SHAKESPEARE'S ANTI-FARCE:

NEOPLATONIC AND CHRISTIAN ECLECTICISM IN

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

by

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ABSTRACT

An examination of image clusters and language in *The Comedy of Errors* reveals the intellectual and poetic coherence of Shakespeare's play. Throughout *Errors*, Shakespeare maintains a dialectic between self-consciously presented farcical convention, epitomized by contingency, and transcendent values. The play's transcendent impulse finds expression through allegory which draws definition from neoplatonic fable, metaphysics, and rhetorical method. Biblical subject matter and Christian hermeneutics are ecletically employed to further the play's tendency to allegory.

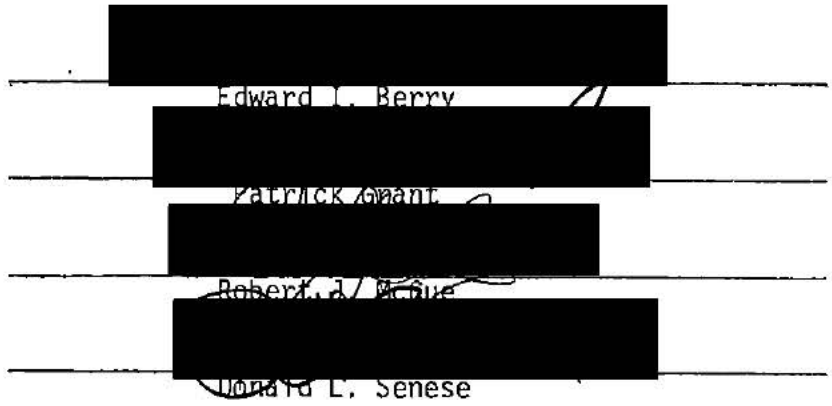
The Introduction presents the argument's scope, problems, and rationale. Chapter I establishes the overarching structural and thematic context for the play which, in the first part, forwards correlatives for Egeon's family-splitting shipwreck in the "fall" part of the triadic cycle of generation exemplified in Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*. In particular, Christianized interpretation of the Aristophanic primal androgyne illustrates how Egeon's shipwreck parallels mankind's loss in Genesis. Perceptual and identity confusions in Ephesus echo Ficino's metaphysical perspective on the fall. Eros, the restorative force in the Platonic fable, is essential to the reunion in *Errors* where it exists in a complex relation with Christian depictions of love. Whereas the first part of the chapter examines the play's ambivalent reference to the neoplatonic descent as division, the second part

considers the concurrent process of embodiment,

Chapter II focuses on the play's antithetical fluid symbolism which constitutes the neoplatonic medium of transformation. The first part emphasizes negative aspects of flux in the text while the latter part stresses latent positive implications.

The final chapter examines contemporary ideas of time and the play's temporal conflict as part of the problem of perception within the sea of time and space. Shakespeare's self-conscious attention to time provides insight into the reflexive use of the dramatic medium dependent upon time. The Conclusion embeds this last point in the wider context of the study as a whole which leads us to view *Errors* as a sustained play within a play which implicates every man in the farcical world of contingency through recurrent allusion to the fall and its effects.

Examiners:



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INTRODUCTION

In recent years *The Comedy of Errors* has undergone something of a critical revaluation. The newer studies still find it necessary to distinguish themselves from a yet prevalent disposition to see *Errors* as simply a rollicking farce or, less benignly, as an awkward apprentice work which collapses somewhere between the genres of farce and romance.[1] Apart from the valuable short re-examinations stands T. W. Baldwin's massive speculation on the many literary and conceptual echoes in *Errors*. However, the impression left by Baldwin's labour is that Shakespeare was an intellectual jackdaw who built his nest from random strands of thought.[2] There has not been previously, to my knowledge, an extended work which argues the intellectual and poetic coherence of *Errors*.

In forwarding the play's unified poetic vision, we will encounter what Barbara Freedman has deemed the two major hindrances to such an outlook: "the purpose of the farcical confusion of the twins' identities in the main plot, and second, its relation to their father's progress in the frame plot from separation to reunion with his family, and from crime and debt to redemption."[3] My evaluation of these questions will reflect an interest in Shakespeare's intellectual milieu more than does the psychoanalytic approach of Freedman. One conclusion attendant upon my approach will be that Shakespeare, in his self-conscious use of farcical conventions, instead of producing a mixed form, actually metamorphizes that genre.

The purpose of this paper is to offer a comprehensive reading of *Errors* through an analysis of the play's major image and symbol clusters.

The interrelation of these clusters suggests a schema which entails the play's dialectical use of language. At its simplest, this dialectic comprises *farcical* and *anti-farcical* polarities. Ultimately, the comedy aims to mitigate the carefully arrayed tensions between these two poles by subsuming the farcical constituents under a widened perspective of the anti-farcical.

Certainly farce is the matrix for *Errors*. However, not only does the play's action derive substantially from the Roman farce of Plautus, as generally accepted, but the very conventions of the farce genre lend material for Shakespeare's speculations. The farcical, epitomized by a world of contingency, is explored in *Errors* as an oddly mimetic picture of the world. Contingency is typically manifested in the play as mistaken identity, behaviour spurred by surface appearances, casual violence, coincidence in the plot's complication and denouement, and the apparently capricious use of language. Against this world of attenuated meaning the play's unfarcical elements are aligned.

The play's anti-farcical movement proceeds from its tendencies to allegory and psychology. As allegory, *Errors* is philosophical and religious, but this tendency is under pressure from a farcical depiction of the world's contingency. The stable, referential world of allegory is eclectically drawn from neoplatonic fable and metaphysics, Genesis, the Pauline Epistles, as well as from commonplace typology which also points us to a set of transcendent values.

The psychologizing features of *Errors* result from Shakespeare's interest in his characters' internal conflicts, which are treated

seriously. The play's psychological dimension, therefore, works against both farce and allegory insofar as these simplify human individuals. But *Errors* as a whole is enriched by situations wherein the play's psychological complexity draws direction from its allegoric structures.

Although the textual analogues and particular analysis used here necessarily differ from Barbara K. Lewalski's treatment of *Much Ado about Nothing*, I believe her description of the general conceptual framework applies also for *Errors*:

> *Much Ado* sets forth, I believe, a complex theme concerning the various levels of knowledge and love in relation to the confusions of appearance and reality in this world. The theme is grounded in neoplatonism, fused, as was usual in the English Renaissance, with Christian concepts. Such ranges of meaning are evoked through patterns of action, structural contrast, language, and visual image, giving the play both intellectual vigor and structural cohesion.[4]

My reading of *Errors* will be made with reference to Renaissance neoplatonic and Christian knowledge which was eclectically adapted in Shakespeare's play. More specifically, I am suggesting that Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, when seen in conjunction with Genesis and the Pauline Epistles, provides a useful context for viewing the play.[5] These works supply a focus, not a Procrustean bed, for my reading. Although my aim is not to prove what Shakespeare read, I will suggest how Shakespeare could have utilized ambient knowledge; the rationale for this approach rests upon whether or not the correspondences are plausible and enrich our overall picture of the play, without

bypassing the disparate elements of the text.

Historical parallels to the text give no more authority to interpret a poetic work than if the analysis were solely drawn from, say, modern sociological or archetypal theory. With a historical orientation, however, there is the suggestion of a more immediate, organic relation to the poet's vocabulary, the semantic content of which is shaped by the age's ideas and ways of knowledge. But strictly speaking, how any critic understands a particular word in context requires an evaluative act which, presumably, entails historical semantic knowledge.

The problems of bringing historical materials to a reading of this poetic work are abundant. That biblical correlatives, for example, occur throughout Shakespeare's works is not much disputed--Richmond Noble's *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge* has been followed by innumerable studies demonstrating this fact. Yet there is much less agreement on what Shakespeare's beliefs actually were. In an age of legislated church attendance, redolent with Christian thought and vocabulary, a writer could be an infidel and yet draw extensively from faith's images and structures. Even direct coincidence of passages would not automatically define Shakespeare's use of those sources; he could, of course, utilize an allusion as literal truth, provisional metaphor, thematic key, incidental image, ironic comment, or some combination thereof.

When dealing with possible neoplatonic elements in Shakespeare's plays, establishing source and use is especially problematic. There is little agreement on what Shakespeare read or thought with regard to the

popular philosophy of his day. Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* was indirectly the wellspring for the Elizabethan surge of literary love philosophy, and there is evidence for Ficino's direct influence on writers as diverse as Spenser, Colet, Chapman, Burton and Raleigh.[6] Shakespeare could have had access to one of the many continental editions of Ficino's *Commentary*, and may have read it.[7] Despite the ideas and passages frequently used to elucidate Shakespeare's use of knowledge, I am aware of no strong claims that the analogous elements could have come only *directly* from Ficino.[8] The difficulty, in part, derives from the Florentine's widespread imitation throughout Europe. In sixteenth century poetry his philosophy of love and beauty is mixed with earlier Petrarchan conventions and a later courtly aestheticism. But, directly or indirectly, Ernst Cassirer states:

> His commentary on Plato's *Symposium* was a source-book of English poetics throughout the whole of the sixteenth century. English literature found here the real philosophical justification of poetry....[9]

In metaphysics and cosmology, where Ficino's Platonized Christianity may be construed to influence Shakespeare's thought, evidence can be even more misleading than in the more secular realm of aesthetics. An attempt to delineate sources can dissolve into the abyss of the past:

> All mediaeval thought up to the twelfth century was Neoplatonic rather than Aristotelian; and such popular authors of the Middle Ages as Augustine, Boethius, and the Pseudo-Dionysius carried Christian Neoplatonism to England as they did to all other parts of Western Europe. The Chalcidius *Timaeus*, which was the basis of Neoplatonic

> cosmology of the Middle Ages, was known in England at least as early as the tenth century.

Sears Jayne continues this capsule history and concludes:

> Any work of literature in the English Renaissance involving theological or cosmological Platonism would probably have had all the marks of Neoplatonism even if Ficino had never lived.[10]

Yet, our present focus on Ficino's *Commentary* is neither arbitrary nor rests solely on its undeniable importance to Shakespeare's age. There are interesting correspondences from so many aspects of the work that it provides an important exterior text to understanding the organization of *Errors*. Briefly put, I suggest that elements of the story, imagery, symbolism, and the structures for self-development found in Ficino's *Commentary* can also be seen in *Errors*. Whether directly or indirectly the ideas, lore, and ways of knowledge promulgated by the *Commentary* radically transform Shakespeare's Plautus.

More particularly, I see as especially important to Shakespeare's comedy the *Symposium*'s Aristophanic fable of the androgynous man. Ficino's development of the parable of the binary, Janus-faced creature accommodates a double-faceted Eros, spiritual and natural, as an ambivalent motive force. This duality corresponds to the spiritual and natural dispositions proper to each individual soul. The *Symposium* provides the seed for Ficino's humanistic exaltation of man as the unique *nexus* "which connects the higher and lower things with each other and satisfies the demand for a middle term in the universe...."[11] The individual soul's progression towards self-knowledge can be

understood as a dialectical reflection upon the two worlds. The dramatic potential for this method is evident; indeed, elsewhere Ficino can speak of creativity in both life and art as a dialectical way of knowledge:

> Similarly, and last of all, art is concerned with uniting and dividing. Accordingly, divine and natural things and human skills, as they are made in their issuing forth, so they are preserved in their turning back by uniting and dividing; and the same goes for the management of life. So, since the manner of knowing ought to follow on the manner of the things it knows, it is quite appropriate that the mistress of the sciences, dialectic, always regards the one and the many equally, and alternates them in turn in the proper way now by dividing, now by uniting.[12]

A similar dialectical method, I will argue, is reflected in Shakespeare's dramatic tensions set forth by the divided world of *The Comedy of Errors*.

The relationship of natural to spiritual understanding expressed in the *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* is complex and ambiguous, and I attempt to represent neither a comprehensive nor an exclusive picture of Ficino's thought. Rather, I am concerned with what Shakespeare appears to have found intriguing in its cluster of ideas--as evidenced by the details of the play.

On one hand, there is in the *Commentary* the familiar neoplatonic notion of the "ladder of love," whereby, step by step, the natural understanding and desire, or "appetite," are displaced by spiritual knowledge and love. However, this purgative and transcendent vision of

development is not altogether consonant with the *Commentary*'s binary, Aristophanic image of man. In the latter case, man's fallen state is portrayed in the division of carnal vision from spiritual vision, and understanding is restricted by over-dependence on the physical modality. Yet, it is man's "natural light" impelled by Eros, which reaches toward the heavenly hemisphere of understanding. The unique perfection of man is attained *not* in surmounting natural understanding, but by its *re-union* with its spiritual companion. Ultimately, this binary image of man points toward the Florentine priest's orthodoxy in matters such as the incarnation of Christ and the resurrection of the body.[13] Although Ficino derives much of his system from St. Augustine, the Florentine's particular incarnational picture of perfected man lends itself less easily to ascetic interpretation.

Such a picture of man could have important implications for Shakespeare's artistic methods as well as for his thematic concerns. These may be best seen by seriously questioning what Barbara Lewalski has offered as polar possibilities for a play which has thematic parallels with *Errors*.

> In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare's incorporation of certain religious significances into his dramatic fiction rather resembles the typological treatment of some classical stories and completely reverses the Platonic emphasis, being incarnational rather than transcendent in focus. In Shakespeare's play the particular story, the created fiction, draws into itself and embodies larger meanings and significances but the focus remains always on the dramatic microcosm: the word is made flesh and continues to dwell among us,[14]

If we substitute (as did Shakespeare's age) Ficino's neoplatonic thought for notions "Platonic," there is no longer a simple transcendental disdain for the flesh and the word,

Shakespeare, I concur, does display considerable typological techniques in *Errors*. For example, Noah's flood is both a negative and positive type for Christian baptism, and Shakespeare, we will see, uses this knowledge which is so common as to be included in the baptismal rite in the Elizabethan prayer book. Clearly, this manner of making mankind's spiritual progress intelligible in world history is designed to bring spiritual perspectives to one's own individual life.[15]

For *Errors*, however, the internal dialectic of the binary soul, in accord with Ficino's epistemological emphasis, will reveal an even more personal and dramatic play of image and symbol. Thus, when Antipholus in his waterdrop soliloquy reflects upon his self-division and personal inundation, we respond first to his individual predicament rather than to the figural significance which will also prove important. How Shakespeare could achieve a sustained interplay of these serious considerations in a play adapted from Plautus will become apparent as my argument proceeds.

Finally, *humour* is a particularly unmistakable dimension of the play which, nevertheless, cannot be ignored in these preliminary remarks. A study such as the present one is likely to incur an objection: "Why stress serious concerns in a play which has as its first concern the evoking of laughter, laughter which is substantially brought about by farce techniques?" A flippant counterclaim might be that Shakespeare's

plays were written to bring income and therefore not worthy of further consideration. Yet this offhand reply does point out that there can be different strata of motivation for the same undertaking. More to the point, though this study does not scrutinize how the play's humour works, I in no way wish to deny its importance. Rather, studies which stress the operation of humour might better emerge from the fields of stagecraft or psychology.

The justification for my approach must come from an attentive look at the play itself: does the play exhibit a careful patterning of themes, images, and structures which reflect the dramatist's "serious" intent? Yet, emphatically, I do not suggest that seriousness can, or should, be divorced from the farcical and physical humour of the play; the details of my argument depend upon the proximity of the two dimensions.

The word "farce" itself, it will be recalled, means "stuffing" and stems from the interludes in English morality plays. In the later productions, comic and bawdy figures, such as "Vice," become an integral part of the protagonists' psychic pilgrimages.[16] Shakespeare's self-conscious manipulation of this humour, I will suggest, reflects a marked development from that genre.

Shakespeare, I believe, also draws from the *discordia concors* mode of Renaissance discourse manifested by *serio ludere*, "jesting in earnest."[17] As Richard Cody expresses it: "Poetic theology always implies *serio ludere*."[18] The paradigmatic example of this way of seeing things must be Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's* Symposium itself. Despite

useful modern comment on the conceptual implications of that work, I can not imagine Shakespeare (or Ficino) consulting the Aristophanic fable without a smile. In soliciting more letters from the priest, Lorenzo de' Medici compliments Ficino on his delightful yoking of humour and seriousness--a yoking which might well be recalled when reading *Errors*:

> What makes me so long for your letters is that in them humour appears so mixed with gravity that if considered lightheartedly everything seems full of humour, if seriously, then they seem more serious than anything else.[19]

In *Errors*, the humour of surfaces, we will see, is not only adaptable to serious considerations; it is especially suited to Shakespeare's epistemological investigations which maintain a double vision of the world,

CHAPTER I

The Neoplatonic Cycle

Part A: "Splitted in the Midst"

In this chapter, I will begin to suggest how the two plots of *The Comedy of Errors* merge to evoke a cyclic mental pilgrimage of descent and ascent. This soul journey which joins the two plots is achieved through two interrelated methods. Firstly, I will argue that Egeon's shipwreck and the split mast can be seen in terms of an archetypal neo-platonic fall into the world of multiplicity. This vision of the fall, and the subsequent recovery, has precedents in Ficino's popular *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*. Secondly, since the Aristophanic fable in the *Commentary* was seen as analogous to the fall in Genesis, the two plots in *Errors* bear a typological relationship to one another. That is, Shakespeare relates themes of Egeon's frame story to those of the Ephesian setting just as themes established in Genesis were habitually seen to be recapitulated and fulfilled in Paul's Ephesians.

Far from simple allegory, this structuring of the play allows Shakespeare to explore dramatically the psychological problem of discerning truth in a world of illusion. This epistemological problem is directly related to the establishing of identities in the play. We will see these epistemological and ontological concerns are also central to Ficino's thought. A brief consideration of the problem of assigning genre will prove useful for framing the coincidences of theme and structuring that occur with *Errors* and Ficino's *Commentary*.

Despite the play's many un-Plautine features, there is yet an obstacle to understanding *The Comedy of Errors* as something other than a farce. This problem of assigning genre is merely highlighted by Gwyn Williams's interesting essay, "*The Comedy of Errors* Rescued from

Tragedy."[1] A major difficulty to the claim, given by Williams, that the play finds a comic resolution to a potentially tragic situation, may be seen if we try to imagine the initial lines of *Errors* as a kind of chiming paraphrase of Macbeth's last grim resolve in his urging Macduff to "lay on":

> Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall,
> And by doom of death and woes and all. (I,i,1-2)

What we may perceive as lacking from the context of this couplet is the sense of a tragic end to some established and conscious wrongdoing. If, however, we look at the governing structures and the details of *Errors* from a neoplatonic perspective, the play gains a coherence which will ultimately suggest how Shakespeare overleaps standard assignments of genre.

Egeon's self-proclaimed "fall" could have more profound overtones if we consider a wider context for tragedy defined by Terence Hawkes:

> A different conception of 'falling' may be more revealing however, especially if it can be allowed that the idea of a greater and farther-reaching 'Fall' lies behind such a notion for a society whose values and metaphors spring from those of Christianity. The concept of falling from a 'good' position to a 'bad' one may then be said to have as a corollary that of falling from a state of unity to one of dis-unity, since unity in Christian terms presupposes unity with God and the state is one of grace, whereas dis-unity involves the idea of separation from God in a state of disgrace. The notion of separation presupposes that of division, diffraction, breaking-up. In Christian terms (as in those of other religions) a situation in which division pertains suffers by comparison with one in which there is perfect unity, as that of disgrace

> suffers by comparison with its counterpart. The latter, by definition, precedes the former, and the change, the 'fall' from one state to its opposite, is a tragic one.
>
> One of the most frequent adumbrations of the idea of Man's mind in the Elizabethan period grows in part out of a fundamental implication of the Neo-platonic philosophy: that whatever has the lowest degree of reality on the level of existence must also have the lowest degree of value on the level of morality.[2]

Hawkes suggests a number of interrelated features which I will discuss in the context of *Errors*: the "Fall" in relation to Christian history and personal experience, the decline from unity to disunity, and division and separation. His last statement on the relation of drama to a neoplatonized moral perspective suggests ways in which the present comedy may be viewed.

Within the Christian tradition of a moral emphasis on conscious responsibility, there runs a neoplatonic cross-current which stresses the metaphysical polarities of reality and appearance, being and non-being, knowledge and ignorance, and the One and the Many. When immorality is conceived in terms of deprivation, the word "evil" loses much of its customary meaning: the near Manichean opposition of good and evil, objectified by an adversarial God and Satan, is diminished. Diminished, too, is one source of dramatic tension: if morality becomes subsumed to a theory of knowledge as outlined by Socrates in *The Republic*, a man does not do evil knowingly; evil is the inability to distinguish what is true. In *Errors*, Shakespeare shifts the dramatic interplay to the tension inherent in a human metaphysical struggle to discern the real from the apparent. Central to my first section is how the play's

metaphysically grounded psychology is related to a dialectical opposition of the One and the Many, and to the process of division and re-union. In *Errors*, the event which suggests an archetype for viewing division in this way is also the play's material cause of conflict--Egeon's mast "splitted in the midst."

If one attempts to advance Egeon's story of his "fall," which begins with his shipwreck, as figuring a wider notion of "the Fall," as previously suggested, there are few obvious details which make us think of Adam and Eve. True, Egeon can say of his early life with Emilia, "With her I liv'd in joy; our wealth increas'd" (I.i.39), but the many particulars he recounts submerge intimations of Eden. At this point, it may be useful to step back and offer an alternate version of the Fall and suggest how it could relate to Shakespeare's overall dramatic structure.

There are two important notions of development in Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* which correspond to the formal development of Shakespeare's comedy. One is found in Pausanias's speech on the sequence of generation; this process constitutes a triad as it flows out, back, and finally rejoins its original source. This configuration provides one way of viewing Shakespeare's three-part cyclic structure which may be superimposed on that of Pausanias: Aristophanes's parable of unity, division, and reunion. Moreover, Aristophanes's creation fable is one which commentators, before and after Ficino, saw as parallel to the Genesis story; thus, the Christian saga of creation, separation and reunion (or Edenic perfection, post-lapsarian history,

and redemption) could be seen to co-exist with the neoplatonic triadic movement.

Ficino repeats the Aristophanic fable in his *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* as follows:

> In the beginning, there were three kinds of human beings, not only the two which we have now, male and female, but also a third which was a combination of both. Moreover, the appearance of each person was whole and round, having a round back and sides, four hands, and an equal number of legs. Likewise he had two faces, completely identical, and joined on a round neck. The male sex was born from the sun, the female from the earth. The bi-sexuals came from the moon, and because of this, they were proud of spirit and robust of body; wherefore they tried to give battle to the gods and ascend to heaven. Therefore, Jupiter cut each one lengthwise, splitting each one, like those who cut eggs with a hair, and threatened that if ever again they were seen revolting in pride against the gods, he would again divide them in the same way. After the nature of man was thus divided, each part desired its other half, so they ran to each other, and throwing their arms about each other, they embraced, trying to recover their original form. Moreover, they would have perished of privation and inactivity if God had not furnished them a means of intercourse.[4]

Ficino extracts from this droll and fertile fable the inevitable allegorical centre:

> The gist of our interpretation will be this: "Men" (that is, the souls of men) "originally" (that is, when they were created by God), "were whole" and equipped with two lights, one natural, and the other supernatural; by the natural light they beheld inferior and co-equal things; and by the supernatural light, superior things. "They aspired to equal God"; they reverted to the natural light alone. Hereupon "they were divided," and lost their supernatural light, were reduced to the natural light alone, and

> fell immediately into bodies, "If they become too proud, they will again be divided"; that is, if they trust too much to natural ability, that innate and natural light which remains to them will also be extinguished in some way.[5]

In accordance with a neoplatonic explanation of individual evil, Ficino stresses the epistemological and ontological dimensions of this creation fable. The psychic history of both mankind and the individual is explored through this fable, and Shakespeare, I suggest, engages both levels of history in the framing story given by Egeon in the first scene of *Errors*.

The fable and its metaphysical core suggest a context within which to view Egeon's emblematically precise distribution of the two sets of twins, his wife and himself, as they are bound to the mast:

> My wife, more careful for the latter-born,
> Had fasten'd him unto a small spare mast,
> Such as sea-faring men provide for storms;
> To him one of the other twins was bound,
> Whilst I had been like heedful of the other.
> The children thus dispos'd, my wife and I,
> Fixing our eyes on whom our care was fix'd,
> Fasten'd ourselves at either end the mast,
> And floating straight, obedient to the stream,
> Was carried towards Corinth, as we thought. (I.i.78-87)

Spatially, the physical arrangement appears thus:

Egeon Antipholus S.	Antipholus E. Emilia
Dromio S.	Dromio E.

In this symmetrical image Shakespeare parallels the Aristophanic primal beings which represent both sexual and asexual unions. When the mast

snaps, echoes of the cataclysm resonate throughout the play's action and imagery. This archetypal division establishes both the cause and pattern of interrelated separations which follow: husband is divided from his wife, Antipholus is divided from his twin (replicated by the Dromios), and the sons are separated from their parents. In the play's main action there is commercial, intercivic, and legal strife. Furthermore, master is divided from servant and, at the personal level, there is self-division which also implies the individual's separation from God. Finally, the drama may be seen to overcome the multiplying divisions in accordance with Ficino's restorative cycle of love.

With this brief outline of the possible phylogenic analogue to Egeon's sorrow, we may now revise the original objection that Egeon's losses, though pitiable, reveal no concern on Shakespeare's part with flawed character or moral psychology's interplay with circumstance. Egeon, however, takes pains to reinforce the original objection:

> Yet, that the world may witness that my end
> Was wrought by nature, not by vile offence,
> I'll utter what my sorrow gives me leave. (I.i,33-35)

Egeon sees the Duke as merely a player in the final event of an unfortunate causal chain begun years before; the chance events exclude moral responsibility, Egeon maintains. To make intelligible the complex plot, Egeon's lines announce the extensive exposition required. Egeon's detailed history, however, is hardly more realistic than the play's main plot, and his whole story has romance echoes which prefigure the shipwrecks of *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*. Romance elements of longing

and pathetic loss are a clear departure from the farce *The Menaechmi*, the main source plot. Egeon displays the polarities of feeling indigenous to the romance quest theme, and bewails the arbitrary play of "the fates" and "the gods" in the bewildering, bitter-sweet circumstance:

> Fortune had left to both of us alike
> What to delight in, what to sorrow for...(I.i.105-06),

"Delight" and "sorrow" take their positions on either side of the caesura, and throughout Egeon's story the heavy use of the syntactical devices of caesura and chiasmus mimic the broken mast. Yet Egeon's self-description as innocent victim deserves further scrutiny.

Deliberate deception by any of the characters in *Errors* is very limited, and the limited deception that does occur is usually precipitated by an earlier perceptual error. Although mistaken identity alone is sufficient to complicate the play's action, any attempt to explain the characters' lack of mendacity by claiming the play is simply a farce, is thwarted by a careful reading--as different critics demonstrate.[6] Neither does *Errors* reveal a novice dramatist's inability to develop complex characters (*Richard III* was written near this time), but rather, the play offers a basically neoplatonic vision of moral error. This vision is first established in the framing story of Egeon.

There is a necessary background to understanding Egeon's place in the play. It has long been recognized that Shakespeare has Christianized the Plautine sources for *Errors*.[7] In particular, Paul's journey and shipwreck in Acts, and his Ephesian epistle are cited. But, as

Freedman acknowledges, their importance to the play has only partially been appreciated.[8] In addition, Genesis is joined to Shakespeare's neoplatonic vision in an inextricable manner. Richmond Noble demonstrates Shakespeare's continuing fascination with the biblical creation story and Adam and Eve; numerous scattered allusions in Shakespeare's works reveal, when collected, "there is hardly a phrase of the story as narrated in the first three chapters that has been missed."[9] Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that the association of the biblical creation with the *Symposium* androgyne was not an obscure aberration in the Renaissance.

Edgar Wind explains the neoplatonic adjunct to the Adam's rib story:

> In the Bible itself, the transition from the singular to the plural is mysteriously abrupt in Genesis i,27:'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.' Philo and Origen inferred from this passage --and their authority ranked high with Renaissance Platonists--that the first and original man was androgynous; that the division into male and female belonged to a later and lower state of creation; and that when all created things return to their maker, the unfolded and divided state of man will be re-infolded in the divine essence.[10]

The story of the androgynous Adam was so well known to the Renaissance commentators on Genesis that Arnold Williams, from his extensive survey, states that "of the commentaries I have read, only Ainsworth's contains no notice of it."[11] Williams also notes a few of the other English writers who allude to the notion, including Cleveland, Milton, Seldon and Browne. In addition, Leon Ebreo's popular *Dialoghi D'Amore* and

Geoffrey Fenton's *Monophylo, drawne into English* suggest that the story of primal androgyne indicates that Plato had copied Moses. Pico's "celestial Adam" derives from the yoked duality of Ficino's primal hermaphrodite: "For it is the perogative of celestial souls that they fulfil simultaneously the two functions of mental contemplation and physical care, without either of them obstructing or impeding the other."[12]

Shakespeare's physical binding of Emilia and Egeon, and his depiction of the breaking mast, invokes this neoplatonic and biblical hybrid of man's original unity and fracture. Traditionally, this fracture signals a disordering of the will and diminished powers of discernment. Accordingly, at the Duke's continued prodding, Egeon recounts his version of the "merciless" action of "the gods" in a manner which is self-revelatory:

> For ere the ships could meet by twice five leagues,
> We were encounter'd by a mighty rock,
> Which being violently borne upon,
> Our helpful ship was splitted in the midst;
> So that in this unjust divorce of us,
> Fortune had left to both of us alike
> What to delight in, what to sorrow for...(I.i.100-06).

Egeon's apparent innocence, despite his chance transgression of the letter of Syracusian law, would seem to deny any representation of original guilt. But though we are meant to sympathize with Egeon's plight, there are disquieting features in his continued reluctance to recollect the history of his downfall. Egeon's plaint against "hap," "Fortune," "the gods," "misfortunes," and "mishaps," leads T. W. Baldwin to devote a chapter to "Hapless Egeon" where he rightly underlines the commonplace

link between fortune and providence:

> But whether Shakespeare alludes to it or not, the doctrine of God's providence is always there, and everyone in his day knew it was there. Some things do not need to be continually repeated.[13]

However, Baldwin ignores the irony inherent in Shakespeare's giving the complaining Egeon this silence. Providence is neither "merciless" (I,i.99) nor "unjust" (I,i.104) and Egeon's despairing reluctance to speak on his own behalf denies a benign heavenly design, a design reinforced, nevertheless, by the play's Christianized settings, language, and happy conclusion.

Egeon's reluctance to acknowledge and speak of the familial separation returns to haunt him in the play's final scene as he attempts to stimulate the son's memory of the father:

> Not know my voice? O time's extremity,
> Hast thou so crack'd and splitted my poor tongue
> In seven short years, that here my only son
> Knows not my feeble key of untun'd cares?
> ...
> Yet hath my night of life some memory;
> My wasting lamps some fading glimmer left;
> My dull deaf ears a little use to hear--
> All these old witnesses, I cannot err,
> Tell me thou art my son Antipholus. (V.i.307-18)

The mast "splitted in the midst" and Egeon's tongue "crack'd and splitted" equate the play's ontological and epistemological concerns with one cataclysm: the chasm in perception and communication is associated with, and a direct descendent of, the archetypal split. This continuity in the two uses of the word "split" is reinforced by neoplatonic biblical

exegesis which saw the descent from the One to the Many, begun by Adam and Eve, as an ongoing process in Genesis which culminated in the confounding of tongues at Babel.[14] In addition, Edgar Wind observes that:

> The biblical passage 'and he divided them in the midst,' (Genesis XV.10) had been cited by Philo as crucial evidence for λόγος τομεύς, 'logos as cutter,' who produces 'creation by dichotomy' but is the 'joiner of the universe' as well.[15]

Egeon, like Ficino's self-centred Aristophanic beings, is threatened with a second physical division (by beheading) but he finally affirms the restorative importance of memory. The function of memory in *Errors* involves both Christian and Platonic definitions which will be repeatedly touched on in this study. For Ficino, the original split is the result of "forgetting" the "divine light" of the soul in favour of the "natural light." "Remembrance" heals this division and re-establishes the true, integrated self. At this level the separation of the twin sons represents the hereditary legacy of Egeon's Adamic self-division figured by the mast tableau.[16] In the speech quoted above, Egeon attempts to re-establish his fading identity and save his life through mutual recognition with his son. Egeon's images of light and dark in connection with consciousness, and his list of enfeebled "old witnesses" (i.e. senses) finally guided by memory, recalls Ficino's metaphysics:

> Sense impressions entering through the doors and windows of the body (the senses) through the medium of the spirit are registered in an image on the imagination. The mind compares this image with the innate idea of the thing stored in the memory; and in this comparison consists the process of

> learning. It amounts to a kind of dawning self-consciousness, in which the individual becomes consciously possessed of a knowledge he had only unconsciously before.[17]

Accordingly, La Primaudaye refers to the organ of memory as the "spiritual eye" which looks backward like "Janus" and causes man to "approach in some sort to that nature which is divine and heavenly, making man farre to excell all other natures in the world."[18] It is this memory which will ultimately inform the easily misled senses in *Errors* and help reintegrate identities for the play's characters.

Since the primal unity of Adam and Eve is also the archetype for the Christian marriage, how this bond is treated in the framing story will be important for the rest of *Errors*. Although both natural and spiritual care are the two proper concerns of the bipartite soul, "forgetting" of the soul's "heavenly light" is manifested by excessive, hence self-divisive, attention to things of the natural world. Egeon's excessive concern with his "goods" (a word rich with dual meaning in the New Testament) occurs at the expense of the primal concord symbolized by the marital bond:

> With her I liv'd in joy; our wealth increas'd
> By prosperous voyages I often made
> To Epidamnum, till my factor's death,
> And the great care of goods at random left,
> Drew me from the kind embracements of my spouse...(I,i.39-43).

Egeon's original claim to the Duke that his "fall" was "wrought by nature, not by vile offence," can be seen as an ironically over-fine distinction when human "nature" is understood as a precipitating cause.

The spiritual dimension symbolized by marriage is reinforced by Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians 5:28-31, where husband and wife are described as "one flesh," a unity that parallels the loving unity of Christ and Church: "we are members of his bodie, of his flesh and of his bones." The Genevan side-note points out the recapitulation of God's directive to Adam and Eve before the fall. A similar use of typological continuity exists in the relationship of the plot to Egeon's story: Egeon's initial willed separation from his spouse is recapitulated in the alienation of the commercially active Antipholus from his wife, Adriana. Behind both marital divisions hovers the biblical ideal epitomized by the androgynous *Matrimonii Typus*.[19]

I have previously suggested that Shakespeare uses the twin sons of Egeon to suggest the binary soul. The allegorical core from which Shakespeare launches startling and original explorations of the psyche can be stated simply: twins together represent androgynous perfection; twins apart signal post-lapsarian division. To illustrate the sustained force of this vision for Shakespeare, it will prove useful to look briefly at the occurrence of twins in several other plays.

On twinning in *Twelfth Night*, William Slights argues that "the use of twins as an alternative representation of the androgyne in classical art suggests the mythic bedrock on which Shakespeare's exploration of sexual identity rests."[20] There is some truth in this. But, though *Twelfth Night* explores the complexities of sexual identity and romantic love in much greater detail than does *Errors*, there are important similarities between the two plays, in particular, the relation of the

framing story to the familial separation and reunion theme.[21] The protracted recognition scene between the twin brother and sister provides *Twelfth Night* with its major dramatic and emotional resolution, a resolution which suggests the primacy of an asexual love.

Repeatedly, Shakespeare uses twins to set forth variations of an asexual, ante-lapsarian unity. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Helena complains to Hermia that they have "forgot" their loving monadic existence:

> O, is all forgot?
> All our school days friendship, childhood innocence?
> We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
> Have with our needles created both one flower,
> Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
> Both warbling of one song, both in one key;
> As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
> Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
> Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
> But yet a union in partition;
> Two lovely berries molded on one stem;
> So with seeming bodies, but one heart;
> Two of the first, like coats of heraldry,
> Due but to one, and crowned with one crest. (III.ii.201-14)

These two soul-mates were only separate to the less real world of appearance: "seeming parted," they were endowed with "seeming bodies." This neoplatonic image of perfection is under great pressure from the "seeming" (illusionary and sensual) world where the play's action occurs. Nevertheless, it does suggest a metaphysical base from which the dream world's apparently arbitrary phenomena may be understood.

A similar use of twinning to suggest the ideal of prior innocence occurs in *The Winter's Tale*, but this time the ethical doctrine is

clearly associated with the story of Eden:

> We were as twinned lambs, that did frisk i' th' sun,
> And bleat the one at th' other; what we changed
> Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
> The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed
> That any did; had we pursued that life,
> And our weak spirits ne'er been higher reared
> With stronger blood, we should have answered heaven
> Boldly, "Not guilty"; the imposition cleared,
> Hereditary ours. (I.ii.67-75)

Unlike Helena's speech, Polixenes's language is more allusive to Christian theology than to neoplatonic epistemology. Yet these two fields are not far apart in Shakespeare's mind: self-delusion precedes Leontes's outward evil; he mistakenly sees "the spider" of Hermione's infidelity though it has no more exterior reality than Puck's love potion. Of course, we are interested in Leontes primarily as an individual, but through Shakespeare's use of the figure of twinning we are meant to test the kind of personal singularity expressed by a character. The two types of personal singularity are antithetical and inspired by the Aristophanic myth: on one hand there is the solitary man alienated from his higher nature, epitomized by Richard III "scarce half made up" (I.i.21); on the other hand, there are socially and spiritually integrated identities suggested by both Sebastian and Viola after their reconciliation. Shakespeare appears to be conscious of these associations with twinning when he separates the two sets of twins in the shipwreck in *Errors*.

Sound reasons for Shakespeare's change of the Plautine setting of *Errors* to that of Paul's journey and shipwreck are given by T. W.

Baldwin: "I know of no other shipwreck of the time which offers such close parallels in handling, and was so available."[22] Although there is no mention of twins in Paul's shipwreck, after deliverance he makes his way to Syracuse on a ship "whose badge was Castor and Pollux" (Acts 28:11). The Geneva side-note explains that pagans saw these twins as children of Jupiter and gods of the sea, but if Shakespeare had the Aristophanic androgyne in mind this sign would be suggestive. Edgar Wind relates the pair to the idea of *concordia*,[23] and Stradling's 1594 translation of Lipsius refers to the simultaneous occurrence of the two stars as a guard against real and metaphorical shipwreck:

> And as marriners being in a tempest, when they see the two twinnes appeare together, do receave great hope & comforte: So fareth it with me, unto whome after many sturdy stormes, this double legion hath shewed it self. Let me lawfully terme it so, after the auncient manner, because it is forked or twofold, And by it I muste manfully prove two severall things, that these evills which nowe we suffer are neither grievous, nor new and unaccustomed.[24]

The heavenly transfiguration of mortal and immortal twins into stars through love suggests the felicitous concord of earthly and heavenly powers and, on the microcosmic level, Ficino's harmonizing of the soul's natural and spiritual lights. For *Errors*, such associations could have been reinforced by Shakespeare's second Plautine source, *The Amphitruo*, where Jupiter resolves the play by announcing twins of divine and mortal paternity, Solinus's inability to divide the re-united Antipholus brothers signals the successful re-integration of the bipartite soul fractured in the tempest:

> One of these men is *genius* to the other;
> And so of these, which is the natural man,
> And which the spirit? Who deciphers them? (V.i.332-34)

Although the Duke's question is obviated by the reunion, can the Antipholi be distinguished as "*genius*" and "natural man" within the play's confused main action? The answer is complex, for Shakespeare's characterizations cannot be reduced to simple allegory. Some distinction between the brothers is suggested by studies which recognize the alien Antipholus as introspective, imaginative, melancholic, and given to soliloquies and self-risk. This characterization is in apposition to his Ephesian brother whose concerns are domestic, social, and commercial.[25] However, to directly equate the two brothers with the two faculties of the mind risks oversimplification. The Syracusian is too humanly bewildered to be merely a figural representation of the divine faculty.

Yet, the confused Syracusian suitor of Luciana does distinguish himself from his brother through his association with ideas of love forwarded in Ficino's *Commentary*. "*Genius*," the Latin equivalent of "*daemon*" or median spirit, is used by Ficino to describe the mediating role of Love as motive force or potentiality, a concept fundamental to interpreting the *Symposium*:

> 'When the division was made, half was drawn by Love to the other half.' When these souls, divided and plunged into bodies, first come to the age of adolescence, they are aroused by that innate and natural light which they have kept, like a kind of half of themselves, to win back, by the study of truth, that divine supernatural light, that former other half of

> themselves which they lost in the fall. When this has been won back, they will then be whole and blessed with the vision of God. (*Commentary*, p. 156)

Similarly, the Syracusian half of the Antipholi becomes "aroused" at adolescence, and becomes the exteriorized motivation for the bereft and irresolute Egeon:

> My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,
> At eighteen years became inquisitive
> After his brother, and importun'd me
> That his attendant, so his case was like,
> Reft of his brother, but retain'd his name,
> Might bear him company in the quest of him;
> Whom whilst I labour'd of a love to see,
> I hazarded the loss of whom I lov'd. (I.i.124-31)

We still see Egeon's rhetorical divisions echo his divided mind as he is torn between loss and fulfillment, love and fear. In the *Commentary*, the object of desire must be already half present by virtue of the memory in order that the restorative love-force may operate. This idea is behind the birth of Love from Poverty and Plenty "since lovers partly have and partly have not what they seek..." (p. 191). The Syracusian Antipholus clearly assumes this role of Love for he is the activating spirit which forces the play away from the paralysis of Egeon's stasis: "Fortune had left to both of us alike / What to delight in, what to sorrow for" (I.i.105-06).

It is this mediating role of the "*genius*," I believe, which led Shakespeare to name the Syracusian brother Antipholus Erotes in the First Folio. Baldwin has suggested the name "Erotes" may make us think of "Eros," for the brother who falls in love. Foakes argues that the

name "has no better connection with Eros as a Greek word than it has with any Latin word" (p, xxvii). Yet, the name is in fact an exact transliteration of Ficino's Venesian genii or daemons: "all are called (from the Greek word Ἔρως , which means *Love*), Ἔρωτες, which means love-gods"((*Commentary*, p. 187). Curiously, Shakespeare has dropped "Erotes" by the time Antipholus actually falls in love: the Syracusian's developing individuality and personal confusion make the name of an impersonal agency too restrictive. Yet this brother has clear affinities with Eros in his initial motivating role and as a self-forgetting lover.

In suggesting Ficino as a likely background for "Erotes," I do not exclude a connotation of the usually preferred derivation:

> It [Erotes or Errotes] has usually been interpreted as distorted from Erraticus of Errans (wandering), thus giving the twin labels (Surreptus and Erraticus) corresponding to the differentiation of the twin Menaechmi as 'civis' and 'advena'...(Foakes, p. xxvii).

The alien Antipholus's rootless bewilderment, exacerbated by Luciana, is yet in keeping with positive and negative features of love distraction. Ficino describes Love, embodied by Socrates, as "homeless" to symbolize distraction from the mundane while pursuing the source of "the good."[26] However, souls of mundane lovers are "without a home" because soul and thought leave the body and attempt to merge with the love object; this is associated with madness and stupefaction.[27] Although I will postpone most textual considerations of this antithesis, Shakespeare does exploit this and related ambiguities in relation to the wandering Antipholus.

"Erotes" and its variant "Errotis" suggest both "love," and "wandering" in the play's context. For an English writer, familiar with the ideas spread by the *Commentary*, both meanings are appropriate, as can be seen from Sears Jayne's rendering of Ficino's *amantium/amentium* word-play: "when [the disease of lovers] is finally driven away, the torment of the poor erotics (nay rather the erratics) ceases" (p. 229).

Such word-play implicates Shakespeare's title and the "errors" of misapprehension which permeate the play. Girolamo Benivieni forwarded the idea of love's "dolce error" in his *Canzona Della Amore*, a poem derived from Ficino's *Commentary*. This poem, a major source for Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes*, argued that although lovers may erroneously overestimate the beauty and goodness of the love object, they may, through amatory vision, be seeing beyond the material shadow to the soul's greater truth. Such a context will elucidate, in part, the bewildered Antipholus's idolization of Luciana.

It should be added that a primary use of the word "error," until recently, had theological echoes. Despite Thomas Browne's fascination with the peculiarities of this world, the first chapter of the *Pseudodoxia*, "Of the Causes of Common Error," very conventionally traces "the first and father cause of common Error" back to Adam and Eve who were "so weakly deluded in the clarity of their understanding, that it hath left no small obscurity in ours, how error should gain upon them."[28] "Error," as the wandering from God through self-deception and misapprehension, is a word particularly adaptable to a neoplatonic epistemological view of sin, one which emphasizes diminished consciousness and

confusion over conscious evil. We see it when Feste, as Sir Thopas the curate, catechizes the benighted Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*: "Madman, thou errest. I say there is no darkness but ignorance, in which thou art more puzzled than the Egyptians in their fog" (IV.ii.42-45). As the dark room becomes a Platonic metaphor for Malvolio's "fog," so does physical appearance: "Thou might have done this without a beard and gown. He sees thee not" (IV.ii.65-66). A similar, but generalized, inability to distinguish outward appearance from reality prevails in the "mist" (II.ii.216) of Ephesus, and brings Antipholus to wonder: "What error drives our eyes and ears amiss?" (II.ii.184)

In Egeon's framing story, I have suggested, there is an analogical depiction of division, the beginning of error, in the divided mast. In the play's main action misapprehensions incurred by this split are at first heightened and then resolved with respect to events initiated by Antipholus Erotes. How the basically neoplatonic motif of division is continued in the main action, through the device of mistaken identity, is the subject I will now address.

CHAPTER I

Part B: "Suits of Durance"

Division, the decline from unity to plurality, is the dimension of the neoplatonic fall I have stressed so far. In *Errors*, Egeon's frame story echoes this theodicy and sets forth the psychology developed in the main plot as part of the psychic history of error. If, in some sense, Ephesus becomes a microcosm of this human heritage, then the farcical device of mistaken identities may be seen to figure this legacy of misperception. How the soul's embodiment is treated in *Errors* illustrates how Shakespeare infuses farcical misunderstanding with meaning, as part of his exploration of the effect and remedy of division.

In the Aristophanic myth retold by Ficino, the "fall into bodies" is as important as the process of division itself.[29] This poses a persistent problem for Christian Platonists, who must acknowledge God's ante-lapsarian creation as entirely good although neoplatonic tradition tends to equate embodiment with the fall. The problem is partly deflected, from Philo to Ficino, by emphasizing that the creation of "man" allegorically refers to, and is defined by, the stable "soul of man"; division and embodiment are subsequent and more suspect developments in the two phylogenic stories.[30]

Yet, as seen earlier, the opposition between the physical and spiritual existence of man is not a simple antithesis for Ficino--or for Shakespeare. In *Errors* such an opposition does exist, albeit within a complex dialectic which will suggest a compromise resolution for the human condition. This dialectic means interaction between the characters of *Errors* more complex than can be satisfied by the limited dimensions of farce or morality play allegory--although both these genres

provide structuring for Shakespeare's investigations. Attitudes toward the body revealed by the play's characters are typical of this complexity.

The pervasive idea of the soul's garment of flesh as "the muddy vesture of decay" that "doth grossly close it in" (*The Merchant of Venice*, V.i.64-65), derives jointly from Plato and Genesis. In Ficino's *Commentary*, man's incorporation was precipitated by the soul's division. When this chronology is applied to the androgynous Adam mystery, biblical commentators provide evidence of embodiment subsequent to Adam and Eve's fall. They cite Adam's sleep as evidence for diminished consciousness accompanying the division, but, in particular, attention is given to Genesis 3:21. Arnold Williams states:

> The garments of skins which God made for Adam and Eve after He cursed them evoked much comment. The commentators note in passing that one of the penalties of Adam is, as Shakespeare phrases it, "the seasons' differences." The chief importance of the garments is, however, mystical rather than physical. They are evidences of God's mercy, but also symbols of death, because they came from dead animals. The action of God in clothing the bodies of Adam and Eve is a figure of Christ's clothing their sins in grace.[31]

The ambiguous treatment of this biblical passage is in keeping with neoplatonic commentary. For Origen, the sense-world is "penal and educative" and that "God made 'coats of skins' for the fallen Adam and Eve means that He created the sense-world, and clothed the fallen spirits with corporeality."[32] Philo observes that "it was proper that the mind and sense should be clothed in the body as in a tunic of skin..."[33]

Shakespeare appears preoccupied with paradoxical attitudes toward the body in *Errors* and, once again, *Twelfth Night* illustrates some of the vocabulary and concepts which concerned the dramatist in the earlier play. The final recognition scene of *Twelfth Night* merges elements of Ficino's androgyne with the ambivalence of the coat of skins allegory:

> ANTONIO
> How have you made division of yourself?
> An apple cleft in two is not more twin
> Than these two creatures. Which is Sebastian?
> ...
> VIOLA Sebastian was my father;
> Such a Sebastian was my brother too;
> So went he suited to his watery tomb.
> If spirits can assume both form and suit,
> You come to fright us.
> SEBASTIAN A spirit I am indeed,
> But am in that dimension grossly clad
> Which from the womb I did participate.
> Were you a woman, as the rest goes even,
> I should my tears let fall upon your cheek
> And say, "Thrice welcome, drowned Viola!"
> VIOLA
> My father had a mole upon his brow.
> SEBASTIAN
> And so had mine.
> VIOLA
> And died that day when Viola from her birth
> SEBASTIAN
> O, that record is lively in my soul! (V.i.220-45)

As we have seen earlier from Malvolio's confusion, apparel ("suit") accounts for only half of the spirit's disguise in this world. Viola and Sebastian are mistaken for a divided Sebastian because they are siblings; iconically relevant, their father is named the original Sebastian from which these two others sprang. Recognition and restoration of individual identity are gained through mutual recollection of their father--his flaw and mortality being the points of reference. Although

compressed, Egeon's Adamic role was still in Shakespeare's mind: "Ourselves we do remember, sir, by you. / For lately we were bound as you are now" (*Errors*, V.i.293-94).

In *Twelfth Night*, disguise itself becomes a metaphor for the body as "form and suit" are linked even before Sebastian makes the familiar comparison of "spirit grossly clad." The "watery tomb" as a neoplatonic symbol for the world of generation will be discussed below, but the "womb"/"tomb" rhyme itself, though distanced by five lines, is the English substitute for Plato's σῶμα/σῆμα word-play. It is part of the generative cycle Friar Lawrence refers to:

> The earth that's Nature's mother is her tomb.
> What is her burying grave, that is her womb...
> (*Romeo and Juliet*, II.iii.9-10).

The shipwreck into the sea of time and space is evident as Viola remarks that spirits may assume both "form and suit." In *Twelfth Night*, which is more concerned with self-determining action than is *Errors*, clothing is important both as conscious disguise and as an analogue for the body. In *Errors*, the body will be seen as a persistent, inadvertent disguise, one which reveals a continuing epistemological concern that transcends farcical mistaken identity.

In *Errors*, the idea of the "Old Adam" clothed in skins is merged with Paul's exhortation to cast off the old man in favour of the new man:

> *That is*, that ye cast of, concerning the conversation
> in time past, the olde man, which is corrupt through

> the deceiveable lustes,/ And be renewed in the spirit of your minde,/ And put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousnes, and true holines./ Wherefore cast of lying, & speake everie man trueth unto his neighbour: for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:22-25)

Foreshadowing the restoration of unity and the theme of rebirth through the mysteries of providence and love, the astonished Antipholus experiences the "sorcery" of goodwill and inexplicable recognition which culminates in the promise of a gratuitous new suit:

> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> There's not a man I meet but doth salute me
> As if I were their well-acquainted friend,
> And every one doth call me by my name:
> Some tender money to me, some invite me,
> Some other give me thanks for kindnesses,
> Some offer me commodities to buy.
> Even now a tailor call'd me in his shop,
> And show'd me silks that he had bought for me,
> And therewithal took measure of my body.
> Sure these are but imaginary wiles,
> And Lapland sorcerers inhabit here. (IV.iii.1-11)

Immediately Dromio enters and in the medium of comic banter deepens the implications of the clothing question. Believing he is speaking to the Antipholus arrested by Adam, sergeant of the band, Dromio brings "angels" for his deliverance (IV.iii.39). Much is made of the leather worn by officers:

> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> Master, here's the gold you sent me for: what, have you got the picture of old Adam new-apparelled?
> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> What gold is this? What Adam dost thou mean?
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> Not that Adam that kept the paradise, but that

> Adam that keeps the prison; he that goes in the calf's-skin that was killed for the prodigal; he that came behind you, sir, like an evil angel, and bid you forsake your liberty.
> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> I understand thee not.
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> No? why, 'tis a plain case; he that went like a bass-viol in a case of leather; the man, sir, that when gentlemen are tired gives them a sob, and rests them; he, sir, that takes pity on decayed men and gives them suits of durance; he that sets up his rest to do more exploits with his mace than a morris-pike.
> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> What, thou mean'st an officer?
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> Ay, sir, the sergeant of the band; he that brings any man to answer it that breaks his band; one that thinks a man always going to bed, and says, "God give you good rest". (IV.iii.12-32)

Both Foakes and Baldwin have noted the allusion to the biblical Adam's coat of skins and the return of the prodigal son. But more remarkable are the relentless quibbles which compress divergent attitudes toward man's incarnation.

Shakespeare signals the iconographical elements of the exchange with the word "picture." Confusion over which Adam Dromio is speaking of reflects the heirs' predicament wrought by the ancestral division. On the surface, "Adam that keeps the prison" is the officer who has come behind Antipholus and "like an evil angel bid you forsake your liberty." But "keeps" also means "resides in" and we have the old, or "offending," Adam as co-conspirator with the "evil angel"--the "prodigal" Adam who has incurred his own animal-skin prison.

> Look, who comes here! a grave unto a soul,

> Holding th' eternal spirit, against her will,
> In the vile prison of afflicted breath,
> (*King John*, III.iii.17-19)

Associated with the legal rigour of the Old Testament, and Solinus's judgement on Egeon, Adam's transgression constitutes "a plain case." The quibble on "suit" parallels that on "case," for the "penalty of Adam" is to feel the seasons' change in his fleshly attire. The spirit, "like a bass-viol," is both sequestered and protected in its "case of leather,"

Dromio continues the paradoxical presentation as he refers to the one who "takes pity on decayed men and gives them suits of durance." Consistent with the side-note in the Bishop's Bible which refers to the coat of skins as God's first merciful gift to fallen man, neoplatonic writers sometimes saw the body as the soul's protection in the material world; more particularly, the spiritual body is conceived as a protective garment mediating the soul and corporeal body.[34] The punishment/pity antithesis is sustained in the "sob" pun, and "'rest" as "respite" or "arrest."[35]

God's ultimate "pity on decayed men" is through the incarnation of Christ, the second Adam or "the old Adam new-apparelled." Increasingly in the play, man's participation in this redemption is figured in the rebirth rite of baptism where it is entreated "that the old Adam in these children may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them."[36] Traditionally, the donning of a white vestment symbolized the ritual transformation. The benignly magical context of Antipholus's

re-tailoring anticipates the conclusion of the Christian comedy.

But, without retrospect, in the midst of confusion the happy outcome is problematic, as is seen in Dromio's hyperbolic rant which precedes and parallels the passage above:

> ADRIANA
> Where is thy master, Dromio? is he well?
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> No, he's in Tartar limbo, worse than hell.
> A devil in an everlasting garment hath him,
> One whose hard heart is button'd up with steel;
> A fiend, a fury, pitiless and rough,
> A wolf, nay worse, a fellow all in buff;
> A back-friend, a shoulder-clapper, one that countermands
> The passages of alleys, creeks and narrow lands;
> A hound that runs counter, and yet draws dry-foot well,
> One that, before the judgment, carries poor souls to hell.
> ADRIANA
> Why, man, what is the matter?
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> I do not know the matter; he is 'rested on the case.
> ADRIANA
> What, is he arrested? tell me at whose suit?
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> I know not at whose suit he is arrested well;
> But is in a suit of buff which 'rested him, that can I tell:
> Will you send him, mistress, redemption, the money in his desk? (IV.ii.31-46)

The ambiguous syntax of "But is in a suit of buff which 'rested him" blurs the boundary between an external "devil in an everlasting garment" and the "buff" body garment of an arrested spirit. As in the previous passage, Adam the jailor and Adam the imprisoned become difficult to distinguish in the context of self-inflicted isolation. External evil is revealed as mainly no thing: a spiritual and psychological projection which is none the less "real" in its deforming power. Dromio, in his extravagant assessment, associates the "devil's" "everlasting garment"

with the "hard heart button'd up with steel"; ironically, the allusion to Ephesians de-materializes the threat and places it in the domain of diminished perception:

> This I say therefore and testifie in the Lord, that ye henceforthe walke not as other Gentiles walke, in vanitie of their minde,/ Having their cogitation darkened, and being strangers from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardenes of their heart...(4:17-18).

If, through travesty, Dromio deepens the metaphor of body as prison, in like manner he elucidates the metaphor of body as protection. Imagining Luce to have Circean powers of transformation, Dromio uses words that parallel the negative "hard heart button'd up with steel."

> I, amazed, ran from her as a witch. And I think if my breast had not been made of faith, and my heart of steel, she had transform'd me to a curtal dog, and made me turn i' th' wheel. (III,ii,143-45)

This time his language clearly reflects the spiritual armour described in the sixth chapter of Ephesians. Dromio, understandably, recoils from the "mountain of mad flesh," but his comically literal application of that chapter to his brother's intended once again ironically highlights the theme of general misperception of surfaces:

> For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, *and* against the worldlie governours, *the princes* of the darkenes of this worlde, against spiritual wickednesses, *which are* in the hie places. (Ephesians 6:12)

This double perspective of protection and obduracy, developed

from the central myth of man's incarnation and fall, engages another body/soul representation in the Platonic figure of the perfect sphere. Derived primarily from the mystical physiology of the *Timaeus*, man's anatomical construction parallels in imaginative whimsy the spherical beings of the *Symposium*:

> They copied the shape of the universe and fastened the two divine orbits of the soul into a spherical body, which we now call the head, the divinest part of us which controls all the rest ... And to prevent the head from rolling about on the earth, unable to get over or out of its many heights and hollows, they provided that the body should act as a convenient vehicle.[37]

In the cartoon lineaments of Luce, Shakespeare draws in parody the fallen soul as "the world." To Dromio she is the world, flesh, and devil rolled into one; she has powers of transforming, but in herself is unreformable--even by "Noah's flood" (III.ii.104). The obduracy of the globular Luce is contrasted by the vulnerability of Antipholus of Syracuse who also is spherically represented--but as a waterdrop subject to dissolution. Natural protection afforded by the body is shown to be ineffectual against psychological and spiritual mutation. Poetically, however, the physical continues to provide metaphors for this spiritual trauma as exemplified in Adriana's plaint: "A wretched soul bruis'd with adversity, / We bid be quiet when we hear it cry" (II.i.34-35).

By this metaphorical continuity, the slapstick physicality experienced by the Dromios mediates between the individual condition and the symbolic meaning of structures in the world itself. On the

individual level, Dromio would have his own "bruis'd soul" protected by the skin armour of a football:

> Am I so round with you, as you with me,
> That like a football you do spurn me thus?
> You spurn me hence, and he will spurn me hither;
> If I last in this service you must case me in leather.
> (II.i.82-85)

Through metaphorical continuity, individual strife may initially be seen to extend out into social and civic strife through the elaborate word-play on "sconce" as both "head" and "protective wall."

> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> Now as I am a Christian, answer me
> In what safe place you have bestow'd my money,
> Or I shall break that merry sconce of yours,..(I.ii.77-79).
>
> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> And fashion your demeanour to my looks,
> Or I will beat this method in your sconce.
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> Sconce call you it? so you would leave battering,
> I had rather have it a head; and you use these
> blows long, I must get a sconce for my head, and
> insconce it too, or else I shall seek my wit in
> my shoulders; but I pray, sir, why am I beaten? (II,ii.34-39)

Paul's warning to masters who would threaten bondservants in Ephesians 6:8 gives an ironic ring to the mild oath of the first citation: "Know that even your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of person with him." The body's association with division, misperception, and subsequent violence is continued, as the function of the Phoenix's protective gate is linked in couplets with the "sconce."

SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
Master, shall I be porter at the gate?
ADRIANA
Ay, and let none enter, lest I break your pate.
(II.ii.217-18)

EPHESIAN ANTIPHOLUS
Go fetch me something, I'll break ope the gate.
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
Break any breaking here and I'll break your knave's pate.
(III.i.73-74)

As either obstruction to union, or as protection, the gate is to the Phoenix as the skull is to the soul. But more than a simple microcosm/macrocosm correspondence, the relationship reflects the epistemological continuity of the world of appearance in relation to reality: misapprehension has the same root cause as it extends from individual to society. The Phoenix gate, which is literally a blocking device to the final recognition and union, is an extension of the primal material obstruction of the body dependent upon its senses. Perceptual limitation in the natural world means potential for deception:

And though that nature with a beauteous wall
Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee
I will believe thou hast a mind that suits
With this thy fair and outward character.
(*Twelfth Night*, I.ii.48-51)

Antipholus's exclusion from his wife, his "own self's better part," evokes the massive Renaissance attention to the Phoenix. The bird's historic association with the hermaphrodite is outlined by Marie Delcourt, and as parallel symbols of unity the two creatures continue into the seventeenth century.[38] The love-union symbolized by the Phoenix is perhaps the most satisfactory image in the restoration of the

Adamic androgyne, Shakespeare's own *The Phoenix and the Turtle* explores at length the paradox: "Two distincts, division none: / Number there in love was slain" (ll. 27-28). With few rivals for popularity in the Emblem books, the Phoenix sustained a commonplace association with resurrection and rebirth--particularly that of Christ.[39] Freitag's Phoenix emblem has its motto from the Latin Ephesians 4:22:

> That is, that ye cast of, concerning the conversation in time past, the olde man, which is corrupt through the deceiveable lustes [*erroris*].[40]

This recapitulates the baptismal rite which acts out the burying of the Old Adam and the putting on of the New, which is the spiritual body of Christ.

Thwarted unity represented by barred entry to the Phoenix *domus* has a correlative in the refusal of Paul's sailors to winter in a port of "Candie," the "Haven Phenix," clearly marked on the Genevan map of the Apostle's voyage. In the midst of the shipwrecking storm Paul reproaches the seamen for incurring their own "hurt and losse,"[41] Shakespeare was not to forget this constellation of symbols in his next sibling-splitting tempest: "this is that Antonio / That took the *Phoenix* and her fraught from Candy."[42]

The dialectic of fusion and fracture is heightened through the residences of the Phoenix and Centaur: the transformational figures of "two-in-one" and "one-in-two," respectively. Shakespeare's sense of the Centaur as division and self-division is glimpsed both in the story from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where Hercules battles the wedding-disrupting

centaurs, and in Lear's characterization of his monstrous daughters as she-centaurs. The symbolism in *Errors* is suggestive psychologically: alienated from himself, the Ephesian Antipholus neglects his wife, his "second self" and is barred from the Phoenix as his dissociated double from the Centaur usurps his marital station.[43] This is a blocking of the mutual love interchange as described by Ficino:

> Here, surely, is a remarkable circumstance that whenever two people are brought together in mutual affection, one lives in the other and the other in him. In this way they mutually exchange identities; each gives himself to the other in such a way that each receives the other in return. How they can give themselves up while oblivious of themselves, I can see; but how one receives the other, I do not understand; for a man who does not even have possession of himself will that much less take possession of someone else.
>
> The truth must rather be that each has himself and has the other, too. A has himself, but in B; and B also has himself, but in A. When you love me, you contemplate me, and as I love you, I find myself in your contemplation of me; I recover myself, lost in the first place by own neglect of myself, in you, who preserve me. You do exactly the same in me. And then this, too, is remarkable: that after I have lost myself, if I recover myself through you, I have myself through you, and if I have myself through you, I have you sooner and to a greater degree than I have myself. I am therefore closer to you than I am to myself, since I keep a grasp on myself only through you as a mediary. (*Commentary*, p. 144-45)

The droll spectacle of the twin Dromios, each guardian of the gate, shouting mutual insults through the opaque partition suggests divided mirror images; in effect, they parody the bifrontal Janus, the celestial gatekeeper who embodies and admits souls into the world of generation.[44] For Pico, we mimic Janus: "Our Souls before united to the Body are in

like manner double-fac'd, but are then as it were cleft asunder, retaining but one; which as they turn to either object, Sensual or Intellectual, is deprived of the other."[45] Since the most representative Elizabethan enactment of rebirth is the rite of baptism, it is no surprise that the scene of exclusion at the Phoenix is transferred to the Abby for resolution. Exclusion from the baptistry, or sanctuary, was traditionally required until a preliminary rite of renunciation or exorcism was performed.[46] In the oblique use of Pinch the exorcist, Shakespeare displays his genius manipulating this theme.

The conjurer's attempt at casting out demons reaps a reward of abuse paralleling that of the itinerant exorcists of Acts 19:11-16. Employed by Adriana to establish her husband "in his true sense again" (IV.iv.46), Pinch methodically misreads all the phenomenal indicators of possession. In his self-assured sense of apparent reality, superficial analysis and mechanical response, Pinch embodies the epistemological error participated in by all the characters. In confrontation with this death-in-life figure ("mere anatomy," "living dead man"), Antipholus of Ephesus experiences the nadir of identity and existence as he is "out-faced" by "no-face":

> This pernicious slave
> Forsooth took on him as a conjurer,
> And gazing in mine eyes, feeling my pulse,
> And with no-face (as 'twere) out-facing me,
> Cries out, I was possess'd. Then all together
> They fell upon me, bound me, bore me thence,
> And in a dark and dankish vault at home
> There left me and my man, both bound together...(V.i,242-49).

As a lodestone of non-being and illusion, it is the exorcist who must be exorcised and this is flamboyantly acted out with a lecture on patience from the impatient Antipholus:

> My master and his man are both broke loose,
> Beaten the maids a-row, and bound the doctor,
> Whose beard they have sing'd off with brands of fire,
> And ever as it blaz'd, they threw on him
> Great pails of puddled mire to quench the hair;
> My master preaches patience to him, and the while
> His man with scissors nicks him like a fool;
> And sure (unless you send some present help)
> Between them they will kill the conjurer. (V.i.169-77)

This cathartic display suggests the function of the primitive scapegoat, or surrogate, outlined in another context by C. L. Barber: "a figure in whom the evils potential in a social organization are embodied, recognized and enjoyed during a period of licence, and then in due course abused, ridiculed, and expelled."[47]

Egeon, as the archetypal old man, also is to be redeemed by the play's end, and although they never meet, Pinch adumbrates Egeon who represents himself as deformed and desiccated by time.[48] In the process of unknotting error we see the symbolic exorcism of the Adamic "old man": remembrance through the common link of the father's infirmity stimulates mutual recognition and self-remembrance in a manner previously noted for *Twelfth Night*.[49]

> EPHESIAN DROMIO
> Within this hour I was his bondman, sir,
> But he, I thank him, gnaw'd in two my cords;
> Now I am Dromio, and his man, unbound.
> EGEON
> I am sure you both of you remember me.

EPHESIAN DROMIO
Ourselves we do remember, sir, by you.
For lately we were bound as you are now,
You are not Pinch's patient, are you sir? (V.i.289-95)

An increasingly sober effort to unravel the "sympathised one day's error" is marked by this renewed civility in language.

Bondage as the common factor of sympathy cannot be ignored, although a thorough examination of this imagery would merit a chapter. As a symbol of mutual infirmity there is the commonplace association of the bondage of sin. Yet Shakespeare's emphasis remains metaphysical. From the initial binding to the mast, the soul's nexus with the physical is established in the spiritual and material shared vocabulary of fastening:

Fixing our eyes on whom our case was fix'd,
Fasten'd ourselves at either end of the mast...(I.i.84-85).

This parallels Ficino's chronology of the soul's attention to the world of generation; this "natural appetite" immediately precedes division and the fall into bodies. The weighty burden and sorrow accompanying this conjunction is clear:

Her part, poor soul, seeming as burdened
With lesser weight, but not with lesser woe,..(I.i.106-07).

But the meanings of "burden" and "travail" are retroactively altered when we learn that physical birth is only the beginning of the spiritual gestation period:

> And all that are assembled in this place,
> That by this sympathised one day's error
> Have suffer'd wrong, go, keep us company,
> And we shall make full satisfaction,
> Thirty-three years have I but gone in travail
> Of you, my sons, and till this present hour
> My heavy burden ne'er delivered.
> The duke, my husband, and my children both,
> And you, the calendars of their nativity,
> Go to a gossips' feast, and joy with me,
> After so long grief, such felicity.[50]

The baptism imagery is obvious in the gathering of "gossips" ("God's sibs"), the nativity and the age of Christ's death and rebirth. Yet the process itself, the journey of the "one day's error" which is the history of both individual and mankind, draws on more than the iconography of baptism for its aesthetic and metaphysical structure.

In marked contrast to the fixed diagnosis of Doctor Pinch, Antipholus's true condition yields to the intuitive questioning by Emilia in her spiritualized identity of Abbess:

> ABBESS
> Hath he not lost much wealth by wrack of sea?
> Buried some dear friend? Hath not else his eye
> Stray'd his affection in unlawful love,
> A sin prevailing much in youthful men,
> Who give their eyes the liberty of gazing?
> Which of these sorrows is he subject to? (V.i.49-54)

Unconsciously she has described the source of family grief as the meaning of family becomes extended. In the process of dawning self-consciousness each soul has an autogenic aspect through the half-remembered original unity and the subsequent separation. This innate knowledge is described by Ficino as the soul's fecundity:

> This is what Plato says: *In all men, the body is pregnant and rich, and the soul is pregnant also,..* Therefore the soul possesses from the beginning principles of moral character, talents, and knowledge whence if it is properly cultivated it brings forth its own offspring in due time. We learn that the soul possesses innate concepts of all its own qualities from its desires, its method of inquiry, its imagination, its judgment, and its comparisons. (*Commentary*, pp. 204-05)

A concordance will show the multiple, physical and mental, applications of words such as "travail," "burden," and "burthen" in *Errors*, but only with Emilia's final speech does the metaphorical sense of a spiritual weight achieve a clearly positive association.[51] The physical body may be a tomb to the soul, but it now proves to be its womb as well--and the trying world of Ephesus a vale of soul-making.

Through a highly neoplatonized interpretation of Genesis, Shakespeare develops exceptional correspondences with a Pauline antitype in *Errors*. These correspondences extend deep into the dramatic structure, psychology, and aesthetic of the comedy in ways which I have begun to examine.

The play begins with a story of physical birth and division which are both the actual and metaphorical precursors of the characters' disparate perspectives and confusions over identity. The play concludes with an actual and symbolic reunion which stresses a cyclical return--but, this time, to a spiritual rather than a physical birth. Although this movement draws upon Christian typology, particularly that of the Old and New man, the play's metaphysical and aesthetic concentration on

the problems of appearance, perception, and self-recognition, suggests that Shakespeare's vision was neoplatonically oriented. What Ficino calls the "gestation" period of the soul is the second part of the triadic cycle and the soul's journey in this world; Emilia's final speech identifies the "one day's error" in Ephesus with this world as she relates it to the delayed delivery of her sons. Through love, which involves both eros and providence, a positive motive force and direction is supplied for this fruition.

I have discussed ways in which the neoplatonic fall may inform the basic structuring of *The Comedy of Errors*, and I have suggested some of the directions Shakespeare takes in leading the characters out of the original predicament. For a fuller understanding of the play's means of resolution, I will now look more closely at Shakespeare's complex portrayal of the world of illusion and flux epitomized by Ephesus.

CHAPTER II

"Obedient to the Stream"

The previous chapter probed some implications of the play's treatment of division and reunion, embodiment and rebirth. These thematic developments constitute a basically cyclic progression which follows the plot movement from simplicity to complexity, and then back again. Yet, despite the inevitable dramatic denouement, the complex activities in Ephesus are confused and confusing and suggest no simple curve of action back to exact origins. The physical birth of the sets of twins recounted by Egeon is not of the same order as the spiritual rebirth finally heralded by the gossips' feast; some new understanding is won from the confusion in Ephesus. Although qualified in this manner, the idea of cyclic return is crucial to *Errors*, and Ephesus is a transitional world where the descending curve slows, wavers, and ascends. The direction and meaning of events only slowly become intelligible as the play moves to fulfillment; Ephesus adumbrates the whole world as a liminal habitation, a place for the errant soul's gestation. And if love, as I have suggested, provides a *motive force* and direction for such development, there is an associated vocabulary for the *medium* of development. In *Errors* the prevailing world of mutability and transformation is conveyed by multivalent images of fluidity.

Fluidity, or flux, is the symbolic medium for the play's dialectic between spiritual and material understanding discussed in the first chapter. The notion of flux is central in neoplatonic imagery and symbolism; it has diverse yet overlapping application in the ideas it conveys--a feature particularly suited to Shakespeare's use of poetic

ambiguity. Frequently Shakespeare exploits positive and negative connotations of flux within the same passage, and frequently our final understanding of these contrary associations shifts as the play develops.

As a symbol of matter, fluidity has negative associations with the world of the senses and the shape-shifting formlessness which obscures the stable spiritual reality. As an image of mutability it suggests both physical decay and the downward transformation, or deformation, of the mind to the physical world of the beast. Yet flux, by its very nature, does not imply change in one direction only; in signalling the generative principle it also suggests the capacity for development, re-formation, and spiritual change through baptism, grace, or individual love.

Ficino provides a fluid model for the overall cyclic development of the themes and structure of *Errors*.[1] Through the cosmological model given by Pausanias, Ficino outlines the *effluit-refluit-profluit* cyclic flow of generative creation:

> Everything also, when it is born, flows from that eternal source; then it flows back to the same source when it seeks its own origin; and finally it is finished when it has returned to its own source. Orpheus explained this and called Jupiter the beginning, the middle, and the end of the universe: the beginning inasmuch as he produces it, the middle inasmuch as he attracts his products back to himself, and the end inasmuch as he finishes the things that return to him. Hence we can now call the ruler of the universe, Good, Beautiful, and Just, as He is spoken of in Plato: Good, I say, when He creates; Beautiful, when He attracts to Himself; and Just, when He finishes according to the desert of each thing. (*Commentary*, p. 133)

Through its association with the fall and recovery of the bipartite mind, this fluid model operates on both a cosmological and psychological level in Shakespeare's play. Once again the neoplatonic metaphysical concerns of the play will be seen to partake of images and ideas from Paul's voyage and epistles.

For *Errors*, the triadic movement is structured around three interacting fluid contexts: the fracture by sea-storm, the obscuring and transforming "mist" (II,ii.216) of Ephesus and the waters of regeneration figured by baptism. The middle term, the confusion in Ephesus, presides over the play's main action; yet from the characters' confusion, marked by ambiguity in language and mind, a relationship is established with the other two terms. To understand the interrelation of these three divergent contexts is to acknowledge the play's aesthetic, and to intimate the providential overview that guides the Christian comedy.

Before we look at details of Shakespeare's controlled use of ambiguity from within this triadic framework, it will be useful to outline important senses of fluidity found in later neoplatonism. As a platonic symbol, derived through Plotinus and Proclus, the fluid principle of generation is exemplified by Ficino's interpretation of Hesiod's sea-born Venus:

> But what Hesiod says of Venus in his *Theogony* (when he says Saturn castrated the Sky and threw the testicles into the sea, and from these and the swirling foam Venus was born) must be understood perhaps as referring to the fertility for creating all things. The fertility lies hidden

> in the first principle of things; and the divine intelligence at first drinks it down and unfolds it inside itself, then pours it out into the soul and into matter. It is called "the sea" because of movement and time and the wetness of procreation.[2]

As an isolated analogy the sense is basically positive, the fluid image of "the sea" suggesting the plenum and vitality of divine creation; yet, especially in the post-lapsarian world, "the sea" of matter can obscure and dilute the individual's spiritual knowledge.

On the individual level, Ficino divides the principle of fluid fecundity into the Heavenly and Earthly Venuses who reflect dual appetites for the faculties of comprehension (intellect) and generation (will), respectively.[3] Yet the faculties, as Sears Jayne points out, are not really antithetical for they seek the same end and correspond to the dual perspectives of the universal and the particular. The two faculties become divided only when the Earthly Venus is followed to the exclusion of her counterpart; Ficino sees the human soul's unique achievement as a kind of hydrodynamic balance between the two appetites. Hence, in her preface to *Five Questions Concerning the Mind*, Josephine L. Burroughs notes:

> In Ficino's hierarchy of Being the soul is the third or middle essence and the 'fountain of motion.' Because of its central position, it has an affinity with all things above and below it; because of its self-motion, it is able to move in either direction.[4]

Pico represents man's flexibility to choose his own place on the chain of being by Proteus, the pagan figure of fluid transformation:

> It is man who Asclepius of Athens, arguing from his mutability of character and his self-transforming nature, on just grounds says was symbolized by Proteus in the mysteries. Hence those metamorphoses renowned among the Hebrews and Pythagoreans.[5]

Like Ficino, Pico connects Venus to the sea in a manner susceptible to a range of moral interpretation; Thomas Stanley's 1651 translation from Pico, *A Platonick Discourse upon Love*, captures some of the complex and overlapping uses of fluid symbolism:

> Venus is said to be born of the Sea; Matter the Inform Nature, whereof every Creature is compounded, is represented by Water, continuously flowing, easily receptible of any form....

Without syntactical contrast, this passage proceeds to discuss fluidity that is now spiritual more than material, transforming as much as transformable:

> This being first in the Angelick Minde, Angels are many times exprest by Water, as in the Psalms, "The Waters above the Heavens praise God continually;" so interpreted by Origen; and some Platonists expound the Ocean .., this Angelick Minde, Principle and Fountain of all other Creatures ... This is the living Fountain, whereof he that drinketh shall never thirst; These are the Waters whereon (David saith) God hath founded the World.[6]

Although the passage's first part could presage a neoplatonic attack upon the corruptible world of generation, the "living Fountain" of the second part suggests an equally neoplatonic continuity with a divinely creative overflowing (*emanatio*) and a Christian vivifying grace. Such an assemblage of potentially antithetical fluid symbolism is consonant with

Shakespeare's ambiguous use of flux in *The Comedy of Errors*.

CHAPTER II

Part A: Bodies of Water

Critics have long recognized the similarity of Egeon's and Adriana's names with those of the Aegean and Adriatic seas, geographical features which the play and Paul's journey hold in common.[7] Why personal names were used to consolidate this common "local habitation" has had limited scrutiny. T. W. Baldwin sees Aegeus from Cooper's *Thesaurus* as a source for Egeon's name. The story, in brief, relates how upon seeing black sails on the returning ship of Theseus, the old king believes, from this pre-arranged sign, that his son is dead. Consequently Aegeus hurls himself from a high rock into the sea which thereafter bears his name. From this Baldwin finds a name "with sufficiently tragic connections to be bestowed upon this unhappy parent."[8]

Whether or not Cooper's story is accepted as a likely source, both Aegeus and Egeon despair due to seemingly solid perceptual evidence. Egeon, though not literally drowned, is carried by the "always-wind-obeying-deep" (I.i.63) and, subject to a similar dissolution, he moves "obedient to the stream" (I.i.86). In adversity, Egeon exceeds mere acceptance of death; his drowning he "would gladly have embrac'd" (I.i.69) were he not "forc'd" by the pleas of wife and children to make provision.[9] All Egeon's actions, including the search for his son, stem from the wills of others or from winds he attributes to Fortune. As if still part of the formless "wind-obeying-deep," Egeon bequeaths his legacy of fluid instability and misjudgement to the apparently dry land of Ephesus:

> Hopeless and helpless doth Egeon wend,
> But to procrastinate his lifeless end. (I.i.157-58)

With this couplet Egeon vanishes from the play until he is re-formed by mutual recognition with his sons; it is a restoration that occurs despite "time's deformed hand" (V.i.299), the obscuring corrosion of physical identity in a temporal world. Whereas Cooper's Aegeus finally receives a bitter-sweet Ovidian-style apotheosis, Egeon's recovery is couched in the language of Christian redemption and neoplatonic metaphysics.

Rather than give the other pelagic name associated with Paul's journey to Egeon's wife, Shakespeare skips a generation and bestows it upon Adriana. The tempestuous "Adriatical sea" (Acts 27:27) was where Paul's ship was blown up and down until it foundered. We see, at length, Adriana associate her own possessive, tempestuous, and oceanic love to the "breaking gulf" (II.ii.119-29) which ultimately threatens to "drown" the buffeted Antipholus in a "flood of tears" (III.ii.46). In Ephesus, the Syracusian Antipholus becomes Egeon's hereditary substitute in the continuing metaphor of the journey of the broken mast. Like his father he is wafted (II.ii.109), wanders "up and down" (I.ii.30), waits upon a favourable tide for deliverance from the pervasive mist, and, as we shall see in more detail, he is repeatedly identified with the fluid medium itself.

Shakespeare chooses to reinforce the aquatic place names of Paul's journey through the personal names of Egeon and Adriana. On one hand, this suggests the identification of successive generations with the destructive flux which constitutes the world; in a Christian context it suggests the inheritable nature of the original catastrophe. On the other hand, Egeon and Adriana, by the play's end, concurrently

participate in the new dispensation revealed in the Pauline epistles and affirmed by the happy denouement and allusions to baptism.

The shared pelagic names of Egeon and Adriana exemplify the interdependence of the framing story and main plot and the interpenetration of the play's allegorical and psychological elements. Shakespeare's interest in the commonplace iconography of the world as ocean, with the perils of sea-voyage and tempest reflecting individual and societal life, has been much discussed.[10] But the unique merging in *Errors* of the framing story with the main plot in a contemporaneous process of fall and redemption reflects a neoplatonic aesthetic and metaphysic. Here is Sears Jayne on the coincidence of phylogenic and individual journeying:

> The Christian history of mankind depicts man as first falling from innocence to depravity in Adam and then rising from depravity to salvation in Christ. Unfortunately for us, however, ontogony does not, in this case recapitulate phylogeny; that is, the life of the individual man today does not recapitulate the fall and rise of the race as a whole. The individual does not go through the *fall* part of the cycle; he is born fallen and during his lifetime has nowhere to go but up ... The idea that the soul descends was not lost in Christian theology ... But on the whole the kataphetic, or descending, part of the soul's cycle was scantily treated in Christian theology, and what attracted Renaissance theologians most to the Platonic theology was the fact that it supplied a detailed account of the descending part of the soul's cycle (stressed in the *Timaeus* of Plato and in the *Enneads* of Plotinus) as well as a corroborating account of the ascending part (stressed in the *Symposium* and *Phaedo* of Plato).[11]

To illustrate Renaissance interest in this double cycle, Sears Jayne chooses Colet's detailed marginal paraphrase of Ficino which equates

falling into the body to "a person drowning in a stormy sea," and the forgetting of "true things" and one's "own nature" to immersion in the "river Lethe."[12]

In *Errors*, these phylogenetic and ontogenetic themes reach congruence through a similar use of fluid symbolism to suggest a common "descent," in the two senses of the word. The Edenic framing story prefigures the main action and, by the play's conclusion, is incorporated with it through the synchronous appearance of characters from both plots.

The sea-derived names of Egeon and Adriana signal the correspondences through which Adriana is at once reminiscent of Egeon's wife and Eve. Adriana's denial of the subordinate role of wife, emphasized in Genesis 1 and Ephesians 5, suggests the archetypal disruption and the inherited disordering of the will, intellect and senses. Egeon and Emilia's marital disharmony has the Edenic elements of pride, persuasion, reluctant consent and regret; this rejection of God's matrimonial hierarchy is followed by pandemic confusion and sorrow:

> My wife, not meanly proud of two such boys,
> Made daily motions for our home return;
> Unwilling I agreed' alas, too soon
> We came aboard. (I.i. 58-61)

In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* being "not meanly proud" is referred to as "Eve's legacy" (III.i.333), and Adriana, like Emilia, balks at being "bridled" by her husband's will. Adriana's persistent urging of Antipholus's "home return" parallels the type established by Emilia; according to Emilia's theocentric other self, the Abbess, the results are similarly disastrous:

> And thereof came it that the man was mad.
> The venom clamours of a jealous woman
> Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth. (V,i,68-70)

We miss the point if we continue to see madness as the characters do--as ideopathic illness and demonic possession curable by a Doctor Pinch --rather than generic, "sympathised" error in a disordered world of flux. We see the ingenious weaving of typology with psychology as Shakespeare has the unrecognized mother-in-law scold the wife, cling to the son, and project her own earlier failings onto her female successor. Yet Adriana does finally acknowledge the inherited human frailty which is "Eve's legacy" and thereby, parallel to the father/son recognition, aids in the freeing from ignorance which brings renewed identities.

Adriana's stormy rejection of wifely obedience and patience is characteristic of the general failure in Ephesus (largely unintentional) to recognize personal identity and the lineaments of order. Luciana's catechistic lecture to her sister on degree establishes a contrast between an ideal hierarchy and the dissolved boundaries of order. This contrast will be seen to reflect Shakespeare's poetic antithesis and the central problem in the play.[13]

The relationship of Luciana's speech on degree to the play's archetypal shipwreck and the problems of identity and understanding is suggested by Pico:

> The chief order established by divine Wisdom in created things is, that every inferiour Nature be immediately governed by the superiour; whom whilst

> it obeys, it is guarded from all ill, and led without any obstruction to its determinate felicity; but if through too much affection to its own liberty, and desire to prefer the licentious life before the profitable, it rebel from the superiour nature, it falls into a double inconvenience. First, like a ship given over by the Pilot, it lights sometimes on one Rock, sometimes on another, without hope of reaching the Port. Secondly, it loseth the command it had over the Natures subjected to it, as it hath deprived its superiour of his.[14]

This dissolution of internal order--psychic shipwreck--is replicated with the play's problems with legal, intercivic, civic, social, marital, and identity boundaries. On the macrocosmic scale Ulysses, in *Troilus and Cressida*, somewhat cynically associates dissolution of degree with a sea unlimited and a world of homogenized mire:

> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark what discord follows. Each thing meets
> In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters
> Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores
> And make a sop of all this solid globe...(I.iii.109-13).

Like Ulysses, Luciana describes natural order and human order as interdependent; both orders are subsumed to divine ordinance. She derives the hierarchy of marital bonds from Genesis and Ephesians:

> Why, headstrong liberty is lash'd with woe.
> There's nothing situate under heaven's eye
> But hath his bound in earth, in sea, in sky.
> The beasts, the fishes, and the winged fowls
> Are their males' subjects, and at their controls;
> Man, more divine, the master of all these,
> Lord of the wide world and wild wat'ry seas,
> Indued with intellectual sense and souls,
> Of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls,

> Are master to their females, and their lords;
> Then let your will attend on their accords. (II,i,15-25)

Sea imagery is plentiful here, and the headstrong wife "lash'd with woe" harks back to Emilia's urging of Egeon's voyage and the subsequent binding to the mast.

Yet, there is something clearly inadequate in Luciana's homiletic prescription for happiness. Her understanding is naive because Ephesus is not Eden: the bonds of order are displaced by tempests and the bondage of the senses. How, even with good intent, can such an order be established when husband and wife, father and son, and master and servant fail to even recognize one another? Shakespeare's skepticism does not assault the truth of Luciana's speech--only its didactic efficacy in a world which obscures reality. Shakespeare's art will suggest answers which are extra-rationative: love and mercy; grace and providence.

Once the internal boundaries of order are first broken, the protean mind of man is receptive to negative metamorphosis, deformation and monstrosity. Egeon and his heirs have strong links with the fluid medium, but rather than Luciana's lords "of the wide world and wild wat'ry seas" they are immersed and carried by the "wind-obeying deep"--following the Aristophanic androgyne, they are split and "plunged into bodies." Literally and figuratively the shipwreck victims are depicted as the "prey" of "fishers":

> And in our sight they three were taken up
> By fishermen of Corinth, as we thought.

> At length another ship had seiz'd on us,
> And knowing whom it was their hap to save
> Gave healthful welcome to their ship-wrack'd guests,
> And would have reft the fishers of their prey,
> Had not their bark been very slow of sail...(I.i.110-16).

Egeon's "in our sight" and "as we thought" qualify his statements and signal the first of many perceptual problems wrought by division for we learn from Emilia that it was "men of Epidamnum" who hauled them aboard. Only later were they further separated, "by force," by "rude fishermen of Corinth" (V.i.355-59). Yet, in both passages, the sense of being "seiz'd" as the "prey" of fishermen is maintained, and the victims pointedly lose the lustre ascribed by Luciana: "of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls."

The word "reft" in Egeon's description is repeated a few lines later so that it suggests both forcible division and a bereft longing for reunion (I.i.124-29). The sense is consistent with the aquatic metaphor given by Ficino's Aristophanes:

> For each of us, since we are split, is a half-man,
> like the little fish called psettae or goldfish,
> which when torn apart become two from one, where-
> upon each seeks its other half. (*Commentary*, pp. 154-55)

The coincidence of the metaphor of the man-fish with the idea of being "plunged" into material existence was not lost on Shakespeare (cf. Caliban), and the notion derives, ultimately, from Plato's *Phaedo*. In that dialogue's lengthy parable, semi-conscious man moves through a dream-world of confusion; he makes his way, fish-like, through the perceptual obscurity of a submerged world. Colet's sense of the fall

into multiplicity causes him to exploit the piscine imagery more soberly than Ficino. His translator notes:

> One favorite comparison with him, is that of men, in this forlorn and erring state, to fishes roaming at their own will in semi-darkness through the deep.[15]

In *Errors*, we see the theme of the pelagic frame story transferred to the wandering Antipholus adrift in the "dream" (II.ii.182) world of Ephesus where the "mist" of ignorance obscures even his own identity (II.ii.212-16). For his brother, the encapsulating mist congeals to reduce his home to "a dark and dankish vault" (V.i.248). I will return to Shakespeare's complex treatment of the pelagic theme in the analogy independently given by both Adriana and Antipholus: the comparison of the self to a drop fallen in the ocean.

One adjunct to man's becoming identified with the fluid medium of the world, I have suggested, is the proclivity to be equated with creatures less "indued with intellectual sense." This negative protean feature of fallen man extends into the motif of Circean transformation, a motif which culminates with the Duke naming it: "I think you all have drunk of Circe's cup" (V.i.271). This particular designation of the apparent madness, violence, and conflicting perspectives of Ephesus has a commonplace allegorical association with man's giving up reason for the senses. Ficino, for example, describes how Ulysses

> escaped the poisoned cups of Circe; that is, he escaped the allurements of corporeal love which transforms the human soul out of man into a beast, that is, out of reason into the sense.[16]

Perceptual relativity in Ephesus is closely related to the transformable identity, and this mutability is regularly set forth in the multivalent language of word-play.[17] One example of the relationship of language to self can be seen in the clamour of brothers separated by the Phoenix gate. There, transformation into the world of multiplicity is reflected by the instability inherent in the hybrid meanings of the pun. Meanings are transient and deformed in the running confrontation: one Dromio denies entrance to his brother until "fowls have no feathers, and fish have no fin" (III.i.79). His counterpart then makes the metaphor monstrously concrete; he calls his brother a fish and threatens to break in with an "iron crow": "For a fish without fin, there's a fowl without feather." Such permutations of language have the power to confuse and effect changes in those subject to an alien environment; and the environment has become alien even to those who call it home.

The language of Circean transformation is synonymous with a precariously fluid self-image. Without external confirmation of personal knowledge, heightened sensitivity to suggestion makes the self dangerously protean and, for the Dromios especially, the body is the image of that self:

> LUCIANA
> Why prat'st thou to thy self and answer'st not?
> Dromio, thou drone, thou snail, thou slug, thou sot.
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> I am transformed, master, am I not?
> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> I think thou art in mind, and so am I.

SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
Nay, master, both in mind and in my shape.
SYRACUSIAN ANOTIPHOLUS
Thou hast thine own form.
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
No, I am an ape.
LUCIANA
If thou art chang'd to aught, 'tis to an ass.
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
'Tis true, she rides me, and I long for grass;
'Tis so, I am an ass, else it could never be
But I should know her as well as she knows me. (II.ii.193-202)

For Dromio, Luciana's occult knowledge of his name bestows, power for conjuring; "Dromio" is declined to "drone" and a string of low-witted, sodden creatures. He finds proof of his ass-like dullness in his failure to recognize Luciana, and the depersonalized Dromio is only capable of "aping" a real identity.

Throughout the play the Dromios are compared to asses, by themselves and others.[18] Hankins points out the association of blind asses in Palingenius's *Zodiacus Vitae* with the limited perceptions of the materialistic mind.[19] This common Elizabethan schoolbook was also popular in Barnabe Googe's translation (1565), and one passage on the symbolic beast reflects the metaphysical problem (though not the tone) implicit in the plight of Dromio in the passage above:

> A number great of Beastes alive in shape of men do stray,
> Hence springeth up your errour great and cause of your decay,
> That with your grosse capacitie, none other thing you see,
> But bodies grosse, nor true things knowe, but such as shadowes bee.[20]

Asses, by Circean transformation, are also equated with being "drowned" in the bodily senses in Adlington's 1566 translation of *The Golden Asse*:

> Verely under the wrappe of this transformation, is taxed the life of mortall men, when as we suffer our mindes so to be drowned in the sensuall lustes of the fleshe, and the beastly pleasure thereof: (whiche aptly may be called, the violent confection of witches) that we leese wholy the use of reason and vertue (which properly should be in man) and play the partes of bruite and savage beastes.[21]

Through the animal motif the Dromios represent a fluid body image whereas their masters display mental mutation. Although, as dramatically viable characters, they do not manifest this as a simple allegorical division, the synchronous birth of bondmen and masters does give Shakespeare an opportunity to explore elements of mind/body psychology. Such a vantage is consistent with the parallel, yet distinctive, romantic and metamorphizing encounters, and with the master-servant relationships which are at once fractious and curiously interdependent:

> EPHESIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> Thou art sensible in nothing but blows, and so is an ass.
> EPHESIAN DROMIO
> I am an ass indeed; you may prove it by my long ears. I have served him from the hour of my nativity to this instant, and have nothing at his hands for my service but blows. (IV.iv.25-30)

Frequently mentioned in the play, this common birthdate is invoked by Antipholus of Syracuse when his soliloquy is interrupted by the entrance of his brother's servant. The soliloquy exhibits an increasingly depersonalized Antipholus who then attempts to objectify and confirm his own identity: "Here comes the almanac of my true date" (I.ii.41). But this attempt to find solace in physical and temporal

continuity is thwarted by the disjuncture realized in the same breath: "What now? How chance thou art return'd so soon?" Dependence on physical recognition as the sole basis of self-recognition and truth is the principal form of bondage symbolically broken in the extended exorcism tableau:

> And in a dark and dankish vault at home
> There left me and my man, both bound together,
> I gain'd my freedom; and immediately
> Ran hither to your grace...(V.i.248-52),

Clearly, this is not a rejection of the physical *per se*, but through distinction, a re-establishment of a decorous lost harmony: "I was his bondman, sir ... Now I am Dromio, and his man, unbound" (V.i.289-91).

For the self-alienated Antipholus, the transformational motif largely bypasses animal metamorphosis in favour of the medium of flux itself. Albeit in less dire circumstances, the Antipholus who initiates his waterdrop soliloquy with "I will go lose myself, / And wander up and down to view the city" (I.ii.30-31), inherits the same tone of dissolution that marked his father's departure: "Hopeless and helpless doth Egeon wend, / But to procrastinate his lifeless end." As the son's meditation progresses, losing oneself and abandoning oneself to death become difficult to distinguish psychologically and spiritually:

> I to the world am like a drop of water
> That in the ocean seeks another drop,
> Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
> (Unseen, inquisitive) confounds himself.
> So I, to find a mother and a brother,
> In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself. (I.ii.35-40)

The words "lose myself" have ominously changed in tone since they were first uttered in line 29 where they reflect mere self-distraction sought by Antipholus between eating and sleeping:

> Within this hour it will be dinner time;
> Till that I'll view the manners of the town,
> Peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings,
> And then return and sleep within mine inn,
> For with long travel [trauail (First Folio)] I am stiff and weary. (I.ii.11-15)

With the repetition of "lose myself" are we meant to perceive continuity, change--or both--with this previous passage?

The words "view," "gaze," "peruse" illustrate the importance of sight as the pivotal sense which ties the viewer to a love and knowledge either carnal or spiritual. The difficulty in distinguishing one type of sight from the other provides the play with metaphysical and dramatic tension. Egeon, finally, must depend on more than his "wasting lamps" (V.i.315) which he once depended on so rigidly: "Fixing our eyes on whom our care was fix'd, / Fasten'd ourselves at either end of the mast" (I.i.84-85). The syntactic and semantic pattern formed by "Fixing ... fix'd ... Fasten'd" firmly identifies restrictive sight with the physical act of binding to the mast. In the last act of the play, Egeon's recovery through recognition is, paradoxically, the self-recognition of the frailty of natural vision.[22] For this unrequited recognition he is at first deemed mad, a fate shared by many in the play: "I see thy age and dangers make thee dote" (V.i.329). It is the Abbess alone who defines a relation of sight to madness. This explanation occurs at the end of an intuitive litany of possible causes for Antipholus's

unhappy transformation, causes which include shipwreck, loss of wealth, and loss of a loved one, and conclude with personal defects:

> Hath not else his eye
> Stray'd his affection in unlawful love,
> A sin prevailing much in youthful men,
> Who give their eyes the liberty of gazing? (V.i.50-54)

On the surface she too is mistaken, but the association of a lover's madness with the elements of the archetypal catastrophe makes the query a basically platonic definition of concupiscence: dependence upon carnal vision confuses appearance and reality, and this is the more profound madness not recognized by the characters. This context, which broadens and complicates the definition of madness, is the perspective from which Antipholus's waterdrop soliloquy may be viewed.

In "losing" himself, then, there may be continuity between sought self-distraction and his apparently unwilled identity loss. Both senses of self-oblivion are proximate in later speeches:

> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> What, was I married to her in my dream?
> Or sleep I now, and think I hear all this?
> What error drives our eyes and ears amiss?
> Until I know this sure uncertainty,
> I'll entertain the offer'd fallacy. (II.ii.182-86)
>
> Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?
> Sleeping or waking, mad or well advis'd?
> Known unto these, and to myself disguis'd,
> I'll say as they say, and persever so,
> And in this mist at all adventures go. (II.ii,212-16)

His disoriented acquiescence to a world unintelligible is naturalistically convincing. Certainly, without external confirmation of his

identity, Antipholus is as psychologically deliquescent as his servant imagines his own self to be physically transformable. Yet Shakespeare is not inclined towards a modern assumption that the experiential world should provide the main criteria for self-definition. The "mist" is pervasive, not personal or external alone; it is the metaphorical companion to the obscuring and dissolving "ocean" of Antipholus's earlier soliloquy and, ultimately, Egeon's ocean which initiates the processes of transformation. Antipholus's comparison of the world to ocean and his self to a "falling" drop restates the spherical soul's kataphetic immersion in the sense world.

If Antipholus's ductile acquiescence to his surroundings constitutes one kind of pervasive madness in Ephesus, there is a contrary sense of madness found in the *Moriae Encomium* also at work in *Errors*.[23] Blending the Pauline sense of Christian folly with ideas of madness from Plato's cave, Erasmus selects metaphors that are common to both Ficino and Shakespeare. Chaloner's 1548 translation relates a general perceptual madness to drowning and binding, through a vocabulary suggestive of phylogenetic and ontogenetic images in *Errors*:

> For fyrst ye must thinke, how Christians in this poinct dooe fully agree with the opinion of Platos Sectatours, *how the soule of man beyng drowned and entangled in the fleshely bandes of the bodie, can not as being dusked with the grosenesse of the same, behold and take fruicion of the sight of verie thynges as thei are in deede*. Whereupon Plato defineth *Philosophie to bee a meditacion or remembraunce of death*, in as muche as it plucketh and retyreth the mind of man from visible and corporall thynges, to those that are invisible and ghostly. Whiche effect is in death also. Therfore

> so longe as the soule within man doeth rightly and in due wyse peruse the Organs of the bodie, so longe is that man called sounde, and of good discrecion: but whan some of those bandes or conduites beyng ones perisshed, she dooeth busily labour to recover hir freedome, minding a certaine flight (as it were) and breakyng lose from that hir flesshely prison the bodie, by whiche strugglyng the whole frame of the sensis, and inwarde powers is disioygned, you dooe holde him for madde and out of his right mynde...,[24]

The madness attributed to those whose fleshly "bandes or conduites" are weakened through age and infirmity is a predicament close to Egeon's in the final act:

> Though now this grained face of mine be hid
> In sap-consuming winter's drizzled snow,
> And all the conduits of my blood froze up,
> Yet hath my night of life some memory...(V.i.311-14).

Such presumed madness, according to Chaloner's *Folie*, is actually escape from collective perceptual madness, and this escape is effected by a Christianized version of Platonic recollection. Remembrance of death constitutes a two-fold recognition: it is a reminder of bondage to the deceivable, fall-constrained body, and yet it also suggests the gateway to spiritual understanding. Egeon's memory, amplified when his physical face is "hid," moves him toward a restored personal and communal indentity. As hinted at in the previous chapter, this process of mortification, whereby elusive physical recognition gives way to spiritual recognition, is gradually infused in the play's other characters:

> Ourselves we do remember, sir, by you.
> For lately we were bound as you are now.

You are not Pinch's patient, are you sir? (V.i.293-95)

The instances in the Erasmian passage where "bandes" and "conduites" (the body's nerves, veins and sinews) are cordage entangling the soul elicit further echoes in Shakespeare's language of binding and the role of Adam, "sergeant of the band." The Erasmian metaphor highlights the symbolism of the broken mast: master remains bound to servant at the loss of spiritual androgyny signified by bound twins; the symbolism is restated with the master and servant tied together in the dark room. It finally becomes evident that true sanity and order cannot be enforced through bewilderingly unreliable physical bonds ("God for thy mercy, they are loose again!"),[25] but by a stabilizing force beyond the limits of physical fixity:

> The body perpetually flows, rises, and falls in a continuous resolution, liquifaction, and alternate shifting from heat to cold. The soul always remains the same. This is clearly shown to us by its search for truth, the never-changing desire for the Good, and the firm preservation of memory. (*Commentary*, p. 157)

As I have noted above, Adriana's complaint uses imagery remarkably parallel to that of Antipholus's waterdrop soliloquy. This parallelism primarily serves to heighten the sense of danger attendant upon the fluid disposition Antipholus allows himself. Adriana, mistaking the alien Antipholus for her errant spouse, reprimands the stranger with his own distinctive metaphors:

> How comes it now, my husband, O, how comes it,
> That thou art then estranged from thyself?--

> Thyself I call it, being strange to me,
> That undividable, incorporate,
> Am better than thy dear self's better part.
> Ah, do not tear away thyself from me;
> For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall
> A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
> And take unmingled thence that drop again
> Without addition or diminishing,
> As take from me thyself, and not me too. (II.ii.119-29)

If Antipholus, who "wants wit in all one word to understand," at all recognizes his own self-comparison to a drop in an ocean, it must be to marvel that his words are magically known and transformed--just as he is beginning to feel himself to be. He is shocked to learn that rather than dissolved and lost, he is melted and merged with his Salmacis-like pursuer. Adriana's speech pointedly recalls that of Antipholus, and his original non-sexual love quest is integrated in an inclusive pattern of neoplatonic and Pauline love bonds. The fact that the present situation is ironically amusing does not negate the play's comic resolution within this overall pattern.

At this juncture, the source of irony derives from Adriana's self-acknowledged shrewish elements which I have previously discussed. Her overweening possessiveness is highlighted here by her statement that she is "better" than her husband's "better part" (i.e. soul).[26] There is an inordinate concern with physicality for someone "better" than a soul; she wants to "fasten" on his sleeve and twine like a "vine" (II.ii.173-74). She fears declining appearance, and repeatedly equates marital success with Antipholus keeping "fair quarter with his bed" (II.i.8; II.ii.145). Thwarted in her claim for co-mingled unity, her distress reflects a narcissistic self-indulgence:

> Since that my beauty cannot please his eye,
> I'll weep what's left away, and weeping die. (II,i,114-15)

The analogue with Narcissus is strengthened by the fact that her hyperbolic complaint to her "other self" is actually directed to the watery image of her husband, the other Antipholus. Ficino sees the story of Narcissus as "the fateful misfortune of man in general" who

> does not see his own countenance, he never notices his own substance and virtue, but pursues its reflection in the water, and tries to embrace it; that is, the soul admires the beauty in the weak body, an image in the flowing water, which is but the reflection of itself ... In this way Narcissus desires, and since he pays no heed to that [true beauty] while he desires and pursues something else, he cannot satisfy his desire. Therefore he is destroyed, melted into tears...(*Commentary*, p. 212).

The psychological problem of Adriana's possessiveness as she tries to unite with her "other self" becomes, from this context, part of the major problem of distinguishing reality from the world of appearance. Her self-dissolving tears are part of the negative lineage of water symbolism which reaches back through Antipholus's self-dissolution to Egeon's wrack. This sequence is compressed in the alien Antipholus's plea to Luciana:

> O, train me not, sweet mermaid, with thy note
> To drown me in thy sister's flood of tears...(III.ii.45-46).

CHAPTER II

Part B: "Salt Waves Fresh"

My concentration, thus far, on the play's negative pattern of water symbolism reflects a rhetorical imbalance requiring redress. In Shakespeare's thematic use of this symbolism he sustains the previously mentioned dialectic whereby latent positive meanings emerge as the play's happy outcome unfolds. One point by which we may see such imagery turn upon itself is present with the tears of Adriana.

Though at first corrosive and drowning, Adriana's tears become an agent for redemption:

> Come, go, I will fall prostrate at his feet,
> And never rise until my tears and prayers
> Have won his grace to come in person hither,
> And take perforce my husband from the abbess. (V.i.114-17)

Contrary to the opinion of Foakes, this represents a departure from the over-possessive love of which she has just made public confession (V.i.89-91).[27] Coupled with supplicative prayers and gesture, these tears are aimed at regaining a husband whom she now considers dangerously mad. The tears are now self-sacrificing rather than self-destroying and the difference is apparent from an increasingly sanctified context:

> I will attend my husband, be his nurse,
> Diet his sickness, for it is my office,
> And will have no attorney but myself,
> And therefore let me have him home with me. (V.i.98-101)

The Solemnization of Matrimony offers echoes for this in the structural parallels of its required "office":

> Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him, in sickness and in health? And forsaking all other, keep thee only to him, so long as you both shall live?[28]

Adriana's humbled recollection of her true marital bonds contrasts her earlier self-concern. Her deferential appeal to the Duke re-establishes an integral link in the referral of marriage to society and spiritual order:

> May it please your grace, Antipholus my husband,
> Who I made lord of me and all I had
> At your important letters...(V.i.136-38).

We learn that this marriage was facilitated by the grateful Solinus for her husband's war service (V.i.161-64) and, on this basis, Antipholus too appeals to the Duke for intercession and justice:

> Even for the service that long since I did thee
> When I bestrid thee in the wars, and took
> Deep scars to save thy life; even for the blood
> That I lost for thee, now grant me justice. (V.i.191-94)

Although Antipholus is still angry and amazed, the stage is set for common recognition and reunion. In recalling the details of his own self-sacrifice, blood has the same transformational function as his wife's tears; the Christian model is turned to repeatedly in the marriage ceremony for the paradigm of unity:

> Saint Paul, (in his Epistle to the Ephesians, the v. chapter), doth give this commandment to all married men.
> Ye husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church, and hath given himself for it,

> to sanctify it, purging it in the fountain of water, through the word; that he might make it unto himself a glorious congregation, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and blameless.[29]

Through these "purging waters" the Phoenix and Abbey, the loci of marriage and baptism, are harmonized; mystical union and rebirth of identity share the same transformational fluid symbolism.

As suggested above, Shakespeare's paradoxical use of the fluid symbol is not unique in itself. It is as common as the Rite of Baptism where (along with its stated antecedents of the River Jordan, the Red Sea, and Noah's Flood) the purgation is described as an antidote to the "troublesome waves of the world." Even Colet, who can call "all things but God, *waters*," because they are "frail, flowing, and perishable; resembling water, in finding no place of rest through any proper boundary of its own,"[30] is drawn to the antithesis:

> Both sin and grace have come to the multitude of mankind: but sin came at man's first origin; grace, after men had become multiplied. The river of grace and the river of sin flow in opposite directions to encounter one another. For sin comes from the one to the many; grace from the many to the one.[31]

Often, Shakespeare's antithetical symbols of fluidity are simultaneously engaged in the same passages, although the dramatic tension from the negative pole is greatly reduced, if not eliminated, through the Christianized positive ending. Elements of ritual baptism, then, are at one level ironic parodies when applied to the characters moving

through the play in semi-consciousness. Farcical high jinks such as "crossing" Dromio's head with blows, Antipholus's gratuitous new vesture, the exorcism of Pinch with "puddled mire," and other incidents, cumulatively insinuate the deeper comedic operation of prevenient grace leading to the gossips' feast. The "puddled mire" used at once to define and exorcise the "living dead man" remains an inadequate symbol for the post-baptismal chrism of oil and balsam.[32] Yet Dromio finally reminds us of the voyage that ends before embarkation, and he refers to a newly acquired cargo. The conveyance of the curious "new goods," the promising signs and convening guidance has been thwarted only if the journey has been understood as a physical one:

> Our fraughtage, sir,
> I have convey'd aboard, and I have bought
> The oil, the balsamum and aqua-vitae.
> The ship is in her trim, the merry wind
> Blows fair from land; they stay for nought at all
> But for their owner, master, and yourself. (IV.i.88-93)

The story of the married Antipholus develops with more direct reference to Christian typology than the story of his brother. With Antipholus "Erotes" Shakespeare considers romantic love conventions which are not obviously pertinent to the trials of married love with its Christian structure. Yet, obviously, the stories of the two brothers are linked by the overall structure of division, confusion, and reunion. This linked development is seen in the association of fluid symbols, negative and positive, with both brothers, and suggests the central place that the *effluit-refluit-profluit* cycle of being and love has in

organizing Shakespeare's metaphysical reflections. Stimulated, directly or indirectly, by Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, Shakespeare appears to be testing an amalgamation of eros and agape in the parallel stories of the two brothers.

I have argued that by his waterdrop soliloquy and related passages the alien Antipholus is directly associated through the image of water to a selfhood that is inveterately unstable. But, as with his brother's marital theme, the romantic theme of the foreign Antipholus engages fluid contraries. The same principle of protean ductility which underscores the visitor's vulnerability to Circean deformation also facilitates his cyclic return, his re-formation through an elevating love.

Some of the language in Antipholus's romantic encounter with Luciana is similar to that in Hoby's Elizabethan version of *The Courtier*.[33] Although a *de facto* progression up the Platonic "staire of love" is qualified by Shakespeare's skepticism and need for dramatic opposition, Castiglione's own presentation is itself playfully undercut by its dialogue format. The fluid imagery in Hoby's translation does suggest parallels to Shakespearean antithesis. On one hand Bembo can speak of the soul confused by sensual desire as

> drowned in the earthyly prison, because she is set in the office to governe the bodie, she can not of her selfe understand plainly at first the truth of spirituall beholding. (pp. 305-06)

But if the courtier transcends this error to see that "the body, where

that beauty shineth, is not the fountaine from whence beautie springeth" (p. 313), he is ready, presumably, for the chaste kiss of lovers whereby souls

> poure them selves by turne the one into the others bodie, and bee so mingled together, that each of them hath two soules. (p. 315)

In *King John* the courtly convention of the confluence of identities is articulated in a comprehensive and positive pattern which has multiple echoes in *Errors*; although ironical in context, Hubert's marriage ideal shows the completion of an Aristophanic androgyne within reciprocally beneficial societal bounds:

> He is the half part of a blessed man,
> Left to be finished by such as she,
> And she a fair divided excellence,
> Whose fullness of perfection lies in him.
> O, two such silver currents when they join
> Do glorify the banks that bound them in;
> And two such shores, to two such streams made one,
> Two such controlling bounds shall you be, kings,
> To these two princes, if you marry them.
> This union shall do more than battery can
> To our fast-closed gates...(II.i.439-47).

But the course of love runs not so smooth for Antipholus and Luciana, and the exchange between them compresses antithetical images of flux. The ambivalence over Antipholus's sudden enchantment, felt by both the characters and the audience, is epitomized by his rejection of one sister who threatens to "drown" him while he pursues the other sister who lures him to another fluid death:

> O, train me not, sweet mermaid, with thy note
> To drown me in thy sister's flood of tears;
> Sing, siren, for thyself, and I will dote;
> Spread o'er the silver waves thy golden hairs,
> And as a bed I'll take thee, and there lie,
> And in that glorious supposition think
> He gains by death that hath such means to die...(III.ii.45-51).

The dual image of drowning highlights the problem of distinction: does Antipholus's attraction to Luciana betray the familiar Shakespearean play on the arbitrary fixation of lust; or, does it signal an intuitive distinction, a marriage of true minds? The problem is caught by the pun "mated" which suggests both mental confusion and marriage, the madness of lust and the *raptus* of love:

> LUCIANA
> What, are you mad that you do reason so?
> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> Not mad, but mated, how I do not know. (III.ii.53-54)

Antipholus's quick submission to Luciana as a source of direction can be seen to be consistent with his role as irresolute wanderer, for it recalls his submissively ductile nature:

> I'll say as they say, and persever so,
> And in this mist at all adventures go. (II,ii.215-16)
> ...
> Less in your knowledge and your grace you show not
> Than our earth's wonder, more than earth divine.
> Teach me, dear creature, how to think and speak;
> Lay open to my earthy gross conceit,
> Smother'd in errors feeble, shallow, weak,
> The folded meaning of your words' deceit.
> Against my soul's pure truth, why labour you
> To make it wander in an unknown field?
> Are you a god? would you create me new?
> Transform me then, and to your power I'll yield. (III.ii.31-40)

Antipholus sees Luciana as both a cause and a cure for his condition of confused drifting. His attribution of divine knowledge, grace, and powers of benign transformation to the puzzled girl can appear as amusing, albeit idolatrous, folly. Such a reading of his supplication, when taken in its entirety, is reinforced by the only comparable passage in *The Courtier*, Bembo's final rapt prayer to God:

> Make us dronken with the bottomlesse fountaine of contentation ... Purge with the shining beames of thy light our eyes from mistie ignorance, that they may no more set by mortall beautie, and well perceive that the thinges which at the first they thought themselves to see, be not in deede, and those that they saw not, to be in effect ... Burne our soules in the lively flame that wasteth all grosse filthiness, that after they be cleane sundred from the bodie, they may be coupled with an everlasting and most sweete bond to the heavenly beautie. (p. 322)

In Bembo's idealistic vision, courtly lovers, at best, become a metaphor for this divine communion. In contrast, Antipholus's dubious attraction to Luciana, the "siren" and "mermaid," would seem to continue the symbolic pattern of human fish caught in the bewitching snare of the senses. For Antipholus, Luciana becomes a "goddess" to renounce, a Venerean fisher who might rival Shakespeare's Cleopatra:

> My music playing far off, I will betray
> Tawny-finned fishes. My bended hook shall pierce
> Their slimy jaws; and as I draw them up,
> I'll think them every one an Antony,
> And say, "Ah, ha! y're caught!"
> (*Antony and Cleopatra*, II.v.11-15)

Yet, even Antipholus's sense of entrapment is given positive dimensions by Ficino's Socrates:

> The appearance of a man, which because of an interior goodness graciously given to him by God, is beautiful to see, frequently shoots a ray of his splendor, through the eyes of those looking at him, into their souls. Drawn by this spark like a fish on a hook, the souls hasten toward the one who is attracting them. This attraction, which is love, since it derives from the beautiful, good, and happy, and is attracted to the same things, we do not hesitate to call Goodness, Beauty, Blessedness, and a God, concurring in the judgment of Agathon and the rest of the previous speakers. (*Commentary*, p. 183)

This image of piscine entrapment continues Agathon's presentation of love as an ethical mediator, and sensible beauty "a kind of bait" (p. 164) by which interior beauty must be approached. Luciana's beauty will prove essential to the forging of a completed identity for Antipholus.

These contrasting positive and negative possibilities in Antipholus's love for Luciana highlight his previously uncertain nature. With the entrance of his bondman, however, Antipholus's personal ambivalence collapses. Dromio's excited confusion over his encounter with Luce parodies the self-doubts in his master's mind: "Do you know me sir? Am I Dromio? Am I your man? Am I myself? ... I am an ass, I am a woman's man and besides myself" (III,ii.73-76). The parallel encounters are carefully drawn, with Luce's name literally the diminutive of Luciana. If the captivating eye-light praised by Socrates is poured out by the "fair sun" Luciana (III,ii.55-58), Luce gives the oily light of a "tallow lamp" (III,ii,93-98). The knowledge-giving light of Luciana's "grace" (III,ii.31) is materially duplicated in the contemporary pun on Luce's "grease."[34] Antipholus's drowning and resurrection under

Luciana's influence ("He gains by death that has such means to die") could invoke the bawdy pun on "die," or suggest the baptism motif in a neoplatonized courtly context. Although Noah's renewing flood, (stated as a type in the Rite of Public Baptism) is clearly alluded to in the proposed bathing of the world-woman Luce, its power to transform is denied:

> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> ...she sweats, a man may go over-shoes in the grime
> of it.
> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> That's a fault water will mend,
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> No, sir, 'tis in the grain; Noah's flood could not
> do it. (III.ii.101-05)

The extended exchange between master and servant, however light in tone, is a crucial stage in the resolution of the romantic motif. It is Dromio's testament of Luce's Circean powers that convinces Antipholus that Luciana's magic must be black, and that they must leave at once:

> There's none but witches do inhabit here,
> And therefore 'tis high time that I were hence...
> (III.ii.155-56).

For the first time since landing at Ephesus, Antipholus has asserted his tractable will; in doing so he gives boundaries to his previously amorphous identity. This process of self-definition is co-extensive with moral definition:

> But her fair sister,
> Possess'd with such a gentle sovereign grace,
> Of such enchanting presence and discourse,

> Hath almost made me traitor to myself;
> But lest myself be guilty to self-wrong,
> I'll stop mine ears against the mermaid's song.
> (III.ii.158-63)

His intuitive attraction to Luciana will prove justified--but only because he is willing to forge his own identity through this difficult decision to leave. The purpose of the parallel encounters is clear: Antipholus renounces that dimension of his love for Luciana which is adumbrated by Luce and, paradoxically, makes the future union inevitable. Dromio's description of Luce as a very palpable world, flesh, and devil isolates her as an object for exorcism, just as Pinch, substituting for the bondage of "old Egeon," is rid by the other Antipholus.[35] The Antipholus brothers' separate scenes of riddance can be seen as contiguous patterns of death and rebirth, brought together in the same baptismal passage:

> O merciful God, grant that the old Adam in these children may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in them. Amen.
> Grant that all carnal affections may die in them, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in them. Amen.
> Grant that they may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the Devil, the world, and the flesh. Amen.[36]

I do not, of course, suggest that in utilizing such symbolism Shakespeare is prescribing a celibate marriage for Luciana and Antipholus; nor does the play embrace the ascetic Platonism ultimately advanced by Castiglione's Bembo. Antipholus's new knowledge of himself is inextricable from moral understanding and this establishes the depth and

ordering of the amatory relationship, Distinguishing flesh from spirit itself fulfils the play's moral pattern of recognition and self-recognition, and this achievement can happily accommodate the marriage of Luce and the Ephesian Dromio.

Luce, then, is something that "water" can not "mend" (III,ii.104-05) only from a solely material perspective. In *The Tempest* similar doubts are given the wilfully malign voice of Antonio when he mocks Gonzalo's observation:

> GONZALO
> That our garments, being, as they were, drenched in the sea, hold, notwithstanding, their freshness and glosses, being rather new-dyed than stained with salt water.
> ANTONIO
> If but one of his pockets could speak, would it not say he lies? (II.i.64-69)

By his absolute denial Antonio has betrayed himself as an irremediable pocket of corruption in the mortal garment since Ariel has already confirmed:

> Not a hair perished.
> On their sustaining garments not a blemish,
> But fresher than before...(I.ii.217-19).

In *Errors* evil does not have Antonio's wilful presence, but the same epistemological relativity that perceives Prospero's island as green or brown already obtains with the early drama's central problem of personal identification.

In Shakespeare's neoplatonized farce, Eros is leagued with providential grace and, as stated in *Twelfth Night*, this makes the original

immersion a "happy wrack" (V.i.265) where tempests prove "kind, and salt waves fresh in love" (III.iv.388). In *Errors* a similar reinterpretation of the archetypal wrack means that a circular mental voyage has been achieved. The fluid medium of change itself proves transformable into something "fresh" as, inexorably, it accrues positive associations: the corrosive, downward transforming, obscuring waves of the world become increasingly replaced by suggestions of baptism, regenerating grace, and the mysterious actions of providence. Re-viewed from this vantage, even the "rude fishermen" become unconscious, proleptic agents of a multivalent Love who is a fisher of men.[37]

In this comedy, however, the power of love to recover a lost paradise is not a simple foregone conclusion. The play is worked out with close attention to the metaphysical problem of appearance versus reality--as it is manifested in the personal psychology of shifting perspectives. In a sense, Shakespeare's poetic use of multidimensional language parallels the possibilities of the fluid symbol: it is at once sufficiently protean to suggest a confused multiplicity of meanings, and yet its overall organization argues an emergent order and truth.

CHAPTER III

The Cycle Completed: Time's Debt and Redemption

We have viewed the play's development with respect to a neoplatonic cycle of love and knowledge that draws heavily upon Christian symbolism. This development, I have suggested, is dramatically set forth in antithetical language which encodes the characters' difficulties in distinguishing between appearance and reality. This dialectic of negative and positive, physical and spiritual, understandings is substantially resolved as the play's end rediscovers its beginning; the *discordia* in this Christianized farce is mitigated with an implication that the bewildering succession of events has been overseen by providence. How time is treated in *Errors* is revealing of both this thematic development and Shakespeare's dramatic strategy. Shakespeare's treatment of time is particularly illustrative of how the farce genre, self-consciously addressed, is transformed into a medium for poetic theology.

As I have previously argued, neoplatonic cyclicity can reflect the history of mankind and the history of the individual soul as parallel movements of descent and ascent. This progression will be seen in eclectic conjunction with Christian ideas of time developed in Shakespeare's comedy.

Although the thematic importance of time in *Errors* has been acknowledged, the implications have been but partly understood. Gāmini Salgādo, for example, points out that

> Of the 1,700 odd lines of the play well over 700 are taken up by characters giving their versions of what has just happened, and yet no one in the play is able to give a reliable account of the present or immediate

past.[1]

This observation, in itself, may not be very significant: in farce, the importance of the timing (or mistiming) of events is obvious for the knotting and unknotting of plot. Yet Shakespeare's explicit references to time, and the nature of time, are less expected. Without tallying the many allusions, there are 33 occurrences of the word "time" itself in this short play; what is device in pure farce becomes a subject for poetic investigation with Shakespeare. This transformation of device into theme is precisely what we have seen happen to mistaken identity as it becomes the ontological and epistemological problem of identity. These subjects are not independent: the misjudgement of temporal and physical reality merge as the single problem of discernment and development within the sea of time and space.

These considerations are necessarily reflexive if farcical misadventure is a metaphor for our extra-dramatic world of illusion. If characters, and audience, construe incidents (conjunctions of time and place) as "chance," as Egeon does at first,[2] the action retains the temporal arbitrariness of farce. If, however, as I have suggested, the unfolding action asserts a proleptic and providential fulfillment, then Shakespeare's transformation of the contingent superficies of farce can be seen as complete. That is, the intercession of providence into "chance" events has a corresponding relevance for the playwright's architectonics: the admission of poetic inspiration into the movement of the "mechanicals" of farce. It is in keeping with poetic theology

to suggest that providence forms such a median term to equate poetic inspiration with grace. This is seen in a letter of Ficino to Antonio Pelotti:

> Plato adds that some very unskilled men are thus possessed by the Muses, because divine providence wants to show mankind that the great poems are not the invention of men but gifts from Heaven.[3]

The self-conscious attention to time in *Errors* becomes a reflexive comment on the dramatic process which is dependent upon sequential time to develop and reveal character and event. I will return to the implications of this view for Shakespeare's aesthetic following a consideration of the views of time within the play.

On one hand, I have stressed that the relation of Egeon's predicament to the main plot reflects the double cycle, racial and individual, of division, progression, and reunion developed along the line of Ficino's Christianized version of the *Symposium*. On the other hand, I have frequently illustrated the relationship of the two plots in terms of biblical symbolism (notably that pertaining to the Old and New Adam) to suggest Shakespeare's felt continuity between Pauline and neoplatonized spirituality. My consideration of the double plot in biblical terms implies Shakespeare has adapted typological method to his play. That is, the situations established in Egeon's story shadow forth the predicaments of the main action, and thus encourage backward and forward reflection, parallel to--and with self-conscious reference to--the way events in the Old and New Testaments were commonly compared. This in itself is a key to Shakespeare's attention to time in the play. Edward

W. Tayler observes:

> The theory of types represents in codified form what is in effect a doctrine of time and an interpretation of history, implying a movement of progressive fulfillment from, in Milton's words, "shadowy Types to Truth."[4]

Augustine's influential adaption of the Platonic concept of Time in apposition to the timelessness of Eternity is still important in the Renaissance; understanding the Truth through types involves this conception whereby temporal events are, in some sense, understood apart from time, with God the Architect of time in mind. Tayler describes the relationship of the two concepts:

> There were, in the Renaissance, two main ways by which men not given to the raptures of mysticism might grasp something of the splendor of the everlasting. One lies in the distinction, elaborated by theologians and preachers into a commonplace, between *chronos*, or Time as it is ordinarily apprehended, and *kairos*, which is Time comprehended under the aspect of Eternity. The other is figuralism or typology, the exegetical method that offered men some insight into God's eternal ways with time and history. These two ways are in effect one, for the theory of types is essentially a theory of *kairoi*....[5]

The double vision inherent in the idea of *chronos* and *kairos* is strongly suggested in *Errors* and forms a binary opposition in keeping with the play's physical and spiritual dialectic. Mistiming and apparent disjunctures in temporal sequence reflect the inability to recognize the true significance of an event in context, a context that is finally felt synchronously as a "sympathised one day's error."[6]

Synchronous apprehension is the playwright's means of suggesting the moment out of time in an art form dependent upon temporal succession; it is the *kairoi* one must wait for till "each circumstance / Of place, time, fortune do cohere and jump."[7] Remembrance of the forgotten is inherent in such a moment of understanding since it is the means of restoring continuity to temporal sequence. The neoplatonic notion of memory as the recognition of the true, spiritual self beyond apparent identity may be seen in conjunction with this theory of *kairoi*, which seeks to "rationalize the points of the intersection of the timeless with time."[8] The necessary farcical improbability of twins forgetting the existence of one another becomes illuminated as a metaphor for self-forgetting through the characters' diminished chronological understanding. In Egeon's story, the importance of attitudes toward time can be seen to be established for the play.

While recognizing multiple perspectives on time in *Errors*, Salgādo sees this plurality mainly as "natural" or "public" time versus "private" time; he posits the "frozen" time of Egeon's story against a "time gone crazy" in Ephesus.[9] Although Salgādo rightly observes that "a developed sense of time and a sense of individuality are virtually two aspects of the same thing," he overlooks Shakespeare's epistemological and phylogenetic focus and suggests a questionable causality: "cosmic disruption caused by a dislocation of time sequence."[10] Egeon's story may appear "frozen" as a recounted tale, but there are more than incidental shadows of the disrupted time of Ephesus:

> My wife, not meanly proud of two such boys,
> Made daily motions for our home return;
> Unwilling I agreed; alas, too soon
> We came aboard. (I.i.58-61)

"Too soon" or (in Emilia's view) too late, this conflict of temporal perspectives gives an archetype of mistiming which actually brings about the real and apparent disjunctures of time which follow. This marital disharmony, seen through temporal conflict, is repeated in the initial words of the Epheisan Antipholus: "My wife is shrewish when I keep not hours" (III.i.2). Individual perceptions of time are taken to near surrealistic extremes in Ephesus and have, as seen with Antipholus, a relation to the growing interpersonal mistrust.

Perceiving a connection of time, the marital theme, and individual identity, Barbara Freedman sees psychological change in *Errors* as a function of time and "temporal disjunction as the cause of identity confusion."[11] I will argue, rather, that temporal perception is a function of self-knowledge, and a personal indicator of the health of the spiritual identity. Freedman recognizes an interplay of marital obligations with monetary debt in *Errors* but maintains, "The play's marital debts lead back to Egeon's history and to the theme of identity as the monetary theme cannot."[12] I will argue otherwise: both marital and monetary debt become subsumed under the question of spiritual debt ("debt" will be defined as an imbalance or obligation with a temporal history).[13] Typologically, the debt of Old Adam (or "old Egeon"), with its penalty of death, is paid by the New Adam, Christ; the importance of this symbolism on the individual level, as previously observed, is

inextricable from the baptism symbolism of the play.

On the individual level, too, how one responds to (or "keeps") time is important, as seen in the marital friction noted above. Time recognition has importance not only in "remembrance" along neoplatonic lines, but in the recovery of "debt" wrested from time's dual nature. This recovery is, in part, effected through a Christian adaption of the pagan figure of Occasion who is commonly portrayed with a forelock on a bald head to show that opportunity not grasped is forever lost. Since the eternal will or divine grace is said to preside over the intersection of time and occasion, failure to seize opportunity can result in eternal spiritual forfeit.[14] This understanding of *kairos* includes terms such as "fit opportunity," "season," "tempestivity" as well as "occasion." Tayler aptly suggests: "This way of dealing theoretically with the relation of Time to Eternity may be considered in some respects more personal, more closely connected to the life of the individual Christian, than the typological method."[15] Along with the neoplatonic process of the soul-journey, this personal approach to time is particularly amenable to Shakespeare's psychological interest in his characters.

The importance of how one sees time becomes an explicit concern in the instances where "Time" becomes personified in *Errors*, and the objectifying of "Time" attests the subjectivity of the characters' responses to it. One illustrative instance occurs when Luciana entreats her sister to embrace patience, in lieu of her absent husband:

> A man is master of his liberty;
> Time is their master, and when they see time,
> They'll go or come; if so, be patient, sister. (II,i.7-9)

If this is understood only as "a man comes and goes as he pleases," Adriana's objection to this as "fool-begg'd" patience is persuasive. Yet time emerges as "master" of man. Human beings, as a race of bond-servants, "when they see time" respond one way or another. In this comedy of mistaken masters and servants who rush to and fro, "master Time" also is misjudged.

The passage comments not only on Antipholus's individual behaviour, it evokes the idea of Christian patience as attendant upon time's opportunity, the moment one may truly "see time":

> We must endure the time, wait or even suffer in acquiescent patience for the fullness of time: "It is not for you," Jesus explains in Acts 1:7 "to know the times or the seasons," not for you to know the *kairoi*, "which the Father has put in his own power."[16]

Patience ultimately means a faith that God, as Lord of Time, is able to intervene in the chronological to "reveal the *kairoi* to come."[17] In *Errors*, multiple levels of consciousness are reflected by the multiple ways one may "see time," Irascibility, violence, inconstancy of mind and quick misjudgements are the play's outward signs for impatience as diminished awareness: "To be unaware of the *kairoi* means to be unable to read history, unable to ponder the true weight of events...."[18]

In the framing plot, Egeon is reduced to a mere chronological comprehension of time; the disputed time of departure, with its

catastrophic consequences, gives way to despair. Hopelessness, as previously noted, involves a denial of providence for chance-laden words such as: "hap," "Fortune," "misfortunes," "unjust," and "mishaps."[19] Egeon's hopelessness is directly related to an obscured perception of divine light; his faulty prediction of death by nature is couched in the same rigid legal matrix which obtains for his later, equally "hopeless," situation:

> But longer did we not retain much hope;
> For what obscured light the heavens did grant,
> Did but convey unto our fearful minds
> A doubtful warrant of immediate death...(I.i.65-68).

Although, unlike Shakespeare, Calvin rejected Fortune even as a conventional embodiment of apparent contingency, his remarks on the subject, in a 1577 translation of his sermons, are suggestive of the events of Ephesus as well as for Egeon's story:

> If a man light among theves ... if by winde sodenly rysen he suffer shypwrak on the sea ... if an other wandryng in deserte places finde remedy for hys povertie, if having been tossed with the waves, he atteine to haven, if miraculously he escape but a fynger bredth from death: all these chaunces as well of prosperitie as of adversitie the reason of the fleshe doeth ascrybe to fortune. But whosoever is taught by the mouth of Chryst, that all the heares of hys hed are numbred, will seke for a cause further of, and wyll firmelye beleve that all chaunces are governed by the secrete councell of God.[20]

In a dialectic of "the reason of the fleshe" with the providential vision, figured by the "numbred heares," Shakespeare again will be seen

to display his neoplatonic metaphysical bias by making the evil of misfortune a function of understanding.

In *Errors*, chronology reft of its spiritual dimension is associated with deformity of body and soul. Egeon complains:

> O! grief hath chang'd me since you saw me last,
> And careful hours with time's deformed hand
> Have written strange defeatures in my face...(V.i.298-300).

Time as Destroyer has its ultimate origin with Adam forgetting the divine directive and thereby reaping the penalty of infirmity and death. Egeon directly associates deforming time with the problem of distinguishing identity, a problem, we have seen, closely related to that of self-recognition. Egeon later suggests he is denied recognition by his heir because of fear and shame to be associated with his condition: "perhaps, my son, / Thou sham'st to acknowledge me in misery" (V.i.321-22). Only failure of recognition prevents this from figuring a prideful denial of the inherited debt of Adam. Dromio's recognition, however symbolic, circumvents the obscuring amnesia of time by acknowledging the universal connection of bondage: "Ourselves we do remember, sir, by you" (V.i.293).

The association of the effects of deforming time with a moral perspective is explicitly treated in Adriana's complaints about her husband:

> Hath homely age th' alluring beauty took
> From my poor cheek? then he hath wasted it,
> ...
> What ruins are in me that can be found
> By him not ruin'd? Then is he the ground

> Of my defeatures; my decayed fair
> A sunny look of his would soon repair..,(II.i,89-99).

Here, aging is at first given as a possible cause of marital division, then it is claimed to be an effect of moral turpitude; by the end of the passage, age's "defeatures" are relative, not fixed, and even capable of "repair." Through a change in perspective time's destruction can, in some sense, be reversed; or, "against the reason of the fleshe," in Adriana's later joking: "the hours come back" (IV.ii.55). Again when Adriana rails at her husband's moral deficiencies it is done by suggesting a physical-temporal equivalence with the soul:

> He is deformed, crooked, old and sere,
> Ill-fac'd, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere;
> Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind,
> Stigmatical in making, worse in mind. (IV.ii.19-22)

The somewhat surprising physical portion of this description is similar to old Egeon's extended self-description in Act V,--and reminiscent of the figure of the "mere anatomy" Pinch, dispelled by Antipholus himself. The obscuring, deforming effects of time invoke Paul's metaphorical "Old Adam"; and yet, Adriana's "Ah, but I think him better than I say" (IV.ii.25) illustrates how the latent power of love can modify chronological perspectives. Through conflicting opinions of time and identities in Ephesus, Shakespeare stresses the conventions of absolute chronology until the constructs of time and place collapse--and wait for an extra-rationative ordering power:

> Ay me, it is my husband; witness you
> That he is borne about invisible;

> Even now we hous'd him in the abbey here,
> And now he's there, past thought of human reason, (V.i.186-89)

The deformities of time, incurable by natural reason alone, are yet part of Adam's recoverable debt. The "one day's error" of the play's action is the compressed temporal allotment of mankind; it is the time frame given Egeon to make good his debt: "I'll limit thee this day / To seek thy health by beneficial help" (I.i.150-51).

From Egeon's impoverishment by wrack and long search there appears no opportunity to raise the thousand marks "to quit the penalty and to ransom him" (I.i.22). This leaves Solinus to follow eye-for-eye retribution started by the Syracusian duke's execution of Ephesian merchants:

> Who, wanting guilders to redeem their lives,
> Have seal'd his rigorous statutes with thier blood..,
> (I.i.8-9).

The debt paid by "blood," the "rigorous statutes" and "solemn synods" (I.i.13) suggest the rigid cause and effect of Old Law and one sort of continuity with the past. The blood debt, I have suggested, is paid in proxy by the Ephesian Antipholus's evocation of the Christian model of sacrifice.[21] However, the latent spiritual meanings of "redeem" do not fully crystallize until the play's completion. The balanced syntactical divisions which mark the framing story continue as Solinus's split of law from mercy offers no hope for the old man:

> Nay forward, old man, do not break off so,
> For we may pity, though not pardon thee, (I.i.96-97)

The duke's pronouncement on ineluctable legal chronology, "passed sentence may not be recall'd" (I,i.147), is antipodal to his gratuitous waiving of all debt (V.i.390). Until this happy moment there is uncertainty in the language of indebtedness which is subject to the vagaries of word-play. Words such as "redeem" and "recovery" compass the ambiguity in contrasting worlds of material and spiritual currency. These worlds, in turn, reflect separated understandings of the nature of time.

The most common source for the spiritual meaning of time and debt comes from Paul's Ephesians: "Take hede therefore that ye walke circumspectly, not as fooles, but as wise, / Redeming the time: for the dayes are evil" (5:15-16). The Geneva Bible glosses "redeming" in the commercial language important to the transactions of *Errors*: one "sells" worldly pleasures to "bye time"; the process is compared with renewing the mind on a heavenly design found in Romans 12:2. The first chapter of Ephesians elaborates on the redemption through Christ's blood of the debt incurred by Adam. The predestined inheritance of heavenly wealth revealed by the gospels and "sealed with the holie Spirit of promes, / Which is the ernest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the posession purchassed,"[22] contrasts with the purposeless blood-"seal'd;" "rigorous statutes" which originally condemn Egeon. In the baptism motif essential to *Errors*, the figurative use of inherited debt as monetary contract has commonplace associations with the process of the renunciation of Satan and adoption of Christ which occurs in Elizabethan rite. Chrysostom provides early, particularly vivid, comment on this

process:

> Christ came once; He found the certificate of our ancestral indebtedness which Adam wrote and signed. Adam contracted the debt; by our subsequent sins we increased the amount we owed. In this contract are written a curse, and sin, and death, and the condemnation of the law. Christ took all these away and pardoned them ... The nails of the cross tore up the decree and destroyed it utterly, so that it would not hold good for the future....[23]

It is no coincidence that Egeon's thousand mark debt is the exact sum Antipholus of Syracuse entrusts to his bondman with confusing results (I.ii.81); or that his brother finds himself in debt to "Adam" the jailor.

Shakespeare stresses the interrelation of the monetary and temporal dimensions of debt in order to emphasize this overarching metaphor of typological debt. The failed obligation of the married Antipholus to "keep hours" is thematically associated with the monetary debt of Egeon through his brother's first entrance:

> Therefore give out you are from Epidamnum,
> Lest that your goods too soon be confiscate;
> This very day a Syracusian merchant
> Is apprehended for arrival here,
> And not being able to buy out his life,
> According to the statute of the town
> Dies ere the weary sun set in the west. (I.ii.1-7)

Here, the anonymous Egeon's penalty, which is bound to inexorable and "weary" natural time, results in Antipholus being advised in duplicity in order to save his "goods" and his self--both terms which prove multidimensional as the action develops. From the first entrance of each

brother, the Antipholi act with a consciousness of temporal urgency which echoes some part of Egeon's indebtedness. Yet their limited understanding of time is part of the matrix of misperception which postpones recognition and release from debt.

Misperception of time as inextricable from misinterpretation of physical appearance is made obvious by the first mix-up of master and servant:

> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> Here comes the almanac of my true date:
> What now? How chance thou art return'd so soon?
> EPHESIAN DROMIO
> Return'd so soon? rather approach'd too late;
> The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit;
> The clock hath strucken twelve upon the bell;
> My mistress made it one upon my cheek;
> She is so hot because the meat is cold;
> The meat is cold because you come not home;
> You come not home because you have no stomach;
> You have no stomach having broke your fast;
> But we that know what 'tis to fast and pray,
> Are penitent for your default to-day.
> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> Stop in your wind, sir, tell me this I pray:
> Where have you left the money that I gave you?
> EPHESIAN DROMIO
> O, sixpence that I had o' Wednesday last...(I.ii.41-55).

It is not that the understanding of time sequence by each is actually wrong--it is insufficient and misapplied. The observation made in the first line is true in one sense, but applied in ignorance of the servant's real identity. Antipholus is defining his own fading identity by Dromio who provides a naturalistic correlative to his natural birth, whereas the "true date" of his spiritual birth is yet to come. With the same misplaced faith given to appearance, Dromio indeed provides an

"almanac" of time sequence, a litany fixing causal proof for his master's "default." At this point in the play, parodic bombast is the main impression conveyed in the use of religious language, but "default," which suggests both sin and a failure to pay a debt in time, is a composite concept that gains momentum.

In Dromio's report of this confusion, the apparent failure of Antipholus to keep time is matched against Dromio's apparent monetary infidelity. In the intense and symmetrical opposition, money and time are merged by the common denominator of defaulting:

> When I desir'd him to come home to dinner,
> He ask'd me for a thousand marks in gold;
> "'Tis dinner-time", quoth I; "my gold," quoth he;
> "Your meat will burn", quoth I; "my gold", quoth he,
> "Will you come?", quoth I; "my gold", quoth he,
> "Where is the thousand marks I gave thee, villain?"
> (II.i.60-65)

The opposing perspectives share a misplaced trust in the chronological-physical dimension epitomized in Dromio's recommendation that the gut should be used to tell the hour: "Methinks your maw, like mine, should be your clock" (I.ii.66). The Syracusian Antipholus has already adopted this body chronometer by making Dromio his "almanac," and although he complains that Dromio's jests are "out of season" (I.ii.68), his instruction for the proper observance of time is still the play's recipe for making all action "out of season": "fashion your demeanor to my looks" (II.ii.33).

As with other important concepts in *Errors*, Shakespeare approaches the question of time most explicitly in scenes that otherwise may appear

as stilted, set-pieces of word-play. Leading into such an examination of time, inherited debt, and the problems of redemption, the Syracusian Dromio first complains he is punished without regard to cause and effect:

> Was there ever any man thus beaten out of season,
> When in the why and the wherefore is neither rhyme nor reason.
> (II.ii.47-48)

Antipholus, in fact, has just given his personal logic for the assault: "Why, first for flouting me, and then wherefore, for urging it the second time to me" (II,ii.45-46). Here, as with Dromio's causal declamation on the spoiled dinner, reason is humourously ineffectual in describing the overall situation. It is not discursive reason which gains an intimation of the providential vantage necessary to interpret time; Sir John Davies makes a pertinent comparison:

> But we that measure times by first and last,
> The sight of things successively do take;
> When God on all at once his view doth cast,
> And all times doth but one *instant* make.
> ...
> His sight is not discoursive by degrees,
> But seeing the whole each single part doth see.
>
> He looks on *Adam* as a *roote* or *well*,
> And on his heires as *branches* and as *streames*,
> He sees *all* men, as *one* man, though they dwell
> In sundrie Cities, and in sundrie Realmes,[24]

To see "all men as one man" is to comprehend time, to redeem it from meaningless succession by understanding the two inheritances of the two Adams--bondage, and release from bondage. This sense of time, essential in the identity restoration of Egeon's sons, is the tacit theme of Dromio's playfully discursive proofs:

SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
Well, sir, learn to jest in good time; there's a time for all things,
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
I durst have denied that before you were so choleric.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
By what rule, sir?
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
Marry, sir, by a rule as plain as the plain bald pate of Father Time himself.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
Let's hear it.
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
There's no time for a man to recover his hair that grows bald by nature.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
May he not do it by fine and recovery?
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
Yes, to pay a fine for a periwig, and recover the lost hair of another man.
SYRACYSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
Why is Time such a niggard of hair, being (as it is) so plentiful an excrement?
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
Because it is a blessing that he bestows on beasts, and what he hath scanted men in hair, he hath given them in wit.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
Why, but there's many a man hath more hair than wit.
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
Not a man of those but he hath the wit to lose his hair.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
Why, thou didst conclude hairy men plain dealers without wit.
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
The plainer dealer, the sooner lost; yet he loseth it in a kind of jollity.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
For what reason?
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
For two, and sound ones too.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
Nay, not sound, I pray you.
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
Sure ones, then.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
Nay, not sure in a thing falsing.
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
Certain ones then.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
Name them.

SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
The one, to save the money that he spends in tiring; the other, that at dinner they should not drop in his porridge.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
You would all this time have proved, there is no time for all things.
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
Marry, and did, sir: namely, e'en no time to recover hair lost by nature.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
But your reason was not substantial, why there is no time to recover.
SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
This I mend it: Time himself is bald, and therefore to the world's end will have bald followers.
SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
I knew 'twould be a bald conclusion; but soft, who wafts us yonder? (II.ii.63-109)

It has been but tentatively suggested that there may here be a quibble on "hair" and "heir":[25] yet Shakespeare's attraction to this pun is widespread and deserves scrutiny. Roger Prior discusses a number of the quibble's occurrences,[26] and M. M. Mahood's consideration of it in *Macbeth* is suggestive of its typological use in *Errors*:

> Had I as many Sonnes as I have *haires*,
> I would not wish them to a fairer death.
>
> Young Siward's death represents the last blind attempt of Macbeth to render his enemies childless. It fails because Old Siward, in his impersonal role of a force of right and order, has many *heirs*: the children of Duncan and Banquo, and the bloody babe, Macduff. Through them the natural order of succession in which 'to everything there is a season' is restored to Scotland after the nightmare parenthesis of Macbeth's tyranny.[27]

In *Errors*, loss of hair is associated with venereal disease, decay in time, vanity, and social disorder. Dromio's argument that "there's no

time for a man to recover his hair that grows bald by nature" (V.ii.71-71), clearly involves a pun on "heir" since "fine and recovery" is the legal process of converting an estate to fee-simple, a system of perpetual inheritance.[28] Dromio's bawdy play on the French disease and hair loss, as a microcosmic correlative for the world's corruption of succession, is surpassed in concision by Quince's "Some of your French crowns have no hair at all,"[29] But Dromio also gives it, metaphorically, to the world-woman Luce since France is "in her forehead, armed and reverted, making war against her heir" (III.ii.121-22).

The association of political and individual corruption through puns on "hair" acquires a more serious tone in *King John* and overtly alludes to the typological context implicit in the Dromio exchange. Constance's distracted ravings comment indirectly on the play's world of *real-politik* and manipulated succession by way of intimating the trans-temporal schema of bondage and redemption:

> KING PHILIP
> Bind up your hairs.
> CONSTANCE
> Yes, that I will; and wherefore will I do it?
> I tore them from their bonds and cried aloud,
> "O that these hands could so redeem my son,
> As they have given these hairs their liberty!"
> But now I envy at their liberty,
> And will again commit them to their bonds,
> Because my poor child is a prisoner.
> And, father cardinal, I have heard you say
> That we shall see and know our friends in heaven:
> If that be true, I shall see my boy again,
> For since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
> To him that did but yesterday suspire,
> There was not such a gracious creature born. (III.iii.61-81)

However "mad," Constance evokes man's two inheritances: in the "court of heaven" (III.iii,87), and in the descendency from Cain. Although John Davies certainly intends no pun on "hair," his metaphors of bondage and contagion are reflected in the word-play of *King John* and *Errors*:

> So when the roote and fountaine of mankind,
> Did draw corruption, and Gods curse by sinne;
> This was a charge, that all his heires did bind,
> And all his of-spring grew corrupt therein.
> (*Nosce Teipsum*, ll. 773-76)

With puns on "hair" and "bald" Dromio's argument that "there's no time for a man to recover his hair that grows bald by nature" has two central metaphorical senses. The first meaning is: "Because of man's fallen nature, he has become meagre and there is no process to restore his legacy." The second core meaning is: "Through nature alone there is no occasion to redeem the diminished life." These senses are played on throughout the exchange, although the second sense, with its latent positive option, appears to be denied by Dromio's argument. Father Time is conventionally given the forelock of Occasion, but Dromio portrays him as totally ("plain") bald in order to bolster his "proof" that there is "no time to recover hair lost by nature" (II.ii.101-02). This conclusion is the natural man's equivalent to the Duke's "passed sentence may not be recall'd" (I.i.147) and is achieved only by excising the *kairoi*, of "season" or "occasion," from the head of *chronos*. Thus, Dromio's reiteration that "Time himself is bald, and therefore to the world's end will have bald followers" (II.ii,105-06), is true for one dimension but a "bald conclusion" (II.ii,107). The possibility of a

supranatural recovery becomes conspicuous in the equivocating denial.

The other side of Dromio's chop logic on unrecoverable time may be seen in contemporary sermons directed to Ephesians 5:16. Daniel Powell's *The Redemption of Lost Time* shows the locus of understanding Dromio works on when he alters Ecclesiastes 3:1 to "there is no time for all things" (II.ii.100): "That all *Time*, is neither opportune nor seasonable for all thinges; for that which is peculiar and naturall for one thing, is not fit for other businesse...." However, against the particular uses of natural time, Powell is careful to posit the period of spiritual work where "there is no precise nor limitted Time: it is alwayes fitte Time, It will be ever seasonable, in what houre so ever, & in what age so ever,..."[30]

Another commonplace association with spiritual time evoked by Dromio's extended play on hair loss and recovery is also apparent in Powell:

> But let men note, and be assured, that *as one haire of the head shall not perish*, much lesse shall anie one moment of Tyme, without rendering good reason & account for the same.[31]

Providential control figured by hairs numbered, or saved, frequently appears in the Bible, but Paul's pre-shipwreck consolation to his crew is the most pertinent for *Errors*:

> Wherefore I exhorte you to take meat: for this is for your savegarde: for there shal not an heere fall from the head of anie of you, (Acts 27:34)

The image is clearly used in Shakespeare's *Tempest* shipwreck,[32] and Dromio may be playing on Paul's meal-time reassurance when he argues that one of the benefits of hair loss is "that at dinner they should not drop in his porridge" (II.ii.97).

In Act IV, scene ii, Dromio returns to the personified "Time" and further develops the theme of multiple levels of temporal apprehension. Again, the problem of debt and redemption hovers between dual understandings of wealth and time. Leading into this passage, Dromio's allocutions demand a brief digression.

Dromio has just called Adriana "Mistris Redemption"[33] and has asked for gold to redeem the Ephesian Antipholus--"angels ... for to deliver you" (IV.iii.39)--from "Adam that keeps the prison" (IV.iii.17). This amusing predilection of the characters, the Dromios especially, to see people as morality play figures reflects a form of compensation for thwarted understanding through simplification. Against "Mistress Redemption" Dromio construes the Courtesan as "Mistress Satan."

> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> Satan avoid, I charge thee tempt me not.
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> Master, is this mistress Satan?
> SYRACUSIAN ANTIPHOLUS
> It is the devil. (IV.iii.46-48)

Undoubtedly, laughter is increased through the parody of morality play elements. Yet, this laughter is encouraged less from the mockery of the older drama than from the extravagant and simplistic conclusions of the bewildered characters. Few morality play-goers would expect to

encounter "Ill Repute," "Vice" or "Mistress Satan" on the street, for these were accepted as shadows for an inner *psychomachia*. If Shakespeare reflected upon the failures of the moralities he would have noted especially the use of clear nomenclature for evil which, by definition, is unsubstantial and difficult to delineate. This granted, Shakespeare may yet be seen to infuse farcical elements, accepted in the English moralities, into characters not essentially malignant. The Dromios, for example, semi-consciously display attributes and tactics Charlotte Spivack ascribes to the vices:

> Through comic manipulation of language, involving parody, equivocation, misinterpretation, misapplication, the vices augment their comic role throughout the transitional, often hybridized plays. The language of evil is as misleading as its appearance and its actions; both are fraudulent, but humor is released in the recognition of the fraudulent exterior.[34]

The use of slapstick and broad physical humour by the later morality plays to "demonstrate one particular facet of the privative nature of evil"[35] may have been adapted by Shakespeare, but his emphasis on the generalized condition of misperception deliberately obscures the didactic signposts. "Mistress Satan," for example, dissolves and returns as a genially treated human as the characters come to see their own misunderstandings. Although the old figures of good and evil still provide *Errors* with provisional metaphors for the inner battle, Shakespeare's skepticism on the human ability to discern where the battle lines are drawn comprises an important concession to psychological

realism. The effect is parallel to the transformation of farce conventions: Shakespeare's new epistemological focus causes the morality play icons to collapse into metaphors for a mental fixity that is inadequate in a world of complex flux.

However, the polarity suggested by Adriana as Mistress Redemption and the Courtesan as Mistress Satan does supply a temporary framework for the development of the analogue to Adamic debt and redemption. Again, it is Dromio's manipulation of a notion of time which links this formative metaphor with the marriage theme in Ephesus. Adriana immediately agrees to send the gold "angels" for her husband's recovery but is suspicious "that he unknown to me should be in debt" (IV.ii.49). Both the mysterious debt and her increasingly alienated husband are "unknown" to Adriana, and her attempts to elicit more information from Dromio bring cryptic answers:

> ADRIANA
> Tell me, was he arrested on a band?
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> Not on a band, but on a stronger thing;
> A chain, a chain, do you not hear it ring?
> ADRIANA
> What, the chain?
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> No, no, the bell,'tis time that I were gone,
> It was two ere I left him, and now the clock strikes one.
> ADRIANA
> The hours come back; that did I never hear.
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> O yes, if any hour meet a sergeant, 'a turns back for very fear.
> ADRIANA
> As if time were in debt; how fondly dost thou reason.
> SYRACUSIAN DROMIO
> Time is a very bankrupt, and owes more than he's worth to season.

> Nay, he's a thief too; have you not heard men say
> That time comes stealing on by night and day?
> If 'a be in debt and theft, and a sergeant in the way,
> Hath he not reason to turn back an hour in a day?
> (IV.ii.50-62)

From Dromio's sequence of puns on "a chain" and "ring" Adriana recognizes the promised gift of "the chain." The quibbling derivation makes the chain a direct descendent of the debt to the "sergeant of the band." Yet, the marital and financial debt incurred by Adriana's husband is certainly alluded to by the "chain" and "ring," for Antipholus exchanges his wife's promised chain for the Courtesan's ring in a travesty of marriage custom. Finally, Dromio projects the whole configuration of interlocking debts onto the personified figure of Time. Adriana participates in the quibbling displacement with: "As if time were in debt; how fondly thou dost reason" (IV.ii.56). It is the same "bald Father Time" who earlier thwarted "bald followers" and made the recovery of heirs lost by nature impossible. The depiction of Time as a "very bankrupt" (IV.ii.58) reflects an externalization of human abuse of time evident from another commentary on Ephesians 5:16:

> So it is not the greatnesse of the meanes, but the diligent redeeming of time, to make use of the means that makes the soule wealthy ... But alasse, hence comes it that some in the store of all good meanes of Salvation are very beggars and bankrupts, because of their negligence to take the time and fit season. They let passe all good opportunities, and care not for any occasion for the soule, and how can their soule thrive?[36]

In Dromio's exchange, Time suffers a reversal through two puns: "on"

heard as "one," and "hour" understood as "whore."[37] Indeed, Time seen by the natural man is a "whore," the "bankrupt" *chronos* who "owes more than he's worth to season" (IV.ii.58). This same debtor Time is made the proverbial thief of youth who "comes stealing on by night and day."[38]

Yet, the latent *kairos* is everywhere present in the passage; it is the creditor "season," Time's silent partner, who will be paid by the comedy's end. Adriana's mock wonderment, "The hours come back; that did I never hear" (IV.ii.55), is proleptic of the real wonderment of captive time redeemed by spiritual rebirth: the Abbess's "thirty-three years" labour, and the Duke's revision of the day's events with, "Why, here begins his morning story right" (V.i.346). Thus, even the hidden action of the "thief" Time, who "comes stealing on by night and day" (IV.ii.60), brings an unsuspected double-sided fulfilment in the play's nativity of understanding:

> But of the times & seasons, brethren, ye have no nede yt I write unto you. For ye your selves knowe perfitely, that the day of the Lord shal come, even as a thefe in the night. (Thessalonians 5:1-2)

In the play's patterns of loss and redemption, the extended sections of word-play can not be considered independent glosses on more "serious" developments in the play; the quibbling exchanges poetically explore the psychology of misperception in operation. Yet, through the addressing of a personified Time, the importance of the play's typology and Christian historical time are reinforced.

Luciana's pre-lapsarian vision of man as lord of the world and sea is of a time apart from the Ephesian world of corrupted time and lost heirs. In bleaker moments, Adriana portrays her husband as one who does not keep time or faith, one who is estranged from himself, and one whose pre-eminent position engenders not order but disease:

> I am possess'd with an adulterate blot,
> My blood is mingled with the crime of lust;
> For if we two be one, and thou play false,
> I do digest the poison of thy flesh,
> Being strumpeted by thy contagion. (II.ii.140-144)

In Adriana's mind, her husband's association with others suggests a communicable corruption which "with intrusion" can "Infect thy sap, and live on thy confusion" (II.ii.180). Although "confusion" may have "ruin" as its immediate meaning, the sense of "confused understanding" certainly describes the play's widening plague of intrapersonal, interpersonal, intercivic, and generational division.

To Balthasar, contagious misunderstanding is succeeded by the inheritable plague of rumour, and he cautions Antipholus not to break down his own door lest

> foul intrusion enter in,
> And dwell upon your grave when you are dead;
> For slander lives upon succession,
> For e'er hous'd where it gets possession. (III.i.103-06)

Balthasar urges Antipholus to have patience and to remember his "long experience" of Adriana's virtue, a recollection that suggests there is "some cause to you unknown" (III.i.91). Violence from Antipholus's mistaken analysis would have bred further destructive opinion. The

"succession" of errors in interpretation is mirrored by the contagious debt of Egeon and by Dromio's erroneous causal proofs on the nature of time.

I have suggested recollection is essential to the resolution of identity divisions in the play. One factor of identity integration entails remembered continuity with the past and, in *Errors*, this mental activity is associated with the redemption of time from its own destructive process. This understanding of memory as continuity is incorporated and altered by a neoplatonic, non-chronological "remembrance" whereby one's true spiritual identity, origin, and fulfilment are apprehended. Although the two understandings of memory suggest the different dimensions of time discussed, the ability of characters to finally "see time" largely reconciles this division. Dean Colet, in annotating Ficino, offers a definition of self-knowledge which implicates both notions of memory: "To know oneself is to consider whence one comes."[39] Both spiritual and causal aspects of memory are involved in the progress to the play's resolution: Adriana's recognition of her shrewish self-indulgence is coupled with a reaffirmation of marriage vows; Antipholus's half-forgotten "husband's office" (III.ii.1-2) is indirectly redefined as he recalls simultaneously, the cause and model of their marriage in his selfless service to the Duke;[40] the Ephesian brother is spurred to a sense of urgency and self-remembrance lest he become "traitor" (III.ii.161) to himself; and the play's denouement is signalled by the typological remembrance of bondage. The self-discovery that comes with the re-vision of events culminates in the Duke's "here

begins this morning's story right"; the redemption of time is complete for "the hours come back" not evading debt, looped, deformed or diseased, but renewed by an inclusive, "sympathised" understanding.

The play's conclusion should not be seen primarily as an eschatological allegory: Shakespeare's attention is on this world's possibilities for human self-realization. His sympathy is evident in one of the most satisfying moments of the conclusion when, once again, surface appearances are mistaken:

> He speaks to me; I am your master, Dromio.
> Come, go with us, we'll look to that anon;
> Embrace thy brother there, rejoice with him. (V,i,411-13)

The ending's residual skepticism declares that, even after all the relationships have been discovered, the frailty flesh is heir to makes error inevitable. Yet, the patient good will in the correction of brother and servant reflects a trust that understanding, in its widest sense, is an ongoing process within a climate of charity. Similarly, the potential for error in time assessment is still evident in the subdued humour of each Dromio deferring to the other as "elder." Although the mock importance of primogeniture in twin servants is cause for amusement, the exchange does provide a precise tableau for the theme of the two types of inheritance with respect to the first (physical) birth and the second (spiritual) birth. The importance given to the birth sequence is resolved by a synchronicity impossible in crossing the physical birth threshold:

EPHESIAN DROMIO
Nay then, thus;
We came into this world like brother and brother,
And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another.
(V.i.424-26)

Establishing first birth is subordinated to the spiritual democracy of being "God's sibs" in the same inheritance; paradoxically, by recognition and acceptance of natural limitations, nature's time is recovered from its limitations.

In Shakespeare's sustained concern to redeem the bald domain of chronological time, the Christian calendar is directly introduced into the pagan setting. The possibility that the comedy may have been written specifically for the Christmas revels at Gray's Inn is suggestive for the nativity theme in *Errors*,[41] but there is a specific holy day alluded to in the play by the merchant: "You know since Pentecost the sum is due" (IV.i.1). Contrasting with the natural "almanac" provided by the Dromios, the unpaid debt motif is also measured by the Christian year. The date selected for the release from debt may not have been chosen at random for there is a firm link between rebirth figured by baptism and the Pentecost (Whitsun) holy days. As the Elizabethan Prayer Book declares, Whitsuntide was one of the two preferred times of the year (along with Easter) for the ceremony. The common association for baptism and the Pentecost is derived from the Acts of the Apostles: the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit on the gathered Apostles signals baptism of the spirit. This symbolism has significance for Shakespeare's matching of language to theme.

Typologically, the "confusion of tongues" wrought by the *hubris* of Babel is repaired by the "gift of tongues" bestowed upon the Apostles in Acts 2.[42] Babel represents the last major effect of the fall on the decline of man in Genesis; the vain venture to reach heaven is punished with misunderstanding--social isolation through the splitting of languages and the dividing of peoples. The gift of tongues repairs language division through a spiritual language understood by all. For *Errors*, I have suggested, the division of language by puns and plurisignification embodies the tensions resulting from the original division into multiplicity and misunderstanding. The story of Babel suggests the juncture of the play's theme of divided mind with the aesthetic of divided language.

As time runs out for the play to unknot its confusions, Egeon could be speaking for the play's profusion of divided meanings as much as for his own predicament:

> Not know my voice? O time's extremity,
> Hast thou so crack'd and splitted my poor tongue
> In seven short years, that here my only son
> Knows not my feeble key of untun'd cares? (V.i.307-10)

Egeon is recovered from "time's extremity" when the relationship between his "splitted" tongue and the mast "splitted in the midst" is understood. From the time of the wreck, Egeon's mind--and the language of the play--is split into positive and negative possibilities epitomized by the caesura's balance:

> So that in this unjust divorce of us,

> Fortune had left to both of us alike
> What to delight in, what to sorrow for...(I,i,104-06).

Egeon's mental division is later echoed by Adriana: "Come, sister, I am press'd down with conceit; / Conceit, my comfort and my injury" (IV.ii,65-66).

The tongue as an outward sign of the mind divided against itself is a recurrent image in *Errors*: "My tongue, though not my heart, shall have his will" (IV.ii,18); "My heart prays for him, though my tongue do curse" (IV.ii.28). Adriana's poignant personal strife is the obverse of the deception Luciana urges on Antipholus in order to spare her sister from grief: "Be not thy tongue thy own shame's orator; / Look sweet, speak fair..." (III.ii,10-11). The differences in these parallel divisions are illustrative. In Adriana's case, her "tongue" displays hostility toward felt injustices while inwardly she retains love for her husband. Luciana asks the opposite: Antipholus is to display charity even if his inner disposition is reprobate. The two different situations curiously mirror each other and thwart any simplistic attempt to assign moral opprobrium. Both situations are attempts to effect a balance, to ameliorate injustice; but these compensatory efforts reflect, rather than heal, the split between expression and intent. The suggestion derives from a shared confusion, self-division, and diminished understanding. The inadequate human correctives do nothing to resolve the basic misperceptions. The sentiment is manifestly unfarcical; the metaphysic is neoplatonic. Mis-speaking is not meaningless for, along with misperception, it constitutes one pole

in the play's dialectical process that finds meaning behind confusion.

For *Errors*, farce--represented in language by the tongue split from meaning--may be recovered from superfice by a process of recognition in the audience patterned upon the resolution of division in the characters. Understanding the duality of time, its limitations and its spiritual function, is the realization of this process.

CONCLUSION

The word "audience," as it is used in the preceding paragraph, invokes the (ultimately unresolvable) question: "For whom did Shakespeare write *The Comedy of Errors*?" The staging, the erudite echoes, and the preservation of the unities of time and place, lend credence to the suggestion that the author had in mind the educated court audience at the Gray's Inn, Innocent's Day performance of 1594.[1] On the other hand, the actual record of the chaotic revelers at that performance indicates that Shakespeare had little need to pay attention to the extensive "conceited" play of metaphysical themes such as argued by this present paper.[2] The answer, more readily acceptable for the canon of "serious" plays, is that Shakespeare wrote, at least in part, for himself. It is not anachronistic to suggest that Shakespeare could accept surprise, delight, and understanding from his own writing. The notion that art could be autodidactic is, inherently, as old as the notion of inspiration--the sense of something "given" in the creative act. Ficino, as I have noted above, could use the same vocabulary to express the informing power of grace and poetic inspiration.[3] To some degree, then, I allow Shakespeare among the beholders when I speak of "audience."

Errors is, in a sense, a sustained play within a play for it is a comedy which at once draws attention to the genre of farce, and implicates every man in its superficial world of appearances through recurrent allusion to the fall and its effects. Serious affirmation is won by the play's emphasis of a providential overview attendant upon the dramatic *rapprochement* of appearance and reality. The audience is

entreated to acknowledge their participation in a universal "sympathised one day's error," and Shakespeare's art urges a consentaneous change that comes with the recognition of a formative power beyond the confusion, folly, and division. In this, *Errors* anticipates Hippolyta's words:

> But all the story of the night told over,
> And all their minds transfigured so together,
> More witnesseth than fancy's images,
> And grows to something of great constancy;
> But, howsoever, strange and admirable.
> (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.i.23-27)

The dramatist's approach to self-knowledge is inextricable from his transfiguring of the random incidents of farce. This transfiguration is the re-vision of the story of bald Father Time, the recovery cycle of the son lost by nature, and, reflexively, the redemption of time lost by the beholders of bald farce. The role of the artist in *Errors* is not so very far from that implied by the epilogue to *The Tempest*: the actor of Prospero must be redeemed from imprisonment in his shadowy role by a "prayer" of applause which demonstrates a pleasure and good will that comes with comprehension. The playful use of Christian vocabulary in that epilogue--as with *Errors*--does not trivialize the religious denotations but, rather, reflects an important shift to art as an active medium for a developmental process toward self-knowledge.

Shakespeare's transformation of the farce genre is complete, not merely an admixture of farce and romance with random echoes of biblical, classical and philosophical sources. The elements of farce

which depend upon exaggerated and superficial reactions, misperception and mistimings, are indeed essential to *Errors*; but, through the extensive co-ordination of Christian and neoplatonic concerns, farce becomes an analogue of the world's error in a dialectic with a historical and spiritual vision. For *Errors*, then, farce is the play's "natural man" in the dramatic process of renewal. I apply this trope of the "natural" versus "spiritual" man to the metadrama because it will be illustrative of Shakespeare's aesthetic strategy as it is parallel to his thematic use of the same notion.

On the thematic side, the binary opposition of spiritual to natural understanding may be seen as central to my analysis of the play's divisions and reunions. This statement is especially true when the concept is seen to be eclectically derived from the Pauline Epistles and Ficino's *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*. When, for instance, I have stressed the motivation and development of characters and actions through the themes of division and reunion, I am, in effect, emphasizing Ficino's conception of the fallen, "natural man," as epitomized by the Aristophanic divided being. The dichotomy of natural versus spiritual understanding in man is not as severe in Ficino as it is in Paul. We are even told that love, the motivation for completion, is a by-product of being divided and plunged into bodies, and that one's natural light is essential in the *process* of regaining the spiritual light: "When these souls ... first come to adolescence, they are aroused by that innate and natural light which they have kept, like a kind of half of themselves, to win back, by the study of truth, that divine

supernatural light, that former other half of themselves which they lost in the fall."[4] However, through Paul's "natural" and "spiritual," "old" and "new" man, which is more strongly suggested through the typological imagery of the play, there comes a greater sense of bipolar disjunction and sudden transfiguration to rebirth. Although these two metaphysical strains are not mutually exclusive for the Elizabethan mind, the degree to which they are syncretized in *Errors* is perhaps Shakespeare's triumph.

If Shakespeare's aesthetic and dramatic strategy are considered via the symbolism of "natural" versus "spiritual" man, the dynamics of Ficino's neoplatonism appear to strongly augment the Pauline construction. This bias is difficult to prove directly for, as Sears Jayne points out, it is in love poetry that the most demonstrable evidence of Ficino's writing can be seen in Elizabethan England.[5] Ficino's metaphysical meld of neoplatonism and Christianity constituted a less clear influence on the literature of the day because of long acclimatization, and repeated influx, of neoplatonic ideas into theology. Yet, it was the Florentine priest's main desire to effect a new reconciliation of Platonism and Christianity, and it is possible that Shakespeare was more fascinated by similar eclectic opportunities than by the more popular poetic derivations of the new philosophy,

Such a view is forwarded by my examination of *Errors*. The examination has stressed cosmological and individual echoes to Ficino's recreation of the Aristophanic man with its dualistic love impulse toward union. The ending of *Errors*, which includes *physical* unions and

reunions, and skeptical traces (inherent in the residual confusions), may not appear neoplatonic when contrasted with the explicit steps of ascent found in, say, Hoby's *Courtier* or Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes*. Shakespeare the dramatist, however, could be more attuned to the dramatic possibilities of Ficino's significant new heirarchy which situated the mind of man as the active *nexus* which joins both heavenly and natural worlds. Rather than a progress of step by step aetherialization, such an image of man lends itself to a means of development which is dialectical and can be epitomized by the Aristophanic duality.

The aesthetic strategy from such a background would be consonant with genres which reflect psychological, internal conflict such as the "metaphysical" poem or Shakespearean drama. Unlike morality plays, when the typological is employed in *Errors* it exists first as internal complexity within the characters rather than the audience. Thus, the two Adams (or Aristophanic dualities) become "naturalized" and coeval with contemporary folly and hope within each individual. In *Errors* this is suggested through the romance yearnings, multi-valent language, unfarcical self-questionings on identity, and divided allegiances. The struggle in *Errors* to discern reality from within a contingent world of confused appearances might be summarized by Donne's "Look Lord, and find two Adams met in me,"[6]

For *Errors*, at least, it is clear that I would not concur with Richard Cody, who ascribes to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a modernity approaching that of Wallace Stevens: "What is celebrated in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is finally the poet's art itself--a certain

aesthetic perception of love and language, Platonically conceived, as agents of a courtly culture."[7] In *Errors*, Shakespeare's poetic theology appears more heavily weighted on the "theology" side of the term--and his self-conscious concern with reflexive aesthetic technique is within the elevated expectations for art as *mediator* in a process of gaining spiritual understanding. Ernst Cassirer, addressing Ficino's impact on the arts, could be speaking for the dramatic strategy--and the subject matter--of Shakespeare's comedy as, "through action," it wrests meaning from apparent chaos:

> According to Ficino, the whole point of religious and philosophical *knowledge* is nothing other than the eradication from the world of everything that seems deformed; and the recognition that even things that seem formless participate in form. But such knowledge cannot content itself with the mere concept; it must be transformed into action, and prove itself through action. Here begins the contribution of the artist. He can fulfil the requirement that speculation can only state. Man can only be certain that the sense world *has* form and shape if he continually *gives* it form. Ultimately, the beauty of the sensible world does not derive from itself; rather, it is founded in the fact that it becomes, in a sense, the medium *through which* the free creative force of man acts and becomes conscious of itself. Seen in this light, however, art no longer lies outside the province of religion but rather becomes a moment of the religious process itself.[8]

As Shakespeare reforms the superfices of farce into a widening metaphor for drama and life, the *process* of coming to understanding gains importance. In this context, Shakespeare's concern with how his characters "see time"--and how the theatre-goers recreate their own lost time as beholders--becomes illuminated:

> If redemption is conceived of as a renovation of the *form* of man and of the world, i.e., as a true *reformation*, then the focal point of intellectual life must lie in the place where the 'idea' is embodied, i.e., where the non-sensible form present in the mind of the artist breaks forth into the world of the visible and becomes realized in it. Thus, speculation will inevitably go astray if it looks only at that which is already formed, instead of concerning itself with the basic act of formation itself.[9]

In *Errors*, providential grace overshadows, shapes and restores the characters' actions from meaningless chance, but it also becomes an analogue of poetic inspiration for Shakespeare. By tracing the world's multiplicity in a language necessarily "crack'd and splitted" since the fall, the dramatist facilitates the mediating role of man's soul in the recovery of an original simplicity:

> Hence, that which mediates eternal and temporal entities is not only a member in the series of objects but also the absolute center of all things. If any middle part, reconciling two extremes, contributes to the unity and continuity of the universe, then the center of things, which reconciles and connects the two halves of Being, may be qualified as the bond and knot of the universe, which makes the unity of the world possible and represents this unity in itself.[10]

How much of Shakespeare's poetic genius evident from an attentive reading of *The Comedy of Errors* could be conveyed by stage, contemporary or modern, must remain a subject for debate. But the stage cannot be value's only arbiter. In Shakespeare's poetic canon, and in literary history, the play merits as much admiration as laughter.

NOTES

Introduction

[1]See Barbara Freedman's introductory account of recent criticism of *Errors* in "Egeon's Debt: Self-Division and Self-Redemption in *The Comedy of Errors*," *English Literary Renaissance*, 10 (1980), 360-83. The Arden edition of *The Comedy of Errors* (London: Methuen, 1962) contains a fine introduction by the editor, R. A. Foakes, which has aided in renewing interest in *Errors*. Commentary from this edition will be introduced in my notes by "Foakes," and all *Errors* citations are from this edition. References to all other Shakespeare works are from *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Sylvan Barnet (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).

[2]T. W. Baldwin, *On the Compositional Genetics of The Comedy of Errors* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968).

[3]Freedman, p. 361.

[4]Barbara K. Lewalski, "Love, Appearance and Reality: Much Ado about Something," *Studies in English Literature, 1550-1900*, 8 (1968), 236-37.

[5]*Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, text with trans. and introd. by Sears Reynolds Jayne (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1944). This work will be abbreviated in the text as *Commentary*. Unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations are from *The Geneva Bible* (1560; facsim. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959). In citations from *The Geneva Bible* and other old spelling texts, I have expanded contractions and normalized u:v forms.

[6]For a conservative estimate of Ficino's influence on Shakespeare's age, see Sears Jayne, "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance," *Comparative Literature*, 4 (1952), 214-38.

[7]John Erskine Hankins states: "In Ficino's one-volume translation to Plato's works (1551 and others) are included Ficino's 'argument' to each dialogue and his commentaries on the *Symposium* (Lat. *Convivium*) and the *Timaeus*. These I think Shakespeare knew." *Backgrounds of Shakespeare's Thought* (Hamden: Shoe String Press, 1978), p. 14. See also Hankins, *Shakespeare's Derived Imagery* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1953), p. 7.

[8]John Vyvyan explicates five Shakespeare plays *via* Ficino's love philosophy in *Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961). For recent claims of various direct and indirect influences on

Shakespeare by Ficino, see Jean Fuzier, "Le *Banquet* de Shakespeare: Les *Sonnets* et le Platonisme Authentique," *Etudes Anglaises*, 34 (1981), 1-15; T. J. Cribb, "The Unity of *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 34 (1981) , 93-104; And Juliet Dusinberre, "*Troilus and Cressida* and the Definition of Beauty," *Shakespeare Survey*, 36 (1983), 85-95.

[9]Ernst Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, trans. James P. Pettegrove (London: Nelson, 1953), p. 111.

[10]Jayne, "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance," p. 215.

[11]Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, trans. Virginia Conant (New York, 1943; rpt. Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1964), p. 105.

[12]*Marsilio Ficino: The Philebus Commentary*, trans. Michael J. B. Allen (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), p. 220.

[13]See Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, pp. 195-97, 390, 407-10.

[14]Barbara K. Lewalski, "Thematic Patterns in *Twelfth Night*," *Shakespeare Studies*, 1 (1965), 169.

[15]See Barbara K. Lewalski's evaluation of typological patterns in Renaissance English poetry in *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[16]See Charlotte Spivack, *The Comedy of Evil on Shakespeare's Stage* (London: Associated University Presses, 1978).

[17]Richard Cody, *The Landscape of the Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 16-17.

[18]Cody, p. 76. See also Edgar Wind on "Sacred *drôlerie*" in *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), pp. 200-01.

[19]*The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, trans, members of the Language Department of the School of Economic Science, London, I (London: Shepeard-Walwyn, 1975), 62.

Chapter I

[1]Gwyn Williams, "*The Comedy of Errors* Rescued from Tragedy," *Review*

of English Literature, 5, No. 4 (1964), 63-71.

[2]Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare and the Reason* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), p. 36.

[3]See pp. 58-60, below.

[4]*Commentary*, p. 154.

[5]*Commentary*, p. 155.

[6]See, for example, Freedman's reading and the earlier, very cogent analysis by Harold Brooks, "Themes and Structures in *The Comedy of Errors*," in *Shakespeare: The Comedies*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 11-25.

[7]Foakes, xxix.

[8]"Egeon's Debt," p. 381.

[9]Richmond Noble, *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge* (New York: Macmillan, 1935), p. 42.

[10]*Pagan Mysteries*, p. 212.

[11]Arnold Williams, *The Common Expositor: An Account of the Commentaries on Genesis, 1527-1633* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), p. 92.

[12]Cited in Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, p. 213.

[13]*On the Compositional Genetics of The Comedy of Errors*. p. 146.

[14]See p. 131 below.

[15]*Pagan Mysteries*, p. 202.

[16]Freedman favours a Freudian model for Egeon's self-division in "Egeon's Debt."

[17]Sears Jayne, Introd., *Commentary*, p. 24.

[18]*The Second Part of the French Academie*, trans. [T. East] (London: G. Bishop, 1605), p. 162.

[19]See pp. 49-50, below.

[20]"'Maid and Man' in *Twelfth Night*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 80 (1981), p. 329 and n. 7.

[21]See pp. 39-40, below.

[22]*Genetics*, p. 250.

[23]*Pagan Mysteries*, pp. 167-70.

[24]Justus Lipsius, *Two Bookes of Constancie* (London, 1594; rpt. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1934), p. 177.

[25]The different personalities of the brothers are recognized by many critics and are crucial to Freedman's argument.

[26]*Commentary*, p. 219.

[27]*Commentary*, pp. 196-97.

[28]*The Prose of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. Norman Endicott (New York: New York University Press, 1968), p. 102.

[29]*Commentary*, p. 155.

[30]See *Commentary*, pp. 155-57.

[31]Williams, *The Common Expositor*, p. 135.

[32]Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1938), Part II, Vol. 1, pp. 167-68 and n. 4.

[33]*Supplement I, Questions and Answers on Genesis*, trans. Ralph Marcus (London: William Heineman, 1961), pp. 30-31.

[34]*Commentary*, p. 186.

[35]Cf. Foakes, p. 74, n. 32.

[36]*Liturgiae Britannicae*, ed. William Keeling (London: William Pickering, 1851), p. 247.

[37]*Timaeus and Critias*, trans. H. D. P. Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 60-61.

[38]*Hermaphrodite*, trans. Jennifer Nicholson (London: Studio Books, 1961), pp. 79-80. See also John A. Thomas, "The Circle: Donne's Underlying Unity," in *The Need Beyond Reason and Other Essays*, College of Humanities Centennial Lectures, 1975-76 (Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), pp. 98-99.

[39]Henry Green, *Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers* (1869; rpt. New

York: Burt Franklin, 1964), pp. 380-90.

[40]Cited in Green, p. 381. In this crucial passage on rebirth out of the misleading senses, there is another echo of the play's use of "errors" apparent from the Latin version.

[41]Acts 27:21.

[42]*Twelfth Night*, V.I.59-60.

[43]Barthelemy Aneau in his *Picta Poesis* (Lyons, 1564) has in his *Matrimonii Typus* the antithetical binary figure of a satyr mocking the central androgynous figure of perfect unity (Reproduced in Slights, "'Maid and Man' in *Twelfth Night*," pp. 335-37).

[44]See Wind, pp. 200-01, 212, 230 (n.41), 251 (n.39).

[45]*A Platonick Discourse Upon Love*, trans. Thomas Stanley (London, 1651; rpt. Boston: Merrymount Press, 1914), pp. 45-46.

[46]See Hugh M. Riley, *Christian Initiation* (Washington D.C.: Consortium Press, 1974), pp. 151-57. See also Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation* (Slough: St Paul Publications, 1972), p. 22, et passim.

[47]*Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 168.

[48]V.i.298-318. See also pp. 109-110, below.

[49]pp. 39-40, above.

[50]V.i.396-406. One of a number of questionable emendations by Foakes is "felicity" (line 406); the Folio of 1623 repeats the word "Natiuity" which emphasizes the second (spiritual) birth of the twins.

[51]Barbara Freedman rightly notes a connection between Emilia's metaphorical "travail" (V.i.400) and Romans 8:23-24.

Chapter II

[1]Referring to a parallel triadic sequence in another play, Richard Cody understates: "Everyone agrees that a Shakespeare comedy unfolds in three movements, and their names may as well be taken from Ficino as from Northrop Frye." *Landscape*, p. 90.

[2]*The Philebus Commentary*, p. 138.

[3]See *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, p. 143; cf. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries*, Ch. 13, "Pan and Proteus."

[4]In *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, eds. Ernst Cassirer et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 158-59.

[5]*On the Dignity of Man* in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, pp. 225-26.

[6]p. 36.

[7]See, for example, Freedman pp. 380-81.

[8]*Shakespere's Five Act Structure* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1947), p. 686.

[9]See pp. 23-24, above.

[10]See, for example, Douglas L. Peterson's study, *Time, Tide and Tempest: A Study of Shakespeare's Romances* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1973).

[11]*John Colet and Marsilio Ficino* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 46.

[12]*John Colet and Marsilio Ficino*, pp. 46-47. This disordering and soporific effect of terrestrial incarnation is repeatedly described by these symbolic waters in Ficino's *Commentary*:

> When these souls, divided and plunged [*immersae*] into bodies, first come to the age of adolescence, they are aroused by that innate and natural light which they have kept, like a kind of half of themselves, to win back, by the study of truth, that divine supernatural light, that former half of themselves which they lost in the fall. (p. 156)
>
> The body perpetually flows, rises, and falls in a continuous resolution, liquefaction, and alternate shifting, The soul always remains the same. This is clearly shown to us by its search for truth, the never changing desire for the Good, and the firm preservation of the memory. (p. 157)
>
> Plunged into the abyss of the body as though into the river of forgetfulness, oblivious at the moment of itself, the soul is seized by sensuality

> and lust as though by a tyrant and his bullies.
> (p. 159)

[13]Compare Eamon Grennan's interesting treatment of Luciana's speech in "Arm and Sleeve: Nature and Custom in *The Comedy of Errors*," *Philological Quarterly*, 59 (1980), pp. 150-64. Only occasionally does the essay's opposition of custom and nature coincide with my argument for a dialectic of spiritual and natural perception. The essay appears to confuse different senses of the word "conventional."

[14]*Platonick Discourse*, p. 64.

[15]*Letters to Radulphus*, trans. J. H. Lupton (London, 1876; rpt. Westmead: Gregg International Publishers, 1966), p. xxxix.

[16]*The Philebus Commentary*, p. 448.

[17]See also Eamon Grennan's consideration of word-play in "Arm and Sleeve."

[18]Deborah Baker Wyrick discusses many of the competing notions of the animal in "The Ass Motif in *The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33 (1982), 432-48.

[19]Hankins, *Shakespeare's Derived Imagery*, p. xxxvi.

[20]Cited in *Shakespeare's Derived Imagery*, p. 221.

[21]*The Golden Asse of Apuleius* (London, 1566; rpt. London: Grant Richards, 1913), p. xxxvi.

[22]See La Primaudaye's distinction between physical sight and the spiritual sight of memory, p. 26, above. Compare also Ficino's *Commentary*: "They use the natural light rightly who, recognizing that it is weak and dim, that it is sufficient only to judge natural things, and that to judge everything which is above the level of nature, we need a higher light, prepare themselves by a thoroughgoing purgation of the soul, so that the divine light may glow again within them." (p. 161)

[23]See also R. Chris Hassel, *Faith and Folly in Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980).

[24]*The Praise of Folie*, trans. Sir Thomas Chaloner; ed. Clarence H. Miller (London: Early English Text Society, Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 121-22.

[25]IV.iv.142.

[26]Rolf Soellner, *Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge* (Ohio:

Ohio State University Press, 1972), pp. 73-74.

[27]See Foakes, p. 92, n. 98-101.

[28]*Liturgiae Britannicae*, p, 297.

[29]*Liturgiae Britannicae*, p. 305.

[30]*Letters to Radulphus*, p, 11.

[31]*Letters to Radulphus*, p. 159.

[32]George Harford et al., eds., *The Prayer Book Dictionary* (London: Isaac Pitman, 1912), p. 187.

[33]Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans, Sir Thomas Hoby (1561; rpt. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1928).

[34]See Foakes, p, 55, n. 94.

[35]See pp, 51-52, above,

[36]*Liturgiae Britannicae*, pp, 247-49. Compare the renunciation in the same Elizabethan rite:

> Dost thou forsake the devil and all his works, the vain pomp, and glory of the world, with all the covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?
> *Answer*, I forsake them all, (pp. 245-47)

[37]See Robert Eisler, *Orpheus the Fisher* (London: J. M. Watkins, 1921).

Chapter III

[1]"'Time's Deformed Hand': Sequence, Consequence, and Inconsequence in *The Comedy of Errors*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 25 (1972), 81-91.

[2]See pp. 23-24, above.

[3]*The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, p. 98.

[4]*Milton's Poetry: Its Development in Time* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne

University Press, 1979). Tayler's book provides an excellent general examination of Christian time in the English Renaissance as well as a study of Milton's particular response. Useful suggestions of iconographic time in Shakespeare are seen in Paul A. Jorgensen's *Redeeming Shakespeare's Words* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), pp. 52-69. Especially pertinent to understanding Shakespeare's sense of time is Donn Ervin Taylor's "'Try in Time Despite of a Fall': Time and Occasion in *As You Like It*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 24 (1982), 121-36.

[5]Tayler, p. 17.

[6]V.i.397.

[7]*Twelfth Night*, V.i.250-51.

[8]Tayler, p. 123.

[9]"Time's Deformed Hand," pp. 83-84.

[10]"Time's Deformed Hand," p. 82.

[11]"Egeon's Debt," p. 368.

[12]"Egeon's Debt," p. 373.

[13]Freedman does observe some Christian implications of the word "redeem" and recognizes the organic importance of the Pauline Epistles. However, her intriguing Freudian analysis of Egeon's hostile superego as the cause of self-division into past and present personas (represented by the Antipholi) insufficiently accounts for the play's persistent typological understanding of debt: "the marital debt explains the apparently arbitrary harassment of an innocent man as a meaningful submission of a guilty self to the attacks of his own superego." (p. 374)

[14]Tayler, p. 124. For a developed treatment of Occasion in Renaissance drama see Frederick Kiefer, *Fortune and Elizabethan Tragedy* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1983).

[15]Tayler, p. 124.

[16]Tayler, p. 128.

[17]Tayler, p. 128.

[18]Tayler, p. 129. See also James L. Sanderson, "Patience in *The Comedy of Errors*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 16 (1975), 603-18.

[19]See pp. 23-24, above.

[20]Cited by Kiefer, p. 19.

[21]See pp. 87-88, above.

[22]Ephesians 1:13-14.

[23]Cited by Riley, *Christian Initiation*, p. 98.

[24]*Nosce Teipsum* in *The Poems of Sir John Davies*, ed. Robert Kruger (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 30.

[25]See Foakes, p. 30, n. 73.

[26]"Some Shakespearean Puns and Their Implications," *Cahiers Elisabethains*, No. 22 (1982), pp. 15-24.

[27]*Shakespeare's Wordplay* (London: Methuen, 1957), p. 141.

[28]Compare, "Sir, for a cardecue he will sell the fee-simple of his salvation, the inheritance of it...," *All's Well That Ends Well*, IV.iii.283-84.

[29]*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I.i.95.

[30]Daniel Powell, trans., *The Redemption of Lost Time* (London: N. O[kes] for R. Sergier, 1608), pp. 53-54.

[31]Powell, p. 13.

[32]See p. 97, above.

[33]IV.ii.46. Foakes' emendation to "mistress redemption" is in the minority; I have reprinted here the Fourth Folio's capitalized form which seems to elucidate the First Folio's "Mistris redemption."

[34]Spivack, p. 98.

[35]Spivack, p. 98.

[36]William Whately, *The Redemption of Lost Time* (London: T. E[ste] for T. Man, 1606), p. 7.

[37]See Foakes, pp. 71-72.

[38]IV.i.59-60. See also Foakes' notes to these lines.

[39]*John Colet and Marsilio Ficino*, p. 98.

[40]pp. 23-24.

[41]Foakes, xxxv.

[42]See Harford, p, 822, and Francis Procter and Walter Howard Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer* (London: Macmillan, 1958), p. 548.

Conclusion

[1]Foakes, pp. xxxiv-xxxix.

[2]See the extract from *Gesta Grayorum* reproduced in Foakes, pp, 115-17.

[3]See pp. 101-02, above.

[4]*Commentary*, p. 156.

[5]"Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance,"

[6]From "Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness" in *John Donne: The Complete English Poems*, ed, A. J, Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 348.

[7]*Landscape*, p. 141.

[8]*The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), pp, 66-67.

[9]*The Individual and the Cosmos*, p. 67.

[10]Kristeller, p. 397.

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