works most fully dealing with warrior heroism omitted by Simmons. When the chapters dealing with these plays are read alongside those analysing the nature of heroism in Hamlet and Macbeth it is hoped that there emerges an indication of Shakespeare's precise understanding of the implications of a warrior hero's relationship with the numinous and the possibilities for heroism and heroic tragedy implied by that relationship. It should be stressed, however, that the

1) Velz, p. 8. Simmons's study was published Charlottesville, Virginia, 1973.

exclusion of other pagan plays, or other works dealing more peripherally with warrior heroism, is not simply a feature dictated by considerations of space. Crucial to the argument which is to be developed is the idea that there were formal and ideological influences impinging on Shakespeare's attitude towards warrior heroism which placed so strong an emphasis on the death or diminution of the hero, -on the anti-heroic facts of heroic life--~~that~~, although it is certainly possible to see their presence in Shakespeare's tragic, or even his comic, plays generally, they are revealed at their most structurally operative in plays which are both tragic in form and which deal with issues surrounding central heroic figures. Thus, while it might still be contended that even in these¹ restricted terms other plays would demand inclusion, it is evident that the qualifications implied by the idea of heroic tragedy legitimately exclude Timon of Athens, Cymbeline, Lucrece, and all of the other Christian tragedies with the exception of Othello.

Othello has not received detailed attention, partially because his warrior heroism within the play serves primarily as a biographical and psychological background for the more domestic tragedy which overtakes him, but also because Edmund Creeth, in his recent attempt to show the formal antecedents of Othello's heroism (along with those of the play itself) to lie in an early morality play structure,¹ has rendered any discussion of Othello which might have been set forth within the context of the present study, as liable to repetition as would have been analysis of the later Roman tragedies following Simmons. Indeed the way in which the method of analysis to be employed below differs from either of those adopted by Brower and Simmons is the extent to which (like Creeth) it is sought to find formal or structural antecedents for the various heroic experiences set out in the four plays under primary investigation.

1) See Mankynde in Shakespeare, Athens, Georgia, 1976, pp. 73-110.

Moreover, it is to be *asserted* -extending Creeth's thesis claiming formal potency for the moral play in Elizabethan tragedy-~~that~~ among the most influential of the formal and ideological pressures which helped to shape Shakespearean heroic tragedy was the dramatic attractiveness of the ironic exposure of the folly of the morality protagonist. Not all plays presenting the experience of an heroic protagonist can be felt to comply so exclusively with the pattern of a moral play as Othello, however, and the chapters dealing with Hamlet and Macbeth seek to demonstrate the extent to which classical, as well as native antecedents can be thought to have exerted a formal influence on Shakespeare's Christian tragedy. In fact, the conclusions reached in this respect suggest that Creeth is wrong to place so exclusive an emphasis on the moral play as a formal analogue of Shakespearean tragedy, and that, in their response to the implications of form, as in their reception of ideas, the Elizabethan dramatists were eclectic.

Above it was intimated that the influences to be discussed would be shown to *promote* -either in terms of concepts or of structural expressions of those concepts-~~an~~ awareness in Shakespeare not only of heroic facts of life, but also of their anti-heroic implications. In response to this suggestion it could be argued that while the citing of various structural parallels between Tudor and Shakespearean drama is in itself a valid exercise, there is no justification for viewing religious drama as a vital element in Shakespeare's understanding of the anti-heroic; which he might far more reasonably be thought to have acquired from a sensitive reading of the works within the classical heroic tradition itself. This, in fact, is largely the position taken by Brower. In his study he makes many perceptive observations concerning the similarities existing between

the classical anti-heroic and Shakespeare's own. Thus, for example, in discussing the relationship between Virgil and Shakespeare, he suggests that Shakespeare learned to make his heroes aware of the ambiguity of heroism by emulating the example provided for him by Virgil's archetypal "questioner of heroic values," Aeneas. He goes on to maintain, more generally, that "Shakespeare's sensibility . . . had undergone a Virgilian education in sympathy that is scarcely distinguishable from Christian discipline in loving-kindness."¹ It should be recognized, however, that, while there do seem to be many similarities between Virgil's ironic awareness of the cost of heroism and Shakespeare's implicit questioning of heroic ideals, we do not have the automatic right to assume that Shakespeare either would or could have read Virgil with a modern sense of the author's ambivalent attitude towards his material. Indeed, (as chapter four below will seek to demonstrate) the evidence is that an Elizabethan would not automatically approach epic literature in a sceptical frame of mind, and would typically be inclined to minimize the questioning of heroic values implied in any work of heroic celebration.

Thus, a major challenge facing anyone attempting to establish Shakespeare's ability to transcend the idealizing tendencies of his contemporaries with regard to the warrior hero in literature, and to arrive at a more precisely classical estimation of the ambivalent nature of heroism, lies in providing an answer to the question of how, genius apart, Shakespeare came to interpret the classics in this iconoclastic way. Otherwise Shakespeare's understanding of heroism could as logically be thought to rest on genius alone, and not on any discoveries made by reading within the heroic tradition. Brower's uneasy attempt to conflate Virgilian sensibility with Christian virtue indicates the obvious answer to this problem.

1) Hero and Saint, p. 86.

Christian ultimates could well be thought to have acted as a corrective against an over-tolerant acceptance of heroic ideals and to have led Shakespeare, paradoxically, towards a more comprehensive understanding of the classical heroic than was common in his age. While this is a view that the ensuing discussion would certainly wish to affirm, it does not in itself offer sufficient explanation as to how Christianity might modify Elizabethan veneration for heroism, particularly as that veneration was itself partially the product of a Christian-chivalric reading of classical heroic poetry.

It has already been suggested that Simmons's work provides one indication as to how Christian ideas might have been actively used by Shakespeare to interpret classical works. Simmons contends that Augustine's critique of the earthly city in The City of God lay behind Shakespeare's vision of Plutarch as revealing the relativity and sin which infected all temporal ideals not ratified by divine sanction: a vision (belief in Christ apart) **not** inimical to Plutarch's own Platonic view of temporality.¹ The problem with Simmons's method of establishing the point, however, is that his argument is open to the same type of scepticism which depreciates Brower's thesis claiming direct and non-syncretic relationships between the ideas of classical authors and those of Shakespeare. Indeed, whereas the apologist for classical influence has numerous echoes and allusions in Shakespeare which serve to endorse the idea that he derived material from pagan authors, there is little textual evidence available for demonstrating wide reading in The City of God, and, even where evidence is forthcoming,² this is not in itself proof that Shakespeare was bound to accept Augustine's estimations of Rome's heroes and their place

¹See Shakespeare's Pagan World, pp.8-10., and cf. D.A. Russell, Plutarch, London, 1972, pp.85-98.

²See M.A. Shaaber, "Pistol Quotes St. Augustine," English Language Notes, XIV, 1976, pp.141-158.

in history.

If, however, it is granted with Brower that Shakespeare often displays a remarkably subtle awareness of the paradoxical nature of the various Graeco-Roman heroic images available to him, and if it is further allowed that Simmons's work both suggests the operation of Christian ideas in this process and also implies the need to investigate the possibility that there were more easily accessible and dramatically responsive means by which Christian attitudes to the classical warrior hero figure could have entered his drama than is implied by the reliance on Augustine, then the Tudor drama does become worthy of consideration as being one possible source of Shakespeare's anti-heroic insights. Whether or not Shakespeare knew Augustine is not at issue. What the ensuing study does seek to suggest, however, is that Augustinian attitudes towards the warrior and temporal conflict entered the medieval drama and continued to form the basis of an anti-heroic tradition in that drama up until the time when it was absorbed by, first, Marlowe and, later, Shakespeare. This tradition, in that it presented the warrior not as an archetype of goodness (as in chivalric literature) but as emblematic of the follies and delusions of all post-lapsarian men, was then able to merge with classical accounts of heroic ambivalence in the Elizabethan drama. In these Augustinian-Christian terms, the warrior became the typical denizen of the earthly city; a metaphorical representation of fallen man throughout history. Implicit in the terms of the metaphor, however, was the idea that following the incarnation the delusion, and hence the sin, implied by the profession of heroic ideals became inestimably more blameworthy because man had then been given ultimates which not only replaced heroic ultimates as necessary objects of veneration, but also explicitly condemned many of the values on which heroic ultimates were based. For the warrior

living in the era of grace the tradition emphasised that, unless exceptional circumstances prevailed, the sinful nature of heroic activity rendered the hero liable to fulfil the eschatological promise latent in the terms of the metaphor: damnation. Hamlet and Macbeth are both shown to deal with the lacuna existing between classical and Christian heroic metaphor in these anti-heroic terms.

In these terms, too, the formal influence of the morality drama unites with the Christian meaning underlying its shape, so that the primary influence of morality drama on Shakespearean heroic tragedy comes to be seen as being contained in the impetus which it provides to create heroic protagonists whose heroism becomes wholly or partially a metaphor of their sinful natures, or of the problem of evil with which they struggle. As indicated above, implicit in the argument is the suggestion that exposure to the dramatic presentation of anti-heroic Christian ironies and heroic metaphors of sin, renders Shakespeare more liable to respond to similar ironies and similar metaphorical representations in the works of the classical heroic tradition. Indeed, just as metaphor is found to unite with form in the context of the influence of Tudor drama, so also it is found to do in the context of the influence of classical literature. Using three comparatively restricted examples of a process which is probably more extensive, it is shown how aspects of Ovidian heroic myth, Virgil's account of the death of Priam, and Seneca's Hercules Furens, gave Shakespeare structures through which to investigate the meaning of the heroic experience latent within his own more immediate source material. In fact, the conclusion which it has seemed valid to assert is that ultimately the medieval attitude which saw the heroic figure as a metaphor of various states of human degeneracy became combined with similar visions in classical works, so that the implications of a Tereus, or a Pyrrhus, or a Hercules

were allowed to merge with those of the morality protagonist in the formation of what, therefore, become unusually complex heroic archetypes, whose individual characters enhance, rather than detract from, their universal implications.

It should be recognized, however, that although Shakespeare is found to adapt classical forms and images to Christian tragedy, and likewise found to impose morality forms onto pagan tragedy, this is not to imply that he confused or conflated the two epochs. The conclusions reached in this respect concur with those of Simmons in that it has been found that throughout his career Shakespeare retained and developed the integrity of the idea that Greece and Rome were a world apart in moral and eschatological terms from the Christian world which gave his dramatic protagonists access to the revealed truths of religion, salvation, and the enabling power of the grace of God. In this respect, then, the study as a whole lays stress on the essential duality which must be felt to underlie the idea of a Shakespearean heroic vision. Distinctions between pagan and Christian need not, however, be felt to establish an irreconcilable dichotomy within the heroic tradition. It is the idea of greatness, the idea of heroism itself, which imposes unity onto any study of individual heroes, however diverse their particular estimations of what makes a person heroic happen to be.

Similarly the concept of heroic tragedy can also be felt to cross the dividing lines between Christian and pagan and exist in terms relative solely to the degree of heroic *aggrandizement felt to be* implied by the drama. Thus Eugene Waith has suggested that absolute distinctions between heroic and non-heroic tragedies do not exist, but that "a distinction may be drawn on the basis of stress. The more heavily it falls on 'total possibilities', the more heroic *is* the vision, and hence tragedies in which this stress is very marked are truly heroic tragedies, whereas those in which the stress falls

mainly on 'grievous limitations' are the least heroic of tragedies."¹ Waith's definition is not only of use in indicating the flexible, heterodox, parameters within which the extent of Shakespeare's tragic-heroic vision may be estimated, but it also suggests how it is permissible to use the terms heroic and anti-heroic in the general sense that they are often taken to imply in the present study. Thus, in these terms, an heroic fact is one which tends towards the aggrandizement or enhancement of the stature of the man or warrior figure being celebrated. Alternatively, an anti-heroic idea becomes one which tends towards the minimization or disintegration of any type of appreciation of heroic or humanistic perfection or power. Obviously such a usage allows for flexibility. In the consideration of a work dealing specifically with warrior heroism then the terms heroic and anti-heroic imply either the endorsement or the undercutting of precise heroic ideals. When applied to works whose subject matter is not so overtly 'epic', however, then the terms can merely be thought to define the extent to which the general idea of human excellence is allowed to emerge from that work.

It should be observed, however, that Waith's definition allows for a paradox to emerge with respect to heroic tragedy. It has been stated that, in selecting the four tragedies for consideration, the main **crit**erion has been whether the play has a protagonist who is a warrior hero, or at least a man who, like Hamlet, is required to act like one. Thus, although Waith's definition still applies to the plays selected in this way, it is clear that in Waith's terms a play which has a warrior as its central concern might still present a markedly unheroic emphasis on his grievous limitations, and, thus, emerge as an anti-heroic heroic tragedy; or perhaps more precisely as a tragedy of heroism. This paradox defines the central

1) The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare, and Dryden,
London, 1962, pp. 14-15.

irony of Christian heroic tragedy, and one which, it *will be argued*, was clarified for Shakespeare by the anti-heroic emphasis of the Christian moral drama on man's inability to achieve his own beatitudes or to work towards his own heroic achievements. In the pagan heroic tradition a warrior might be celebrated as heroic or condemned as non-heroic. This evaluation is made within the context of the values of the heroic world of the work of art: thus a man may be a Pyrrhus or an Aeneas. In Christian heroic literature, however, the *parameters of heroic worth transcend* the mundane estimations of the hero's society and the hero may enjoy the universal appreciation of the possibilities of his heroic powers and yet still achieve the absolute anti-heroic minimization of damnation as a reward for their exercise.

As will be shown, the final distinction to be drawn between Shakespeare's Christian and his pagan heroic tragedies is that the pagan's heroic career is seen by him *and his society as a mundane one; a glorious life which gives the hero no special spiritual status*, while for the Christian the hero's career might lead either to the further *aggrandizement* of salvation amidst flights of angels, or else it may compound the ironic reversal of death with the far greater minimization of damnation. Should the Christian warrior retain sufficient insight into the nature of his tragedy then he will recognize, along with the morality protagonist to whom he is related, that damnation has been deserved ironically as a result of the pursuit of heroic aggrandizement in this world at the expense of the next. In the Christian-tragic universe the pursuit of goodness is both more complex and more obscure than it may be allowed to be within the ethically lucid confines of the epic poem, and the heroic dilemma is that while the aggressive exercise of heroic virtue may appear to be a mundane good it may also be a spiritual evil leading towards the common enemy of man.

CHAPTER ONE: Attitudes towards pagan and Christian warrior heroes
in Saint Augustine's The City of God.

The view of history propounded in The City of God differs fundamentally from that which has been put forward as being the orthodox historiographical vision current during Shakespeare's lifetime.¹ Augustine rejected the rationalistic interpretations of those among his contemporaries who believed that history was the intuitively accessible record of God's moral purposes in directing temporal affairs.² Instead he insisted that although the Christian must never refrain from drawing instructive lessons from past events, he must also never forget that without divine revelation the diminished capacities of post-lapsarian man allow him to make at best only educated guesses as to the reasons why God caused events to occur as they did.³

1) Although recent criticism has discredited the view that Shakespeare had an unquestioning belief in the so-called Tudor moral order theory of history (for a summary of modern work in this field see J.W.Lever, "Shakespeare and the Ideas of his Time," Shakespeare Survey, XXIX, 1976, pp. 84-91) it still seems permissible to cite E.M.W. Tillyard's view that the orthodox account of historical causation during the period postulated "a . . . comprehensible scheme of history: a scheme fundamentally religious, by which events evolve under a law of justice and under the ruling of God's Providence, and of which Elizabeth's England was the acknowledged outcome" (Shakespeare's History Plays, London, 1951, pp. 320-321.), if by 'orthodox' it is sought to imply nothing more than 'officially sanctioned.'

2) See R.A. Markus, Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 55 and 62-63. Hereafter cited as Saeculum.

3) For a fuller exposition of Augustine's contention that "outside the limits of the history told in the Bible we have no way of assessing the meaning of any action . . . or any epoch in the unfolding history of salvation," see Markus, Saeculum, pp. 158-159. For a discussion of Augustine's insistence on "the futility of seeking a rational comprehension of the absolute" see Herschel Baker, The Dignity of Man, Cambridge, Mass., 1947, p. 162. The whole chapter on Augustine, pp. 154-186, deals with many of the general tenets of his theology discussed below in a way which confirms the rigorously anti-humanistic nature of his thought and, hence, of his influence.

In expounding this viewpoint Augustine was not abandoning history to moral chaos and religious scepticism. Indeed, it was because he recognized that history often seemed morally incoherent¹ that he sought to put the central Christian belief in a benign and incontestably good God controlling all history on more firm foundations than the rationalist approach would allow. Those foundations were to rest on faith. Given that events occur which any rational theory of providential ethics must allow to be illogical or even evil in that they contravene all human estimations of what is right and just, then the rationalists leave themselves open to the arguments of the sceptics who would insist that God is, therefore, shown either to be evil or non-existent. Augustine obviates the validity of such conclusions by arguing that all of God's judgments are necessarily moral but that we are wrong to attempt to evaluate His transcendent morality in terms of our own mundane ethics and imperfect reason. Not until the end of human history will God's people discover the truth concerning the higher morality now righteously obscure to them: "And when we come to that great judgment, properly called 'the day of doom,' or 'the consummation of time,' there we shall not only see all things clearly, but acknowledge all the judgments of God, from the first to the last, to be firmly grounded upon justice. And there we shall learn, and know also, why God's judgments are generally incomprehensible unto us, and how just His judgments are in that point also; although already indeed it is manifest unto the faithful, that we are justly, as yet, ignorant in them all, or at least in most of them."²

1)cf. The City of God, XX.2. Throughout reference is made to both a modern edition (trans. G.E. McCracken, W. McAllen Green, et al., 7 vols., Loeb Classical Library, London, 1957-72) and to that of the work's first English translator, John Healey (ed., from both the 1610 and 1620 editions, by R.V.G. Tasker, 2 vols., London, 1945.). The Loeb version frequently gives greater clarity, though all quotations are taken from Healey so as to indicate a Jacobean reading. It is not suggested that Shakespeare had prior access to Healey's translation.

2) The City of God, XX.2 (Healey II, p.270.).

It should be observed that Augustine does not contend that man can never discern God's providential purpose. His point is that without direct revelation man can never be certain (even in the seemingly obvious instances of virtue prospering and vice suffering) as to the nature of God's intentions. All men were not equally benighted, however, and Augustine was also at pains to stress that the Christian will more often come closer to understanding God's meanings in history than will the pagan who lacked the special insights given to the true Church and whose judgments were, therefore, based on the imperfections of human reason and inferior, man-made, moral philosophies.¹ Thus all Christians had Biblical texts which revealed with absolute certainty the types of ways in which God's providential role worked. Such examples allowed for reasonable inferences to be made about His meaning when He caused similar events to occur in secular history.² In addition the Christian had had revealed to him certain general truths about the progress of history, its divisions, and its overall status in terms of the pattern of redemption.³ Moreover, having understood the implications of the incarnation, all Christians knew (in a way that a pagan could not) that all history possessed moral and eschatological implications for them. Indeed it was Augustine's express concern that he make the faithful aware of their spiritual role within mundane history.⁴

Thus, while the Bible said little about the period of time falling between the resurrection and the apocalypse, the Christian living in the final age did have the advantage of knowing that salvation was possible and that all human action, and hence all history, had relevance in the mechanics of salvation. This did not give man any insight into

1) See The City of God, XVIII.41.

2) Thus, for example, drawing on the punitive biblical wars, Augustine asserts that the Romans were empowered "to punish the vicious states of other nations." The City of God, V.12. (Healey I, p.160.).

3) See Markus, Saeculum, pp.16-19.

4) See The City of God, XX.2.

God's historical meanings, but it did cause him to be aware that, whatever its transcendent implications, so far as each individual involved in history is concerned, each action will also be evaluated in terms of a personal moral and spiritual calculus knowable to him and endorsed by divine example. Indeed, one of the most immediate of the senses in which a Christian could be ethically superior to the pagan was defined by the fact that in the figure of Christ Christians had been given a moral biography, as well as a series of explicit moral teachings, against which they could not only regulate their lives but also evaluate the personal morality of all other men in history. While again it must be emphasised that the ethics of God in His providential role were not necessarily those enjoined upon man by Christ, nevertheless the existence of a divinely sanctioned code of ethics allowed the Christian to make moral judgments at the human level with far more assurance of truth, and with a much more spiritually compelling sense of the absolute need to obey their moral imperatives, than could be felt by them to be derivable from any conflicting ethical system or code based on reason, or social sanction, or even on the law of nature and of nations.¹

This Augustinian distinction between those with access to absolute certainty and those either historically confined or, worse still, temperamentally resigned to the relativity of human values is crucial for the argument which is to follow. Stated briefly the distinction is this: both as a result of the diminished capacities of man following the fall, and also because God operates at a transcendent moral level, all of secular (or non-Biblical) history is "radically ambiguous"² in providential terms; although it is an article of faith that all history works towards divine goodness. Less ambiguous is personal morality, and

1) See The City of God, XI.3.

2) Markus, Saeculum, p.62.

in this sphere, guided by the teachings of Christ, the Christian is not only better equipped to act well than the pagan, but he is also more capable of ethical evaluation. Thus, if he uses these gifts correctly, the Christian may evaluate the individual actions of men in all epochs against the absolute standards of his faith. Given the absolute righteousness of his ethics he may do this even for milieux in which Christian ethical standards were unavailable or inappropriate. In a real sense Augustine's distinction between Christian and non-Christian denied cultural or historical relativism to be of significance: the word of God had to be given primacy in any era and over any ethos. All human estimations of what constituted praiseworthy behaviour, including those current in an heroic society, or in a partially heroic civilization such as Rome, had to be measured against Christian standards, and (wholly or partially) accepted or rejected accordingly.¹

The basic distinction between those living according to *temporal ideals* and those living their lives in the faith and love of God is a crucial one in Augustinian theology, and, ultimately, while it is certainly intended to divide pagans from Christians, the full implications of the distinction for Augustine allow him to use it to transcend all superficial categorizations made by reference to time or to professed belief, and to make a more basic division of all men according to their affections, and, by implication, according to their eschatological destiny. Thus, Augustine divides all men into two temporally intertwined but spiritually separate estates;² the city of God and the earthly city. Even the Christian is unable to discern the exact inhabitants of either city in this world, but it has been revealed that a major factor determining an individual's eschatological status is the nature and focus of his love while alive:

1) A process engaged in by Augustine with respect to classical philosophy in books six to nine of The City of God.

2) See The City of God, XV.1., and XI.1., also Markus, Saeculum, pp.158-159.

Two loves therefore have given origin to these two cities, self-love in contempt of God unto the earthly, love of God in contempt of one's self to the heavenly. The first seeks the glory of men, and the latter desires God only as the testimony of the conscience, the greatest glory. That glories in itself, and this in God. That exalts itself in self-glory: this says to God: "My glory and the lifter up of my head."(Psalms,iii.3.) That boasts of the ambitious conquerors led by the lust of sovereignty: in this all serve each other in charity, both the rulers in counselling and the subjects in obeying. That loves worldly virtue in the potentates: this says unto God: "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength."(Psalms,xviii.1.) 1

As this distinction will be shown to have great importance for Augustine's critique of the Roman warrior-hero, it is instructive to observe that even when couched in general terms the opposition between the glory of men, self-glory, ambitious conquerors and worldly potentates, and humility and self-deprecation before God, is one which can be said to encompass a distinction between heroic and non-heroic visions of man.

Part of Augustine's justification for his ideas in this respect came from the basic anti-heroic paradox of the Christian faith which affirmed the meek and the humble; those celebrating the excellence of the creator rather than themselves, the creation, to have the most power in the battle against evil, and to be most likely to emerge as victors in the life to come. In these terms Augustine unequivocally rejects the Graeco-Roman celebration of heroic human potential, and instead looks toward the heroic² destiny given by God to those men who maintain an anti-heroic vision of their own powers for the greater glory of God. He cites in support of his argument the prophetic words of Hannah (1 Samuel,ii.1-10) which include an *aphoristic* encapsulation of the paradox he was seeking to explain: "The bow of the mighty men hath He broken, and girded the weak with strength. . . . for in his own might shall no man be strong."³

1)The City of God,XIV.28. (Healey,II,pp.58-59.)

2)At one point Augustine refers to Christian martyrs as heroes of the Church.See The City of God,X.21.

3)The City of God,XVII.4. (Healey II,p.148.)

For the mature Augustine all creation was good in that its source was God who could create nothing evil.¹ Evil came into the world with the fall² when man began to desire God's creation inordinately; not as His gift (and, therefore, as a means towards the contemplation of His goodness) but as something ultimately desirable in itself. This facet of Christian thought forms another aspect of the ideological background of Augustine's division of humanity into two cities whose distinguishing criteria carry implications for the opposition between the heroic and the non-heroic. When a man's love is directed solely towards himself or any other temporal phenomenon then in effect he is guilty of the aggrandizement of creatures above their natural place in man's affections; which should always look beyond the creature to the creator. This affection is a profoundly foolish and spiritually destructive one in that it prefers a limited, finite, temporal good (one which is, therefore, neither capable of providing total fulfillment nor eternal enjoyment) before, or instead of, God Himself; in whom lies total peace and eternal life for those who will learn to love Him correctly. What earthly man does, then, is to substitute the ineffable goodness of God for goods which his own debased affections can encompass.³

Obviously Augustine recognized that there were degrees of degeneracy among earthly men, yet it was still the case that all were united by their inordinate desire for earthly goods, be they material or abstract. Thus lust for wealth or for honour both represented a movement away from Ultimate Being towards a diminished state in which man becomes satisfied with himself, with his own lesser goods and his own finite preoccupations.⁴ It was in this perverse relationship with creation, this futile aggrandizement of man and his world, that Augustine saw

1) In his youth Augustine accepted the Manichean teaching that the physical world was evil. See D. Knowles's introduction to his edition of The City of God, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. xi-xii.

2) See The City of God, XIII.14 and 15. 3) See The City of God, XV.4., XIV.13

4) See The City of God, XIV.13.

the root of all sin and the basis of pride: "And what is pride but a perverse desire of height, in forsaking Him to whom the soul ought solely to cleave, as the beginning thereof, to make itself seem its own beginning. This is when it likes itself too well, or when it so loves itself that it will abandon that unchangeable Good which ought to be more delightful to it than itself."¹ Pride, therefore, was rooted in man's sinful aspiration to take upon himself the qualities and duties properly belonging to God.

Implicit in this view of pride is the idea that it represents man's attempted usurpation of the place and power of the deity. When a man takes it upon himself to define his own supreme goods and to desire them for themselves alone, he not only substitutes finite ends for infinite ones, but also, because he invests either himself or some other temporal property or object with ultimate worth, he becomes guilty of either attempted self-deification; the sin of Satan, or of idolatry; false deification. As already suggested, the heroic psyche, with its typical tendency towards self-esteem, temporal aspiration, and worldly idealism, tended to suggest itself to Augustine through the language in which he defined the contrast between his two cities. Given this understanding it is now possible to proceed by illustrating both how and why Augustine found the warrior heroes of pagan Rome to be not merely members of the earthly city, but in fact to be archetypally representative of the men and values which he believed to characterize it throughout history.

As shall become apparent during the ensuing discussion, there were two obvious features of the Roman hero which allowed him to become so potent a symbol of human delusion for Augustine. Firstly, like the Homeric hero, the Roman warrior was given to investing his heroic ethos and the honour which accrued to him through it, with a degree

1) The City of God, XIV.13. (Healey II, p.43.)

of veneration which rivalled his worship of the gods. A second characteristic of Rome's heroic ethos was the reverence which was accorded to the temporal city of Rome by its military leaders.¹ Such strong devotion to country and status provided Augustine with a widely known type who illustrated both aspects of the sin of pride: the tendency to run towards self-deification (the worship of one's own honour and status) and the tendency to create false idols (Rome and its institutions).

Augustine knew that the heroic veneration of Rome was a literary as well as a social attitude.² The opening of The City of God sets the tone for the whole by launching into a scathing attack on Virgil's representation of the pax Romana. As God is the director of all history, Augustine felt it to be a typically pagan-heroic usurpation of His role to imagine oneself able to control not only individual destinies but the moral shape of history itself. What for Augustine was the myth of human self-determination was compounded by the Romans in their belief that they exercised another of God's exclusive functions; the arbitration of cosmic justice: "For the King, the builder of this city, whereof we are now to discourse, hath revealed a maxim of the divine law to His people, thus: 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble' (Jas. iv. 6.). Now this which is indeed only God's, the swelling pride of an ambitious mind affecteth also, and loves to hear this as parcel of his praise: 'To spare the lowly, and strike down the proud.' (Aeneid, VI.853.)"³

It should be stressed that Augustine does not say that Roman heroes were generically the most sinful of men; moral evaluation being here, as elsewhere, an individual matter. In fact Augustine specifically states that the Roman warrior class, while containing some of the worst of men, also included many of the more admirable members of the earthly city; made impressive by the rigour of their

1) See The City of God, V.14.

2) See H. Hagendahl, Augustine and the Latin Classics, Gothenburg, 1967, vol. 2, p. 388.

3) The City of God, I.1. (Healey I, p. 1.)

devotion to heroic ideals.¹ Rather, Augustine's point was that Roman heroes were emblematic of fallen humanity by being not simply involved in temporal affairs, but for going on to idealize that involvement into an heroic ethos which effectively became a mundane religion, conceived and celebrated completely within the limitations of human time: "But the others [ie. the Scaevolus, Curtii, and Decii, as opposed to the Christian martyrs], living in an earthly city, wherein the end of all their endeavours was by themselves propounded to themselves, the fame and domination of this world and not the eternity of heaven; not in the everlasting life, but in their own ends, and the mouths of their posterity: what should they love, but glory, whereby they desired to survive after death in the memories and mouths of such as commended them."² Thus, it was not their evil as such, but their determination to seek beatitude within the possibilities of the tangible world which made Augustine continually return to the warriors of Rome's past for his illustrations of the nature of the earthly city.

As the last quotation shows, however, Augustine was not oblivious to the fact that the Roman warriors of whom he speaks were ignorant of the revealed truths of religion and of the eschatological significance of Christ's mission. At one moment he even exhorts the progeny of the Roman heroic dynasties to turn towards a source of beatitude which was unavailable to their ancestors who were, therefore, forced to seek for glory amid the uncertainties and disappointments of history in a way that was no longer necessary: "If nature have given thee any laudable eminence, it must be true piety that must purge and perfect it: impiety contaminates and consumes it. Now then, choose which of these to follow, that thy praises may arise, not from thyself that may be misled, but from the true God, who is without

1) See The City of God, V.13.

2) The City of God, V.14. (Healey I, p.163.)

all error. Long ago wast thou great in popular glory: but then (as it pleased the providence of the high God) was the true religion wanting for thee to choose and embrace. But now, awake, and rouse thyself; it is now day."¹

Thus, while Augustine did not argue for moral and religious relativity in the context of the absolute distinction between the earthly city and the city of God, he did recognize that before the incarnation man often had no other recourse than to pursue ultimates either among false gods or in terms of temporal goods, so that, although providentially excluded from the possibility of salvation, the activities of a man or race who lived comparatively virtuously, given their ignorance, deserved more understanding than when similar activities were performed in the full knowledge of Christianity. This was Augustine's attitude towards the most praiseworthy of the Roman heroes whose self-sacrificing love of honour and country drove them to forsake many of the vices which a Christian would also try to avoid: "those men were such, as for honour and domination's sake would have an absolute care of their country, whence they received this honour: and would not hesitate to lay down their own lives for their fellows, suppressing covetousness and all other vices, except the desire of honour alone."²

Augustine well recognized the religious zeal with which the pagan warrior pursued his ends, and he believed that God also rewarded their merits in the temporal sphere within which they operated: "If God did neither mean to bless such as we have spoken of with eternity in His heavenly city, . . . nor to vouchsafe them an earthly glory or excellence of imperial dignity; then should their virtues, the good acts whereby they endeavoured to ascend to this

1) The City of God, II.29. (Healey I, p.74.)

2) The City of God, V.12. (Healey I, pp.160-161.)

glory, pass unrewarded. But the Lord says even of such as do good for human glory: 'Verily I say unto you they have their reward' (Matthew vi.2,5.). . . . therefore . . . honoured they are almost all the world over; all nations very near received their laws; *honoured were they then* in all men's mouths, and now in most men's writings through the world. Thus *have they* no reason to complain of God's justice; they have their reward."¹

The reward, though evident enough, was; like all empire, reputation, life, and honour, subject to the mutability which infected the whole of temporality, and, thus, it appeared to Augustine to be radically unworthy of the sacrifices made for it. All that the Roman hero laboured to achieve was an ironic travesty of the rewards that such human devotion could be given. The pagan hero had no hope of heaven and, thus, sought immortality in reputation and in permanence of empire. Their example in making so many sacrifices for so meagre a reward was to be thought of as an inspiration for Christians whose sacrifices for God were so much less and their potential reward so much greater.²

When he observed the pagan warrior with the retrospective eye of a Christian moralist, however, even this partial respect for pagan heroic virtue became further qualified. Frequently Augustine attacks the heroic code by showing how heroic virtues were often vices in Christian terms. Thus, for example, while Augustine commends the way in which love of praise impelled the hero to eschew vice, he still insists that love of praise was itself a vice to be avoided by the Christian: "Vainglory is not a vice proper to human praise, but the soul's that perversely desires praise of men, . . . Nor is pride *his* vice that gives the power, but the soul's, perversely loving that

1) The City of God, V.15. (Healey I, p.163.)

2) See The City of God, V.17.-V.18.

power."¹

Even more destructive of the idea of heroic virtue, however, was Augustine's suggestion that warrior heroism was morally reprehensible in its own terms; was open to charges of savagery or bestiality without it being necessary to impose anachronistic Christian standards onto the judgment. Augustine in fact claims that heroic 'virtues' are frequently nothing more than transparent idealizations of basic human failings and can be recognized as such even within their own heroic milieu by any sensitive human being. Heroic society itself came to be seen as a series of thinly veiled excuses (institutionalized over the course of time) for allowing the practice of many of the worst aspects of fallen man's lust for possession.² Thus, for example, Augustine finds himself in full agreement with Sallust's pagan moral outrage³ concerning the greed which lay beneath the supposedly idealistic motives which prompted the Alban campaign:

This desire of sovereignty is a deadly corrosive to human spirits. This made the Romans triumph over Alba, and gave the happy success of their mischiefs the style of glories. Because, as our Scripture says: "The wicked maketh boast of his heart's desire, and the unjust dealer blesseth himself" (Psalm x.23.). Take off then these deluding veils from things, and let them appear as they are indeed. Let none tell me, he or he is great, because he has coped with and conquered such and such a **one**. Gladiators can fight and conquer, and those bloody acts of theirs in their combat do never pass unpraised. But I hold it better that a man's name should be exposed to all taint of idleness, than that he should purchase renown from such bad employment. 4

On many occasions Augustine indicts the pagan heroic impulse as being an ideal which, on inspection, degenerates into its un-ideal opposite. Throughout the impression conveyed is that for Augustine the heroic ethos was merely an aggrandizement of the vices of greed, blood-lust, and egotism which characterize all humanity in its fallen state.⁵

Indeed, one of the primary reasons why the Roman warrior became

1) The City of God, XII.8. (Healey I, p.351.)

2) Of relevance here is Augustine's famous observation that a conqueror is no different than a thief, although his activities are obscured by the title of emperor. See The City of God, IV.4.

3) In Catilina, II.2. (4) The City of God, III.14. (Healey I, p.89.)

5) cf. his attack on Caesar at V.12.

so potent an archetype of fallen humanity for Augustine was precisely because conflict and strife were central to his conception of what distinguished fallen man from man in his original innocence. Since being expelled from Eden man was plunged into the chaotic flux of time. For Augustine the passage of time had been marked by human conflicts of various kinds. This brings him to assert that warlike activity was both an actual and a symbolic manifestation of man's divorce from the peace of God. Thus, while conflict was inevitable for all men, it was the area of existence which provided the special arena for the warrior hero, whose life, therefore, could be seen to be most clearly associated with the wickedness of man acting without the pacifying power of grace:

God was not ignorant that man would sin, and so incur mortality both for himself and his progeny: nor that mortals should run on in that height of iniquity, that brute beasts should live in more agreement and peace among themselves, whose origin was out of water and earth, than *men* whose kind came all out of one for the commending of concord: for lions never war among themselves, nor dragons, as men have done. But God foresaw withal that His grace should adopt the godly . . . and rank them in eternal peace with the angels, . . . and those should make use of God's producing all mankind from one, in learning how pleasing to God was unity in mankind. 1

Even from so general a statement it can be seen how the warrior might emerge as providing a powerful metaphor for fallen humanity.

When Augustine turns to make the more specific point that, though a characteristic of all men, strife is especially indicative of the earthly city, his association of fallen man with the heroic mentality becomes more direct. The theological point being made was that the nature of the goods to which earthly man is addicted, made them liable to cause unrest and dissension in a way in which the spiritual goods of the city of God could not. In these terms the typically dynamic pursuit of mundane phenomena associated with the heroic psyche makes the warrior archetypally representative, not only

1) The City of God, XII.22. (Healey I, p.367.)

of fallen man in general, but of the earthly city in particular:

But the temporal, earthly city (temporal, for when it is condemned to perpetual pains it shall be no more a city) has all its good here upon earth, and therein takes that joy that such an object can afford. But because it is not a good that *acquits* the possessors of all troubles, therefore this city is divided in itself into wars, altercations, and appetites of short-lived or destructive victories. For any part of it that wars against another desires to be the world's conqueror, whereas indeed it is vice's slave. And if it conquer, it extols itself and so becomes its own destruction. 1

Certainly it must be acknowledged that this unambiguous association of war both with sin and with membership of the earthly city, places serious constraints on any attempt to promote the idea of a just war or a Christian warrior and yet still remain faithful to Augustine.

In fact, however, although Augustine can never be said to condone the chivalric concept of warriors for Christ, he does not totally reject the idea that a member of the elect might be justified in functioning as a soldier. In this world even the godly are ravaged by an internal psychomachia in which the will is engaged in continuous conflict with the recalcitrant passions and emotions, and where the soul is the scene of a battle between man's innate evil and his divinely inspired goodness; a battle which can only be won through the grace of God. This being the case Augustine concedes that there will be occasions when this inevitable conflict of good and evil will need to be extended into the external world:

The strife therefore of Romulus and Remus shows the division of the earthly city in itself; that of Cain and Abel shows the opposition of the city of men and the city of God. The wicked oppose the good; but the good, being perfect, cannot contend amongst themselves: but whilst they are imperfect they may contend one against the other in that manner that each contends against himself, for in every man the flesh is against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. So then the spiritual desire in one may fight against the carnal in another, or contrariwise the carnal against the spiritual, as the evil do against the good; or the two carnal desires of two good men that are imperfect may contend as the bad do against the bad, until their *diseases* be cured, and themselves brought to everlasting health of victory. 2

1) The City of God, XV.4. (Healey II, p.63.)

2) The City of God, XV.5. (Healey II, pp.64-65.)

As the language here illustrates, however, even where conflict is partially condoned it is still viewed as resulting from human imperfection.

Augustine insists that even where the issues of good and evil are at their clearest any war between the two is at best a necessary evil, a debasement of humanity, and a concession to the degenerate values of the earthly city.¹ Strife is represented as a major misfortune of human existence, and conflict as something which is only to be countenanced as a final resort. In general peace was to be the aim of the city of God on earth, and, this being the case, its members were enjoined to seek peace with and promote peace among the earthly city; if for no other reason than to maintain a suitable climate in which to worship.² Should this not prove possible then it is true that Augustine seems to theoretically uphold the view that the city of God might wage a just war with an evil aggressor: "the waging of war, and the augmentation of dominions by conquest, may seem to the bad as a great felicity, but the good must needs hold it a mere necessity. But because it would be worse if the bad should get all the sovereignty, and so overrule the good, therefore in that respect the honest men may esteem their own sovereignty a felicity. But doubtless, he is far more happy that he has a good neighbour by him in quiet, than he that must be forced to subdue an evil neighbour by contention."³

Even when postulating the theoretical possibility of a good nation being opposed by a bad one Augustine can be seen to put severe qualifications on the concept of a justifiable war. As Augustine knew, however, the issues of good and evil could rarely if ever be as easily discernable as in his theoretical situation. Certainly he was aware that nations as a whole tended to be an

1) See The City of God, XIX.7.

2) See The City of God, XIX.26.

3) The City of God, IV.15. (Healey I, p.125.)

obscure mixture of both cities whose affairs are locked in the ethically ambiguous contingencies of time and history. When this factor is combined with the impossibility of ever ascertaining the locus of providential morality in war it is not surprising that in practice Augustine never gives any indication of an extra-Biblical conflict in which one side was totally evil and the other totally justified.¹ In effect the potential Christian warrior who would follow Augustine was still faced with the problem of knowing whether he was, in fact, fighting for good, and thus in no danger of eschatological punishment, or whether he had mistaken his cause and was fighting for evil, and, therefore, risking damnation.

It could be argued, however, that such problems were 'outside the sphere of man's legitimate concern. Certainly a man cannot be expected to know God's providential purposes. What all men had to do was to make ethical judgments according to the moral criteria made known to them. While this is true, there still remained the possibility that a man might confuse or mistake what he takes to be a legitimate opponent, and that while sincerely convinced of his cause's righteousness, he might fall liable to punishment for making the wrong decision. Augustine goes some way towards obviating this problem for the ordinary soldier who, so long as he is not required to contravene God's laws needs only obey his sovereign to be morally justified in any war,² but this still means that the ruler, or the captain, or the heroic individual who makes independent decisions about whether it is just to fight, would be liable to punishment should the ambiguity of temporal affairs cause him to calculate the moral issues of the conflict wrongly. As chapter four below will illustrate, the potential spiritual peril of having to make war in the ethically ambiguous realms of history undercut the heroic resolve

1)cf. The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's De Civitate Dei, by N.H. Baynes, Historical Association Pamphlet No.104, London, 1936, pp.6-9.

2)See The City of God, I.20., and XIX.17.

of Henry V and his men at Agincourt.

It should also be remembered that while man cannot know God's providential purpose outside of the Bible, this is not the same as saying that God's providence has given no guidance as to the personal morality He required of His people. Thus, the record of His didactic meanings in directing Biblical history has shown that although there are always right and wrong moral responses for man to make when confronted by a wicked aggressor, the right response is not always to oppose the wicked by force. Thus, the Bible and, more obscurely, Roman history, has taught the Christian that frequently the moral response required by God from His people has been one of passive acceptance of the evil inflicted upon them by the earthly city, and not a proto-chivalric defense of their righteousness. Thus, for many reasons, it has been revealed that even where the issues of good and bad are tolerably clear, the wrong response of the Christian would be the aggressive one. It is known, for example, that God uses evil persecutors to test the faithful tolerance of His people, so as to prove their ability to suffer for His sake.¹ As has been illustrated God also was known to desire His people to leave the punishment of sin to His own hands. The Christian should learn from the example provided by the Romans that they were not automatically justified in punishing seeming evil. This is especially the case as it could be shown that to oppose evil by aggression may be to act in opposition to the larger paradox of history whereby evil is caused to oppress good so as to promote a still greater good.² Augustine is quick to point out that, following the example of Christ, the martyrs of the Church met Roman cruelty with passivity; and by so doing gave an inspiration to the Church which would not have been in evidence had

1) See The City of God, I.27.

2) See The City of God, XIX.12.-XIX.14.

they responded in warlike fashion and fought for their lives.¹

Also an argument supporting the exercise of caution when deciding whether to uphold God's cause by force of arms, is Augustine's belief that even when God's approval of a war against evil is taken for granted, there is still no certainty that the moral status of the temporal avenger of sin is unquestionable. While Augustine believes it perfectly possible that God will sanction a military action as a scourge against sin and thereby absolve the punitive force from the sins such as manslaughter inevitably committed during the fighting,² he also records that evidence suggests it to be equally possible for God to punish one evil through the agency of a lesser evil,³ or to combat one evil through a power which is equally wicked.⁴ In the latter two cases it is then open to God to punish His agents for the evil that they commit on His behalf. The scourge of God may himself be scourged. Eschatological punishment must always be the possible reward for heroic action conducted within the morally ambiguous confines of human history, because to embark on such action always involved the contravention of several of the most pressing of the moral injunctions of Christ.

Finally, then, the multitude of reservations and qualifications to be taken into account prior to deciding whether to wage war for God rest on the basic duality of goodness in Augustine's theology. All history is good in providential terms in that it furthers the divine plan. In human terms, however, history is the sum-total of all of the freely-willed actions of men, who are always responsible for their actions in mundane moral terms. The distinction is meant to remove the charge of determinism from the concept of omnipotence, and also to make man responsible for his own damnation. In terms of

1) See The City of God, I.6.-I.9.

2) See The City of God, XIX.12.

3) As with the battles of the Israelites under Joshua. See The City of God, XVI.43

4) As between Rome and Alba. See The City of God, III.14.

the concept of the just war, however, what the distinction between the social, historical, or providential morality of an act, and the personal morality of that act implies, is that a warrior can pursue a long-term Christian good through the operation of personally evil thoughts and actions, for which he will be rendered spiritually accountable.

For Augustine all of these doubts about whether a Christian warrior is justified or not would depend on whether that individual warrior could be thought to be acting in a state of grace. Indeed, whether the proposed action be considered overtly heroic or more simply moral, it was central to Augustine's vision of man that, if he was to overcome the innate tendency towards evil implicit in his fallen nature, then he must be aided by the empowering grace of God:

The flesh is . . . rebellious against the spirit, and the spirit has the same sorts of conflict against the flesh, so that we cannot do as we would, or expel all concupiscence; but we strive (by the help of God) to suppress it by not consenting, . . . lest ~~we~~ **Should** take good for evil and evil for good; . . . lest enmity should make us return mischief for mischief; . . . lest desire of revenge should draw us to impropriety; . . . lest our lust should become our law; and lest we ourselves in the dangerous conflict should either hope to win the victory by our own strength, or having gotten it should give the glory to ourselves, and not to His grace of whom St. Paul says: "Thanks be unto God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians, xv.57.); and elsewhere: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Romans, viii.37.). 1

Considered (as it largely came to be in the morality drama) as a metaphor of the internal psychomachia, or as a potential historical action, the figure of the warrior; if it was to be thought capable of an act of heroic goodness, needed, so far as Augustine was concerned, to be thought of as acting in a state of grace. Where this certainty is lacking, the moral obscurity of history, the sinful activity of the warrior generally, and the pervasive association between the warrior's ethos and the values of the earthly city, combine to suggest the warrior hero as a metaphor or archetype of fallen man.

1) The City of God, XX.23. (Healey II, pp.390-391.)

Obviously, however, there is a question which is begged by this solution to the problem, and it is one which the ensuing chapters will show to have no easy solution for the Christian warrior operating outside of the climate of spiritual certainty available in an allegorical play. The question is: 'How is it possible to know if you are acting in a state of grace?' The answer to the question is that it is not possible. Even Augustine admits that the exact locus of grace, and hence the inhabitants of the city of God **cannot** be ascertained until the last judgment. Ultimately the warrior can never be certain that his warlike action will not lead him to damnation, because his perceptions are confined to the obscurity of time in which not only right and wrong, but also the grace which alone allows man to **judge those concepts truly**, must forever remain uncertain or ambiguous to him.¹

It could be argued that this problem is not confined to the warrior, that it is the general dilemma facing anyone hoping to act in accordance with the will of God. While this is certainly the case, it should be acknowledged that the warrior is again special in that his dilemma is an extreme extension of the one facing the ordinary Christian. The ordinary man leads a life in which (with relatively minor ambiguities) the private Christian standards of right and wrong provide clearly demarked guidelines for moral action. Thus, unlike the warrior, he may never be forced to consider performing an action which, though wrong by every normal standard of Christianity, may, in certain exceptional cases, be the correct one. Thus again, the warrior can be seen to function as a figurative example for the Christian; this time of the central role played by grace in moral action and personal redemption. The image becomes all the more appropriate when it is remembered that the spiritual struggle between

1) cf. Markus, Saeculum, pp. 157-169.

human evil and divinely inspired goodness had been metaphorically represented in terms of heroic warfare at least since the composition of the Pauline letters.¹

There remains one further point to be made concerning the central role played by grace in Augustinian theology and its implications for a heroic vision of man. Augustine's division of humanity into the two cities rests on the belief that the inhabitants of the city of God are in a state of grace. This grace not only empowers them to perform good acts (it being possible for such enabling grace to be extended to allow the non-elect also to perform good acts) but it also guarantees their eschatological salvation. Just as man is unable to perform a good act without the operation of grace, likewise he is not able to earn or deserve the grace which waives the debt owed to God as a result of original sin. The Pelagian heresy² had it that man achieved salvation through his own good works. Augustine vigorously rejected this implied aggrandizement of man, by putting forward the orthodox view that such grace is not merited but given gratuitously, as an act of divine mercy: "nothing severs man from God but sin, which not our merits but God's mercy wipes off us. It is His pardon, not our power, for all the power that is called ours is ours by His bounteous goodness; for we should think too well of our flesh, unless we lived under a pardon all the while we are in the flesh. Therefore have we our grace by a mediator, that being polluted by the flesh, we might be purged by the like flesh."³

Thus, just as it is an heroic delusion to suppose oneself capable of determining history through one's innate resources, so too it is a delusion rooted in pride to suppose oneself capable of performing good actions or of achieving salvation without the grace and mercy

1) See chapter 3 below.

2) See Knowles, ed., The City of God, p. xvii.

3) The City of God, X. 22. (Healey I, p. 295.)

of God. Thus, whether a hero is seen as a literal-historical figure, or as an allegorical, or semi-allegorical representation of virtue opposing vice, for Augustine it is essential to recognize that any power to do good which that figure may be felt to represent emanates not from within himself, but externally, from God. This intuition is anti-heroic in the broad sense that the whole of Augustinian theology may be said to be anti-heroic. Throughout The City of God Augustine sought to minimize man's sense of his independent capabilities, and hence to increase his sense of dependence on God. The consequent Christian emphasis on humility and the contemplation of human powerlessness and folly when unaided by grace was one of Augustine's enduring influences on medieval literature and thought.¹ Given that states of mind or being suggesting the idea of human excellence and potential carried with them such associations of spiritual blindness, then it is not surprising (given also the associated factors which made the hero so potent a symbol of pride and love of the world) that the warrior (along with the Emperor, the King, and others of temporal power) came to be an object of spiritual contemplation during the medieval period: almost a memento mori, a reminder of the mutability of human greatness, of mortality, of the fickleness and transience of mundane possessions, and of the consequent necessity for self-effacement before the eternal glories of God.²

The de contemptu mundi and vanitas vanitatum traditions of medieval art were not, however, totally dependent on Christian thought.³ In fact many of the ironies and potential absurdities attendant on heroic action which Augustine and the Christian tradition exposed were well known to the pagan heroic tradition from the time of Homer onwards.⁴ Augustine

1) See Baker, The Dignity of Man, pp. 176-186.

2) See chapter two below. Note also that Hamlet's meditations within this tradition centre on two pagan warrior kings, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar: Hamlet, V.i. 192 ff.

3) See Willard Farnham, The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy, Berkeley, 1936, pp. 1-36., for an analysis of pre-Christian influences.

4) See chapter seven below.

acknowledged Virgil's awareness of the tragic cost of Rome's heroic destiny,¹ and, although his Christian belief in the ultimate goods ignored by the pagan in favour of the transient rewards of a heroic career drew him to develop the ironies and expose the absurdities of heroic ideals more destructively than in pagan epic, he still found time to attack pagan heroic codes in their own terms. Thus, he implies that it does not need Christian eschatology to expose heroic ideals as a remarkably poor means of achieving even limited, temporal, happiness: "seeing you cannot show such estates to be anyway happy, as are in continual wars, and constantly in terror, trouble, and guilt of shedding human blood, though it be their foes'; with what reason or wisdom any man doth wish to glory in the largeness of empire, since all their joy is but as a glass, bright and brittle, and evermore in fear and danger of breaking."²

Augustine repeatedly invokes the unattractive aspects of heroic life which also disturbed the pagan warrior. Honour may be awarded to the wrong man, for the wrong type of action, and is, in any event, ephemeral. War is miserable, dehumanizing in its savagery and ultimately joyless, even in success, in that it reveals the warrior's own mortality and eventual mode of death.³ As will be shown, it was similar reflections on the brittle nature of heroic joy and on the vast human suffering involved in the building of an empire which obsessed Homer's Achilles and Virgil's Aeneas respectively. It is central to the following analysis to establish that Augustinian-Christian criticism of pagan-heroic ideas does not emerge from a wholly different attitude towards heroic limitations to that already known within the heroic tradition. The radical shift in emphasis distinguishing the two

1) The City of God, III.16. contains a passage in which Augustine concurs in Virgil's lament (Aeneid, vi, 820-823.) for Brutus who killed his sons in Rome's interests.

2) The City of God, IV.3. (Healey I, p.114.)

3) In fact Augustine returns again to Brutus to make these points. See The City of God, V.18.

traditions only emerges when the anti-heroic facts of the warrior's life are evaluated in terms of spiritual and eschatological beliefs which were largely unavailable to the pagan. Thus, when the Christian recognized the ultimately disappointing nature of temporal existence, he was also able to see that existence as being the flawed prelude to a totally fulfilling eternal life. The pagan who had similar recognitions, however, was forced to seek whatever fulfillment he could find within the ambivalent potentialities of mundane existence. The Christian, therefore, was able to interpret such central human failings as death, mutability, and oblivion in time, as showing the folly of reliance on human ultimates subject to such impermanence. For the pagan hero those same anti-heroic facts could only suggest the need to overcome them, however imperfectly, in this world; and, thus, to create an afterlife through honour or empire, or through any other purely human endeavour of lasting worth.

To conclude, then, it must be observed that the same anti-heroic facts of mundane existence were significant to both pagan warrior and Christian man. Augustine acknowledged the fact that the pagan had to contend with the limitations of existence by adopting one of a woefully inadequate set of alternatives with which to obviate them. Even among pagans, however, there were *many more satisfactory philosophic solutions to the* problems of life than those provided by any heroic ethos. He was especially concerned, therefore, that the superficial attractiveness of the heroes of the Roman historic and literary past should no longer appeal to men given the advantage of living in the era of grace. His ultimate message was that the Christian should abandon those aspects of the earthly city archetypally illustrated by Rome and her heroes, and embrace instead the meekness and humility before God paradoxically culminating in the victory of the eternal city.

CHAPTER TWO: The English cycle plays and their place within the heroic tradition.

In discussing the implications of the presence of supernatural beings in heroic poetry C.M.Bowra coined the phrase "heroic humanism" to describe the attitude towards man to be found in those works of oral heroic poetry which contain no gods to rival or to control the heroes whose deeds they celebrate.¹ The point being made was that even an admittedly heroic work which presented divine beings as superior to heroic man in terms of power, knowledge, or causal capabilities, was, by so doing, alerting its audience to latent weaknesses, and an innate lack of possibilities in the human heroic condition. Such works, therefore, fall short of the total celebration of the hero as the most potent power in his artistic universe, and, in effect, undercut the idea of total heroic humanism by including anti-heroic recognitions of human limitations. Thus, for example, the Homeric depiction of divine immortality draws attention to the weakness of human mortality in a way in which the mere recognition of the fact that death exists would not do, was it not also set against the possibility of everlasting life in other, superior, beings.² Limitation of any kind is antagonistic to the heroic idea in its fullest sense of total human possibility; and, although the heroic can survive a recognition of limitation, nevertheless, limiting concepts are ultimately anti-heroic ones.

It must be recognized, however, that the anti-heroic implications latent in the theological dimension of a given work will vary according to the relative constraints which that work allows the relationship between man and god to place on the independent possibilities of man as hero.³ After all it is little more than a truism to

1) Heroic Poetry, London, 1952, p.84.

2) cf. Iliad, XXII, 1-20. where Achilles laments his inability to kill Apollo.

3) Thus, Bowra goes on to note that the poem's nominal Christianity does little to reduce the heroic spirit of The Song of Roland (p.84 and ff.)

say that a god's powers exceed a man's. While it is hoped to suggest that a continual emphasis on this truism will in itself help to engender an anti-heroic attitude in an audience, it must be admitted that belief in divinity per se is only humanistically limiting in the most general sense, and it would not be productive to label a work as being markedly anti-heroic unless supernature was shown to actively impinge on the affairs of heroism. Heroic virtues are commonly seen as peculiarly human achievements, and, so long as divinity does not qualify man's presumed ability to enact the types of excellence belonging to a man, then the theological dimension of a work need not be felt to seriously undercut man's celebration of his own proper potentialities. Indeed, in Homer there is a feeling that heroism is peculiar to men simply because men have weaknesses which the gods do not have, and that those weaknesses (such as mortality) forced upon men a rigorous code of heroic ethics which was inappropriate for the gods whose eternity allowed them to discount the need to create an enduring reputation by risking death in battle. Thus, Homer's heroes emerge as partially superior to his gods, who may never risk life to gain honour. Certainly heroic ethics are seen as being independent of the gods.¹

Homeric theology, then, does not greatly impinge on man's function as his own arbiter of human greatness and heroic goodness.² The Homeric epics present their heroic codes in an almost totally human frame of reference within which divine injunctions outlining what constitutes admirable behaviour are less important than the heroic society's own evaluations. Not all theological systems allow such independence to mankind, however, and many, more

1) cf. Bowra, Heroic Poetry, p.90., also Iliad, XII, 310-28.

2) See M.I. Finley, The World of Odysseus, 2nd revised edition, Harmondsworth, 1979, pp.137-138, where he writes that "The ethics of the world of Odysseus were man-made and man-sanctioned."

"transcendental,"¹ religions, postulating a perfect divinity who imposes external moral obligations on man, expressly oppose the idea that human estimations of goodness can be made without reference to god. Such religions inevitably insist on man's subordinate position within the scheme of things: "Once one assumes a Cosmic Being superior to man in goodness, . . . in omniscience, in omnipotence, and in transcendence of time and morality, human values which do not stem from Divine principles become inconsequential, since man's moral behaviour is measured primarily by the extent to which he lives up to a supra-human **I**deal."²

As was seen with Augustine, however, it is not solely the idea of moral self-determination which is compromised by such theologies. Rather, it is ideas of human self-sufficiency, and, therefore, of traditional concepts of heroism in general, which are called into question by the humanistically minimizing implications of belief in such transcendent deity. Certainly Augustine's vision of the relationship between man and God was antagonistic to the whole concept of independent human excellence. Indeed, while Augustine and medieval orthodoxy repudiated the idea, it is possible to give Christianity an almost totally anti-heroic bias, by postulating a God in deterministic control of men's actions, so that free-will is denied, and man, consequently, is reduced to a mere cipher: a being whose temporal actions and eschatological status become an arbitrary reflection of the divine will. Augustine rejected a theology which did not allow man the freedom to merit his own damnation. Such determinism was, however, latent in his view that the source of all good action and the controller of all history was God. It was only

1) See C.B. Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honour, Princeton, 1960, p. 19.

2) ibid, p. 20.

through the use of a certain amount of theological athleticism that Augustine was able to hold that free-will exists and still assert God's total, omnipotent control over humanity. As the following chapter will illustrate, Reformation theologians were more reluctant to detract from God's total sovereignty by allowing free-will to operate; and thus some branches of Christianity, along with the moral dramas that grew out of them, began to extend the implicit anti-humanism of Augustine's theology into Calvinistic-inspired rejections of the idea of even the most limited forms of human self-sufficiency.¹

While medieval orthodoxy remained as zealous as was Augustine to uphold the concept of free-will, it also continued in his determination to *defend Christianity against Pelagianism by promoting the doctrine* of man's absolute reliance on God in moral and eschatological terms. Even Thomas Aquinas, who is often spoken of as liberating the forces of Aristotelian humanism with its aggrandizing emphasis on the power of unaided human reason and goodness,² was actually only concerned to obviate the necessity of postulating the divine presence in every incidental worthwhile action, and in matters of morality and salvation he was centrally Augustinian in his belief in the necessity for grace:

Human nature is not completely corrupt or entirely destitute of good, and without supernatural help-though never without the divine help pervading all activity-a man can contrive particular good ends, such as building a house or planting a vineyard, but not his entire well-being. He will fail somewhere. A sick man may move about, but until he is cured by medicine his movements are not those of a healthy man. Fallen nature, therefore, needs grace, first to be healed, and next to act supernaturally and deserve everlasting life. 3

Thus, unlike Augustine, Aquinas allows man a certain degree of innate

1) See Baker, The Dignity of Man, pp. 291-292, 317-321. Also see R.M. Benbow, ed., introduction to W. Wager's The Longer Thou Livest the more Fool Thou art and Enough is as Good as a Feast, Regents Renaissance Drama Series, London, 1968, pp. xiv-xv.

2) cf. D.J. O'Connor, Aquinas and ... Natural Law, London, 1967, p. 4 and ff.

3) Summa Theologica, 1a-2ae, cix, 2. In T. Gilby, selected and trans., St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Texts, London, 1955, p. 157. cf. pp. 156-160.

potential, but his liberalism does not extend to a belief that reason or innate goodness can allow a man to achieve the heroic goodness demanded by Christian moral standards. This level of beatitude is external in its motivation: "supernatural, is man's nobility. Irrational creatures are impotent here. It does not follow that the highest human perfection is gained by natural power, which may indeed reach to what accords with the state of nature, but not to the heroism of the state of grace."¹

Aquinas, often seen as the champion of reason, insisted that Christian truth was ultimately a matter for faith to affirm and not for reason to prove. Thus, theology was wrong to seek overall philosophical unity, and should instead use the God-given powers of intellect to explain and promote each aspect of Christianity which The Scriptures revealed to be true, despite its sometimes seeming irreconcilable, according to the insufficiencies of human reason, to other articles of the faith. Thus, as in Augustine², in Aquinas there is an emphasis on each individual point rather than an attempt at a rational synthesis; so that whereas at one moment a doctrinal point might bring out a relatively humanistic opinion, at another the emphasis may change to one that is markedly minimizing of human abilities.³

This tendency of medieval theology to adduce all possible arguments, however mutually exclusive, in didactic support of Christian tenets (especially if taken in conjunction with the heterodox and uncertain authorship, purpose, and development of the cycle plays) provides a warning against attempting to isolate a unified philosophical attitude in the mystery plays as we now have them. To be balanced against this awareness of the the potential lack of intellectual unity in the cycle plays must be the recognition that there were

1) Disputations, XII, de Veritate 3 ad 12. In T. Gilby, selected and trans., St. Thomas Aquinas: Philosophical Texts, London, 1951, p. 320.

2) cf. Baynes, The Political Ideas of St. Augustine's De Civitate Dei, p. 1.

3) See Summa Theologica, 1a, i, 1. In Gilby, Theological Texts, p. 11.

constants in medieval thought which it is reasonable to infer would have all been affirmed by most thinkers. Augustine's influence lay behind many medieval orthodoxies. His "was the dominant influence until the thirteenth century, when it was shared, but never overthrown, by systems inspired by Aristotle."¹ Even for Aquinas Augustine represented the voice of orthodoxy², and it is worth observing that by the fourteenth century (the century which saw the first appearance of the cycle dramas) a reaction had set in against the comparative ennoblement of man which, though not intended by Aquinas, had been developed from aspects of his work to a degree whereby sceptical philosophers such as Ockham and Duns Scotus were seen to be undermining God's central providential role.³ In response orthodoxy turned again towards an Augustinian (also, in fact, Aquinian) emphasis on the primacy of faith and grace. Throughout the period one half of the mendicant movement, which G.R.Owst has shown to have been so influential in the development of many of the popular themes of devotional literature adopted by the cycle dramatists,⁴ were fiercely promoting such anti-humanistic attitudes; especially following the appointment of the strongly Augustinian St. Bonaventure to the Franciscan chair in Paris in 1257.⁵

As already observed, such devices of devotional literature as the de contemptu mundi, vanitas vanitatum and memento mori or dance of death traditions were strongly influenced by the anti-heroic attitudes of Augustinian Christianity; as the examples to be found in the Ubi Sunt poetry accredited to St. Bernard of Clairvaux illustrate.⁶ As will be

1) Gordon Leff, Medieval Thought, St. Albans, 1958, pp. 46-47.

2) See Summa Theologica, 2a-2ae, xix, 12. In Gilby, Theological Texts, p. 259.

3) See Leff, Medieval Thought, p. 236 and 299.

4) Literature and the Pulpit in Medieval England, 2nd edition, Oxford, 1961, p. 475ff

5) See Leff, Medieval Thought, pp. 197-198

6) See Farnham, Medieval Heritage, pp. 81-82. For the Augustinian ancestry of de contemptu mundi and its continuation into the seventeenth century see H. Baker, The Wars of Truth, New York and London, 1952, pp. 43-50.

demonstrated, the cycles all adopt the ironic awareness of this type of poetry which exposes the folly and vanity of man who is doomed to die and who yet insists on idealizing the powers and riches of the temporal sphere which are shown as not only transient, mutable, and ultimately disappointing in themselves, but also to be as powerless as will be the man who worships them besides the realities of mortality and damnation. Moreover, the cycles reflect the tradition in that by seeking to expose human pretensions in this way they, too, frequently singled out the temporally powerful and highly placed to provide suitably arresting examples of the tragic-ironic reversal of death. By compromising heroic types in this traditional manner the dramatists maintained a powerful anti-heroic or anti-humanistic contrast between the illusion of mundane power and the reality of man's temporal and spiritual weakness.

Given that it is intended to illustrate how the anti-heroic emphasis of Augustinian theology is in close accord with the didactic-dramatic impulse which helped to establish the cycles, then it is not inappropriate to begin the scrutiny of the plays themselves by further establishing the point made above and indicating the type of use to which the plays put the traditional art forms designed to remind the heroic of this world of the realities of the grave:

Ther is none so styf on stede,
 Ne none so prowde in prese,
 Ne none so dughty in his dede,
 Ne none so dere on deese,
 No kyng, no knyght, no Wight in wede,
 ffrom dede haue maide hym seese,
 Ne flesh he was wonte to fede,
 It shall be Wormes mese.

.
 Ilkon in sich aray/With dede thai shall be dight,
 And closid colde in clay/Wheder he be kyng or knyght;
 ffor all his garmentes gay/that semely were in sight,
 his flesh shall frete away/With many a wofull wight.
 Then wofully sich wightys
 Shall gnawe thise gay knyghtys,
 Thare lunges and thare lightys,
 Thare harte shall frete in sonder;

These masters most of myghtys
Thus shall thai be brought vnder.¹

Given that one of the characteristics of the Elizabethan stage may be thought to be its heroic tragedy it is not without significance that right from its inception the vernacular dramatic tradition in England contained action and ideas showing the death of the temporally powerful to be archetypally representative of the ironic reversals awaiting all men. As will be shown, such potentially tragic structures formed a pervasive feature of both cycle and morality drama throughout the whole course of their existence.

For the cycle dramas in particular such memento mori commonplaces took on an even sharper irony than that suggested by the contrast between the court and the grave. In the extract cited above the words are spoken by Lazarus after he has been raised from the dead by Christ in what became a figure of the resurrection.² Thus, the truisms take on a far greater significance in this context; the suggestion being that though all men must die, all men may live again through the power of Christ, who not only conquered death for Lazarus and again later for himself, but in so doing potentially overcame the horror of death for the whole of mankind. What is significant about this contrast for the present study is the fact that each cycle not only repeatedly stresses the impotence of even the most heroic men in this respect when compared to Christ,³ and, therefore, emphasises also the consequent necessity for the mighty to humble themselves if they are to escape eternal death, but, moreover, each develops these two anti-heroic intuitions within an overtly heroic frame of reference whereby Christ is depicted as the eschatological hero of an otherwise damned mankind:

Hayle, conquerour of all mankynd!
To doe mercye thou hasse mynde,

1) Lazarus, lines 111-134, in A.W. Pollard, ed., The Towneley Plays, E.E.T.S. E.S. No. 71, London, 1897, pp. 390-391. Hereafter cited as Towneley.

2) See K.P. Roddy, "Epic Qualities in the Cycle Plays," in N. Denny, ed., Medieval Drama, Stratford upon Avon Studies No. 16, London, 1973, pp. 166-170.

3) cf. Towneley, The Conspiracy, lines 720-721.

the devills band to unbynd
and relieve all thyne.

.
for thou shalt mend us throug thy might,
dye and ryse the thyrd night,
to recover agayne our right
and breake the devills bande.¹

The concept of Christ as man's heroic champion against Satan was one which was present both in the mass itself,² and in the Latin liturgical drama which arose from it,³ though the cycle dramatists frequently went beyond liturgical practice in their use of the heroic language of secular literature to represent the combatants.

Thus at Chester, celebration of Jesus is couched in a typically chivalric idiom: "Christ shalbe haused hye, // And rise also in noble araye, // as a prynce to wyn great paye, // overcome his enemyes, as I say, // and them boundly bye."⁴ He is so powerful that "Emperour, kinge, knight ne Iew, // with [him] they dare not stryve."⁵ At Toweley he is hailed as "ouercomer of kyng and of knyght // . . . godis son most of myght,"⁶ and similarly as one who "Myght in his armes . . . wrought, // And dystroed in his thought, // Prowde men and hygh berand."⁷ At the centre of his heroic career was the resurrection and the negation of Satan's hitherto righteous hold over human souls. All cycles dramatize the apocryphal account of the harrowing of Hell.

1) Magi's Gifts, lines 168-179, in R.M. Lumiansky and D. Mills, eds., The Chester Mystery Cycle, E.E.T.S. S.S.No. 3, London, 1974. Henceforth cited as Chester.

2) See O.B. Hardison, Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages, Baltimore, 1965, pp. 39-40, 139-176.

3) eg. the text of the Concordia expanded from the Winchester Troper in K. Young, The Drama of the Medieval Church, Oxford, 1933, where the risen Christ is described as "a strong lion." Volume 1, pp. 254-55

4) Balaam and Balak, lines 252-256, in H. Deimling, ed., The Chester Plays, Part 1, E.E.T.S. E.S.No. 62, London, 1893. This edition is based on an alternative MS to that of Chester. Henceforth cited as Chester Plays I.

5) The Passion, lines 867-868, in Dr. Matthews, ed., The Chester Plays, Part 2, E.E.T.S. E.S.No. 115, London, 1916, reprinted, 1935. Henceforth cited as Chester Plays II.

6) Toweley, Offering of the Magi, lines 547-549.

7) Toweley, The Salutation of Elizabeth, lines 64-66.

This served both to provide a concrete visual image of the victory implied by the resurrection and also allowed for the enactment of the liberation of the elect from Hell; a scene symbolizing the escape from the consequences of sin possible for all men through Christ. Each cycle has the devils treat Christ's advance as an attack upon a besieged castle; so that gates are locked, guards posted, and the Towneley Satan even calls for his armour in true tournament fashion.¹ The contest is, of course, grossly unequal, and Christ becomes victor almost without struggle. Nevertheless—as the York David's exclamation illustrates—his victory is seen in martial terms:

He is a kyng of vertues clere.
A!lorde, mekill of myght,
And stronge in ilke a stoure,
In batailes ferse to fight,
. And worthy to wyne honnoure.²

Throughout the cycles Christ is seen as man's spiritual warrior, and, therefore, as deserving both heroic celebration and humble veneration from man; as when the York Magdalene greets Christ with the words: "Al mercy, comely conquerour, // Thugh thi myght thou haste ouercome dede."³

It is important to recognize why humility as well as celebration is demanded by Christ's victory. All the cycles stress that the Messianic conflict with the spiritual consequences of original sin was not merely a divine intervention in the same battle against human sin fought by all good men, but rather one with an evil which man had no way of opposing. It was precisely because man could not annul the eschatological legality of his damnation that Christ had to become man, and, by death, pay back the debt owed by humanity to God. Implicit in this doctrine of superabundant satisfaction, therefore, is the belief that neither one man nor all men together have sufficient

1) See Towneley, The Deliverance of Souls, line 225 ff.

2) The Harrowing of Hell, lines 128-132, in L. Toulmin Smith, ed., York Mystery Plays, London, 1885, reprinted New York, 1963. Henceforth cited as York.

3) York, Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene, lines 86-87.

value to repay man's debt to God, or sufficient power to overcome the consequences of sin. Thus, a necessary corollary to the belief in the heroism and supreme value of Christ is the humble acknowledgment of the diminutive worth of man.¹

Christ's victory has the effect of giving the cycles what is, in medieval terms, a comic structure. In defining the term as it applied to his own Comedy, Dante wrote that "comedy is a certain kind of poetical narration which differs from all others. It differs, then, from tragedy in its subject-matter, in that tragedy at the beginning is admirable and placid, but at the end or issue is foul and horrible. . . . Whereas comedy begins with sundry adverse conditions, but ends happily, as appears from the comedies of Terence. . . . And from this it is clear that the present work is to be described as a comedy. For if we consider the subject-matter, at the beginning it is horrible and foul, as being Hell; but at the close it is happy, desirable, and pleasing, as being Paradise."² Similarly the cycles dramatize man's comic upward movement from the adverse conditions affecting humanity following the fall, through to the tragic horrors of the crucifixion, and on to the eschatological triumph of the elect; which, paradoxically, was made possible for them by the tragic death of Christ. Like Christianity itself the cycle plays centre on a fortunate reversal whereby comic fairness emerges from out of tragic foulness according to God's epic design for history and the pattern of redemption.³

1) See E. Prosser, Drama and Religion in the English Mystery Plays, Stanford, 1961, p. 31.

2) The Epistle to Can Grande della Scala, in Paget Toynbee, ed. and trans., Dantis Alagherii Epistolae, 2nd edition, Oxford, 1966, pp. 200-201. See also J. W. H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase, Cambridge, 1943, pp. 31-32, 176-177., and Farnham, Medieval Heritage, pp. 170-171.

3) For the dramatic encapsulation of this paradox within the Church liturgy see Hardison, Christian Rite and Christian Drama, pp. 82-83. cf. George Steiner, The Death of Tragedy, London, 1961, pp. 12-13., and Glynne Wickham, Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage, London, 1969, pp. 43-44. The epic-comic sweep of cyclical history is discussed by A. Williams, "The Comic in the Cycles," and by K. P. Roddy, "Epic Qualities in the Cycle Plays," in N. Denny, ed., Medieval Drama, London, 1973, p. 110 and pp. 155-171 respectively.

Implicit in the structure of the cycles, then, is the humanistically minimizing belief that man only partakes in the comic beatitude of salvation through the intervention of Christ. V.A. Kolve has added amplification to the idea that a primary motivating force behind the writing of the cycles was an anti-heroic one. In suggesting that they developed through the feast of Corpus Christi and were therefore informed by the impulse to celebrate the host as the "maximum gift of God" gratuitously made available to an undeserving humanity so that they might achieve salvation, Kolve has further endorsed the view that the cycles promote an anti-humanistic view of man almost automatically, as part of their terms of reference.¹ While Kolve's theory as to the genesis of the cycles is not beyond question, it is certain that they do display an awareness that it is only through the vicarious power and enabling grace of the Eucharist that man can partake of the victory over death that Christ had won for him. Thus, there is a double dependence on Christ; both for giving man the opportunity of salvation, and for providing him with the power to take advantage of the opportunity:

He so etyth my body and drynkyth my blood
 Hol god and man he X.al me take
 It X.al hym defende from the deuyll wood
 and at his deth I X.al hym nowth for-sake.

and ho so not ete my body nor drynke my blood
 Lyf in hym is nevyr A dele
 Kepe wel this in mende for your good
 and every man save hym-self wele. 2

Significant also in this respect is the assertion that the host also strengthens man in his battle against the temporal forces of evil.

In terms of man's ability to perform good acts the enabling powers of the Eucharist are a particular form of the general need for

1) The Play Called Corpus Christi, London, 1966, p.48.

2) The Last Supper, lines 825-832, in K.S. Block, ed., Ludus Coventriae or The Plaie called Corpus Christi, E.E.T.S. E.S.No.120, Oxford, 1922. Henceforth cited as Ludus.

fallen man to be aided towards goodness by grace. As demonstrated, both Augustine and Aquinas saw the Christian heroism necessary for salvation as incumbent upon grace in one form or another. Kolve has argued, however, that the cycles do not attempt anything so sophisticated as an analysis of the spiritual background of human goodness, and that they prefer instead to present a "common human nature" which exposes the fallibilities of even the best of men.¹ The argument has a point. The cycles do maintain the distinction between the moral heroism of Christ and the imperfections of human nature. This too is part of their general anti-heroic orientation. It is misleading, however, to suggest that the cycles make no attempt to dramatize the effects of grace on moral action.

In fact the plays contain several devices to illustrate man's dependence on divine succour. At their most simple they may merely constitute a didactic statement made direct to the audience, informing them, for example, that so long as the desire to oppose evil is present then God will supply the grace to strengthen the will beyond the power of Satan to tempt it.² Alternatively the plays contain symbolic representations of the transforming effects of grace. Thus, for example, at Chester the blind centurion has his sight restored through the agency of the blood of the crucified Christ: an event made emblematic of the radical enlightenment conferred through divine bounty.³ Similarly the otherwise feeble Noah is filled with vicarious strength while building the ark, whereas his wife, a recalcitrant and argumentative representative of fallen humanity, becomes meek and conciliatory once she has entered the ark; symbol of the grace to be found within the true Church.⁴

1) The Play Called Corpus Christi, p.264.

2) Ludus, The Temptation, lines 209-221.

3) Chester, Passion, lines 380 ff. See also The Play Called Corpus Christi, p.201.

4) See R. Woolf, The English Mystery Plays, London, 1972, p.132 ff.

More important for the present discussion, however, are the occasions when the cycles attempt to dramatize the changes in human nature which became possible as a result of the freer availability of grace following the resurrection. Thus, for example, the York cycle dramatizes the reappearance of the risen Christ before his disciples. Christ informs the audience that whereas they have followed his laws "buxsomly" in the past, they are still "wondir harde of hartis."¹ Confirmation of their congenital imperfection arrives later when we find them hiding behind locked doors, afraid of being condemned along with their master. Thus, to strengthen them in their future Christian resolve Christ asks for an infusion of grace:

Thou halowe thame, fadir, for-thy,
 In sothfastnes so that thei may
 Be ane as we ar, yowe and I,
 In will and werke, both nyght and day,
 And knawe that I ame verilye
 Both sothfastnes and liffe alway;
 Be the whilke ilke man that is willy
 May wynne the liffe that laste schall ay.²

Later, following the appearance of the Holy Ghost, we are reminded that "This is the yere of grace," and that the apostles have now become Christian heroes in strength, fortitude and wisdom. Even taking into account the traditional idea of the saints as heroes of the Church, however, the extent to which the apostles themselves acknowledge their increased powers in the language of physical heroism is surprising:

Hitt was sente for oure sele,
 Hitt giffis us happe and hele,
 Me thynke slike forse I fele,
 I myght felle folke full feele.

and again:

We haue force for to fighte in felde,
 And ffauour of all folke in feere,
 With wisdome in this worlde to welde,
 Be knowing of all clerye clere.³

1) York, The Ascension, lines 51 and 84.

2) ibid, lines 73-80.

3) York, Descent of the Holy Spirit, lines 129 and 117-124.

Moreover, their subsequent actions leave it open to question whether physical force is to be envisaged as a dramatic metaphor of their enhanced spiritual strength, or whether bodily vigour is actually conferred on the disciples along with their new moral dynamism. Certainly they are seen to vanquish the threatening Jews outside their door who back down before their "mekill myght."¹

While such divinely inspired Christian heroism is typically dramatized by the cycles as being an amalgam of moral, spiritual, and physical strength, it is important to recognize, along with the Fourth Apostle in the episode under discussion, that, military or not, the source of the heroic ennoblement is unequivocally God; and must, therefore, never be celebrated in humanistic terms: "Hitt is the myght of oure maistir dere, // All dedis that here are done this daye, // He giffis vs myght and playne power."² The humility here is reminiscent of that of Henry V after his victory at Agincourt,³ and it raises the question whether the plays sanction the concept of the type of Christian-chivalric war which Henry V believed himself to be waging; wherein God's enemies are attacked by a force acting under the operation of grace. Augustine, it will be remembered, allowed the possibility of such a war, while at the same time insisting on the extreme difficulty of ever isolating the true locus of good and evil, grace and reprobation, outside of the scriptures.

The Chester cycle appears particularly interested in this question concerning the relationship between divine and temporal-heroic authority, and, uniquely, actually dramatizes one of the occasions warranted by scripture on which God could be seen to uphold the cause of His people in a war against temporal evil. Even the source of

1) York, Descent of the Holy Spirit, line 201 and ff.

2) ibid, lines 197-199.

3) cf. Henry V, IV.vii.104 ff. All references for Shakespeare made to P. Alexander, ed., William Shakespeare. The Complete Works, London and Glasgow, 1951, reprinted 1974. See also chapter 4 below.

that evil, Balack, enemy of the Israelites, is able to recognize their divine bolstering:

For there God helps them so stowtly
of other landes to have mastery
that yt is boteles wytterly
agaynst them for to fight,
.....
Noe knife nor sworde maye not avayle
that ylke people to assayle.
That foundes to fight, hee shall fayle,
for sycker yt is noe boote. 1

He is, indeed, as scrupulous as is Henry V to make the anti-heroic point that the source of the Israelites' power is God alone. It is significant, therefore, that the same scene goes on to provide an alternative example of heroic man, this time not operating under the influence of grace, which confirms many of the points made by Augustine concerning the Roman heroes whom he saw as emblematic of the earthly city. Thus, we find that the cycle which gives the clearest example of warrior heroism justified by grace also provides the fullest characterization of heroic man demonstrating the typical delusions and presumptions of his kind when acting outside of God's grace.

It is again Balack who provides that example, for, despite his knowledge of God's opposition to him, he presumptuously decides that his own heroic strength, along with the help of his own gods (here made classical-pagan, perhaps in deference to Augustine's critique of the Roman warrior) can overcome the God of the Israelites:

But yett I truste venged to bee
with ~~dynte~~ of sword or pollicye
on these false losells, leaves mee.
Leeve this withowten dowbte,
for to bee wroken is my desyre;
my heart brennyys as whott as fyre
for vervent anger and for ire,
till this bee brought abowte.
Ther fore, my god and godes all,
O mightye Mars, one thee I call!
With all the powers infernall
ryse now and helpe at neede. 2

1) Chester, Balaam, lines 100-115.

2) ibid, lines 124-135.

Events serve to disabuse Balack of his error in this respect. Temporarily, however, he is seen to be consciously attempting to usurp God's role as arbiter of historical events; an heroic delusion for which the cycle does not even allow the Roman hero's historical ignorance of divine activity to excuse, for Balack knows of God's powers and yet still decides to oppose them.

Thus, from the Chester Balaam play at least, the conclusion to be drawn concerning the nature of heroic activity would seem to be the orthodox Augustinian one, that where divinely aided heroic action exists, then it may be admired as worthy (though always with the anti-heroic reservation that its goodness emanates from God's desire to motivate the action) but where it arises solely from the freely-willed actions of man then it is not only likely to be motivated by sinful emotions such as anger and desire for revenge, but it is also likely to lead the warrior to the presumptuous over-estimation of his own powers. As will be illustrated, this is a conclusion which is valid for the cycles in general in that they all follow The City of God in presenting the human impulse towards hostility and cruelty as one of their most potent actual and metaphorical expressions of the evil besetting fallen humanity as a whole, and, where that impulse is idealized as an object of veneration, of the members of the earthly city in particular. ¹

It is important to make the point that the cycles contain characters who idealize their own fallen human condition in an heroic context, as it is frequently asserted that when the drama became more secular these characters, especially Herod, influenced the development of 'Renaissance supermen' on the Elizabethan stage and with them their equally characteristic profession of exalted, heroic, humanity.² To put this

1)cf. S.J. Kahrl, Traditions of Medieval English Drama, London, 1974, pp. 73-98

2)eg. by D.C. Boughner, The Braggart in Renaissance Comedy, Minneapolis, 1954, p. 141.

seemingly unexceptionable idea into a proper context from the outset, however, it should be observed that the anti-heroic Christian orientation of the cycle plays exposed these characters to a savagely deflating irony, and that if later drama was to develop such characters into wholly admirable heroic archetypes then it had to do so by ignoring or modifying the Christian concepts which informed the cycle plays. This is not, of course, to obviate the possibility of any such connection; and indeed it will be asserted that Marlowe in particular allowed the widely unorthodox implications of such characterizations to emerge in his own dramas. It will be suggested, however, that the Christian view of the world which informed the cycles was not obsolete for Shakespeare, and that any automatic assumption that he delighted in heroic egocentricity needs to prove that his supposed Renaissance delight was not undercut by a conscious irony related to an orthodox medieval-Christian contempt for such figures.

Given that a primary aim of the cycles was to exalt the power of Christ by dramatizing a story which in fact shows him as subject to the hostile wills of the agents of temporal power, then it was necessary; if the might of that power was not to be over-estimated by the audience, to go further than merely exposing the personal evil of Christ's antagonists (as this would still suggest that evil man was able to harm Christ) and to present as well, with maximum ironic force, the Augustinian point that even the actions of evil men fulfill the aims of God, while at the same time ensuring damnation for their perpetrators. Thus, it is not only the good man acting through grace who is minimized by being represented as acting in accordance with the will of God, but the wicked man too lacks real self-determinancy in that though his acts are freely-willed, they also comply with divine wishes for history.

Thus, in a real sense the wicked agents of temporal power are shown to be absurd, as well as deluded. In the first instance they

revel in their temporal authority, and yet it is in no real sense their's, especially as it allows them to have power over Christ, but is given to them by God for the furtherance of His ends. Thus, Christ is frequently made to remind his persecutors that he is the source of the power that is being used against him: "Sich powere has thou noght/
 to wyrk thi will thus with me//But from my fader that is broght /
 oone-folde god in persons thre."¹ Equally lucidly expressed, and even more radically destructive of the idea of the freely-willed power of evil over good, is the ironic fact that the wills of evil men inexorably serve a greater providential good of which they are ignorant:

On me poer thou hast ryth non
 but that my fadyr hath grawntyd be-forn
 I cam my faderys wyl to full-fylle
 that mankynd xuld not spylle.²

As already observed, the full absurdity and the full irony of the situation for such men arises from the fact that they will be damned for the act of furthering a goodness which they imagined they were opposing.³

Possibly the best example of this ironic undercutting of the delusion of self-determination is provided by the Towneley crucifiers. The scene is doubly significant for the present study as it is given a self-consciously heroic frame of reference. The crucifiers mock Jesus with a crude irony by drawing attention to the seeming incongruity existing between his profession of divinity and his miserable subjection to their own knighthood. They jokingly see him as a chivalrous warrior, the cross being his mount, and wonder how he will perform in the joust.⁴ What they do not realise is that, by medieval convention,

1) Towneley, The Scourging, lines 116-117.

2) Ludus, The Trial of Christ and the Thieves before Pilate, lines 596-599.

3) This punishment for sin is usually eschatological, but Ludus, The Death of Herod, lines 168-180 includes retributive temporal death among Herod's punishments for ordering the massacre of the innocents. See also Kolve, The Play Called Corpus Christi, pp. 79, 140, 201-205.

4) Towneley, The Crucifixion, line 47 and ff.

Christ was indeed a knight who rode triumphant from the cross away from the trials of the incarnation and on towards his heroic defeat of Satan.¹ Thus the true irony of the scene is that the grotesque acts of the torturers, which they insist on seeing as heroic, do not, in fact, impose the defeat on Christ that they imagine; but rather serve to enact his will in a way beyond their control or their understanding, to promote a truly triumphant heroism, one as worthy of man's celebration and worship as theirs was of his condemnation.

It is to be observed that during the crucifixion and throughout the whole of his persecution Christ is portrayed as submitting passively to the violence inflicted upon him by his enemies. His sole method of opposition is shown to be his continual assertion of the truth of his ministry and the consequent error of the judgments being made against him. Thus Christ's temporal career, as opposed to his eschatological one, is rigorously portrayed not in terms of Messianic heroism, but in terms of a non-violent dependence on the ways of righteousness. This fact carries with it important implications for the Christian living in the morally and spiritually obscure period between the incarnation and doomsday. Even the heavily didactic cycles acknowledge the difficulty of locating the exact sources of goodness and grace during this period by omitting the whole of secular history not attested to by the Bible and its apocrypha.² Thus, any potential warrior in modern times must not only recognize that the seeming clarity of his cause may be perilously misinterpreted by him owing to the radical ambiguity of history, but he must also contend with the equally damaging affront to his intentions delivered by the example set for him by Christ's temporal ministry, which consistently denied the use of violence, even against certainly knowable enemies of divine

1) See Kolve, The Play Called Corpus Christi, pp. 204-205., also T.W. Craik, "Violence in the English Miracle Plays," in Denny, ed., Medieval Drama, p. 186.

2) See Roddy, "Epic Qualities in the Cycle Plays," in Denny, ed., Medieval Drama, p. 156 and ff.

goodness.

This distinction between the eschatological and the temporal actions of Christ can be made in terms of the Romanesque conception of the Messiah as man's spiritual warrior king, and the Gothic concentration on Jesus's mortal suffering and the didactic implications of that suffering for mankind.¹ In the cycles both conceptions of God-as-man merge. For those seeking biographical guidance from the figure of Christ, however, the fundamental Christian dichotomy appears at first sight to offer conflicting models of behaviour. This is not, in fact, the case. As observed, the cycles are most explicit in maintaining that Christ's spiritual heroism was not an aspect of man's own struggle with evil. They are equally explicit also about the related point that it is Christ's temporal actions which have been provided as a model for human behaviour. The model, of course, is applicable to all men, but, in that it demands the circumscribed use of strength and the exercise of humility, it provides special lessons for the heroic and powerful of this world. Thus the Ludus Coventriae John the Baptist is made to bring out this point as a direct homiletic lesson to the audience:

All men may take exaunple lo
of lowly mekenes evyn ryght here
be oure lorde god that comyth me to
hese pore servaunt and his sutere
Euery man lere to worke ryght so
Bothe Kynges and Caysere and gret Emperere
be meke and lowe the pore man to
And put out pryde in all manere
God doth here the same 2

Again concentration on the figure of Christ automatically brings out an anti-heroic orientation in the cycles.

Frequently Christ himself is made to confirm these implications within himself and reject his own divine potential for revenge or

1)The terms are discussed by G.Wickham,Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage, pp.17-23.

2)Ludus,The Baptism,lines 79-87.

crusading ire so as not to mar the clarity of his mission by behaving like a warrior or a worldly king:

And if my *realme* in this world were,
stryve I would with you nowe *here*
and lead with me such powere
should pryve you of your praye.
But my might in this manere
will I not prove, ne appere
as worldly kinge; my cause uncleare
were then, in good faye. 1

All of the cycles contain the injunction against violence and personal vengeance delivered by Christ to Peter at Gethsemane.² Throughout the pacifist message is shown as being in accord with the New Testament emphasis on mercy; an emphasis which was consciously shown to compromise the retributive legalism of the Old Testament, and with it the innate aggression of mankind.³

As already asserted, the cycles adopted the Augustinian idea that the earthly city is stigmatized by its propensity for discord. Thus, from the killing of Abel onwards, violence in the cycles becomes the special characteristic of the opponents of goodness.⁴ Throughout, and often quite unBiblically,⁵ goodness is confronted by soldiers, knights, and cavaliers, who, along with their masters, idealize their violent activities, so that they become, as Augustine recognized, not merely sinners, but archetypes of all members of the earthly city, of all of "kamys kyn," as the Towneley Pilate calls his troupes.⁶ All of the cycles unite in presenting the heroic mentality as being a state of mind in which men glorify the activity and state of sin.⁷ The persistence

1) Chester, The Trial, lines 267-274.

2) The York Christ elaborates, saying that he could have "aungellis full many" to fight for him if he wished it. The Agony and the Betrayal, line 275 ff

3) See Prosser, Drama and Religion, p. 31.

4) cf. Woolf, The English Mystery Plays, pp. 108-112.

5) For an explanation of the implications of anachronism for the view of world history in the cycles see Kolve, The Play Called Corpus Christi, pp. 102-123. For the medieval Church's satire of contemporary warriors see Owst, Literature and Pulpit, pp. 292-361.

6) Towneley, The Conspiracy, line 639. Later he martials his "knyghtys" under "lucyfer the feynde," lines 649-65.

7) cf. Towneley, Herod the Great, lines 397 ff., with The Conspiracy, lines 600-638.

with which the cycles present the antagonists of Christ in an heroic frame of reference has been widely disregarded. As a consequence the heroic bluster of the two Herods and Pilate has been seen as a rather naive stage convention which was too often both overdone and overused.¹ While assenting to the idea that the tradition tends to become tedious as drama, it would still be wished to assert that the conventional comic/ironic *heroic bluster* of these men represented a convenient; and obviously compelling, shorthand means of metaphorically exposing their spiritual and psychological shortcomings in Augustinian terms.

Biblically neither of the Herods nor Pilate were warriors.² Rather they had executive functions which involved the command of soldiers. In representing their roles as commanders rather than performers of action the cycles maintain a high level of verisimilitude with the original story. Their language, however, frequently fails to conform to their passive status in the action, and they characteristically claim for themselves martial abilities and heroic strengths which are ludicrously inappropriate to their type of authority. Even for genuine warriors their boasts would be hyperbole. Thus, the York Pilate insists that "Ther is no prince preuyd vndir palle//But I am moste myghty of all,"³ and that his heroic deeds exceed those of the twelve peers of France: "The dubbyng of my dingnite may noyt be done downe,/Nowdir with duke nor dugeperes, my dedis are so dreste."⁴ He brandishes a sword and threatens violence to those who do not obey him.⁵ In the Towneley cycle Pilate claims an even greater heroic identity: "Say, wote ye not that I am pylate, perles to behold?//Most doughty in dedys of dukys of the Iury; //In bradyng of batels I am the most bold."⁶ He

1) Cf. Woolf, The English Mystery Play, p. 160

2) See Boughner, The Braggart in Renaissance Comedy, pp. 130-132.

3) York, Second Accusation Before Pilate, lines 25-26.

4) York, The Conspiracy to take Jesus, lines 7-8.

5) See York, The Dream of Pilate's Wife, lines 1-9.

6) Towneley, The Scourging, lines 5-7.

continuously threatens death, either "with [his] brand burnyshyd so bright," or else with his own fists: "I warn you, //ffful boldly shall I bett you, //To hell the dwill shall draw you, //Body, bak and bone."¹

The heroic aura surrounding Pilate in the York and Towneley cycles can be appreciated by contrasting his character with that developed in the Chester and Ludus Coventriae cycles where the same convention is not adopted. With the two Herods, however, all four cycles, as well as the Coventry fragment and the Digby play, share the conception of presenting a megalomaniac ruler who sees his powers as being *rooted* in his own heroic stature. Indeed, it is a characteristic of both Herods that their presumption leads them not merely to assert heroic superiority over the temporally mighty, but to assume for themselves the heroic powers of Christ, and even of God Himself. Thus, for example, a frequent claim is for the ability to undertake a harrowing of Hell, and to "drive the devills all *by* deene //deepe in hell *adowne*."² In fact one aspect of the opposition between these figures and Christ made in heroic terms is the incongruous insistence of Herod the Great on seeing his opposition to the infant Christ in martial terms: "Such dotardes never shall, //ney noe sleepe sluggard, make my right title cease. //But I shall knightlye keep~~e~~yt, whatsoever shall befall, //agaynst that yonge godlinge,"³ thus causing him to vow to "hewe that harlott with my bright brond so keene //into peeces smale."⁴

The Ludus Coventriae Herod usurps the heroic power of Christ over Satan along with the overall power of God over creation: "Of mayn and of myght I master every man //I dyng~~e~~ with my dowtynes the devyl down to helle //ffor bothe of hevyn and of herth I am kyng~~e~~ sertayn."⁵ He goes on

1) Towneley, The Crucifixion, lines 1-28.

2) Chester, Magi, lines 175-176. cf. Woolf, The English Mystery Play, p.203.

3) ibid, lines 304-307

4) ibid, lines 336-337.

5) Ludus, The Adoration of the Magi, lines 6-8.

to make the direct claim that his temporal superiority results from his unrivalled heroic valour:

Ffor **dy** gne of my dygnyte thei haue of me dowt
ther is no lord lyke on lyve to me wurth a toost
nother kyng nor kayser in all this worlde abought
If any brybour do bragge or blowe a-yens my bost
I **x**al rappe tho rebawdys and rake them on rought
With my bryght bronde
Ther **x**al be neythey kayser nere **kny**ge
But that I **x**all hem down dyng
lesse than he at my byddyng
be buxum to myn **h**onde. 1

Similarly in the Digby play of Herod's Killing of the Children he is "most strong and myghty in feld for to fyght, // And to venquysshe my enemyes that a-geynst me do, // I am most be-dred with my bronde bright."²

Though extravagant in its expression, the merging of extreme presumption, antagonism towards God, pride, a heroic mentality and the assertion of warlike ability to be found in the Herod of the Coventry Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors is characteristic of all of the existing Herodian figures:

Qui statis in Jude et Rex Iseraell,
And the myghttyst conquerowre that eyuer walkid on grownd;
For I am evyn he thatt made bothe hevin and hell,
And of my myghte powar holdith **vp** this world rownd.
Magog and Madroke, bothe them did I confownde,
And with this bryght bronde there bonis I brak onsunder,
Thatt all the wyde worlde on those rappis did wonder.
I am the cawse of this grett lyght and thunder;
Ytt ys throgh my fure that **the soche noyse dothe make.**
My feyrefull contenance the clowdis so doth incurbur
That oftymis for drede ther-of the verre yerth doth quake.
Loke, when I with males this bryght brond doth schake,
All the whole world from the north to the sowthe
I ma them dystroie with won worde of my mowthe! 3

The formula is repeated again in the York Pharaoh and the Towneley Augustus.⁴ Its frequent use alone indicates that it was more than a device for securing crowd silence or for providing comic relief.

1) Ludus, The Massacre of the Innocents, lines 132-141.

2) In The Digby Plays, ed., F.J. Furnivall, 1st edition, E.E.T.S. E.S. No. 70, London, 1896, lines 62-64.

3) In Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays, ed., Hardin Craig, 2nd edition, E.E.T.S. E.S. No. 87, London 1957, lines 486-499.

4) Boughner recognizes the potential seriousness of the Herodian figures in The Braggart in Renaissance Comedy, pp. 119-120

Study of The City of God has suggested that Herod's rantings are the result of an attempt to create an extreme caricature illustration of the sin of pride. Pride taken to its extremes results in the substitution of the self for God. From Augustine onwards the warrior hero's mentality provided one of the most potent illustrations of pride, in that man's heroic trust in his own power consciously or unconsciously led him to assert the deluded notions of self-determination and self-deification, which, when taken to their logical conclusions (as with Herod) represent an attempted usurpation of divine power. Thus Herod's claims of heroism are directly related to his even more outrageous notions about his being a universal force, while his heroic boastfulness emerges as being both cause and symbol of the spiritual and psychological malaise known as pride. Heroic faith in human power, as it is revealed by these characters, becomes symptomatic of their more general idolatry of mundane values, the characteristic blindness of all earthly men.

Moreover, it is essential to take account of such characters in the context of the full-scale dramas in which they are in. Their delusions of power are articulated in cycles designed to celebrate the true source of power. Thus, for them to be in a drama which lucidly reveals the epic design of divine benevolence, and at the same time for them to oppose or ignore that benevolence and to continue to have faith in their own capacity to achieve beatitude, is to be supremely deluded. Furthermore, while such delusion may be amusing, it has tragic consequences in that it removes the character from out of the comic movement of the play and places him in a spiritual tragedy of his own making. For many such characters awareness of their plight is not achieved until the Last Judgment; and this further ignorance increases the feeling that in the most radical way possible they fail to understand the meaning of the play that they are in. It has been shown

that one of the most pervasive dramatic metaphors for such radical ignorance in the cycles is provided by the heroic mentality. For while the simply belligerent can come to some knowledge of their sin and its consequences,¹ it is the self-idealizers who tend to cling to the religious sanctity of their delusions up until death and eschatological vengeance serve to enlighten them as to the real nature of the play in which they featured.²

Not all self-idealizers remain in ignorance, however, and the Chester cycle provides an interesting example of the traditional equation between the pagan heroic mentality and idealized ignorance, while at the same time showing how an appraisal of the true God must expose such views as inadequate. The nativity play reveals Octavius Caesar as a typically (though more justifiably) vaunting heroic ruler, who, through the "strenght and strokes sore," of his armies and himself, "the manful *st* man of might,"³ has subdued the whole world. In the typical Virgilian-Roman fashion condemned by Augustine, he boasts of his ability to uphold the pax-Romana: "Syth I was soverayne, warre cleare can cease, // and through this world now is peace, // for soe drede a duke sate never on dayes // in Rome — that you may trust."⁴ As if to confirm that such heroic self-determinancy implies the assumption of divine powers, the play immediately introduces a delegation of senators wishing "to honour [Octavius] as God with blys" in recognition of his establishing peace. Less deluded than Herod he turns down the offer for the logically sound reason that he is not immortal as a god must be.⁵

Next we are told that the Temple of Peace, supposed power source of the pax-Romana and of the Empire itself, collapsed on the day of

1) As with Cain: See Towneley, The Killing of Abel, lines 462-473.

2) Contrast Cain with Herod in Ludus, Death of Herod, line 207 and ff.

3) Chester, Nativity, lines 205 and 223.

4) ibid, lines 237-240

5) ibid, line 306 and ff.

Christ's nativity. We are left to infer, therefore, that Rome's Empire and its peace are subject to a greater power than itself. This interpretation is enforced by the Sibyl, who draws Octavius's attention to a vision of the infant Jesus and his power "to passe all kinges, and eke thee."¹ The point is immediately taken by Octavius:

Should I bee God? Naye, naye, witterlye!
Great wronge iwys yt were.
For this childe is more worthy
then such a thowsande as am I.
Therfore to God moste mightye
incense I offer here. 2

In Octavius, then, we are given, with some historical sensitivity, a portrait of a pre-Christian pagan hero, displaying the typical delusions of his epoch and of his ethos, being transformed from an attitude of pride to one of Christian humility, from ignorance to enlightenment, at the moment in history when the true source of universal peace arrived on earth to expose the folly of earthly man, and to make the wisdom which would end in salvation both possible and necessary.

This unique dramatization of the evolution of a pagan monarch into an enlightened Christian ruler raises the question *of* whether Herod and the other antagonists of Christ are in any way excused by the cycles for living in an era when ignorance of the truth of Christianity was made more understandable by the fact that the resurrection had not yet provided conclusive proof of Christ's divinity. Certainly the cycles contain an awareness that the Incarnation heralded a new order of power which the old order was almost bound to resist; though the cynicism with which (Octavius excluded) the existing authorities oppose Christ suggests that the dramatists had little sympathy with the dilemma of contemporary rulers.³

1) Chester, Nativity, line 649.

2) ibid, lines 661-666.

3) See York, Second Trial before Pilate, lines 148 ff.

In fact the issue is legitimately ignored by the dramatists, as the cycles typically concentrate on the contrasting characteristics and actions of the people of God and those who oppose Him throughout the whole of historical time. Thus, in Augustinian terms, the eschatological city of man began with Cain, and all its members, from that moment on, display the typical degeneracies which are caused by an excessive love of the world, whether they exist before or after the Incarnation. This fact also explains why it was that historical time mattered little enough to the cycle dramatists to allow them to people Biblical time with anachronistic medieval figures who belonged spiritually to the same grouping of scriptural malefactors with whom they are made to associate.¹

When what has been said concerning the relationship between heroic man and the earthly city is acknowledged, it will not be considered surprising to find that many of these anachronistic inhabitants of Biblical time take the form of medieval braggart or carpet knights and debased chivalric warriors. Thus, the henchmen of the Chester Herod; "Sir Waradrake the knight" and "syr Grymbald Lancherdeepe," display the earthly city's characteristic tendency to transfer reverence from creator to creature by referring to Herod as "lord and kinge of blys."² Their other gods are also mundane. Once their sense of honour is satisfied they are prepared to kill children for Herod without concern for religion or morality; pleased, in fact, that they are required to slaughter thousands of infants as to kill only one would appear cowardly.

Seemingly at every crucial moment of confrontation between the temporal authorities and Christ the cycles show those authorities as using soldiers whose medieval knightly demeanour is combined with an

1) See Kahr, Traditions of Medieval English Drama, p. 73 ff.

2) Chester, Innocents, line 153.

amoral lack of concern about the brutality of their behaviour. Thus, in the Towneley Conspiracy play Pilate's three knights display the same propensity for praising their master in explicitly religious language, and they also illustrate the antagonism towards Christian values which is typical of their kind:

Siche thre knyghtys had lytyll drede
To bynde the dwill that we on call
In nede;
ffor if thay were a thowsand mo,
that prophete and his apostles also
with thise two handys for to slo,
had I lytyll drede. 1

Underlying their boastfulness is a frenzied hatred towards Christ because he will not worship temporal power and do reverence to *their* "chefe lordyng/ *S*ir Cesar."² Even after the crucifixion the knights still remain eager to oppose Christ, and all delightedly vow to prevent the promised resurrection:

Yea, lett him ryse yf that him dare;
for, and I of him be aware,
hee bode never a worse charre
or that hee wend awaye.
I helped to slea him yerre while.
Weenes he to doe us more guyle?
Ney, yt ys no parrayle,
my head heare dare I laye. 3

Throughout all the cycles the language of the knightly servants of temporal power shows them to have been thought of as men who serve a kingdom that is not in Heaven. As a result they illustrate the cruelty, delusion and spiritual blindness which earthly allegiance implies.

Frequently the dramatized clash between the earthly and the Heavenly cities takes the form of an exposure of the earthly city's over-estimation of its heroic strength. In these terms the warrior becomes a symbol of the power resources of temporal authority; a

1) Towneley, Conspiracy, lines 632-638.

2) Towneley, The Scourging, line 209.

3) Chester, Resurrection, lines 106-113.

symbol also representing man's excessive and deluded esteem for his institutionalized power. The York cycle provides an informative example of this technique occurring during the trial scene when the lances held by the guards bow in deference to Christ. On being told that the soldier was unable to keep the lance upright Annas correctly recognizes that their authority has been symbolically overthrown by a higher power: "Ya! allas, conquered ar we clene."¹ Unable to accept this implied defeat, however, they insist on turning the issue into a power struggle and send for their two strongest "chyualers" to represent their party, as at a chivalric contest, against Christ.² When the inevitable defeat for Pilate comes he loses his hitherto placatory demeanour and tries to reassert his authority through brutality towards Christ at the hands of his "knyghtis that are comly."³

This anti-heroic cameo, which also shows Pilate being mysteriously impelled to worship his seeming prisoner,⁴ prefigures the most significant scenes of heroic impotence and delusion in the cycles which take place when the warriors stationed outside the sepulchre fail to prevent the resurrection. Following medieval iconographic tradition the risen Christ is made to assert his total superiority over temporal power by symbolically placing his foot in triumph on the prostrate figure of one of the warriors who are so confidently stationed to prevent the resurrection, and yet who all inexorably fall to the ground without struggle prior to its taking place.⁵ Here again heroic manhood becomes the symbol of temporal power, and of its inability either to comprehend or to obstruct the spiritual power of God. The fact that no physical struggle actually takes place shows the stationing of the warriors to be not only an

1) York, Second Trial before Pilate, line 167.

2) ibid, line 290.

3) ibid, line 337.

4) ibid, lines 268-284

5) See Kolve, The Play Called Corpus Christi, p.196, and note pp.307-308.

impotent gesture, but also an inappropriate one: the act of men who can only understand strength in mundane, martial, terms.

It is often contended that the men guarding the tomb are exposed as cowards, or as carpet knights.¹ The cycles do not, in fact, suggest this aspect of the soldiers in this instance, whereas they showed no scruple in doing so elsewhere.² The reason why little attempt was made to suggest that the knights at the sepulchre were any less valiant than they professed to being is probably to be found in the fact that to do so was to make the tacit admission that increased prowess on the part of his opponents might have allowed them to have made a more effective opposition to Christ's resurrection. This, of course, would have been to have made the same error as that later made by the contemporary authorities. The York Annas, for example, cannot comprehend of a power which is outside of temporal capacities, and he suggests that the warriors, "in dedis dowty, // Chosen for chiffe of cheualrye," could not possibly have failed if they had fought to the best of their abilities: "Hadde ye no streng~~he~~ hym to gayne stande? // Traitoures! ye myght haue boune in bande // Bothe hym and thame that ye ther fande."³ Similarly, the concocted tales of an attack from a superior force of men delivered in excuse by some of the warriors, are the equally mundane rationalizations of men who congenitally interpret all issues in terms of the earthly city.⁴

Having experienced the spiritual power of Christ, however, others among the soldiers are able to develop a less deluded appraisal of their capabilities. Thus, the York knight tells Annas that human strength was impotent, despite his accusations to the contrary: "That dede all erthely men leuand // Myght noyt haue done."⁵ Again it is the

1) See Woolf, The English Mystery Play, p. 276.

2) eg. The role of Watkin in the Digby Play of Herod's Killing of the Children, ed., Furnivall, op cit, Scene 3.

3) York, The Resurrection, Fright of the Jews, lines 163-164, 371-373.

4) ibid, lines 407 ff.

5) ibid, lines 375-376.

Chester cycle which contains the most explicit statement on the general anti-heroic theme of the supremacy of the risen Christ over heroic man:

Nowe by the order that I beare of knight,
he rose up in the morninge light
by vertue of his owne might,
I knowe hit well afyne.
Hee rose up, as I saye nowe,
and lefte us lyenge, I wott nere howe,
all bemased and in a swoone
as we had binne stycked swyne.¹

Given the pervasive equation between traditional heroic attitudes and spiritual ignorance common to all cycles, it is not insignificant that the expression of enlightenment, however limited, achieved by these warriors is couched in an anti-heroic vein. The most deluded, of course, continue their heroic visions of themselves until the end.

As has been shown, dramatic consciousness of truth within the cycles ranges from the supra-human knowledge of Christ to the almost total ignorance of Herod. With Herod, as with others, this lack of Christian consciousness in a Christian play is often represented in terms of the heroic over-evaluation of the self or of temporality.² In contrast those characters represented as having a consciousness of the Christian truth of their play are represented in terms of their humility and self-minimization. When the destinies of these two groups of people are viewed eschatologically, however, a reversal occurs which is based on the radical Christian irony that it is the meek and the humble who shall inherit the earth and enter the Kingdom of God. Thus, the Christian hero followed Christ's example of humility which, paradoxically, led to the aggrandizement of salvation, the earthly man trusted to his own power which resulted in the ultimate minimization of being: damnation.

To conclude, then, it is not surprising that the same distinctions

1) Chester, Resurrection, lines 258-265.

2) See Woolf, The English Mystery Play, pp.250-251.

made between earthly and Heavenly man while alive continued to be made by the cycles in differentiating between the elect and the damned in the plays of the Last Judgment. On this occasion the playwright did, however, allow the members of the earthly city who had been ignorant throughout life sufficient ethical lucidity to make them at last aware of their errors; aware of the nature of the play they have been in, though too late to alter their fate. Aware that they are to be denied participation in the comedy of salvation, the damned come to a heightened consciousness of the tragic ironies which underlay their faith in the world. As the damned frequently constitute a satirical collection of typically erring medieval potentates, it is especially apt that their sins are often represented as being based on an excessive faith in the world and on the autonomous powers of man. The lament of the Damned Queen from the Chester cycle is particularly relevant in this respect, as it takes the form of an almost axiomatic expression of the inability of heroic power to alter the inexorable law of retribution, and, therefore, offers the most radical exposure of the folly of faith in heroic man:

I, that soe seemelye was in sight,
 where ys my blee that ys so bright?
 Where ys baron, where ys knight
 for mee to alledge the lawe?
 Where in world ys any wight
 that for my fayrenes nowewyll fight,
 or from this death I am to dight
 that darre mee heathen drawe? 1

Heroic power might determine and uphold mundane laws, but is powerless in the face of divine laws. Only Christ may draw man from damnation. This lament becomes more than a mere commonplace, however, when it is remembered that faith in heroism itself is not merely futile in the context of man's eschatological end, but that the faith itself is part of the involvement with temporality that is likely to ensure damnation. The hero, emblem of human strength, emerges paradoxically as a metaphor of man's spiritually weakening worldliness: an archetypal illustration of the vanity of human estimations leading to damnation.

1) Chester, The Judgment, lines 285-292.

CHAPTER THREE: The morality tradition and the idea of heroism.

The previous chapter illustrated how the didactic impulse to celebrate the role of Christ in human affairs resulted in the cycles' presenting a relatively minimizing, anti-heroic, attitude towards man. It is often suggested that the genesis of the morality drama is to be found in the same Church programme of popular theological instruction which prompted the development of the cycles during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹ Such a theory accounts for the huge differences in form between the two genres by asserting that the morality drama was a product of a different, though complementary, didactic emphasis to that which informed the cycle dramas. Thus, while the mystery drama sought to educate the people as to the central role of God in the mechanics of salvation, the morality drama characteristically attempted to examine the part which man had to play in his own regeneration.² Thus, it is possible to contend that the morality play, by virtue of its acknowledged formal emphasis on human ethical and religious responsibilities, necessarily presents a comparatively aggrandized vision of man's innate ability to influence his eschatological status. Certainly, moral choice is one of the major themes of the morality drama, and, outwardly at least, this is reflected in a humanistic interest in man's potential for virtue and reasoned awareness of good and evil.

It is possible to trace this characteristic of morality drama back to the limited espousal of reason in the work of Aquinas. As already observed his Aristotelianism was extended by his later followers to form a more explicitly anti-Augustinian body of thought than Aquinas himself would have affirmed:

The doctrine of man embodied in the moralities belongs to a

1) See Owst, Literature and Pulpit, p. 574.

2) See Kahrl, Traditions of Medieval English Drama, p. 42 (for cycles) and p. 106, where moral plays are described as "studies in the choices man makes."

rather liberal and humanistic strain of Catholic theology that grew up as a reaction against some of the rather terrible implications of the Augustinian theological tradition. The anti-Augustinian or popular tradition received additional support in the later Middle Ages from Scholastic philosophy, which stressed the role of reason in religion and implied a strong belief in man's ability to control his behaviour and arrive by reason at an understanding of the nature of things. In the popular tradition man is injured or infected by Original Sin not wholly depraved by it. 1

This general recognition of the formal focusing on the abilities and responsibilities of humanity is a useful one from which to begin an analysis of the significance of morality drama in terms of the implications for heroism which it contains.² From the outset, however, several qualifications need to be made to the above statement. It is believed that the discussion which follows will serve to uphold the qualifying points made.

It is not tenable to view the morality drama as containing a conscious counter-thesis either to Augustinian theology or to the implications of the cyclic form of drama. Just as the cycle drama can be found to have incorporated liberal doctrines and morality forms,³ so too the moral drama will be shown to have adopted the subject matter of the cycles and the anti-humanism of Augustine. As already observed, the theologian will tend to emphasise each particular doctrinal point in isolation from other contradictory articles of faith. Thus, in a form whose subject matter is man's journey through life, there will naturally arise many occasions where the dramatist will need to deal with man's moral choices, even though, when considering the question more overtly, he would wish to deny the unorthodox implications of showing man to be responsible for his own salvation. As will be shown, it is the form itself which carries with it implications of self-determination; implications which many dramatists tried hard to negate.

1) E.T. Schell and J.D. Shuchter, eds., English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes, New York, 1969, p. xvi. Henceforth cited as Schell and Shuchter.

2) cf. R. Potter, The English Morality Play, London and Boston, 1975, pp. 40-41. Potter postulates the existence of conflicting theories of man forming the basic tension in the form, humanism undercut by Augustinianism.

3) As with the Ludus Coventriae Death of Herod discussed above.

In fact, while always remaining humanistic in terms of its formal implications, in terms of the doctrines it contained the morality drama was highly flexible, and proved able to accommodate, along with completely secular subjects, every possible variation of Christian attitudes from near Pelagianism to Calvinism. Furthermore, most moralities (like the cycles) emphasised man's individual responsibility for his salvation at the same time as insisting on his reliance on God. As the paradox was an aspect of the Christian mystery the question always remained one of emphasis rather than of polarization, and, therefore, the extent to which the humanism latent in the form of a drama of ethical choice was allowed to dominate depended on the beliefs of the individual dramatist.

Certainly the earliest morality plays with their emphasis on the need for penance and repentance (that is for humanly motivated observances) do promote a comparatively exalted idea of man in relation to his final end. More important for the present study than the implied liberalism behind, for example, the stress put on Good Deeds as an aid to salvation in Everyman, however,¹ is the tendency for some dramas to express the struggle between good and evil engaged in by all men in explicitly heroic language.² Thus the hero of the fifteenth-century drama Mankind is told to fight against his sinful nature in these terms:

The temptacyon of the flesch ye must resyst lyke a man,
For ther ys euer a batell betwyx the soull and the body:
'Vita hominis est milicia super terram' [Job, vii. i.]

Oppresse yowr gostly enemy and be Crystys own knyght.
Be neuer a cowarde ageyn yowr aduersary.
Yf ye wyll be crownyde, ye must nedys fyght,³
Intende well and Gode wyll be yow adjutory.

Indeed, the Prudentian concept of the psychomachia, the heroic

1) See E.K. Chambers, English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages, Oxford, 1947, pp. 63-64.

2) Wickham, Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage, pp. 27-28, has even suggested that the popularity of the form lay in its applicability to the conventions of the medieval Tournament.

3) In Mark Eccles, ed., The Macro Plays, E.E.T.S. No. 262, London, 1969, lines 226-232. Henceforth cited as Macro.

spiritual war waged between good and evil in men, is, as Bernard Spivack has noted, one of the major constants uniting the morality tradition: "The dramatic and homiletic energy of this whole dramatic corpus flows from the concept, basic to Christianity, of endless and universal conflict between God and the Devil, or between their auxiliaries, virtue and vice—a concept that defines the earthly life of man as the arena of a Holy War between the contending forces of his own nature."¹

Although the allegorical method of Prudentius (to an extent adopted by the author of The Castle of Perseverance²) which opposes only personified virtues and vices, carries no direct imputations of moral heroism for man himself, the earlier Pauline iteration of the same concept squarely placed the heroic role within man's capabilities. Thus, the Holy Ghost informs Adam and Eve in the Norwich Grocers' play of the Fall (a late cycle fragment incorporating the allegorical traditions of morality drama) that:

This armors ar preparyd, yf thou wylt turn ageyne,
To fyght wyth; take to the, and reach Woman the same;
The brest-plate of rightousnes: Saynte Paule wyll the retayne;
The shyld of faythe to quench thy fyrre darteres to tame;
The hellmett of salvacion the devyles wrath shall lame;
And the sworde of the Spright, which is the worde of God—
All this ar nowe the offred to ease thy payne and rodd.³

Here it is clear that while the weapons with which man fights evil are God-given, it is man himself who must sustain the desire to use them. Given this acceptance of the possibility of moral heroism it takes only a small imaginative step to adapt the morality form to a chivalric story in which the metaphor of moral/allegorical heroism becomes a literally imagined heroism in which warriors are shown doing battle with the forces of evil.

1) Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, London, 1958, p. 73. For his analysis of the influence of Prudentius' Psychomachia see pp. 73-95. Potter, The English Moral Play, pp. 37-38, makes the valid point that the moral play is far more concerned with man's struggle with evil than with abstract heroic personifications of virtue.

2) See Eccles, Macro, pp. xix-xx.

3) In N. Davis, ed., Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments, E.E.T.S. S.S. No. 1, London, 1970, lines 137-143. cf. Ephesians, vi. 11-17.

Ethically, of course, the step from allegory to reality is more considerable. Evidence suggests, however, that within its life the morality form was adapted to depict not an allegorical journey through life but a chivalric knight's journey through heroic trials. Though attacked by some as being of dubious moral efficacy, records suggest that there were a number of plays whose titles link them with Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes and Common Conditions; the two surviving examples of the chivalric-morality drama from the early part of Elizabeth's reign.¹ Both works present warrior knights who are prepared to defend the forces of goodness as they see them against the forces of evil which they encounter on their travels. Though influenced by the traditions of medieval romance, both works attest to the ease with which the allegorical heroism of the psychomachia could be transferred to the issues of the external world:

Know thou therefore Clamydes deare, to have a knightly name
 Is first above all other things, his God for to adore,
 In truth according to the lawes prescribde to him before,
 Secondly, that he be true vnto his Lord and king;
 Thirdly, that he keepe his faith and troth in euery thing,
 And then before all other things that else we can commend,
 That he be alwaies ready prest, his countrey to defend:
 The Widow poor, and fatherlesse, or Innocent bearing blame,
 To see their cause redressed right, a faithfull knight must frame:
 In truth he alwaies must be tried, this is the totall charge,
 That will receiue a knightly name, his honour to enlarge. 2

Here the abstract Pauline armour becomes pragmatic political-chivalric virtue, while the concept of a spiritual struggle against sin becomes an ethos endorsing positive heroic action in defence of goodness.

Though such dramas prefigure The Faerie Queene in showing how a liberal, humanistic, theological tradition might endorse Christian heroic action that is more than merely a metaphor for moral fortitude, it must be stressed that the majority of morality plays proper explicitly deny that man is capable of independent moral heroism in the battle against evil, while they are even more stringent in their

1) cf. P. Russell, "Romantic Narrative Plays 1570-1590," in J.R. Brown and B. Harris, eds., Elizabethan Theatre, London, 1966, pp. 107-111.

2) Lines 231-241, Malone Society Reprints, Oxford, 1913.

rejection of the related idea that the glory of man might be seen in terms of his ability to attack the temporal manifestations of evil. As already implied, a form which insists both on mankind's need to fight evil, and also on his eschatological end, will always risk seeming to imply that a heroic moral agent can merit his own salvation. The Pelagianistic implications of dramatizing a life ending in salvation were evidently obvious even to the most humanistic of the dramatists, who, so long as they continued to deal with man's ultimate end, consistently undercut the implied heretical aggrandizement of man latent within the structure. Thus, as Wisdom who is Christ insists, the comic upward movement from deserved damnation to salvation is a gratuitously extended elevation which man may not influence: "Endles peyn worthyi be owr dysyrvynges, // Wyche be owrselff neuer may be amendyde // Wythowt Gode, in whom all ys comprehendyde. // Therfor to hym let us resort. // He lefte vp them that be descendyde."¹

The most pervasively obvious anti-heroic feature of all morality dramas lies in their characteristic tendency to allow man the theoretical possibility of unaided, freely-willed, goodness, and then in practice show him to be congenitally unable to resist the equivocal attractiveness of evil. This debility is a doubly minimizing one in that it not only negates any real possibility of unaided moral excellence, but also this fatal attraction to sin places man in the spiritually humiliating position of deserving damnation and, thus, of being reliant on the mercy of God for salvation. The dramatization of the pitiful plight of the soul after death is a particular feature of the early morality play, but the idea of man's tragic propensity to sin, and hence **his** need

1) Macro, lines 935-939.

for forgiveness, is constant throughout the tradition.¹ Thus, for example, the late morality play The Conflict of Conscience has a significantly anti-humanistic alternative ending in which the originally damned protagonist is rescued from damnation by divinely inspired repentance: "Till at the last God changed his mind, His mercies for to crave," followed by the mercy which followed: "Yet, at the last God him restored, even of His mercy."²

In more retributive protestant plays the emphasis is often on deserved damnation rather than on undeserved salvation.³ The minimization of damnation, however, is presented as even more radically destructive of human delusions of spiritual self-determinism. Thus, in Louis Wager's Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene, a morality styled scriptural biography play, Mary is bluntly informed that

[damnation] was necessary and it dyd behoue,
 Considering man's pride and temeritie,
 Whiche was dronke and blynde in his owne loue,
 To make a lawe to shewe his imbecillitie.

Except the lawe had rebuked his vanitie,
 So much he would have trusted in his own strength,
 And beleued that through the power of his humanitie
 He might have obtained saluation at length. 4

Indeed, as the century wore on⁵ and Calvinistic doctrines sought to legalistically codify Augustinian determinism, then the anti-heroic emphasis of the morality drama increased as the protestant polemical stage stressed the consequences of original sin and predestination.⁶

1) Spivack, Allegory of Evil, makes the point that while no drama later than c.1500 has an eschatological scene, "many of them continue to train on the events of life a moral focus sharply adjusted to view them chiefly in relation to their consequences beyond the grave." (p.68)

2) The lines are from Nathaniel Woodes' revised Prologue to the play reprinted in Schell and Shuchter, pp. 548-9. They substitute the original lines 35 and 63.

3) See D.M. Bevington, From Mankind to Marlowe, Cambridge, Mass., 1962, p.153.

4) Ed., F.I. Carpenter, Chicago, 1902, lines 1026-1033.

5) Precise chronology is not important for the argument being developed.

6) See R.M. Benbow, ed., introduction to W. Wager's The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art, and Enough is as Good as a Feast, London, 1968, p.xiii ff.

It must be reiterated, however, that such attitudes were not confined to the protestant drama of the reformation period. This fact can be illustrated by the citing of equally firm rejections of the idea of human spiritual potency occurring in earlier Catholic plays such as Mankynd: "All the vertu in the word yf ye myght comprehend//Your merytys were not premyabyll. to the blys above, //Not to the lest joy of hewyn, of your propyr efforte to ascend. //Wyth mercy ye may; I tell yow no fabyll."¹

Few morality dramas, however, denied the possibility of good works or the free will to perform them.² Thus, in The Castle of Perseverance Humanum Genus has a choice over whether to turn to the Castle of Virtue or associate with the vice characters: "Mankynd to don what he wyl do, // God hath govyn him a fre wylle."³ Similarly in Hickscorner man "may choose whether [he] do good or ill."⁴ As observed, however, the action of these plays typically shows man to incline towards evil. The aristocratic/humanistic stage of the early **six**teenth century proves to be an exception to this pattern.⁵ Although it never openly affirms Pelagianistic theories of salvation, it openly suggests that man does not necessarily use free will to choose evil, but instead is able to overcome his sensual nature through reason. It is in this attribute that human excellence is to be found. Thus, both Man and Reason in Medwall's

1) Macro, lines 867-870.

2) Some, however, do take this step, and explicitly propound the Calvinistic doctrine of double predestination; whereby the good are predestined to be good and the evil to be wicked without the use of free will. See the prologue to Jacob and Esau, Malone Society Reprints, Oxford, 1956.

3) In P. Happe, ed., Four Morality Plays, Harmondsworth, 1979, lines 2578-2579.

4) In Ian Lancashire, ed., Two Tudor Interludes, Manchester, 1980, line 160.

5) Though David Bevington (Tudor Drama and Politics, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, pp. 43-63) divides the humanistic drama into that of the old aristocracy, represented by Skelton, and that of the new ruling class, represented by Medwall, he still sees both as distinguished from the popular tradition by their humanistic outlook.

Nature praise both God and man by exclaiming:

... thou hast gyven me [ie. Man] vertue
Surmountyng all other in hygh perfeccyon,
That ys, understandyng, wherby I may avew
And well dyscerne what ys to be done,
Yet for all that have I freer eleccyon
To do what I wyll, be yt evyl or well,
.....
For Sensualyte, in very dede
Is but a meare whyche causeth [man] to fall
Into moche foly and maketh hym bestyall
So that there ys no dyfference in that at the lest
Betwyxt man and an unresonable best.
But this other cometh of great tenderaunce
And spyrytuall love that God oweth to mankynde,
whom he hath create to hys owre semblaunce
And endued wyth a wonderouse mynde
wherby he may well dyscerne and fynde
Suffysant dyfference b twyxt good and bad,
whyche ys to be left and whyche ys to be had.¹

It is worth observing in passing that this paradox surrounding man's bestiality and his God-given reason was to become a feature of the Elizabethan dilemma over Renaissance man.²

The point that it is hoped to establish here, however, is that the humanist's belief in unaided human excellence was a belief that carried with it Pelagianistic implications for the theory of salvation. As already asserted, no extant drama actually states that man's moral self-determinancy implies human influence on salvation. Even the most advanced humanist would have rejected the idea that man might compel God to number him among the elect. As A.H.T. Levi has observed in discussing the nature of the dispute between Erasmus and Luther, however, there was an unacknowledged contradiction in humanist thought which seemed to accept both that man was able to do good and that grace was active in promoting good works:

It is not difficult to see how [the argument] arose. If man's 'nature' is capable even of accepting, to say nothing of meriting, grace, the result is at least semi-Pelagian theology and a religion of tension. If, however, it is not, man is necessarily

1) In A. H. Nelson, ed., The Plays of Henry Medwall, Trowbridge and Esher, 1980, Part I, lines 134-139 (Man) and 290-301 (Reason).

2) cf. Hamlet II. ii 292 ff.
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deprived of any power of self-determination to a good which, on any theory, is supernatural, and he is incapable of influencing his own eternal fate. The dilemma is rigid. Erasmus's treatise against Luther, the de libero arbitrio (On Free Will, 1524), accuses Luther of denying free will. Luther's reply, the de servo arbitrio (On unfree Will, 1525) accuses Erasmus unjustly of scepticism but also and more cogently of Pelagianism. Although Erasmus had never made a formally Pelagian utterance, it was true that there was no known way of reconciling the autonomous power of self-determination to good in which Erasmus believed with a non-Pelagian theory of grace. 1

As Levi indicates even if man were seen as able to accept or reject the grace which empowered him to good works or salvation then he is still able to influence his ultimate end in that, for example, he might decide to seek out the grace which would give him the strength to repent. It is instructive to recollect how precise The Conflict of Conscience was in insisting that even the power to think of repenting came from God. As will be illustrated, plays whose dramatists could not be so doctrinally exact in locating all human impulsion towards goodness in the power of God alone increasingly tended to avoid plays focusing on man's eschatological fate, and preferred instead to concentrate on mundane, even secular issues in the life of the mankind figure; so that they were then able to keep their humanism intact while avoiding consideration of what was, even for them, its untenable implications.

The problem for the humanist, then, lay in the traditional form of the morality play with its emphasis on the spiritual fate which man's actions revealed. So long as the suggestion that victory in the psychomachia was a temporal triumph prefiguring the salvation of the elect held then even a dramatist such as Medwall, who celebrated the excellence of man when not confronted with the necessity to consider its spiritual implications, was driven to revert to the anti-heroic expression of man's weakness against his enemies when considering them in supernatural terms:

And certes these our sayd enemyes
Be of theyre nature so myghty and so strong

1) Introduction to Erasmus, In Praise of Folly, trans., B. Radice, Aylesbury, 1971, p. 30.

That hard yt wyll be for us in any wyse
 Agayn them warre or batayll to underfong.
 Also our qarisons and fortresse to mayntayn long
 Agayn theyre ingens wythout spyrytuall grace
 We can not performe in no maner case. 1

Thus, even in humanist drama, man does not emerge as a spiritually independent heroic agent, but as one who, despite his reason or any other innate power, is reliant on divine succour. Similarly the more liberal Catholic dramas spoken of by Schell and Shuchter also follow Aquinas in ultimately minimizing the effectiveness of reason as an aid towards salvation. In Wisdom who is Christ, for example, despite the Aquinian vision of man partially ennobled by reason, the audience is presented with an ultimately anti-heroic vision of man in which reason needs to be bolstered by grace to recognize its own impotence. Thus, the character Mind asserts: "Myselff ryght nought than I confes, // For by myselff I may not ryse // Wythowt specyall grace of Godys goodnes. // Thus mynde makyt me myselff to dyspyse." He is backed up in this by Will who adds: "For of owrselff we have ryght nought // But syne, wrechydnes, and foly."²

When it came to actually receiving the gift of grace all dramas except the most rigidly Calvinistic allowed man the ability to reject grace:³ to be the independent cause of his own damnation. When it came to a consideration of how man was actually to accept grace, most early dramas and most humanist plays propounded the semi-Pelagian

view mentioned by Levi and implicit in the speech made by Charity in Mankind quoted above: "Intende well and God wyll be yow adjutory." The consensus (again perhaps an idea implicit in the form itself) seemed to be that if man could only generate the desire to live a good life then in practice God will fortify him in that desire so long as it lasts. The play Calisto and Melibea provides an active demonstration of this

1) Nature, Part 2, lines 29-35, ed Nelson, *op cit*.

2) Macro, lines 201-204 and 234-235.

3) Again Jacob and Esau proves exceptional by asserting the irresistible nature of grace. See lines 1792-1821, Malone Society Reprints.

semi-humanistic standpoint. Melibea desires to remain virtuous and prays "for grace all vyce to eschew."¹ In spite of her good intentions she is just about to follow her natural inclination towards lust when a divinely inspired dream fortifies her in goodness. Her grateful father is left to supply the moral in this for the audience: "God shall send you ever his grace at nede // To withstand all evyll temptacions."²

While the idea of good intent served to provide a reasonable and workable compromise for the notion of man's relationship with grace for the tradition to function as a drama of moral choice, it should be observed that on those occasions when the plays seek to present an orthodox and fully considered account of the operation of grace then the tendency was for even the humanistic stage to reject the pelagianistic implications of that doctrine in favour of a less humanistic view. Thus John Heywood's Witty and Witless contends that:

The grace of God alway to grace allureth man,
And when man will call for grace, of grace assureth man.
To assist man God's commandments to fulfill,
At all times if man cast out ill willing will,
Now since the Christian, that worketh most in faith,
Shall have most in reward, as the Scripture saith,
And that God's grace by grace called for, will assist
Man's will to work well, alway when man list, —
And at instant of due ordered penitence,
Man hath God's mercy of all former offence;
Which sheweth for mercy man is not mor' greedy
To ax, than God to grant mercy is ready. 3

Thus, as in Woodes' The Conflict of Conscience, the syntax is precise: it is through grace that grace is called for and given. The conclusion which it would seem valid to draw is that over the related issues of grace and salvation the humanistic stage was driven to circumscribe the independent faculties of man almost as severely as did the later protestant drama.

Possibly the major difference between the humanist and the

1) Line 1007 in R. Axton, ed., Three Rastell Plays, Cambridge, 1979.

2) ibid, lines 1043-1044.

3) In J. S. Farmer, ed., The Dramatic Writings of John Heywood, E. E. O. S. London, 1905, p. 214.

Protestant polemical play was the insistence of the former on the availability of salvation and of the latter on the imminence of death and damnation. Thus, while the anti-heroic emphasis of Witty and Witless is partially obscured by its vision of man's free access to mercy and grace, the later Calvinistic drama, with its more retributive emphasis on punishment and undeserved escape, had no inclination to detract from its vision of an enfeebled and degenerate mankind totally dependent on the mercy of God.¹ John Bale's work may be used to provide one from many possible examples of the typically grim anti-heroic determinism with which the genre emphasised the absolute impotence of free will to do good of any kind:

Where is now free-will, whom the hypocrites commend,
Whereby they report they may at their own pleasure
Do good of themselves, though grace and faith be absent
And have good intent their madness with to measure?
The will of the flesh is proved here small treasure,
And so is man's will, for the grace of God doth all. 2

While Bale may be considered extreme in his desire to explode the humanistic myth of innate human goodness, his iconoclasm is typical of the radical anti-heroism of all Protestant morality drama.

In works so hostile to the idea of human excellence, good works, despite the severe anti-humanistic qualifications concerning their origin, become of less relevance to the Christian than obedience and faith. Even the so-called "insistence on the sole efficacy of Good Deeds" to be found in Everyman,³ becomes, on analysis, a celebration of the vicarious power of the sacraments; the taking of which is found to be the only significant 'good deed' which determines the salvation of Everyman.⁴ Later The Conflict of Conscience explicitly defines the superiority of faith as a means toward salvation; and in

1)cf. Spivack,Allegory of Evil,p.245.

2)God's Promises,in Hazlitt's Dodsley I,p.322.

3)Schell and Shuchter,p.112.

4)See Everyman,ed.,A.C.Cawley,Manchester,1961,lines 652 ff.cf.Potter,The English Morality Play,pp.46-47.

so doing attacks the Erasmian heresy¹ which held that some of the more virtuous pagans might be awarded salvation:

There are two kinds of righteousness, as Paul to Romans saith;
The one dependeth of good works, the other hangs of faith.
The former, which the world allows, God counts it least of twain,
As by good proof it shall to you in words be proved plain.
For Socrates and Cato both did purchase great renown,
And Aristides, surnamed "Just," this righteousness fulfilled,
Wherefore he was, as justest man, expelled his native town.
Yet are their souls with infidels in hell forever spilled,
Because they sought not righteousness *that* way that God them willed,
For *other righteousness comes from faith, which God regards alone,*
And makes us seem immaculate before his heavenly throne. 2

Thus, even the pagan can perform good deeds. They are not proof of spiritual regeneration, or, therefore, of salvation. It seems obvious that such an attitude which valued repentance, *pe*nance and faith (all aided by grace) above human achievement would ultimately force those authors wishing to appreciate human acts of goodness or heroism away from the drama of ultimate ends. Certainly it will be shown that one of the factors involved in the growth of secular drama was the desire to celebrate man in the less transcendent terms of the goods which 'the world allows.'

To summarize, it is true to say that so long as the morality drama concentrated on man's eschatological end within the context of a form which depicted man as being in the position to make moral choices, then the idea of good works continued to invoke unacceptable implications concerning man's spiritual relationship with God. There were, however, several ways in which these implications could be lessened, and several of these have already been touched upon. The solution adopted by the early morality dramatists and many of their successors was to endorse the theoretical possibility of good works but to depict the actual weakness of man and his inclination towards evil unless aided by grace and the healing power of the sacraments. A later solution

1) Discussed by Levi in his introduction to In Praise of Folly, pp. 26-27.

2) In Schell and Shuchter, lines 1953-1963.

was to deny man's capacity for good of any type. This was the case even though the dramatic form still presented the mankind figure with moral choices; thus supplying the illusion of choice provided by life itself alongside the doctrinal knowledge that no choice, in fact, exists. A third solution was to use the morality form but to remove its eschatological implications and replace them with, for example, intellectual ultimates (as in Redford's Wit and Science) or with political ultimates (as in Magnificence or Respublica) which the protagonists could work towards achieving through their own endeavours and good deeds without seeming to invoke Pelagianistic heresies of self-determination. While such dramas did not have to abandon Christian ultimates, but merely debate them without a focus on salvation, it was open for this movement to produce almost totally secular plays with a morality form whose concern with Christianity was at best tangential. Pickering's Horestes will be shown to be a play of just such a type: a morality play almost lacking in moral values. A fourth alternative open to the dramatist who wished to investigate human values unembarrassed by their untenable implications in an eschatologically orientated drama was to abandon the form altogether.

This is the solution adopted by Medwall in Fulgens and Lucrece. Medwall's Nature has been shown to illustrate the tensions engendered by his humanism on the one hand and his religious orthodoxy on the other. In Fulgens and Lucrece the maxim that nobility is the result of character and not of breeding is brought out through a play which, though neither un-moral nor un-Christian, is set in the secular world of ancient Rome. Anachronistically, though significantly for the present study, part of Medwall's concern is to provide a blueprint for the type of warrior to be admired by a Christian state. Thus, though private violence is to be condemned, the warrior, so long as he is God-fearing and virtuous, is the necessary and rightly praised

bastion of his nation's security. Thus Flaminius tells Fulgens that his nobility rests in the combination of his moral and his heroic virtues:

I have borne unto God, all my days,
His laud and praise with my due devotion;
And, next that, I bear always
To all my neighbours charitable affection;
Incontinency and uncleanness I have had in abomination,
Loving to my friend and faithful withal,
And ever I have withstood my lusts sensual.

One time with study my time I spend,
To eschew Idleness, the causer of sin;
Another time my country manly I defend;
And, for the victories that I have done therein,
You have seen yourself, sir, that I have come in
To this noble city twice or thrice
Crowned with laurel, as is the guise.
By these ways, lo, I do arise
Unto great honour from low degree. 1

While the endorsement of a meritocracy would no doubt please Medwall's patrons,² it is noteworthy that he might have been equally flattering to self-made men by asserting that Flaminius rose to eminence through divine reward for virtue. Instead, because his 'comic' movement from low to high degree is a purely mundane elevation, Medwall is able to imply that the whole achievement is the direct result of Flaminius's own efforts. The repetition of the pronoun 'I' throughout the whole passage is indicative of the celebratory, maximizing, emphasis on human endeavour and self-perfectability which is a characteristic of the play's unequivocal humanism.³

During the sixteenth century many plays which either abandon the morality form, or else superimpose political, historical, romance, or humanistic plot structures onto the basic allegorical formula in which the mankind figure *vacillates* between virtue and vice, treat warrior

1) Fulgens and Lucrece, Part 2, lines 673-684, in G. Wickham, ed., English Moral Interludes, London, 1976.

2) See Bevington, Tudor Drama and Politics, pp. 42-47, where he outlines the fact that Medwall was chaplain to John Morton; the statesman and cleric appointed by Henry VIII from outside of the landed aristocracy, and discusses the implications of this for Medwall's dramas.

3) cf. Coriolanus V.vi.144-147, for a similar emphasis on the personal pronoun by a warrior hero. Creeth, Mankynde in Shakespeare, pp. 167-168 suggests that Shakespeare may have known Fulgens.

figures as sympathetically as Flaminius is treated by Medwall. Such plays tend not to place a debilitating anti-heroic emphasis on the eschatological implications of the warrior's role and instead tend to view his military virtues as providing a frequently elaborate metaphor for various types of mundane dynamism, such as the aggressive quest for knowledge¹ or (in authors as varied as Bale and Wilson) the staunch upholding of Britain's interests, its order and its divinely inspired virtues.² Many of these works have been termed hybrid moralities in that they combine an allegorical form with more literal material. With the exception of Horestes the hybrid plays will not receive detailed attention with respect to the ideas of heroism they contain, partially because close study has already been given to these works,³ and also because many turn out to be works of political or patriotic theory which reproduce the type of commonplace views about the role of the soldier in society found in Fulgens and Lucrece, and which were available to Shakespeare from many sources besides earlier drama.⁴

Medwall's play singles itself out for attention whereas others do not because it combines an early example of an heroic character featuring in a secular play with a representation of the pagan world, thus providing

1) As in Redford's Wit and Science (in Schell and Shuchter) or the later The Marriage of Wit and Science where Wit fights violent battles with the enemies Tedium and Ignorance; See lines 931 ff., Malone Society Reprints, Oxford, 1960.

2) Thus Bale's Three Laws tells Christian princes that "God hath given you the power, // With sceptre and sword all vices to correct." (In J.S. Farmer, ed., The Dramatic Writings of John Bale, E.E.D.S., London, 1907, p. 47). Robert Wilson's Three Lords and Three Ladies of London, represents three heroic personifications of English virtue (Policy, Pomp and Pleasure) doing battle with three Spanish vices depicted as degenerate braggart warriors (See W.C. Hazlitt, ed., A Select Collection of Old English Plays originally published by Robert Dodsley, 4th edition, London, 1874, Vol. 6, pp. 461 ff.)

3) eg. by Bevington, Tudor Drama and Politics, p. 157, pp. 194-195, et passim.

4) Thus the debate over which rank of society is the most valuable which takes place between a soldier, a scholar, a courtier and a country gentleman in Robert Wilson's The Cobbler's Prophecy includes the soldier's assertion that "Souldiers obserue lawes, therein appeares their iustice, at least equalling the scholler: bring Princes to thraldom, then triumphing ouer courtiers: are liberall to giue, wherein for the most they excell the Country Gentleman. In briefe, they are the swords of heauen to punish: the salue of heauen to pitie." (Malone Society Reprints,

a rare opportunity to examine an early Tudor representation of the Roman heroic world against which Shakespeare's later efforts in the same period may be contrasted. It is noteworthy that Medwall makes little attempt to distinguish between the imagined values of ancient Rome and the Christian-political values of his audience. True, he incorporates Roman customs (such as the victor's laurel) into his drama, but otherwise he conflates the zeitgeist of Rome with that of early sixteenth century Christian humanism. Fulgens and Lucrece makes no capital, for example, of Augustine's view that Rome and its mundane heroic values took the place of religious ultimates for the heroes that served them. Instead he presents a Flaminus whose first priority is devotion to God and the cultivation of Christian virtues. Goodness in the play is a solid and unambiguous vein of Christian-humanistic sentiment, and the pagan past, rationalized in these terms, is able to illuminate the present without irony or distortion.

So far as plays with a morality form are concerned, too few exist which dramatize pagan antiquity to talk of an orthodox position with respect to their treatment of the classical past. Such plays, however, by virtue of their inherent didactic purposes, tend necessarily to endorse an unequivocal standard of truth and goodness against which all of the characters and events of the play can be evaluated. This necessity, therefore, forces dramatists who choose a pagan setting for their play to either expose pagan error by setting it against Christian standards (as in The Peddler's Prophecy¹) or to adopt Medwall's solution and superimpose the views which it is desired to endorse onto a nominally classical world (as in The Cobbler's Prophecy). For the rigid didacticist the options were

Oxford, 1914, lines 288-293). As P.A. Jorgensen's Shakespeare's Military World, Berkeley, 1956, pp. 73-87, has made clear, however, the large number of treatises dealing equally polemically with the soldier's estate means that it is not necessary to postulate, for example, that Fluellen is based on Wilson's soldier.

1) Malone Society Reprint, Oxford, 1914. Here the obscure half-truths of the Peddler's classical rantings become a satiric parallel for Roman Catholicism.

either to Christianize or to satirize. It is hoped below to show that Horestes was in some respects a pointer towards a more subtle dramatic presentation of the ancient world in that it can be read as suggesting that the 'unequivocal standards of truth' which operate for the pagan characters in the play remain absolute for them but tacitly alert the audience to the fact that they are compromised by newer Christian standards available to the audience but not to the characters in the play world.

Firstly, however, it is necessary, always bearing in mind the general anti-heroic emphasis of the morality drama that has already been discussed, to trace the development of the image of the man of war in pre-Shakespearean ethical drama. In what follows, the vice character will receive secondary attention, while primary emphasis will be placed on the heroic characteristics of several of the mankind figures. This emphasis is not only because the vice figure has been given extensive analysis in this respect, but also because those analyses seem to suggest that the influence of the vice figure on Elizabethan tragedy went towards the establishment of Machiavellian type characters as a result of the fact that the role of the vice gradually evolved away from one of militaristic aggression towards one dominated by intrigue.¹ In contrast, however, while the potential importance of the Mankind figure as an analogue for the Shakespearean tragic hero is again receiving attention,² little study has been made of the pervasive link that exists between many Mankind abstractions and the attitudes and attributes of the warrior. It is hoped, therefore, that by focusing on the representative of humanity in the morality tradition valuable insights into the protagonists of Shakespeare's heroic tragedies will emerge. Furthermore, it is

1) See Spivack, Allegory of Evil, pp. 385 ff.

2) eg. by Creeth, Mankynde in Shakespeare, p. 6 et passim

intended to go some way towards obviating the idea that the influence of the morality play on English heroic tragedy rests solely on the vice figure: an idea which the high esteem given to Spivack's work may have inadvertently helped to disseminate.

The Pride of Life, probably the earliest surviving morality play, dramatizes the coming of death to the King of Life, and, in so doing, takes the opportunity to stress the anti-heroic ironies surrounding the King whose pride is such that he "dredith no deth for to deye."¹ During the course of the play he is taken by death and his mortal weakness is then found to be a prefigurement of his spiritual impotence which necessitates the intercession of the Virgin Mary on his behalf: an act which then becomes solely responsible for his eventual, undeserved, salvation. Edmund Creeth has compared the King of Life to Lear in that both believe themselves to be age proof: the all-powerful source of their own access to beatitude.² The King of Life is certainly deluded. Like Herod he misunderstands the nature of the play he is in, and denies the power of death and the possibility of damnation. His delusion is also the result of pride, and, again in Herodian fashion, his pride is given its dramatic-metaphorical expression in terms of an exaggerated heroic personality which illustrates the self-deterministic nature of his folly. Indeed, considering that he is supposed to personify life itself, and not manhood or power, his heroic vaunts begin to take on an independent metaphorical life which slightly conflicts with his allegorical role:

Pes, now, ye princis of powere so prowde,
Ye kingis, ye kempis, ye kniytis ikorne,
Ye barons bolde, that beith me obowte;
Sem schal yu my sawe, swaynis isworne.

Sqwieris stoute, stondit now stille,
And lestenith to my hestis, I hote yu now her,

1) In Davis, ed., Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments, line 28.

2) Mankynde in Shakespeare, pp. 120-122.

Or I schal wirch yu **wo with werkis of wil**
And doun schal ye drive, be ye neuer so dere.

King ic am, kinde of kingis ikorre,
Al the worlde wide to welde at my wil;
Nas ther neuer no man of woman iborre
Oyein me withstonde that I nold him spille.¹

It would, indeed, seem that the heroic vaunt contained so potent an illustration of pride that it induced the dramatist to allow an allegorical figure representing life to utter the quite inappropriate threat of dealing out death in battle.

It is, in fact, the King of Life's two servants, Health and Strength, whose animosity towards Death is more appropriate to the allegory. Significantly, their delusions are also represented in terms of the heroic boastfulness of soldiers; terms already familiar from the knights outside the sepulchre in the cycle resurrection plays:

1 Miles. Mi lord, so brouke I my bronde,
God that me forbede
That Deth schold do the wronge
Qwhile I am in thi thede.

I wol withstonde him with strife
And make his sidis blede,
And tel him that thou art King of Life
And lorde of londe and lede.

2 Miles. May I him onis mete
With this longe launce,
In felde other in strete,
I wol him yive mischaunce.²

Naturally Strength and Health fail their master and the King dies. As the play is incomplete it is not known whether the enlightenment of the protagonist as to his folly took place prior to the moment of death or eschatologically. Whenever the anagnorisis took place,³ however, it would certainly have included a recognition of man's spiritual powerlessness, the ultimate impotence of temporal power, and the consequent need for Christian humility: anti-heroic truths

1) Davis, ed., lines 113-124.

2) ibid, lines 247-258.

3) Creeth deals with the question in Mankynde in Shakespeare, pp. 120-122.

which the enlightened characters had been urging on the King throughout the play. Thus, in a drama with many affinities to the cycle plays, it is evident that the same practice of allowing the heroic psyche to be emblematic of delusion and the meek to be the voice of truth prevails.

While Mankind in The Castle of Perseverance exhibits a similarly fatal *attach*ment to the trappings of power,¹ it is possible to see that this slightly later play also exhibits a dramatic expression of warrior heroism which came to complement the Herodian expression of the hero as archetypally proud throughout the whole of the ensuing tradition. The psychomachia dramatized in The Castle of Perseverance is an allegorical representation of the battle which takes place within the soul of man. Nevertheless, as in The Pride of Life, the dramatic impulse to enliven the allegory results in the representation of the battle and its participants in much more literal heroic terms than the allegory strictly demanded. Thus the vices arm themselves with the whole panoply of medieval warfare, while the language with which they accompany their attack on the castle is realistically belligerent:

What, for Belyalys bonys,
Where a-bowtyn chyde ye?
Have done, ye boyes, al at onys.
Lasche don these moderys, all thre.
Werke wrake to this wonys.
The *vaun*ward is grauntyd me.
Do these moderys to makyn monys.
Youre dowty dedys now lete *se*.
Dasche hem al to daggys.
Have do, boyes blo and blake.
Wirke these wenchys wo and wrake.
Claryouns, cryeth up at a krake,²
And blowe your brode baggys.

In stark contrast to the behaviour and language of the vices, however, the virtues do not arm themselves, nor do they express themselves in martial language. Instead they pledge to remain staunch against attack

1) See lines 570-586. All reference to the play is made to the edition in Peter Happé, ed., Four Morality Plays, Harmondsworth, 1979.

2) lines 2201-2213.

in the safety of their castle, which will remain inviolate so long as Mankind desires it.¹

The conflict which takes place extends this linguistic contrast between the militaristic vices and the passive virtues into the area of action. It is not possible to state categorically that the virtues do not actually engage in battle with the vices.² What can be said is that the dialogue does not support the view that the virtues oppose the vices with physical violence. As observed the virtues do not adopt the aggressive language of the vices, and also they do not have traditional weapons. Instead the virtues rout the vices by throwing roses, symbols of Christ's passion, down from the castle wall.³ As the directions are vague it is possible that the virtues were meant to physically repel the vices with their roses; but in either event the radically different nature of their weapons, their passive humility, and their outspoken condemnation of violence (as in Patience's quotation of James I.xx., "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."⁴) all serve to suggest that an effect was sought for which castigated the evil elements of the psychomachia by associating them with mundane forms of violence and aggression, while absolving the side of righteousness from the moral ambivalence of the battlefield by attributing their strength to the Christian virtue of meekness and the transcendental power of Christ to defeat evil.

It should be noted that the original Psychomachia of Prudentius did not provide a precedent for this distinction between good and evil. There the personified virtues fought with as much epic gusto as the vices. Possibly the device was forced upon the dramatist by

1) See lines 2045-2160.

2) Happé holds that, while the need for spectacle would have demanded "physical aspects," the conflict would have been conducted ritualistically: Four Morality Plays, p.32.

3) See lines 2159, 2064 and 2235-2237. Also contrast the stage directions given in Happé with those in Schell and Shuchter, p.68.

4) line 2138.

the facts of stage presentation which assure that even abstract allegorical violence appears to be as realistic as any other type of violence: a consideration which did not apply to Prudentius's poem.¹ Whether for this reason, or because of a more doctrinaire desire to illustrate the Augustinian/cyclical vision of strife as being especially representative of the earthly city, there was an obvious attempt to contrast the degenerate martial heroism of the vices with the passive moral heroism of the virtues whose strength was that of the Pauline letter. Thus again the impulse towards violence, aggrandized into a warrior's ethos, becomes a dramatic metaphor for evil. The Castle of Perseverance is expansive enough to make this point through the operation of numerous personifications of vices which, allegorically, form a part of the divided nature of the Mankind figure. The psychomachia which we see represented is actually to be viewed as taking place within the soul of Humanum Genus. Even in this play, however, the allegory is not pursued with exact logic and we see Humanum Genus adopt the same propensity towards wrath on the occasions when he is under the control of his vices who themselves should be sufficient to symbolize his internal nature.² Later dramas with a less epic sweep than the castle play further transferred the representation of degenerate heroic belligerence from the vices to the mankind figure, and in so doing further developed the idea of wrathful man as being a convenient dramatic expression of sinful man.

Mundus et Infans provides a powerful example of this technique of equating man's warlike tendencies both with pride and with the generally sinful state of fallen humanity. The use of the device here is especially significant in that the play's structure shows it to be an

1) See Spivack, Allegory of Evil, and cf. Potter, The English Morality Play, pages 72-95, and 37-38 respectively.

2) See lines 1050-1062.

extreme example of role doubling and compression¹ (needing only two actors in performance) so that with character interaction being limited the dramatist was obliged to convey his meanings through character self-revelation and by providing emblematic clues for the audience to evaluate. Accordingly, the sustained use of the image of the warrior to convey man's state of sin further suggests the potency and accessibility which the image had for both dramatist and audience. The play dramatizes the successive stages of man's life and the various modes of dalliance with the earthly city which characterizes each stage. When the Mankind figure reaches manhood he chooses to be ruled by pride and takes on a highly specific heroic role, which, as seen previously, quickly transcends its allegorical appropriateness as a suitable symbol for manhood, and assumes an ultra-Herodian dramatic life of its own. Manhood becomes an adventurous knight who, following the pattern observed by Augustine, devotes himself exclusively to the service of such temporal goods as honour, fame, and the enhancement of his own heroic selfhood: "Now I am dubbed a knyght hende, // Wonder wide shall waxe my fame! // To seke adventures now wyll I wende, // To please the Worlde in gle and game."²

In the event, however, even these limited temporal objectives show themselves to be a typically heroic idealization of what, in fact, emerges as a Tamburlaine-like celebration of conquest, violence and murder:

Salerne and Samers and Ynde the loys,
 Caleys, Kente, and Cornewayle I haue conquered clene,
 Pycardye and Pountes and gentyll Artoys,
 Florence, Flaunders and Fraunce, and also Gascoyne,-
 All I haue conquered as a knyght.

There is no emperour so kene // That dare me lyghtly tene,

1) See Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe*, pp. 51, 116-124.

2) lines 212-215, in *J. M. Manly, ed., Specimens of the Pre-Shakespearean Drama, vol. 1, Boston, 1897. All future reference to the play is made from this edition.*

For lyues and lymmes I lene, // So mykyll is my myght;

For I haue boldely blode full dyspyteously spylde,
There many hath lefte fyngers and fete, both heed and face.
I haue done harme on hedes and knyghtes haue I kyld;
And many a lady for my loue hath sayd 'alas.'

Brygaunt ernys I haue beten to backe and to bonys,
And beten also many a grome to grounde;
Brestplates I haue beten as Steuen was with stonys;
So fell a fyghter in felde was *there neuer yfound.*
To me no man is makyde;
For Manhode myghty, that is my name,
Many a lorde haue I do lame;
Wonder wyde walketh my fame,
And many a kynges crowne haue I crakyd.¹

The extract provided here gives merely an illustration of the prolonged development of the metaphor equating pride, life in sin and degenerate heroic attitudes which Mundus et Infans exploits to its maximum effect.

It must be observed, however, that in spite of its seemingly total anti-heroism, the play does conclude by endorsing a positive heroic role. The character Conscience informs Manhood that to be a true knight he must defend "Holy Chyrches ryght" rather than pursue his own will.² Ultimately, then, the play does allow the possibility of a more admirable heroic image which the Church could endorse. To retain a proper perspective, however, it should be noted that the prompting of Conscience takes four lines and, in terms of the overall impact of the drama, does little to minimize the force of the extensive presentation of human, especially adult male, pride and sin through the metaphor of debased heroism.

As the cycles would suggest, other morality plays address an issue ignored by Mundus et Infans. The problem raised by Conscience's assertion that a warrior must fight for "holy Chyrches ryght" was, of course, that man' could never be absolutely certain as to the locus of right and wrong, grace and wickedness, amid the ambiguity of temporal existence. Again, warlike activity is so closely associated

1) Mundus et Infans, lines 245-266.

2) ibid, lines 445-448.

with sin that to embark on a career of chivalric warrior heroism in defense of the supposed right of God was to risk *performing* a damnable act in the mistaken belief that it was one of the rare occasions when such an act was justified. This possibility emerges particularly strongly in the morality tradition as one of the basic *ideas about* man to emerge from the plays of moral choice was that without divine aid *he* was congenitally liable to confuse right *and* wrong, especially in the area of human conflict which is consistently shown to be the activity most open to sophistry and idealization of the bestial in man, whereby "murder, [is] named manhood in every need."¹ It is not only mankind that equivocates over the issues of good and bad. The forces of evil are typically shown as deluding man as to the true nature of sin by masquerading it as a virtue, so that wrath becomes manhood or greed thrift.² Throughout the tradition as a whole it is possible to generalize and say that while the vice characters know and rejoice in their own evil, the mankind figure is typically shown to be deluded into thinking evil to be good.³

There are, however, exceptions to this rule, and in passing it is illuminating to observe how frequently those protagonists who are aware of their alliance with evil are made to express that realization in terms of a braggart bravado directed either against their colleagues in sin or against the concept of goodness. Thus *Free Will* in *Hickscorner* suggests that "Every man bear his dagger naked in his hand, // And if we meet a true man, make hym stand, // Or else that he bear a stripe."⁴ Similarly Youth in *The Interlude of Youth* threatens firstly to kill Charity: "Hence, knave, and go thy way, // Or with my dagger I shall thee slay!" and goes on to threaten violence to all

1) *Hickscorner*, line 559, in *Lancashire*, ed. *Two Tudor Interludes*.

2) See *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdelene*, lines 37-48.

3) See Spivack, *Allegory of Evil*, p. 47.

4) lines 413-415, ed. *Lancashire*.

who invoke the name of God: "And yet of God wilt thou not cease//
Till I fight in good earnest!//On my faith I tell thee true, //If I
fight thou wilt it rue//All the days of *thy* life."¹

More commonly, however, the mankind figure is deluded into a pursuit of false goods by the vices, and, in this situation also, a typical method of figuratively dramatizing their folly is through an heroic, often Herodian, *caricature* of the delusions of the temporally mighty. Thus in Magnificence the protagonist is duped into thinking true nobility to lie in "*wealth at will, largesse and liberty,*" and is immediately (and for an allegory intended to illustrate the folly of excessive expenditure, *inappropriately*) transformed into a tyrant whose political delusion is represented in terms of his heroic prowess:

Hercules the *hardy*, with his *stubborn clubbed mace*,
That made Cerberus to *catch*, the cur dog of *Hell*,
And *Theseus the proud*, was Pluto to face,
It would not become them with me *for* to mell;
For of all barons *bold* I bear the bell;
Of all doughty I am *doughtiest duke, as I deem*;
To me all princes to lowt man *be seen*.

Charlemagne, that *maintained* the nobles of France,
Arthur of *Albion*, for all his *brim beard*,
Nor *Basian the bold*, for all his *bribance*,
Nor *Alericus*, that ruled the *Gothiance* by sword,
Nor no man on *mould*, can make me *afeard*;
What man is so *mazed* with me that dare *meet*,
I shall flap *him* as a fool to fall at my *feet*.²

It is significant for the argument to be developed below that the tradition of sinful heroic archetypes is not only strong enough to demand incorporation despite incongruity, but that it is also capable of uniting with classical heroic imagery in a fusion which is potentially more than merely cosmetic.³ Thus, for example, whether Skelton intended to make the point or not, it is not inappropriate to have Magnificence claim superiority over two classical heroes who *were*

1) lines 172-182, in Schell and Shuchter.

2) John Skelton, Magnificence, line 1459 and lines 1495-1509, ed. P. Neuss, Manchester, 1980.

3) cf. chapter 8 on Macbeth and Hercules Furens

hubristic 'harrows of hell,' for it helps to endorse the Augustinian point that the heroic ethos ultimately leads to the usurpation of the divine function. Certainly part of Magnificence's disabusement comes from learning the proper anti-heroic truths concerning his vulnerability under the avenging hand of God's Adversity who may "pluck" down king, prince, lord, and knight" at any moment after they "follow their fancies in folly to fall."¹

In other plays mankind is shown as deluded not merely by tempters but by his own congenital ignorance. In these instances too his delusion is frequently linked with violence. Thus, for example, Impatient Poverty is temperamentally inclined towards fractiousness because he is oblivious to the Christian imperatives concerning the forgiving of enemies and the maintenance of peace. He enters his play determined to fight over a debt. Symbolically he is admonished by Peace who tells him: "Al *soch* *warryours* I do reprove," and who then goes on to explain the Christian paradox whereby ultimate victory belongs to the meek and to "Grace and good *gouvernaunce* of man,"² while, in fact, Impatient Poverty's constant search for battle actually excludes him from grace and true victory: "Thou arte so full of wrath and *enye*//In the: can growe no grace."³ Impatient Poverty, however, is so inured to the short sighted retributive calculus of temporal revenge that he cannot even understand Peace's argument: "yf a man do you a greate offence//*wyll ye kepe your pacyence*//Naye by god not so//I put case I breake *your heed*//*wyll ye suffre* that in *verye dede*."⁴ The idea that belligerence itself was likely to exclude a man from grace put serious constraints on the warrior who, like Impatient Poverty, used even ostensibly legitimate arguments

1) Magnificence, lines 1884-1898. Bevington, Tudor Drama and Politics, p.61 sees the anti-heroism as being Skelton's satirical comment on Henry VIII's warlike ambitions in Europe.

2) Impatient Poverty, lines 136 and 144, ed. R.B. McKerrow, Louvain, 1911.

3) ibid, lines 159-60.

4) ibid, lines 182-186

to justify violence. Thus, an appeal to the righteousness of a grievance, or even a reference to the Mosaic law was not sufficient to absolve that argument from the charge that it might be a sophistical rationalization of less exalted human impulses towards violence and revenge.

Thus Lusty Juventus also masks his innate aggression behind sentiments derived from the chivalric code and Old Testament ethics:

Why should I not and if my cause be right?
What, and if a knave do me beguile
Shall I stand crouching like an owl?
No, no, then you might count me a very cow.
I know what belongeth to God's law as well as you.¹

Both plays show that sophistry surrounding the impulse to fight need not necessarily be patently ridiculous and may involve quite exalted motives for action. It follows, then, that, given the superficial attractiveness of outraged aggression to man, the antipathy between violence and grace, and the extreme difficulty of acting righteously without grace, both plays treat any suggestion about the taking up of arms for God with extreme caution; especially where the conflict arises over a private issue. As Peace affirms, the Christian example for personal moral behaviour demands the exercise of patience:

Holde thy hande and kepe pacyence;
Thynke what Chryste suffered for our offence.
He was beaten, scourged, and spytte on wyth vyolence
And suffered death for our sake
yet he toke it pacyentlye
He forgaue hys death, and prayed for his enemyes
Pater dimitte illis, hys sayinge was truelye
An example for vs to take
To be meke in harte: beatey pauperes spiritu
Shal Chryste saye full euen.
Et venite benediciti. come my blessed chyl dren
To the kyngdom of heauen. 2

Again meekness and patience promote enlightenment and victory, while haughtiness and ire imply ignorance and defeat.

1) R. Wever, Lusty Juventus, lines 860-865, in J. A. B. Somerset, ed., Four Tudor Interludes, London, 1974.

2) Impatient Poverty, lines 189-200

As the cycle plays showed, this paradox emerges most clearly when the eschatological fate of the proud and the meek is compared. The morality dramatists, however, were also anxious to expose the folly of such men within the non-eschatological context of the form's allegorical dramatization of man's temporal life. Accordingly, as much of the above has illustrated, the playwrights tended to infuse the heroic pretensions of their protagonists with a strong comic dimension arising from out of their absurdly exaggerated heroic language and the bathetically un-heroic actions which it leads them to perform. Thus rather than seeming heroic such characters are revealed as fools. This feature is compounded by the frequent desire to transpose the transcendental Christian victory of good over evil from out of its metaphysical realm into the arena of the struggle between good and evil being represented by the drama. It is to be remembered that the didactic purposes of the morality tradition would not easily allow the continued dramatization of evil afflicting good, even though, theoretically, good is only certain to triumph in the next life. Thus, frequently good is seen to triumph over evil temporally, or else evil is shown as being incapable of fulfilling its threats against goodness. The combination of these effects results in the reduction or the ridiculing of the violent or heroic dimensions of the protagonists, so that they come to seem as cowards, blusterers and braggarts rather than as warriors.¹ This process can be demonstrated by reference to Moros in W. Wager's The Longer thou livest the more Fool thou Art, where the protagonist's ingrained folly, ultimate cowardliness in the face of Discipline, and generally comic gullibility would seem to obviate any discussion of him in heroic terms.

1) See Boughner, The Braggart in Renaissance Comedy, pp. 119-177

While the un-heroic nature of most of the mankind abstractions can readily be admitted, it must be viewed against the fact that in the morality tradition degeneracy and absurdity, while comic in the dramatic sense, are confined to the evil characters and are marks of that evil. To be comical, as to be violent, was a dramatic metaphor for sin, and was, therefore, profoundly serious.¹ Thus, when, as was often the case, comic exposure was combined with the impulse to fight, the stage character may become a figure of farce, but he necessarily carries implications for the serious estimation of those activities which his folly derives from and which to an extent it serves to undercut. Though Moros is a deluded, foolish, hero his folly is to be seen as a dramatic exposure of *all those* men who treat such foolish impulses seriously, and it has, therefore, serious implications for the heroic tradition.

It is significant that the play has so strong a sense of the debilitating nature of original sin that the tempters feel it is hardly worth adopting equivocal pseudonyms to delude Moros as he does not have the moral discernment to tell "cheese from chalk"² and is predisposed to the type of sin they offer. Nevertheless, he is beguiled, and, after Idleness/*Pastime* has won him over with a pack of cards, he is quickly brought to accept Wrath/Manhood as his governing vice. After being given a sword and a dagger along with the advice that he always be prepared to fight, he returns the cards and reveals that he has discovered a truly amenable vehicle through which to channel his natural propensity for sin. He declares to his seducers:

These weapons have set me on a fire.
[*Flourish with your sword.*]
How say you? like a man do I not look?
To be fighting now is all my desire;
No remedy, with one of you I must fight.
Fend your heads, you fools, knaves and daws.³

1) See Potter, The English Morality Play, pp. 34-37, and Schell and Shuchter, p. ix.

2) Longer, line 740, ed., Benbow. (3) ibid, lines 835-839.

and throughout Wager *skil*fully suggests that the weapons touch a psychological nerve in Moros which makes him find a fatally attractive impetus towards damnation in such tools of violence. He becomes obsessed by his sword, and at one stage cries "O that my sword were a mile long, // I would kill him then whereas he dwelleth,"¹ and, again, later he exclaims "Body of God! give me my sword. // Hearts, wounds! I will kill them by and by."² Even in old age and at the point of death he persists in his heroic folly: "A man I am now, every inch of me, // I shall teach the knave to keep his bounds; // What his prattling will profit I will see. // With me to come I would not suffer one: // Yet servants I have and that plenty. // I myself, I trow, am good enough alone, // Yea, by the mass, if there were twenty."³ Ironically Moros is struck down in his ignorance by the sword of vengeance, without the grace to recognize and repent of his folly, or the enlightenment even to acknowledge the superior power of God and its part in his ensuing spiritual tragedy.

So far a case has been developed for suggesting that the medieval drama as a whole presents an image of degenerate mankind partially in terms of an image of degenerate heroism. The thesis to be developed will go on to suggest that the structural implications of a drama which represented human evil in a context which alternative traditions (both Christian and pagan) celebrated as being the mode of life through which man's potential for excellence was most easily displayed, brought about a situation in Elizabethan drama which allowed the dramatists, who, like Shakespeare, felt the influence of the medieval religious drama, to develop insights into the anti-heroic implications of Christian and pagan works of heroic literature which were either

1) Longer, lines 942-943.

2) ibid, lines 1357-1358.

3) ibid, lines 1744-1750

acknowledged by the original authors or which were latent within their work, but which in either event tended to be ignored or glossed over by contemporary, non-dramatic, poetic theory which tended to see the hero of epic literature as being a metaphor of a human virtue or virtues. In this way it will be suggested that Shakespeare was helped towards a more exactly classical estimation of the ambivalent nature of the warrior hero because earlier drama helped him towards a formal appreciation of aspects of the classical heroic which his age tended to disregard when appreciating those works as heroic literature.

As a preliminary to such an investigation of Shakespearean heroic tragedy it will be found to be instructive to examine two contrasting plays which also display an indebtedness to medieval religious drama. The first play provides an example of a mode of presenting classical and medieval thought which Shakespeare might have adopted, but, perhaps for reasons of temperament, did not, while the second provides an early indication of the way in which Shakespeare's reception of the traditions available to him would in fact develop. Tamburlaine may be dealt with more briefly than Horrestes as many of the points to be made are well established. It is, for example, widely recognized that Marlowe made frequent use of the morality form in his drama.¹ It is, however, less often observed that there is a definite parallel between the structure of Tamburlaine and the type of morality play represented by Mundus et Infans in which the life of man is depicted in terms of a degenerate heroic image, the career of the tyrant conqueror.

In Tamburlaine Marlowe may be thought to have taken the heroic rhetoric of conquest, as articulated by the Herodian figures of the religious drama as a metaphorical expression of their sin, and allowed his heroic protagonist to transform the metaphor of his stage

1) See Bevington, From Mankind to Marlowe, pp. 207-208 and ff.

ancestors into the actual dramatic achievement of his linear progression through conquest to death.¹ Thus Tamburlaine's Herodian rhetoric becomes not merely an expression of pride but also a stimulus for action and a poetic formulation of actual dramatic events. One of the most striking points about Tamburlaine is his ability (as with the carriage drawn by Kings) to turn morality metaphor into dramatic fact as an expression of the power of the heroic will to shape history according to its desires.² While Marlowe takes the step of transferring morality metaphor from the realm of allegory to that of historical reality, it must be remembered that the technique whereby "verbal images become visual as the ideas are developed, so that something spoken becomes something seen"³ was in itself a primary device of the morality drama: a device which, among other things, was responsible for the way in which the Biblical imagery equating the temporally mighty with those whose pride God was to ironically put down resulted in the actual dramatic-allegorical representation of sinful mankind as a worldly heroic potentate.

There was a related aspect to the making flesh of metaphor in morality drama which Marlowe also employed. When representing a dramatized metaphor for sin (such as comic buffoonery or violence) the morality dramatist allowed the attraction which such sequences held for his audience to become an integral part of the play's homiletic impact. Thus an audience's delight in comedy or stage violence served to confirm that audience's attraction to the sinful states of being for which those sections of dramatic action were metaphors. Accordingly

1) See N. Brooke, "Marlowe the Dramatist," in Brown and Harris, eds., Elizabethan Theatre, p. 90.

2) See J. R. Mulryne and S. Fender, "Marlowe and the 'Comic Distance'," in Brian Morris, ed., Christopher Marlowe, Mermaid Critical Commentaries, London, 1968, pp. 54-55. Note that a chariot pulled by kings appears as a metaphorical illustration of Fortune's fickleness in Liberality and Prodigality, line 242 and ff., Malone Society Reprints, Oxford, 1913.

3) P. Neuss, "Active and Idle Language: Dramatic Images in Mankind," in Denny, ed., Medieval Drama, p. 44.

the recognition that such facets of temporal life are attractive to them places the audience in a morally embarrassing position whereby their responses to the play actually confirm for them the alluring nature of the sins which they must guard against.¹ Occasionally Marlowe uses this technique in a way which seems, superficially at least, to conform to the usage of the morality dramatists. Thus, in Faustus, the play of Marlowe's most obviously allied to the morality form, Marlowe allies the audience to the damnable delight in trivia which overtakes his protagonist by having them laugh at the buffoonery with which Faustus amuses himself during his life of power. In this way the audience are compromised in much the same way as the audience who delight in the exhibition of a mankind figure's career in sin. More usually, however, Marlowe seems to have enjoyed manipulating his audience into morally embarrassing positions by playing off their ethical expectations arising from the morality play forms or metaphors which he used against elements in his drama which either invalidated those expectations, or else rendered them so unacceptable as to make the morality form itself appear ethically obscene.² In this way the audience are compromised but the drama does not provide them with any solid homiletic advice on the way to achieve a more acceptable stance. Unlike the morality play Marlowe often seems intent on exposing cant, hypocrisy and sophistry without supplying any obvious suggestions about how such failings might be overcome.

Certainly in Tamburlaine the audience is compromised by Marlowe's refusal to establish a correlation between the play's formally anticipated meaning as a descendant of the type of play represented by Mundus et Infans, exposing heroic sin, and other, highly amoral,

1) See Neuss, loc cit and passim, also Potter, The English Moral Play, pp. 34-37.

2) eg. Brooke, "Marlowe the Dramatist," suggests that the ending of Edward II represents a challenge to "moralize this one if you dare." p. 104.

features of the play existing within the general moral format. In fact Marlowe makes no unambiguous assertion of meaning for Tamburlaine's heroism despite the seemingly obvious ironic reversal of his death.¹ Thus, while in Mundus et Infans Manhood's heroic career of conquest is unequivocally evil, however superficially attractive the image of an adventurous knight might be to members of the audience, in Tamburlaine, though humanistic appreciation of the protagonist's martial prowess is undoubtedly embarrassed by its concomitant wickedness, there is no valid sense in which the moral constant of the play's ethical system may be felt to rest on the unambiguous fact of heroic evil because in many instances cruelty and violence seem either to be genuinely celebrated or else partially mitigated by the idea that those being attacked are being punished for their own equally great sinfulness. There is no simple moral formula against which to interpret the literal and metaphorical implications of Tamburlaine within his play because Marlowe seems to consciously allow a heterogeneous mass of opinion and interpretation to surround his protagonist, and, while no one opinion receives constant affirmation, taken together they all serve to modify the seeming ethical lucidity of a structure which depicts a cruel warrior hero eventually dying at the height of his power and pride as a result of a mysterious ailment.

Thus Tamburlaine is, in medieval terms, a cruel, tyrannical evil, he is a de contemptu mundi illustration of the pride and fall of princes, he is a scourge of God, and a typically amoral pagan conqueror hero.² In contrast to this he emerges as an archetypal practitioner of Machiavellian virtù, as a Herculean hero who controls Fortune, and as

1) Thus Mulryne and Fender write that "the audience's response is balanced in uncertainty between opposing attitudes . . . because it cannot react 'for' or 'against' the hero . . . the play's function as a model of absurdity." ("Marlowe and the 'Comic Distance'," p.64.).

2) cf. Tamburlaine Part One, V.i.347-371., III.iii.40-60., V.i.445-478. All reference to Marlowe made to Fredson Bowers, ed., The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe, 2 vols., 2nd edition, Cambridge, 1981.

a symbol of the new humanistic veneration of man's aspiring mind.¹ The point about all these aspects of Tamburlaine's dramatic image is not that they cannot be synthesised into one intellectual system (indeed as Roy Battenhouse has shown the medieval concept of the scourge of God himself being scourged can provide a cohesive rationale for the career of Tamburlaine²) but that Marlowe himself offers little indication as to how or if they are to be so reconciled. Instead medieval and Renaissance attitudes towards heroism are left in a deliberately raw state of opposition, so that the holding of any one opinion of Tamburlaine is compromised by others or by events which invalidate that opinion. Thus Renaissance and medieval are not so much synthesised as allowed to work in a creative opposition which results in the emergence of a composite hero whose precise significance is as ambiguous as secular history itself.³ Commonplace formulas are continually questioned by events and eventually even rationalizations such as the scourge of God idea are undercut, not only by the possibility that all the events of the play, including Tamburlaine's supposed retributive death, have no *supernatural* significance whatsoever, and are merely to be evaluated in mundane terms, but also by the diametrically opposed idea which is increasingly implied by Tamburlaine's poetry, which suggests that his heroic spirit renders him too ethereal for mortality and that his expiration is a prelude not to retribution but to an ultra-Pelagianistic apotheosis.⁴

The extent to which this pervasive relativism and deliberate erosion of moral viewpoint is seen as estimable or significant depends

1) cf. Tamburlaine, Part One, I.ii.174-186., II.vii.12-29. See also Waith, The Herculean Hero, pp.49-64.

2) See R.W. Battenhouse, "Tamburlaine, the 'Scourge of God'," revised version in I. Ribner, ed., Tamburlaine, New York, 1974, pp.187-200.

3) "Tamburlaine, so far from interpreting life by indicating its form, appears as formless and incoherent as life itself." (Una Ellis-Fermor, Christopher Marlowe, London, 1927, p.44.)

4) cf. D.J. Palmer, "Elizabethan Tragic Heroes," in Brown and Harris, eds., Elizabethan Theatre, p.28 with Tamburlaine, Part Two, V.iii.115-125.

perhaps on the extent to which Marlowe is trusted as an artist. *The view to be put forward*, however, is that even *though its results may* be impressive, Marlowe's iconoclastic desire to dramatize a clash of medieval and renaissance, moral and amoral, Christian and pagan, ideas within a morality form, but without offering the degree of authorial guidance implied by the form, represents a use of ideas as opponents¹ which *was* alien to the cultural and ideological synthesis which *will be shown to have been so characteristic a feature* of Shakespearean heroic drama.

As *intimated above*, Horestes also abandons an overt formal emphasis on the eschatological implications of its protagonist's heroism. Unlike Tamburlaine, however, the play does not totally undercut the possibility that the ethical absolutes suggested by the form provide a reliable moral guide to the play's meaning. As *will be demonstrated*, however, Pickering does not allow the ultimates of pagan revenge ethics (which are those secular values in the play replacing the more traditional Christian ultimates of the genre as a whole) to remain absolutely unquestioned within the drama, nor does he allow Horestes's revenger heroism to emerge from the play without its being subjected to anti-heroic minimizations. The plot of Horestes, though nominally classical, had already received a medieval colouration in Caxton's translation of Raoul Lefevre's Recuyell of the Historyes of of Troye.² This fact in itself may partially account for the spirit of synthesis between Christian and pagan attitudes and images which *the play shows Pickering to have* brought to his retelling of the myth of Horestes's revenge on Clytemnestra and Egisthus for the killing of his father Agamemnon.

In fact, there are many obstacles put forward by the play which serve to detract from Horestes's own sense that his "cruell reuengment"³

1) See Fermor, Christopher Marlowe, p.24 and ff., esp. p.36.

2) ed., H.O. Sommer, London, 1894. See pp.684-687 for the material in Horestes.

3) See the title page of the 1567 edition in D.Seltzer, ed., Horestes, Malone Society Reprint, Oxford, 1961; to which all future reference is made.

on his mother is justified. Firstly, there is the play's technique of presenting mock-heroic revengements in seemingly ironic, deflatory, contrast to the main revenge plot.¹ All of the play's revengers are united by the fact that they are prompted to take revenge by the Vice, Revenge personified, though masquerading under the name of Courage. Thus Horestes, along with the more overtly comic dupes, would seem to be exposed as being a typical image of human folly and evil within the morality tradition; especially as his deception involves him in the use of savage heroic violence, and, thus, further associates him with the metaphorically damning implications of the man of war within the morality form. Indeed, Horestes *would seem* to be linked to the most foolish of all the mankind abstractions; the character who allows the equivocal nature of evil to deceive him into thinking an evil is a good. As with Moros in Longer Pickering seems to suggest that Horestes is already psychologically *predisposed* to fall prey to the equivocations of evil and the sophistry which would provide a veneer of ethical respectability for his more bestial human impulses. Thus, even before the Vice enters, we see that he has decided on revenge against the arguments of Nature, and that he is asking the gods not if, but when he shall take revenge: "O godes of war, gide me a right, when I shall war begyn."² When Revenge tells him that he is Courage Horestes further illustrates his predisposition to accept the equivocation by joyously proclaiming that he feels the quality that Courage personifies (actually lust for revenge) flooding through his veins: "My thinkes I fele corrage prouokes, my wil for wa^ard againe//For to reuenge my fathers death, and infamey so great, //Oh how my hart doth boyle in dede, [†] firey perching [†] keate, //Corrage now welcom by the godes, I find thou art in dede, //A messenger of heauenly gostes, come

1) See Russell, "Romantic Narrative Plays," in Brown and Harris, eds., Elizabethan Theatre, pp. 124-125.

2) line 21g.

let vs now procede."¹

In this way it would seem that the play, although secular, opens with every intention of echoing the religious morality drama in its association of the heroic psyche with delusion and evil. The drama goes on *further* to undercut the heroic image of Horestes in a way which is also typical of the heroic minimization found in Christian religious drama. As the above outburst from Horestes illustrates, although Horestes pays deference to the pagan pantheon, he reveals exactly the same propensity to equate his own will and his own estimations of right and wrong with the will of his gods as was shown to be so common a delusion of heroic man within the Christian tradition. In effect Horestes misguidedly assumes that he acts in a state of grace and that the "heavenly gostes" endorse his own desires. In Christian drama to presume so much when contemplating such a violent action would have been a spiritually precarious error. This determination to follow the sanctity of his own will is further exposed when, after raising doubts as to the legality of the proposed revenge, Idumeus is told by the Vice that Horestes cannot be swayed because he will "haue his owne wyll." Revenge even goes on to confirm this by saying, in Horestes's presence, that he had little part in bringing about his desire to take retributive action.² As in Longer the Vice can be confident enough in the protagonist's will to sin to deny his own part in bringing about that desire. Throughout the play the indications are that Horestes continues to equate his personal thirst for vengeance with the will of the gods and with the idea of temporal justice: "My hāds do thyrst her blod to haue, nought can my mrd. cōtent//Tyll *ȝ* on her I haue perfourmed, oh gods your iust iudgmēt."³ It is noteworthy that Nature, Horestes's major critic

1) lines 249-253.

2) See lines 291-298.

3) lines 484-485.

within the play, attacks him on just this point; that his wilful assertion of truth may in fact be judged to be no more than an aggrandization of his own evil will: "Leue now I say Horestes myne, & to my wordes giue place, // Lest that of men this facte of thine, may iudged for to be: // Ne lawe in south, ne iustys eke, but cruell tyraney."¹

Despite these admonitions Horestes leads a destructive army into Mycenae and takes his revenge on his mother and her lover. It may, therefore, be felt to be surprising that most criticism suggests that the play endorses Horestes's revenge and his military action. While such interpretations leave the anti-heroic features of the drama unexplained, such conclusions are not unjustifiable. As the consensus of critics have observed, little attempt is made to *implicate Horestes satirically* in the overtly mock-heroic scenes.² Moreover, not only does the play contain no subsequent mention of the protagonist's beguilement after it has taken place, nor is there any positive attempt to alert either the audience or the hero to the ironies of his trust in Courage,³ but the play also goes on to sanction Horestes's actions by invoking the extraordinary moral and political obligations incumbent upon a prince.⁴ Furthermore, Pickering demonstrably alters his source to portray Horestes in a more favourable light. Thus, for example, Horestes, like Henry V, is made to offer clemency to Mycenae before his troupes are allowed to attack. While on this occasion the offer is rejected and a bloodthirsty siege ensues, Caxton allows no such Renaissance magnanimity to his warlike avenger. Pickering also humanizes Horestes during the killing of his mother which is made a far less savage, more joyless, conscience-ridden act than in Caxton.⁵

1) lines 514-516.

2) See Russell, *op cit*, p. 122.

(3) See Palmer, *op cit*, p. 17.

4) *eg.* See lines 311-314.

(5) See Bevington, *Tudor Drama*, pp. 151-152

The reason for this seeming impasse between morality play condemnation and the legalistic-political upholding of Horestes's act may be traced to one or more aspects of the play's composition. It might for instance be felt that the metaphorical associations of the heroic protagonist within the moral orientation of the form clash with the particular metaphorical implications given by Pickering to his hero during the course of the play; which required him to function as an image of political retribution for treason. Rather than accuse Pickering or the hybrid form of causing confusion, it *could be argued* that the ambivalence ~~was~~ deliberate; the result of a cautious desire to avoid seeming too partisan in offering parallels with the analogously problematic moral/political dilemma then facing Elizabeth over the issue of Mary Queen of Scots.¹ It might even have been that an ethical lightness of touch compatible with court presentation and *child* drama was sought for. More censoriously, of course, the inconsistencies may be felt to be the result of Pickering's indifferent dramatic skills. While not wishing to deny the possible contribution of any of the above factors to the problem posed by the play, it is intended to propose an alternative hypothesis which might help to explain the play's paradoxical attitude towards Horestes. Indeed, if it can be felt that Pickering had the talent to write such a play as the one suggested by the interpretation to follow, then it will be agreed that the paradoxical presentation of Horestes is not the result of a flaw in the dramatist's depiction of character, but rather the outcome of a dramatically innovative presentation of classical antiquity as a world defined not by anachronistic Christian values, but by limitations of moral and spiritual insight compatible

1) Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, pp. 150-151 discusses the parallel between Agamemnon/Clytemnestra/Horestes and Darnley/Mary Queen of Scots/Elizabeth in the debate over whether Elizabeth should execute Mary. He suggests that Pickering was both trying to commend Elizabeth's humane instincts and also to recommend the execution.

with a civilization for which the revealed truths of the Christian religion had no meaning. Whether the conclusions reached will be accepted for Horestes or not, it will be found that the methodology used in the discussion will have important implications for the treatment given to Titus Andronicus and particularly Troilus and Cressida in the chapters to follow.

Horestes is an unusual play, even among hybrid morality drama, in that it avoids any explicit reference to the Christian God or to Christian ethics. The absolutes of the play are seen by its characters in terms of the pagan gods of classical antiquity and of the law of nature and of nations. Thus, by not imposing the anachronistic machinery of Christian redemption and retribution onto its mythical material, Horestes presents a recognizably pagan heroic culture. As has been shown, within the dimensions of these three terms a conflict exists. Political truth, or the law of nations, along with the intuited will of the gods are felt to condone revenge, while the law of nature (equivalent to the natural law which Aquinas held man might discover unaided by grace and the more profound truths of scriptural revelation) suggested otherwise. The play allows no higher absolutes to exist, so that when a conflict of values arises, there is no recourse to an authority whose decision can be held to be definitive. It is noticeable that when Nature opposes Horestes she is not able to say that God will deplore his action, only that men may come to find it wrong. There is, in fact, no suggestion that the pagan gods are the ultimate arbiters of human morality; they never appear on stage (as in The Peddler's Prophecy) and the fact that their only influence on a character comes through Revenge's deception, combined with Nature's insistence that divine sanction is often merely an excuse for wilful self-justification, might be felt to suggest to a Christian audience that even the most pious pagan had no absolute divine ultimates, only

those which he capriciously and inconsistently imagined to be divine ultimates.

Thus, given a man's role as creator of his own view of the divine will, along with his innate political and natural-moral vision (all of which may pull him in contrary directions), the play depicts a relativistic pagan society whose ultimates rest on the value judgments of its leaders. It is with such a vision that Horestes ends. In debate Horestes argues that his lack of mercy is excused by his divine sanction and by the corresponding lack of mercy shown by his enemies.¹ This view is upheld by Idumeus and Nestor, who even offers to fight anyone who thinks Horestes not praiseworthy. Menalaus, however, invoking the natural law, feels that it was wrong to murder a mother. This disagreement between the leaders is not resolved. Without any means of suggesting that his ethics countermand theirs, Menalaus can do no more than register his disagreement and consent to marry his daughter to Horestes so as to secure the peace which is both politically and naturally desirable.

If Pickering was attempting to expose the lack of overriding moral and spiritual absolutes available to the pagan who could not avoid the taking of revenge because he did not have access, for example, to the explicit scriptural injunction against the taking of revenge, and so had no firm values against which to measure action in a world of moral ambiguity, then it *would be reasonable to expect him to have alerted his audience* that such was his intent. As indicated above, Pickering does not develop a sustained ironic method whereby the hero's pagan revenge absolutes are undercut either by other conflicting pagan absolutes or by Christian moral standards inserted into the play in explicit opposition to the revenging ethos of the protagonist. It is, however, possible that a more subtle ironic method is in operation

1) The debate takes place from line 1032 ff.

which seeks not to subvert the pagan values which are the inescapable product of their milieu, but *facitly to* expose the gap between the fragmentary and unsatisfactory pagan values and the Christian interpretation which would be applicable to the action were it to have taken place in a contemporary Christian culture. Thus, when the action of the play itself is over, the character Truth appears to assert what seems to be a Christian vision of divine retribution at the hands of one God, with the further assertion that in time all error will be exposed:

He that *leadeth* his lyfe, as his phanse doth lyke,
Though for a whyle, the same he maye hyde:
Yee Truth, the daughter of Tyme, wyll it seke,
And so in a tyme, it wyll be discryde.
Yet in such tyme as it can not, be denyed:
But receaue dew *punnishment*, as god shall se,
For the faute comytted, most conuenient to be.¹

Even at the conclusion of his drama, however, it will be observed that Pickering *refrains from stating exactly* whose fancy and punishment God has been able to reveal in time.

The most obvious interpretation of Truth's comment on the play is that it is Clytemnestra who is to be thought of as exposed and punished by God. If this is accepted then there still remains an ironic gap between Horestes's actions and the Christian view of them, because Horestes is revealed to have been following his own freely-willed, and, therefore, potentially evil, desire to obtain revenge, while at the same time enacting the will of a God of whom he knows nothing. In Christian terms this implies that Horestes may still be punished for the evil committed in being the unconscious scourge of God. There is, however, an alternative interpretation of Truth's comment. As the play has shown it is Horestes who has most conspicuously followed his 'phansey' and succeeded in hiding it. Clytemnestra in the play is known to all as a malefactress; it is Horestes who is shown as following a personal thirst for revenge and giving that impulse respectability by hiding it behind the sophisticated

title courage and the false (though sincere) belief in divine sanction. Furthermore, it is Horestes, not Clytemnestra, who succeeds in gaining the support of his heroic society, which is then revealed as having insufficient moral resources to indict him for the evils of revenge, matricide and military cruelty. Possibly, therefore, Pickering's tentative suggestion is that it was only in the course of time that truth-Christian truth- entered man's moral universe, and gave him both sufficient moral insight and direct commandments to alert man to the dangers of the holding of such typically heroic fancies as those which suggest that a prince might be justified in taking bloody private revenge against his own mother and his own nation. Thus, whereas Horestes is comparatively, though it must be stressed not absolutely, justified in terms of the moral resources of his civilization, in Christian terms he is revealed as culpable and liable to be punished by a law more binding than any known to him.

While it may be doubted that Pickering wrote such a play as the one postulated above, it should also be remembered that what has been suggested is no more than a dramatization of the dilemma which is consciously debated by Hamlet. As the chapter on Hamlet below will further indicate, the problem can be seen as being a conflict of pagan and Christian, but more broadly, it becomes one of contrasting heroic metaphors. There is a sense in which the revenging hero can be seen as an image of human justice and the victory of good over evil. As in Horestes and in the original Amleth myth this metaphor is most successful in an heroic society or work of art which is not encumbered by moral or religious injunctions against enacting the deed which defines the metaphor. When moral or particularly Christian sensibilities begin to impinge on the consideration of that heroic act, as for Hamlet, then the original heroic metaphor becomes also a metaphor of human evil. The morality tradition has been instrumental in forcibly bringing this aspect of the metaphor before the Elizabethan mind, but, as the

discussion of the relationship between Hamlet and the Aeneid will also reveal, the idea that the hero could be a metaphor of human evil was not unknown to pagan heroic literature. Hamlet's answer to the problem was that the Christian might only emulate the heroic literary metaphor of human justice in 'real life' if he was convinced that he avoided taking upon himself the metaphorical associations of the heroic image of human evil by being in a state of grace or divine justification. This, of course, was also the solution to the problem adopted by Aeneas and Horestes. The retrospective Christian moralist, however, can see that the pagan's faith that he obeyed the gods was a delusion and that in *eschatological* terms even the most pious pagan became an emblem of human evil.

It is in these terms that Horestes becomes a potentially important link with Shakespearean practice. Whether it is agreed that Pickering casts a retrospective Christian irony onto his play or not it certainly seems likely that he attempted to dramatize a vision of the political and moral limitations of pagan heroic society, perhaps so as to indicate the political and moral superiority of the choices open to Elizabeth. These points only emerge by inference, however, and Pickering has also gone some way towards allowing the mythical heroic values of Horestes their own relative historical cogency. Horestes is a better man than the morality tradition could allow him to be precisely because he has no access to the Christian God. According to the dictates of his own heroic code he acts properly. He is not Caxton's savage but a man who obeys an unenlightened code with religious deference and piety. He is not consciously machiavellian or sophistic, and though we can see these and other anti-heroic failings attach themselves to him, in a pagan heroic play he is able to function as a metaphor of human nobility. What follows will discuss these intuitions with respect to Shakespeare.

CHAPTER FOUR: Henry V and the Renaissance heroic metaphor.

Even if the mystery cycles and saints' plays are overlooked, the existence of comparatively early dramas (such as Fulgens and Lucrece or Heywood's debate plays) based on non-allegorical characters, must qualify any overly simplistic Darwinian view of the English drama as illustrating an empirical line of progression from the medieval theatre of abstract personification through to the Elizabethan achievements in character portrayal. It is, however, also true that the Elizabethan stage displays a typically Renaissance-humanistic interest in individual character operating in specific, localized, situations which the morality drama, with its homiletic desire to present broadly representative characters, does not share. Accordingly, commentators have found Shakespeare's drama, with its appreciation of the rich diversity of human character, and its characters' preoccupation with their own identities, to be a product of the Renaissance feeling for the newly-appreciated potentialities of man.¹ Given this truism of Elizabethan drama, the objection must be met that while it might be permissible to treat the warrior hero figure in the morality drama as a locus of abstract ideas, the same treatment is not justifiable in a later period, when each dramatized warrior is conceived as an individual whose significance, therefore, lies in his own character and not in any abstract generic view of the warrior's function.

While readily concurring with the sentiment that Shakespeare's heroes are all different people, it must be conceded that the warriors among them are at least linked by their **common** calling, which, even in character drama, may be invested with a significance independent of any one of its practitioners. Furthermore, the intrinsic likelihood

1) See L.G. Salingar, "The Elizabethan Literary Renaissance," in B. Ford, ed., The Pelican Guide to English Literature: Volume Two, The Age of Shakespeare, 2nd revised edition, Harmondsworth, 1977, p. 104.

that Shakespeare would retain some feeling for the warrior as a repository of abstract ideas is greatly increased by the fact that the warrior was not only a figure of archetypal significance in the medieval religious drama, but also took on equally generic associations and implications in all heroic societies and the literature which those societies inspired.¹ Thus, not only were there comparatively homogeneous visions of the warrior to be found throughout the Graeco-Roman heroic tradition with which Shakespeare was either directly or indirectly familiar, but, as E.M.Waith has shown, the chivalric literature of the middle ages, which represented an aristocratic-Christian sophistication of an earlier heroic-Christian literature, and with which Shakespeare was also familiar, saw all of its heroes as being united by an overriding concept of human greatness, which was, in many ways, as abstract as that found in the morality drama, and according to which "the ideal knight was, in effect, the ideal man."²

On purely external evidence the probability that Shakespeare was conscious of a generic unity existing between all of his warriors, whether they were pagan or Christian, admirable or reprehensible, is suggested by the fact that contemporary English literary theory insisted that the hero in literature was properly a didactic composite of ideas of human excellence, and that, furthermore, all poetry from Homer onwards which contained such figures was involved in essentially the same process of creating superhuman archetypes, either of all, or of some specific aspect of virtue and morality.³ As is apparent to an

1) See Bowra's discussion of "the different metaphysical and theoretical outlooks which the conception of a hero presupposes" in Heroic Poetry, p.91 and ff.

2) Ideas of Greatness, London, 1971, p.15.

3) Chapman was especially outspoken in his view that the heroes of Homer's epics afforded a proto-Christian guide to ethical conduct. This will be discussed fully in chapter 7 below, but see his apology "To the Understander" printed in preface to his translation Achilles Shield (London, 1598) and reprinted in G.G.Smith, ed., Elizabethan Critical Essays, 2 vols., London, 1904, vol.2, pp.304-307.

age with a greater understanding of the heroic society of Homeric epic, and a less explicitly Christian interpretation of the Aeneid than the Elizabethan era, such a theoretical view was inclined to lead to an even more overtly moral, more comprehensively homogeneous, vision of the warrior hero and the ideas which he represented in Western literature than actually existed. Indeed, so syncretized was the Elizabethan attitude towards the hero of heroic literature, that recent scholarship has begun to challenge the methodology of earlier studies which had sought to distinguish classical from neo-pagan or chivalric from Christian concepts of honour and heroism in Elizabethan writings on the subject. It is now generally agreed that "such dichotomized categories" ignore the essential homogeneity which the era imposed onto an admittedly eclectic variety of heroes through its overriding moral-Christian outlook on literature and society.¹ Instead the new orthodoxy has been to emphasise "the comprehensive unity of the heroic tradition" during the Elizabethan and Jacobean period.²

The initial observation needs to be made, however, that while it may be possible to view the whole heroic tradition in homogeneous terms from within the auspices of a flexible Christian vision, this does not preclude the possibility that the raw material of the tradition might sometimes prove intractable or contradictory to aspects of Christian thought; nor does it mean that the Christian tradition may not offer more than one interpretation of any aspect of a warrior's activities. Furthermore, while it is inevitable that a universal religious system would incorporate all human activity within its confines, and, therefore, would be able to see pagan literary figures as analogues of the Christian moral or even spiritual message,

1) N. Council, When Honour's at the Stake, London, 1973, note 2, p. 33. Council's attack is on the methodology employed by Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honour.

2) Waith, Ideas of Greatness, p. 29.

from another point of view it is equally inevitable that the mechanism would exist to distinguish between the true Christian alive in the era of grace, and those pagan literary figures who provided that true Christian with examples which the Scriptures also, more authoritatively, upheld. It will be found that even the most humanistic of the literary critics to be discussed below make these and other qualifications when analysing pagan and Christian warrior heroes.

In a well-known passage from An Apology For Poetry Sir Philip Sidney expounds his conception of poetry as an art which may transcend the limits of nature by making its creations, especially its heroes, surpass the possibilities of natural man in their generic-didactic excellence according to the poet's idea of abstract virtue.¹ In this respect heroes such as Pylades (a constant friend), Orlando (a valiant man), Cyrus (a perfect prince) and "so excellent a man every way as Virgil's Aeneas" are defined by an idea or fore-conceit of the work in which they appear.² Sidney's belief that the idea informing heroic characters will always be an ideal is made manifest by his suggestion that the poet delivers them forth "in such excellency as he had imagined them," rather than by modelling them on the imperfect potentialities of living men.³ In one sense such heroes represent essential goodness, or else an archetypal idea of perfection which is almost inconceivable in Nature. In this role of ethical maker, however, Sidney is quick to establish the idea that the efficacy of pagan poetry in this respect is the result of the poet's membership within the Christian brotherhood of all men:

Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature;

1) See A Defence of Poetry, ed. J.A. van Dorsten, Oxford, 1966, pp.23-24, where the "brazen" world of nature and the "golden" world of poetry are contrasted. All further reference to Apology is made to this edition.

2) ibid, p. 24.

3) ibid, p. 24.

but rather give right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature; which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings — with no small arguments to the credulous of that first accursed fall of Adam, since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it. 1

If Sidney is Platonic in his conception of poetry as a vehicle for the presentation of ethically unattainable poetic ideals, then he is also typically Elizabethan in his desire to assimilate his belief into an overriding Christian Weltanschauung.

As a result of his Christian view of art Sidney did not wish to completely abandon the didactic efficacy of poetry, and, although he allowed Christianity to merge with neo-platonism to explain the unique presence of supra-human ideals in poetry, he also propounded the Aristotelian view of poetic ideals as being ethically attainable states which prompt the reader to emulation.² Thus, not only do the poet's heroic ideas constitute pure being, they also hold out the possibility of one's becoming similarly pure, and at least, through "delightful teaching," are able to "draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of."³ As Sidney's praise of Pylades and Cyrus illustrates, these poetic archetypes did not necessarily have to be warrior heroes; but, such was the Renaissance veneration for the epic, "the summe and ground of all Poetrie,"⁴ that the epic form in both its contemporary and its classical manifestations was seen as supremely justifying the truth of all Renaissance poetic theory. Thus, although the English conception of what exactly constituted epic (or heroic) poetry was widely catholic by contemporary Italian or French standards, incorporating

1) Apology, pp. 24-25.

2) For a discussion of Sidney's merging of Platonic with Aristotelian/Horatian critical theory see J.W.H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance, London, 1947, pp. 116 ff.

3) Apology, pp. 27-28.

4) William Webbe, A Discourse of English Poetrie, in Smith, ed., Critical Essays I, p. 255.

histories such as Xenophon's Cyropedia, medieval romance chronicles, and even patriotic panegyric poetry,¹ this esteem for epic still ensured that it was pre-eminently warrior heroes who were seen, almost as a matter of humanistic faith, as being supremely illustrative of both aspects of the poet's art: the creation of supra-human archetypes of virtue and the depiction of moral examples to uplift and **stimulate the reader into** emulation. When Sidney begins to discuss epic poetry he writes:

There rests the Heroical.— whose very name (I think.) should daunt all **backbiters**: for by what conceit can a tongue be directed to speak evil of that which draweth with **him** no less champions than Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas, Turnus, **Tydeus, and Rinaldo?**— who doth not only teach and move to a truth, but teacheth and moveth to the most high and excellent truth; who maketh magnanimity and justice shine **through** all misty fearfulnes and foggy desires; . . . But if anything be already said in the defence of sweet poetry, all concurrerth to the maintaining the heroical, which is not **only** a kind, but the best and most accomplished kind of poetry. For as the image of each action stirreth and instructeth the mind, so the lofty image of such worthies most inflameth the mind with desire to be worthy, and informeth with counsel how to be worthy. 2

The fact that the word 'Heroical' was the common Elizabethan word for what we now term epic seems to endorse the idea that it was the hero who formed the basis of epic theory throughout the period.

That "the most high and excellent truth" to which Sidney refers is the truth of the Christian religion is confirmed by the explicit statement to this effect made by Warrington in A Brief Apology for Poetry prefixed to his translation of Ariosto's Orlando Furioso. There he views heroic poetry as a delightful introduction to the truths of religion; to truths which, ironically, ultimately invalidate the premises on which poetry is allowed as useful:

I **can** not deny but to vs that are Christians, in respect of the high end of all, which is the health of our soules, not only Poetrie but al other studies of Philosophy are in a manner vaine

1) See E.M.W. Tillyard, The English Epic and Its Background, London, 1954, pp. 251-258.

2) Apology, p. 47.

and superflous, yea (as the wise man saith) whotsoever is under the sunne is vanitie of vanities, and nothing but vanitie. But sith we liue with men & not with saints, and because few men can embrace this strict and stoicall diuinitie, or rather, indeed, for that the holy scriptures, in which those high mysteries of our saluation are contained, are a deepe & profound studie and not subiect to euerie weake capacitie, no nor to the highest wits and iudgments, except they be first illuminat . by Gods spirit or instructed by his teachers and preachers: therefore we do first read some other authors, making them as it were a looking glasse to the eyes of our minde, and then after we haue gathered more strength, we enter into profounder studies of higher mysteries, hauing first as it were enabled our eyes by long beholding the sunne in a bason of water at last to looke vpon the sunne it selfe. . . . If then we may . . . spend some of our young yeares in studies of humanitie, what better and more meete studie is there for a young man then Poetrie? specially Heroicall Poesie, that with her sweet statelnesse doth erect the mind & lift it vp to the consideration of the highest matters, and allureth them that of themselues would otherwise loth them to take and swallow & digest the holosome precepts of Philosophie, and many times even of the true diuinitie, ¹

Possibly because Harrington took a more defensive stance than many contemporary critics, he is more explicit about the role of poetry in Christian teaching. His sentiments, however, are not unusual: poetry imparts—in diluted form—deep truths of religion, morality and philosophy, and the warrior hero of either classical or Christian epic is a figurative example of the mysteries and values of Christian life.

The irony behind Harrington's defence; that the truths to be gleaned from heroic poetry, in that they are otherworldly and ascetic in implication, serve to undercut the worldly orientation of the poem itself, reveals a contradiction that is latent in much Elizabethan criticism. Throughout, the tendency of the critics was to abstract the warrior away from his concrete historical or mythical poetic setting and to interpret his actions in generalized allegorical, anagogical or even mystical moral and religious terms. It is, in fact, in this typically medieval vein that Harrington continues his justification. Citing the myth of Perseus's killing of the Gorgon and his subsequent

1) In Smith, ed., Critical Essays II, pp. 197-198.

ascent to heaven as an example of the way in which ancient poets "did of purpose conceale . . . deepe mysteries of learning"¹ in their fables, he goes on to interpret the various levels of meaning which he feels the myth reveals to the attentive reader. Firstly, the myth illustrates how a man, on killing a tyrant, is exalted by other men for his virtue. Even more generally the myth is to be read as an allegory of how heavenly-inspired virtue conquers earthly sin. Thirdly the myth reveals *the spiritual* victory of the child of God over his earthly nature culminating in his achieving a state of human perfection. Lastly, the myth is seen as suggesting the ascent to heaven of man's angelic nature; the final stage in an increasingly transcendental series of interpretation. Although *Harington's* analysis covers a wide range of human experience it is noticeable that at all levels he views Perseus as a representative of goodness fighting evil, and, therefore, as an emblem of the victorious forces of God in the cosmic battle against all forms of evil. While there is no need to question its sincerity, such a view was forced upon the Elizabethan critics who insisted on justifying pagan heroic activities in moral and religious terms, because, as many puritan critics were only too aware, if the matter of heroic poetry was given a more literal reading than its moral and religious significance became far less obvious. Important in this respect is the fact that *Harington* concedes that Christian epic, such as the Orlando Furioso, was capable of a more overtly didactic emphasis than a work such as the Aeneid in which pagan gods abound, and which as a consequence can only yield Christian truth through abstraction.² Roger Ascham, a critic less inclined to tolerate heroic literature as a means of delightful teaching, insisted that there was no sound instruction to be had even in Christian heroic poetry whose chivalric subject matter, as revealed

1)Smith,ed.,Critical Essays II,p.203.The analysis of the Perseus myth follows this observation by way of confirmation.

2)See p.214.

by Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur, was profoundly immoral and un-Christian: "the whole pleasure of which booke standeth in two speciall poyntes, in open mans slaughter and bold bawdrye: In which booke those be counted the noblest **K**nights that do kill most men without any **quar**ell, and commit foulest aduoulters by sutlest shiftes."¹

Even the apologists for heroic literature were aware that the characteristic activity of the warrior was potentially destructive of the image of perfection which they thought necessary in an epic hero. Thus, Sidney insists that if the poet is working correctly he should remove all possible ambiguity from his hero's battles; making his cause obviously right, his actions, therefore, virtuous, and his opponents worthy of nothing but hatred. The didactic purity thus achieved illustrates how the poet's function is superior to that of the historian, who must follow the morally ambiguous events of the past and cannot, therefore, depict a world in which all events and actions promote a beneficial ethical awareness in his reader: "If the poet do his part aright, he will show you in Tantalus, Atreus, and such like, nothing that is not to be shunned; in Cyrus, Aeneas, Ulysses, each thing to be followed; where the historian, bound to tell things as **things** were, cannot be liberall (without he will be poetical) of a perfect pattern, **but, as** in Alexander or Scipio himself, show **doings**, some to be liked, some to be disliked."² Thus, whereas the poet "ever **sets virtue** so out in her best **colours**," the historian "being **captived** to the truth of a foolish world, is many times a terror from well-doing, and an **encouragement** to unbridled wickedness."³

This distinction between history and art was an important one for Renaissance criticism, and one which had special implications for the

1) The Scholemaster, in Smith, ed., Critical Essays I, p. 4.

2) Apology, pp. 35 - 36.

3) Apology, pp. 37 - 38

figure of the epic hero. *It has been shown how* Sidney saw it as the poet's function to create archetypes who transcended the anti-heroic failings of post-lapsarian man. Thus, even when the poet incorporated historical or pseudo-historical characters into his heroic poem, it was his duty to distort the facts of his character's career and present him in ideal terms. This was exactly the process which, it was *believed*, Aeneas underwent in the hands of Virgil, who transformed him from the historical coward and traitor that he was in Dares and subsequent medieval redactions of the matter of Troy, into the perfect neo-Christian hero that he appeared to be in the Aeneid.¹ Thus, while the Elizabethan critics recognized as clearly as had St. Augustine that history did not function according to the laws of morality knowable to man, they did not, in theoretical terms, adopt Augustine's solution to the problem. Rather than postulate a divine historical morality unknowable to man they insisted on asserting a didactic theory of art, and, *therefore*, demanded that if history and its personages were to be represented in art then it had to be with a moral clarity and lack of ambiguity which was missing from life itself. The warrior, then, could be revealed as either good or bad, but, theoretically at least, never ambivalent.

While historical subjects continued to be seen as a proper subject for heroic poetry throughout the period,² the ultimate logic of Sidney's argument would suggest that the complex contingencies of historical events rendered them too complex to allow their wholesale depiction in heroic poetry without there being some governing artistic device within the poem through which the author could maintain the ethical precision necessary in epic literature. One means of depicting history

1) See Apology, pp. 167-168.

2) eg. George Puttenham describes "Heroick" poets as "such therefore as gave themselves to write long histories of the noble gests of kings & great Princes." (The Arte of English Poesie, Smith, ed., Critical Essays II, p. 26)

while retaining greater control over the subject matter than was possible in even the most rigorous reshaping of the past according to an ethical vision was to incorporate history obliquely into a non-historical, recognizably artificial, epic world over which the poet could maintain a far greater degree of ethical authority than when being governed, even remotely, by the incongruity of past events. Given this theoretical pressure it is not coincidental that the two major, self-consciously epic, works of the Elizabethan period take exactly this step and choose as their starting point the predominant medieval literary forms-romance and allegory-in which the ambiguities of history could be completely abandoned in favour of a structurally controllable presentation of virtue and vice and the ethically instructive conflict between them. Though both the Arcadia, as a romance, and The Faerie Queene, as a romance-allegory, contain analogues to historical situations and characters, and though both works make some claim to epic historicity,¹ neither attempt to portray a world of either past or present realism but allow the abstract, idealized, nature of their poetic world to comment indirectly on the less stylised historical events which they in part parallel. Given Sidney's concept of the idealized epic hero being made poetically superior to his historical counterpart, the question has been asked whether, for example, Spenser's Arthegall, a warrior hero signifying justice but identified with Lord Grey de Wilton,² embodies the concept of justice more unequivocally than his historical counterpart, or whether (in view of critical discomfort over the ethics of book five of The Faerie Queene) the actions of the historical figure were sufficiently questionable as to make even an allegorical justification of them seem

1)cf. The Faerie Queene III.iii.4 ff. Unless otherwise stated all reference is made to the Variorum edition, ed., E. Greenlaw, C. G. Osgood, and F. M. Padelford, 6 vols., Baltimore, 1932-1938.

2) See T. P. Roche jnr., ed., The Faerie Queene, Harmondsworth, 1978, p. 1190.

less than ideally just.¹

In general this is a question which Spenser himself does not address. It is, however, worth raising from the outset as the problem of idealizing a morally ambiguous historical warrior is one which Shakespeare confronts when, in Henry V, he dramatizes what purports to be historical verisimilitude in a form which took cognisance of the theory of Renaissance epic. For the moment it is important to recognise that, by placing the warrior hero in a context of ethical lucidity, both Spenser and Sidney minimize (though they do not obviate) Ascham's objection to the morality of heroic literature. Thus, though both admirable and despicable warriors in both works engage in "open mans slaughter" those characters deserving of the title warrior hero (the moral dimension being made implicit in the terms of the **heroic aggrandizement**) all fight unambiguously in the cause of Christian truth and justice. In this atmosphere the slaughter of their evil opponents becomes an extension of their personal moral dynamism and of the abstract superiority of cosmic goodness over evil. Thus, also in the fifth book of The Faerie Queene, Arthur fights with complete success and with an absolute assurance of right, on behalf of Belge against the oppression of Geryoneo. The episode is an allegorization of Britain's expedition against Spain in the Low Countries; an expedition in which Sir Philip Sidney actually lost his life at the battle of Zutphen.² When it is remembered that Arthur was actually the allegorical representative of Sidney then a good indication of the didactic superiority of Spenser's epic world over history emerges in that the actual historical campaign was in fact a noteworthy example of the moral confusion of history whereby an image of virtue died defending the right.

1) E.A.F. Watson, Spenser, London, 1967, p. 131, discusses the possibility that Spenser might have been writing too close to history to maintain his allegory successfully.

2) For the historical background see Roche, The Faerie Queene, p. 1205.

Spenser, of course, does not have Arthur killed, but instead shows him to be a fully justified agent of temporal retribution; one who conquers all his unchivalric opponents and sends their souls onto their "place of punishment."¹

Spenser ensures that the general abstract point about the victory of right over wrong is taken by his readers by explicitly stating that such was the significance of Arthur's victory:

It often fals in course of common life,
That right long time is ouerborne of wrong,
Through auarice, or powre, or guile, or strife,
That weakens her, and makes her party strong:
But Iustice, though her dome she doe prolong,
Yet at the last she will her owne cause right.
As by sad Belge seemes, whose wrongs though long
She suffred, yet at length she did requight,
And sent redresse thereof by this braue Briton Knight.²

After slaying Geryoneo Arthur makes the related point that the heroism of an act lies not in any value which violence or aggression or killing has in itself but in the righteousness of the cause. He says to Belge:

Deare Lady, deedes ought not be scand
By th'authors manhood, nor the doers might,
But by their trueth and by the causes right:
That same is it, which fought for you this day.³

Early on in the Arcadia Sidney likewise establishes the positive evangelical zeal which drives Pyrocles and Musidorus to move from one exercise of virtue to another:

. . . they determined in unknown order to see more of the world, and to employ those gifts, esteemed rare in them, to the good of mankind; and therefore would themselves . . . go privately to seek exercises of their virtue, thinking it not so worthy to be brought to heroical effects by fortune or necessity, like Ulysses and Aeneas, as by one's own choice and working. And so went they away from very unwilling people to leave them, making time haste itself to be a circumstance of their honour, and one place witness to another of the truth of their doings. 4

1) The Faerie Queene V.x.36.

2) ibid, V. xi. 1.

3) ibid, V. xi. 17.

4) ed., M. Evans, Harmondsworth, 1977, p.275.

Obviously, the image of the warrior hero as an abstract emblem of moral dynamism as well as a primary historical force promoting righteousness is a medieval-chivalric commonplace. The fact remains, however, that such heroic metaphors form an integral part of the Renaissance ethical humanism which is central to both works.

If either the Arcadia or The Faerie Queene maintained the poetic equation between heroism and man's ability to determine and fight for righteousness throughout the work without questioning its validity as a universal ethic in a world more complex than romance or allegory needed to be, then their iteration of so commonplace an idea would not be thought to carry profound implications for Shakespearean tragedy. In Spenser's epic in particular, however, there is a pervasive awareness of the implications of the heroic idea for the world outside the allegorical dimensions of his poem, and while this awareness never leads Spenser to deny the possibility of heroism in the contingent world, it does impel him to introduce numerous qualifications into the chivalric allegory, and it is these qualifications, which a consciously epic poet still felt constrained to make, which are of relevance to the idea of the heroic developed in Shakespearean tragedy. In one respect Spenser's allegorical form itself worked against his affirming his warrior heroes to be models for emulation outside the poem. **Often** his warriors seem to emerge as metaphorical representations of the moral and spiritual valour, rather than the martial valour, necessary for all men to adopt. Certainly in the case of the Red Cross Knight his armour and his battles confessedly represent the metaphorical staunchness of the soul against Satan advocated by St. Paul.¹ Similarly with Guyon and others, their foes are frequently abstract personifications of vice, whose overthrow,

1) In his letter to Raleigh Spenser makes it clear that the armour given to Red Cross is "the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul v. Ephes." (Greenlaw, et al, eds., Vol. 1, p. 169.)

therefore, represents a moral victory rather than the death of a human being. In these terms heroic aggression becomes emblematic of inner Christian fortitude rather than of hostile physical activity against the temporal manifestations of evil.

It is not true, however, to say that the whole allegorical force of The Faerie Queene works in this fashion. As observed above, the poem frequently sanctions in allegory an actual historical act of heroism, or else seeks to promote heroic attitudes as a solution to contemporary problems.¹ Furthermore the poem, along with many other works of romance, displays an almost Homeric appreciation for the vitality and amoral stature of the man who, ethics aside, is skilled in battle.² E.M.Waith has said of romance literature that this basic ability to excell in battle, termed prowess, became "the sine qua non" of a knight's being; an ability which was prized for itself, much as it was in the classical-epic tradition: "Prowess in these poems is not very different from the areté of Homeric epic, which Werner Jaeger defines as 'a combination of proud and courtly morality with warlike valour' (Paideia the ideals of Greek Culture, 3vols., 4th edition, Oxford, 1954, Vol.1, p.5). Considered as the supreme manly virtue, it is also analogous to the Latin virtus, meaning first of all 'strength', and related to both vir ('man') and vis ('energy')." ³ Certainly in Spenser there is an acceptance of the fact that a man is raised to heroic stature not just by his ethical strength but also through his physical power and energy.

It is through the recognition that, no matter how allegorized or moralized, man has an inescapably amoral fascination for deeds of

1) cf. The Faerie Queene III.i.13.

2) See, for example, the tournament for Florimell at IV.iv. where the glory of performing well begins to take precedence over the ethics of the contest, even for so admirable a warrior as Satyrane, whose chief concern comes to be that "his vtmost prowesse there [be] made knowen." (stanza 38).

3) Ideas of Greatness, pp.8-9.

martial excellence that Spenser comes to suggest that it is not possible to reconcile the warrior with a rigorous interpretation of Christian ethics. To begin with there was the problem that arose from the fact that killing, no matter how evil the opponent, was necessarily sinful. As observed above, the concept of the psychomachia did not automatically absolve the warrior for righteousness from the charge that he might be fulfilling God's will by punishing His enemies through the operation of his own freely-willed sin, and, thus, himself become liable to be scourged. This is an argument which perturbs the conscience of even the most Pauline of Spenser's warriors, the Red Cross Knight, who is brought to despair by the suggestion that his heroism, though praiseworthy in the amoral terms of human heroic estimation, is, in fact, damnable as a result of its mortally sinful associations with bloodshed, murder and revenge: "All those great battels, which thou boasts to win, // Through strife, and blood-shed, and auengement, // Now praysd, hereafter deare thou shalt repent: // For life must life, and blood must blood repay. // Is not enough thy euill life **fore**spent?"¹

The argument of Despayre is not, of course, meant to be so potent that it need result in the abandonment of all hope of salvation, but that does not mean that his point about the inherent sinfulness of the warrior is invalid. Indeed, the force of his argument lies in the inescapable logic of divine retribution for sin, and it is invalidated, as Una insists, not because the observation about heroic sin is false, but because it ignores the possibility of escape from the consequences of sin through mercy and grace:

Come, come away, fraile, feeble, fleshly wight,
 Ne let vaine words bewitch thy manly hart,
 Ne diuelish thoughts dismay thy constant spright.
 In heauenly mercies hast thou not a part?

1) The Faerie Queene I.ix.43.

Why shouldst thou then despeire, that chosen art?
Where iustice growes, there growes eke greater grace,
The which doth quench the brond of hellish smart,
And that accurst hand-writing doth deface.
Arise, Sir knight arise, and leaue this cursed place.¹

Before discussing the implications of Una's vision of man's reliance on mercy and grace, it is important to observe that even she does not argue that heroism is anything other than sinful and potentially damnable. This attitude is given a more positive endorsement later when Red Cross's spiritual advisor tells him that while for the moment he will have to continue his heroic career, he will eventually need to make amends for the sins committed during that career:

Well worthy doest thy seruice for her grace,
To aide a virgin desolate foredonne.
But when thou famous victorie hast wonne,
And high emongst all knights hast hong thy shield,
Thenceforth the suit of earthly conquest shonne,
And wash thy hands from guilt of bloody field:
For bloud can nought but sin, and wars but sorrowes yield.²

Clearly, then, Spenser was aware of the ethical distinctions to be made between actual chivalric battle and internal **spiritual** conflict, and, though he occasionally blurs their edges, he keeps the two concepts separate.

When Una reassures Red Cross by saying that he will not be damned because he is elect, or 'chosen', and will therefore be saved from damnation by grace and mercy, we are directed back to the Augustinian expression of the same solution to the problem of the eschatological status of those among the city of God who must fight an evil oppressor. Spenser, of course, within the allegorical confines of his epic poem can say clearly where the locus of grace and election happen to be. Thus we infer that all of the warriors held up as epic heroes within the poem are acting in a state of grace as members of God's elect

1) The Faerie Queene I.ix.53.

2) ibid, I,x.60. Compare this with Williams' objection to battle: Henry V IV.i.133 ff.

and are, therefore, absolved, both temporally and eschatologically, from the inherent sinfulness of battle. As Augustine saw, however, it was not possible to determine the exact locus of election and grace within the ambiguous realms of history and, as Henry V will serve to illustrate, even the self-consciously Christian warrior, existing outside of the moral certainties of the Renaissance epic, could never be certain whether his heroism was damnable or motivated by grace. Even in Spenser's poem it is important to notice, however, that this reliance on grace to ensure that a warlike act is justified carries anti-heroic implications which are familiar from the morality drama. The suggestion is that even the best, in Spenser's allegorical terms, the most heroic, of men earn only damnation through their own efforts and must rely on grace to achieve salvation. Throughout the poem there is an anti-Pelagianistic undercutting of the seeming heroic humanism of its subject matter through an insistence that all heroic goodness is motivated and directed by grace and that salvation even then remains as God's gratuitous gift to an unworthy humanity.¹

Immediately after Una's rebuke Spenser himself intervenes into the narrative to make exactly these points:

What man is he, that boasts of fleshly might,
 And vaine assurance of mortality,
 Which all so soone, as it doth come to fight,
 Against spirituall foes, yeelds by and by,
 Or from the field most cowardly doth fly?
 Ne let the man ascribe it to his skill,
 That ~~th~~rough grace hath gained victory.
 If any strength we haue, it is to ill,
 But all the good is Gods, both power and eke will.²

If man does any good or achieves any heroic success over evil he is both directed and strengthened by God. If he acts as a warrior hero using merely the resources of his own will then his action will be

1)Note that in the letter to Raleigh (op cit,p.169) Spenser conceived of Red Cross as being merely a "tall clownishe yonge man" previous to his being endowed with the grace of a Christian armour.

2)The Faerie Queene I.x.1.

wicked on two counts, firstly because warlike action is inherently sinful, and secondly because all human action tends towards evil if not supported by grace. The warrior for God is only an archetype of goodness if he can be seen as acting in a state of grace, otherwise, man's powers are such that he will become (as in the morality tradition) an archetype of evil, or at least of delusion.

This is not to suggest that Spenser believed human reason to play no part in the process of ethical decision-making and virtuous action. Like most orthodox Christians, however, he believed that reason alone was insufficient, and, as a consequence, The Faerie Queene is particularly rich in episodes (such as those concerning Duessa, Archimago, and the false Florimel) illustrating how a consciously virtuous knight can be deceived by the propensity of evil to appear as desirable or good in a radically ambiguous moral universe. The seeming-virtuous quality of many temporal manifestations of evil was, as Spenser saw, an apt intuition to make through the figure of the warrior hero. Given the aggressive nature of the true warrior's pursuit of what he believed to be right, Spenser illustrates how that dynamism, when linked, due to an error in judgment and a lack of grace, to a mistaken estimation of what is worthy of esteem rendered the warrior liable to invest something ultimately worthless with the qualities of ultimate desirability. This process of misplaced affections, of the idealization of the unideal, was for Spenser as for Augustine, the root of sin, and, if in Spenser the Christian hero's aggressive assertion of virtue makes him emblematic of the ideal man, then the tendency of even the Christian, though especially the faithless, hero to be deluded into idealizing the worthless rendered him archetypally illustrative of the folly of fallen man in a morally obscure world.

Linked in Spenser to the idea that without God even the well-intending hero would be deceived into a belief or an action that was unworthy of him is the idea that many of the heroic virtues become

vices when they are put into practice in aid of causes that are unworthy of them. In these terms it is the object of the heroic action rather than the action itself which determines its moral status. As Arthur implied when instructing Belge, heroism is morally neutral, potentially either moral or immoral. Similarly, the honour gained by a warrior may be either his due reward for righteous action or else the result of society's misplaced estimation of an unworthy action. In the first canto of the fourth book of his poem Spenser provides the reader with an allegorical representation both of the heroic idealization of the unworthy and of the degeneracy already latent within heroic virtues. Together Duessa, masking an inner evil with an outer beauty, and Ate, blatant in her provocation of false battles in pursuit of a sham honour, represent the twin pitfalls open to knights who "hunt for honor, raised from below, // Out of the dwellings of the damned sprights."¹ The cumulative impression left by The Faerie Queene is that without the aid of God, and without also the conscious depiction of right and its distinction from wrong possible in an epic poem, then the warrior figure would always emerge as a morally ambiguous one. When such considerations are transposed into the more contingent literary climate of historical representation where the will of God and the locus of right and wrong become less reducible to the certainty of epic truth, then the ambivalent nature of the heroic metaphor of goodness would emerge even more clearly.

The epic, or more precisely, the heroic nature of Shakespeare's Henry V and the corresponding attempt to make Hal an idealized heroic king following *contemporary theories of literary* criticism have long been the subject of critical discussion.² Given the ambivalence of the

1) The Faerie Queene IV.i.19.

2) For an affirmative account of Shakespeare's epicizing intent see J.H. Walter, ed., King Henry V, The Arden Shakespeare, 4th edition, London, 1954, pp. xiv-xvii.

moral status of any historical warrior hero it is interesting to note the assiduousness with which Shakespeare appears to defend his hero-king from the ethical ambiguity of his actions. From the outset it is revealed that Henry is a devout Christian, a sober and learned king, and a man who is not content to trust to his own judgment over so serious a matter as embarking on a war, but who, rather, seeks advice from his bishops as to the word of God: even warning them against fashioning absolute truth according to the dictates of temporal politics.¹ Henry's desire to undertake only what is truly God's will and to act "with right and conscience,"² along with his later conviction that he and his men are empowered to their victory by the grace of God, are the two aspects of his character which make him a warrior hero in Spenser's terms: "O God, thy arm was here!//And not to us, but to thy arm alone,//Ascribe we all. . . . Take it, God,//For it is none but thine. . . . Come, go we in procession to the village;//And be it death proclaimed through our host//To boast of this or take that praise from God//Which is his only."³ Augustine himself could not wish for a more rigorous anti-heroic humanism than that which, paradoxically, defines the truly Christian nature of Henry's heroic status. The whole list of Henry's virtues, said by the Renaissance handbooks to be necessary in the ideal king, forms an essential part of his heroic image, virtue may even be an outward manifestation of his election; of the divine grace which he hopes provides the motivation for his heroic career, but, from Henry's point of view (and from the point of view of the play as an epic illustration of the divine will working in history) such personal virtue was secondary to the need for the cause to be absolutely righteous and for its course to be both justified and empowered by God.

1)See I.ii.9-32.

(2)I.ii.96.

3)IV.viii.104-114.

Henry was acutely aware of the possibility that a warrior may be punished for the destruction caused by his wars. He is also aware-as he tells Bates, Court and Williams-that though "men . . . have no wings to fly from God: war is His beadle, war is His vengeance,"¹ it does not follow that the instrument of the vengeance is not himself guilty of evil sufficient to earn his damnation. Furthermore, as P.A.Jorgenson has pointed out, in the discussion with Bates and the others, the crucial issue about "his cause being just and his quarrel honourable"² is ignored by Henry once Williams insists that it is impossible for them to know whether that is the case.³ Instead of addressing the problem of the radical ambiguity of historical morality, Henry goes on, logically enough, to contend that he cannot be held responsible for the sins of his men. Neither does Henry consider the question, which he dwelt on earlier,⁴ that he was responsible for sanctioning the violence of the battle. In these terms it was possible for all of Henry's actions to reflect the will of God and for Henry to remain accountable for them. In effect, therefore, Henry avoids the issue of whether he acts in a state of grace or whether he is liable to be punished for the evil of waging a war. Thus, he has no certain answer to Williams's contention that "few die well that die in a battle,"⁵ because in spite of his discussions with the clergy and his rhetoric about God's hand, he can not say with certainty that he is motivated by grace as opposed to his being the morally culpable agent of a higher ethical plan.⁶

1)IV.i.170-171.

(2)IV.i.126-127.

3)Shakespeare's Military World,pp.166-168.

4)See I.ii.18-30.

(5)IV.i.140-141.

6)For a recent assessment of sceptical critical opinion concerning Henry's vision of himself as a divinely inspired hero see R.W. Battenhouse,"The relation of Henry V to Tamburlaine," in Shakespeare Survey XXVII,1974,pp.71-79 where most of the ensuing points concerning the anti-epic aspects of the play are discussed. Battenhouse's basic point is that the epic dimension of the play does exist but it is invented or assumed by a role-playing king who subconsciously, or perhaps hypocritically, ignores the ambiguities of his situation and idealizes its unattractive aspects so that greed and savagery become

Certainly before the battle Henry was far from certain that the campaign was not a punishment on him for his father's usurpation of the throne.¹ While these doubts do not emerge after his success at Agincourt, there are several indications that Shakespeare was not content to allow his warrior hero an unequivocal position as a divinely inspired Renaissance epic king. Firstly, the play contains the strong suggestion that Henry was the puppet of the temporal Machiavellian politics of his prelates rather than the righteous instrument of God.² Although this in itself does not mean that Henry was not also fighting for and inspired by divine truth (for the ways of God in history are ineffable and His good can emerge through human evil) it does serve to detract from the audience's sense of the absolute certainty of divine purpose rhetoricized by a self-consciously heroic prince, and, thus, introduces the idea that Henry may in fact be engaged in the literal-historical equivalent of doing battle for the beauty of Duessa. This again does not invalidate Henry as a hero, but evangelical zeal. Thus, there are two plays; Henry's epic and Shakespeare's own more morally and historically perceptive analysis of the situation. Battenhouse writes that "Henry in effect confuses Mars with the Christian God" (p.72) and in so doing defines the play as the expression of God's will working through himself by the medium of grace, whereas the possibility emerges that he may be impelled by far less exalted motives: "This interpretation implies . . . that there is no intentional blasphemy in Henry's use of religion, as compared to the deliberate boasting by Tamburlaine when burning Scriptures. Rather, there is by Henry merely a blindly Pharisaic suppression of self-examination, along with a connivance with the worldly-minded bishops in pursuing a mutual game of self-preservation and raison d'état, at whatever cost, and for the sake of fame as recognized by conventional norms of worthiness, norms as old (and unChristian) as those of Alexander the Great. It is Henry's devotion to a role-playing of these norms which marks him as basically more frivolous than Tamburlaine, more self-defined as 'actor' rather than an agent inspired by goals of missionary dimension." (p.78).

1) IV.i.288 ff.

2) Canterbury's legalistic justification of the war (I.ii.33 ff.) is in ironic contrast to his earlier concern to divert Henry's attention away from taxing the church by financing an expedition to France (I.i.72-88.).

it does introduce a note of moral, historical and religious complexity to his role which he, as a self-conscious Renaissance epic hero, does not care to consider too strongly. The same point must also be made about Henry's potentially ambivalent association with the properties of Ate; particularly as the horror of war is lucidly revealed through his threatened violence at Harfleur, the actual order of execution of his prisoners, and the harrowing description of the battlefield; all of which redefine the image of Henry's Christian perfection by associating him with murder and bloodshed, especially as much of the killing arises from Henry's own professed desire for honour.¹ While even Spenser had not shrunk from a realistic depiction of the carnage caused by his warriors, there is still the suggestion that perhaps Henry's lust for military glory becomes an idealized pseudonym for Ate, that for all warrior heroes, not merely for degenerate ones, the ethics of their profession are not so secure as they might hope. When Henry compares the effect which his soldiers would have to that caused by "Herod's bloody-hunting slaughtermen,"² he seems not to be conscious of the implication that he, therefore, becomes equated with Herod himself; the archetypal heroic self-idealizer from the cycle dramas.

A final element in the play which might detract from the epic-heroic image of Henry is contained in the final chorus which bluntly reports that shortly after his marriage Henry died, and that his greatest achievement, the winning of France, was reversed in the next reign. As has been shown, the Renaissance conception of both their own and of classical epic was a comic one in the medieval sense of its depicting a struggle through adversity or trial to success or happiness.³ Thus, Aeneas won Italy and Lavinia, Odysseus regained Penelope and his palace,

1) See III.iii.1 ff., IV.iii.20-67., IV.vi.37., and IV.vii.68-79.

2) III.iii.41.

3) See Sidney's Apology, pp. 37-38.

Red Cross was rewarded with Una and sanctification, while Artegall won Britomart and their glorious destiny. Death, though an integral part of the Homeric heroic ethos, was not a central concern for the epic protagonist during the Renaissance.¹ Though mortality was not ignored, and the idea of honour transcending death was as important to Spenser's heroes as to Homer's, the ironical implications of death for the true Renaissance hero did not exist so powerfully because for such men death held no ironies of reversal but involved only a graduation from temporal brilliance to eschatological brilliance. For the wicked, or anti-hero in Renaissance epic death was equally unambiguous. It was, as seen in Spenser, a punishment for temporal misdeeds and a prelude to damnation.

Thus, like the other elements in the play which serve to undercut our appreciation of Henry's metaphorical representation of absolute human perfection, the death of the hero detracts from but need not completely destroy the Renaissance heroic orientation of the work. In general we are made to believe in the poetic (in Sidney's sense) presentation of history as epic and of Henry as epic hero, and while mention of his death and the ironic reversal of his win in France, introduces a sceptical note into the epic celebration, we may still infer that Henry, like Falstaff, is in the bosom of Abraham, and it need neither pervert nor depreciate the comic shape of the history. Such Shakespearean complications to the epic form do, however, show, as plays which Shakespeare had already written confirm, that he was fully aware that history was less poetical than poetry, and that the locus of grace and divine morality in history was in fact more ambiguous than Henry claimed. What Henry could not know, but what Shakespeare had already revealed in Henry VI, the ambiguity was compounded by the

1) In this sense Renaissance epic was Virgilian (or Odyssean) rather than Homeric (or Iliadic). See Thomas Greene, The Descent from Heaven. A Study in Epic Continuity, New Haven and London, 1963, pp. 14-17, 93-99.

fact that there was no grounds in the history that followed Henry for believing that his victory was an integral feature of a knowable divine morality. There was no continuation of the seeming implications of Henry's heroism beyond his own time. From Shakespeare's perspective France was still lost, Henry V had no Ascanius to consolidate his heroic mission, and the disasters of civil war which were to follow demonstrably proved that the value of Henry's heroism for the future of England could not be asserted as unambiguously as when Virgil celebrated the consequences of Aeneas's struggles for the future of Rome.¹ In these terms it must be concluded that Henry V is an experiment in Renaissance epic drama by an artist who had too complex an historical awareness to allow the ethically lucid heroic image required by the form to exist with the perfect simplicity which even the theoreticians agreed did not exist in history. Elsewhere Shakespeare was even more insistent on the ironies which both define and subvert the heroism of his protagonists. When the plays come to deal with the eventual death of the hero then it will be seen that the values of heroic life which emerge in both pagan epic and in Christian religious drama from a consideration of mortality are brought into sharper focus. Henry V needed to sustain one heroic metaphor so as to fulfil the expectations of its form. In the more iconoclastic atmosphere of tragedy it will be found that Shakespeare allowed heroic ideas and imagery to merge so as to achieve a more complex vision of the nature and implications of heroic man in his society.

1) For a more positive appraisal of the play's similarity to the Aeneid see J.H. Walter's edition of the play pp.xxviii-xxix.

CHAPTER FIVE: Ovid's Metamorphoses, the Shakespearean heroic and Titus Andronicus.

As the previous chapter sought to suggest, the Elizabethan period "was an age of syncretism and eclecticism."¹ In literature at least, however, while homogenization of classical and Renaissance works undoubtedly occurred, this did not mean that the Christian critic was unable or disinclined to make distinctions between pagan and Christian writings. Thus, Harington's distinction between the obscure truth of pagan epic and the ethical lucidity of Christian epic illustrated how moral insight could be granted to a pagan author while at the same time he was viewed as being a necessarily less effective didactic writer than an overtly Christian artist was capable of being. This was because the pagan (either through his Aquinian natural reason, or through the more Augustinian medium of divine grace²) was only able to prefigure or parallel Christian truth in a veiled or subliminal fashion, while the Christian author could write in accordance with the ineluctable truths of his faith. Thus, pagan literature was suitable material for the Christian because he was a Christian, and able to interpret the "dark Philosophie"³ of antiquity to the best advantage of his faith. While this process of Christian reading may have necessitated the imposition of an acceptable contemporary interpretation onto a work, this anachronizing process is not equivalent to treating the work as an anachronism, or to seeing it as a work of Christian orthodoxy.

Thus, Arthur Golding was only too conscious of the fact that Ovid's Metamorphoses contained a potentially damaging mixture of spiritual and

1) G.K. Hunter, "Seneca and the Elizabethans: A Case-Study in 'Influence'," in Shakespeare Survey XX, 1967, p.19.

2) Chapman believed Homer's ethical fecundity to have arisen from an infusion of grace. cf. the dedication to Essex prior to his Seaven Bookes of Homer's Iliads, reprinted in A. Nicoll, ed., Chapman's Homer, Vol. 1, London, 1957, p.504.

3) Arthur Golding, The Epistle to Robert Earl of Leicester, line 7, in W.H.D. Rouse, ed., Shakespeare's Ovid, London, 1904.

moral truth and falsehood, which, unless approached by the contemporary reader with an active determination to imaginatively recreate its fables in the light of their own Christianity, constituted a danger that it was wisest to avoid. Accordingly his advice to any reader likely to be seduced by the immoral aspects of Ovid was to "absteine untill he *bee* more strong."¹ While Golding does not attempt to moralize the main body of his translation, he does reveal in his two prefaces that, despite reservations *about* the poem's content,² he finds the overriding moral intent of Ovid to be quite sound if the Metamorphoses are read correctly.³ He goes on to interpret each of the fifteen books in the moralizing fashion which he felt constituted that correctness. While his suggested reading stressed the idea of Ovid's illustrating divine retribution for sin,⁴ it was, in fact, the religious aspects of the poem which occasioned Golding the most concern as being a potential inducement to error. Thus, not only was it necessary for the reader to see the power of the pagan gods as an expression of that of the one God, but he also needed to avoid falling into the heretical beliefs concerning man's relationship with God and God's relationship with providence which abound in Ovid:

And whereas in interpreting theis few I attribute
 The things too one, which heathen men to many Gods impute,
 Concerning mercy, wrath for sin, and other giftes of grace,
 Described for examples sake in proper time and place:
 Let no man marvell at the same. For though that they as blynd
 Through unbeleefe, and led astray through error even of kynd,
 Knew not the true eternall God, or if they did him know,
 Yet did they not acknowledge him, but vaynly did bestow
 The honor of the maker on the creature: yit it dooth
 Behove **all us** (who ryghtly are instructed in the sooth)
 Too think and say that God alone is he that rules all things

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- 1)Golding,The Preface to the Reader,line 217,in Shakespeare's Ovid.
 2)See The Preface to the Reader, lines 215-222.
 3)See The Epistle to Leicester,lines 65-66. This may explain why Golding refrains from moralizing the main body of his translation.cf.G.Braden,The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry,New Haven and London,1978, p.12, where it is stated that "the moralization is almost all in the two prefaces, and Ovid himself is remarkably unaltered."
 4)See The Epistle to Leicester,lines 324-325.

And worketh all in all, as lord of lords and king of kings,
With whom there are none other Gods that any sway may beare,
No fatall law ~~too~~ bynd him by, no fortune for too feare.
For Gods, and fate, and fortune are the termes of heathennesse,
If men usurp them in the sense that Paynims doo expresse. 1

Here and elsewhere Golding expresses as clearly as Augustine that pagan society and literature was characterized by their tendency to bestow the honour of the maker onto the creature and, thus, ultimately to usurp the divine role as master of all history.

In these terms even an avowedly Christian interpretation of the classics achieved its vision of the didactic homogeneousness of pagan and Christian literature alongside a recognition that the historical locus of classical art made it represent truth obscurely and even unconsciously through its many misconceptions and irreverences. As Golding was aware, this fact imposed an active creative duty on his reader:

If Poets then with leesings and with fables shadowed so
The certaine truth, what letteth us too plucke those visers fro
Their doings, and too bring ageine the darkened truth too lyght,
That all men may behold thereof the cleere~~ness~~ shining bryght?
The readers therefore earnestly admonisht are too bee
Too seeke a further meaning than the letter gives too see.²

It should also be remembered that even where the Renaissance saw the classical world as being proto-Christian in ethical terms, there was an increasing tendency to stress the fact that it was a radically different world in devotional or religious terms. Given this, it was not a contradiction for even the most zealous moralizer of pagan literature to indicate the religious separateness of the classics while at the same time stressing their moral homogeneity with his own era.³ Such a vision was in itself part of the homogeneous Christian view of humanity according to which man is distinguished by his membership of the city

1) The Epistle to Leicester, lines 306-321.

2) ibid, lines 537-54 .

3) See Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry, Minneapolis, 1932, pp. 31-32, for a discussion of the Renaissance tendency to abandon the medieval view of the classics as Christian allegory for a more general emphasis on their moral-allegorical edificacy.

of man or the city of God. Although the division was not a temporal one, the pagan world was representative of the earthly city in that it did not have access to the revealed truths of religion or share in the era of grace.¹

Thus, while Shakespeare was not bound by orthodoxy, it is noteworthy that an artist was not even theoretically bound to develop an anachronistic-Christian vision of the ancient world; and that in the area of religion he was even encouraged to establish the separateness of his own civilization from those of Greece and Rome. It is, indeed, possible that Golding's eloquent expression of these points may have constituted an early influence in the development of Shakespeare's awareness of the independent spiritual nature of the ancient world, and of the almost enforced humanism of societies which would "bestow//The honor of the maker on the creature."² That Shakespeare was particularly intent on dramatizing historically accurate representations of the ancient world as it was imaginatively available to him at any given point during his career was a point made by T.J.B.Spenser, who then went on to record the regularity with which Roman history was viewed by Elizabethan commentators as a succession of monarchical "garboyles."³ Viewed in these terms Titus Andronicus can be said to provide a more representative Elizabethan vision of Rome than that found in the later dramas created through the dramatically innovative use of Plutarch, especially as the Rome of most contemporary historians was "Suetonian and Tacitan rather than Plutarchan."⁴ This is to say that the Elizabethan imagined an Imperial, war-torn, divided Rome as opposed to a stately,

1)cf. Simmons, Shakespeare's Pagan World, pp.8-9.

2)For Shakespeare's early and continued use of Ovid see R.K.Root, Classical Mythology in Shakespeare, 1903, reprinted New York, 1965, pp.3-5. For a balanced appraisal of Shakespeare's use of Golding see Braden, The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry, p.6 and passim.

3)"Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans," Shakespeare Survey X, 1957, pp.27-38, esp.p.30.

4)ibid, p.31

Republican and majestic one. Spenser's suggestion was that the 'Noble Roman Historye' of Titus's registration entry was not an inaccurate description since the play, showing the civil wars and dissensions of the late Empire, "was obviously intended to be a faithful picture of Roman civilization."¹ While this interest in the Roman monarchy might reflect a desire for historical drama to inform contemporary institutions, it will be suggested that Shakespeare's consciously 'historical' representation of Rome is matched by a deliberate attempt to suggest the quite uncontemporary spiritual limitations of pagan Rome, and the result of those limitations on the ethics of Roman society.

Before deciding on the extent of Shakespeare's attempt to people the Rome of Titus with men of a peculiarly Roman ethos, however, it will be informative to examine the case for suggesting that the Metamorphoses provided Shakespeare with a model or with models of pagan heroic character which he drew on when creating the characters of his plays. The idea that Ovid influenced the Shakespearean heroic is not new. While believing that Ovid rarely achieved the heroic seriousness of the epic poem, and feeling him to be temperamentally unsuited for a genuine celebration of Homeric areté, R.T.Brower has nevertheless suggested that the Metamorphoses may have provided Shakespeare both with an image of Aenean heroic piety being rewarded with sanctification,² and also, and more significantly, with an anti-heroic recognition of the cruelty and inhumanity of the warrior's traditional heroic ethos, and of "the degradation of the heroic world" in general.³ Brower's central thesis is that Ovid was uninterested in heroism per se⁴ and that he developed the technique, which he passed on to Shakespeare, of allowing heroic war

1)Spenser,op cit,p.32.

2)Hero and Saint,pp.121-126.

3)ibid,p.128..

4)See p.125.

to form the background to the more elemental human tragedies of crime and passion which were his main concern. This "domestication"¹ of heroic experience, whereby the story of Hecuba or Philomel expands to form the major area of interest in the arena of heroic war in which they are set, is obviously of relevance to such plays as Hamlet, Macbeth and Othello as well as to Titus; the play to which Brower confines his discussion.

Brower further implies that the degradation of the heroic world and the domestication of heroic experience form a united feature in Ovid, and, through him, in Shakespeare. In his narratives of human suffering Brower feels that Ovid was chiefly concerned with character and the portrayal of an "imaginative vision of humanity gone astray" through passion leading to degradation.² The point being made is that heroic character, be it defined by magnanimity of any kind, militaristic or otherwise, is liable, as a concomitant of its greatness, to fall from equanimity into gross passion and even animalistic wildness as a result of the lawless, unrestrained, nature of the heroic mentality. *Brower then goes on to imply* that a similar feeling for the lawless, passionate, potentially degenerate, nature of heroic types *became* "one of the central metaphors" of Shakespeare's work.³ Finally, it is contended that in such early works as Titus and Lucrece the metaphor is found in a recognizably Ovidian form; though later it receives treatment in more expansive Christian and tragic terms than the enclosed world of Ovidian myth would allow.⁴

While it would also be emphasised that the morality tradition could have helped Shakespeare come to an awareness of the potentially degenerate nature of heroic ideals, it is not necessary to object to

1) Hero and Saint, p.131.

2) ibid, p.135.

3) ibid, p.135.

4) See pp.137-141.

Brower's thesis on this point as a major feature of the argument being developed is that the classical anti-heroic unites with the medieval anti-heroic in the Elizabethan heroic drama. Certainly Brower would seem to be correct in contending that Ovid was an influence on Shakespeare's taste for stories of lurid passion in his early career. The idea is perhaps part of a larger point made by W.B.Sedgwick and, later, by G.K.Hunter, who both point out that it was from Ovid rather than from Seneca that the age derived its "gothic" taste for violent sensationalism and intrigue.¹ Titus certainly recreates its 'Suetonian and Tacitan' vision of the late Empire in terms of the lurid Ovidian/gothic mythology popular in the literature of the early Empire.² This is a point which will be given fuller attention below.

It is, then, not intended to produce a counter-thesis to Brower's. As will become evident Ovid certainly encompasses the features which Brower suggests. Ovid's notorious polytonality,³ however, makes not only Brower's but many other types of influence possible. The ensuing analysis will seek to establish a case for Ovidian influence on Titus which will focus on different features of the Metamorphoses than those discussed above. The conclusions will serve to complement, not invalidate, Brower's interpretation. During the discussion, however, several *different opinions about Ovid's* attitude towards his material than those put forward by Brower emerge. It will, therefore, be informative to make these clear from the outset. Firstly, it will be suggested that the warrior hero was of intrinsic interest to Ovid, and that he consciously used the heroic tradition of his past to make intellectual points about its nature and its place in his present.

1)See Sedgwick, "The Influence of Ovid," in The Nineteenth Century CXXII, 1937, pp.491-492, and Hunter "Seneca and the Elizabethans," pp.20-21.

2)See G.Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, Vol.6, London, 1966, pp.10-15.

3)See note 4, page 159 below.

Secondly, it will be suggested that Ovid was interested in the variations of individual heroic psychology and that he did not merely group all his warriors together as passion's slaves.

It is noteworthy that, following L.P. Wilkinson's Ovid Recalled,¹ classical criticism began to treat Ovid as a poet of intellectual seriousness:

. . . some trends in modern scholarship can be fairly clearly observed. In general, the judgement of Ovid as a second-rate and superficial writer is being superseded by the idea that he is an important poet who deserves to be taken seriously. In particular, this more sympathetic approach takes three main forms—the detailed examination of Ovid's style . . . , the recognition of his humanity and his psychological perceptiveness, and the careful assessment of the philosophical implications of his poetry and its relationship to its social and political context. 2

It is, therefore, commendable that Brower accepts the challenge implicit in such criticism to investigate the possibility that Shakespeare also took Ovid seriously, and that a poet who, demonstrably, had a great appeal for Shakespeare was instrumental in modifying his ideas as well as his style. Much of even relatively recent criticism has failed to respond to these changes in Ovidian interpretation, and has been content to offer variations on the idea of there existing a qualitative empathy between Shakespeare and the "*sweete wittie soule of Ouid*,"³ or else has made quantitative records documenting the extent of Shakespeare's borrowings from Ovid.⁴ While these avenues of approach are important, their underlying assumption would seem to be that Ovid is a delightful but superficial writer whose considerable attractions for Shakespeare

1) Cambridge, 1955.

2) J. Barsby, Ovid, Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics No. 12, Oxford, 1978, p. 4.

3) Francis Meres, Palladis Tamia, in Smith, ed., Critical Essays II, p. 317. Contrast Meres's sentiments with those expressed by Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled, p. 419, by S. G. Owens, "Ovid and Romance," in G. Gordon, ed., English Literature and the Classics, Oxford, 1912, p. 185, and by E. K. Rand, Ovid and his Influence, New York, 1926, reprinted 1963, pp. 164-165. Hunter's view that Shakespeare empathised with Ovid's gothic appreciation of the qualities of violence and sensationalism has already been discussed.

4) cf. Root, Classical Mythology in Shakespeare, p. 3 and passim, P. Simpson, "Shakespeare's Use of Latin Authors," in his Elizabethan Drama, Oxford, 1955, p. 24 and ff. Also more recently see C. Jameson, "Ovid in the Sixteenth Century," in J. W. Binns, ed., Ovid, London, 1973, pp. 210-242.

were artistic rather than intellectual. By way of contrast, it is hoped to go on to suggest that Shakespeare recognized in Ovid a social and political critique of *warrior heroes* which depicted them as being dangerous anachronisms in the sophisticated Roman world to which Ovid belonged. While such a view is now being developed by modern scholars, it will be further suggested that Shakespeare's medieval and Christian heritage allowed him to recognize the anti-heroic implications of Ovid's Metamorphoses and to reflect those intuitions in his portrait of the Roman hero presented in Titus.

The Metamorphoses contain several passages which echo the material of Homeric and Virgilian epic. The difficulty of deciding on Ovid's attitude throughout these sections is illustrated by the revisions made by Brooks Otis to his work Ovid as an Epic Poet.¹ Originally Otis held that there was a serious Augustan epic dimension to the Metamorphoses which was developed throughout several related sections designed to celebrate the heroic achievements and apotheosis of Julius Caesar and, by inference, the Emperor Augustus. Thus the poem was thought to move upwards through a mythological development from unworthy mortality (Phaethon), to worthy man (the hero Perseus), on to the hero worthy of godhead (Hercules, Aeneas, Julius) and finally to Augustus who, superior to them all, was also to attain deification. In a later revision of his work Otis rejected this initial interpretation. Previously he had seen 'two' Ovids; one epic, the other comic. Later he recognized that the distinction was artificial and that the epic Ovid was a device of the uniformly consistent comic/erotic/iconoclastic Ovid, one of whose main intentions was to repudiate the Virgilian attempt to define the standards of contemporary Roman excellence in terms which Ovid saw as a spurious, inappropriate, anachronistic heroism leading towards an absurd and

1) Cambridge, 1966, 2nd, revised, edition, 1970. All references to later edition. Otis's original thesis and his later modifications to it are outlined in the introduction to the 2nd edition.

unjustifiable deification. In these terms Ovid was consistent, his point being "that myth is false and human passion and love are true, that the connection of Julius and Augustus, of modern Rome, with the saga-world of heroes and gods, apotheosis and miracle, is both unreal and ludicrous."¹ Thus, Otis comes to assert, the heroic portions of the poem prove to be as undercut by scepticism, irony and parody as the rest of Ovid's depictions of myth: "the heroic and Augustan portions of the Metamorphoses are fully Ovidian and in this sense intentionally anti-Augustan. Where I once saw 'bathos', I now see rather delightful or at any rate intentional parody or comedy. . . . I . . . thought of Ovid as explicitly Augustan in some parts at least of his poem even though he was as I also thought implicitly anti-Augustan. I am now convinced that the anti-*Augustanism* was fully intended and indeed but slightly mitigated by its obvious danger or audacity."²

As will be seen, Otis's final conclusion as to the overridingly anti-heroic orientation of the heroic passages in the Metamorphoses is endorsed by many modern students of the work. Prior to discussing the implications of this for Shakespeare, however, it will be illuminating to suggest why it was possible for Otis to have made what he later saw to be a fundamental misinterpretation of Ovid's intentions. Part of the answer to the question would seem to lie in "the chameleon variations" of the poem.³ Throughout the work Ovid continually and bewilderingly changes the tone, narrative style, artistic seriousness and direction of his stories so that "metamorphosis is the hallmark of Ovid's narrative technique in the Metamorphoses. Hence the polytonality of the poem."⁴ Thus, especially if attention were given

1) Ovid as an Epic Poet, p.372.

2) ibid, p.viii.

3) Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled, p.155.

4) G.Karl Galinsky, Ovid's Metamorphoses, Oxford, 1975, p.62.

to individual episodes in the poem rather than to overall effect, it is quite possible to isolate what might seem to be serious epic or heroic elements depicting examples of Achillean areté, Odyssean cunning or Aenean pietas which could promote the belief that such characteristics were being affirmed in an Homeric or Virgilian manner.

It is, however, not possible to extrapolate from individual episodes to assert an overall artistic unity for the poem as a whole: "The Metamorphoses cannot be restricted to a genre such as epic or 'anti-epic', but they 'are a cosmos of all possible narrative forms' (K.Büchner, Römische Literaturgeschichte, 3rd edn., Stuttgart, 1962, p.384.). High-blown epic alternates with burlesque, elegiac scenes with dramatic scenes, scenes that concentrate on graphic external description vary with those that explore the inner aspects, the psychology of a character."¹ This is not to say, of course, that an Elizabethan reader may not have responded to the heroic passages in the same way in which Otis originally did, and see them as genuine affirmations of epic values. This possibility is increased if, instead of reading Ovid's own elegiac metre, such Homeric passages as that describing the battle between Perseus and Phineas over Andromeda in book five were read in Golding's fourteeners; the future medium of Phaer's Aeneid and Chapman's Iliad, the metre which evidently "looked like the logical English equivalent of the august dactylic hexameter"² to the Elizabethans.

Despite this, however, it will be argued that there is little evidence for suggesting that Shakespeare did read Ovid in this way. A brief analysis of part of the passage from Golding mentioned above may give some indication as to why it is to be contended that Shakespeare was primarily influenced by the anti-heroic dimensions of

1) Galinsky, Ovid's Metamorphoses, p.11.

2) Braden, The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry, p.22.

the Metamorphoses:

Behold through gredie haste to feight one Phorbas Methions son
A Swevite: and of Lybie lande one callde Amphimedon
By fortune sliding in the blood with which the ground was wet,
Fell downe: and as they woulde have rose, Perseus fauchon met
With both of them. Amphimedon upon the ribbes he smote,
And with the like celeritie he cut me Phorbas throte.
But unto Erith Actors sonne that in his hande did holde
A brode browne Byll, with his short sword he durst not be too bolde
To make approach. With both his handes a great and massie cup
Emboast with cunningg portrayture aloft he taketh up,
And sendes it at him. He spewes up red blood: and falling downe
Upon his backe, against the ground doth knocke his dying crowne.
Then downe he Polydemon throwes extract of royall race
And Abaris the Scithian, and Clytus in lyke case,
And Elice with his unshorne lockes, and also Phlegias,
And Lycet olde Sperchesies sonne, with divers other mo,
That on the heapes of corses slaine he treads as he doth go.¹

Though prior to the publication of Chapman's Homeric translations Shakespeare may well not have recognized it, there is much that is conspicuously Homeric even in this one brief extract. There is the technique of highlighting one particular hero and some of his conquests while passing over others with no more than a mention. There are the family geneologies of heroes, the grimly ironic, almost mocking, narrative handling of heroic death, the lucid awareness of the physical horrors of the battlefield and the use of unusual weapons, particularly "massie" objects thrown by a great hero at lesser warriors.

There are, however, three things to observe about this pastiche. Firstly, although the passage contains a concentrated awareness of the carnage of battle, it does not (and this is true of Ovid in general)² attempt to mitigate that vision by allowing the warriors an Homeric feeling that the honour gained in battle is compensation for a life of heroic suffering terminating in grotesque death. The second point to notice is that the passage is highly concentrated and visually explicit; so that in a short space of time it includes a plethora of the unusual, gruesome, and even grotesque elements of Homeric battle narrative: thus,

1) Rouse, ed., Shakespeare's Ovid, Metamorphoses V. 90-116. Henceforth cited Golding.

2) See Galinsky, Ovid's Metamorphoses, p. 15

sliding in blood, the killing of men in twos, the use of a crushing weapon, the examination of a man's wounds, the list of the *many* dead and the sight of a warrior walking on heaps of his own victims, all take place in seventeen of Golding's lines.¹ Thirdly, it is important to notice the context of the conflict. It takes place not during a war but during the wedding of Perseus and Andromeda, when Phineas, an ex-suitor, attempts to disrupt the celebrations by force. The setting is, therefore, an incongruous one in which to display martial prowess.

To these three observations about Ovid might be added a fourth which, though it reflects Ovidian practice, is accentuated by the rhythm and diction of Golding's translation. Although the warriors *here* are not being debunked, there is an element of levity in the language used to describe them which could certainly suggest to the reader that an effect was being sought for which was something other than high seriousness. Thus, for example, the lilting rhythms of such lines as "And with the like celeritie he cut me Phorbas throte," the rhyme of "down" with "crown" and the phrase "with divers other mo" all contribute to an element of ludicrous lightness of touch which the smooth, urbane latin of the original is also often said to convey.²

The combination of these elements might be felt to alert an Elizabethan reader to the fact that an admittedly heroic passage (Ovid *here* is not *destructively parodic*) is being treated in a way which did not conform to their expectations of poetic veneration for the epic hero. Other passages, however, more obviously display the same techniques but in a context in which the warriors are not treated with Homeric objectivity, but revealed through an exaggerated, burlesqued, style

1) For a discussion of the elements of Homeric battle narrative see G.S.Kirk, "War and the Warrior in the Homeric Poems," in J.P.Vernant, ed., Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne, Paris and The Hague, 1968, pp.93-117.

2) See Braden, The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry, pp.35-54.

which does constitute a direct parody of poetic epic seriousness. Thus, in the Trojan section of book twelve, Nestor is made to recount to Achilles his exploits at the battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths, which, again significantly, took place during a wedding celebration. He recalls his own part in the conflict after the Centaur Phocaeus killed a Lapith with a huge log:

The logge him all in fitters strake,
And of his head the braynepan in a thousand peeces brake,
That at his mouth, his eares, and eyes, and at his nosethrills too,
His cruss^{shel} brayne came roping out as creame is woont too doo
From sives or riddles made of wood, or as a Cullace out
From streyner or from Colender. But as he went about
Too strippe him from his harnesse as he lay uppon the ground,
(Your father knoweth this full well) my sword his gutts did wound.¹

Here the minute and grotesque analysis of a death wound, together with the absurd simile of cream "roping"² from a sieve, suggests that what was only a suspicion of incongruity in the Perseus passage was a more or less indulged in but quite deliberate feature of Ovid's heroic style: visual over-explicitness³ promoting both humour and revulsion, and, ultimately, therefore, serious questioning of the heroic ethos which found a source of pride in such events.

Even when he is treating them seriously, Ovid continually promotes an anti-heroic attitude towards heroic events by describing them with a concentrated awareness of their grotesqueries and horrors; often at near comic length and with what appears to be mock-serious detail. While on the one hand this has led to charges of his totally debunking the epic tradition, on the other he has been accused of attempting to pander to the jaded Hellenistic tastes and gladiatorial morality of his readers.⁴ Wilkinson took the view that the gruesome realism was

1) Golding, XII.475-482.

2) See Henry V, III.v.23, for a Shakespearean usage of this word, a favourite of Golding's.

3) See Galinsky, Ovid's Metamorphoses, pp.153 and 179-184.

4) This is Galinsky's conclusion, ibid, p.129.

neither comic nor gratuitous in intent, but that it "merges into horror"¹ as Ovid attempted to make a serious point about the savagery of battle by showing his sophisticated audience the atavistic implications of the code which the literature of their day professed to endorse as the basis of Roman nobility.² While the differences of critical opinion attest to the difficulty of arriving at an overall artistic strategy for Ovid, it is noteworthy that Otis also concurs with Wilkinson in believing that Ovid was attempting to alert the Rome of his day to the unacceptable nature of heroic codes as value structures according to which a modern, ethically aware, society could be run. His suggestion is that Ovid was a humanitarian poet who sought to expose the lack of humanity in the ancient epic-heroic world by contrasting it to the more enduring and worthy amatory values which were contained in other parts of his mythical collection and which his society could feel were truly worthy of human compassion and idealism.³

Whether Ovid affirms romantic values or not, it certainly seems possible that an Elizabethan could read the Metamorphoses as an indictment of the traditional Graeco-Roman heroic ethos. Ovid characteristically presents Homeric and Virgilian intuitions about the anti-heroic dimensions of heroic action (sometimes heightening them through exaggeration, parody or comedy) in a literary climate which is not sympathetic to the idea that the rewards of heroic action, be they honour or empire, overcome the human miseries occasioned by an heroic life. Thus he suggests to a society which he feels anachronistically overvalues codes which accept cruelty, amorality, violence and slaughter as the price to be paid for estimable achievement, that the gains are

1) Ovid Recalled, p.162.

2) ibid, pp.162-163.

3) Ovid as an Epic Poet, pp.372-374.

no longer worth the price paid by humanity and that perhaps they never were. It is to be remembered that even Virgil implies that the establishment of Rome was achieved only through a level of heroic suffering which, were the prize not so exceptional, would invalidate any less exalted heroic quest. Achilles, too, comes to feel that the disadvantages of an heroic life negate its supposed rewards.¹ It is, perhaps, not the smallest claim which will be made for Ovid's influence on Shakespeare's view of the heroic, that when he came to consider Virgil and Homer in his drama he was able, with his background in Ovid, to assess the anti-heroic aspects of classical epic accurately. Certainly, the conclusions reached in the subsequent chapters on Hamlet and Troilus and Cressida support the view that Ovid, along with the medieval contributions to the heroic tradition, promoted a Shakespearean reading of classical epic which took into account the tensions at the centre of the Graeco-Roman heroic code as opposed to further endorsing his glib acquiescence in the Renaissance **orthodoxy** of **unquestioning support** for the idealized hero.

As suggested above, however, Ovid had a more concrete social point to make about the heroic mentality than arises from the general idea that heroism may merely be degeneracy viewed sympathetically. He went on to indicate how the idea of warrior heroism, if it was indeed to be viewed in the sympathetic terms of the epic poem, needed to be strictly confined to the legitimate arena of heroic, preferably nationalistic, war. Outside of his traditional frame of reference on the battlefield the warrior is shown by Ovid to be peculiarly inept and his activities to be radically inappropriate and unadmirable. It is no accident that Ovid twice shows the heroic mentality resorting to battle as a solution to differences at a wedding; that is to say when such martial action was morally and socially indefensible, and where the brutal ethics of

1) See chapters six and seven below.

the warriors stood in ironic and deprecatory contrast to the true and enduring values of human love and compassion which were the proper values being celebrated by the symbolic union of man and woman in matrimony. As will be shown to be the case in Titus Ovid sought to expose the near total vindication which heroic literature gave to its heroes by placing warriors in situations, both on and off the battlefield, where their warlike ethos rendered them either unsuitable or else showed them to be noticeably inferior to other types of men. This technique again forms part of his general suggestion that a complex Roman society needed virtues which were both more flexible and more humane than those forwarded by ideals of heroic manhood.

This artistic embarrassment of the warrior whose heroism is placed under stress by the unfamiliar or the unexpected is especially evident in books twelve and thirteen of the Metamorphoses: significantly, as the mythological action of the poem draws closer to the union with Roman history. In one comic episode¹ Achilles unknowingly confronts an invulnerable opponent, Cygnus. His first reactions illustrate the pride and confidence of the great Homeric warrior: "O noble wyght//A comfort let it bee too thee that such a valeant knyght//As is Achilles killeth thee." His heroism receives its first shock, however, when his javelin hits but does not harm Cygnus, an event which "Achilles woondred much thereat." His second spear proving equally ineffective, Achilles cannot tolerate his unaccustomed lack of success and he is provoked to blind animalistic fury: "Achilles chafed like a Bull that in ~~the~~ open list . . . //Dooth fynd his wounds deluded." Desperate to maintain his heroic poise, he checks that his javelin point is still intact. Finding it sound he falls into despair; despite all his past success he must keep killing to maintain his prowess, his raison d'être, which he feels is now called into question:

1)The episode is in Golding XII.8 ff.

My hand .by leeke is weakened then (quoth hee),
And all the force it had before is spent on one I see.
For sure I am it was of strength, both when I first downe threw
Lyrnessus walles, and when I did Ile Tenedos subdew,
And eeke Aëtions Thebe with her proper blood embrew.
And when so many of the folke of Tewthranie I slew,
That with theyr blood Caycus, streame became of purple hew,
And when the noble Telephus did of my Dart of steele
The dowble force, of wounding and of healing also feele.
Yea even the heapes of men slayne heere by mee, that on this strond
Are lying still too looke uppon, doo give to understand
That this same hand of myne both had and still hath strength.

When he comes to regard the visual affirmation of his might in the
heaps of corpses he has killed, his waning self-belief is restored
enough for Achilles to rush away to kill another warrior and, thus, to
reestablish his heroic confidence: "As though he had distrusted all
his doings ere that sted." This done, still suspicious of his javelins,
he retrieves the successful one from the recently slain corpse and
launches it at Cygnus, again to no avail.

At this point Achilles reaches the limits of his heroic ability to
respond to the situation; unable to countenance the failure which
would, he believes, render him un-heroic, he can only think in terms
of the necessity of victory in battle, and he reacts with irrational
anger towards the man who has denied it to him. Thus "like a madman"
he seizes Cygnus and pummels his invulnerable body against a stone.
The situation thus reaches an impasse, which, for Achilles, could have
had tragic repercussions through the shattering of his idealised
self-image. As so often in the Metamorphoses, however, the irresolvable
is resolved by a metamorphosis: Neptune is made to turn Cygnus into a
swan and Achilles, thinking he has vanquished, is allowed to resume
his heroic career deluded but satisfied.

Obviously there is a strong element of comedy in the episode. It
would also endorse Brower's observations concerning the Ovidian hero's
propensity for passionate fury. It would be suggested, however, that
the episode also contains a psychologically penetrating study of the
warrior hero's mentality and the limitations of response which the

heroic code imposed on its devotees. While obviously not attempting to expose the inability of the warrior to come to terms with invulnerable beings in the Rome of his day, Ovid used the myth to alert his readers to the fact that life presented obstacles (political, moral, strategic and possibly even supernatural) which could not be adequately met with the limited set of solutions provided for by a warrior's ethos. Moreover, off the battlefield, there were likely to be many situations, weddings being only a minor, possibly symbolic, example, where the propensity of the heroic psyche to resort to violence when frustrated by events would become a major threat to social peace and stability. Furthermore, there is even the suggestion latent in Achilles's despair that the individual or the society which governs its responses according to an inflexible ideal (of which the heroic ideal is a major literary and social example) becomes liable, should events prove able to threaten or destroy the self-sustaining integrity of that ideal, to undergo a tragic loss of faith, both in itself and in the world which it had previously interpreted in terms of that ideal.

It will be suggested that Titus also develops the idea that the warrior, however admirable or awesome he may appear, is severely limited in the political world as a result of self-imposed standards, latent in his Roman heroic ethos, which obviate his development of the qualities of statesmanship required by Rome at the time of the play. In Titus, as in other, later, tragedies, Shakespeare was concerned to dramatize the process whereby his protagonist has his ideals and illusions destroyed or stripped away by a dramatic world which is inimical to their being sustained. For Titus this typically Shakespearean tragic loss of faith is related to the shattering of his idealistic belief in the Roman warrior's ethos. Initially, the action of the play exposes the heroic limitations of Titus by showing him to be unable to cope with the Machiavellian policies of Rome's new regime. Later Titus

comes to endorse the truth of the idea suggested by the responses of Achilles that the warrior is peculiarly liable to tragic disillusionment if his heroic faith in himself is not endorsed by events. Titus comes to recognize that Rome no longer values his heroic integrity as he thought it must and, consequently, he *experiences* a tragic Weltschmerz similar in nature to that suffered by Timon and Lear. Whatever discoveries Shakespeare later made about the nature of tragic experience, it is suggested that in Titus at least, containing as it does so many strands of Ovidian influence, he was helped towards an understanding of man's frequently fragile dependence on a self-projected heroic image by Ovid's own artistic embarrassment of the heroes of classical epic and the brittle ethos on which they relied.

While it may be objected that so far as the tragic spirit is concerned Ovid is not a likely source for a vision of the cathartic potentialities latent in the technique of placing ideals under stress, and that the Achilles episode in particular does not even possess a tragic tone or structure, it will be suggested that the figure of Titus himself, like many of the near-tragic figures of Ovid, falls short of attaining a full tragic stature precisely because he does not achieve any lucid consciousness of the nature of his disillusionment or of the *wider* issues *behind his political decline*. In more positive terms, however, it can also be said that there is one episode in the Metamorphoses, to which the Achilles episode forms a thematic prelude, which does debate the issues surrounding the political and social limitations of the warrior hero in a manner which comes as close to achieving a tragic form and a fully conscious tragic disillusionment as Ovid ever gets. The episode is the debate between Ulysses and Ajax over who should be awarded the arms of Achilles and, as well as being a source for the characterizations of the two figures in Troilus and Cressida,¹ the

1) See K. Palmer, ed., Troilus and Cressida, The Arden Shakespeare, London, 1982, pp. 30-31. It is worthy of note that Palmer feels Shakespeare to have taken cognizance of Ovid's gruesomely explicit battle narratives (p. 32).

passage may also be felt to form an analogue to the vision of the warrior overcome by political guile and disrespect for his traditional heroic values which defines a large part of the action in Titus. The passage also prefigures Titus by illustrating how a warrior could be exposed as politically limited, how he might be manipulated and disparaged, and how the recognition of these facts on the part of the hero could lead to the disintegration both of his belief in his society, which he had thought was, like him, fundamentally heroic, and, ultimately, of himself.

The extract begins rously.¹ Ajax asserts his right to the arms as the greatest living Greek warrior. Indeed, he even hints at his superiority to Achilles, and he finds the idea that anyone other than a warrior should win the prize intolerable. As in Shakespeare, he shows himself proud even in humility by intimating that it is not a sign of arrogance which leads him to resent even having to contest the prize with Ulysses:

The pryse is great (I doo confesse) For which wee stryve. But yit
It is dishonour untoo mee, for that in clayming it
So bace a person standeth in contention for the same.
Too thjnk it myne already ought too counted bee no shame
Nor pryde in mee: although the thing of ryght great valew bee
Of which Ulysses standes in hope. For now alreadye hee
Hath wonne the honour of this pryse, in that when he shall sit
Besydes the quisshon, he may brag he strave with mee for it.

Ulysses, however, attacks Ajax's far from uncogent case on its main premise. He does not deny Ajax superiority in battle, but argues against the view which saw martial skills as the sole criterion of human value. The warrior is only a fighting machine that lacks the intellect, resourcefulness, vision and pragmatism even to run a war properly, to say nothing of the skills needed for organization off the battlefield. Thus, it is the gifts of the politician which are the more valuable and necessary to society both in war and in peace:

1)The episode is in Golding XIII.1-466.

[Diomedes] (if he had not thought
 A wyseman better than a strong, and that preferment ought
 Not alway followe force of hande) would now himselfe have sought
 This Armour. So would toother Ajax better stay'd doo,
 And feerce Ewrypyle, and the sonne of hault Andremon too.
 No lesse myght eeke Idominey, and eeke Meriones
 His countryman, and Menelay. For every one of these
 Are valeant men of hand, and not inferior untoo thee
 In martiall feates. And yit they are contented rulde too bee
 By myne advyce. Thou hast a hand that serveth well in fyght,
 Thou hast a wit that stands in neede of my direction ryght.
 Thy force is witlesse: I have care of that that may ensew.
 Thou well canst fyght: the kyng dooth choose the tymes for fyghting dew
 By myne advyce. Thou only with thy body canst avayle,
 But I with bodye and with mynd too profite doo not fayle.
 And looke how much the mayster dooth excell the gally slave,
 Or looke how much preheminece the Capteine ought too have
 Above his souldyer: even so much excell I also thee.
 A wit farre passing strength of hand inclosed is in mee.
 In wit rests *cheefly* all my force.

Amusingly, the assembled warriors agree with this estimation of their
 limitations and award Ulysses the arms.

It is then, however, that the tone changes, briefly, from levity to
 near-tragedy. Ajax not accept that the society which he thought
 was heroic has not affirmed his belief in the ultimate worth of
 heroic values. The rejection results in the shattering of his ideals
 and the feeling that life can not continue in a society which does not
 uphold his own sense of honour:

He that did oft susteine
 Alone both fyre, and sword, and Jove, and Hector could not byde
 One brunt of wrath. And whom no force could vanquish ere that tyde,
 Now only anguish overcommes. He drawes his sword and sayes:
 Well, this is myne yit. Untoo this no clayme Ulysses layes.
 This must I use against myself: this blade that heretoofoore
 Hath bathed beene in Trojane blood, must now his mayster gore,
 That none may Ajax overcome save Ajax. With that woord,
 Intoo his brest (not wounded erst) he thrust his deathfull sword.

Though reminiscent of Antony's suicidal sentiments,¹ Ajax can be felt
 to be more generally prototypical of all the Shakespearean tragic heroes
 who have their idealistic visions of themselves and their world
 shattered by a dramatic experience which refuses to verify that vision.

It need not be thought that Ovid absolutely endorses Ulysses's view of

1) See Antony and Cleopatra IV.xiv.57-58, and Brower, Hero and Saint, p.124

the politician's superiority. What does seem evident, however, is that Ovid consciously suggests that the warrior's ethos implies certain limitations, despite its grandeur. This was an intuition which Shakespeare developed throughout his career; not least in Troilus and Cressida, where Ulysses, in his Ovidian form, is allowed to make similar points about the Greek warriors.¹ Thus, while Shakespeare depicted warriors as individuals (even adopting several Ovidian heroic characterizations) there is a sense in which he concurred with Ulysses's assertion that all "valeant men of hand" could be treated generically by virtue of the fact that they all adhered to similar codes of conduct which provided them with similar virtues and exposed them to similar vices. In these terms Achilles's irascibility and shortsightedness and Ajax's pride and instability, though partially comic, pass serious comment on the nature of heroic codes in general; comment which ultimately suggests that the pursuit of heroic virtue, however admirable or serious, leaves the warrior open to the adoption of concomitant heroic vices. As the discussion of Troilus and Cressida will seek to establish, an Ovidian, humorous, treatment of warrior heroes is as capable of making serious comment on the nature of heroism as a comic exposure of sin was capable of making serious points about the nature of evil in the morality plays. The idea that heroic virtues may only be vices looked at differently has a classical as well as a medieval background and, as Titus will reveal, it could emerge naturally through a play heavily indebted to Ovid, whose work can be seen to emphasise the ultimately ambivalent nature of the heroic image as being both comic and tragic, admirable and degenerate.

To provide a final illustration of these points, it has been suggested that Ovid reveals a common savagery and lack of humane feeling in all of his heroic characterizations. It has also been stated that his warriors

¹ Troilus and Cressida I.iii. 75 ff., and esp. lines 197-210. For further discussion of Shakespeare's use of the debate sequence and Ovidian characterization see Alice Walker's edition of the play (New Cambridge Shakespeare, Cambridge, 1957) p. xlii.

display the hero's typical esteem for the honour which they believe accrues to them through battle. From this the possibility emerges that for the heroes themselves battle was ultimately unconnected with right and wrong, but was engaged in for the, at best, amoral desire to gain kudos. Ovid appears to validate this point about the warrior by making it in connection with Aeneas, who is otherwise the most sympathetically treated warrior in the Metamorphoses,¹ a miniature version of his pious Virgilian ancestor. Ovid goes against Virgil, however, when he states that it was not altruism, religion, patriotism or love which drove Aeneas to battle, but rather it was the love of conquest and the thirst for honour:

And eyther partye had theyr Goddes theyr quarrell too assist,
And courage also: which as good as Goddes myght well be thought.
In fyne they neyther for the Realme nor for the scepter sought,
Nor for the Lady Lavine, but for conquest. And for shame
Too seeme to shrinke in leaving warre, they still prolongd the same.²

The desire to win honour not only starts wars but, as Shakespeare's Hector reveals, it prolongs them in spite of ethical considerations.³

Ovid, then, alerts his readers to the way in which the ideals of heroism can become the same thing as their un-ideal opposites. Thus, magnanimity may be pride, valour may be bloodlust, heroic steadfastness becomes the same quality as intellectual inflexibility, while skill in battle implies inhuman brutality. This process is not a destruction of heroism as a value, rather it is an exposure of what heroic values imply in terms of other, none heroic, overtly moral, values. The technique of viewing heroism in a non-heroic light is one frequently ascribed to Troilus and Cressida, and, although the iconoclasm of that work is potentially more universal than that found in Ovid, it should be

1)See Galinsky, Ovid's Metamorphoses, p.246.

2)Golding XIV.646-650.

3)cf.Troilus II.ii.163-193.

recognized that the process has a logical and artistic integrity of its own, so that once begun it becomes possible to suggest the barbarous human actuality subsisting at the heart of any heroic ideal (indeed of any human ideal) by viewing it as an aggrandized rationalization of a besetting iniquity in man. Thus, although Troilus and Cressida was seen by R.K.Root as an acerbic departure from Ovidian myth,¹ it could also be seen as the logical development of an intellectual process discovered in Ovid and cultivated by Shakespeare throughout his career. As the ensuing analysis of Titus will illustrate, there is certainly an attempt by Shakespeare to define the savagery inherent in heroic ideals in terms of the atavistic primitivism of several of Ovid's more 'gothic' or Senecan myths.

It should be remembered that the assertion of Ovidian influence on Titus does not negate the arguments for Senecan influence on the play, nor does it obviate the strong possibility that the play's direct source was a prose narrative close in form to the mid-eighteenth century version of the Titus story found in a Folger Library chap-book. If such was the case, then the recognizably Senecan/Ovidian nature of the prose story, with its sensationalism and melodrama and its actual use of the Lavinia episode from Ovid and the Thyestean banquet from Seneca, would have introduced an intermediary element into the drama's reception of classical material.² Furthermore, it is to be recalled that Seneca and Ovid shared the predilections of their age for the lurid and the sensational to the extent that their influence over style and choice of material is not always distinguishable. Thus, the claim for Ovidian influence over the choice of 'gothic' material might with equal cogency be felt to be a Senecan or a joint influence.³ Given the

1) Classical Mythology in Shakespeare, p.19

2) See Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources VI, pp.7-13.

3) See Hunter, "Seneca and the Elizabethans," op cit, p.20.

homogenizing tendencies of the Elizabethans with respect to classical material these facts are not of paramount importance when discussing the influence of ideas or styles as opposed to investigating detailed textual borrowings from an individual author. For Titus, however, the suggestion is that "On balance, the resemblances to Ovid seem . . . the more important,"¹ so that it is not a distortion to focus on the Metamorphoses as an influence on the play as an heroic tragedy, so long as it is recognized that it is not being implied that the classical influence is exclusively Ovidian.

It is important to observe that a substantial proportion of the material in Titus which is not in the chap-book story (which has Titus as a warrior but does not allow him the opportunity to become Emperor or leave him a surviving son) involves the Romanization of the political world of the play and the heroization of Titus along traditional Roman lines:

Considerable expansion was used . . . In particular some attempt was made to make Titus a Roman play with political implications. Opportunity for this came from the need to substitute *for the preliminary* biographical material of the first two chapters of the prose *tale* other incidents which would show the nobility of Titus and contrast him with the Emperor and the Gothic Queen. The designer of the plot seems to have been interested both in the political ideal of order and unity in the State and in the ancient traditions of Rome from which the later Empire departed. He therefore filled out the cruel theme with political matter not in his main source, introducing the quarrel between the two brothers, the refusal of Titus to stand for election, his choice of Saturninus, and other incidents which increase our sympathy for the central figure by making him a Roman of the finest traditional kind. 2

Indeed, as T.J.B.Spenser observed, the drama is so keen to establish its Roman identity that it includes all the political institutions of Rome from the Republic to the Byzantine Empire (including free elections, senatorial systems, monarchical primogeniture, plebeian nomination and

1) J.C. Maxwell, ed., Titus Andronicus, The Arden Shakespeare, London, 1953, p. xxxi; cf. also E.M.W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, London, 1944, pp. 137-138, and H. Baker, Induction to Tragedy, Baton Rouge, 1939, pp. 121-124.

2) Bullough, Sources VI, p. 23.

tyrannical despotism) existing together in an anachronistic "summary of Roman politics."¹ Nor is the attempt to incorporate quintessential Roman institutions confined to the political world of the play. Rather than being shown as a "Roman Senator, and a true Lover of his Country,"² Titus has his chap-book identity as a patriotic warrior redefined so as to display him as a "stern old Roman"³ who is not merely a celebrated general but a warrior hero of the traditional Roman kind whose heroic faith "belongs to a different age and moral order from that in which he finds himself, an age of rigorous devotion to duty and honour."⁴ He too is an anachronism in the gothic world of lust and intrigue which dominates the play.

As observed, Titus enters his play in circumstances calculated to evoke sympathy. He is to bury yet more of the sons he has lost in defending Rome. From the outset, however, the Ovidian technique of testing the heroic impulse in areas outside its normal frame of reference is applied to Titus. Thus, his acceptance of death as an occupational hazard of war finds a parallel in his readiness to sacrifice the life of a captive in what turns out to be a particularly gruesome way so as to gain "honour" for his dead sons. Tamora objects to this sacrifice in a fashion which invokes the Ovidian suggestion that the heroic ethos is given to the trivialization of brutality in a socially dangerous and morally indefensible way. She suggests that the "Roman rites" about to be performed on her son have nothing to do with piety or honour but are rather based on degenerate human impulses casuistically given the status of virtues. Her dismissal of the sacrifice as "cruel, irreligious piety"⁵

1)"Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Romans," op cit, p.32.

2)Bullough, Sources VI, p.36.

3)ibid, p.16.

4)ibid, p.22.

5)The sacrifice of Alarbus takes place between I.i.96 and I.i.149.
Tamora's dismissal comes at line 130.

not only echoes Ovid's observations about Aeneas's war against Turnus, but also the Augustinian analysis of traditional Roman society as tending to elevate base human impulses to the level of divinity.

The artistic examination of the heroic mentality in a context outside the field of war then continues in a more explicitly Ovidian fashion. Having been offered the *office of Emperor*, Titus turns it down on the Ulyssean grounds that he has been a warrior, not a statesman, and *that* his career has been marked by the pursuit of honour. Thus, not fitted by training for rule, he requires "a staff of honour for [his] age, // But not a sceptre to control the world."¹ Unlike Ajax Titus does not suppose that a warrior's training is the most suitable for any calling. He recognizes the limitations of his chosen role, and, as if to verify the view that the warrior is temperamentally unsuited to "have care of that that may ensw," the one executive act which Titus makes is to nominate Saturninus as Emperor; a decision which *is* to have tragic repercussions both for himself and his city. Titus, of course, does not wilfully nominate a man he knows to be unsuitable. Rather, it is his otherwise admirable heroic idealism which leads him to make his judgment according to the principle of primogeniture; a method which was laudable by contemporary English practice, but which the play quite clearly shows was not enforced upon Titus by the institutions of the Rome of his day. A more practical, less theoretically principled, man would not have so unthinkingly acted in accordance with a principle which his own milieu did not recognize. Just as later Titus was to insist on behaving honourably in his dealings with a political power which was not in itself honourable, Titus, nobly, though with *consummate political* naivety, elects Saturninus according to a political ideal which a more pragmatic man would have seen was inappropriate. As Ovid implied, the innate idealism of the warrior was liable to carry itself over into areas

1) I.i.198-199.

of life where it would be radically unsuited to deal with the complex contingencies of a world which, even on the battlefield, was rarely so unambiguous as to allow an unqualified reliance on abstract codes outlining correct behaviour.

The view that the necessarily uncompromising nature of heroic idealism could have disastrous consequences when applied to situations which lack the polarised standards of open warfare is given a typically Ovidian endorsement when the play turns from politics to personal relationships with the seizure of Lavinia from Saturninus by Bassianus to whom she was previously betrothed. As has been seen, the motif of incongruous conflict arising from circumstances surrounding marriage and love was a frequent device used by Ovid to expose the socially destructive nature of the heroic impulse towards violence. Certainly this is a moment when Titus behaves at his most idealistic and uncompromising. Attempting to retrieve Lavinia, Titus is hindered by his son Mutius, whom he promptly kills. Even in itself the episode would comment on the inhumanity and savagery of the warrior's ethos, but the point is made even more clear by the exchange which follows between Titus and Lucius in which Titus asserts that even family loyalties can not be allowed to compromise his devotion to honour:

Luc. My lord, you are unjust, and more than so:
In wrongful quarrel you have slain your son.
Tit. Nor thou nor he are any sons of mine;
My sons would never so dishonour me. 1

It has been said that Ovid sought to alert the Rome of his day to the gross inadequacy of the Roman heroic code as a means of judging human worth and behaviour. There is certainly an Ovidian irony here attached to the man who talks of honour after having killed his son. Obviously, however, this recognition of the dichotomy existing between Roman virtu and the common values of human decency was not an exclusively Ovidian one.

1)I.i.292-295.

Virgil (Aeneid VI.820-823) commented memorably on the misery of Junius Brutus who had felt obliged to kill his sons for the good of Rome, while Augustine uncompromisingly condemned the perversion of values which had such a man being celebrated as a paragon of virtue.¹ Given the play's intention to create a quintessential vision of Rome, it is indeed quite possible that the killing of a son in defense of Rome's prerogatives had come to seem emblematic of the stern patrician morality which characterized the Roman heroes of the Republic, who, in part, Titus was intended to resemble.

As the drama develops, Titus, having, like Lear, placed himself in a position of vulnerability, finds his heroic simplicity to be of little avail against a world dominated by politicians, schemers and intriguers. He puts his faith in the sanctity of Rome and its institutions and that faith is abused. First, despite Titus's killing his son to preserve the marriage of Lavinia to Saturninus, the new Emperor decides to marry Tamora instead. After this the hostility of the ruling dynasty to him is not only seen in the initially undiscovered rape and mutilation of Lavinia by Tamora's two sons, but also in the positive coolness of the Emperor in response to Titus's pleas for clemency for his two sons suspected of murdering Bassianus.² At the opening of the third act Titus explicitly asks for mercy to be shown to his sons as a favour to him, granted in recognition of his heroic deeds for Rome, only to have the request turned down by the senators.³ Furthermore, his eldest son, Lucius, is banished for attempting to intervene in the execution of his brothers, while Titus, having sacrificed his hand following a deception of Aaron's playing upon his heroic staunchness, has the hand-and, symbolically, his heroic value to Rome-"in scorn to [him] sent back-//. . . [his] resolution mock'd."⁴ Finally, the true cause of Lavinia's rape

1)See The City of God III.xvi.

2)See II.iii.288 ff.

3)See III.i.1 ff.

4)See III.ii.238-239.

having been discovered, Titus is unable to get justice in "ungrateful Rome."¹

Given the continued refusal of Rome to show deference to the traditionally venerated values of heroic worth, and finding himself, seemingly inexplicably, held in low esteem, the "staff of honour" which he felt to be his due denied to him, Titus is shown to suffer a disillusionment similar to that experienced by Ajax after finding himself slighted by the Greek army.² Indeed, even prior to the inception of the tragic events of the play, Titus finds the hostility of Saturninus to him to be both painful ("These words are razors to my wounded heart") and incomprehensible ("Titus, when wert thou wont to walk alone, // Dishonoured thus, and challenged of wrongs?"³). These early reactions are reminiscent of the sane Lear's initial dissatisfaction with his daughters, and, as with Lear, they herald the more complete understanding that he is subject to an actively hostile world which Titus *acquires* later in the play. Again as with Lear, the realization of this fact drives Titus into madness. This suggests both that Titus was unable to modify his idealized conception of the world to allow him to come to terms rationally with events which invalidated that conception, and also that this tragic inability to adapt to an uncongenial actuality was related to the warrior hero's temperamental reliance on an heroic self-image which, therefore, could be thought to render such a psyche peculiarly liable to inner disintegration once that image became impossible to sustain.

Unlike Lear, however, Titus's madness does not serve to bring him to a paradoxically increased tragic consciousness of the nature of the cathartic experiences he undergoes. Whereas Lear's madness brings him, or at least drives him to articulate, tragic lucidity, Titus's lapse

1) IV.iii.17.

2) See III.i.52 ff.

3) I.i.314 and 339-340.

into insanity is also a lapse into a more obscure awareness of the implications for him of having his ideals about his own value in the world destroyed. In fact Titus never achieves the lucid anagnorisis which the morality tradition may have suggested for Lear and other Shakespearean tragic heroes. In Titus the morality structure is not used and, indeed, the protagonist's lucidity is actively restricted by the more superficial tragic structure which is employed. The Kydian revenge play with its emphasis on sorrow producing real and feigned madness leading to the taking of an emphatically grisly revenge, did not naturally emphasise the study of a man's tragic *disillusionment*. In Titus Aemilius is made to invoke the similarity between the predicament of Titus and that of Coriolanus,¹ and it was not until Shakespeare dramatized that story that he came to fully treat the tragic potentialities of the pagan warrior whose Roman heroic ideals were destroyed by Rome herself.

Titus does, however, articulate some awareness of the fact that he has been pushed into madness by being wronged by his society beyond his ability to bear it and retain his heroic equanimity:

Marcus, we are but shrubs, no cedars we,
 No big-bon'd men fram'd of the Cyclops' size;
 But metal, Marcus, steel to the very back,
 Yet wrung with wrongs more than our backs can bear;
 And, sith there's no justice in earth nor hell,
 We will solicit heaven, and move the gods
 To send down Justice for to wreak our wrongs.²

It is, then, not correct to say that Titus does not know of his disillusionment and vulnerability, but it is true to say that he is not made to express his knowledge so forcibly as to make the audience fully aware of why so heroic a nature is liable to receive so shattering a blow from a non-heroic world. Having no temporal means of redress the invocation to the pagan gods is instructive on two accounts. Firstly,

1) IV. iv. 62-69.

2) IV. iii. 45-51. cf. also IV. iii. 10-24.

it confirms the Roman nobility of Titus, who, despite massive wrongs, is shown to desire justice through the legal channels of his esteemed city rather than exercise his demonstrable propensity for the taking of direct violent action. Secondly, Titus is revealed to be firmly pagan in his religious allegiances.

This aspect of Titus's character is significant because the historical setting of the play's probable source suggests that the action took place well within the Christian era during the time of Theodosius, who was a "pious Christian"¹ and a friend of St. Ambrose. Thus, while paganism survived in Rome until well into the Christian era, it is likely that the depiction of Titus as a pagan was another aspect of his anachronistic adherence to the old Roman practices. Certainly, there is an attempt in Titus, not found in any other of Shakespeare's Roman plays (where Christianity was historically unavailable), to suggest that an alternative to paganism *did exist*. Aaron, for example, scorns the "religious" Lucius for his "popish tricks and ceremonies," while Lucius's responding oath "by my god" is clearly monotheistic.² Christian responses are also made by the Clown who, in answer to Titus's question "what says Jupiter?" replies "Alas, sir, I know not Jupiter," and goes on to speak rather of a single God and an eschatological heaven: "God forbid I should be so bold to press to heaven in my young days. . . . God be with you, sir."³ Later his language becomes even more explicitly Christian as he talks of saying grace and speaks of "God and Saint Stephen" and begs "by'r lady."⁴ It is possible that the references (often sneering) to Catholicism are a reflection of the fact that Rome was the centre of the Catholic Church.

While the religious pluralism may be merely one more example of the

1) Bullough, Sources VI, p.8. For an outline of the play's "semi-fictitious" historical background see pages 8-10.

2) V.i.71-86.

3) IV.iii.83 ff.

4) IV.iv.42 ff.

technique whereby all historical possibilities in Rome are grouped eclectically together, it may also be a conscious attempt to represent the actual religious duality of fourth-century Rome as outlined in the prose story and as much commented upon by Augustine. Certainly it is evident that the play seeks to suggest the psychological and doctrinal inadequacy of Titus's religious ultimates in terms which are not merely those of Ovidian scepticism but also those proffered by Augustine when seeking to expose the deluded, self-deterministic, nature of pagan religious absolutes. Thus, early in the play, Tamora cries out against the moral inadequacy of Titus's religious observances, and, in so doing, she also hints at one of Augustine's most destructive criticisms of heroic man, his tendency to usurp divine prerogatives: "Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?//Draw near them then in being merciful.// Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge.//Thrice-noble Titus, spare my first-born son."¹ It is, however, not simply the fact that Titus is seen to follow a course of religious practice which to the Christian observer appears as immoral which emerges from the play. In conjunction with this suggestion of religious cruelty there emerges the idea that Titus's religion does not provide him with any reliable guide by which to govern his responses when confronted with the extreme examples of human evil, malevolence and injustice which rise against him and his family during the course of the play. He does not, for example, have any sense that temporal injustice will inevitably occur in a fallen world but will be inexorably punished eschatologically. Titus's horizons do not transcend this world, and, even in terms of temporality, his ethics are man-made; he has no positive divine injunctions against the taking of personal revenge, or towards the exercise of Christian virtue and patience. His religion gives him no comfort, only the hope of revenge.

Thus, when his gods provide no sign of awarding him temporal redress,

1)I.i.117-120.

Titus feels that there is no other alternative open to him than to seek revenge himself. This conclusion, of course, emerges all the more readily in Titus's mind because his heroism not only predisposes him towards violence but, as Tamora observed, it also made him less likely to continue to subjugate his already restive sense of heroic individuality beneath an abstract concept of divine causality. It is in this aggressive mood that he responds to Jove's supposed procrastination: "He doth me wrong to feed me with delays.//I'll dive into the burning lake below//And pull [Justice] out of Acheron by the heels."¹ Similarly his firing arrows in supplication to the gods is emblematic of the growing militancy of his devotional role.² It is not surprising that once he begins to feel as undervalued by the gods as he felt to have been by Rome Titus proceeds to seek his own, wild, justice through private revenge. Thus, despite being praised as being "so just that he will not revenge," the play illustrates how, denied the possibility of gaining either supernatural or temporal justice and without having recourse to the idea of eschatological retribution, Titus is left with few tenable alternatives, given his heroic temperament, other than to take revenge.³

It is important to recognize, however, that even in the terms of the pagan-Roman civic virtues to which Titus subscribes revenge is seen as falling away from the exalted standards of a Roman hero. To ascertain exactly what type of a decline is postulated by the play for Titus as he surrenders to the attractions of becoming a stage revenger it is necessary to examine the nature of those aspects of the play which, prior to the last act, Titus's traditional Roman virtue had stood in contrast with. Titus supports the idea that it is a conscious

1)IV.iii.42-44.

2)IV.iii.50 ff.

3)IV.i.129.

dramatization of a late Roman world by containing several references to the fact that not only Ovidian myth but Ovid himself was a figure from the distant past and that his works had become classics which formed part of the poetic heritage of Rome alluded to by the educated Roman.¹ Even Titus's small nephew is able to draw self-conscious analogies between Lavinia and Ovid's Hecuba,² while Philomel's treatment at the hands of Tereus in Ovid was well enough known even for Aaron to make the connection.³ The play continually defines the grotesque and savage events which occur in terms of the sensationally **horrific** world of Ovidian myth, Tamora and the gothic intrigues which surround her being especially represented in this fashion. Thus, it is significant that when Titus finally abandons his attempts to secure legitimate forms of justice he, ironically, abandons also the accepted values of Roman nobility and enters the unrestrained, impassioned, almost animalistic world characterized by a certain type of Ovidian/Senecan myth. Thus, when he finally confronts Tamora's sons with his plans for their death he too invokes two Ovidian analogues for his proposals. Significantly, considering his own warlike nature, the second of his parallels is to the bloody battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths described by Nestor in book twelve of the Metamorphoses, which, it has been suggested, revealed the potential inhumanity of heroic conflict. By equating himself with a half-beast Titus has already metaphorically entered the "wilderness of tigers"⁴ which characterized the Rome of Saturninus:

This is the feast that I have bid [Tamora] to,
 And this the **banquet** she shall surfeit on;
 Far worse than Philomel you us'd my daughter,

1) See II.iv.38 and IV.i.42 ff.

2) IV.i.20-43.

3) II.iii.42-44.

4) III.i.54.

And worse than Progne I will be reveng'd.
And now prepare your throats, Lavinia, come,
Receive the blood; and when that they are dead,
Let me go grind their bones to powder small,
And with this hateful liquor temper it;
And in that paste let their vile heads be bak'd
Come, come, be every one officious
To make this banquet, which I wish may prove
More stern and bloody than the Centaurs' feast.¹

This degeneration of Titus from the comparative social and religious responsibility of his earlier desire for true justice through the Roman political and theological machinery to the primitivism with which he allies himself to the atavistic world of Ovidian mythology is not an unexpected development. It will be remembered that throughout the Metamorphoses Ovid suggested that the heroic ethos, however sophisticated, was always capable of degenerating into the atavistic savagery of its roots in human brutality, especially when the hero was put under pressure by events which were not part of his traditional epic experience. In Ovid, Tereus, the warrior who came to ravish Philomel, illustrates exactly this propensity of the warrior to unleash his violent nature on inappropriate objects whenever his passions are sufficiently aroused.²

Given this, it becomes possible to suggest that Shakespeare, by equating the violent world of his late Roman play with the violent world of Ovidian myth, was attempting to suggest along with Ovid that the values and ideals of pagan Rome could, and in the late Empire did, degenerate into the more primal qualities which underlay them. Obviously, part of this degeneration came about as a result of the injection of the Gothic values of Tamora, Aaron and the rest into the heroic world of Rome. Equally, however, as the human sacrifice revealed, the potentiality for Gothic cruelty was already latent in the Roman values of Titus, their most venerable advocate. Accordingly it only required the hostility of the

1)V.ii.193-204.

2)The account takes place in Metamorphoses VI.425 ff.

Goths to stretch Titus's heroic ideals beyond their ability to respond to illustrate that the pagan heroic code of Rome was in fact related to the amoral ethics of its barbarian opponents. Predictably, therefore, there was a direct association between Tamora's party and the more savage Ovidian myths. Thus, for example, following the sacrifice of his brother, Demetrius expresses his hopes for his mother's revenge in terms of the Ovidian story of Hecuba and her revenge on Polymestor for the murder of Polydorus, as recounted in Metamorphoses XIII.551 ff:

Then, madam, stand resolv'd, but hope withal
The self-same gods that arm'd the Queen of Troy
With opportunity of sharp revenge
Upon the Thracian tyrant in his tent
May favour Tamora, the queen of Goths—
When Goths were Goths and Tamora was queen—
To quit the bloody wrongs upon her foes. 1

As Titus himself was aware, his revenge for the Ovidian horrors perpetrated on his family was also framed according to the standards of Ovidian myth; especially those operating at the grim banquet prepared for Tereus by Procne.

As has been shown, Ovid was interested in the movement of men from equanimity to the extremes of passion. As he appeared to depict the warrior hero as tending to hold an idealized, formal, code to endorse and govern behaviour which was, in essence, often passionate, savage and animalistic, then he frequently used the warrior figure to illustrate the psychology of passion or anger. Given his vision of the Trojan and early Roman warriors along these lines, then the intuition emerges that a civilization based on the warlike ideals and responses of the warrior, is, however stable and sincere in its beliefs, liable, in times of stress or in circumstances which compromise its heroic faith, to degenerate into the elemental qualities and emotions which underlie its ideals. In this sense both Titus and Rome, each defined by ideals which were fundamentally

1) I. i. 135-141.

lacking in humanity, were always liable to capitulate (as under the selfish Saturninus) to the wildness at their centre. In a Rome which was functioning normally the strict, though ambivalent, moral and social ethos of the Roman patriarch kept this inherent chaos in check. In a Rome, however, where the traditional heroic ethos is no longer authoritative, then the actions of those representing that ethos can themselves lead to yet further disorder as the innate anti-social nature of heroic idealism is released.

As Shakespeare was also to suggest in Coriolanus, there is a sense in which the wilderness of tigers is always present in the psyche of the warrior hero; and, developing on from this, a further sense in which the heroic spirit is present in much that is, considered more generally, responsible for the whole catalogue of tragic evil which besets humanity:

The matter of tragedies is haughtiness, arrogancy, ambition, pride, injury, anger, wrath, envy, hatred, contention, warre, murther, cruelty, rapine, incest, ravings, depra-dations, piracyes, spoyles, roberies, rebellions, treasons, killing, hewing, stabbing, dagger-drawing, fighting, butchery, trechery, villany, etc. and all kind of heroyick evils whatsoever. 1

Though John Green no doubt wrote his condemnation of drama in a spirit more closely associated with the anti-heroic vision of the morality tradition than with that derived from Renaissance classical humanism, it is informative to observe how in Ovid, as well as in the Elizabethan dramas which Green condemns, the heroic spirit is associated with many more manifestations of human misery and evil than those encountered solely on the battlefield. In one respect the heroic spirit was shown to transcend its military dimension and become represented by a more universal personal staunchness which, though worthy of respect, was often seen to precipitate the extremes of conduct which led to tragedy. As Titus demonstrates, the heroic spirit of the protagonist eventually causes him to share in the more overtly evil nature of his opponents.

1) J. Green, A Refutation of the Apology for Actors, 1615, p. 56, cited by Hunter in "Seneca and the Elizabethans," p. 23.

This is not to suggest that classical literature promoted a similar image of the warrior hero that of some morality dramas in which the hero became a metaphor for human life in sin. What is being suggested, however, is that Ovid, when read against the background of early English drama, could provide a stimulus for drama which depicted the warrior as representing the ambivalent nature of heroic idealism, whereby a man could emerge as a simultaneous image of human excellence and degeneracy. Such conclusions indicating the ambivalent nature of human images of nobility will be found to be common to all of the subsequent chapters; though, as will be indicated, the conclusions which may be drawn from each instance of heroic ambiguity are influenced by the availability of other ultimates which can be thought to be available to the hero.

Thus, in Titus, the ambivalence of the hero's ethos does not necessarily imply that Rome was a morally chaotic or relativistic world. In most normal, and even in many extraordinary situations, the resources open to Titus within his own heroic milieu offered fixed guides to his behaviour. Thus, although from a Christian point of view it was wrong for Titus to have undertaken human sacrifice or to have killed his son in defence of his honour, he did not act from a spirit of **ungoverned** impulse, but, ostensibly at least, according to rigid social and religious codes.¹ In these terms it is mistaken to find Titus lacking because "he does not display . . . the awareness of eternity and damnation . . . of the major tragic figures,"² for, although the statement is true enough if Titus was to be compared with Hamlet or Macbeth, his limitations in these areas are mitigated and explained by the fact that while theoretically available, Christian ideas of this sort were not a part of his consistently pagan Weltanschauung. At the

1) See, for example, Titus's insistence that correct devotion, not vengeance, demanded the sacrifice of Alarbus: I.i.121-126.

2) G.Lloyd-Evans, "Shakespeare, Seneca and the Kingdom of Violence," in T.A.Dorey and D.R.Dudley, eds., Roman Drama, London, 1965, p.140.

grave of his sons his religious responses are Stoic-pagan, his afterlife is seen in terms of a simple removal from the cares of life, and he has little sense of reward or punishment or of the eschatological ultimates which obsess the Christian tragic heroes.¹ Titus displays little transcendent awareness simply because for him as a pagan the issues which torment him are temporal ones *requiring* resolution in mundane terms because he acknowledged no machinery for their spiritual resolution. Thus his responses are not relativistic, they merely do not encompass the Christian transcendental, so that it became possible for his mundane ultimates to come to seem inadequate as a means for ensuring the ultimate triumph of virtue and justice. When this exhaustion of the resources of mundane ideals occurred it was then that Titus entered a more relativistic world in which any method of securing revenge was deemed permissible. Thus Titus decided to "o'er-reach them in their own devices,"² knowing that those devices were evil in terms of his earlier ethic, but that they offered a solution to his problems whereas his earlier ethic did not.

Unlike Horestes, therefore, Titus is not deluded into supposing evil to be good. He is not taken in by Tamora's personification of Revenge, but he nevertheless accepts revenge as a means towards justice. While in a Christian play this Macbeth-like consciousness of evil would further condemn the protagonist, in a pagan play Titus's final actions are partially excused by the fact that his high ideals and his genuine desire for virtue fail him in his quest for justice and leave him with no solution to the problem of evil in his play. The Christian is directly enjoined to leave vengeance to God. Titus is not so enjoined, and so he emerges as less culpable than a similarly offending Christian, though, in that he consciously adopts evil, even in pagan terms he is more

1) See I.i.150 ff.

2) V. ii. 143.

blameworthy than the more deluded Horestes.

When Titus resorted to wild justice in his wilderness of tigers he did not so much fall from Roman virtue as, having exhausted the possibilities of that virtue, pass beyond its limits in an attempt to solve the problem of evil in his world. In Christian terms, however, the limits of virtue could never be reached because ultimately, good works having proved ineffective, virtue *consisted of* obedience and faith in God and His retribution for any seemingly triumphant temporal manifestation of wickedness. Roman virtues by contrast were, as Augustine observed, centred on man, and were, *therefore*, liable to be afflicted with the limitations and insufficiencies which characterized a fallen world. There were, of course, pagan philosophies and religions which grappled with the problem of the nature of evil in a way which allowed man to retain his equanimity in the face of a seemingly incoherent, evil universe.¹ It is not suggested that all pagans were bound to adopt the solution devised by Titus. This, finally, is where Titus's heroic nature becomes crucial; his innate heroic dynamism renders him temperamentally unsuited to retain his stoic forbearance in the face of adversity and, lacking any belief in their ultimate punishment, he is driven, where others would not be, towards the *enactment* of the punishment of his enemies, in a manner which, were he a Christian, he might have imagined to have been that meted out by an avenging God.

1) See Farnham, Medieval Heritage, p.15 for an analysis of the way in which Stoicism "provides a basis for reasoning evil out of existence."

CHAPTER SIX: The structure of the hero's experience in Hamlet.

While discussing the influence of Seneca on Elizabethan tragedy Hardin Craig drew attention to the numerous "structural resemblances" existing between Senecan and Shakespearean drama. Though suggesting that these resemblances may in part be due to the common patterns of all tragic experience, he goes on to record some of the more striking of the structural parallels which he believed could be found:

In Œdipus the father of Œdipus, like the father of Hamlet, appears as a ghost (625 ff.); reveals the crime, accuses the murderer, and asks for revenge. Jocasta, like Gertrude, is only secondarily guilty. Œdipus's sorrow for his own deeds is like that of King Lear. The blinding of Gloucester recalls the blinding of Œdipus. . . . The motive of incest appears in both Œdipus and Hamlet. In Phœnissæ the relation of Eteocles and Polynices resembles both in general situation and in treatment that between Edmund and Edgar in King Lear. Œdipus, like Gloucester, desires to die by jumping from a high cliff. The speeches of Œdipus to Antigone are much like those of Lear to Cordelia. The choice that Jocasta is forced to make between her sons is like that which Octavia is compelled to make in Antony and Cleopatra between her husband Antony and her brother Octavius. Jocasta's plea for reconciliation between her sons is like that which Volumnia makes to Coriolanus. And so on in every Senecan play in large and in small. 1

Although it must be remembered that many such parallels may be merely the result of common themes of folklore recurring in the disparate mythical material which lay beneath each dramatist's work,² it does seem that Shakespeare sometimes developed or emphasised formal parallels between his own tragic material and that of Seneca. Thus, to add one more example, the human sacrifice and the debate which surrounds it at the

1) "The Shackling of Accidents: A Study of Elizabethan Tragedy," Philological Quarterly XIX, 1940, p. 10.

2) Thus, for example, the potential analogy between Hamlet and Seneca's Agamemnon based on a comparison of the roles of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Egisthus and Orestes with those of Old Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius and Hamlet, is (though Shakespeare might have been aware of it) in fact the result of innate resemblances between the Greek myth of the House of Atreus and the legend of Amleth as recorded by Saxo Grammaticus in his Historiæ Danicæ. cf. J.A.K. Thomson, Shakespeare and the Classics, London, 1952, p. 116, for a brief discussion to the background of common though unrelated "laws of the mythopoeic imagination" in Hamlet and in classical tragedy.

opening of Titus Andronicus, an episode without warrant in the likely source,¹ is reminiscent of the dispute over the sacrifice of Polyxena which takes place between Agamemnon and Pyrrhus in Troades 203 ff. To extend the parallel into another play, it is noticable that the same action (in that it involves the spirit of Achilles calling for Polyxena's death which his surviving son then strives to accomplish) provides analogies for the action in Hamlet which itself contains a warlike ghost urging revenge. In that this facet of the play was not part of the original Amleth myth, it is possible that this similarity was more than merely accidental, and that it might even reflect a conscious indebtedness on either Shakespeare's or the author of the Ur-Hamlet's behalf.²

This possibility is made more likely by the fact that Jasper Heywood's translation of Troades (remembering Nashe's insistence that English Seneca afforded "whole Hamlets, I should say handfulls of Tragicall speeches,"³ and extending this to consider the idea that it may have provided some specific structural devices also) has the ghost of Achilles actually appearing on stage, as opposed to being merely reported in Seneca, where along with heroic boasting he demands the death of Polyxena in what he specifically sees as an act of revenge for his treacherously executed murder:

Remembred is alowe where sprites do dwell
The wicked slaughter wrought by wyly way.
Not yet revenged hath the deepest hell,
Achilles bloud on them that did him slay
But now of vengeance come the yrefull day

1) See Maxwell, ed., Titus Andronicus, p. xxix.

2) Thomas Lodge alluded to the fact that the Ur-Hamlet contained a "ghost which cried so miserably at the Theatre, like an oyster-wife, Hamlet, revenge." (Wit's Misery, London, 1596, p. 56). The allusion, along with a consideration of the likely contents of the Ur-Hamlet, is discussed by Harold Jenkins in his introduction to the Arden edition of Hamlet, 1982, pp. 82-85 and 97-101 where he concludes that the ghost in the earlier play, especially if it was, as he believes, by Kyd, was likely to differ from Shakespeare's in showing "all the trappings of classic myth." (p. 101).

3) Preface to Greene's Menaphon, To the Gentlemen Students of both Universities, in R. B. McKerrow, ed., The Works of Thomas Nashe, Vol. 3, revised by F. P. Wilson, Oxford, 1958, pp. 315-316.

And darkest dennes of Tartare from beneath
Conspire the fautes, of them that wrought my death.

Now mischief, murder, wrath of hell draweth nere,
And dyre Phlegethon floud doth bloud require:
Achilles death shall be revenged here
With slaughter such as Stygian lakes desyre.¹

Thus, ironically, Old Hamlet; the revengeful warrior ghost also killed under cover by an inferior enemy, traditionally seen as one of the more Senecan of dramatic devices in Hamlet, is more obviously analogous to Heywood's interpolated character than to any revengeful spirit ever created by Seneca.²

Despite the fact that Heywood's translation of Troades approximates more closely to the situation in Hamlet than does the original, it must be emphasised, however, that in neither case is the analogy, even in abstract terms, an exact one.³ Obviously, the major area of difference between the two 'ghostly-father/living son' situations lies in the fact that Achilles, even in Heywood, does not ask Pyrrhus to take private revenge on his killer (Paris by then being dead himself), but demands that the Greeks allow Pyrrhus to enact the public sacrifice of an innocent victim as a mark of their respect for the memory of Achilles and also as an abstract act of revenge against the Trojans who, he feels, ignobly and unheroically killed him.⁴ Furthermore, Achilles's demands are made after Pyrrhus has killed Priam, so that his son has already performed the act which is more analogous to that required of Hamlet in that, while not exactly an act of direct revenge upon his father's killer, it was a similarly private act of violence undertaken by a younger man

1) In Thomas Newton, ed., Seneca His Tenne Tragedies, London, 1581, reprinted, ed., C. Whibley, as Newton's Seneca, 2 vols., London, 1927, Vol. 1, pp. 17-18. (No line refs.). All subsequent reference to Elizabethan Seneca is made to this edition.

2) See H. B. Charlton's introduction to C. G. Kastner and H. B. Charlton, eds., The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander, Vol. 1, London, 1921, p. clvii.

3) Even so the sense of posthumous revenge is stronger in Heywood's translation than in Virgil's account of the death of Priam. Jenkins (Hamlet, p. 480) is correct to make this point vis a vis the Aeneid but he ignores the possibility that classical authority for the idea of a Pyrrhic revenge might have been taken from Troades. But see note 4 below.

4) In Seneca, as opposed to Heywood, the idea of revenge is not powerfully developed, cf. Troades 203 ff.

against an older king, who was also the head of both the family and the nation which had been instrumental in his father's demise. Indeed, Achilles's spirit is essentially unconcerned with securing the type of revenge required by the ghost of Old Hamlet, which had, in fact, as near as circumstances allowed, already been taken; his main concern now being that the extraordinary honours which he feels are due to be paid to his spirit are not neglected.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the above example is the one which the view of Shakespeare as being creatively flexible in his use of sources and analogues would also suggest was true. Thus, it could be said that if Shakespeare does indeed use classical or even medieval forms and treatments to give dramatic shape to his major sources, then he does not allow them to become obtrusive or to detract from his dramatic aims by seeking a too-close correspondence between his own and earlier structures. This qualified acceptance of the idea that Shakespeare may have consciously used classical analogues to define his own work can be set down as a preliminary point of reference from which to begin a discussion of the player's speech in Hamlet; one of the more conspicuous occasions on which Shakespeare seems himself to draw attention to the parallels between classical myth and literature and his own drama.¹ In the speech depicting the events surrounding the death of Priam, Shakespeare appears to invoke and to extend the similarities which have already been shown to link the mythical situation operating during the fall of Troy with the situation that has developed in Elsinore. It is important to recognize that here too, however, the implications of the speech within the play world of Hamlet are as lacking in logical consistency or in exact character to character equivalences as were the parallels surrounding Achilles's ghost discussed above. Indeed, the high level of general correspondences existing between the character reactions and relations

1) See Jenkins, ed., Hamlet, p. 480.

in the Trojan cycle of myths and those operative in Hamlet, combined with the conspicuous lack of any precise parallels which would irrefutably link all of the major figures in the player's speech to exactly related counterparts within the play itself, has accounted for the wide variety of interpretations which have arisen concerning the structural and thematic analogies existing between the play's characters and their classical prototypes in the player's speech.

Thus, for example, G.Ashe, ignoring the fact that Priam is only obliquely 'responsible' for Achilles's death, observed that the player's speech "echoes the main theme of Hamlet" by describing "the retributive vengeance of a son against ~~the~~ king whom he must regard as responsible for the treacherous killing of his father."¹ Having made this connection he went on to suggest that if Pyrrhus and Priam are equated with Hamlet and Claudius respectively, then the role of Hecuba as a grieving queen widowed by revenge was potentially related to that of Gertrude after the killing of Claudius.² The obvious objections to such a scheme: that Hamlet was patently not an amoral revenger, Priam not the murderer of his brother, and Hecuba not a previously widowed queen now joined in an incestuous marriage with her brother-in-law, prompted Harry Levin to see a more oblique series of relationships between speech and play. He suggested that Hamlet reflected the roles of both Aeneas and Pyrrhus, that Priam suggested Old Hamlet, and that Gertrude was ironically dissimilar to the mourning Hecuba: "all occasions inform against Hamlet, who rediscovers his own plight in the verbal painting, the theatrical mirror of the Player's speech. The narrator, pious Aeneas, recalls him to his filial duty. The King, his father, like Priam, has been slaughtered. The Queen his mother, ironically unlike Hecuba, refuses to play the part of the mourning wife. As for the interloping newcomer-whether you call

1) "Hamlet and Pyrrhus," Notes and Queries CXCII, 1947, p.214.

2) ibid, p.215.

him Pyrrhus, Neoptolemus, or Fortinbras—he too is prompted by the unquiet ghost of his father, Achilles. His destiny, too, is to bring down the revenge of a dead hero upon the unheroic heads of the living.”¹

While Levin does not insist on rigidly ascribing man-to-man associations between the mythical archetypes of the player's speech and the characters in Hamlet, it is clear that his interpretation raises as many problems as it solves. Thus, for example, how may the postulated parallel between Hamlet and Aeneas be reconciled with that between Pyrrhus and Hamlet? Furthermore, if Priam is equated with Old Hamlet, then is not Claudius the most appropriate character to equate with Pyrrhus? If this equation is accepted, however, what is the significance of the pause which Pyrrhus is described as taking prior to delivering the final blow with his sword? This aspect of his behaviour (unique to Shakespeare's version of the myth) has been cogently seen as a reference to Hamlet's own inaction.² Certainly hesitation would not seem to be an obviously appropriate quality to apply to Claudius's murder of his brother, and nor would the open aggression of Pyrrhus's actions accord with the secret killing of King Hamlet. In his study of the anomalous position of the Trojan scene as a parallel to the action of Hamlet Clifford Leech suggested that the player's characters had a dual significance for Hamlet and that the gap as well as the correlation between the events of the speech and the 'reality' of the play should be taken into account when assessing its function:

. . . what emerges clearly enough is that there are two equations contained within the speech: Pyrrhus is both Hamlet and Claudius; Priam is both Claudius and the elder Hamlet; Hecuba in both equations is Gertrude. In . . . the hesitation of Pyrrhus . . . Shakespeare gives us an image of the hesitation that Hamlet is now practising and of the hesitation that Claudius should have practised but, apparently, did not. Hecuba's grief is the grief Gertrude should have felt at her first husband's death; it may also be the grief,

1) The Question of Hamlet, New York, 1959, p.147.

2) See C. Leech, "The Hesitation of Pyrrhus," in D.W. Jefferson, ed., The Morality of Art, London, 1969, p.47.

Hamlet suspects, that waits for her when Claudius dies. The tale to Dido has become both a record of Elsinore's immediate past (with ironic inversion in Pyrrhus' hesitation and Hecuba's grief); it is also an exercise in wish-fulfilment as the Prince listens to the account of a revenge accomplished for a dead father. 1

Thus, Leech modified the hitherto untenable systems of individually linked characters by introducing a more complex and ironic scheme of correspondences, which, though binary, retained the logic of group associations and the methodology of its predecessors by keeping faith with the principle that an allegorical relationship existed between the speech and the play.

Although the idea that a character's divergences from the recorded behaviour of his literary archetype are as significant as his similarities is a productive one, it should, nevertheless, be observed that even the levels of allegorical flexibility postulated by Leech still fail to account for certain other correspondences within and surrounding the player's speech which Shakespeare seems to have been at pains to establish. While the validity of Leech's dual pattern of associations shall not be contested, it will be suggested that the neatness of his postulated scheme of past and future allegorical appropriateness is ultimately dissipated and confused by the existence of other parallels between the speech and the play which eventually serve to frustrate any generally applicable schematic placement of the speech within the play. To anticipate what will be treated more fully below, the roles of Old Hamlet, King Fortinbras, Young Fortinbras and Laertes can all be thought to find further clarification within the player's speech, while for the moment it is hoped to develop further the observation made by Levin, though ignored by Leech, that some account needed to be taken of the significance of the role of Aeneas, the story's Virgilian narrator, and perhaps also of Dido, when seeking to interpret the implications of the player's speech for the characters in Hamlet.²

1) "The Hesitation of Pyrrhus," p.48.

2) cf. The Question of Hamlet, pp.159-160.

As this is not a view that can be put forward as being a matter of accepted fact, it is worthwhile indicating that Shakespeare certainly attempted to invoke the Virgilian background to the speech by causing Hamlet to refer directly to Dido and Aeneas and also to show an easy familiarity with the circumstances in which the narrative appears in the Aeneid; even to the extent of having him consciously assume the role of Aeneas as mythological narrator of the events: "One speech in it I chiefly lov'd: 'twas Aeneas' tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially where he speaks of Priam's slaughter. If it live in your memory, begin at this line—let me see, let me see:// 'The rugged Pyrrhus, like th'Hyrceanian beast,' // 'Tis not so; it begins with Pyrrhus. // 'The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms, // . . .'"¹

Furthermore, while it is not necessary to engage in the controversy surrounding the exact nature of influences behind the player's speech, it is quite evident that along with any supposed Senecan emphasis on atrocity, on Hecuba, on the vicissitudes of fortune and on broad archetypal figures,² and despite also any suggestion of Ovidian scepticism concerning the pagan gods,³ *there also lay Virgil's depiction of the death* of Priam in Aeneid II (lines 506-558) as at least one of the accounts behind Shakespeare's version of the story.⁴ Thus, though it is evident that Shakespeare also knew Marlowe's relatively faithful, though shortened, version of Virgil's narrative in the second act of Dido Queen of Carthage,⁵ the player's speech retains Virgil's vision of Priam engaging in ineffectual martial combat with Pyrrhus, whereas Marlowe

1) II.ii.440-445.

2) Troades 41-62 has Hecuba narrate the death of her husband. Levin discusses the passage's general classical characteristics in The Question of Hamlet, pp.144-150. He sees the passage as Ovidian in scope.

3) Ovid also depicts the scene allusively in connection with the sorrows of Hecuba. See Golding XIII.487 ff.

4) See Jenkins, ed., Hamlet, p.103.

5) See Leech, "The Hesitation of Pyrrhus," (p.49) for a full discussion of both the Virgilian and the Marlovian aspects of the account.

depicted Priam as entreating Pyrrhus for his life.¹ Indeed, Shakespeare's Priam is altogether more Virgilian in the dignity of his pathetic attempts at heroism than is the rather bathetic character in Marlowe; who not only pleads for mercy (leaving aggression to Hecuba) but who also has his upturned hands chopped off in the process. Additionally, there is the possibility in Hamlet's false start of a direct Virgilian echo, when, in comparing Pyrrhus to "th' Hyrcanian beast," he anticipates a later moment in Virgil's poem (Aeneid IV.367) when Dido came to apply the same epithet to Aeneas. While these points are well documented, it is hoped to take the conventional illustrations of the presence of the Aeneid in the background of the player's speech and use them as a starting-point from which to go on to strengthen and extend the concept of Virgilian influence in Hamlet, firstly in the speech itself and, through that, out into the play as a whole.

Before such a discussion can begin, however, it should be noted that the combined influences of Virgil, Ovid, Seneca and Marlowe in the player's speech do not exhaust the possibilities of its indebtedness to other artists. It has been suggested, for example, that the speech is a burlesque of earlier, ranting, Latinate tragedy, or even that it is a remnant taken directly from the Ur-Hamlet, which, if it was by Kyd, would have been likely to have contained ritualistic artistic parallels to the main action such as those provided by the play within the play in The Spanish Tragedy.² While the nature, contents and scope of the Ur-Hamlet, along with the actual extent of its alleged debt to English Seneca, must remain largely a matter for speculation, it still must be

1) The line "his antique sword, // Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls, // Repugnant to command." (II.ii.463-465) has been seen as a direct echo of Aeneid II.509-511. See Jenkins, ed., Hamlet, note pp.264-265, and Levin, The Question of Hamlet, p.144. Compare Dido II.i.210-261.

2) cf. S.L. Bethell, Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition, London, 1944, pp.144-151, and G.K. Hunter, "The Heroism of Hamlet," in J.R. Brown and B. Harris, eds., Hamlet, London, 1963, p.106.

remembered that, even where the possibilities of direct borrowing or burlesque are felt to be intrinsically likely, they do not in themselves negate the intuition that Shakespeare also referred to the classical authorities before constructing the speech.¹ Furthermore, the fact that the speech is collectively so unlike any one version known to exist suggests that its author consciously attempted an amalgam of numerous accounts to obtain a desired effect. While the effect sought might have been burlesque or pastiche, it has at least as plausibly been seen as an attempt, within the already poetic context of verse drama, to create an epic-sounding style suitable for the dramatic declamation of Virgil's memorably tragic scene.² It could plausibly be argued that such an interpretation accorded with the serious function which the speech is given within the play.

The idea that Shakespeare consciously created an epic style to accompany Virgilian material has frequently been advanced, but it has rarely been taken as providing an insight into the way in which the rest of the play is to be evaluated. A good deal of Hamlet criticism has, however, discussed the extent to which warlike or heroic characters, not merely Pyrrhus, are put forward by the main body of the play as foils or contrasts to Hamlet. This realization is not confined to the play's audience, however, but is shared by Hamlet himself. Thus, for example, R.A.Foakes has observed that "Hamlet sees his father in an heroic image," and that "much of his idealism is bound up with the warrior-figures of the Ghost at the beginning and Fortinbras at the end." He goes on to develop the idea of Hamlet's heroic self-evaluation by adding that "the heroic

1) This is the conclusion reached by Jenkins in his edition of Hamlet, p.103.

2) Jenkins, ibid, pp.478-479 sees the speech as both epic and serious and rejects the view that it is a borrowed passage on the grounds that it anticipates the themes of the play so exactly and in so many ways. A.C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, London, 1904, reprinted 1956, pp.413-419 agreed with Coleridge's view that the lines were a 'superb' example of epic narrative (see S.T.Coleridge, Shakespearean Criticism, ed., T.M.Raysor, 2 vols., London, 1960, Vol.1, pp.25,37). He cites an impressive series of parallels between other passages of "epic grandeur" in Shakespeare and the player's speech. His view is that "the speech of Aeneas contains lines which are unquestionably grand and free from any suspicion of bombast, and others which, though not free from that suspicion, are nevertheless, highly poetic." (p.416).

ideal Hamlet thinks he sees in his father merges into those classical figures that spring to his lips for a comparison, Hyperion, Mars, Mercury, Caesar, Hercules, *Aeneas, and others, all help to* suggest imagined models for Hamlet himself, and to exemplify to him [the] possibility of the godlike in man."¹ Thus, although Hamlet typically tends to disclaim these heroic comparisons with himself, the player's speech remains as part of the same process by which Hamlet evaluates himself in terms of classical heroism. Foakes concludes that the speech is "based on Virgil's Aeneid, and [is] so associated with that heroic world with which Hamlet likes to link himself, and which emerges especially in references to and images drawn from classical history, literature and myth."²

This process whereby Hamlet, both consciously and subconsciously, recalls heroic images to objectify the situation in Elsinore is important; not least because the original Amleth myth was itself set in a society whose heroic ethos was not altogether remote from *that* of the Homeric poems.³ Thus the player's epic narrative becomes significant for Hamlet not only through the characters it contains, but also through the epic narrative style itself which unites with its content to provide an emblem of an artistic world that is related in Hamlet's mind to the position he finds himself in, that was once a characteristic of the civilization which gave the original mythological Hamlet the heroic Zeitgeist necessary to exact his revenge without doubts *about* the validity of his actions, but which was now demonstrably out of joint both with the mores of the Danish court and with the Christian sensibilities that Hamlet elsewhere displays. The issues raised by the

1) "The Art of Cruelty: Hamlet and Vindice," Shakespeare Survey XXVI, 1973, pp.23-24.

2) ibid, p.25

3) See Historiae Danicae Bk.III, trans. O.Elton, in Bullough, Sources VII, esp. pp.60-61 where Horwendil's heroic ethos is striking.

distinctions to be made in the play between heroic and non-heroic, Christian and amoral or pagan attitudes or cultures will be discussed at length below. Initially, however, it is important to remember the twin concepts that Hamlet is compared with heroes of classical mythology and that he himself sees the difference between himself and the warriors of an heroic age.¹ If it is then recalled that Aeneas, whose name Hamlet invokes and whose narrative role he, briefly, assumes, is likewise a self-conscious commentator on an heroic age from which he is seen as separate, morally superior, then it becomes at least a legitimate exercise to enquire as to the extent that Aeneas can emerge as one of the classical analogues for Hamlet presented by the play.

It is not often enough noted that the player's speech has its emotional impact defined by the shocked reactions of the narrator who is not, strictly speaking, the player, but an anonymous actor representing the role of Aeneas, and, therefore, representing Aeneas's (ultimately Virgil's²) shocked reactions to the events he witnessed. In these terms Aeneas's horror at the amoral heroic savagery of the killing of Priam may be felt to be emotionally analogous to Hamlet's own horror occasioned both by his father's death and also perhaps by the prospect of being himself required to act with Pyrrhic heroic savagery. Further evidence will be forwarded to suggest that such an interpretation is not without basis, and that the scene, with its vision of an heroic world operating at its most savage and amoral functions as a "mirror" both in Virgil and Shakespeare,³ a mirror which both artists exploit through the medium of their protagonist's ambivalent reaction to the heroic world which it reflects. Ultimately, the suggestion will be that Shakespeare acknowledged similarities between his own and Virgil's exploitation of

1) See for example I.ii.452-453.

2) See Levin, The Question of Hamlet, pp.159-160.

3) A. Johnston, "The Player's speech in Hamlet," Shakespeare Quarterly XIII, 1962, p.21.

the killing of Priam, and that he learned from Virgil the possibilities of placing a temperamentally un-heroic protagonist in a situation which requires him to operate in typically heroic fashions. This will lead to the conclusion that, designedly or not, the involvement of Aeneas in the epic world of the Aeneid is partially analogous to the involvement of Hamlet in the play world which surrounds him.

It is appropriate, therefore, to begin the attempted comparison of the two works by observing that the Virgilian career of Aeneas provides several general parallels to what may be called the formal situation facing Hamlet. Thus, for example, Arthur Johnston made the point that the mythical relationship between Dido and Aeneas echoes that between Ophelia and Hamlet in that both couples are separated by a mission, a 'higher' duty placed upon the male partner.¹ Johnston might also have added that Aeneas's desertion of Dido is instrumental in causing her death *in the same way as that in which* Hamlet's rejection of Ophelia facilitates her eventual decline. There is also the rather more convincing link between the two characters which emerges from the fact that Aeneas is not only given a mission but that he, like Hamlet, is prompted towards its fulfilment by the supernatural visitations of the ghost of his father, Anchises. Certainly during the first six books of the Aeneid there is a constant emphasis on Aeneas's development as the type of heroic son required by his father's spirit. Indeed, Virgil's use of the scene depicting the death of Priam is designed to provide a contrasting image of the same theme for Aeneas to consider. In Hamlet, both in the hero's relationship with his father, and in the player's speech, the same Virgilian technique of role-definition and role contrast is powerfully evident: "The heroic image of the warrior young and old, and the Virgilian contrast of father and son, are always present in the imaginative background of Hamlet, the night-time of past and present in

1) "The Player's speech in Hamlet," p.22.

one."¹ Indeed, the device of having both past and future represented in the present is itself a Virgilian technique, and it is present in Hamlet not only in the Aenean narrative but also in the characters' frequent evocation of Roman history to provide a parallel for contemporary dramatic events.²

As the observations made by Johnston, Brower and Levin illustrate, there has been a long history of critical comment recording isolated points of contact between the Aeneid and Hamlet. It has, moreover, long been recognized that, even if the player's speech is ignored, Hamlet is unusual among Shakespeare's works in that "one is impressed by the paucity of Ovidian reference, and by the relatively frequent traces of Virgil's influence."³ When these facts are assessed alongside the evidence that scholarship has found for seeing Virgil as providing a major structural influence on at least one other work by Shakespeare,⁴ it becomes at least legitimate (given Craig's precedent with Seneca) to record the full extent of the Aeneid's formal similarities with Hamlet; not so that every point made can be affirmed with equal conviction, but so that a cumulative impression can be gained which will, taken as a whole, establish the presence of Virgil's poem in the background of Shakespeare's play. This having been done, then the more profound correspondences of theme and meaning, which, it will be suggested, work throughout Hamlet by way of the player's speech, can be more readily established. Parallels between the two works will, obviously, be found to be more significant in cases where there are no incidents in any of the known sources to suggest that the correspondencies are merely the result of common elements in otherwise separate mythologies. Geoffrey Bullough

1)Brower,Hero and Saint,p. 291.

2)Bullough,Sources VII,p. 34 ff., draws attention to *how* the Emperor Claudius was the incestuous second husband of Agrippina who was later killed by her son Nero; thus providing a Roman parallel with Gertrude that Hamlet wishes to avoid fulfilling (III.ii.383-386). More familiar are the parallels between the portents heralding Caesar's death and the walking of the ghost (I.i.108 ff.).

3)Root,Classical Mythology in Shakespeare,p.128.

4)See J.M.Nosworthy,"The Narrative Sources of The Tempest," R.E.S.,XXIV,1948, pp.281-294.

has found that the most significant aspects of the action of Hamlet not found in the narratives of Amleth are the presence of a revelatory ghost initiating revenge (the Ur-Hamlet had a vengeful ghost, though not necessarily a revelatory one), the insistence on obvious foils and sub-plots echoing the experiences of the hero, the depiction of a confidant and of a beloved female, the provision of an opportunity for the hero to exact revenge prior to the final catastrophe, and the fact that the revenge, when it is taken, is not the result of a premeditated plot but of an initiative taken by his enemies which is itself partially successful in that it results in the death of the hero.¹

The Dido and Aeneas/Ophelia Hamlet parallel has already been suggested. The correspondence might, however, be extended by observing that not only does the maddened Dido commit suicide,² but, on her death, she prophesies that an avenger will arise from her blood who will oppose the line of Aeneas for the wrongs done to her.³ A less obvious feature of the career of Dido which may, nevertheless, have been instrumental in suggesting her mythological relevance to the situation in Hamlet emerges from Virgil's account of the circumstances of her previous marriage, which are curiously similar to those relating to King Hamlet, Claudius and Gertrude:

Sicheus was her husband tho: the richest man of ground
 In al that coast, and deepe (good hart) in love with her (sic) was dround.
 For her to him her father gaue a virgin yet ontwyght
 And to her brother [ie. in law] came the crown of Tyrus than by right
Pigmalion, a sinfull wretch of all that euer raignde,
 Whom couetise did blinde so sore, and rage of fury strainde,
 That onaware, with priuy knife before the altars pure
 He slew Sicheus, and of his sisters loue he thought him sure.
 And long he kept the deede in close, and she good soule full sad
 The crafty theefe made wondrous meanes and tales her mind to glad.
 But in a dreame (vnburied yet) her husband came tappere
 With visage pale, and wondrous hewes, ful deadly was his chere

1) Sources VII, pp.6-10, 50-53.

2) Contrast Aeneid IV.474 ff., with Hamlet V.i.1-2, 212 ff.

3) Aeneid IV.607 ff. In Hamlet Laertes not only takes revenge on Hamlet for the deaths of his father and sister but, symbolically, they first oppose each other in Ophelia's grave (V.i.248 ff.).

And told her all, and wide his wound disclosing shewd his brest
How he before the altars was, for what entent opprest. 1

The murder of a royal brother and (as later it transpires) the incestuous lust for a sister is a common mythological theme and one which is repeated in the Amleth tale. What is remarkable here, however, is the close correspondence between the motif of the secret death of a king being revealed by his ghost and the identical feature in Hamlet that has no precedent in Belleforest.

Obviously, it is not to be suggested that Shakespeare would have expected his audience to have taken one brief reference to Dido as indicating all of her mythological associations with Ophelia, then with Gertrude, and in the last instance with Hamlet. It is, however, legitimate to contend that the Aeneid could have provided a formal model on which to base the precise role of the ghost in Hamlet. It would also be observed that the killing of Sychaeus at the altar may have suggested the incident to Shakespeare where Hamlet is given the chance to kill Claudius at prayer. Once the idea that only dramatic forms may exert an influence on later drama is abandoned then it becomes apparent that the Aeneid could have provided models suggestive of the role of King Hamlet's ghost as exact as any to have been found in Seneca. In fact Aeneas, like Hamlet, seems at times to be beset by supernatural visitations; two of which, especially when they are combined with the role given to the spirit of Sychaeus, appear to be particularly relevant to the ghost in Hamlet. Firstly, there is Aeneas's account of his dream vision of the ghost of Hector² in which he stresses Hector's sorrowful countenance, his ragged beard¹, and the fact that he ordered Aeneas to enact his destiny.³ If the apparition of a dead warrior is

1) Aeneid I.340 ff., trans. Thomas Phaer, The Whole xii Bookes of the Aeneidos of Virgil, London, 1573, p. B1^v. *The edition has no line references.* Part of Bk.10 and Bks.11 and 12 were translated by Thomas Twynne. Afterwards cited as Phaer.

2) Aeneid II.270 ff.

3) See Hamlet I.ii. 228 - 240..

suggestive of Hamlet, then the later appearance of Anchises, Aeneas's father, must be felt to be even more reminiscent of Shakespeare's play.¹ Anchises too appears by night, having been "commaunded here . . . from mighty Ioue in skies aboue" to greet "a youth of corage bold" and to spur him on to enact his fated heroic mission in which he is to "vainquish . . . in ba.tailes rough" an enemy whom Jove himself has decreed must be overcome. He then goes on to assure his son that he is not a wicked spirit:

I (my son) am not in hell:
Nor with no wickid kind of wofull ghostes haue I to dwell.
But fieldes of pleasur pure, and Paradise, doth me retayne,
With ioyfull sort of soules, in blisfull state that do remayne.

Finally, and in a manner particularly suggestive of the ghost in Hamlet, (provoking Phaer's marginal comment that "sprites can not abide the dai light") Anchises is forced to take his leave as daylight approaches:

And now farewell, for midnight moist her half cours hens doth wre^{the},
And dawning day with blast of horses, hote on me doth breathe.
He spake, and thinne from sight as smoke, in skies disperst he styed.

Though the idea is one common in folklore, the similarity is still striking.

It will be suggested, however, that while such similarities may offer a significant indication as to the ancestry of the formal role played by Hamlet's ghost as a figure intent on urging an unenthusiastic son on towards a fated heroic action, it is also necessary to allow the analogue to alert us to circumstances which are different for Hamlet than for Aeneas. These negative functions of the epic model will be further discussed once a convincing case has been established for viewing Aeneas as a paradigm for Hamlet. It should be observed here, however, that Hamlet cannot achieve the epic certainty in his Christian world that Aeneas *is given* concerning the revealed will of god and the eschatological 'health' of his father's ghost. Even in Hamlet the ghost makes no claims to residence in Paradise, suggesting rather a residence

1) Aeneid V.720 ff. The quotations from the passage are from Phaer, p. 03.
cf. Hamlet I.v.13 ff.

in Purgatory.

Indeed, it must be observed that not one of the spirits in the Aeneid asks Aeneas to take a private revenge of the type required of Hamlet. Given this fact it might still be argued that Senecan ancestry is still the more likely avenue of investigation for anyone attempting to find a formal analogue for Hamlet's ghost in classical literature. Certainly it is not intended to minimize the view that Senecan or 'gothic' taste played a significant part in the literary genetics of Elizabethan revenge tragedy. In terms of the nature of the argument being developed, however, it is important to recognize that while Aeneas is not directly solicited to take revenge, the motif of revenge is, nevertheless, a central and underacknowledged aspect of his career. Moreover, the manifestations of Aeneas's vengeful nature are often noticeably close to features of Hamlet not in the known sources. Thus, of central importance is the occasion where Aeneas, directly following his account of the death of Priam (that is to say immediately after an episode which Shakespeare almost certainly consulted), recalls how he encountered Helen, as Hamlet encounters Claudius, alone at an altar and how he experienced the desire to take his revenge on her as the cause of Priam's death and the agent of Troy's destruction:

The plague of Troy, and of her contrey monster most vntame:
There sat she with her hatyd head, by the altars hid for shame.
Straight in my brest I felt a fier, *deepe* wrath my hart did straine
My contreis fall to wreke, and bring that cursid wretche to payne.
What shall she? into her contrey soyle of Sparta, and hie Mycene?
All saufe shall she returne? and there on Troy triumphe as Queene?

.....
Was Priam slaine with sworde for this? Troy burnt with fier so wood,
Is it herefore that Dardan strondes so oft *have* swet with blood?
Not so: for though it be no prayse on woman *kynde* to wreke,
And honour none there lieth in this, nor name for men to speke:
Yet quenche I shall this poyson here, and due deserts to dight.
Men shall commend my zeal, and eas my *mynd* I shall outright.
This *moche* for al my peoples bones, and contrey flames to quite.¹

1) Aeneid II, 588 ff., trans Phaer, p. E3v.

On this occasion Aeneas is restrained by the direct intervention of Venus. Again it will be argued that this negative aspect of Aeneas's role as a parallel for Hamlet (who, of course, decides against revenge for more grim reasons) is significant, and that this dissuasion of the epic hero from the taking of private revenge, in so far as it is a feature of a typically Virgilian insistence that his hero is directed by supernature towards righteous ends, is appreciated by Shakespeare and adapted by him to great effect in the more ambiguous, non-epic, world of his tragedy. Initially, however, it is the structural similarity¹ between Aeneas's encounter with Helen and Hamlet's overtaking of Claudius at prayer which is to be stressed. Supernature does not always preclude Aeneas's acting as a warrior, however, and it is worth observing that Aeneas later becomes involved in something like an inversion of Hamlet's relationship with Polonius and Laertes where he too becomes the object of someone else's desire to revenge the death of a close relative.² In Aeneid X. Aeneas kills Lausus while he was attempting to defend his father, **Mezentius**, from attack. Aeneas recognizes that Lausus lost his life for exercising the same filial loyalty for which he himself is famous, and, as Hamlet was later made to do with Laertes, he comes to recognize that Lausus provides him with a mirror of his own attempts to fulfil the role which his affection **for and duty to** father has required of him: "His face which pale in wondrous sort did looke: he wofull stands, // And pitifully bewayles, and vp with greif doth cast his hands. // The semblant[†] deape of fathers loue comes eft into his mind."³ Mezentius then attempts to kill Aeneas in revenge for his son's

1) Bullough, Sources VII, pp. 38-39, is at least as implausible in his suggestion that the prayer scene is derived from the medieval matter of Troy which has Paris kill Achilles in a temple. Note, however, that this is the manner of death outlined by the ghost of Achilles in Heywood's interpolated scene in Troades (See Newton's Seneca I, p. 17.) There is, however, no suggestion of revenge by Paris, merely treachery.

2) Jenkins, ed., Hamlet, pp. 143-147, argues that Hamlet's role as both revenger and revenged is central to the play's structural/ethical development of the idea of the ambivalence of Hamlet's mission.

3) The episode takes place **from line 790 ff.** Contrast Phaer's trans. (p. 2F4^v-2G1) with Hamlet V.ii.77-78.

death, and, as with Laertes, is himself killed in the attempt.

Possibly of more significance than any one example of the device is the widespread presentation by Virgil of characters whose situations or temperaments allow them to emerge as contrasts to Aeneas. Hamlet certainly resembles the Aeneid in its continual use of the technique of character assessment through the contrast of the behaviour and reactions of those whose situations are comparable or analogous to that of the hero.¹ Moreover, in so far as Virgil was attempting to establish a new, Augustan, definition of heroism in his epic, it is noteworthy that many of these contrasting characters (whose function was to provide an insight into the untraditional nature of Aeneas's heroic ethos) are, almost of necessity, cast in one of the more traditional heroic roles, particularly those of the Homeric epics. Thus, as in Hamlet, where the protagonist is set (and sets himself) in contrast to his father who "smote the sledded Polacks on the ice"² and to Laertes, the traditional revenge hero, as well as to young Fortinbras, the play's most potent living representative of the warrior heroic type, and where too he continually invokes a world of dead heroic figures and epic values, the Aeneid has its structure defined by the device of providing heroic contrasts. Indeed, so pervasive is the technique in Virgil, that Brooks Otis was led to conclude his study of the Aeneid by stating that "we can partially describe the Aeneid as the creation of Roman civilization out of Homeric barbarism. It is not, however, so much the contrast of the Homeric and Augustan eras in themselves that Virgil is interested in, as the contrast of human ideals and motivations: he is, in short, concerned with Aeneas as the opposite *and* opponent of such men and women as Dido and Turnus and, perhaps above all, as the

1) See V. Pöschl, The Art of Vergil, trans. G. Seligson, Ann Arbor, 1962, p. 18.

2) Hamlet I.i.63.

man who overcomes the Dido and Turnus inside himself."¹

Hamlet's relationship with the Laertes or Fortinbras in himself will be discussed below, but to continue, for the moment, to discuss resemblances of form, it is noticeable that if Turnus, Nisus, Euryalus, Lausus, Pallas, Mezentius and the other warriors² who contrast with Aeneas are felt to be suggestive of the roles of Laertes, King Hamlet and Fortinbras young and old in Hamlet and the implicit contrast of heroic roles which such figures present, then the role of Turnus as the specific opponent of Aeneas can be felt to be particularly suggestive of the role of Laertes (and perhaps, more obscurely, of Claudius) particularly as the final section of the Aeneid shows how the desire for revenge becomes a growing element in their relationship. It is too infrequently observed in the context of Elizabethan revenge tragedy that the Aeneid ends on an act of revenge, where Aeneas, whose sword had been held motionless as he "staid his hand" over the suppliant body of Turnus, finally kills him "with rage incenst, in furie wood, and uncontrold" as an act of revenge for his earlier killing of Pallas; an act of which he is reminded by the belt which Turnus wore as a trophy.³ It is also to be observed, finally, that although in the Aeneid the always strong sense of fate and divine direction of events increases in emphasis as the death of Turnus approaches, with the whole of heaven concurring in his end, there is still, much as in Hamlet, where a similar emphasis on the providential ruling of events also pervades the climax, a feeling, brought about by the seeming capriciousness of Aeneas's sudden turn from mercy to revenge, that the circumstances of the revenge depend as much on chance and sudden, almost uncharacteristic, emotion at the human level as on the hand

1)Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry,Oxford,1964,p.385. cf.also pp.315-318.

2)See ibid,p.315.

3)See Aeneid XII.912 ff.Phaer p 201. Given the controversy surrounding the origin of Pyrrhus's pause, seen as an image of Hamlet's hesitation, and in view of the Hamlet/Aeneas parallels under discussion, it is not impossible that Aeneas's hesitation over Turnus may have suggested the device to Shakespeare. This is at least as plausible as Leech's view that the incident was suggested by Pyrrhus resting on his sword after the killing in Dido ("The Hesitation of Pyrrhus," p.45.).

of fate; although, in the epic at least, we are left with no doubt as to the divine impetus behind the human impulsiveness.

While several of the above parallels afford surprisingly exact analogies for Hamlet others, however, are less productive. Most potentially damaging to the attempt at a critical comparison between the works is the fact that Hamlet is not a warrior hero in the mould of Aeneas or Turnus, and that, furthermore, neither is Laertes. Given this, it can also be objected that the ending of Hamlet, involving an Italianate poisoning intrigue and featuring the death of the protagonist as well as his opponent, is far removed from the heroic and, for Aeneas, triumphant climax of the Aeneid. While all this must be readily granted it must be met with the observation that while the drawing of structural analogies between Virgil and Shakespeare can suggest that Shakespeare was receptive to the formal possibilities of the Aeneid it would be misguided to suppose that he would allow a pagan epic form to obtrude into his Christian tragedy to the detriment of its intrinsic meaning. Rather, if acceptance of the idea of Virgilian influence is to be carried, it is necessary to go beyond the mere citing of structural similarities, however exact, (remembering the commonality of Western mythology) and show that the later artist was not only indebted to the earlier for some of his structures, but that he was also demonstrably stimulated by the meanings or the larger artistic developments suggested by those forms. In pursuit of this method it will again be recalled that Virgil was creating something new in the epic form and, thus, the possibility was always there that a later age (though the Aeneid could be read as the traditional poem of the homogenizing Renaissance theorists) could make the artistic rediscovery of the radically anti-heroic (in Homeric terms) epic that the Aeneid was for its Augustan age.

While, *therefore*, it is hoped to go on to illustrate that the Aeneid had important meanings to express for the Renaissance, it must be

acknowledged also that Shakespeare was twice the distance away in time from Virgil *That Virgil* was from Homer, and that, furthermore, the Christian religion divided them. Thus, whereas Aeneas is an Augustan hero operating within a largely Homeric world, Hamlet is a Christian hero figuring in a myth whose original ethics were not far removed from those of primitive Homeric society.¹ In an important respect, therefore, the moral and religious gap between Aeneas and his heroic society is far smaller than that occasioned by the Renaissance sensibilities of Hamlet and the amoral heroic revenge which he contemplates. Certainly it will be demonstrated how Shakespeare imposes a Christian frame of values and ambiguities onto the world of Hamlet which compromises even the limited freedoms allowed to the pagan Aeneas and his Renaissance epic progeny in contemporary poetic theory. Thus the Aeneid and the other heroic myths which impinge on the Hamlet story can be seen as containing an endorsement of heroic values which, even at their most piously Aenean, are, though attractive to Hamlet, not endorsed in Hamlet without their being measured against the Christian sensibilities which the play's protagonist has instilled within him.

To begin the second phase of the analysis, then, it is necessary to determine exactly how Virgil displayed the contrast between outmoded and valid, Augustan, heroic responses which, it has been suggested, forms so essential a role in the design of his epic. As has been shown, this contrast is achieved partially through character contrast. Even more typically Virgilian, however, is "the awareness of form as expression" which Victor Pöschl *thought of as the very* essence of the classical in art, and which is so pronounced in the Aeneid that it becomes "the classical poem par excellence."² While having many dimensions, this

1) "You must understand, that long time before the *kingdome* of Denmark received the faith of *Jesus Christ*, . . . that the common people . . . were barbarous and uncivill and their princes cruell, without faith or loyaltie, seeking nothing but murder." The Hystorie of Hamblet, anon. trans. from Belleforest, London, 1608, cited in Bullough, Sources VII, p. 85.

2) The Art of Vergil, p. 1.

awareness is seen most clearly in the technique of what might be termed extended symbolism (not allegory) or of condensed thematic anticipation. Pöschl's introductory analysis of the device centres on the opening scene in the Aeneid in which Juno raises a storm which destroys the Trojan fleet before it is eventually calmed by Neptune. In the episode he sees a condensation of the whole complex of ideas surrounding pietas and furor, fate and counter fate in Virgil's poem. He also illustrates how such extended symbolism allows the significance of episodes to reverberate throughout the whole poem, so that Juno's storm, for example, relates morally and poetically to all other storms, and its subduing relates to all other conquests, supernatural or heroic.

Significantly, from the point of view of Hamlet, however, another major scene which serves in the Aeneid as a symbolic representation of many of the poem's major themes is the death of Priam episode. As Kenneth Quinn's introductory chapter, 'The heroic impulse', in his Virgil's Aeneid. A Critical Description illustrates, the scene becomes a point of moral reference within the Aeneid against which an evaluation of all the heroic characters in the poem can be made.¹ In one sense the nature of this evaluation is obvious and perfectly in accord with Shakespeare's use of the same scene. Pyrrhus's action represents the absolute moral nadir of warrior heroism and its code. He represents in Virgilian terms a personification of the forces of furor: those blind, impassioned and irrational impulses in man, and especially in the warrior's code, which had, in Virgil's own lifetime, almost destroyed the forces of order and civilization in Rome during the civil war. Moreover, Pyrrhus is archetypally representative of the forces of furor in the poem in that his heroic drive is shown to oppose those qualities (old age, piety, familial affection and respect, and especially the sanctity of divine worship) which constitute pietas, the opposite of and social/moral bastion

1) First published London, 1968.

against furor. He is, therefore, quite simply an unambiguous metaphorical illustration of the evil which Virgil saw as being inherent in the concept of Homeric arete; and, thus, an extreme literary exemplum of the type of amoral bloodlust in vengeance which was to be avoided. It was against the negative example provided by Pyrrhus that the relative merits of other heroic natures could be assessed.

This does not, however, exhaust the implications of the episode for heroic evaluation. It has been noted that Virgil makes much of Priam's attempted attack on Pyrrhus, and that Shakespeare retains this aspect of Virgil's account, also keeping the figure of Hecuba in line with Virgil's vision of her as passively un**belligerent**:

Anon he finds him
 Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,
 Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
 Repugnant to command. Unequal match'd,

 But who, *ah*, who had seen the mobled queen—
 Run barefoot up and down, threat'ning the flames
 With bisson rheum . . . 1

As Quinn observed, there is a sense in which for Virgil Pyrrhus here is not the absolute opposite of Priam in the way in which opposing concepts of furor and pietas might suggest. Rather, it is possible to view the episode less schematically and maintain that Priam, despite having all of the moral arguments on his side, does not become archetypally representative of pietas, but instead takes upon himself something of the degeneracy of Pyrrhus:

The reaction expected seems [to be], . . . that Priam's heroic gesture is not merely futile because he lacks the strength to make it effective, not merely inadequate, but irrelevant-irrelevant to the point of being wrong, the conditioned response of one trained to meet every emergency by an act of reckless bravery, unable to make any other response, unable to cope with situations that cannot be dealt with by fighting it out, sure it is always nobler to take up arms against a sea of troubles; unaware one might, by enduring, at any rate do' less harm. 2

What is crucial to this analysis is that Hecuba's reaction can be seen

1)II.ii.462 ff.

2)Virgil's Aeneid. A Critical Description, p.6.

to be that of ordinary suffering humanity. She is seen to explicitly reject violence and put her faith instead in the gods to bring either safety or death:

But ~~whom~~ she Priam thus beclad in armes of youth so bold
Espied: what minde alas (qd she) o wofull husband you
In harnais dight: and whither away with wepons run ye now?
Not men nor wepons vs can saue: this time doth axe to beare
No such defence, no not if Hector myne now present were.
Stand here by me, thys altar vs from slaughters all shall shelde,
Or dye together at ones wee shall. 1

Thus, although Priam's heroism might be impressive, even admirable, Quinn insists that "We should give Virgil the credit for perceiving the challenge his un-sublime Hecuba implies to his sublime Priam and ask ourselves whether her function is not to prompt a comment on Priam's heroic impulse."²

The idea which emerges from this interpretation is one which is latent throughout the whole of the Aeneid; that the active warrior, whatever the merits of his activities, takes upon himself the nature of furor as exemplified by Pyrrhus. Thus, Pyrrhus emerges from the episode not only as an absolute analogy against which any similar act of retributive violence can be assessed, but as a minimizing symbol of the furor or inherent evil in all heroic action; and this minimization attaches itself to all other examples of such action in the Aeneid, whether they be chivalric, pious or whatever. Thus, the killing of Lausus or Turnus by Aeneas following the death of Pallas, whatever the mitigating circumstances might be, designedly reminds the reader that such actions still contain aspects of the anti-heroic barbarism of which Pyrrhus's action was the quintessential symbol:

As [Aeneas] sweeps on in pursuit of Turnus, he strikes out at all who stand in his path, until he meets Lausus, the young man who steps between Aeneas and his wounded father. Impatiently Aeneas kills Lausus too-and as he looks down on the young man's lifeless body we realize, if Aeneas does not, that the deed he is supposed

1) Aeneid II.520 ff, Phaer p. 124. Note again the motif of an altar providing sanctuary. Ironically Hamlet, like Pyrrhus and Aeneas, ignores its status.

2) Virgil's Aeneid, p. 7.

to be avenging cannot be considered worse than the deed he has now himself committed. It is one of the great moments *in* the poem and surely a considered expression of the poet's *judgment* on the glamorized barbarity of war. 1

The same Pyrrhic symbolism touches Aeneas in the last moments of the poem as it does in his earlier account of his behaviour at Troy's fall, including, of course, his impulse to exact revenge on Helen. There are, however, two points to be made so that these intuitions may be related more closely to Hamlet.

Firstly, to indicate the potential relevance of Virgil's methods as a means of explaining the seemingly bewildering series of correspondencies existing between the player's speech and the main body of the action in Hamlet, it needs to be emphasised that, although Pyrrhus is involved in a father-son relationship, and although Priam seems to act as an image of Anchises, Virgil did not primarily intend to exploit these similarities to Aeneas in an overtly allegorical way. Rather, Pyrrhus, and, indeed, Priam and Hecuba, were designed to symbolize or to represent general thematic movements within the Aeneid, and, thus, their primary function is not to analogously figure any other character or group of characters but to attach their significance to whomever *it is applicable to*. Pöschl makes a telling comment in this respect when discussing what he took to be the mistaken method of too closely associating Virgilian archetypes with other characters, either within the poem or historically: "The mistake is in confusing symbol and Allegorie: a symbol may exist even without reference to what takes shape within it, *while* the Allegorie exists only through that reference. The symbol permits, even demands, more than one interpretation, the Allegorie allows only one."²

In these terms, then, it is essential that the symbolic value of Pyrrhus is allowed to have meaning for all to whom that meaning is appropriate and also-as symbolism is not exclusive in the way demanded by allegory-that

1)Quinn,Virgil's Aeneid,p.18

2)The Art of Vergil,pp.21-22.

the symbolic meaning of Hecuba can also attach itself to the same character where appropriate. Thus Aeneas is touched by Pyrrhic implications, but he is also par-excellence the character in Virgil's epic with an inner consciousness of the pathetic or tragic consequences of war and heroic action; the insights symbolized externally by the grieving figure of Hecuba.

Similarly in Hamlet the image of Pyrrhus can cogently be seen to symbolize an aspect of both heroic and vengeful action which carries moral implications for all those characters, regardless of allegorical appropriateness, whose actions lean towards violent aggression. Thus, he becomes a static symbolic reference point within the play whose purpose is to qualify or undercut the ethics of the heroic codes and civilizations (be they purely vengeful or more broadly warlike) which present themselves for Hamlet's consideration. In effect, Pyrrhus can be thought to function in a similar way to the heroic manhood figures of the moral drama whose metaphorical implications attached themselves to everyman who partook of their nature.

Before making the second point, it might also be observed that Hamlet also parallels Aeneas in that while he undoubtedly becomes associated with Pyrrhic bloodthirstyness¹ he is also the character in the play who is most closely associated with the symbolic nature of Hecuba as Shakespeare represents it; that is as overcome by grief, indecision ("Run barefoot up and down"²) and horror. These emotions humanize Hamlet in the same way that Aeneas's Hecubean awareness of the tears of things humanizes his heroic responses to the world and to his fated role. It is also worth pointing out that Priam, if he be allowed as a symbol of misguided heroic irrelevance bordering on amoral heroic wrong-headedness, can be taken as being ethically analogous to

1)Not only imaginatively, as at III.ii.378-383, but also actually as in the killing of Polonius.

2)II.ii.499.

young Fortinbras (the name, 'strong-in-arm' being a youthful inversion of Priam's "rebellious" arm) whose own expedition against Poland's "little patch of ground" at the cost of *many* thousand men was an even greater example of morally unjustifiable heroic irrelevance than Priam's pathetic gesture.¹

While this last point may merely be felt to emerge by virtue of the general correspondence between the Shakespearean and Virgilian anti-heroic, a more specifically convincing parallel may be drawn between Priam's action and the ghost's, where Priam as the "unnerved father" attempting martial action in his declining years can be thought to symbolize the attempt of the once heroic now impotent King Hamlet to effect a revenge when it was no longer mortally possible for him to do so. Ironically, however, despite Hamlet's pleas that his "sinews, grow not instant old, // But bear [him] *stiffly* up,"² he, as he himself comes to recognize,³ does not become the posthumous vehicle which the ghost must have hoped for, but instead more closely partakes of the lack of fortitude symbolized by the impotent old-age of Priam. To take the analogy to its furthest point Hamlet is symbolized in his inactivity by the weak, the unnerved, arm of Priam, which provides a startling contrast between himself and his father, whereas there is an exact correspondence between the figures of the Fortinbras dynasty; the strong of arm both young and old. It is worth observing in this respect that the phrase 'repugnant to command' not only describes Priam's arm, but quite precisely suggests Hamlet's moral repugnance at the deed he has been directed to perform.

This disinclination to perform the behests of supernature leads to the second aspect of the Aeneid which further links the critique of heroic

1) IV.iv.1-28.

2) I.v.94-95.

3) IV.iv.32 ff.

action in Virgil's epic with that of the revenge ethos in Shakespeare's play. To begin with Aeneas is a particularly reluctant enactor of his own destined role. Again and again he secretly despairs, and points out that the task he has been given is not congenial to him; that he would have preferred to have remained to rebuild Troy, that he would have liked to have remained with Dido in Carthage, or alone in Sicily, but always he is driven on by supernatural goadings and by his own pietas which made such goadings seem incontrovertable.¹ Furthermore, in stark contrast to his epic ancestors, Aeneas finds that an especially distasteful aspect of his fated heroic role is the necessity it imposes on him to function as a warrior hero and as a general to his troops. By temperament Aeneas is the least martial of epic heroes and his tenderness, piety, humanity² and sensitivity are qualities at the centre of what has been termed³ the poem's 'private voice', a voice which continually undercuts the traditional epic hero's relish for combat: "His character, or that which is the mark of his experience, remains unchanged; the conflict of heroic fulfillment of duty with human sensitivity that determines the shape of his experience pervades the whole poem. It is evident in the first scenes and can be followed to the last verses where he hesitates between killing and pardoning Turnus."⁴

In these terms it would be possible to argue that Aeneas was a model for Hamlet's own immobilizing sensitivity, and, indeed, it is by no means impossible that Shakespeare conceived the idea of placing a morally conscious hero in a mythical context which was originally amoral from Virgil. Certainly the Amleth of Saxo Grammaticus had as little scruple about the killing of his enemies as had Achilles in the Iliad. To make

1) See W.A. Camps, An Introduction to Virgil's Aeneid, London, 1969, pp. 20-24. See also Pöschl, The Art of Vergil, p. 40.

2) See R.D. Williams, Virgil, Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics No. 1, London, 1967, p. 28.

3) By Adam Parry in "The Two Voices of Virgil's Aeneid," reprinted in S. Commager, ed., Virgil: A Collection of Critical Essays, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966, pp. 66-80.

4) Pöschl, The Art of Vergil, p. 58.

too much of this point, however, would be to sentimentalize both Aeneas and Hamlet. As has been shown Aeneas did engage in typically Homeric warlike behaviour. His own account of his desperate fighting during the fall of Troy branded his actions as both inappropriate and brutal in the terms symbolized by Priam and Pyrrhus.¹ The records of his actions after the death of Pallas which "recall the blind rage of Achilles after the death of Patroclus"² and where "Virgil ascribes the urge to kill in its ugliest form. . . . to show Aeneas, despite his struggle for pietas, a soldier still by training and liable to lapse into the conditioned reflexes of that training"³ expose Aeneas to moral criticism. Similarly Hamlet does act. He kills Polonius, transcends even Aeneas's vengeful impulses over Helen by desiring eschatological as well as temporal punishment for Claudius, allies himself with blood and the forces of evil,⁴ sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths, and eventually kills Claudius while being instrumental in the death of Laertes, and so, in so far that the play attaches moral condemnation to such actions, then Hamlet, like Aeneas, is condemned.

These points, however, would be merely superficial were it not for the fact that there is one crucial difference between the situations facing Aeneas and Hamlet which, it is suggested, Shakespeare both recognized and capitalized on. Quinn in his analysis of the Aeneid makes the point that Virgil is no mere cynic and that he refuses to debunk the heroic impulse which, in the desperate type of situations facing his Trojan warriors, was understandable, even admirable and certainly preferable to inert cowardice.⁵ While this is to be admitted,

1) cf. Quinn, Virgil's Aeneid, pp. 20-21.

2) ibid, p. 46.

3) ibid, p. 17. See also pp. 223-231.

4) III.iii.73 ff. and III.ii.378 ff.

5) Virgil's Aeneid, pp. 9-10, 20-22.

and while Virgil's admiration for even so Homeric a warrior as Turnus¹ is paralleled by Hamlet's own Renaissance appreciation of Fortinbras,² the Aeneid does, in fact, provide a more solid basis for its admiration of Aeneas's heroism than emerges from the simple evocation of the undeniable grandeur of the Homeric warrior's arete. As is widely appreciated, the Aeneid celebrated the founding of the Roman line and its consequent Augustan virtues. Thus, there is a sense in which Aeneas is justified simply because the momentous nature of the task he has to perform obviates the normal criticisms which more private or capricious heroic action would incur. While this is true enough, Virgil was a profound enough artist to recognize that his hero would not escape moral condemnation for his actions unless he himself was fully aware of their special justification and himself only prepared to act in these exceptional circumstances. It was, therefore, essential for Aeneas, if he was to remain pius, to have a full knowledge of why he was impelled to act as a conquering warrior, and why, also, his otherwise execrable martial career was to be endorsed by the divine powers of the poem which represented the public voice of Rome's heroic destiny. Once given this unambiguous knowledge then Aeneas was able to act with the certainty that he was behaving righteously in religious and political terms, and that (while Virgil was too humane an artist ever to relinquish his private sense of the moral evil of all war) he was justified by higher ethical ends in enacting personally uncongenial, immoral, means.

While this interpretation is perhaps more sympathetic to Aeneas than many have been,³ it is certain that Virgil goes out of his way to provide Aeneas with numerous supernatural visitations and experiences which all

1) See C.M. Bowra, From Virgil to Milton, London, 1945, p. 45.

2) As at IV. iv. 49-52.

3) cf. L.A. Mackay, "Hero and theme in the Aeneid," in Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association XCIV, 1963, pp. 156-166.

suggest that he is justified in his cause along every step of his heroic career. Furthermore none of these visitations are allowed to hint at a deception of Aeneas by supernature. Thus, by removing the possibility of ambiguity from his protagonist's heroic justification, Virgil was able to avoid the unpalatable interpretation that Aeneas was a wholly or partially evil or deluded character whose actions inadvertently worked towards a great historical good but were in themselves to be condemned. In making Aeneas's role unambiguously just in divine and political terms Virgil set a precedent for all future writers of epic who wished to suggest that their heroes might appear culpable at the personal moral level but that their violent actions were in fact mitigated by their certain knowledge that their ends were directly sanctioned by heaven. Thus, as Thomas Greene has shown, in post-Virgilian epic the hero loses some (though never all) of his Homeric humanism and becomes more closely associated with the achievement of divine political ends in temporal affairs: "The heroic act assumes its highest prestige by its divine authorization, *authorization which became symbolized* with increasing frequency in the Renaissance by the literal descent of the angelic messenger to the hero."¹

In the Aeneid the predecessor of all such epiphanies is the descent of Mercury to Aeneas in book four of the poem. There Mercury makes the divine will clear to Aeneas and makes the earlier advice given by the ghosts of Creusa and Hector absolutely incontrovertable. In so doing Virgil reveals one of the major distinctions between the epic and the tragic visions in literature. As Henry V revealed, a prerequisite for seeing the epic hero as a model of virtue was the ability to believe that he had absolute moral and religious justification for the otherwise immoral tasks which he was driven to perform. As observed above, Shakespeare was less willing than Spenser to give his epic hero the

1) The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity, New Haven and London, 1963, p. 18.

necessary certainty in the divine warrant for his heroic mission and, thus, Henry is left in the somewhat ambivalent position of being one who is sincerely pious but who may still be deluding himself **about** his knowledge of the will of God. This ambiguity does not necessarily imply cynicism but can result from the Augustinian-Christian sense that the contingent (as opposed to the allegorical or artificial literary) world of history and events was always obscure in terms of revealing the locus of divine meanings and spiritual purposes.

While Henry V seems to emerge as being as justified in his mission as is possible in human affairs, in Hamlet, however, Shakespeare depicts a situation which is far more anti-epic, anti-Virgilian, in its emphasis on the doubts and uncertainties surrounding Hamlet's mission. Hamlet stresses the full Christian ambiguity of the temporal agent guided to perform an immoral act by a supernatural agent who may or may not represent the voice of God. As Hamlet recognizes, the ghost is ambiguous both from the point of view of his eschatological status and also with regard to his demands; which may be tantamount to asking him to perform a damnable act.¹ Obviously, however, Hamlet's doubts about the ghost lessen after the play has proven Claudius to be guilty: "O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound."² It is not only in this belief of the ghost's **veracity** that he makes what he thinks to be his first decisive act resulting in the death of Polonius, but, more significantly for the present discussion, it is also the background against which Hamlet describes his father as having "A station like the herald Mercury//New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill// A combination and a form indeed//Where every god did seem to set his seal,//To give the world assurance of a man."³

1)See III.ii.78-82.,II.ii.594-599.

2)III.ii.279-280.

3)III.iv.58-62.,cf.Aeneid IV.252-253 where Mercury alights on Mount Atlas on his journey to Carthage to deliver Jove's prompt to Aeneas.

As already indicated, Hamlet enjoyed associating his father with the heroic past. Important here, however, is the fact that Hamlet's conviction of the truth of the ghost's message, and his consequent belief that the mission had to be carried out, is linked by Shakespeare to an occasion in the Aeneid when Mercury was sent to give Aeneas an equally unequivocal knowledge of what it was that the gods desired of him: "Alas, and of thine own affaires or kingdoms hast no care.// Him: self the mighty god doth me to thee on message send, // The king of heauen and earth, that all this world with becke doth bend. // Himself hath bid me through the winds so swift these things to tel."¹ This direct echo of a Virgilian situation is particularly significant given the related fact that forty lines later the ghost appears to carry out the exact equivalent of Mercury's task (and also of Anchises' in book five) which was to whet the almost blunted purpose of his protégé.² Thus, there is a period during the play in which Hamlet does seem possessed of an epic certainty concerning his mission and its supernatural warrant, and it is significant for the thesis suggesting Virgilian influence on the play that the occasion is echoed, both poetically and formally, by a similar incident in the Aeneid.

There is, however, an added complexity to the issue of supernatural justification for Hamlet than Virgil allows to arise with respect to Aeneas. Quite apart from the fact that the ghost being right about the murderer does not automatically mean that he is expressing God's wishes about how the murder is to be revenged, there is the added complication of Christian free will whereby it was perfectly possible to enact the will of God and yet remain personally culpable for the evil deeds performed during its undertaking. Hamlet has in fact been felt to centre itself for its protagonist on the Christian dilemma of whether

1) Aeneid IV.265 ff, Phaer p KIV.

2) III.iv.110 - III.

he was a minister, or a conscious public enactor of the divine will who is, therefore justified, or a private agent who, though acting out the providential plan, was to be scourged for his own sins.¹ While Virgil never openly detracts from the aura of epic justification surrounding Aeneas by exposing his mission to the idea that he may be punished for his sins incurred under the rule of fate, he does openly suggest that Turnus and Dido suffer deaths as a punishment for the sins which they were predestined to commit.² As Fredson Bowers indicates, however, there is no need to look to the subsidiary characters of the Aeneid for a clue *about* the role played by the concepts of scourge and minister in Hamlet, for the ideas were commonplace. It is more important to make the point that Hamlet himself recognizes that, despite the ghost's *veracity*, there is a distinction between the epic-Aenean model, where the truth of the supernatural promptings provides the artistic assurance of the righteousness of the hero's actions, and the values operative in the Christian universe which allow for providential purposes to be fulfilled alongside an inclusive system of retribution for personal evil:

For this same lord,
 I do repent; but Heaven hath pleas'd it so,
 To punish me with this, and this with me,
 That I must be their scourge and minister.
 I will bestow [Polonius], and will answer well
 The death I gave him. 3

The point being made, then, is that for the Christian Hamlet, in direct contrast to Aeneas, the conviction that the ghost is a spirit of health (itself not a belief to be made automatically) does not obviate the consideration that his providential role could involve him in damnable personal evil.

The moral obscurity of Hamlet's tragic world for Hamlet when

1) See, for example, Fredson Bowers, "Hamlet as Minister and Scourge," P.M.L.A. LXX, 1955, pp. 740-749.

2) See Otis, Virgil: A Study in Civilized Poetry, pp. 319, 370-371.

3) III.iv. 172-177.

compared with Aeneas's epic world for Aeneas is not merely the result of differing religious convictions (indeed with Turnus and Dido, Virgil has been felt to come close to Christian attitudes towards fate and free will¹) but the result also of the forms themselves, whereby Virgil's epic public purpose demanded moral, political and religious clarity for his protagonist, while Shakespeare's tragic form allowed for the development of ambiguities and ironic uncertainties which, enclosed within the more protracted awareness of the ordinary man's understanding of the divine purpose, serve to undercut the comparative freedom from moral responsibility which the epic poet can contrive to give his hero.

Hamlet's lack of awareness of the divine purpose, his not knowing whether he is scourge or minister, deluded or enlightened, acting with grace or without it, is in one respect nothing more than an aspect of the radical ignorance pervading all humanity over the matter of God's purposes in history. In another respect, however, it is possible to see Hamlet as undergoing a diminution or narrowing of awareness as the play progresses. Thus, the Hamlet of the early section of the play has a firm understanding of the issues which impinge on him. In plain terms he knows that the ghost may be a goblin damned and that he too may be damned, or scourged, if he acts as the agent of divine retribution at Elsinore.² Once assured of the truth of the ghost's story he seems to ignore or to suspend consideration of his earlier awareness that the ghost may be tempting him into the performance of damnable acts, and instead he seems rather glibly to take on the self-consciously grim role of divine executioner.³ In one respect Hamlet may be seen as analogous to the type of morality protagonist, typified in Elizabethan drama by Faustus and Macbeth, who, despite a keen understanding of the

1) See T.S. Eliot, "Virgil and the Christian World," in On Poetry and Poets, London, 1957, pp. 121-131. Also Otis, op cit, p. 227.

2) See II.ii.594-600., III.ii.80-82.

3) See III.iii.72-96., V.ii.57-70.

nature and consequences of sin, somehow persuade themselves that for them the best (sometimes the most heroic or 'manly') course is to ignore or limit or trivialize their consciousness of the issues of the play they are in and, as it were, wear moral blinkers in pursuit of a desired end or a psychologically compelling course of action. Thus, for a period following the killing of Polonius, Hamlet draws closer to the Pyrrhic metaphor of heroic evil artistically present at the centre of the play. With Pyrrhus both classical and medieval traditions merge to provide not merely an image of heroic brutality but also a symbol of religious and moral blindness; of an almost total lack of normal human and humane awareness. Hamlet's moral decline has been felt to reach its nadir with his debate over the killing of Claudius at prayer.¹ Here Hamlet, like Pyrrhus over the fallen Priam, literally causes his sword "i'th'air to stick"² above Claudius until it can find for him a death that has "no relish of salvation in it." Despite admitting that "in our circumstance and course of thought"³ man has no way of knowing the eschatological status which God will judge it proper to award to any human soul, Hamlet, however, goes beyond Pyrrhus in his determination not only to revenge but *presumptuously* to assume God's avenging role by seeking to ensure damnation for Claudius. Again it would be asserted that this crucial indication of Hamlet's Pyrrhic brutalization as he is overwhelmed by evil at the centre of the play is revealed through a Shakespearean modification of a Virgilian device whereby Aeneas is made to reveal his own Pyrrhic savagery as he too expresses ignoble and vengeful sentiments against Helen as she took refuge before an altar.

Despite a temporary association with the type of moral and religious

1) See Nigel Alexander, Poison Play and Duel, London, 1971, pp. 81-83.

2) II.ii.473.

3) III.iii.73-96.

brutalization symbolized by "the hellish Pyrrhus"¹ it has often been felt that after his return from England Hamlet emerges with a new Christian understanding of his role and with a unified Christian philosophy which sets him apart from the far less enlightened warriors Laertes and Fortinbras.² While it would be admitted that Hamlet (his behaviour at Ophelia's funeral apart) does display a greater equanimity on his return from England, it should, however, also be recognized that his final state of mind is itself a diminution, perhaps a necessary one, of his earlier more complex awareness of the issues involved in his taking revenge action. In discussing the nature of this minimization of consciousness the example of Aeneas is, again, informative. It has long been recognized that Aeneas's heroic experiences were partially modelled according to the abstract vision of the Stoic hero gradually learning to achieve equanimity in the face of the harsh blows of fate, and while "this comparison is only partially true because Aeneas notably fails again and again to achieve the rock-like constancy of purpose of the Stoic . . . Nevertheless Aeneas in some sense approximates to the Stoic pilgrim on his journey through life, and his reasons for abandoning Dido are the Stoic ones of subordinating his personal desires to his sense of his divine duty."³ Linked to this vision in Virgil, however, is the non-Stoic (perhaps Platonic) idea that the fate which governed men was ultimately moral or, in Christian terms, providential; and that, therefore, being obedient to fate's behests constituted more than a Stoic testing time but was also a moral-religious affirmation of faith in the divine purpose. At moments throughout the poem Virgil reveals the divine ethical purpose behind fate's machinations, as in Anchises's speech at VI.724 ff., which is "Virgil's firmest assertion that the

1)II.ii.457.

2)See Jenkins,ed.,Hamlet,pp.157-159.

3)R.D.Williams,Virgil,p.35.,also see Bowra,From Virgil to Milton,pp.59 ff.

universe is not blind, that there is a providence shaping things for the best, and that the individual must learn to follow the will of providence."¹

This is, in fact, a view of fate which is close to that expressed by Hamlet in the last act, though, of course, his expressions are all couched in explicitly Christian terms:

let us know,
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well,
When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.
.....
Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
I had my father's signet in my purse, . . .
.....
We defy augury: there is a special providence in the
fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come;
if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not
now, yet it will come— the readiness is all. 2

In these three statements Hamlet appears to be saying that despite our wrong-doings or lack of direction providence shapes our actions to its own ineffable patterns of goodness and that, furthermore, Heaven will fabricate chance events through which to further its own purposes. Thus, Hamlet suggests that there is no justification for usurping God's role in human affairs, but the need is rather to make oneself ready to enact the purposes of fate if and when the occasion arises to make such action necessary.

Thus, though it is not necessary to suggest that Hamlet's final Weltanschauung was derived from that of Aeneas, it must be agreed that there does exist a link between the two characters in their common determination to follow the will of providence which, as a matter of faith, will direct them towards good ends. For Hamlet to adopt the attitude towards action, however, which marks that of a pious and obedient epic hero involves him in several serious oversights, the

1) R.D. Williams, Virgil, p. 35.

2) V.ii.7-11, 48-49, 211-215.

natures of which have been partially outlined above. To begin with, there is the fact that Aeneas knows more clearly than Hamlet ever could do what it was that providence required of him and how he was to achieve it. Thus, for Hamlet to say that there is a special providence shaping his ends, and that heaven has been ordinant in bringing about its purposes through him and that he *shall* not act until heaven requires him to raises unanswered questions *about* how it was that he knew such things, how *he could* claim to understand the will of providence, it not having been revealed to him, and how *he would ever be able* to know when providence would decide on his 'readiness' to act. Furthermore, he himself admits that his own indiscretions serve the purpose of what he takes to be divinity, while he ignores the related point that providence cannot be causal of his indiscretions, which he must answer for himself, but can only be instrumental in achieving the good effects which inevitably emerge from them. Thus, in short, Hamlet refuses to consider his own earlier lucid awareness of the idea that though he may be a scourge, yet he too can be scourged for the evil concomitant on his scourging.¹ This impression of Hamlet's somewhat contrived and perhaps deliberately narrow religious vision is further endorsed by the fact that, like Aeneas, his final accomplishment of his fated role is seen to emerge not through an heroic feeling of Stoic or Christian devotion to duty but through a peculiarly human impassioned response to circumstances. In neither work, of course, does this negate the possibility that supernature was directing events, it merely increases the sense that the final revenge was motivated through human character rather than through divine deterministic control.

In conclusion several points must be stressed. Hamlet arrives at *a*

1) The casuistry of Hamlet's argument that he can scourge without being in danger of punishment is powerfully expressed in R. Battenhouse, Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Art and Its Christian Premises, Bloomington and London, 1969, pp. 260-262.

Christian philosophy which suggests that he has a certain knowledge of the will of God, and that he is necessarily acting in a state of grace which allows him the "perfect conscience" to kill Claudius.¹ This certainty of the divine purpose, however, is not available to him in his obscure tragic world (a fact which he earlier understood) and, thus, the philosophy which allows him to act is one which is really more suitable to the lucid epic world of the Aeneid and its Christian progeny in which the true hero has more certain insights into the providential plan and the divine will. Even Virgil was ethically aware enough to show that Aeneas was deeply tainted by the moral evils of his fated role, and there is evidence that he was more critical of his hero than the public voice of his Roman epic would suggest. Certainly the Christian Hamlet is potentially open to eschatological punishment for the evil inherent in his revenger's purpose. What it is also important to recognize, however, is that Hamlet's epic assurance in the final act provides him with an intellectual rationale with which he can act. Certainly the ideas he expounds are logically flawed, less complete in their Christian vision than those expressed in the early part of the play, yet, given that Hamlet, like Aeneas, is a hero characterized by his (occasionally lapsed) humanity and sensitivity, he at least arrives at an ethos which, despite the possibility of self-delusion, allows him the conscience to contemplate revenge and still think of himself as God's minister. Certainly, the play's most recent editor has suggested that in the final scenes Hamlet has at last come to terms with the fact that all men are necessarily evil, and that to act in support of that part of human personality which is capable of goodness, is itself, though liable to involve inevitable sin, preferable to the debilitation caused by the overpowering awareness of human evil which immobilized Hamlet during

1)V.ii.63 ff. In this speech Hamlet certainly appears to be guilty of special pleading by arguing that it is damnable not to kill Claudius.

the early part of the play.¹

Though it cannot be decided with certainty whether Hamlet is a scourge or a minister, whether he acts under the power of grace or whether he is to be damned, it must be remembered that the ambiguity of temporality in these matters works both ways and, though Hamlet may be seen as deluded and in danger of damnation, it might also be felt that he has hit upon the correct solution to his problem and that while the epic certainty surrounding his role is missing, the epic solution of the divinely sanctioned hero is the correct one. The ending of the play retains the radical ambivalence of all secular history by pointing towards both solutions. On the one hand there is Horatio's seemingly critical report of "carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts; // Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters; // Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause,"² some of which at least must refer to Hamlet's activities during the play, while on the other there are Horatio's parting words to Hamlet: "Good night, sweet prince; // And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest,"³ which suggest a Hamlet being rewarded like Aeneas for the heavy burden he was fated to carry.⁴ Thus, ultimately, the play can be read as a retributive tragedy within the morality tradition, in which Hamlet is punished for his association with the damnable Pyrrhic metaphor of heroic violence and spiritual delusion. Alternatively, however, the play can be seen as an heroic tragedy with its emphasis on the total possibilities open to the hero who like Aeneas finds his heroic destiny not in Homeric presumption or self-assertion, but in obedience to destiny and to providence.⁵ Remembering the evil with which Hamlet contends, the play's emotional impact has tended to promote a concurrence in the sentiments of Horatio's sublime epitaph.

1) Jenkins, ed., Hamlet, pp. 153-157.

2) V.ii.373-375.

(3) V.ii.351-352.

4) For the eschatological ambivalence of the play's final scene see A. Barton, "Shakespeare: His Tragedies," in C. Ricks, ed., English Drama to 1710, London, 1971, pp. 224-226.

5) See T. S. Eliot, "Virgil in the Christian World," p. 128, also Otis, op cit, p. 233.

CHAPTER SEVEN: The Classical anti-heroic and Christian absolutes
in Troilus and Cressida.

Following the work of H.M.Chadwick¹ and Milman Parry² much subsequent Homeric scholarship has been concerned to establish a valid system of poetics with which *legitimately to* approach, evaluate, and compare the various surviving epic poems which are the product of both an oral poetic tradition and an heroic civilization or Zeitgeist.³ Chadwick's conception of the unifying characteristics of an heroic age and of heroic poetry are now thought to be based too narrowly on Teutonic epic and also to be too politically precise to *describe satisfactorily the* generic criterion of all heroic epic, and later analyses have emphasised both the diversity of the poetic products of individual heroic societies and also the more general, more ideological, nature of those similarities which do exist between the heroic poetry of one civilization and that of some others.⁴ While no one common factor characterizes all heroic poetry, it is, however, still held that similar ideas were likely to be current in similar societies at similar stages in their development and that of these the most pervasive were "the 'special conceptions of manhood and honour' which are said to distinguish Heroic Ages."⁵ One consequence of this fact is that 'Homeric' ideas of heroism in post-Homeric literature need not have even the remotest ancestry in Homer but, in England for example, could as easily trace their literary genetics back through medieval chivalric literature to the Teutonic and Frankish oral heroic poetry

1) The Heroic Age, Cambridge, 1912.

2) "Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. 1: Homer and Homeric Style," in Harvard Studies in Classical Philology XXXI, 1930, pp. 73-147.

3) See Bowra, Heroic Poetry, G.S.Kirk, The Songs of Homer, Cambridge, 1962, A.B.Lord, The Singer of Tales, Cambridge, Mass., 1960, and C.H.Whitman, Homer and the Heroic Tradition, Cambridge, Mass., 1958.

4) See J.B.Hainsworth, Homer, Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics No. 3, Oxford, 1969, pp. 14-15.

5) ibid, p. 14. (Hainsworth quotes from Bowra).

from which that literature developed.¹ As Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida is in part indebted to non-Homeric medieval versions of the Trojan story this fact is one to be borne in mind throughout the ensuing discussion, part of which relies on the premise that it was possible for Lydgate, for example, to have his heroes iterate Achillean insights into their heroic ethos without Lydgate or the poetic tradition within which he worked having any direct consciousness of the Homeric epic which those insights invoke.

At several points above the attitude which prompted the Homeric warrior on to the performance of his heroic deeds has been touched upon. It is now necessary to provide a fuller outline of the governing ethos of the Homeric warrior. In so doing two passages from the Iliad can be set forward as containing the essential justification for warlike heroic action in Homer. The first passage is the reply made by Sarpedon to Glaucus at Iliad XII.310 ff.² Sarpedon argues that heroes must fight so as to deserve the privileged position that they are given by their people who "look on us as if we were immortals." He goes on, however, to suggest that it is not only their social status and its implied duty which impels the hero to fight but, more potently, it is the idea of immortality itself which causes the hero to seek out rather than avoid battle:

Man, supposing you and I, escaping this battle,
would be able to live on forever, ageless, immortal,
so neither would I myself go on fighting in the foremost
nor would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory.
But now, seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us
in their thousands, no man can turn aside nor escape them,
let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others³

It was, however, an immortality which did not eradicate death but which was necessary because of death. As Achilles informs Lykaon before

1) See Waith, Ideas of Greatness, pp. 8-9.

2) Called by Hainsworth "the best enunciation of the heroic ethic" in Homer (Homer, p. 38.)

3) Iliad XII.312-328, trans. R. Lattimore, Chicago and London, 1951. All quotation and reference made to this edition unless otherwise stated, hereafter cited as Iliad. cf. also the similar sentiments expressed by Hector (VI.440 ff.) and by Glaucus himself (VI.145 ff.).

killing him, death was a fact of heroic life which even the most heroic of all could not hope to avoid:

So, friend, you die also. Why all this clamour about it?
Patroklos also is dead, who was better by far than you are.
Do you not see what a man I am, how huge, how splendid
and born of a great father, and the mother who bore me immortal?
Yet even I have also my death and my strong destiny,
and there shall be a dawn or an afternoon or a noontime
when some man in the fighting will take the life from me also
either with a spearcast or an arrow flown from the bowstring. 1

Consciousness of the imminence of death through heroic action was a feature of the Homeric hero who was typically aware of the ironies which defined his heroic existence.

These two comments on the heroic life of man combine in the observation that unlike a god a man was subject to death. Paradoxically, however, this fact drove the hero to attempt to transcend his mortality by performing deeds of renown in battle so as to win an honour and a glory among men which would not only add prestige to life but which would also survive after his death in memory and in song, thereby giving the hero a kind of immortality conveyed through posthumous prestige: an immortality which though perhaps inferior to that enjoyed by the gods, was the special beatitude of men; an undying fame independent of the gods who could neither confer this type of immortality nor share in it. Only the mortal could risk death through deeds of heroism and, therefore, only the mortal could be considered admirable for daring to attempt to win honour at the risk of life.

It has been asserted that the humanism of epic poetry arises as a result of the impression it conveys of man's ability to control his own destiny and determine his own actions without supernatural aid. In fact the humanism of Homeric epic is even more extensive in that it suggests that human excellence is a phenomenon *on decided by criterion which* is totally independent of the gods; *criterion which is itself* defined by

1) Iliad XXI, 106-113.

human separateness from the gods. Moreover, superlative warrior heroism, the excellence imposed on man by virtue of his mortality, allows, as Sarpedon observed, a man to win veneration enough to equal that given to the gods for other reasons. The full extent of Homeric humanism emerges when heroic veneration begins to make men actually appear as superior to the gods:

. . . the gods are not heroes. Being ageless and immortal, they cannot take such risks as men do, and can do with impunity what men may do at the cost of their lives. In consequence the gods are less impressive than men. They can never know the menace of death which forces a man to fill his life with valorous actions, nor the code of honour which demands that a short life should be rewarded by an undying renown. The gods are free to do what they please, and for that reason behave without responsibility and obligations; and the result is that, despite all their power and magnificence, they are not noble or dignified in a human sense. With men it is different. They are bound by claims and obligations, and in their devotion to these and especially to the ideal of manhood which embodies them they achieve a real nobility. In the Homeric poems . . . man's mortality greatly increases his grandeur, because it means that in his brief career he must do his utmost to realise his ideal of manhood and be prepared in the end to sacrifice everything for it. 1

In what ensues it will be argued that, both by direct and indirect means,² Shakespeare recognized and used the standard heroic arguments in Homer as part of the heroic debate which takes place in Troilus. It will further be contended that Shakespeare recognized the heroic humanism of Homeric epic and that he sought to alert his audience to its significance when looked at retrospectively by a Christian civilization aware that the absolutes of Christianity were as unavailable to the Greeks and Trojans as they were to the ancient Romans.

1) Bowra, Heroic Poetry, p.90.

2) The most obvious direct source being the embassy to Achilles (Iliad IX.) translated as book five of Chapman's The Seaven Bookes of Homer's Iliads, London, 1598. While almost all of the Homeric material in Troilus can be accounted for by the material in The Seaven Bookes there is evidence (see Bullough, Sources VI, pp.87-89) that Shakespeare knew other books than those in Chapman and a convenient list of the other translations which he may have consulted can be found in J.S.P. Tatlock, "The Siege of Troy in Shakespeare and Heywood," P.M.L.A. XXX, 1915, pp.742-744. Bullough suggests the most likely source to be Hughes Salel's version complete by 1580 rather than Arthur Hall's translation (1581) of the first ten books only, taken from Salel's French.

After observing that Troilus and Cressida is typified by "mad idolatry" and by characters (such as Ulysses with the state, Hector with glory, Troilus with Cressida and the Trojans with Helen) who give excessive pseudo-religious worship to non-transcendent phenomena, William Empson went on to make the general observation that "the play is full of gods who are found out."¹ To ignore for the moment Empson's point that many if not all of the values in Troilus upon which the characters pin their faith become tarnished during the course of the action, the question still remains as to why Shakespeare should so insistently make the characters in this play discuss themselves and their temporal affections in language which is explicitly religious. Several of the most significant examples of this aspect of the play will be analysed in detail later. At this point, however, many other examples of the trait can be cited which, though more *peripheral to the* terms of the present discussion, do provide evidence that the technique is widespread throughout the play and applicable to a diverse range of character, tone and subject matter. It would be noted that it is not only the lovers but also the warriors in the play who are discussed, with varying degrees of irony, in terms of the language of worship.

Thus, Cressida's remark that "women are angels, wooing"² can be contrasted with Nestor's deference to Agamemnon's "godlike seat"³ and with Ulysses's more overtly Christian depiction of the general as the ultimate end of all spiritual and intellectual endeavour: "Heart of our numbers, soul and only spirit //In whom the tempers and the minds of all //Should be shut up."⁴ The fact that there is

1) Some Versions of *Pastoral*, London, 1968, p.42.

2) I.ii.278.

3) I.iii.31.

4) I.iii.56-58.

probably conscious irony, perhaps even facetiousness, in Ulysses's utterance is not disputed. Indeed it will later be argued that the undoubted comic irony which the speaker recognizes to exist beneath many of these estimations of godlike stature forms part of a more pervasive and serious irony established by Shakespeare (as in the morality tradition) through humour and the comic suggestion of ludicrous discrepancy between language and event. For the moment, however, the examples may be treated as neutral in terms of their comic/bathetic impact so that Ulysses's openly scornful "god Achilles"¹ can be directly equated with Aeneas's more guardedly ironic "which is that god in office, guiding men?//Which is the high and mighty Agamemnon?"² in that they both illustrate the play's awareness of the fact that Homeric heroic mortals were given the respect accorded to divinity within their heroic society.

Troilus in particular is a character, as Hector observes,³ who insists on deifying that which he values. He talks of Priam's honour as being of infinite worth, he compares Helen to the god Apollo and says that a war for her is a religious war in which her soldiers might achieve sanctification.⁴ In a morality play such a chivalric metaphor would carry openly Pelagianistic implications. Most obviously Troilus uses religious imagery in his descriptions of Cressida,⁵ and on one occasion actually rivals his love for her with that which mortals give to the gods.⁶ In fact throughout their scene of parting the language of both lovers takes on the religious dimensions of a morality play, in which to fall from love is equated with a fall from grace or faith, while the cause of that

1) I.iii.169.

2) I.iii.231-232.

3) II.ii.53 ff.

4) II.ii.25-32., II.ii.78-79., II.ii.196-206.

5) III.ii.7-15., IV.iii.6-9.

6) IV.iv.23 ff.

fall, be it internal weakness or an external tempter,¹ is equated with a devil. Thus, when Cressida does prove false it appears to Troilus as though heaven itself has been dishonest: "the bonds of heaven are slipp'd, dissolv'd, and loos'd."² In ironic reversal to the morality play, however, Troilus discovers that it is his heaven (Cressida) which is inconstant, whereas he, the worshipper, has remained true.

Ulysses, in the embassy scene, when outlining the sudden aggrandizement of Ajax to Achilles, suggests that a system of rank exists even among the human divinities of the camp: "shall he be worshipp'd//Of that we hold an idol more than he?"³ Patroclus later confirms the religious deference with which the Greeks were wont to treat Achilles when they came to his tent "as humbly as they us'd to creep//To holy altars,"⁴ while Ulysses further urges that though "all the Greeks begin to worship Ajax," they might yet be made to worship Achilles again whom even the gods envy: "Whose glorious deeds but in these fields of late//Made emulous missions 'mongst the gods themselves,//And drove great Mars to faction."⁵ Similarly Troilus displays a typically, though more passionately serious, Homeric desire to rival his martial abilities with those of the gods. In his disillusioned mood of savagery, which might even have appeared as being dangerously presumptuous in Homer, he asserts his humanistic independence from and superiority to the gods; stating that not even "the hand of Mars//Beck'ning with fiery

1)IV.iv.87-96.

2)V.ii.154.

3)II.iii.183-184. Note also that Thersites calls Achilles the "idol of idiot worshippers."(V.i.7.).

4)III.iii.73-74.

5)III.iii.182-190. Alice Walker's note on this line in her edition of the play (Cambridge, 1957) *sees a possible* reference to Iliad V. Kenneth Palmer, the play's New Arden editor (London, 1982) suggests Iliad XX., While Bullough, Sources VI, p.89 suggests Iliad XXI. (the same book as Achilles's speech to Lykaon cited above). None of these books was translated by Chapman in 1598. From whichever source, however, Shakespeare captured the Homeric humanism which saw the deeds of warriors as surpassing and excluding the immortals.

truncheon"¹ would make him retire from battle where he will "dare all
imminence that gods and men//Address their dangers in."²

Finally, perhaps the most impressive instance in which a
warrior is either compared with or described in opposition to a
god occurs when Hector visits the Greek camp, is met "with most
divine integrity"³ by Agamemnon and is eulogised by Nestor as
being like Jove himself:

I have, thou gallant Trojan, seen thee oft,
Labouring for destiny, make cruel way
Through ranks of Greekish youth . . .
.
When thou hast hung thy advanced sword i'th'air,
Not letting it decline on the declined;
That I have said to some my standers-by
'Lo, Jupiter is yonder, dealing life!
And I have seen thee pause and take thy breath,
When that a ring of Greeks have hemm'd thee in,
Like an Olympian wrestling. 4

Nestor's praise of Hector is couched in terms which invoke many
of the humanistic fallacies which the Augustinian Christian
tradition felt lay beneath the pagan heroic ethos. Hector is not
only godlike but he usurps the power of god. He creates his own
destiny and dispenses his own mercy. He deals life like a god
even more overtly than did the Romans whom Augustine condemned
for celebrating the pax-Romana. Here at least, however, the tone
of the old warrior Nestor seems sincere; his praise is the heroic
equivalent of Troilus's idolatry of Cressida. If there is an
example in Troilus of a character seriously treating a warrior
with the reverence which Homer's Sarpedon said was the hero's
due from his people then it is to be found in Nestor's generous
tribute to his enemy.

1)V.iii.52-53.

2)V.x.13-14.

3)IV.v.170.

4)IV.v.183-194. It is interesting that Hector, like Pyrrhus, is made
to pause over his 'declined' enemies. Possibly the suggestion is
that he too might have paused longer; that if he was to draw near
the nature of the gods then he was to do so by being merciful.
Ironically, however, his merciful pause over Achilles proves fatal.

Having indicated some of the 'gods' referred to by Empson, it can now be attempted to suggest why Shakespeare introduces this aspect of heroic humanism into Troilus. One avenue of approach to the problem is provided by Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde. It should be emphasised from the outset, however, that Chaucer will be found to provide endorsement for an attitude towards antiquity present in Shakespeare from Titus onwards. The influence of Chaucer will, thus, provide further confirmation of the view that classical and medieval authors were comparatively homogeneous in their influence throughout the Elizabethan period. It is not suggested that Chaucer provided a reading of the classics that Shakespeare could not have found elsewhere in the non-classical material available to him, merely that certain features of Chaucer's poem were likely to have alerted Shakespeare to the peculiarly pagan nature of the problems encountered by the characters in the narrative.

It is, in fact, after the narrative has ended that the most striking Chaucerian indication of the influence which Troilus's pagan limitations had on his misfortunes occurs. While Chaucer studiously kept the main narrative free from anachronistic Christian insight, at the close of the poem he allows the soul of Troilus access to a Christian vision of the vanity of all of the worldly ultimates such as love and heroism in which he had put all his faith during his life. The point which Troilus is allowed to understand is that all the temporal absolutes in which he as a pagan had invested ultimate worth were in fact examples of the finite, morally insecure and frustrating nature of all temporal values when they are seen against the infinite, perfect and absolutely fulfilling beatitudes made available to man through God. Normally, however, Chaucer agrees with Augustine¹ that the ancient

1) See Troilus and Criseyde V.1849 ff., in F.N. Robinson, ed., The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd edition, Oxford, 1974; from which all reference to Chaucer is taken.

Christian consciousness of there being transcendental values in the universe from both the characters in the play and from the audience watching it. This being done the pagans in the play would be left with no other ultimates than those in Chaucer, political, heroic and romantic ideals which, due to the nature of fallen man, were as morally and spiritually jejune as the pagan deities themselves:

All Shakespeare had to do to Chaucer's poem to produce the vision of chaos we find in his play was to omit the higher level of values that would provide an alternative to the cynical materialism of Ulysses and the misplaced idealism of Troilus. . . . Shakespeare must have perceived the ambiguity of his source and made a deliberate decision to change the final effect by providing no corrective to the shortsighted vision of his characters on either the romantic or the heroic level. Both writers see their characters seeking constancy and lasting happiness in things unstable by their mortal nature, and being governed by apparently irrational forces and accidents beyond their control, but Chaucer moves beyond this lower level of the Boethian vision of life and finally takes his hero with him, while Shakespeare leaves his characters in the disorder of mortality.¹

It will be argued that while Shakespeare leaves his characters in the disorder of mortality, there is a corrective offered to his audience in the shape of an ironic method combined with a humorous exposure which could alert them to the distinction which potentially (though not inevitably) existed between the pagans of the play, necessarily restricted either to misplaced idealism or temporal pragmatism, and themselves, who had the opportunity to take comfort in the faith that the insufficiencies of this life were compensated for by the eternal verities of the next. Moreover, the Christian was able to minimize the relativity of moral values seen as endemic in Homeric society by reference to the incontrovertible ethical codes of the Christian religion, which, though equally open to sophistry, could not in themselves be inherently contradictory.

Thus, Troilus need not be seen as Shakespeare's vision of

1) Shakespeare's Chaucer, Liverpool, 1978, p. 155.

society as it necessarily is (although it seems likely that the suggestion is that the over-valuation of the world is a characteristic of men in all epochs), but as his vision of society as it necessarily was without Christianity, and as his vision of society as it partially always will be given that even Christian societies and Christian men in this life form an obscure mixture of the city of man and the city of God. In these terms Troilus provides a metaphor of fallen humanity as well as representing the historically benighted nature of all pagans living prior to the era of grace. It symbolizes, however, particularly the nature of all men who live according to false gods, and, thus, though it touches all of humanity to an extent, applies especially to the city of man in all epochs, and leaves open the possibility, even if only by negative example, that the Christian man and the Christian society can avoid many of the worst excesses of ignorance, delusion and relativity symbolized by the characters of Troilus once the values of a fallen and unstable world are assessed and evaluated in terms of the transcendent certainties and moral absolutes provided by the Christian religion.

As observed above, it is not being suggested, however, that Chaucer was the sole influence on Shakespeare in this direction. Lydgate, for example, has a long and involved digression lamenting the worship of pagan gods and the practice of false deification among the Greeks and Trojans; a facet of human delusion which he saw as originating in Satan.¹ More negatively, though it has been thought most influentially,² there is the effect on Shakespeare's reaction to the Homeric world which may have been caused by Chapman's introductions to his translations of The Seaven Bookes

1) The Historye Sege and Dystruccyon of Troye II.5410-5940. All references to this poem are made to the edition of H. Bergen, E.E.T.S. E.S. Nos.97(Books 1-2), 1906, 103(Book 3), 1908, 106(Books 4-5), 1910. Henceforth cited as Troy Book.

2) See Bullough, Sources VI, pp.86-87. Palmer, ed., Troilus remains ambivalent, pp.33-37.

and Achilles Shield, both of which were published in London in 1598, and in which the most extreme statement of the didactic **efficacy** of pagan epic for a Christian audience to be found in English Renaissance poetic theory was set out.¹ At one point, for example, Chapman alludes to the legend which said that the Emperor Ptolemy so revered the Homeric "piety and perfect humanity" that he executed any convicted detractor of the poems. He then continues:

O high and magically raised prospect, from whence a true eye may see means to the absolute redresse, or much to be wished extenuation, of all the vnmanly degeneracies now tyransing amongst vs! For if that which teacheth happinesse and hath vnpaynefull corosiuues in it (being entertayned and obserued) to **eate** out the hart of that raging vlcere, which like a Lernean Fen of corruption furnaceth the vniuersall sighes and complaintes of this transposed world, were seriously and as with armed garrisons defended and **hartned**, that which engenders & disperseth that wilfull pestilence would bee purged and extirpate; but that which teacheth being ouerturned, that which is taught is consequently subiect to euersion; and if the honour, happinesse and preservation of true humanity consist in obseruing the lawes fit for mans dignitie, and that the elaborate prescription **of those lawes must of necessitie be** authorised, fauoured, and defended before any obseruations can succeed, is it vnreasonable to punish the contempt of that mouing prescription with one mans death, when at the heeles of it followes common neglect of obseruation, and in the necke of it an vniuersall ruine? 2

Chapman's suggestion that neglect of Homer would usher in universal ruin, and that the ethical absolutes of the Homeric poems would provide a corrective for the degeneracies to be found in the modern "transposed world" implies that he believed the moral and social milieu of the Iliad to be superior to that of his own civilization. Elsewhere he asserts that it is not only soldiers who would benefit from reading Homer but all ranks of society would benefit from the consideration of what, in effect, is seen as

1) The editions of Chapman consulted were those owned by the British Library (Seauen Bookes and Achilles Shield, British Museum Catalogue Nos. C.39d46 and C.39d54 respectively) The bulk of the prefatory material, however, is reprinted in Smith, ed., Critical Essays II, pp.295-307, and reference has been made to this edition supplemented by the (also incomplete) version edited by A. Nicoll in Chapman's Homer, 2 vols., London, 1957, Volume 1, The Iliad, pp.503 ff.

2) Dedication to Essex, Achilles Shield, in Critical Essays II, pp.302-303.

a eudaemonia: a catalogue of all that tends towards moral goodness in society.¹

When these assertions are combined with Chapman's eulogy of the Earl of Essex as a parallel to Achilles (who by "sacred prophetic" prefigured the Earl to the extent that both emerge as archetypes of "honor, vertue and pietie, . . . in godlike pursue of Eternitie,"²) then it is not surprising that it has been widely held that Troilus constituted Shakespeare's exposure of the anti-heroic actuality of the Homeric warrior's ethos when interpreted with a less indulgent attitude towards the idealized conception of the warrior than Chapman's.³ It follows, therefore, that Shakespeare may also have taken exception to Chapman's assertion of the self-sufficiency of Homeric ethics and with his suggestions that the poems contain a rigorous proto-Christian value structure prophetically advanced by Homer for the maintenance of social well-being. Thus, rather than show Homeric civilization as a bastion against universal ruin, it is shown as a historical epoch which in fact is lacking most of the necessary virtues to stave off ruin because it is radically lacking faith in any absolute and truly worthwhile divine values; and, therefore, it emerges as a metaphorical expression (significantly in terms of the morality tradition couched through a vision of degenerate heroism) of the degeneracy of all post-lapsarian civilizations which lack the certainties of Christian revelation to instill some semblance of order into an otherwise confused world.⁴

1) See Achilles Shield, "To the Understander," Critical Essays II, pp. 306-307.

2) From the Seaven Bookes dedication to "the most honored now living Instance of the Achilleian vertues eternized by divine HOMERE, the Earle of ESSEX," in Nicoll, ed, Chapman's Homer I, p. 504. For Chapman's view of a divinely inspired Homer see M. Maclure, George Chapman. A Critical Study, Toronto, 1966, p. 166 and passim.

3) See G.K. Hunter, "Troilus and Cressida: a tragic satire," Shakespeare Studies, Tokyo, 1977, pp. 1-23, and also R.S. Ide, Possessed with Greatness, The Heroic Tragedies of Shakespeare and Chapman, London, 1980, pp. 4, 36 ff.

4) Obviously the concept of universal ruin through lack of social order is understood by Ulysses to be close to the surface in Troilus: I.iii.75ff.

Early in Troilus Shakespeare provides an indication of how the tension, which, it has been postulated, he wished his audience to recognize, between pagan and Christian attitudes towards the world was to emerge. Agamemnon is made to lament the way in which historical events continually frustrate human desires with seemingly pointless monotony. When confronted by the morally confusing nature of history the Christian has recourse to the idea that higher providential morality is directing events towards ultimate, though incomprehensible, righteousness. Agamemnon, however, can have no such concept of transcendent: if ineffable goodness, and he has to explain the phenomenon in terms of the more amoral Stoic view of history according to which all events are subject to an unstable and fickle supernatural order which has no overriding meaning other than to test men's powers of fortitude:

The ample proposition that hope makes
 In all designs **begun on earth below**
 Fails in the promis'd largeness; checks and disasters
 Grow in the veins of actions highest rear'd,
 As knots, by the conflux of meeting sap,
 Infects the sound pine, and diverts his grain
 Tortive and errant from his course of growth.
 Nor, princes, is it matter new to us
 That we come short of our suppose so far
 That after seven years' siege yet Troy walls stand;
 Sith every action that hath gone before,
 Whereof we have record, trial did draw
 Bias and thwart, not answering the aim,
 And that unbodied figure of the thought
 That gave't surmised shape. Why then, you princes,
 Do you with cheeks abash'd behold our works
 And call them shames, which are, indeed, nought else
 But the protractive trials of great Jove
 To find persistive constancy in men. 1

Even if Agamemnon's explanation of failure is only considered to be a rationalization designed to obscure his own inadequacy,² it still

1) I.iii.3-21. cf. Agamemnon's similar sentiments in Troy Book II.4392-4408. In Homer, Iliad IX.16-28 (Chapman's Book 5, quoted by Bullough, Sources VI, pp.130-131) Agamemnon talks of protractive trials but less stoically suggests that the Greeks accept defeat.

2) See R.K. Presson, Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida and the Legends of Troy, Madison, 1953, p.14, for the suggestion that Agamemnon is being satirized for having an inappropriate philosophy for a general, and W.B. Drayton-Henderson, "Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, Yet deeper

emerges as a typically pagan rationalization; and one which, though dissimilar from Sarpedon's justification for heroic action, is heroic in its humanistic vision of man's need *actively to* attempt to make an amoral, stubbornly contrary, divine order finally accede to his designs.

While no one would argue that Agamemnon propounds a Christian interpretation *of* the problem of historical purposelessness, it has been argued, rightly, that his speech contributes to one of the play's main themes: the destructive nature of time.¹ Following on from this recognition it is frequently suggested that all of the play's non-Christian attitudes concerning time, mutability and degenerate decay are ultimately reconciled to a sixteenth-century Christian interpretation of history through the medium of Ulysses's speech on order, which has been felt to qualify the humanistic stoicism of Agamemnon and Nestor and establish Ulysses as the anachronistic voice of Christian orthodoxy (or even of Shakespeare himself) working within the play.² Such an interpretation suggests that by introducing the idea of order within the state Ulysses by inference invokes the idea of a divine cosmic order which directs all historical events according to a principle of providential design. Though the fact that Ulysses later denies that order exists as a social imperative may be ascribed to his desire to disturb Achilles rather than to a sincere questioning of his supposed faith in order,³ it is, of course, equally legitimate to conclude

in its Tradition," in H. Craig, ed., Essays in Dramatic Literature, Princeton, 1935, revised ed., New York, 1967, p. 131, for the view that he uses stoicism to gloss over his own failures and incompetence.

1) See A. S. Knowland, "Troilus and Cressida," Shakespeare Quarterly X, 1959, p. 363.

2) See T. Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, New York, 1942, pp. 21-28. D. Bush, Prefaces to Renaissance Literature, Cambridge, Mass., 1965, pp. 37-40. V. K. Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use of Learning, San Marino, 1953, pp. 199-203. O. J. Campbell, Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, San Marino, 1938, pp. 231-232.

3) See III.iii.145 ff and Palmer, ed., Troilus, pp. 67-68.

that he is represented as a skilled though insincere politician who invokes ideals or philosophical concepts not out of any sense of commitment but with an aim to promote his own pragmatic political ends.¹ Even if Ulysses is accepted as a sincere Apologist for political order, however, it must still be observed that his speech on order as an ideal does not in fact extend to make the final Christian points emerging from the concept. In this respect his speech parallels that of Agamemnon's cited above in that both men discuss a philosophical problem which had been under consideration since philosophy began, but both fail (as a matter of historical accuracy) to provide the specifically Christian conclusions to the problem, conclusions which, for the orthodox among Shakespeare's audience, gave meaning to the concepts themselves.²

The fact that Ulysses omitted any reference to God (or even to a god) was noted by E.M.W. Tillyard, himself one of the leading advocates of the view that Ulysses provides the voice of orthodoxy upheld by the play. As he stated, the Elizabethan moral order theory involved a pyramid of creation leading upwards from the lowest levels of creation to God who both defined and upheld the ordered structure. Ulysses's 'world picture', however, went no higher, nor no lower, than man and the physical world: "The picture, however, though so rich, is not complete. There is nothing about God and the angels, nothing about animals, vegetables and minerals. For Shakespeare's dramatic purposes he brought in quite enough, but it would be wrong to think that he did not mean to imply the two extremes of creation also."³ Tillyard then goes on to cite passages (from

1) A view forwarded by Brower, Hero and Saint, pp. 255-256, 266.

2) See Palmer, ed., Troilus, pp. 321-322, for the distinction between Christian and pagan applications of the concept.

3) The Elizabethan World Picture, 9th impression, London, 1960, p. 8.

Raleigh and Elyot) in which the preeminent place of God in the order of creation is stressed. While Tillyard is to be applauded for admitting, against the direction of his own argument, that the speech is not the exact parallel of the more overtly Christian expression of the same idea in Henry V,¹ it does seem legitimate to consider whether it is correct to be so sanguine about the idea that Shakespeare meant to "imply" the place of God at the head of Ulysses's postulated chain of order. What has been said above suggests that Shakespeare might at least have plausibly have been expecting his audience to recognize that Ulysses was not proto-Christian but rather that he was typically pagan in his truncation of the ordered universe at the level of planetary influence. This, of course, is not to say that the action of Troilus goes on to endorse the Christian moral order theory, merely that Ulysses's catalogue of commonplace ideas about the necessity of order conspicuously lacks any reference to the commonplace Christian conclusion which saw all order as emanating from and justified by the nature of God.

The fact that Shakespeare actually disregards a suggestion in one of his sources, when making Ulysses affirm his faith in order in more naturalistic, non-religious, terms than he is made to do in Chapman, adds credibility to the idea that the character in Troilus is deliberately represented as having no sense of the numinous; for he is not even allowed to place a Christianized Jove at the head of the ordered cosmos, but instead keeps his frame of reference strictly within the physical and political world. Thus, though in Chapman he cries:

. . . nor must Greekes be so irregular;
 To live as every man may take the scepter from the king;
 The rule of many is absurd, one Lord must leade the ring:

1) I.i.183 ff.

Of far resounding government: one king whome Saturnes sonne,
Hath giuen a scepter and sound lawes, to beare dominion: 1

in Shakespeare Ulysses confines his transcendent awareness to the making of an elaborate parallel between the body politic and the planets.²

A passage in which Ulysses confirms his feeling for the state as an independent body existing without reference to, and almost in rivalry with, the pagan deities occurs during his embassy to Achilles when he attributes his knowledge of Achilles's love for Polyxena to the providence and divinity which exists within the state itself. The passage is, in fact, one further example of the prevalence of false gods within the play; and although it has been given less critical attention than the order speech it would be obvious to a Christian audience that Ulysses attributes concepts properly applicable to God alone directly to one of God's instruments: the state:

The providence that's in a watchful state
Knows almost every grain of Plutus' gold;
Finds bottom in th'uncomprehensive deeps;
Keeps place with thought, and almost, like the gods,
Do thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles.
There is a mystery-with whom relation
Durst never meddle-in the soul of state,
Which hath an operation more divine
Than breath or pen can give expresseure to.³

As in the order speech, though here more obviously, Ulysses omits the orthodox Christian corollary to the idea of providence working through a state: that the providence was divine and not political. Ulysses here actually compares this institutional mystery to the activities of the pagan gods; and although he is a ubiquitous enough

1) Seaven Bookes II. p. 34 (E1v). No line references. cf. Iliad II. 196-206.

2) I.iii.75 ff.

3) III.iii.196-204.

politician to make it questionable whether his sentiments express genuine belief or whether they arise from the machiavellian desire to manipulate Achilles into conformity with his real-politik, it is true to say that if there is anything in the play which Ulysses treats with religious deference it is the sanctity of the state.

So far it has been shown that Troilus is full of characters who give religious significance or deference to mundane phenomena, and no distinction has been made between the quality, justification or seriousness of each character's object(s) of worship. Thus, Achilles, Agamemnon, Hector, Troilus, Cressida, Helen and the state; that is to say heroes, lovers and institutions, have all been grouped together as being objects of the language of religious awe seen as characteristic of the pagan tendency to invest temporal phenomena with ultimate worth, while little attempt has been made to suggest whether the play attempts to convey any impression of the relative worth of each object of veneration. Obviously, however, the play does make qualitative distinctions between these widely differing 'gods', and it is a process upon which much of the comedy, pathos and even tragedy in Troilus depends. While insisting on the difference between each one of the play's ideals, however, it would also be suggested that each one is exposed as either falling short of, or frustrating the sanctity of, the faith with which it is invested by the characters in the play; and that although some of the 'gods' are transparent enough to be debunked comically, the comic irony itself serves the serious purpose which it did in the morality tradition by providing analogous comment on the more exalted, though spiritually similar, involvement with worldly ultimates engaged in by the more admirable characters in the play.

Thus, a great deal of heavy, almost farcical, irony surrounds

the gap between the traditional concept of the god Agamemnon, or the hero gods Ajax and Achilles and the actuality of their characters and actions in the play. Much of this irony others in the play are conscious of; though, as observed, Hector's nobility does earn him serious consideration as a near divinity by warriors on both sides. Similarly the Trojan investment of infinite value in the figure of Helen is more obviously undercut early in the play by the actual representation of Helen's behaviour,¹ than is Troilus's more sympathetic, and initially more justified, worship of Cressida; though, as Troilus himself comes to recognize, this veneration too turns out to have been misplaced, providing one more example of the tendency for mortal frailty to fall from the divine integrity of the ideal invested in it.² Even Ulysses's belief in the divinity of the state is undercut by events.³ Thus, statecraft does not prove powerful enough to bring Achilles back to battle; a decision he takes, following the unforeseen death of Patroclus, totally independently of Ulysses's stratagems. Furthermore, the arrival of Achilles on the battlefield does not herald the victory of political order as supposed by Ulysses. Rather, the opposite is true, and "the Grecians begin to proclaim barbarism, and policy grows into an ill opinion."⁴ What is also clear, however, is that, just as Augustine gave qualified approval to the Roman worship of the state; they having nothing else of sufficient worth to esteem, Ulysses's reverence of order and the state emerges from the play as being one of the more sane and constructive types of idolatry in which a pagan

1) Contrast II.ii.81 ff. with III.i.40 ff.

2) V.ii.135 ff. Related to this constant failure of events to match ideals in Troilus is the feature discussed by Palmer in his edition of the play, pp.42-46, where he makes the cogent point that a given character's ideal reasons for action or inaction (order, love, justice, etc.) are never matched by the sordid actuality of their ensuing actions (trickery, sex, injustice, etc.). It will be suggested below that the cause of this was felt to lie partially in the ethical redundancy of the pagan gods.

3) See L.C. Knights, Some Shakespearean Themes, London, 1966, pp.69-70.

4) V.iv.15-16.

could engage.

The question which remains to be answered, however, asks why it was that Shakespeare, while allowing his characters full familiarity with the pagan pantheon, should still wish to present a vision of "mad idolatry" in which humanity, not content with its established immortals, habitually endows non-celestial objects with the reverence due to the gods. Partially, of course, the answer is to be found in the fact that Shakespeare was attempting to reproduce the heroic humanism of the heroic age and, for reasons to be outlined below, extended the typically Homeric worship of honour and heroes into other areas of human veneration of the world. It should be remembered that a rigidly medieval theological interpretation of this process would insist that the root of all sin lay in the deification of creation and the consequent bestowal of the love due to the creator on the creation which was an object not worthy of such love. While it is hoped to suggest that a more historically sensitive approach than that which would anachronistically condemn a pagan society by Christian standards unavailable to that society is in operation in Troilus, it is obviously significant that the spiritually destructive substitution of mundane ultimates for celestial ones is so prominent a feature of the play.

A convenient place from which to begin a more thorough analysis of this question, one which attempts to take the role of the pagan deities themselves into account, is with Troilus's comment on hearing of the death of Hector: "But, march away; // Hector is dead; there is no more to say."¹ It has been observed that this comment resembles a traditional, and semantically redundant, medieval poetic formula, possibly indebted to Lydgate's comment on Troilus after hearing the news of Cressida's departure.² As a comment on the death

1) V.x.20-21.

2) See Troy Book III, line 4109. Also Thompson, Shakespeare's Chaucer, p.148.

of a hero, however, the comment carries with it a suggestion which makes it potentially more than verse padding, especially if it is considered against the background of the oral epic attitude towards the death of a warrior as revealed by the speeches from Sarpedon and Achilles quoted above. Both extracts revealed the typically Homeric feeling that a hero's achievements belong totally to this life, and that, moreover, for the hero himself their significance is confined totally to mundane existence. Although Homer acknowledges an afterlife, his heroes have no sense that their deeds will have any eschatological significance, for the honour which they hope will live after them is a temporal not a spiritual reward. Thus death is amoral in its significance and the state of death is for the most part neutral; and certainly there is no preoccupation while alive with the issues of damnation and salvation. Thus, in a real sense the meaning of Hector's life in Homer ended with his death; there was no more to say about him, because there were no flights of angels to carry him to his rest, nor no fiend to draw him to damnation. The only afterlife for Hector in Homer was to be in the celebration of his ideal image as a warrior. This celebration of the ideal warrior was, of course, exactly what the profoundly disillusioned Troilus, all his courtly and chivalric ideas shattered, believing only in savage vengeance, could not take part in. Thus, for him, even more profoundly than for his Homeric ancestors, there was no more to say, or to sing, about Hector.

The fact that there was a lacuna in the religious beliefs of classical paganism compared to those of Christianity whereby there was no sense that mundane actions had spiritual consequences, thus forcing men to view their involvement in this life as being the sole means of achieving any worthwhile elevation, is endorsed by the dialogue between Ulysses and Achilles in the second embassy scene.¹

1) III.iii.145 ff. esp. the lines "O, let not virtue seek//Remuneration for the thing it was." (169-170).

It is interesting that Shakespeare can actually be shown to have manipulated his sources so as to maintain the force of the idea that pagan heroes were impelled to make temporal honour their god, to be pursued and worshipped relentlessly, if they were to gain the degree of beatification in this life which was not offered to them by their own gods either in this life or the next. In fact the scene in the Iliad¹ to which Shakespeare's scene is partially indebted is one of the great occasions in Homer where Achilles questions the validity of the heroic Zeitgeist of his society which held that honour was the great human beatitude, desirable in itself above life and happiness.² Confronted by the fact that he, the greatest hero at Troy, had been dishonoured, he recognizes that honour itself has become tarnished as an ideal and thus articulates "a new and profounder attitude to the old ideology"³ wherein he states that there is no correlation between a man's heroic worth and the honour he is accorded, and that, furthermore, the idea that a man wins immortality by fighting is spurious since the great warrior is given no more esteem in death than the lesser fighter, especially as, during life, others are parasitic on the honour he is able to accumulate:

With equall honor Cowardes dye, and men most valiant.
 The much performer and the man, that can of nothing vant.
 No ouerplus I euer found, when with my mindes most strife,
 To do them good, to dangerous fight, I haue exposde my life,
 But euen as to vnfeatherd birds, the carefull dam brings meate,⁴
 Which when she hath bestowde, her self hath nothing left to eate:

Thus, as a consequence of the recognition that the distribution of **honour is**

1) Book IX. 307-429.

2) C.M. Bowra, The Greek Experience, reprinted New York, 1959, pp. 47-53 records Achilles's questioning of his heroic ethos, but goes on to show how closely connected the heroic pursuit of honour was (page 51) to the Greek belief that "death annihilates all that matters"

3) G.S. Kirk, Homer and the Oral Tradition, Cambridge, 1976, p. See also J. Griffin, Homer on Life and Death, Oxford, 1980, pp. 55, 93 and esp. 98-100.

4) Seaven Bookes V. pp. 84-85 (M2^v-M3). cf. Iliad IX. 316-325.

so capricious and unfair Achilles determines that it is better to choose a modest, unheroic, life of quietness rather than to court death in pursuit of a god which is not worth the loss of life: "much of my fame decayes, // But death shall linger his approche." Chapman even goes so far as to supply Achilles with an un-Homeric moral objection to the pursuit of an unworthy temporal goal resulting in an inevitable death: "t'were arroganc~~e~~, t'abridge my life for *praise*." ¹

Shakespeare, of course, does not give his Achilles this Homeric anti-heroic consciousness of the limitations of his heroic ethos. As suggested, the scene in Shakespeare presents an Achilles who is deeply disturbed by Ulysses's arguments about his declining honour. Prior to discussing why Shakespeare should deny his Achilles a consciousness of there being mundane alternatives to heroism, ² it must be observed that Shakespeare did not simply prefer a medieval version of the scene showing an unenlightened Achilles to the scene in Chapman. Indeed, it is striking that both Lydgate and Caxton give Achilles (possibly contemptuously) an articulate understanding of the anti-heroic implications surrounding the concepts of mutability in time and human caprice. Thus in Troy Book IV.1867 ff. Achilles, in response to Ulysses's assertion that time will never "dirken or difface" his memory if only he will fight, lucidly rejects the Sarpedinian idea that heroic fame can survive time's oblivion, or, in any event, be worth dying for. It is preferable to be called a coward:

I nat purpose in this werre or strif
 For to iupart~~e~~ any more my lif,
 For leuer I *have* that palled be my name
 Than to be slayn, & han an Idel fame;
 For worthines, after deth I-blowe,

1) Seaven Bookes V.p.87 (M4). cf. Iliad IX. 405-416.

2) Even Chapman makes no suggestion that Achilles believed the choice could affect his eschatological status. The choice as in Homer was a mundane one between a short heroic life and a long non-heroic one. Neither Shakespeare nor any of the medieval versions discussed below suggest that Achilles had an understanding of the eschatological limitations of his pagan heroic ethos.

Is but a wynde, & lasteth but a throwe;
 For though renoun & pris be blowe wyde,
 Forgetlines leith it ofte a-syde
 By lengthe of yeris and obliuion,
 Thorough envie and fals collucioun.
 The laude of knyghthod & of worthines,
 Of wysdam eke, & of gentilnes
 Freedom, bounte, vertu, & swiche grace,
 Forgetlines can dirken and difface;
 And, ther-with-al, malys and envie
 I-serid hath the palme of chivalrie
 By fals report. Wherefore, I seie, for me,
 I wil of wisdam swiche foly lete be,
 And in quiete forthe my lyf now lede.

Even in Caxton's less expansive Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye Achilles's reply to Ulysses's suggestion that he must fight to keep his "good renome" is similarly anti-heroic in tone, this time taking the death of Hector as an illustration of the folly of shortening life for honour: "Hector that was so noble and so worthy/is he not dede/
 In lyke wyse I may dye lightly that am not so stronge as he was. And
 Therfore how moche as ye requyre me to goo to bataylle/*so* moche payne and laboure lese ye. For I haue no more entencion to putte me more in danger/And loue better to lese my renomee than my lyf. For in the ende ther is no prowesse *But hit be forgotten.*"¹

It is noteworthy that the arguments raised by Achilles in Lydgate and Caxton concerning the mutability of heroic fame and the irrelevance of temporal honour after death were points which the de contemptu mundi tradition frequently used to discredit the heroic estimation of temporal power and prestige. What is also noteworthy, however, is that the Christian tradition also established the irony contained within the transient heroic ethos by setting it against the immutable and eternal values of the Christian afterlife. This, of course, was not an irony which was historically available to Achilles; and even the medieval versions retain the historical accuracy which allowed Achilles only the Homeric options

1) Edited by H.O. Sommer, London, 1894, 2 vols., continuous pagination, Vol. 2, p. 631.

of a short or a long life. It is, possible, therefore, that one reason Shakespeare avoids putting the traditional anti-heroic objections into the mouth of Achilles was because he did not wish **his** audience to see Achilles as a character with a proto-Christian enlightenment concerning the anti-heroic nature of the pagan heroic ideal. Certainly, he seems not to have wished Achilles to emerge from the play with even the limited pagan awareness of the anti-heroic nature of the heroic ethos which he is given in all of the sources for the embassy scene. Not only is Achilles deliberately **denied** awareness, however, Shakespeare presents a scene in which Ulysses actually attempts to persuade Achilles to return to battle by using exactly the same arguments in support of continued heroic action which Achilles's literary ancestors had used to argue against any further continuance in the life of a warrior.

Thus, in Homer one of Achilles's main objections to an heroic life is that honour given to a man does not accord with his worth as a fighter. This too is Ulysses's main observation. Ajax is "a very horse"¹ and yet he is worshipped by the Greeks as much as Achilles himself was. Rather than suggesting that this fact exposes the futility of regarding honour as a constant and desirable ultimate worth dying for, however, Ulysses argues that Achilles ought to reclaim his place as the most honoured warrior by returning to fight. Furthermore, Ulysses is not afraid to show Achilles how fickle and subject to detraction the bestowal of honour actually is. Thus, whereas Lydgate's Achilles is made disinclined to fight by the fact that honour is subject to the "forgetfulness" of time after death, Achilles is made to witness the detraction and mutability of his own renown even during his own lifetime; indeed, immediately after his withdrawal from the battle he finds that he is treated

1) III.iii.126.

with contempt by the Greeks.¹ Even this fact, however, is not cited so as to make him aware of the ingratitude and inconstancy which accompanies heroic esteem in spite of the orthodox theories of the bestowal of eternal honour on a hero, but instead it is intended to fire Achilles with the sense that continuous heroic action is necessary if heroic reputation is to be maintained. This argument, of course, carefully avoids mention of its obvious corollary, which is that after death honour must, therefore, immediately begin to tarnish:

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great-siz'd monster of ingratitudes.
Those scraps are good deeds past, which are devour'd
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon
As done. Perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright. To have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail
In monumental mock'ry. 2

Ulysses presents Achilles with an argument for heroic continuance which envisages good deeds as having no permanence in mundane terms. Ironically such a vision might have been less bleak for the Christian hero who might have had the comfort of believing either that temporal mutability and impermanence were compensated for and mitigated by eternal stability, or else of holding the theologically contentious, yet common sense belief that somehow good deeds do have an eternal estimation in heaven whatever may happen to them in the contingent world. Achilles, however, has no such solutions available to him, and it is part of the comic irony which surrounds him in the play that he is cajoled to resume his heroic career by the use of arguments (not necessarily spoken from firm conviction) most calculated to cause him to abandon that career completely.

1) Admittedly the scorn shown to him by the leaders at III.iii.55 ff. is part of Ulysses's strategem, but it is no more than a confirmation of the lack of esteem that he is actually held in by the generals. cf. I.iii.140 ff.

2) III.iii.145-153.

Thus, the audience is presented with a situation in which a pagan, Ulysses, argues for the continuance of an heroic career by citing facts about the mutability and instability of temporal values which, even for a pagan, could be made to support entirely opposite conclusions, and which, when analysed with a retrospective Christian understanding, were even further indicative of the need to develop an anti-heroic attitude towards life on earth. Shakespeare's Achilles is not given sufficient insight to draw such conclusions. Even for a pagan he lacks lucidity. The Christian audience, however, might also recognize that the scene exposes the fact that both Ulysses and Achilles are shown to lack any transcendent ultimates through which they could compensate for a vision of life as being inimical to human values and achievements by relating them to eternal standards. Thus Ulysses, faithful to the logic of his argument (even though elsewhere he has argued that there were some constant and objectively valuable human virtues), is driven to postulate for Achilles a relativistic vision of all human virtue as subject to human caprice and inconstancy, and, therefore, as an ephemeral, even potentially meaningless quality, which has no implications for a man other than during his own brief life in time:

For Time is like a fashionable host,
That slightly shakes his parting guest by th'hand;
And with his arms *out*-stretch'd, as he would fly,
Grasps in the comer. The welcome ever smiles,
And farewell goes out sighing. O, let not virtue seek
Remuneration for the thing it was;
For beauty, wit,
High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating Time. 1

Although the idea that virtue gets no remuneration might be a concept with which the anti-Pelagianistic vision of the Augustinian tradition would agree, it should be observed that Ulysses groups heroic virtue

1) III.iii.165-174.

(concerning which the Christian might agree in discerning a relativity of human approval) with such concepts as love and charity which any Christian would affirm to be moral virtues whose value was given absolute, unambivalent, sanction by Christ and the New Testament ethical example.

Achilles, then, is urged to act so as to regain his honour. The arguments used to convince him of this show honour to be a relativistic, unstable phenomenon, and one which has no lasting value but which instead needs to be continually fought for and renewed if it is to be retained. These traditionally anti-heroic ideas do not immediately convince Achilles, but they do disturb him in the way intended by Ulysses; and he certainly does not challenge **the conclusions reached by** Ulysses in the way his epic predecessor might have done. In fact, Achilles does not possess his ancestor's insight into the nature of the heroic world he is in, and, consequently, he accepts Ulysses's estimation of the worth of heroic fame at its face value: "I see my reputation is at stake, // My fame is shrewdly gor'd,"¹ is his anxious rejoinder to Ulysses's persuasions. The sole reason that Achilles does not rejoin the fighting is not because he is allowed the moral or spiritual resources to see beyond a world of relativistic opinion and change, but because, in a manner typical of the play, he has another ideal; this time a romantic one, which conflicts with his heroic inclinations. As will be shown, Troilus is a play whose action is dominated by a heterodox variety of temporal values and institutions, heroism being only one among them, and they are appealed to by the characters in the play, often in confusing conflict, as offering guides to conduct or a means of achieving differing types of joy or prestige in this life or of conferring immortality in the memory of men after death. The problem which the

1) III.iii.227-228.

characters face, and which from a different perspective is faced by the audience, is how to determine which values have precedence in which situation and why.¹

Certainly the characters in Troilus do respond to a heterodox variety of ultimates and not just heroic ones. In Homer or in any heroic society proper (like that which Titus thought operated in Rome) there was little confusion of values because all human behaviour could, in theory, be evaluated according to the overriding dictates of the heroic code. Thus, while that code might be seen as insufficient (as in Titus) or found to have inherent contradictions (like those outlined by Homer's Achilles), it was still an objective, non-relativistic, ethos against which absolute standards could be formulated. In Troilus, not only is it held to be a possibility that heroic values themselves are relativistic in that they are subject to change through time and subjectivity of opinion, but there is also another, even more un-Homeric, brand of relativism revealed through the frequency with which characters respond to heroic absolutes at one moment while at another they will find those heroic values obviated by demands arising from other conflicting human value-structures; structures which may be romantic, political, ethical, legal or *familial* in nature. This fact is in one respect a reflection of the multifarious complexity of human existence. Alternatively, however, the characters, by responding to this variety of ultimates in a confused and frequently incoherent way, reveal themselves to add to the play's sense of contingency through their lack of any rigorously held belief in an ascending scale of values operating throughout their various ideals, or of any feeling that some ideals place inherently greater demands than others, both on themselves as individuals and on the organisation of society as a whole.

1) It is typical of Shakespeare's Achilles that his love for Polyxena is as obscurely realized as his heroic ethos: see III.iii.190 ff.

Thus, the relativism becomes greater than that encountered in many societies because in Troilus it frequently transpires that what is asserted to be correct is relative only to any one individual at any one time.

This feature of the play will be revealed in greater depth below. Initially, however, the technique should be viewed as an extension of the Homeric code of heroic individuality, and, thus, seen to be related to Shakespeare's technique of introducing many, not just heroic 'gods', into the play-world of Troilus. Both devices serve to extend the typical heroic humanism of epic poetry into all areas of human involvement with temporality. It could, of course, be suggested that the confusion and relativity of the value-structures operative in Troilus is merely a reflection of the play's wide diversity of sources. It will be argued, however, that Shakespeare deliberately reveals ancient Greece to be a less structured civilization than ancient Rome because it lacked the collective ethos and overriding value-structure supplied by the heroic image of Rome itself which provided the Roman heroes with something approaching a consensus of social values. Lacking a collective destiny Greek civilization was shown to be even more liable than the pagan city of Rome to become afflicted by the relativity of values which infected all of humanity within the ambiguity of time; especially that non-heteronomous section of humanity which had neither the certainty of Christian absolutes, nor even the lesser advantage of a concrete and widely accepted mundane code against which to govern its behaviour.

It is not wished to suggest that the characters in Troilus were obliged to view their values as relative, subjective or transitory. As has been indicated Ulysses eloquently championed the concept of order as being a unifying absolute which might counter the rabid

individualism which was disrupting the Greek camp.¹ Indeed, from a spectator's point of view, it would appear that Ulysses is justified in his assertion that the introduction of order into the camp would provide a bastion against the forces of chaos and change. The major problem in identifying Ulysses as the play's one unequivocal voice of valid eternal standards, however, is that once he has delivered his theoretical analysis of the problem facing the Greeks his actions and stratagems show him to be as guilty of promoting disorder and **dissention** as anyone in the play, making it difficult to view him as the drama's one constant embodiment of a valid system of values; especially as his remarks to Achilles cited above show him to have argued, with equal cogency, for a world which necessarily subverts social order or constancy of any kind.² As all of Ulysses's devices in the play leave open the possibility that he is being depicted as a political pragmatist who is prepared to do and say almost anything without inner sincerity so long as he feels it to be promoting his own conception of diplomatic expediency, it will be instructive to examine a parallel scene in the play in which a plea is also made for adherence to an ultimate and unequivocal value structure by a character whose idealism is less open to detraction than that of Ulysses. It will then be suggested that the play's studied refusal to allow those postulated ideals to have any sustained effect on character and action points to a general principle operating in Troilus which reveals why ultimate values (including those of Ulysses) fail to define or regulate human action and, thus, fail to provide a satisfactory reference point from which to interpret and evaluate the drama as a whole.

1) Other immutable constants argued for in the play are love (as claimed by Troilus and Cressida in III.ii.156 ff.) and the moral law (see Hector at II.ii.164 ff.) These will be discussed below.

2) See Una Ellis-Fermor, The Frontiers of Drama, p.67, Palmer, ed., Troilus, pp.42-46, and, especially critical of the view of Ulysses as the voice of wisdom in the play, N. Coghill, Shakespeare's Professional Skills, Cambridge, 1964, p.101 and note p.215, and pp.110-114.

The scene in question is the Trojan counsel scene¹ in which Hector takes the stance of a vociferous champion of objective, eternal, standards, arguing against Troilus and other idolators who would subjectively impose standards onto the world in a relativistic, impulsive way. Stating that warfare is ethically untenable given a cause as unworthy as Helen he asserts that "Tis mad idolatry//To make the service greater than the god." From there he goes on, albeit anachronistically, to cite Aristotle in support of his view that honour more truly lies not in the upholding of transient subjective ideals, but in the promotion of eternally fixed laws of the natural and political world such as those which reasonable men could divine through moral philosophy. These standards, "these moral laws//Of nature and of nations," are the product of human reason and social experience and may be felt to approximate to what Aquinas, in his own Aristotelian synthesis, termed the natural law. Certainly, Hector feels such laws to carry a far higher degree of unambiguous objectivity than any created by the tendency of "the hot passion of distemp' red blood//. . . to make up a free determination//'Twixt right and wrong." Ostensibly then, as with the affirmation of degree, there seems no obvious reason for supposing that Troilus as a whole does anything other than affirm that there are standards available for its characters to comply with which were as binding on them as Christian standards were for Shakespeare's audience.

While in one sense this is true, and while, even in a pagan play, those characters who emerge as the most admirable are those who honestly attempt to comply with the best principles available to them, it must be asserted again that no character is without conflicting ideals, and that, moreover, no character is unwavering or consistent in his fidelity to the integrity of his ideals, and it is this fact

1)Hector's arguments are contained in II.ii.53-60 and 163-189.

which it is to be suggested that Shakespeare saw as being central to the point which he was trying to make about pagan heroic society. One obvious difference between the Christian imperative felt by his audience to obey the divine law and the need to obey higher ultimates felt by the pagan as being incumbent upon him was that the Christian had to believe that his ultimates needed to be obeyed if he was to have a chance of salvation whereas a pagan might be aware of moral laws and yet still have little or no sense that to infringe those laws would have serious eschatological implications for him. To put the matter simply, there was less need for a pagan to feel bound by any one system of ideals than there was for a Christian and the action of Troilus reflects the comparative ease with which a pagan might move from one set of ideals to other, conflicting, ones, or else the ease with which the pagan felt able to abandon idealism altogether; the worst that could happen to him being the loss of his mundane reputation.

These points, of course, constitute negative factors working to promote pagan equivocation. There is in the heroic world of Troilus, however, a more potent and psychologically active force which made men more liable to disobey known general laws in favour of other, more personal, imperatives. As has been seen, and as Hector immediately affirms, pagan ethical absolutes tended to constrain the imperatives of the warrior hero who, almost by definition, saw the quest for honour as being of paramount importance to a man. Superficially (though un-Homerically) the hero might hold that moral values were more binding on a man than heroic codes, and yet, at a more profound emotional level, he still felt that he could only achieve immortality through the winning of glory in battle. Thus whereas in the morality drama the choice was unambiguous; the warrior figure either pursued his mundane ultimates

and eschewed salvation, or he transformed his heroic impulses into a moral-allegorical dynamic acting in support of the Christian value structure of the drama and, by so doing, became eligible for salvation. In Troilus, and in the heroic world in general, a paradox emerges for the pagan hero which cannot arise for the morality protagonist nor, indeed, for the Christian of any era. Thus, for the pagan the moral absolutes which he may be aware of do not guarantee him the immortality of great honour, whereas the amoral values of the heroic code do provide the hero with that opportunity. A situation may arise, then, in which the highest morality suggests a course of action which conflicts with that demanded by the hero's longing for immortality. This is not a Christian dilemma; and it explains how Hector can, for him more understandably, take what for a Christian would be an illogical and spiritually perilous decision to ignore the "way of truth" and to continue to fight for Helen because she embodies "a cause that hath no mean dependence// Upon our joint and several dignities."¹

The need to achieve one's ultimates in this world rather than the next might also provide a clue as to why Ulysses seems to feel it expedient to work towards order through a policy of disorder. It is, however, the warrior hero who is shown as being the most likely of all pagans to disobey or disregard ethical absolutes as they tended to conflict with his near-spiritual appreciation of the temporal concept of honour. This worship of honour as a means of gaining immortality is seen at its most Sarpedonian in Troilus's delighted rejoinder to Hector, where he explicitly states, and through a Christian metaphor, that fighting in an immoral cause may still confer heroic sanctification on those heroic enough to risk the loss of life in battle:

1)II.ii.189-193. For an analysis of the relativism of opinion in this scene see W.B.Drayton-Henderson, op cit, p.129.

Were it not glory that we more affected
 Than the performance of our heaving spleens,
 I would not wish a drop of Trojan blood
 Spent more in her defence. But, worthy Hector,
 She is a theme of honour and renown,
 A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,
 Whose present courage may beat down our foes,
 And fame in time to come canonize us. 1

Thus, perhaps ultimately it must be concluded that it is not that the characters in the play do not believe in ultimate or eternal values, but that there is an unresolved conflict between the values which they do express belief in. There is also a conflict between their support of value and the suggestion made by Ulysses and others that all values are subject to mutability.² Despite this, however, there is the pervasive expression of the hope, to be found also in Homer, Caxton, and Lydgate, that the representation of heroic deeds by men to other men will overcome the ravages of time.³

In Thersites the play presents a character who has faith in none of the pagan absolutes which attract the other characters. He consistently deflates the values of love, order, the state, heroism and hero-worship; and while in so doing he frequently adopts an air of moral censure⁴ which might seem to make him the play's one

1)II.ii.195-20..

2)Remember that Aquinas affirmed that the natural laws, discoverable by reason were not immutable. Only divinely revealed truths, which the pagan did not have access to, could be affirmed with absolute certainty. Thus Aquinas would have agreed with Ulysses that the political concept of order and the law of nations was, so far as it was sub specie aeternitatis, subject to envious and calumniating time.

3)Thus Troilus's hopes of canonization find their parallel not just in Sarpedon's outcry but also in Recuyell,p.538.,Troy Book,Prologue lines 147-308 and passim. It is noteworthy, however, that the Metamorphoses end on a note emphasising the tension between the destructive nature of time (as stressed in Ulysses's embassy speeches) and the enduring potentialities of great heroism and, probably more seriously, great art:See Golding XV.222 ff. At one level Troilus seems to tacitly endorse the dual Ovidian concept of time as both destroyer/perverter and preserver/exposer of truth. Thus the reputations of the warriors have survived (perhaps the characterizations of Achilles and Ajax suggest not entirely accurately) through Homer. Also the self-propheciated reputations of Troilus and Cressida (III.ii.167 ff) gained immortality through literature. cf.R.A.Foakes,"Troilus and Cressida reconsidered," reprinted in D.Seltzer,ed.,Troilus,New York,1963,pp.273 ff.

4)See II.iii.67-71.

unwavering voice of "the law of nature and of nations," he does not, in fact, display any faith in the ultimate worth or validity of an ethical approach. Instead Thersites is depicted as an undercutter of all values, even his own, through a vision of unrelieved misanthropic iconoclasm.¹ The Thersitean vision represents a vision of chaos in which no ideal, no concept of beauty, worth or heroism, no article of faith, is allowed to stand without it being reduced to its unideal opposite; to its least attractive, most anti-heroic light. Indeed, Thersites extends the anti-heroic vision across the whole range of humanistic achievement and belief in the play; so that love becomes glorified lust, heroism a combination of brutality, ignorance and idiot-worship; and statecraft, self-interest and machiavellianism.² As a satirist of all human motives and actions the artistic voice of Thersites resembles that of those Christian writers in the de contemptu mundi/vanitas vanitatum traditions who also dwelt on "the common curse of mankind, folly and ignorance."³

This similarity between Thersites' scorn for the heroes and heroines of Greek legend and the Christian impulse to condemn the folly of fallen man has led to the suggestion that Shakespeare's character was indebted to the figure of Folly in Erasmus's In Praise of Folly who ironically celebrates the whole range of beliefs and actions based on ignorance and foolishness.⁴ W.B.Drayton-Henderson made the point that Erasmus's radical Christian critique of society not only exposes the folly latent within all human institutions and all purely human ideals, but goes on as a corollary of this to indicate that some degree of folly or delusion was indeed a necessity

1)See V.iv.27-28 and V.vii.15 ff.

2)See V.iv.1 ff.,V.ii.188 ff.,II.i.96-103 and II.iii.1-20.

3)II.iii.25-26.

4)Made by Drayton-Henderson, op cit, pp.152-156.

for any man who was to retain his sanity and composure in the face of a world which might otherwise make him despair at the actual chaos which constitutes mundane existence.¹ It is this, usually too uncompromizingly horrific, but profoundly true, demythologized, vision of life which, it is argued, Thersites espouses. Henderson even suggests, in spite of there being little overtly heroic or martial material in the work, that it was from Erasmus that Shakespeare adopted the technique of castigating human folly in general through an emphasis on the particular human folly constituted by the Trojan war: "Of the folly of war [In Praise of Folly] has much to say: an enterprise without counsel, largely conducted by 'fat and lusty bloods, having boldness with the most and wit with the least' (Chaloner trans., 1510, p.17), fitter for wild beasts than for men. The Trojan War, what is it as Homer describes it?-'Save only the contentious debates of foolish kings and foolish people-whereby it appeareth that all the world is full of fools.' (Chaloner, p.71)."² While the idea of a world full of heroic fools is certainly Thersitean, it would be observed, however, that *Thersites was a railer in Chapman*,³ and that the device of exposing general human folly through an examination of particular heroic attitudes could have been suggested to Shakespeare through any of the mediums discussed in the first three chapters above.

A more important distinction to be made between Thersites and the Christian expositor of folly than arises from any quibble over the source of Shakespeare's character, however, was ignored by Drayton-Henderson, whose otherwise useful linking of the two characters must, therefore, be felt to be misleading. In the Christian

1) See "Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida. Yet Deeper into its Tradition," p.154.

2) *ibid*, p.153.

3) See Bullough, Sources VI, p.120.

tradition, though folly might be seen as the inevitable lot of all men, it was still open to the individual to associate himself with outer wisdom and truth through an adherence to a system of values based on the divine folly of the cross. Thus, like Christ himself, the Christian could die to this foolish world and centre himself in the values and interests of the next. Thus Christian iconoclasm is not essentially cynical, but rather it is creative in that it represents a movement away from human mutability, transience, evil and insufficiency, towards faith in eternal absolutes and goodness existing beyond the chaos of history. Thersitean iconoclasm and Ulyssean relativism do not have access to the comfort of this belief in values existing beyond mortality, and, hence, they express an unrelenting vision of impermanence, subjectivism, degeneracy and obscenity at the centre of human affairs without providing hope that the absurdity might have meaning or allow for rectitude. Thersites invokes a moralistic-Christian sounding vision of folly and evil which destroys the possibility of his having faith in any mundane value, but he is unable to allow for the implications of the Christian paradox of the fortunate fall which helped to give stability, meaning and comfort to man's position in the universe. It is possible (remembering the proverbial scorn of the Greek philosopher Diogenes) that unrelenting and rather sordid iconoclasm was an attitude which Shakespeare thought of as being the particular refuge of the ancient Greek moralist inclined by temperament or circumstances towards misanthropy.¹ The fact that Thersites is not presented in a favourable light, despite his insight, would seem to endorse the suggestion that Shakespeare, like Erasmus, felt that sustained cynicism, especially that unrelieved by spiritual comfort, rendered the cynic as absurd and reprehensible as any of the more naive idealists whom he chose to attack.

1) Thus linking Thersites with the Greeks Timon and Apemantus, and, as a pagan, the Roman Casca.

This leads to a crucial point about the characters in Troilus who, unlike Thersites, are idealists. The faith of such characters, be it in love, heroism or whatever, is, in the absence of any powerful religious or eschatological alternative, necessarily based on temporal criteria. Although in Christian, and even in purely mundane, satiric-moral terms, such faith can be shown to be rooted in folly or tainted with the degeneracy of mortality, such beliefs do represent for the holder the means whereby he imposes a sense of purpose, an order, a meaning, onto the otherwise confused flux of human events; and as such they are temporally equivalent to the Christian religion which itself provides an absolute frame of reference for its devotees confronted with a sense of the ambiguous and unsatisfactory nature of life. Thus, for the pagan, warrior heroism was a type of religious faith in that it provided a reference point which gave meaning and structure to life, and, by so doing, and despite all its ethical ambivalence, opposed the chaos of relativism and nihilism which, to some extent, was always seen by Shakespeare to be more apparent in pagan society than in the Christian world, and which would otherwise overwhelm all attempts to maintain a cohesive social structure.

The problem with this way of life, quite apart from the eschatological limitations it implies, however, is that, in a world of radical uncertainty, any purely temporal devotion is liable to prove inconstant and unworthy of the faith of its acolyte.¹ Thus, as suggested, the heroic faith put by man in warriors wherein the

1) Nestor is made to set the tone of the play's exposure of humanity's inability to sustain the integrity of man's highest ideals by declaring that his wife was "as chaste//As may be in the world." (I.iii.229-300.) This serio-comic statement is one of many visions of fallibility in the play which prepares us for the more tragic shattering of Troilus's faith in the constancy of Cressida.

hero is deified as an object of worship is broadly exposed by the ironic gulf between the language of worship surrounding Ajax and Achilles and their grossly fallible natures. The exposure of Ajax and Achilles is not difficult. Troilus, however, reveals how even the most admirable warrior in the play, Hector, is infected by the moral wavering and casuistry common to all men operating without grace,¹ and he shows himself to be merely mortal in his suspected tendencies towards pride and in his overt *assent* to the unworthy heroic impulse of killing for spoils.² Eventually even Hector's determinedly pure heroic ethos renders him liable to the charge that his quest for honour became synonymous with the avaricious desire for gain; so that even his chivalric ideal points towards the fallibility of all human ideals by beginning to degenerate into its unideal opposite and by revealing (like the anonymous warrior in gold armour³) its own internal corruption, with the effect that the audience is alerted to the possibility that all human ideals may be little more than a veneer of respectability put on a more primal facet of human bestiality by man's ego and his natural desire to live a life tolerably free from self-disgust. At least Hector dies without being disillusioned by himself and by the events of the play which undercut his heroic faith.⁴ His final words appeal to the chivalric absolutes of fair-play which

1) Again humorously, the dialogue seeks to make the point about the unavailability of grace through the comic exchange between Paris's servant and Pandarus when in reply to the statement "You are in the state of grace," Pandarus answers "Grace! Not so, friend; honour and lordship are my titles." (III.i.14-16.)

2) In the medieval sources Hector does not make the about face from moral opposition to heroic approval over the continuance of the war. Rather he remains opposed but goes along with the majority decision: cf Troy Book II.2183-3077, and Recuyell, pp.518-524. While Hector's abandonment of ethical objections for heroic dignity is Shakespeare's, his pursuit of men for their arms is in the medieval versions where he is roundly condemned for his actions: See Troy Book III.5325-5422.

3) See V.vi.27-31, and V.viii.1-4.

4) Note that he goes to his final battle because he stands engaged "in the faith of valour" and will not "break [his] faith" (V.iii.69-71).

he feels appertain in war and which Achilles ought to respect.¹ If Hector's death is to be considered tragic it is, for him at least, a confused or obscure tragedy. Just as some morality protagonists were allowed to die without a recognition of the error of their dramatic careers, so too Hector is not led by temperament or experience to glimpse the anti-heroic aspects of his heroic faith. Scorning even to consider the threat to his ideals posed by Thersites enough to kill him, he goes to his final battle iterating the same belief in the transcendence of honour over life which was the orthodox response of his literary ancestors: "Mine honour keeps the weather of my fate.//Life every man holds dear; but the dear man//Holds honour far more precious dear than life."²

Similarly Achilles is only obscurely aware of the problems posed for him by the clash of values represented by his desire to return to battle following the promptings of Ulysses and the promise made to Polyxena. As Ulysses's ability to disturb Achilles with arguments which might easily have been negated would suggest, Achilles lacks the quality of consciousness to achieve any tragic insight into the ironies of his heroic ethos. Unlike his ancestors he does not understand the brittle frailty of an heroic life. Thus, though he admits himself to be perturbed by his confusing loss of honour and his simultaneous devotion to incompatible ideals, he is unable, even under the anti-heroic goadings of Thersites, to articulate the nature of his perplexity: "My mind is troubled, like a fountain stirr'd; //And I myself see not the bottom of it."³ As silence in drama tends to suggest lack of awareness, it can hardly be said that

1)See V.viii.9.

2)V.iii.26-28.

3)III.iii.303-304. Note that immediately afterwards (line 308) Thersites terms him "a valiant ignorance."

Achilles is the play's great tragic figure; the representation of Chapman's "predominant perturbation" seen by R.K.Presson in his study of the sources of Troilus.¹ In fact neither Hector nor Achilles explore or develop the insights of the play they are in with respect to the heroism that they both profess. Though Hector achieves greater lucidity than Achilles, both are given less insight into the nature of the heroic code than that allowed to the audience; and, hence, though their respective values sustain them through life they are seen to maintain their relative peace of mind at the expense of their delusion.

Troilus, of course, is the character who most powerfully becomes conscious of how a man's faith in temporal phenomena can be shattered by the inconsistencies attendant on all worldly figures and ideals. Even Troilus, however, requires (like Timon) direct and incontrovertible proof that his faith was misplaced before he can come to believe and then to articulate how the seemingly constant and worthy can be fickle and debased, and how what had appeared worthy of worship comes to expose through its own decline the radical weakness of all human values, loves and ideals. Thus, in stark contrast to the ritualistic morality play-like scene² in which the lovers vow eternal and religious devotion is the scene in which Troilus struggles to reconcile a false Cressida with his idealized conception of her as true. His struggle eventually results in his arriving at a Thersitean vision of the world in which all values are in error and in which only primary human emotions such as hate anger and revenge have any validity. Troilus's anguished

1) See Troilus and Cressida and the Legends of Troy, p.142. The phrase is taken from Chapman's dedication to Robert Earl of Somerset prefixed to his translation of Homer's Odyssees, 1615, in Nicoll, ed., Chapman's Homer II, p.4. For Chapman's view of Achilles cf. P.B. Bartlett, "The Heroes of Chapman's Homer," R.E.S. XVII, 1941, pp.258-260.

2) III.ii.154 ff.

outburst is no less full of religious imagery than the vows made in the earlier scene.¹ The difference now lies in the fact that, having invested the major part of his potential for worship and hope for happiness in his love for Cressida, he has found her to be proven false, and, thus, the main source of his beatitude being discredited, the effect of this on him is that he is brought to doubt that there is truth or value in any previously credited human value or institution. The effect of this discovery on Troilus's value structure is similar to that which might be expected to happen to a Christian's view of the world after being given conclusive proof that salvation and Christian goodness were mythological concepts and their reverence, therefore, spurious: "Instance, O instance! strong as heaven itself://The bonds of heaven are slipp'd, dissolv'd, and loos'd."² Having had his main article of faith exploded, then all faiths potentially explode and all qualities which underlie human ideals such as reason or virtue also become subject to the same uncertainty which the mortal frailty of Cressida exposed in her.³ The folly of Cressida becomes the potential folly of all women.

This experience allows Troilus to view his world without the many ideals of love, honour and heroism which had earlier given it meaning for him. He looks at his world in a demythologised way which, for example, prompts him to attack Hector's "vice of mercy" whereby he imposes a code of ethics onto his heroic activity which makes him spare men he could slay as "fool's play." Hector calls Troilus a savage for insisting on the ruthfulness of the "wars"⁴ but

1) See V.ii.114-174.

2) V.ii.153-154.

3) Notice the ambivalence of Hector's remark to Troilus after his disillusionment: "No, faith, young Troilus, doff thy harness, youth." (V.iii.31.)

4) V.iii.37 ff.

the play allows for some sympathy to be given to the view that war is indeed a horrific and savage human activity which ought to be viewed naturalistically and not given an artificial chivalric glamour which tries to make it less terrible than it is. Ironically, it is Achilles's Realpolitikal approach to battle which takes disdainful advantage of Hector's "vein of chivalry"¹ so as to return and engineer his death in a treacherous and unglamourised ambush which amply illustrates the brutality of war so often masked by the chivalric rhetoric of the idealists.

The issue is not, however, resolvable by simply saying that Hector is deluded and in the wrong and that Troilus is vindicated. While it is true that Hector's heroism is undercut by the play, it is also correct to say that within the limits set by his historical locus and his adopted heroic ethos he strives to behave well; and certainly a Christian audience would recognize that mercy was not a quality to be despised. Thus, although Troilus can be felt to have made a valid point about Hector's "vice of mercy" in that particular context, and possibly about the general inappropriateness of chivalric games in warfare, a Christian audience could not share his conviction that because Cressida was false then all values are the product of mendacity. Just as the concupiscence of Cressida can only be felt to have dishonoured all mothers in Troilus's disillusioned mind,² so too there is no objective logic to an argument which holds that because one instance of mercy is arguably foolish then the concept of mercy itself is discredited.³ The flaw in Troilus's nihilism from the Christian point of view can be located in the historical necessity for the classical pagan to

1)V.iii.32.

2)See V.ii.123-133.

3)See V.iii.37-49.

invest transcendent significance in ultimately unworthy objects, which, having proved fallible, call value itself into question and produce a general sense of Weltschmerz or tragic disillusionment in the mundane idealist. The Christian is able to find the world false and still know that the values affirmed by a transcendent God are not tainted. Troilus can hardly be condemned for the limitations of his idealised vision of the world. He is in a sense the victim of his epoch; a tragic figure who suffers and articulates the consequences of not being able (unlike Chaucer's hero) to take solace in the face of an inconstant world in the transcendent constancy of God.

For this reason Troilus is the play's most tragic figure in that like Lear and Timon he has to come to terms with a world which is radically anti-heroic in the general sense that it proves antagonistic to the upholding of mundane ideals. It is interesting that all three protagonists lack the Christian awareness that ideals may be affirmed beyond the world. It has been suggested¹ that Lear resembles the King of Life in that he undergoes a Christian anagnorisis concerning the folly of his previous ideals. Whether Lear finally introduces a Christian dimension to the hero's cathartic insight or not **cannot** be debated at this moment. What would be insisted upon, however, is that Troilus has the limitations of his idealised vision of Cressida revealed to him dramatically; as though he were a spectator watching a morality play exposing the folly and frailty of worldly vanity.² His disabusement, however, offers him no possibility of an alternate religious wisdom in which to base his affections more securely. It has been

1)By Creeth, Mankynde in Shakespeare, pp.124-134.

2)But cf. Palmer, ed., Troilus, pp.60-61. For a view of Act V. Scene ii. as being an illustrative drama for Troilus see Presson, Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida and the Legends of Troy, pp.130-131.

argued that Troilus represents two morally opposing factions and that Cressida's 'fall' from the ethically superior Trojans to the debased Greeks was the equivalent of a lapse from grace in the morality tradition.¹ In fact, despite their vows of eternal love and reference to enduring standards, there is no contrast between heavenly and earthly man in Troilus; indeed, it is impossible even to develop a valid case for viewing the Trojans as being morally superior to the Greeks in any sustained sense.² Certainly, all of the play's alternatives, Greek and Trojan, are mundane ones; and this is also the case in the world which Troilus has to come to terms with following Cressida's failure to uphold the sanctity of his vision of her.³ There is no eschatological revelation for Troilus and, moreover, there is for him only temporal enlightenment, not death: unlike Timon and Lear Troilus is not allowed the tragic aggrandizement of death, but, as befits a bitter comedy and a totally mundane morality play, he is left on stage to continue his life in a world which has extinguished all his hopes and ideals.⁴ In one sense it is Troilus's tragedy to continue to exist in a world which has lost its meaning for him; doomed like Sisyphus, to continue his heroic struggle with a full consciousness that (thirst for vengeance apart) to do so was absurd.

1) See A. Gerard, "Meaning and Structure in Troilus and Cressida," English Studies XL, 1959, pp. 150-151.

2) See Foakes, "Troilus and Cressida Reconsidered," op cit, pp. 278-280.

3) A. S. Knowland, "Troilus and Cressida," Shakespeare Quarterly X, 1959, concludes that "the play can be seen as an image of man's life in mutability," (p. 363) but that it continually exploits the tension between man's desire, which is enduring, to find some enduring value amidst mutability, and the unstable nature of the world. Thus the play is a monument "to man's efforts to find stability in the shifting currents of his existence." (p. 365.)

4) See Foakes, op cit, pp. 273-280.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusion; Macbeth, the morality metaphor and the form of Seneca's Hercules Furens.

The previous chapters have shown Shakespeare's awareness of how a person's image of himself as a hero serves to modify his behaviour and responses. Furthermore, it has been suggested that Shakespeare recognized that the heroic images available to the pagan were different in type to those available to the conscientious Christian. While the possibilities for Christian heroism were more circumscribed for Henry V or for Hamlet than those offered by the more humanistically expansive freedoms allowed to the heroic conscience by the religious or mundane ideals subscribed to by Titus or by Hector, there was, nevertheless, often felt to be the suggestion that the heroic role assumed by the Christian was in some ways a simplification or a rationalization adopted to justify a course of action which their own wider, non-heroic, consciousnesses saw as questionable or even wrong. In discussing what he calls "heroic self-image" in Shakespeare Matthew Proser has written that:

On the one hand, the image suggests a certain public role, a persona the hero takes for the sake of action; on the other, it captures what the hero feels are vital aspects of his most personal self. The image is gauge to the hero's hopes, wishes, aspirations-his impulse to play the heroic part. But insofar as the image is a symbolic reality, in its very nature it must fail to capture the entire human reality of the man. The image, in short, is a kind of metaphoric simplification. Or to put the matter another way, the protagonist fails to see or suppresses the ambiguity cast upon the image by the total reality of his situation, and in neglecting this ambiguity he simplifies that situation disastrously.

The image itself intimates the sort of action the main character must take if he is to fulfill his conception of his heroic identity. But since the image is emotional, not rational, action becomes an emotional matter as much as a practical one. . . . From this standpoint, conduct becomes in part a series of symbolic acts, poses, stances, and gestures which seek to define the heroic image in action. 1

The earlier chapters of this study have sought to demonstrate that

1) The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies, Princeton, 1965, pp.3-4.

what Proser terms the "metaphoric simplification" of the heroic image in Shakespearean drama has, in fact, a long ancestry in Christian thought and in Christian drama; which frequently used the figure of the hero as an archetypal example of man's irrational propensity to pursue and idealize ultimately disappointing mundane goods which would both bring misery in this life and induce damnation in the next. In short, the warrior hero, with his typical spiritual delusions and moral degeneracies, became an emblem of the minimization implied by sin within the anti-humanistic confines of some morality dramas. It must be remembered, however, that this symbolic association attached itself far more directly to the Christian hero who was aware of the New Testament injunctions against violence and of the eschatological alternatives to mundane glory than it did to the classical pagan whose milieu provided him with few if any alternatives to the pursuit of temporal glories and the values of an earthly kingdom.

It has long been recognized that Macbeth is close in form and allied in content to the more retributive plays within the morality tradition. Willard Farnham commenced a study of the play by stating that:

Macbeth is a morality play written in terms of Jacobean tragedy. Its hero is worked upon by forces of evil, yields to temptation in spite of all that his conscience can do to stop him, knows he has given his soul to the common enemy of man, goes deeper into evil-doing as he is further tempted, sees the approach of retribution, falls into despair, and is brought by retribution to his death. The story is reminiscent of those later moralities which end tragically instead of mercifully. But Macbeth is unlike the normal morality for the reason that its hero begins his evil-doing with complete understanding of the course he is laying out for himself and with complete willingness to sacrifice his soul in the next world in exchange for the gifts of this world. He is deceived by supernatural agents of evil, but he is not blinded by them morally through the specious argument that vice is not truly vicious or that it is not repulsive, as the hero of the morality is usually blinded. Among the deeply flawed but noble heroes of Shakespeare's last tragic world Macbeth is the only one who deliberately, after a soul struggle, takes evil to be his good. Among them he is the only Satan. 1

1) Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1950, p. 79.

It should be added that Macbeth is also allied to the type of morality play in which the sin of the protagonist is partially defined in terms of his heroic ethos. This is seen not only in the way in which Shakespeare goes out of his way to emphasise that Macbeth is a great warrior,¹ but, more significantly, it is evident, as E.M.Waith has noted, in the fact that he is driven towards sin by appeals to his manhood and his heroism;² appeals which, to paraphrase Proser, make him see the murder of Duncan as a symbolic act which defines and verifies his heroic image of himself:

The development of Macbeth's character is a triumph for Lady Macbeth's ideal, for conscience is stifled, and Macbeth, like Hamlet, becomes increasingly "bloody, bold and resolute." His deliberate decision, against the dictates of his better judgment, to be a "man" in this narrow sense of the word is one of the most important manifestations of the evil which dominates the entire play: to his subjects Macbeth now seems a devil. Shakespeare's insistence upon this narrowing of character is also a commentary on Macbeth's ambition. In "the swelling act of the imperial theme," the hero becomes fatally diminished. 3

It is noteworthy that although Waith's thesis is not concerned to establish a morality play ancestry for Macbeth, his analysis, hinging on assumed devilry and a fatal diminution of conscience caused by self-delusion, centres on features of characterization familiar from the morality drama. The point being made by Waith, however, is in itself of interest both to the present discussion of Macbeth and also as an indication of how the methodology which has been developed throughout the study and which has postulated an eclectic merging of classical and medieval influences on the Shakespearean heroic can be shown to be of further usefulness.

Waith's essay develops the idea that rather than being necessarily an emblem of evil, heroism, as the Renaissance interpreted

1)eg. See I.ii.7-45.

2)Made by Lady Macbeth. See her arguments at I.vii.35-72. esp. her taunt: "When you durst do it, then you were a man." (line 49).

3)E.M.Waith, "Manhood and Valor in Two Shakespearean Tragedies," A Journal of English Literary History XVII, 1950, p.267.

the classical admiration of the ideal, needed to temper the idea of manliness with qualities of conscience and moral or social awareness; so that in Macbeth it is Macduff who emerges as the complete hero because he uses his manly qualities only in the cause of what his faith or reason allows him to intuit to be right.¹ Thus, to put the matter simply, heroism was an amoral quality which became a symbol of goodness or of evil according to the right of the cause or the worth of the object under attack. Thus, Macbeth's heroism does indeed make him an image of bravery and worth when it is directed against his monarch's enemies, but when it comes to be directed against the king himself the same quality turns him into an image of unequivocal evil. It has been shown above that Waith's view of the moral ambivalence of heroism for the Renaissance was at the centre of contemporary humanistic poetic theories concerning the epic hero. It is hoped to go on to show, however, that the idea was one which helped to shape the structure of Seneca's Hercules Furens; a play which it will be contended united in influence with the morality play tradition in defining the form of Shakespeare's Macbeth. Remembering Hardin Craig's observations concerning the formal similarities which exist between many of Shakespeare's plays and classical literature (and with the example of Virgil's influence on Hamlet before us) it is intended to demonstrate how the complete action of an analogous classical tragedy helped Shakespeare give structure to the themes latent in the passages in Holinshed which depicted the legend of Macbeth.

Just as there has been a long record of critical acknowledgement of Macbeth's structural debt to the morality drama, so too there has been a good deal of attention given to the large number of Senecan echoes in the play; particularly to the incidence of parallels with

1)Waith, "Manhood and Valour," p.267.

Hercules Furens. Thus J.A.K.Thomson (who was generally cautious in his attribution of classical knowledge to Shakespeare¹), having first made the general point that "Macbeth is in many respects the most classical of all Shakespeare's plays. It employs, more powerfully and overtly than any other, the method of tragic irony, which gets its effects by working on the foreknowledge of the audience—here communicated by the Witches—of what is to come,"² goes on to cite numerous Senecan echoes in the play, including those that he felt to exist between Macbeth I.vii.8 ff., II.ii.35 ff., V.iii.22-40., and Hercules Furens 735-736., 1065., and 1258-1261 respectively. These, along with the widely acknowledged parallel³ (also shared with Hippolytus 715 ff.) between Macbeth's sentiment, at II.ii.60 ff., that all the oceans of the world will not wash Duncan's blood from his hands and Hercules's equivalent recognition (1323 ff.) that rivers and seas could not cleanse his hands of the sin of killing his family, lead Thomson to conclude that "Shakespeare, before writing Macbeth, must have been reading Seneca, being especially struck by the Hercules Furens. . . . It almost looks as if, before writing Macbeth, ~~he had made a~~ special study of at least one or two dramas of the Latin poet."⁴ While verbal echoes can be thought to be more or less convincing, Thomson is most challenging in suggesting that classical drama had an effect on the tragic form of Shakespeare's play.

The problem with Thomson's general statement that Macbeth is classical in form because it gives the audience an ironic awareness through foreknowledge is that the point is open to disintegration

1) See J.W.Velz's assessment of Thomson's work under the heading 'General Works' in his editorialised bibliography Shakespeare and the Classical Tradition, Minneapolis, 1968.

2) Shakespeare and the Classics, London, 1952, p.119.

3) See Kenneth Muir's note on the lines in his Arden edition of Macbeth, 9th edition, London, 1962.

4) Shakespeare and the Classics, p.124.

because he cites no specific evidence which could relate the device in Shakespeare to a corresponding device in a classical tragedian. What follows is an attempt to show that Hercules Furens had a direct formal influence on Macbeth, and that features of Seneca's play not only specifically endorse Thomson's general point about *The play's use of audience foreknowledge, but also point to* more precise similarities between the two dramas. The ensuing argument will attempt to offer sufficient cumulative evidence of direct analogies existing between the two plays to make the contention that Shakespeare responded to and reacted against the form and meaning implicit for an Elizabethan in Seneca's tragedy as convincing as the number of verbal echoes *were enough to convince* Thomson that Shakespeare actually studied the play. The phrase 'for an Elizabethan' is significant here, however, because (in accordance with the tendency towards the homogenization of classical and medieval forms which has been under investigation) it will be shown that part of what can be said to constitute 'influence' arises from Shakespeare's creative recognition of how the milieu within which each warrior hero operated altered the case for each hero; and that while certain features of Hercules's formal experience were echoed in Macbeth, their implications differed.¹

Indeed, the concluding chapter of a study which has sought to analyse the structural and intellectual reception of classical and medieval heroic forms by Shakespeare centres on the play in which Shakespeare most conspicuously attempts to synthesize the pattern of classical heroic tragedy with *the native* metaphor of heroic evil from the

1)For the way in which Shakespeare uses Senecan expressions, elevates them to themes, and then extends those themes to incorporate a wider Christian vision, see I-S.Ewbank, "The Fiend-Like Queen: A Note on Macbeth and Seneca's Medea," Shakespeare Survey XIX, 1966, pp.82-94., where the process is discussed with respect to the similarity between Lady Macbeth and Medea; in many ways the female actual and metaphorical counterpart to the mad Hercules in Seneca.

morality tradition.

Warning about the need to provide more conclusive evidence of Senecan influence than that provided by the mere citing of elements in a later play which are similar in type to elements in Seneca has been voiced by G.K.Hunter who expressed the growing feeling that the line of reasoning pioneered by J.W.Cunliffe in his The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy¹ involved the attribution to the classical dramatist of direct influence when all that was justified by the evidence was that Seneca was usually only one element in a more pervasive 'gothic' taste which could often come more immediately to the Elizabethan dramatist through medieval drama, narrative tragedy, romance prose, Italian drama, or-as has been shown-Ovid:

The post hoc ergo propter hoc argument, which has supported much chronological study and 'explanation' of European or English tragedy, is clearly not enough by itself to establish a detailed and inescapable proof that similar features appearing in some Elizabethan tragedies and some Senecan tragedies are *in the former only* because they are in the latter. And this is particularly the case when the features in question are available in other (and in some cases more immediate) sources. Thus stichomythia, ghosts, five-act structure, rhetorical speeches, a devotion to horror, a stress on the ineluctable quality of fate-these 'Senecan' features are equally available in England in vernacular comedy, the Mirror for Magistrates, Terence, Ovid and the Miracle plays. If we are to talk meaningfully about Seneca and English tragedy it can only be within an awareness of these alternative sources and with some sense of the strainers through which Seneca's plays had to pass if they were to be assimilated into the English scene. 2

Thus, although Hunter does not obviate the possibility of ever establishing direct Senecan influence, it is evident that if an argument is to be made for the existence of direct structural influence then the extent and singularity of the formal parallels must be sufficiently and specifically outlined if the correspondences

1) London, 1893, reprinted New York, 1925.

2) "Seneca and English Tragedy," in C.D.N.Costa, ed., Seneca, London, 1974, pp.167-168. As other studies have shown Seneca became for the Elizabethans a reaffirmer of general late medieval tastes and ideas (such as contempt for the world, fortune's wheel and de Casibus

are to be thought to be anything more significant than an indication of common themes in the tragic experience.

Thus, to return to Thomson's point, it could be argued that Shakespeare could have developed the technique of supernatural prefiguration of the play's plot from Kyd's Spanish Tragedy, or from any one of the generation of morality plays (including Horestes) which have an allegorical character set out the career of the protagonist at the start of the play.¹ Thus, for example, the first one hundred and fifty-six lines of The Castle of Perseverance; the morality play which Edmund Creeth found to come the closest of any extant play to providing an allegorical analogue to the career of Macbeth, give an exact schematic outline of the **vacillating** fortunes of the mankind figure which the audience then goes on to witness; fully anticipating the pattern of decline, repentance, decline, death and gratuitous salvation which is to follow. Indeed, it should be observed that the general structure of Macbeth, presenting the conscious career in sin leading to the anagnorisis, the "tragic recognition on the part of [Macbeth] of the folly of his chosen way of life," is so close to the morality form of the type represented by the Castle play (closer even than suggested by Farnham, who finds the conscious entry into sin and subsequent disabusement of the hero to be atypical of the genre) that it may be questioned whether Shakespeare was indebted to any other artistic pattern when shaping the overall form of his material.² Creeth is

tragedy) which his writings, along with stoicism in general, had helped to popularize in the early Christian period. See H.B. Charlton, ed., (with L.E. Kastner), The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander, Vol. 1, Edinburgh and London, 1921, p. xxv., W. Farnham, Medieval Heritage, pp. 30-70., and G.M. Ross, "Seneca's Philosophical Influence," in Costa, ed., Seneca, pp. 124-125.

1) On the development of an ironic method in Elizabethan drama see D.J. Palmer, "Elizabethan Tragic Heroes," in Brown and Harris, eds., Elizabethan Theatre, pp. 1-33.

2) Creeth, Mankynde in Shakespeare, p. 5.

certainly persuasive in suggesting that it is wrong to suppose that medieval drama may not produce Elizabethan avatars which shape the protagonist's experience in an almost classical way:

The initial moral uncertainty of Macbeth, rooted in his flawed nature, the supernatural soliciting, the half-blind willingness to jump the life to come in return for a worldly throne, the ensuing career of falsehood and oppression all have their Castell prototypes. These and other, sometimes more particular resemblances place Macbeth nearer *in conception to the Castell* drama than to any Tudor play lying between them. Most centrally, Mankynde, like Macbeth, is led through metaphysical sophistry to believe that sin, though he well knows it to be sin, will somehow be best for him, all things considered. The moral play is much concerned with the error of this belief which, together with Mankynde's bitter recognition of it as Nemesis overmasters him constitutes the major link with Macbeth.¹

It is, however, hoped to show that the form of Seneca's tragedy, depicting as it does the descent through supernatural means of a venerated hero into a career of sin and crime arising out of his own misguided heroic impulses, still provides important, though perhaps secondary, analogues to the themes and structures developed by Shakespeare in his construction of this most anti-heroic of his heroic tragedies.

Hercules Furens is also anti-heroic in its tragic emphasis on the minimization of a supreme hero by supernatural forces through the medium of fate and sin. A brief outline of the movement of the tragedy from a tone of heroic triumph to one of heroic defeat will illustrate this point. The play opens with Juno lamenting Hercules's success in overcoming all her afflictions and trials and also his arrogance in aspiring towards godhead. She recognizes his heroic potency, however, and decides that if he is to be defeated then that power will have to be turned against him so that he becomes the cause of his own exclusion from heaven. She decides, therefore, to make him mad so that he directs his heroic aggression towards his family, ultimately killing them. In this way Juno will not only

1) Creeth, Mankynde in Shakespeare, pp. 40-41.

secure the temporal misery she wants for Hercules but she will leave him so defiled by sin that Jove will be unable to allow him into heaven as a god. The technique of allowing the audience prior knowledge of the action of the play, mentioned by Thomson as *being on of the characteristics of* classical tragedy shared by Macbeth, is almost total in this deterministic opening of Hercules Furens: Juno's proposals work out exactly. In the absence of Hercules, man's proto-chivalric champion against all forms of temporal evil; Thebes his city has been usurped by the tyrant Lycus, who is revealed as ruling through fear and as threatening *forcibly to* marry Megara, Hercules's wife. At this point Hercules enters and echoes Juno's earlier suggestion that his heroic greatness thrives on the successful completion of the tasks which fate sets out for him to perform. The feeling that heroism is somehow parasitic on the evils of life is strengthened by showing a Hercules who, on being informed of the usurpation, immediately leaves the stage to kill Lycus. On returning he is advised to purify his hands of the slaughter, but he refuses; insisting that the killing of evil men is a holy act to be celebrated not regretted. It is at this exact moment that madness overtakes him, and, thinking his wife *is Juno (later Lycus's wife) and his children Lycus's, he kills them off* stage, and we are given a description of their brutal murders. Hercules then falls into a sleep from which he eventually awakes with his sanity restored. When he sees his dead family he chafes for revenge; and on learning that he was their killer, he expresses the painfully lucid awareness of the irony implicit in Juno's plan: that it was his heroism which was the cause of their deaths. He says he will burn his weapons, he invokes terrible apocalyptic punishments for himself, and he threatens suicide. Theseus argues that sin cannot be committed in ignorance. Hercules feels that his honour is gone;

he is now evil and, as an habitual opponent of evil, he must kill himself. Eventually, however, he agrees to go with Theseus to seek pardon from the gods for his sin. It is with this recognition of sin and the suggestion that it may be forgiven that the play ends. There is no attempt to investigate Juno's prophecy of the eschatological minimization implicit in Hercules's act.¹

Given this outline it would be possible to begin immediately by postulating numerous random formal correspondences between the Senecan and the Shakespearean play. Thus, for example, Juno, as the supernatural forcaster and manipulator of the hero's fate, could be equated with the witches in Macbeth. Hercules himself, the hero whose heroism, or manliness, turns wickedly to harm objects which it ought to protect could be equated with Macbeth. Lycus, the tyrant usurper who must impose his rule by force and guile rather than by having the respect of his subjects² could also be seen as a model for Macbeth after the killing of Duncan. While these and other analogues to the action in Macbeth will be discussed more fully below, the problem raised by the mere citing of more or less plausible similarities in this unrelated way is that they each become liable to the type of objection made by Hunter; an objection which would claim, for example, that an Elizabethan need not go to Seneca to find literary prototypes for the behaviour of tyrants.³ What is required before credence can be given to any individual associations is a demonstration that Shakespeare's play uses those features which are similar to features in Seneca in an intellectually and logically cohesive way which is derived from a wholesale

1)The edition of Hercules Furens used for all reference and non-Elizabethan quotation is the Loeb edition of the tragedies, 2 vols., ed., F.J.Miller, London and Cambridge, Mass., 1917, reprinted 1968.

2)Compare Hercules Furens, 332-357 with Macbeth III.i.115-25., V.ii.11-22.

3)Indeed Creeth cites the Castle play's temptation scene in which Mankynde is tempted to abandon his state of heroic victory over sin by the use of sophisticated appeals to his manhood and the lure of becoming a tyrant as an analogue to Macbeth. (Mankynde in Shakespeare, pp.46-48.).

incorporation of the meaning which patterns the elements in the play for Seneca into his own drama. To seek clarity through overstatement, it must be shown that Shakespeare uses Senecan devices to suggest the same meaning as he saw those devices combining together to mean in Hercules Furens. Thus, in some structurally precise way, it needs to be shown that the relationship between supernature, heroism and Hercules in Seneca is directly analogous in meaning and intent to the same relationship in Macbeth. If this can be satisfactorily achieved, then not only will more ready assent be given to more incidental parallels which will be postulated, but it can be concluded that Hercules Furens was seen by Shakespeare as affirming truths about the warrior hero which he wished to affirm and clarify in his own play.

Perhaps the most basic objection which could be made prior to any attempt to establish a reading of Hercules Furens which would bring it close enough to the Christian vision of providential goodness eventually overcoming evil which superficially defines the structure of Macbeth is that the play seems to depict a more deterministic/stoic vision of goodness or excellence being destroyed by the machiavellian intervention of supernatural forces impelling a hero to commit sin against his will and thereby attempting to subvert the deification which his virtues had seemed like winning him. As Hershel Baker has written of Neo-stoicism in general, Hercules Furens implies a "deterministic materialism [which] impugned the sovereignty of God no less than the freedom of man."¹ Certainly Macbeth's freely-willed turn towards evil is strikingly dissimilar in nature and in moral culpability to Hercules's madly oblivious act of heroic wickedness. In Seneca also

1) The Wars of Truth, London and New York, 1952, p.110.

it is typically the innocent or virtuous protagonist who is destroyed by tragic suffering. Certainly this is true of Hercules who in this respect would seem to be an unlikely tragic prototype for Macbeth whose tragedy makes him one of the more obviously punished of Shakespeare's tragic characters. As Hunter went on to observe in the essay cited above the whole of Seneca represented a vision of tragedy which the Elizabethan age could not accept and about which they occasionally articulated their unease:

The ethic of Seneca was, as a unifying factor in his plays, quite hostile to the ethic *that* is tolerable to a Christian community. The most memorable statement of this incompatibility comes, fortunately enough, from . . . a 'Senecan' dramatist, Fulke Greville. Greville in his life of Sir Philip Sidney describes his own tragedies and makes in the course of his description a distinction which is curiously overlooked when Elizabethan Senecan imitation is discussed, for it should be central to any such discussion. He speaks first of ancient tragedies which 'exemplify the disastrous miseries of man's life, where Order, Laws, Doctrine and Authority are unable to protect Innocency from the exorbitant wickedness of power, and so out of that melancholic vision stir horror, or murmur against Divine Providence'(p.221). On the other hand, modern tragedies 'point out God's revenging aspect upon every particular sin, to the despair or confusion of mortality'(ibid). The central distinction is, as Greville sees it, that the ancient (and he means Senecan) world was, because its gods were unjust, a world of total injustice. On the other hand, the Christian world shows man unable to face up to the justice of God, but hunted down in terms of particular sins, not overall corruption.¹

Clearly, in Macbeth at least, Shakespeare was not engaged in an overt examination of the more iconoclastic implications of Senecan tragedy which might cause his audience to 'murmur against divine providence'.

Indeed one possible answer to Hunter's objection could be that the Shakespeare who was writing Macbeth did not wish to explore naturalistic or sceptical views of tragic fate but instead was intent on investigating the operation of providential retribution and that this led him to consider Seneca's plays (all of which are notoriously amenable to a heterodox variety of

1)"Seneca and English Tragedy,"p.173.

interpretations¹⁾ along his age's orthodox Christianizing lines so that it became seen as a pagan tragic structure revealing 'God's revenging aspect upon every particular sin', and, thus, analogous to the formal design represented by the retributive morality play. However deliberate Shakespeare may be thought to have been in his manipulation of his sources and models, it is certain that many of his contemporaries felt no inconsistency in reading Seneca in a favourable Christian light. Hunter himself is well aware that this was the case, and, in an earlier essay, he cites Studley's mis-translation of the last line of the Medea ('bear witness, where thou ridest, that there are no gods," becoming "Bear witness, grace of God is none in place of thy repayre") as a paradigm of the more extensive features of the process whereby the Elizabethans shifted the emphasis of Senecan tragedy from stoic/pagan to Christian.² While this process can now be felt to be widely acknowledged, it will be appropriate to provide one further example of its occurrence; one which centres on the view taken of Hercules and of heroic tragedy in general.

E.M.Waith has shown that the two Hercules plays attributed by the Elizabethans to Seneca had a significant formative effect on the Renaissance humanistic appreciation of heroic virtù.³ Hercules Oetaeus is in one respect the most heroic of Seneca's Tenne Tragedies in that its emphasis falls heavily on the 'total possibilities' of Herculean heroic apotheosis; the deification only talked about in Hercules Furens being achieved from out of the suffering of the sequel.⁴

1) See C.D.N.Costa's "The Tragedies," in his ed. Seneca, pp.96-115. Here Costa shows how Seneca's primary interest in rhetoric led him to present catalogues of opinions, characters and interpretations without any real attempt to impose an overall authorial attitude on them, so that his play's 'meanings' emerge as either unclear, confused or so poorly realized as to depend on subjective imposition.

2) "Seneca and the Elizabethans," op cit, pp.20-21.

3) The Herculean Hero, pp.32-38, 51 ff.

4) Contrast Hercules Furens 63 ff. and 955 ff. with Hercules Oetaeus 1940 ff.

For the mind prepared to accept the openly Pelagianistic implications of both plays, particularly Hercules Oetaeus, the dramas, as heroic tragedies, point towards violently unorthodox visions of man in relation to the divine. Thus, Marlowe seems to allow for the model implied by the death of Hercules by fire, his mortal elements purged by flame, when, at the end of Tamburlaine, he allows one of several potential conclusions to emerge suggesting that his hero has transcended mortality and earned apotheosis as a reward for his heroic endeavour. To understand how a reader intent on finding a more orthodox, Christian, interpretation of the play would respond to the ending of Hercules Oetaeus, however, one needs to turn from the iconoclastic Marlowe to the more conventional Studley, the play's Elizabethan translator. The Loeb translator retains Hercules's insistence that he has achieved Godhead through valour (the latin virtus): "Why, since I hold the realms of starry heaven and at last have attained the skies, dost by lamentation bid me taste of death? Give o'er; for now has my valour borne me to the stars and to the gods themselves . . . Cease then thy lamentations which to a worthless son might well be given. Let tears for the inglorious flow; valour fares starward, fear, to the realm of death."¹ Studley, however, despite remaining reasonably faithful to Hercules's earlier boasts of humanistic independence from god, balks at being required to give Hercules a self-manufactured apotheosis, and instead has him claim that

. . . vertue opened hath
 To mee the passage to the Starres, and set mee in the path
 That guides to everlasting Lyfe, . . .

 . . . loe vertue hopes the Starres to get,
 But faynting feare stil dreames on death. 2

Thus, it is virtue, not amoral heroic valour, which is celebrated

1) Lines 1940-1944, and 1968-1971.

2) Tenne Tragedies II, pp.255-256.

and Hercules does not attain the skies, but "hopes" for the stars; he has been set on the path to a Christian-sounding "everlasting lyfe," in an image which suggests that such a state will still have to be given to him and which is not his to be claimed as a right.

Even Studley's modifications, however, retain heretical Pelagianistic implications in that the inference still seems to be that Hercules will eventually win a place in heaven as a reward for his temporal virtue. *Once Hercules's pagan triumph has been made to sound Christian,* the idea of his having somehow earned salvation is invoked. It is a suggestion which Studley goes on to attempt to remove. The brief concluding chorus of the original reiterates the belief that valour is divine: "Never to Stygian shades is glorious valour borne," and it goes on to pray that the god Hercules will continue to protect mankind from heaven as he did on earth. Significantly, Studley omits the prayer and adds his own choric ending to the play:

When flesh doth fall, and breathing body dies
Then (Fame the child of Vertue) doth arise;
But sluggish sottes that sleepe their *dayes* in sloth,
Or geve their golden age to loathsome lust,
Them and their names the wretches bury both,
When as their bones shall shryned be in dust:
The clay shall cover their carkases forlorne,
As though such kaytiffes never had bene borne.
But if that ought of memory they have,
In thafter age it shalbe filthy shame.
The gnawing wormes torment not so in grave
Their rotten flesh, as *tounges* do teare their name,
That dayly kild to further mischief^e lives.
Loe both the fruites, that vice and virtue gives.¹

Thus, by concentrating on the temporal rewards of virtue and vice, Studley postulates an ending in which Hercules's virtue did not win him salvation but a type of Sarpedonian everlasting life on earth as a celebrated man of chivalric worth. The emphasis is on fame and not heaven as being virtue's child; and the ending, therefore, suggests a non-eschatological morality play in which the final

1) Tenne Tragedies II, p.256.

appearance of Hercules is an allegorical representation of the kind of perpetual heroic fame that Macbeth recognizes he is not to have.¹ It may well be that Studley was only unconsciously diluting the implications of the play which were untenable to him; but his reading of Senecan tragedy does indicate how a more historically conscious artist could approach the recognizably pagan action of Hercules Furens with a view to reinterpreting its structure so that it could help to give dramatic shape to a proposed Christian tragedy which analysed the similar problems of heroic ambivalence and the workings of fate but from a Christian perspective. For the determined Christianizer the difficulties in reading Hercules Furens outlined above could easily be overcome or else ignored as being the product of an unenlightened age.

How then might Shakespeare have read Seneca's play with an eye to exploit its overall formal implications for use in his own Christian-orientated play whose action was to depict a similar story of heroic crime followed by an analysis of the protagonist's reaction to the sin which he commits? It must be remembered that Hercules Oetaeus was extraordinary in being a genuine heroic tragedy of human aggrandizement. More usually (and certainly in the case of the eight dramas that we now believe to be by Seneca) the tragedies show characters suffering defeat and minimization at the hands of outside forces; and the most commonplace Elizabethan interpretation of these plays-despite Greville's recognition that they were nothing of the sort-was that they were exactly the type of retributive tragedies which Greville felt his own plays to be. Thus, for example, the grossly unfortunate Oedipus was seen as providing " a dreadful Example of Gods horrible vengeance for sinne"²

1) See V.iii.22-28.

2) Alexander Nevyle, the introduction to his translation of Oedipus, in Jenne Tragedies I, p.190.

Given this commonplace attitude to the plays, it may well have been that Shakespeare, while no doubt recognizing the anomalies inherent in viewing a pagan play in such a way, could have considered the structural implications of Hercules Furens' being the type of play in which a hero, considered universally admirable, turns his heroism to evil ends and suffers deserved punishment (including the pained consciousness of the consequences for sin) for doing so. Certainly he would have been enjoined to consider that Seneca was saying something serious about the morality of heroism in the play, even though his paganism left his account of the supernatural world which lay behind men's actions suspect:

And whereas it is by some squeymish Areopagites surmyzed, that the readinge of these Tragedies, being enterlarded with many Phrases and sentences, literally tending (at the first sight) sometime to the prayse of Ambition, sometye to the maytenaunce of cruelty, now and then to the approbation of incontencie, and here and there to the ratification of tyranny, cannot be digested without great daunger of infection; to omit all other reasons, if it might please them with no **forestalled judgment**, to mark and consider the circumstaunces, why, where, and by what manner of persons such sentences are pronounced, they cannot in any equity otherwise choose, but find good cause ynough to leade them to a more **fauourable** and milde resolution. For it may not at any hand be thought and deemed the direct meaning of Seneca himselfe, whose whole wrytinges . . . are so **farre** from countenauncing vice, that I doubt whether there bee any amonge all the Catalogue of Heathen wryters, that with more grauity of Philosophicall sentences, more waightynes of sappy words, or greater authority of sound matter beateth down sinne, loose lyfe, dissolute dealinge, and unbrydled sensuality: or that more sensibly, pithily, and bytingly layeth doune the **quedon** of filthy lust, cloaked dissimulation and odious treachery: which is the dryft, whereunto he leueleth the whole yssue of ech one of his Tragedies.¹

Thus, in conclusion, to recognize that Seneca's play was untenable to a Christian as an explanation of the supernatural **background to** sin, does not mean that Shakespeare may not have viewed it as an analysis of the morality of heroic sin; an analysis which could be incorporated within a more orthodox Christian study of the causes and consequences of that sin.

1) Thomas Newton; from his editorial dedication to Sir Thomas Henneage, Tenne Tragedies I, pp.4-5.

The tragic peripeteia of Hercules Furens is bounded by two off stage acts of heroic violence. The first, the killing of the tyrant Lycus, is seen by Hercules at least to be an act of almost symbolic goodness; a continuation of his habitual heroic opposition to all temporal evil. His second off stage killing, of his wife and children, (an act which, significantly, his madness leads him to believe is a continuation of his earlier quelling of Lycus's followers) is, of course, seen by all, the sane Hercules included, as an act of evil. It is essential to stress that the moment in Seneca in which Hercules is transformed from being what he sees as a metaphor of goodness into one of evil is heralded by a difference of opinion between Amphitryon, his earthly father, and Hercules. The disagreement is over the moral nature of the killing of Lycus. The old man warns his son, who is about to sacrifice to the gods, that he must first purify his hands from "bloody slaughter, and the death of enemy." Hercules, however, rejects this suggestion that there can be sin or impurity in the killing of evil. His rejoinder is the classical equivalent of the chivalric knight's justification of his warlike activities as being reverently performed for God:

Would God the bloud of hatefull head even unto Gods on hye
 I might out shed, for lycour loe more acceptable none
 Myght th'aulters stayne: nor sacrifice more ample any one
 Nor yet more plentyfull *may bee* to Jove above downe cast,
 Than *king* unjust. 1

The fact that Hercules's celebration of the shedding of "the bloud of hatefull head" in the name of God is suggestive of the manner of

1) Jasper Heywood, trans., Hercules Furens, Tenne Tragedies I, p.39 (see lines 918-924). It is noteworthy that Heywood introduces the suggestion of decapitation, an idea not in Seneca at this point. It should be said, however, that given Lycus's earlier decapitation of Creon (see lines 257-258) during the overthrow of Thebes, then there would have been a certain poetic justice in allowing Hercules to exact retribution in the same manner. In what follows it will be suggested that Shakespeare made structural use of the idea of a warrior who has himself decapitated (Macbeth beheads Macdonwald, I.ii.21-23) being eventually brought to justice by decapitation (compare Macduff's celebration over Macbeth's head at V.viii.54-55. with Achilles's view of the killing as an act of worship).

Macbeth's death and the tone with which it is greeted at the end of the play will be discussed below. For the moment, however, it should be recognized that, even in the context of the typically half-realized themes of Senecan tragedy, there seems to be a deliberate irony being developed through the fact that it is at this exact moment of heroic hubris that madness suddenly overtakes Hercules and he immediately accentuates his profanity by beginning to rage against the sovereignty of the gods and by threatening to usurp Jove's kingdom in the same way that Lycus had usurped his. The previously pious Hercules complains that he has been promised deification and that he is now about to take matters into his own hands and, rather than accept delay, force fate to comply with his desires.¹ Amphytrion is aghast at the blasphemy, but his terror, along with the irony of the reversal, increases as Hercules proceeds to mistake his own children for those of Lycus and Megara for Juno. Thus deluded, he kills them all in what he takes to be a holy continuation of his chivalric attack on the evil house of Lycus.²

The basic suggestion being made, then, is that in Macbeth Shakespeare made use of this ironic structure of Hercules Furens which shows how a warrior can enter his play by having his virtue expressed in terms of a chivalric/metaphorical victory over a public/political evil which, the play then goes on to reveal, contains within itself the same heroic or manly impulses which will later impel him to perform an act of more private violence which will transform him from a dramatic image of goodness into one of evil. Macbeth, like Hercules, presents an image of heroic ambivalence: the slayer of rebels, the killer of his king. Within this broad similarity of design, however, there are other correspondences. Both acts of violence take place off stage and are

1) See lines 955-973.

2) See lines 1035-1038.

made known to the audience through reported descriptions of the events; in the first instance celebratory and joyous, in the second shocked and morally outraged.¹ Moreover, it is noteworthy that in both plays it is immediately after the protagonist's victory over usurpers that *he is* beset by the supernatural forces which bring on their evil deeds. It is a commonplace of Macbeth criticism to observe that the witches touch some hidden chord in Macbeth, one that impels him, almost in spite of himself, and certainly in spite of his rational self, to "yield to that suggestion//Whose horrid image doth unfix [his] hair."² The fact that Macbeth goes on to kill Duncan, despite his awareness of the multiple reasons for not doing so, suggests a kind of insanity, and, indeed, given his responses to the witches, Banquo's question "have we eaten on the insane root //That takes the reason prisoner?"³ seems to be not without its justification. Certainly, like the maddened Hercules, Macbeth decides to usurp God's providential role in history despite his more sane recognition that if he is to be king then he will become so without his acting wickedly at all.⁴

The comparison between the two works can also be thought to extend to the making of a potential parallel between what might be seen as Seneca's moral point about the nature of heroism as the two examples of Herculean slaughter reveal it and an equivalent moral point in Macbeth. If it will be allowed that Shakespeare was prepared to consider Seneca as being a more ethically rigorous dramatist than perhaps he was, then it must be conceded that the

1) See Macbeth I.ii.7 ff. and II.ii.14 ff. and Hercules Furens 895 ff. and 991 ff. Thomson, Shakespeare and the Classics, observed that the killing of Duncan is done off stage "in the **Greek** manner" (p.119), but he does not equate this with the Sergeant's report, nor does he equate this dual structure of off stage violent action with the analogous structure of Hercules Furens.

2) I.iii.134-135. See J.Dillon, Shakespeare and the Solitary Man, London, 1981, p.136.

3) I.iii.84-85.

4) I.iii.143-144. 303

section of the play under consideration could be read as an illustration of the moral ambivalence of warrior heroism. Thus, Hercules refused even to consider that the killing of Lycus was in any way sinful or brutalizing or worthy of divine disapproval. Amphitryon's concern, however, linked to the fact that the same heroic impulse (Hercules supposes his family to be supporters of Lycus) is then shown as leading him to commit his act of heroic sin, suggest that an alternative conclusion is being put forward. Most obviously, it might be concluded, as already suggested, that heroism is being shown to be only a 'good' when it is directed towards legitimate opponents and that it is in itself potentially good or evil, morally ambivalent. More radically, however, the play might be read as indicating that all heroism, even the most justified and chivalric, is morally ambiguous; not only because it necessarily involves the hero in the sinful act of killing, but because the characteristic heroic celebration of such acts brutalizes the hero, divorces him from common humanity and piety, and finally renders him more liable to pursue his heroic role in situations where it becomes not merely morally ambiguous but positively evil.

In support of such an interpretation it would be stated again that Hercules himself, after recovering his sanity, lays the blame for the death of his family on his own heroic valour.¹ Indeed, if the play were read as a *Thoroughgoing* retributive tragedy then it might even be thought that Hercules is punished for his hubristic inability to feel remorse over his killing of Lycus or for his failure to maintain humility in his dealings with the gods at the sacrifice. It is, however, unnecessary to see Hercules as providing a prototypical model for the retribution which overtakes

1) See lines 1192-1199 and 1231-1245.

Macbeth.¹ As shall be illustrated, what it is appropriate to see him as is a model for the Macbeth who sins out of his own heroic nature and who thereafter retains a painfully lucid consciousness of the consequences of that sin. In fact, Hercules tends not to feel that he has been made to suffer for his misdeeds, but he does, like Macbeth, recognize that his sins have caused him to have lost both his temporal peace of mind and his chance of heaven.²

Initially, however, it is necessary to demonstrate how closely Macbeth echoes the same idea that heroism is both ambivalent and ambiguous, and, more significantly, echoes it within the same formal pattern through which the equivalent ideas are established in Hercules Furens. Waith's essay cited earlier deals well with the more orthodox concept of heroic ambivalence when he shows how Macbeth's heroism won him praise when it led him against Macdonwald but how it became the instrument of his damnation when the concept of manhood brought him to exercise his heroism to murder Duncan.³

There is, however, also the suggestion of moral ambiguity latent even in the description of "brave Macbeth" which emerges during the early scenes whereby it is possible to see an indication of the bloodlust, butchery and amoral savagery of Macbeth which was to emerge more fully in the scenes during and after the murder of Duncan. Thus not only is the Macbeth who killed Macdonwald like the chivalric Hercules who slays Lycus in that he is seen as "justice . . . with valour arm'd," "brave" and "worthy," a man prepared to disdain Fortune in pursuit of right; but he is also, and more disturbingly, seen as a blood-stained image of his later self, the savagery of his later actions symbolically and actually prefigured in his chivalric

1)Indeed, as will be shown below, the closest model for Macbeth in this respect is provided by the retribution which overtakes Lycus.

2)See again lines 1258-1262 and also 1331-1341.

3)"Manhood and Valor," pp.265-267.

areté. Thus, like the Hercules whose appearance disturbs Amphitryon, Macbeth is described as being covered in blood, ominously resembling the soldiers at Christ's crucifixion, he is "Bellona's bridegroom" and not only did he unseam his enemy but he, again like Heywood's Hercules, cut off his head and carried it as a trophy.¹ Indeed, even the blood-covered soldier who narrates Macbeth's victory is an ambiguous figure; himself resembling the blood-stained Hercules who tells of his own victory over Lycus as well as the Macbeth who was to be stained with the sinful blood of Duncan. In both plays, of course, blood and its symbolic associations with irremovable sin is a central motif.²

It should be observed at this point that although this intuition about the nature of heroism is by no means unique to Seneca, it is made by Shakespeare through the use of the same structural device of contrasting repetition as that which defines the action of Seneca's play. Moreover, Hercules Furens provides a far more satisfactory structural analogue for these scenes in Macbeth than may be found in the Castle play which Creeth puts forward as influencing the establishment of contrasting heroic states. It should be remembered that while the Castle mankind character achieves an heroic purity which he later defiles by associating with sin and directing his aspirations towards temporal goods,³ there is, nevertheless, a fundamental allegorical distinction established by the two metaphorical states of heroism representing Godly man and earthly man. When bolstered by the virtues man is able to sustain an inner strength which helps him repel the attempts of evil to seduce him to the values of the world.

1) See I.ii, 7-58.

2) There is an analogy, also, with Pyrrhus in Hamlet whose totally sinful nature is represented by his being "total gules" (II.ii.451.).

3) A sinful movement which, it is not wished to suggest, is not made by Macbeth also: see K. Muir, ed., Macbeth, Arden Shakespeare, 9th edition, London, 1962, pp. xlvii-xlix.

As indicated in the discussion of the play, his heroism here is a metaphor for moral and spiritual strength, as symbolized by Christ's passive victory over evil. Thus as a metaphor it is fundamentally different in type from the one which is later associated with the mankind abstraction wherein his aggression, delight in arms, and general worldliness is made to represent an actual-though archetypal-pattern of behaviour visible outside the allegory in all fallen men. Thus, the general heroic demeanour of so many morality protagonists arises because it symbolically presents a state of being that is archetypally representative of all sin: violent and irrational love of the world above God. It can **not**, therefore, be suggested in the Castle play that the heroic metaphor of human goodness somehow contains within itself the qualities, such as greed or violence, which lead to the state of being in which a man can become a heroic metaphor of sin. The whole allegorical point is that they are two distinct, mutually exclusive, states of being separated by two different 'loves'. Thus, the suggestion cannot be, as it is in Macbeth, that heroic goodness has an innate ambiguity; an unstable amoral propensity to become or to degenerate into a state of heroic evil. The Castle play postulates a chivalric heroism as a symbol of spiritual, internal, strength, and a more debased, manly, aggression and **acq**uisitiveness as an image of the external, worldly, behaviour of men in states of sin. Like Hercules Furens, Macbeth shows the way in which heroism can be seen as good in terms of human judgment, and how, when those qualities become wrongly applied, the same features which allowed it to become a metaphor of goodness allow it to be condemned as a metaphor of evil. Thus, the formal implications of the secular play combine with those of the morality play to make the emblematic associations of Macbeth's heroism unusually rich: not only

does it suggest the combined classical and Christian vision of the hero as an anti-heroic archetype of human evil or brutality, but it also includes a less overtly allegorical, more explicitly literal critique of the anti-heroic implications of heroism as a secular ideal.

Similarly, although Creeth is quite correct to point out the relationship between the Castle protagonist's conscious decision to 'jump the life to come' and Macbeth's equally grim preference for an earthly crown before a heavenly one, especially as both are allowed to recognize the folly of their choice at the point of death,¹ it should be remembered that the metaphorical association between sin and folly denied the medieval dramatist the chance to give his hero any sustained awareness of the horror or brutality of his own sinful deeds during his life in sin. Here again it is suggested that Shakespeare combined the formal implications of classical and medieval so that Macbeth is not only given the last minute anagnorisis concerning the equivocation of the fiend but also a painful understanding of what it is to live a life in sin. Thus, even before the murder, Macbeth is made to consider the "bloody business" he is about to perform by dwelling on the image of an imagined knife in much the same way that Hercules contemplates the enormity of his own sin by dwelling on the weapons² with which he performed his fearful deed. More concretely, immediately after the killing, Macbeth's agonized dwelling on his blood-stained hands actually echoes a similar moment of rhetorical self-dramatization from Hercules:

What Tanais, or what Nilus els, or with his Persyan wave
What Tygris violent of streame, or what fierce Rhenus flood,
Or Tagus troublesome that flowes with Ibers treasures good
May my ryght hand now wash from gylt? although Maeotis cold
The waves of all the Northern sea on me shed *out now wolde,*

1) Mankynde in Shakespeare, p.64.

2) II.i.33-64. See Hercules Furens 1231-1236, 1296 ff.

And al the water therof *shoulde* now pas by my two handes,
Yet wil the mischiefe deepe remayne. 1

Moreover, another of the more convincing of the potential verbal echoes noted above also concerns the *similar* feeling of both heroes that their sin has put them beyond the normal human comforts of life, which, paradoxically, they had hoped to enhance through their heroism:

Wherfore I longer should sustayn my life yet in this light,
And linger here no cause there is, all good lost have I quighte,
My mynd, my weapons, my renoume, my wife, my sonnes, my handes,
And fury to no man may heale and lose from gyilty bandes
My mynd defyeld: needes must with death be heald so haynous yll.²

Even Macbeth's feeling that he has lost the ability to be soothed by sleep may have been suggested to Shakespeare by the choral plea for sleep to vanquish the pain of the maddened Hercules, as well as by the dramatic contrast between Hercules's peaceful sleep and his grief on awakening.³ For both there is the lucid recognition that, ironically, their heroism, which had always been the means of their aggrandizement, had come to work towards their minimization.⁴

The ultimate minimization of being in the morality tradition is damnation, and it is of significance that Hercules shows himself to be as conscious as Macbeth that he has deserved the punishment for great sin which was meted out by the pagan equivalent of the common enemy of man:

The furies places dire
And dungeon depe of sprites in hell and place of tormentry
To gyilty ghostes and banishment yf any yet do lye
Beyond Erebus, yet unknowen to Cerberus and mee,
There hyde me ground to farthest bond of Tartarus to see.
To tary there *I*le goe. 5

As can be seen, perhaps the most powerful feature of Senecan

1) Heywood, trans., Hercules Furens (lines 1322-1327), Tenne Tragedies I, p. 51.

2) ibid (lines 1258-1262), p. 49. See Macbeth V.iii.22-28.

3) See Macbeth II.ii.41-43, and Hercules Furens 1065 ff. cf. also Muir's note on V.iii.43 in his Arden edition of the play.

4) Compare Hercules Furens 1267-1272, and 1278 ff. with Macbeth III.iv.133 ff.

5) Heywood, trans., Hercules Furens (lines 1221-1226), Tenne Tragedies I, p. 48.

rhetorical drama is the way in which a sinner's consciousness of the depths of his own sin emerges as almost the centre of interest in a form of art in which introspection and the formative stages by which attitude and opinions are reached are of primary importance.¹ Thus, even if direct echoes were fewer than they are, it could still be argued that Macbeth, which is also characterized by its protagonist's tendency to expose his inner feelings,² reveals a recognizable fusion of Senecan self-awareness and morality play emphasis on linear progression through sin, with the result that the morality play form (which typically was unable to allow its hero a consciousness of the nature of sin as to do so would have given him an empathetic human sensitivity which the didactic ends of the genre could not sanction) was broadened to allow an amoral tragic grandeur to attach itself to the hero, who thus emerged as endowed with some form of emotional greatness, however morally reprehensible he might be considered. Certainly, whether intentionally or otherwise,³ Shakespeare can be thought, through the transforming power of his superior psychological insight and poetic gifts, to have created a 'Senecan' protagonist in terms of insight into the issues of the play he is in, but one who also lacks the accompanying wooden egotism and mechanical rhetoric which modern taste finds alienating in Senecan protagonists. Certainly Macbeth-in direct opposition to the moral play-gains sympathy for its hero by allowing him to understand more about the evil and darkness at the centre of the play than the comparatively colourless and glibly orthodox 'good' characters who oppose him and who feel able to

1) See Costa, "The Tragedies," op cit, p. 00.

2) eg. Cunliffe, The Influence of Seneca, p. 82., saw Macbeth's reflectiveness as being the play's most Senecan feature.

3) Muir, ed., Macbeth, pp. li-liii., acknowledges the critical feeling that the quality of the poetry spoken by Macbeth is an intentional attempt to win him sympathy, while himself arguing that this is not justified, the device being merely a reflection of the medium (poetic drama) in which Shakespeare worked.

summarize Macbeth's tragic experience as the record of "this dead butcher, and his fiend-like queen."¹

The relationship between goodness and evil in the play will need further attention below. For the moment, however, it is necessary to continue to look at how Hercules's reaction to the tragedy which overtakes him develops, and how that knowledge of the implications which his sin has for his view of the world is paralleled by a similar understanding in Macbeth. As has been indicated, Hercules Furens presents a view of the tragic experience which reveals a hero pursued by the forces of destiny and destroyed in direct contradiction to what would be expected by anyone who believed the processes of history to work according to an overall sense of justice. Indeed, Hercules is shown to be punished by Juno precisely because he has exhibited every heroic virtue and piety required of him.² The general tenor of the play suggests a universe which is actively hostile to the great man, and where to be heroic involves the recognition of this fact combined with the determination to stoically overcome the constant evils sent to disturb the equanimity of the great. It is this outlook on life which defines Hercules's heroism at the start of the play:

What warres? what ever hideous thinge the earth his enemy
Begets, or what soever sea or ayre hath brought to syght
Both dredfull, dire, and pestilent, of cruel fiercest might,
'Tis tierd and tam'd: he passeth all, and name by ills doth rayse
And all my wrath he doth injoy and to his greater prayse
He turnes my hates: whyle tedious toyles to much I him behest.³

As the drama develops, however, Hercules's universe shows itself to be even more actively hostile, even more amoral, even more unfairly antagonistic to heroic virtue than he had supposed possible; and for

1)V.viii.69.

2)See lines 30-62.

3)Heywood trans., Hercules Furens (lines 30-35), Tenne Tragedies I, p.10.

a time we see him, under the initial shock of the recognition of Juno's victimization, lose his pious-stoic sense of the overall purpose for man implied by an implacable destiny, and, instead, he articulates a vision which sees life as a purposeless and ultimately absurd arena of suffering and defeat which the sane or enlightened man would be best to avoid by means of his own destruction. Not only does Hercules grow weary of the sun but, also like Macbeth, he calls for an apocalyptic destruction of the whole of creation which has proved so false to his expectations of it:

Of Thracian Pindus eyther I wil teare downe every tree,
 And Bacchus holly woods and tops of mount Cythaeron hye
 Burne with my selfe, and al at once with all their housen I
 And with the Lordes therof the roofes with goddes of Thebes all
 The Thebane temples even upon my body will let fall:
 And wyl be hyd in towne upturn'd: . . .

 Then all the wayght wheron the worlde in middle part doth rest,
 And partes the Goddes upon my head Ile turne and overthrow. 1

While it must be admitted that there is no example of Herculean Weltschmerz which could be thought to correspond to Macbeth's most memorable moment of nihilism; the "to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow" speech,² the exclamation cited above most obviously being analogous to his invocation to the witches that they perform their spells "even till destruction sicken,"³ it should still be noted that, given the idea of world-weariness for Hercules, the chorus to the play express similar sentiments about the briefness of mortality and the inconsequentiality of life (lines 159-190) to those articulated by Macbeth during the last act. Moreover, not only does Macbeth articulate these recognizably stoic verities, but he does so at the moment in the play when, having heard of his wife's untimely death, his situation most closely parallels that of the tormented

1) Heywood trans., Hercules Furens (lines 1285-1294), Tanne Tragedies I, p.50.

2) V.v.17-28.

3) IV.i.50-60.

Hercules, who is himself brought to an understanding of the seeming lack of purpose in history through the death of his wife and children. Hercules, however, when confronted by these thoughts, considers suicide far more extensively than does Macbeth; and, indeed, it is possible that Macbeth's scornful rejection of suicide as an end to life's tribulations may in part have been suggested by Hercules's typically stoic, rather self-indulgent, contemplation of self-slaughter. More important, however, is the fact that eventually both heroes reject suicide in favour of heroically continuing to endure what blows fate still had to offer.¹ It is true that Macbeth's grimly warlike determination to fight to the death with the expectation of the world-weary slave or even that of a captive animal is different in tone to Hercules' calmly resigned desire to add living to the burdens of his already defeated soul, but this is in part due to the fact that the forces of Nemesis were still closing in on Macbeth as they were not on Hercules. This distinction suggests also, of course, that Macbeth was still deluded as to his chances of defeating fate in a way that Hercules no longer was.

It has been suggested above that one link between the heroism of Macbeth and Hercules is that both are associated with the belief that their heroic virtu will allow them to *mould* fate according to their vision of what they would like it to be.² Thus, Macbeth is prepared to 'disdain fortune', not just in the killing of Duncan but also, having initially moulded his own fate through regicide, in the subsequent murders and intrigues by which he attempts to subvert the fated succession of the issue of Banquo. *Equally*

1) Compare V.v.48-52., where Macbeth begins to "wish th'estate o' th' world were now undone," but yet decides to die with harness on his back rather than play "the Roman fool" (V.viii.1.). See also V.vii.1-4. and cf. Hercules Furens 1278-1294 and 1314-1319.

2) See Heywood trans., Hercules Furens (lines 558-568), Tenne Tragedies I, p.26; where Hercules is described as being able to "Break *F*ate by force."

Hercules shows no hesitation in killing Lycus and restoring his destiny as ruler in Thebes. In Seneca's play, however, Hercules is humbled into the recognition that even the greatest hero is subject to the overriding power of fate. Macbeth, on the other hand, as each of his attempts to shape destiny are frustrated by events, rather desperately refuses to let himself consider the possibility that he might be powerless to alter the future, and, like the Hercules before his madness, determines to fight against fate in the lists, to turn his thoughts into acts, and, finally, when the equivocal truth of the prophecies is made clear to him and his doom is spelled out by the same agents of prediction in whose verity he had previously believed, *elects in spite of this to* combat the inevitable through a preconditioned heroic reliance on his martial ability to create his own destiny.¹ Macbeth, then, in his play, never reaches the point arrived at by Hercules, where he can look back on his being destroyed by fate and learn the anti-heroic truth of his own lack of potency. In Seneca's structure, of course, the committing of the play's great heroic sin was also the act which Hercules was later able to see as fate's most crushing blow. In the structure of Macbeth the great heroic sin was the act through which Macbeth most *decisively* attempted to influence his own fate. It *is* from that moment on that the forces of destiny begin to prove intractable to him. Thus in one sense it is Hercules's killing of Lycus which is more structurally analogous to the killing of Duncan because it is by that act that Hercules most conspicuously shapes his own destiny to become king and, as with Macbeth, it is following that act that the forces of supernature begin to work against him to accomplish his destruction and the loss of the throne which his valour had won for him.

1) See Macbeth III.i.70-71., IV.i.144-155., V.v.35-52., and V.viii.27-33.

For Macbeth retribution comes as a result of the great sin he commits. For Hercules the opposite is true. While he might be considered hubristic in his attitude after the killing of Lycus, it is the committing of an unnatural act of heroic violence which, along with its destructive psychological effect on Hercules, constitutes his tragic overthrow. Hercules sees the committing of sin to be his tragedy; Macbeth's tragedy emerges from the committing of sin. It is this distinction which, ultimately, differentiates the two plays: Macbeth is a retributive tragedy in which goodness eventually overtakes a sinner, Hercules Furens depicts supernatural evil destroying heroic goodness. The difference is the difference between a Christian and a stoic view of fate. The conclusion to Macbeth strongly suggests the idea that the invading forces are to be thought of as being directed by the "grace of Grace" and that providential goodness is directing events to ensure the defeat of evil.¹ Thus, whereas Hercules knew that he had been defeated by an amoral, hostile, fate, and, thus, knew too that he had every right to express a vision of apocalyptic fatalism in response to the *machiavellian* evil of historical causality, Macbeth, though he too articulates similar, stoic-sounding, visions of nihilistic contempt for the world, has no right to echo Hercules in this respect, because the events of his play are proof that history operates otherwise, and works towards meaning and goodness. Thus, though Macbeth shows that evil may temporarily govern the seeds of time, their fruition works inevitably towards goodness; and, thus, Macbeth's final iconoclastic scepticism is not only anti-Christian, but it is also, significantly, anti-Senecan because it is a Senecan conclusion derived from events which do not justify that conclusion: events which, unlike those in Seneca, suggest

1) See Macbeth IV.iii.188-192., IV.iii.231-240., and V.viii.39-75.

that history is morally intelligible and just.

Thus, in a sense, Macbeth's final scepticism is an aspect of what he in fact recognizes in himself: a falling away from his previous moral clear-sightedness.¹ Despite its stoic antecedents, Macbeth's iconoclasm and reliance on his own ability to determine his fate is not even a legitimate pagan response to his situation. Life, at that moment in his play, is clearly not a tale told by an idiot signifying nothing; and though it has evidently reached the stage where events have proved life to be without purpose for him, a more clear-sighted Macbeth would have recognized the moral and religious implications of his own defeat. What seems to happen to Macbeth as events prove intractable, as the monarchy proves to be without comfort, as his wife dies, and as, finally, the riddling assurances of the sisters prove as false or inconstant as all the other worldly values in which he has rested all his faith and all his hopes of happiness, then the world becomes a place of chaotic and hostile emptiness for him; a place where all belief or faith, even in God, is seen as the province of the gullible idiot. It will be understood by now, however, that the orthodox response to be made, given the recognition of the radical falsity of the world, was that a man should abandon his faith in the transient values of the world and centre his belief in the constancy of God. By this time, however, Macbeth could draw no comfort from de contemptu mundi commonplaces. His final stance as a prototypical absurdist spokesman may or may not be felt to reflect doubts which Shakespeare himself had had about the purpose of life. What is not in doubt, however, is that, in terms of the orthodox Christian form of the play, Macbeth is exposed as being deluded and damnable.

Given what has been established concerning the distinction to

1) See V.v.9-15., esp. the admission that "Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts, // Cannot once start me."

be made between Hercules's and Macbeth's response to fate's power over them, it is necessary to conclude by looking in more detail at the similarities and dissimilarities existing between the formal representation of supernatural intervention in each play. This will be done with a view to establishing how Seneca's tragedy could have helped Shakespeare shape his own study of predestination and how the pagan-stoic view of the issue provides an insight for the Christian reader into exactly how much more complex the issues became when history was viewed in terms of providential morality rather than in terms of deterministic fatalism. Above it was suggested that the Elizabethan reader who was so inclined might have read the Hercules Furens as a tragedy of harmatia,¹ or even as a tragedy of supernatural retribution for sin. The obvious point to make, however, is that Hercules, though arguably hubristic, does not commit his most striking sin of his own free will, but is shown to be overtaken by divinely inspired madness. Thus, although he feels guilt for his actions, he scarcely feels himself morally responsible for the wicked impulse to perform them, while his father argues that even his sense of guilt is irrational given his lack of self-knowledge.¹ The position is that, although the play was presumably intended to raise the issues surrounding the familiar stoic dualism of fatal determination and moral responsibility, the problem is not resolved beyond the equally familiar suggestion that one must learn to suffer the blows of fate including the sense of guilt they occasion.² Otherwise, at the level of the play's depiction of supernatural interference, we are given either no-or at best only obscure-suggestions that somehow fate works through its mysterious foreknowledge of human character; that, in fact, character

1)See line 1237.

2)See lines 1272-1277.

is an aspect of destiny, as it was shown to be in Greek tragedy.¹ Rather, the inference to be drawn is that supernature, in the shape of Juno, deliberately intervened to manipulate or pervert human nature in a deterministic and machiavellian way so that a good man could be made to behave out of character and yet still have to suffer the eschatological consequences of the sin so caused. Thus, the earlier, rather simplistic, suggestion that Juno could serve as a model for the witches in Macbeth must be set aside the recognition that the wierd sisters are clearly shown to be beings who, while knowing something of what the future holds, have no power to control the moral behaviour of Macbeth or of anyone else.² They are not agents of deterministic supernatural power, and, as Macbeth is well aware, when he turns to evil in his Herculean resolve to pre-empt the processes of destiny, he does so of his own free will.³

As indicated, however, there is another force operating within the play which the final scenes especially invoke as being instrumental in actually shaping the events leading to the destruction of Macbeth. The power is, of course, that of providence, or of grace, or of God working inexorably through men to achieve ultimate good. Thus, it could be suggested that a more analogous parallel in Macbeth with the overall power exercised by Juno in Hercules Furens, would not be the witches but the idea of providence guiding history in accordance with the wishes of the Christian God. This analogy, however, raises a further, more profound, question. Whereas Seneca, with the typically stoic view which saw evil as the product of an essentially amoral fate, did not need to be too concerned with the ethics of destiny, the Christian was obliged to reconcile the idea

1)The point about Seneca's essentially un-Greek tragic vision is made by Thomson, Shakespeare and the Classics, p.245.

2)This aspect of Macbeth is dealt with by Farnham, Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier, pp.99-104.

3)See I.vii.1-28.

of a God in total control of all that happens in history with the fact that everything, therefore, necessarily had to be good in divine terms. The question which arose from this view, then, was the one which enquired in what sense could the obvious and pervasive evil in the world ever be considered good. The orthodox answer to such questions was the one outlined by Augustine: all events worked towards providential morality and were, therefore, good, despite the fact that God's predetermined pattern of goodness could only be imperfectly understood by fallen man, who himself had no recourse other than to operate according to freely willed estimations of the correct way to act; estimations and actions known in advance to God, but not caused by him, and which, therefore, could later be judged by him, independent of his own causal activities, according to their compliance with the values of religion and morality made available to man in the Bible and elsewhere. Though this view of historical causality is theologically subtle, it is surprising how closely Macbeth, Shakespeare's most rigorous analysis of the problem of historical morality, can be made to correspond to its requirements. Thus, all of Macbeth's evil actions are shown as freely willed and resulting from his own deeply flawed nature: it is these actions which, we intuit, are punished by providence through temporal retribution and which, unless Macbeth were to be saved gratuitously, will be the cause of his damnation. It is also possible, however, that some of Macbeth's misdeeds form part of a more obscure, in human terms, less ethically lucid, providential movement. Thus, it seems worth making the point that *but for Macbeth's wickedness Scottish history might have developed differently, so that Banquo's progeny (including James I) may never have come to reign.*¹ Other misdeeds, however, if thought to be part of the divine plan, must remain even more inaccessible to human

¹Certainly the witches seem to view their predictions for Macbeth and Banquo as forming part of one insight into the future. See I.iii 61-68.

estimations of righteousness. Thus, it must remain deeply uncertain as to how the murder of the wife and children of Macduff could ever emerge as being ethically necessary. While it might be argued that to impose such a reading onto Shakespeare's play trivializes his complex awareness of the ambivalence of history, it must at least be acknowledged that such a view was the orthodox response to the enigma resulting from faith in omniscient divinity and the recognition that the world was seemingly evil and hostile. It was the response which had been put forward since Augustine's time in answer to those pagan philosophies such as stoicism which postulated a morally chaotic universal fate.¹ Thus, while it would not be suggested that Shakespeare necessarily accepted the orthodox view without question, it is suggested that it is significant that the Shakespearean tragedy which outlines the Augustinian orthodoxy with the most precision contains within itself a hero who fails to recognize the orthodox formal movement towards Christian retribution, but who himself parallels the formal career of the stoic hero who possesses a heightened consciousness but who, nevertheless, interprets his tragic destruction at the hand of fate as evidence that he exists in an amoral nihilistic universe. It might almost be said that Shakespeare's own beliefs concerning the events dramatized are not important, but rather he plays off the responses of those who know that they are in a Christian tragedy of retribution against an ultimately Godless, possibly stoic, hero who can never quite bring himself to accept it.

Further evidence of Shakespeare's conscious manipulation of the implications of this pagan tragedy into the Christian world of his play, can, finally, be found in the function given to the witches.

1) Thus Baker, The Dignity of Man, p.123 contends that Christianity was attractive to its early devotees because it provides "solace in eternity for the political, intellectual, and moral chaos so horribly near at hand" in pagan philosophies which stressed the evident evil of the world.

As is widely understood, the accepted view of the pagan gods was that they were in fact diabolic forces who exercised the circumscribed powers left to them after their expulsion from heaven to increase the discomfiture or deception of man.¹ Thus, a Christianized view of Hercules Furens would have seen Juno as a demonic power who had no authority over the providential pattern of destiny, but who did have limited foreknowledge, and who could tempt or deceive mankind into performing evil deeds, and thus, through his deluded free will, do harm to his soul. This it has been suggested is exactly the function of the witches in Macbeth,² they are not powers of predestination, but they tempt the hero to a freely willed, though predestined, evil. Thus, like Juno, they are machiavellian and deliberately attempt to try to get Macbeth to damn himself. Like Juno, they might even be considered to be objective manifestations of the subjective means through which a good man comes to commit sin. Certainly, the power of the witches and Macbeth's faith in their essentially absurd and contradictory assurances of security seems to be fundamentally a matter of psychology rather than of external force. It cannot, of course, be said to be certain that Juno would be seen as an emblem of Hercules's inner inclination towards sin. What can be said with certainty is that this was the way in which the equivocating personifications of evil in the morality play were interpreted and, likewise, the witches achieve success through the power of suggestion, and, evidently the suggestion of a crown for Macbeth was as potent an inducement to evil for Macbeth as was the idea of a sword for Moros. Influenced by a Christian-allegorical view of Juno, or more simply by the vices of the morality tradition, it is clear that the formal

1) See The City of God II.x. and VII.xxxiii. See also Farnham, Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier, pp.92-104.

2) See Farnham, Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier, p.81.

role of the witches confirms the view that Macbeth is not predestined to sin but is fundamentally predisposed for his career of heroic evil. This fact moves the play away from becoming a neo-Senecan tragedy of determinism towards a Christian vision of damnation as the result of free will used wrongly which in itself implies a vision of tragic calculus which is close to the Greek idea of character as destiny.¹

By way of conclusion to the present chapter, and also as a means by which to proceed to a more general conclusion, it is hoped to establish two more areas of correspondence between Macbeth and Hercules Furens and then to use these as the basis for a wider-ranging discussion on the limitations of the general method of interpreting Shakespeare's meaning through structural or metaphorical analogy which has been a major feature of the thesis which has been developed. The first area of correspondence involves Lady Macbeth, who has so far been given little attention with regards to the postulated analogy with Seneca's play. Certainly, it is reasonable to claim that, in her central role as the agent who goads Macbeth to exercise his manhood sinfully, she is diametrically opposed to her equivalent, Megara, who not only attempts to placate her husband's madness, but is herself the recipient of his murderous fury. This structural dissimilarity is significant and provides an important element in what is to be said concerning the necessary caution which needs to be applied in the search for structural analogues in the plays. Initially, however, it should be made clear that, despite this broad incompatibility with the mythical pattern of Seneca's play, Shakespeare does seem to link her in various ways to the action of Hercules Furens. Most obviously, there is the fact that Lady Macbeth shares in the parallel with Hercules in his anxiety to wash the

1) See Battenhouse, Shakespearean Tragedy. Its Art and Its Christian Premises, pp. 195-200.

Lady Macbeth is presented as an alter-ego of Macbeth; almost as his evil conscience, so that she is legitimately able to share in the metaphorical associations existing between the Macbeth character and the image of Herculean heroic sin. Even such a sympathetic interpretation, however, could not make a convincing case for contending that Macbeth is analogous to the tyrant Lycus and the chivalric Macduff analogous to his vanquisher Hercules and still maintain the integrity of the idea of a thoroughgoing formal linking of the protagonists of each play. It is, however, true to *say that both such analogies may be convincingly drawn.* In fact the second half of Macbeth, after the usurpation, is as structurally analogous to the first section of Hercules Furens as the first section of Macbeth (with its pattern of binary heroic action) is to the latter portion of Seneca's play. Briefly, the similarities are these. Lycus, has usurped the crown of Thebes by heroic though underhand means. In so doing he kills Creon, the rightful king, in an act of heroic violence involving decapitation.¹ Once in power Lycus reigns by force, hated by the subjects whom he frightens into subservience. The future arrival of Hercules is hoped for as heralding the inevitable retribution which will take place.² Meanwhile Lycus, like Macbeth self-consciously aware of his own tyrannical powers and precepts, but wishing to secure a more credible peace and political stability, begins to threaten the wife, children and father of Hercules.³ He is about to have Megara and her children slain by his

1) See lines 254-258.

2) See lines 270-279.

3) See lines 331-337 and 501-509.

followers when Hercules returns from Hades and, seeing himself as a divine avenger of sin, exacts a bloody revenge on Lycus, both for the maltreatment of his family and also for his more general political evil.¹ The act is celebrated as a purging of an unhappy land and as a religious consummation. The general resemblances with Macbeth here are obvious enough. Most startlingly exact, however, (apart from the fact that Lycus does not actually get the chance to kill Hercules's family) are the parallels between the situations facing Hercules and Macduff; himself an absent warrior who has gone away on a divine mission,² and in whose absence has his wife and children killed by the henchmen of a tyrant, and who, therefore, returns to his country heavily endorsed by the suggestion of his having supernatural sanction as a providential revenger so that his subsequent killing of the tyrant emerges as both a private revenge and a public purge, celebrated in religious terms despite the violence (the image of the bloody head) it involves.³ Like Hercules Macduff becomes an image of a morally aware agent of heroic retribution.⁴

In addition to this structural similarity, there are several specific associations linking Macduff with the idea of Hercules as man's champion against all forms of 'monsters'; and these associations serve to underline the validity of the structural analogy. Thus after being informed of the treatment of his family Hercules asks

1) See lines 634-639, and 895-918.

2) See IV.iii.102 ff.

3) Compare V.viii.54-75.

4) See Waith, "Manhood and Valor," pp.267-268.

why no one in his land would undertake to protect his family. His question is couched in a similar tone to that asked by the Christian Macduff when he wonders how heaven could have looked on and not taken their part.¹ When he finally does encounter Macbeth, not only does he use the term monster to describe him,² but he actually terms him "hell-hound."³ It is surely significant that Hercules Furens shows Cerberus to have been exactly the one unnatural monster which Hercules had had to defeat, even shown to be dragging him onto the stage with him as he enters.⁴ Linking Macbeth with Cerberus prior to his defeat not only gives him infernal associations, but links Macduff with Herculean conquest over evil.

Cumulatively, then such associations would seem to *prove* that the formal relationship between Hercules Furens and Macbeth does not operate at the level of exact character-to-character equivalences. One conclusion which can be drawn from this recognition is that while quite stringent or elaborate formal parallels must exist before one can feel justified in suggesting that an earlier work *exerted a formal influence on* a Shakespearean play, it should not be supposed (as the example provided by Hamlet would indicate) that existing structures would have constricted Shakespeare in his application of other features of that source into areas of his play where the logic of character interaction would forbid them to go. Thus, Hercules provides a model both for Macbeth and for Macduff.

1) See Hercules Furens 631-633., and Macbeth IV.iii.223-224.

2) V.viii.25.

3) V.viii.3.

4) Lines 592 ff.

Indeed, it might be argued that in making this split association between Hercules and two characters in his own play Shakespeare was displaying a highly developed sensitivity to the implications of *structure*. What has been outlined above demonstrates sufficiently well for the purposes of the point being made that Hercules Furens was, in terms of its character and plot development, a work comprising two distinct halves. In the first section Hercules, the chivalric champion against evil, returns to purge Thebes of the evil tyrant Lycus. This being accomplished, the plot turns to investigate the situation in which Hercules becomes mad and, in direct opposition to his earlier heroic persona, emerges as a hero deeply stained by the sin of a wicked, un-chivalric, killing. Thus, in a real sense, the binary form of the play presents two heroic metaphors: one showing the hero as an image of human virtu and moral dynamism, the other showing the hero as an image of evil, of humanity tainted by unbearable sin. It is to Shakespeare's credit that he not only recognized the possibilities inherent in the idea of having a hero degenerate from good to bad by using the technique of juxtaposing one scene of heroic goodness with one scene of heroic evil, but that he also saw that essentially the first half of the play was a retributive tragedy which was formally analogous to the one which he intended to have overtake his own heroic sinner once he had indeed made the Herculean transition from good to evil. In this respect Macduff becomes as exact a formal parallel to the early Hercules as the more divided Macbeth became for the whole of Hercules's formal

experience in Seneca's play.

In so far as Seneca's play provides any material which would allow the reader to rationalize Hercules's sudden change of heroic persona in psychological terms, then it has been shown that Shakespeare not only responded to Hercules as a metaphor of heroic goodness and, later, as one of heroic evil, but that he also (seeing the possibility that the latter was inherent in the former) may have found evidence in the play for seeing Hercules as an image of the warrior hero's typical moral ambiguity. Thus Macbeth also provides an example, or a metaphor, of the way in which that which is good in a man, for example manliness, is also the same quality which, when it is looked at or used differently, defines that which is bad in a man. Given this comparatively stringent series of associations between Hercules and Macbeth, whereby the formal patterns of the experiences of each hero invoke quite complex attitudes towards warrior heroism, it can be wondered whether some of the intuitions which are revealed by the experience of the protagonists might not attach themselves to other characters who exemplify similar attitudes but who do not share the same formal progression as the Hercules/Macbeth metaphor. Certainly Lady Macbeth was seen to be deliberately associated with Herculean heroic evil despite the fact that she is not herself structurally analogous to him. Likewise, then, might not the predominantly 'good' Macduff be thought to share in the evil, or at least the ambivalence, of the Lycus/Hercules/Macbeth association when, like them, he involves himself in the bloody decapitation of a fellow human being? Similarly does not the same lack of humanity

attach itself to "good Siward" when he shows himself to be as sanguine about the death of his son as is Hercules following his own remorseless killing of Lycus?¹

If this can be granted, it would seem to suggest that a tension can exist in works in which Shakespeare can be felt to have made use of pre-existing artistic models to provide structures for his own dramas. The tension arises over his adoption of often quite extensive formal parallels and the meanings that they imply and his complementary, more flexible, less quasi-allegorical, incorporation of generic heroic metaphors (either taken from the same model or from the heroic tradition generally) which, through image or association, become poetically assimilated with any character or aspects of character wherever appropriate. This latter technique has been found to apply not only to Macbeth but also to Hamlet; where the evil metaphor of morally blind heroic savagery provided by Pyrrhus was found, quite apart from any formal parallels his Virgilian experience may have had with Hamlet, to attach itself to whichever character who wholly or partially partook of the nature implied by Pyrrhus. Obviously, however, the relative degree to which the metaphor becomes appropriate to any given character must be a matter for individual moral evaluation: it would, for example, be quite absurd to suggest that Macduff is as morally ambiguous a character as Macbeth is revealed as being in the early scenes simply because his killing of Macbeth makes him share to an extent in the moral ambiguity of all warrior heroism.

1)V.viii.39-53.

Where formal or structural parallels can be discerned it is hoped that it would be accepted that these can be of help in interpreting Shakespeare's artistry and its implicit meanings. It will be felt by some, however, that the idea of heroic metaphors contributes little more to the understanding of Shakespeare's heroic types than could be achieved through means of the individual moral evaluation of character. It would be suggested, however, that what the previous chapters have sought to establish is indeed true; and that medieval art, Christian thought and Renaissance criticism all habituated the Elizabethan mind to see the literary warrior hero figure as a symbol, an archetype, or-what was, perhaps, a more complex metaphor-an idealized persona, which could be made to represent general truths about the nature of actual historical manifestations of the type, and also about the nature of the less-than-purely-symbolic common run of humanity. Thus, the heroic metaphors really did have meaning for the dramatists and, also, for their characters. They represented absolute standards of varying types and with differing implications against which to measure, evaluate and, it is suggested, construct characters. In this last respect, remembering the quotation from Proser at the beginning of the chapter, metaphor itself implies both form and meaning because a character shapes his actions according to his self-image and an artist shapes plots to allow that image legitimate spheres of action.

The earlier chapters of this study concentrated on the outlining of the development of one particular heroic metaphor: that through which the degenerate warrior hero

came to be representative of the self-love and self-aggrandizement based in folly which is sin. This was done partially because it was far less widely acknowledged than the medieval image which is its opposite, the chivalric warrior for God, or for goodness. More fundamentally, however, this image was chosen because it concentrates far more unwaveringly than any other on the spiritual, moral and eschatological implications for the Christian of the ethos of the hero. Typically, from Homer onwards, the warrior hero has been seen as a temporal metaphor of greatness; one which, even in chivalric literature, achieved greatness as a humanistic affirmation of man's power rather than God's. It was hoped, therefore, to analyse some of the ways in which the Elizabethan drama contained within itself the tensions which arose when classical, chivalric and Renaissance heroic/humanistic images and forms combined in that 'age of syncretism and eclecticism' with images and forms created by a tradition which assessed the hero in the more-or-less anti-humanistic terms of the city of God as opposed to the city of man. Apart from the obvious thickening and deepening of the heroic tradition involved, whereby a single heroic figure might be found to have metaphorical associations and meanings on many, sometimes conflicting, levels, one conclusion which can be drawn from the investigation is the extent to which the medieval Christian anti-heroic absorbed and incorporated the anti-heroic intuitions which were always at the centre of the classical heroic. In this way, for example, Ovidian gothic horror in Titus merged with Christian-moral

injunctions against the taking of revenge.

Titus proved, in fact, to be an interesting starting point from which to observe this process, not merely because it was written early on in Shakespeare's career, but because it was in itself set in the obscure hinterland between the pagan and the Christian worlds. Perhaps because of this as much as because of immaturity, Shakespeare in Titus displayed some uncertainty in his merging of morality play forms and Christian absolutes with classical ideals of heroic manhood and the Roman body politic. Even in Titus, however, the lesson was learned that while Shakespeare was quite capable of merging classical forms and metaphors with Christian forms and metaphors, he did not so glibly homogenize the Christian milieu and classical civilization. From the beginning there was the indication that form and meaning were to be defined by context and content. To be more specific, it has been suggested that Shakespeare, throughout his career, developed and clarified the awareness that classical forms and metaphors were developed against the spiritual and moral confusions and limitations of the pagan world; so that, while they could be readily made applicable to situations facing Christian warriors, they must always be interpreted or revised in the light of the differing absolutes available to the Christian. Thus, Macbeth acts of his free will in a universe governed by providence; and those facts make him a far worse man than the Hercules with whom he is analogous. Similarly, when Christian forms and metaphors are applied to classical civilizations, it is done with the

acknowledgement that the pagan did not have access to the Christian hope of salvation, and so he is that much more restricted to the values of temporality; and while this often renders the pagan less morally admirable than his Christian counterpart, it often makes his deluded propensity to sin more understandable, and his fall from goodness much less extreme, less profoundly minimizing. Hector, like Macbeth, decides on heroic action in the knowledge that it is morally wrong, but he, unlike Macbeth, cannot do so in the knowledge that by doing so he substitutes an earthly crown for a heavenly one. Hector may only substitute one mundane imperative, moral goodness, for another, temporal honour. Thus, the final assertion which would be made would be that when investigating any potential cross-fertilization of classical and Christian forms in Shakespeare, it should always be considered expedient to assess the critical productiveness of the idea that Shakespeare was actively concerned to show that, quite literally, the classical and Christian civilizations were worlds apart.

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