GREEK INFLUENCE ON SHAKESPEARE

T H E G R E E K I N F L U E N C E

ON

S H A K E S P E A R E

by

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PREFACE

It is not my purpose in making this study to prove that Shakespeare read and studied Greek, although I am certain his classical attainments are far more considerable than is generally supposed. His knowledge of the Greeks was secondary and was gleaned from contemporary legends and translations.

I take opportunity here to express my gratitude and most cordial thanks to Dr. Cyrus Macmillan for reading my manuscript and for making many helpful suggestions.

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CHAPTER ONE

GREEK TENDENCIES IN ENGLISH LITERATURE BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

There is no clear evidence of the introduction of Greek learning in England before the latter half of the seventh century. At this time monks came to England and brought with them a large number of Greek manuscripts among which were poems of Homer. Schools for the study of Greek were founded and also libraries well stored with Greek books. Bede relates that five bishops in his time had mastered Greek, but there is no trace of its influence in extant Anglo-Saxon literature. John Scotus Erigena, sometime between 800 and 815 A.D., concentrated on the Greeks and his works conclusively prove his familiarity with Aristotle, Plato and the Neo-Platonists.

The dawn of Greek renaissance appeared during the thirteenth century, when, in emulation of Continental universities, the study of Greek was taken up in England. Translations of Greek into Latin were made, and Greek grammars and a Greek lexicon were compiled. The works of

Aristotle were also translated.

The fourteenth century showed no advance in Greek studies. Neither in Chaucer nor in Gower, the most cultivated men of their age, do we find any trace of a knowledge of Greek learning. Even Wycliffe and his coadjutors, though professionally men of learning, appear to have been ignorant of Greek. There was one striking exception, Richard of Aungerville (1281-1345), who displayed a very intimate knowledge of the language and of the Greek philosophers. He advocated the study of Greek and pointed out that the Roman classics were but a reflection of the Greek. However, during the fourteenth and the greater part of the fifteenth centuries Greek appears to have been totally neglected.

There was a considerable band of English scholars of Greek in Italy towards the end of the fifteenth century. One of the earliest was Robert Fleming (d. 1483) who compiled a Greco-Latin dictionary. William Grocyn (c. 1444) returned from Italy an accomplished Greek scholar and an enthusiastic Aristotelian, and began to lecture on Greek at Oxford. A new era in English university life began. The prior to the monastery of Christ Church at Canterbury, Sellynge or Selling (d. 1494), presented a large number of Greek manuscripts to the monastery. Dr. Thomas Linacre on

his return from Italy taught Greek at Oxford, translated several treatises by Galen from Greek into Latin, and was universally admitted to be one of the foremost classical scholars in England. John Colet, the founder of St. Paul's School, visited Italy in 1496 to master Greek in its relation to theology and on his return he lectured at Oxford. Among his pupils were Sir Thomas More and Erasmus. In 1509 he chose William Lyly (or Lily), one of the foremost restorers of Greek learning, as the head master of St. Paul's. From then on we read of outstanding Greek scholars and teachers at Oxford and Cambridge.

Dr. Richard Croke (1489-1558) of Cambridge lectured at Leipsic and gained the reputation of being the first to teach Greek in a rational and profitable manner. Next to Croke no man gave greater impulse to the study than Sir John Cheke, Professor of Greek at Cambridge (1540-1551). In his public lectures he discussed all the works of Homer, all of Euripides, and all of Sophocles; he was never weary of dilating in his conversation and his lectures on the beauties of Demosthenes, Xenophon, Plato, and Isocrates. Sir Thomas Smith (1513-1577) was equally enthusiastic in his efforts to impart Hellenic learning. In speaking of Cambridge, Ascham wrote in a letter (c. 1535) that "Aristotle and Plato

are read by boys; Sophocles and Euripides are as familiar as Plautus used to be; and Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon are read fluently."

Much encouragement ~~for~~ to the study of Greek was given by worthy patrons but Greek had no better friend than Henry VIII, who in 1541 issued a royal ordinance that Greek should be taught at grammar schools attached to the cathedrals. After that date the placing of Greek in the curriculum of grammar schools became a regular practice.

This new learning could not long remain exclusively for the study, and for scholars. It soon passed into the hands of men and women in general. The Book of the Governour (1531) by Sir Thomas Elyot brought the Greek conception of education practically before thoughtful people, and must have exercised great influence. The Utopia (1516) of Sir Thomas More also gave impulse to Greek study. Although the sentiments expressed in the Utopia are tempered with the noblest in Christian thought, it is thoroughly Greek in the best sense of the word and could not have been written without a knowledge of Plato's Republic. The Schoolmaster of Roger Ascham (1515-1568) shows not only that Greek had come to be an essential part of the intellectual fabric of the man himself but that it was penetrating the cultivated mind of England. Ascham brought this study into vogue in courtly and fashionable

circles and as the tutor of Elizabeth and Edward VI he encouraged royalty to favor it. The ladies of the court became as excellent scholars as the gentlemen. So popular was Greek that the Plutus of Aristophanes was acted in the original language before the court of Elizabeth.

The influence of the printing press and the interest in the new learning gave impetus to translation; these works, at first plain, business-like, and uninspired, slowly developed in style and power, until at last, they were written by a series of masters of English who thus introduced ancient writers to English poets.

The indirect influence of Greek on English literature before the time of Shakespeare is stronger than the direct. Knowledge of the art, thought, and enthusiasms of Athens constantly came to England through Italy or France tinted and charged in the passage with something characteristic of those countries. In this way crude notions of Greek mythology and Homeric stories came to Chaucer through Boccaccio and other Medieval writers even as early as the fourteenth century.

Imitation of the Greek by Latin, Italian, French, and other Continental writers established a medium through which the English received their ideas of the Greeks.

Virgil imitated Homer in his AEneid, Hesiod in his Georgics, and Theocritus in his Eclogues. The odes of Sappho and the Lesbian school with those of Anacreon were imitated by Catullus and Horace, and thence by Italian and French lyrists who set the keynote for many Elizabethan songs. Tragic drama followed Seneca and Latin writers, who received their inspiration from AEschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; comic drama followed Plautus and Terence who adapted the New Comedy of Menander, an outgrowth of the comedy of Aristophanes. Plato and Aristotle affected all subsequent thought and philosophy. In biography the Parallel Lives of Plutarch served as a model for later writers. AEsop's Fables passed from Phaedrus and others to all Western Europe and are the source of the majority of our fables since the time of King Alfred. Thus English writers received their inspiration either directly from the original Greek or from the imitations of it.

The universities in England guided and shaped the tastes of English literature through their students, who seized upon writing either as a means of livlihood or as a social accomplishment. The writers who later exercised much influence on Shakespeare gave many enduring contributions which testify to the classical culture received in their university

training. It was mainly through these students that the people at large became acquainted with classical learning. The new poetry which was introduced by Wyatt (1503-1542) and Surrey (1517-1547), though in imitation of verse forms imported from Italy, was a revival of the old love-lyric poetry of Greece. Thus began an epoch of lyric poetry which made an indelible mark on the poetry of Elizabethan times. The first regular English tragedy Gorboduc was fashioned on classical models. George Gascoigne (1535-1577) drew largely from foreign sources; his tragedy Jocasta was written in accordance with Greek standards. Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) included in his Faerie Queene much of the philosophy of Plato which he had learned at Cambridge. John Lyly (1553-1606) with his classical knowledge, subject matter and methods exercised a tremendous influence in courtly circles. Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) adopted as the prevailing model of his writing the late Greek romances. In the reign of Elizabeth there appeared a group of university men who turned chiefly to the theater as the most profitable market for literature. These men were Marlowe, Peele, Greene, and Nashe of whom we shall make a closer study more particularly in their influence on Shakespeare.

CHAPTER TWO

GREEK TENDENCIES IN ENGLISH DRAMA BEFORE SHAKESPEARE

The earliest form of the drama known in England is the religious plays which to some extent were first cultivated in monasteries during the period succeeding the Norman conquest. These plays followed the examples set by Continental ecclesiastics. This form of the drama had altogether lost sight of the examples of dramatic structure as practiced by the ancients from whom it is probable the early Christian religious drama had taken ideas. It is true that about the fourth century religious plays were written in imitation of the style of the Greek poets Euripides and Menander, but by the time religious drama became popular in England all trace of the ancient drama, if it ever existed, was subsidiary.

The transition from the medieval miracle, mystery, and morality plays to later drama was a result of the revival of learning during the Tudor Period, when knowledge of the classical theater was revived through the researches of the Humanists. The architect Vitruvius made a discovery of the method of construction of the classical stage and this knowledge not only led to imi-

tation by the universities and courts of Europe but was further disseminated by the revivals of classical plays as well.

In the first three decades of Elizabeth's reign the tragedies of Seneca were a favorite study of English scholars and men of letters. Between the years 1559 and 1589 all the ten tragedies by Seneca, or those attributed to his authorship, were successively translated into English by English university men. The direct influence of these translations upon the beginnings of regular English tragedy is abundantly manifest in the early productions, which show an unmistakable imitation of no other model. Seneca, of course, was not original but followed the Greek poets and especially Euripides, whose bold treatment of mythical characters and situations, as well as his elaborate effects of diction, gave much material for Seneca's purpose. However, the Roman poet showed a preferment for the most sensational themes in Greek mythology--the murder of King Agamemnon by his adulterous wife and her paramour, the incestuous love of Phaedra, the horrible banquet placed before Thyestes by Atreus, the revenge of the disenchanted Medea, the execution of Astyanax and Polyxena, and the slaughter

of Megara and her children, the fatal jealousy of Deianira, the incest and parricide of OEdipus, and the strife of his sons--tales which would gratify the audience with a spectacle of horrors.[1] One of the chief tricks of his tragic machinery was the extensive use of the Ghost. Sophocles and Euripides rely less than AEschylus upon the supernatural. It was Seneca who developed the impressive effects of supernatural appearances and devices and gave them to the modern stage. However, there is a possibility that were the dramas of AEschylus extant, "we might find that the author of the Psychagogoi equalled or surpassed Seneca in this respect; but there is an appearance of probability in the suggestion of Dr. Campbell that in the Eumenides AEschylus carried the staging of the supernatural too far for the temper of his age."[2]

Seneca also brought upon the stage supernatural beings from the lower regions. In the Hercules Furens we have a full description of the horrors of Tartarus, and in the other plays he refers to it repeatedly. "The Ghost of Tantalus, driven by a Fury, opens the Thyestes; the Ghost

1. The subject of the Octavia is not taken from the Greek but its theme is lust and blood.
2. J.W.Cunliffe, The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy.

of Thyestes the Agamemnon; in the Octavia the Ghost of Agrippina appears. Laius is called up from the shades in the OEdipus; the Ghosts of Achilles and Hector are seen in visions in the Troas; and we have another ghostly dream--that of Poppaea--in the Octavia. OEdipus is terrified in the Thebais by the vision of the murdered Laius, and Octavia's dreams are haunted by the Ghost of Britannicus. Atreus and Medea invoke the Furies to aid them in their revenge; and when Medea is relenting, she is spurred on by the appearance of her murdered brother's spirit."[3] Besides Ghosts Seneca employed Furies, witchcraft and oracles.

Seneca's use of the Chorus was different than that in Greek tragedy. In the early plays of AEschylus supreme importance was attached to the Chorus, which was the kernel from which drama had sprung. In Sophocles, the Chorus became subordinate to the dialogue. In Euripides, its connection with the action was slight. In Seneca the Chorus had no relation to the conduct of the plot. For this reason Seneca has been accused of disregarding the "unities" of time and place. Because of the continual presence of the Chorus in Attic drama the "unities" became a natural consequence and

3. J.W.Cunliffe, The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy.

were not observed as an arbitrary rule as some scholars have thought. The "unities" were not regularly observed in Greek tragedy. AEschylus was apparently ignorant of any necessity of continuity of action; and the observance of Sophocles and Euripides is not without exception.

Another point in which Seneca shared in common with Attic poets was the use of stock characters--the faithful Servant, usually an old man; the Nurse full of counsel and consolation; and the Messenger, who reported to the audience incidents and business that were taking place off the stage.

The influence of Attic drama through Seneca can be traced in the earliest known English tragedy, Gorboduc, which was acted before the Queen by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple on January 18, 1562. The authorship seems to have been divided between two of their members, Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville. It was accepted as a kind of manifesto of the classicists and as an example of what could be done in handling a subject from British legend. The plot is thus stated in the "Argument of the Tragedie--Gorboduc King of Britain divided his realm in his life-time to his two sons Ferrex and Porrex. The sons fell to dissension. The younger killed the elder. The mother, that more dearly loved the elder, for revenge killed the younger. The people, moved with the cruelty of the fact, rose in

rebellion and slew the father and mother. The nobility assembled and most terribly destroyed the rebels; and afterwards, for want of issue of the prince, whereby the succession to the crown became uncertain, they fell to civil war, in which both they and many of their issue were slain, and the land for a long time almost desolate and miserably wasted."[4]

The authors clearly borrowed from classical examples. Each of the four acts closes with a chorus, of its essence superfluous,[5] recited by a company of four old men of Britain. Messengers report to the audience the murders which take place off-stage. Long epic and lyric passages take the place of action on the stage. The last act is in the form of an epilogue which clogs the movement of the plot. The supposed law of the "unities" is disregarded by the authors, as it was disregarded by Seneca. Their plot covers an epoch of history and involves frequent changes of scene.

Manifestly, this is an expansion of the ancient Theban story of the sons of OEdipus and Iocasta and their fatal strife,--although the antecedents of the OEdipodean legend

4. A.W.Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature.
5. Euripides reduced his Chorus to a position of almost vanishing importance in the action.

are omitted, and the father and mother play a different part in the action. The story recalls in some measure the opening of *King Lear*, for Gorboduc relinquishes his royal authority under the influence of an unwise generosity.

In comedy, English dramatists followed the Latin models which were adopted by sixteenth century schoolmasters for presentation by their students. The comedies of Terence and Plautus became fashionable. Like Seneca, these authors were indebted to Greek originals for their subjects which they borrowed from the masters of the so-called New Comedy of Menander and Philemon in particular. The Roman *comoedia palliata* cannot properly be called imitations since the Greek comic stage had been transferred bodily to Rome, at a time when the productions were still gratifying Greek audiences.

The first extant English comedy *Ralph Roister Doister* (1552 or 1553) by Nicholas Udall[6] was an adaptation of the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus; itself in all probability an

6. Udall was the head master of Eton school from 1534 to 1541. He was an Oxford student. Besides this play he was known to have translated Erasmus' *Paraphrase of St. Luke* as well as other writings which won sovereign recognition by Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth.

adaptation from Menander, from whose Colax Terence, in his Eunuchus, borrowed the figures of Thraso the soldier, and Gnatho the parasite. A later English comedy Misogonus (1560) introduces characters with Greek names revealing the new interest in the study of the classics through the universities. In 1566 the Supposes of Gascoigne, who translated I Suppositi of Ariosto, shows an ingenious combination of Terence and Plautus. The interludes of John Heywood introduce personages from classical mythology and display the influence of Plautus.

Between the years 1567 and 1580 mythological subjects were presented at court by choir boys and school boys. Such plays as John Pickering's New Interlude of Vice Concerning the History of Horestes (1567), which mingles personages of classical myth with a number of abstractions, contains a long passage based on the story of Paris and Helen. Other plays performed in the course of these years were Effigenia,[7] Ajax and Ulysses, Narcissus, Paris and Vienna (all produced in 1570-71); Alcmaeon, and Perseus and Anthomeris[8] (1573-74); and the History of Serpedon (1579-80).

7. Probably for OEnone.
8. Probably for Andromeda.

The Revels' Accounts give evidence of the production of classical tragedies at Oxford and Cambridge between 1564 and 1582.[9] These include Dido, Progne, OEdipus, Ulysses Redux, and Melager. Translation as well as imitation of the ancient drama became popular. The plays of Euripides were translated, and the Scotch humanist Buchanan (1506-1582) made Latin transcripts of Medea and Alcestis. As other Greek tragedies were recalled we find the Philoctetes translated by Ascham, Iphigenia by Lady Jane Lumley, and Antigone by the poet Thomas Watson, all before 1581. George Gascoigne's Jocasta (1566) is a free adaptation of the Phoenissae of Euripides or rather a version of a free Italian adaptation of this play.

This enumeration shows how the choice of classical subjects and the imitation, direct or indirect, of classical models were exercising their influence on the progress of early English drama. Some of these plays show the influence of the Attic conception of tragi-comedy as is true of the Alcestis and Orestes of Euripides. The Damon and Pithias (1564-65) by Richard Edwards shows this tendency. When

9. The Plutus of Aristophanes was given in Greek at Saint John's College in 1536. In 1546 ~~a performance of~~ his Pox ~~was given~~ was — purpose at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Elizabeth visited Cambridge in 1564 and 1566 she was entertained by a Latin translation of the Ajax of Sophocles and an original Latin play by Edward Halliwell on the familiar subject of Dido, which seems to have pleased the Queen. On her second visit a play Palaemon and Arcyte by Richard Edwards was performed in English on two consecutive evenings, and proved to be a very great success.

To indicate the relations of classical plays with those of other types presented on the popular stage we may note, remembering the incompleteness of his records, that Henslowe in a list of two hundred and eighty plays produced between March 1592 and January 1600 mentions twenty-four titles, undoubtedly based on ancient story. None of these latter are now extant. Greg calls attention to the popularity of Greek subjects about 1598: Polyphemus, Orestes, Agamemnon, and the Arcadian Virgin (Atalanta). Chettle, especially with Dekker and Haughton, were chiefely concerned in these. But it was a few years earlier that the most determined effort to popularize ancient myth on the London stage was made. In five plays which were subsequently named the Golden, Silver, Brazen, and Iron Age a series of vital scenes dramatizing the myths of Jupiter, Hercules, Jason and the heroes of Troy were presented by Heywood.

Before ~~passing to a~~ study ~~of~~ the affect of this revival of the ancient classical lore on Shakespeare it is necessary to look more closely at the dramatists who immediately preceded him and to take particular notice of the Greek tendencies in their work.

John Lyly (or Lily), 1553-1606, who studied both at Oxford and at Cambridge, became Master of the Revels at the Court of Elizabeth. As a dramatist he wrote for choir boys who entertained the court. His plays are for the most part graceful adaptations of classic myths, so arranged as to have a bearing upon contemporary happenings at court, yet moving always in an atmosphere of quaint and dreamlike unreality. His novels set both a code of manners and a fashion of speech for the court and helped to elevate social life to an art. He borrowed the word Euphues from Plato and the whole of his appendix to the novel by that name from a treatise by Plutarch. The "Euphues and His Ephoebus" appended to Euphues, The Anatomy of Wit (1579) is almost a literal translation of Plutarch's tractate De Educatione Liberorum, and one of the epistles from Euphues is a translation of the De Exilio. In various ways and degrees Lyly is indebted in style and matter to Ovid, Virgil and Homer, and to Caesar, Cicero and Seneca. Yet there is no evidence in any of his work that he was a widely or deeply read classical scholar, nor can his diction and

vocabulary apart from quotation, be fairly described as impregnated by classicism. With the exception of Mother Bombie the subjects of all his plays are derived from clasical history and legend. Even where the names of their personages are not directly derived from a classical story the episodes of the original classical sources are repeatedly interwoven with the main action. Still more noticeable is his fondness for classical allusion. His Alexander Campaspe and Diogenes reveals a passing taste for Aristotle and Plato. Figures and deities of classical mythology as the representatives of moral qualities, vices, and virtues were carried to the extreme by Lyly who became adventurous also in introducing with these a species of allegory which had hitherto hardly been tried on the stage. He used the Woman in the Moone (printed 1597) as an elaborate allegory complimenting Queen Elizabeth under the designation of Diana. The frolicsome spirit of his Galathea (printed 1592) recalls the gaiety of Theocritean pastorals, but in English dress. Sapho and Phao (printed 1584), Mydas (printed 1592), and Loves Metamorphosis (printed 1601) contain classical characters and allusions treated after the style of his other plays. The last two plays were suggested to him by his favorite Latin poet Ovid who used Greek material in his Metamorphoses. Lyly drew from Greek mythology in his

Endymion or the Man in the Moone (printed 1591) though he introduces an allegory of court life which has no place nor counterpart with the myth. The Diana in this play becomes an English Queen attended by her court and Endymion is her favorite courtier.

While Lyly was at the height of his vogue, during the late eighties of the sixteenth century, a group of young dramatists was coming to the front whose appeal was not to the court but to the people, and whose plays were written for the popular stage. The most important members of this group were Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, and George Peele. By natural gifts Peele was a lyric poet, Greene a prose romancer, and Marlowe, their undisputed leader, was a master of the epic. However, the tendency of the age was overwhelmingly in favor of drama, and these young poets were diverted into the channel of dramatic expression.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) may be called the true founder of the popular English drama, although his work was the outgrowth of the long period of preparation which we have been reviewing. He graduated from Cambridge at nineteen; and four years later astonished London with his first play, Tamburlaine the Great (1587), which exhibits an excessive use of similes drawn from a limited range of

classical mythology more or less haphazard, although among them are to be found some of the choicest gems of Marlowe's poetry. As is true of his later dramas Marlowe gave unity to this play by making it revolve around some single great personality, engaged in some titanic struggle for power; and likewise ~~of~~ treating this struggle with the rhetorical splendor of his "mighty line" of blank verse which astounded and fascinated his contemporaries. His second play, Doctor Faustus (1588), is built on an even larger scale and involves larger questions of human will and fate. The specific notion, however, of the sale of his soul to the Devil by a human being--followed in all early instances by the ultimate annihilation of the contract by Divine Grace--can be traced as far back as the sixth century, when the story of Theophilus was supposed to have been related in Greek by his pupil Entychianus; it spread in various versions through Eastern and Western Christendom. Marlowe uses a chorus much after the fashion of Seneca. The introduction of the Seven Deadly Sins, favorite characters of Renaissance literature, resembles after a fashion a play within a play. No greater strain of passionate poetry can be quoted from this play than the scene in the fifth act when Mephistopheles raises from the dead the spirit of Helen of Troy and Faustus utters his rapturous exclamation at the sight of the beautiful apparition:

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?"

Marlowe's third play, The Jew of Malta (1589-90), presents a vigorous sketch in Barabbas, of which Shakespeare in the Merchant of Venice was to make a finished masterpiece. The exquisite beauty of the verse in the earlier part of this play is heightened by that imaginative use of classical simile which was peculiarly Marlowe's own. Again the story is a study of the lust for power--the power bestowed by great riches. We are immediately reminded of Shakespeare's Shylock when we read,

"One sole daughter, whom I hold as dear
As Agamemnon did his Iphigene
And all I have is hers."

After the second act the play falls into ~~gory~~ melodrama quite in keeping with the prejudiced Elizabethan view of the Jews.

The love of classical allusions is as active as ever in his chronicle history play, Edward II (1590-91); we are overwhelmed by meeting Leander, Ganymede, Circe, the Cyclops, Proteus, Danae, Helen, Atlas, Pluto, Charon and Tisiphone, as well as Cataline and other historical parallels. Seneca and Pliny are cited as are ancient philosophers,

"Come, Baldock, come, sit down by me,
Make trial now of that philosophy,
That in our famous nurseries of arts
Thou suck'dst from Plato and from Aristotle."

Marlowe's life ended suddenly in 1593 and his friend, Thomas Nashe, completed his unfinished play, Dido, Queen of Carthage (printed 1594), which follows Virgil with remarkable fidelity. Among other fragments of Marlowe's work is Hero and Leander which is regarded by some as a paraphrase of a legendary poem attributed to the Greek poet Musaeus. It is curiously pagan and almost Greek in sentiment. The poem celebrates the lovliness of passion and of physical beauty: through it all there runs a sense of wantonness and the cruelty of the gods. The two lovers are the toys of the Fates, the sport of the Destinies. The poem was completed by Chapman and published in 1598.

A dramatist of whom little is known, but who is important as representing a type of drama which had great influence, is Thomas Kyd (c.1557-c.1595). His plays Jeronimo and The Spanish Tragedy (presented on the stage about 1588) are a degenerate form of Senecan tragedy known as the "tragedy of blood." He adopts the Ghost and in the later play the Ghost of Andrea with an abstract character, Revenge, form a chorus at the end of acts one and four. The story of Erastus and Perseda is introduced after the fashion of Seneca's play within a play. The play ends with the father's revenge, which seems to defy all classical conventions by presenting

untoward events on the stage. This type of double play wherein the hero is slain in the first part, but in the second part returns as a Nemesis to inspire revenge, which results in the destruction of all the other characters, was very popular with Elizabethan audiences. Traces of it may be seen in Shakespeare's Hamlet and Julius Caesar.

George Peele (c.1558-c.1597) took the usual degrees at Oxford, where he became noted for his poetry. He wrote a Tale of Troy and a version of one of the Iphigenias of Euripides. He was well read in classical poetry, to the phrases and subjects of which he makes constant reference in his works. His first play was probably The Arraignment of Paris (1581-84) which follows Ovid's story of Paris and OEnone and ends with a pleasing compliment to a "gracious nymph whose name Eliza is, and whom some Zabeta call." His play The Battle of Alcazar (c. 1592) employs the usual antique methods, such as the dumb-show, the chorus, and frequent classical allusions. Peele is excessively fond of employing infernal machinery and uses it without any regard to its appropriateness, as is true of the last speech of the Moor.

"Mount me I will:
But may I never pass the river, till I be
Reveng'd upon thy soul, accursed Abdelmelec!
If not on earth, yet when we meet in hell,

> Before grim Minos, Rhadamanth, and Aeacus,
> The combat will I crave upon thy ghost,
> And drag thee through the loathsome pools
> of Lethes, Styx, and fiery Plegethon."

His David and Bethsabe is a late type of mystery play and imitates Seneca's gruesomeness without Marlowe's delicacy of treatment. Joab thus delivers himself as to the dead Absalom:

> "Night-ravens and owls shall ring his fatal knell,
> And sit exclaiming on his damned soul;
> There shall they heap their preys of carrion
> Till all his grave be clad with stinking bones,
> That it may loathe the sense of every man."

His Old Wives' Tale is a crude kind of dramatized nursery-tale and distinctly shows his inability to write a good play.

Robert Greene (c.1560-1592), Artibus Magister, and often called "the Homer of women" because of the popularity of his romantic novelettes among the women, was a follower of Lyly. His Plantomachia (1585) contains two tragedies; one told by Venus and the other by Saturn. In Penelope's Web (1587) he weaves another graceful story, but his Comicall History of Alphonsus, King of Arragon confuses Greco-Roman mythology with the oracles of Mahomet. Venus speaks the prologue and the connecting choruses and holds converse with the Muses. There is little evidence in Greene's works to show that he

was a deep classical student. He adopted the conceits of Lyly. The success of Marlowe's Tamburlaine encouraged him to write the History of Frier Bacon which like his other plays shows his love of classical allusion. Perhaps no better example can be quoted than the last lines complimenting the Queen, a flower which shall overshadow Albion with its leaves until,

> "Apollo's heliotrope shall stoop,
> And Venus' hyacinth shall vail her top;
> Juno shall shut her gilliflowers up,
> And Pallas' bay shall 'bash her brightest green;
> Ceres' carnation in consort with those
> Shall stoop and wonder at Diana's rose."

The influence of Seneca is very marked in the early works of Greene. If King Selinius (printed 1594) can be rightly ascribed to him, a very interesting and considerable influence upon his style is noticeable. In this play we have the usual Sisyphus, Ixion, and "the cave of damned ghosts" so familiar in Seneca as well as "all the damned monsters of black hell." Seneca's dialogue is imitated by Greene.

Thomas Lodge (1558 c.- 1625), a doctor of physic at Oxford, tried his hand at drama. Besides translating Seneca he wrote a play The Wounds of Civil War (c. 1587, printed 1594) founded on Plutarch's Lives. Thomas Nashe (1567-1601), B.A., introduced mythological figures in the dramatis personae in his play Summer's Last Will and Testament (acted 1592) in which

Will Summer, the celebrated jester of Henry VIII, sits as a chorus and "flouts the actors." Henry Chettle (1564-c. 1607) was reputed to be a prolific dramatist but no play attributed with certainty to his single authorship has come down to us except Hoffman (1602), which is a crudely constructed revenge play. The hero boasts that the tragedy "shall surpass those of Thyestes, Tereus, Jocasta, or Medea." The dramatic works of Anthony Munday (1553-1633), Robert Wilson (c. 1598), Robert Armin (c. 1570), and Michael Drayton (1563-1631) are too sketchy to be taken up for discussion as to their classical tendencies.

It is evident that the tastes of Shakespeare's predecessors remained true to the Renaissance traditions which were largely reflected by the universities. Their fond display of their classical learning helped to make every one acquainted with the learning of the ancients although that knowledge had become corrupted by being passed through so many mediums before it reached Englishmen.

CHAPTER THREE

ELIZABETHAN TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GREEK

Knowledge of Greek literature could not long remain dependant on the Latin copies and plagarisms of it. The zealous work of the Humanists had given students a deeper understanding of the Greek. Dissemination of such knowledge led to the establishment of Greek study in England through the efforts of Erasmus, Cheke, More, Ascham, and others. When the matter of Greece had become fairly abundant people became inquisitive to know more about the interesting people of the past. Nothing could have been more fascinating to an Elizabethan than a translation of a Greek manuscript.

The Elizabethan Age was an age of translations. One of the first translators of importance was Sir Thomas North (c.1535-c.1601), a very versatile linguist, who translated Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Greecians and Romans. It is not known that North was a university graduate, but the fact that the freedom of Cambridge was bestowed upon him in 1568 and that the originals of three of his works were from the Spanish, Italian and French ~~are~~ is evidence enough that he was an educated and cultured gentleman. His translation of the Lives is almost a word for word rendering of the Vies des Hommes

Illustres of Jacques Amyot (1513-1593) who followed Plutarch closely. It is believed that Shakespeare used the Richard Field Edition of 1595.[1]

Shakespeare relied on Plutarch for a number of his plots. The first was the Hippolyta-Theseus story in A Midsummer-Night's Dream (1596). Then followed in succession his Julius Caesar (1599-1600), Antony and Cleopatra (1607), Timon of Athens (1608), and Coriolanus (1608-09).

The incidents from the three lives, Caesar, Brutus, and Antonius, were woven together by Shakespeare in his Julius Caesar. A comparative study of these threads reveals the following interesting resemblances: The first two acts and the first scene of act three of Julius Caesar are drawn from the "Life of Caesar", with the exception of the meetings of the conspirators, which are described in the "Life of Brutus";

1. Professor W.W.Skeat has discovered two passages in Shakespeare's earlier plays which may have originated in North's Lives. In the Merchant of Venice (I. i. 167) Portia is compared to "Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia," while in the Midsummer-Night's Dream (II. i. 75-80) the names Hippolyta, Perigouna, AEgle, Ariadne, and Antiope, all of which are to be found in the pages of Plutarch's Life of Theseus, occur in quick succession. These may indicate that Shakespeare knew North's Lives before 1600. J.Q.Adams in A Life of Shakespeare says, "One would like to believe that Field presented his friend with a copy of this edition, and that A Midsummer-Night's Dream, giving evidence of prompt reading of the volume, shows the dramatist's appreciation of the gift."

Antony's speech (III. ii.) is based upon a passage in the "Life of Antonius"; the murder of Cinna (III. iii.) is found in the "Life of Brutus", since he is not described as a "poet" in a similar passage in the "Life of Caesar"; acts four and five follow closely the "Life of Brutus"; the statement that Cassius stabbed himself with the sword with which he murdered Caesar is taken from the "Life of Caesar".[2]

In Julius Caesar Shakespeare did not follow the language of North as closely as he did in his other plays. The passages which show a close resemblance are the speech of Portia to Brutus, the parting words of Lucilius to Antony, and the last speech of Brutus before his death. The quarrel and final reconciliation of Brutus and Cassius is the essence of a succession of events described in the "Life of Brutus".

Shakespeare's treatment of the character of Caesar shows plainly the influence of Plutarch's, not altogether unbiased, delineation of the great general. His courage, generosity, and eloquence are praised, but there is a tendency of dislike for his tyrannical disposition and overwhelming ambition. Plutarch tells us "the prosperous good success he had of his former conquests bred no desire in him quietly to enjoy the

2. Cf. R.H.Carr, North's Translation of the Life of Coriolanus, "Introduction".

fruits of his labors, but rather gave him hope of things to come, still kindling more and more in him thoughts of greater enterprise and desire of new glory, as if that which he had present were stale and nothing worth." He was "mortally hated for the covetous desire he had to be called king." He "would never rise to receive the Senate; he would speak of the people contemptuously; and on the day of his death he was torn by effeminate fear and arrogant self-confidence." To these defects Shakespeare adds deafness and epilepsy.

Plutarch tells us that Brutus "was rightly made and framed unto virtue". His manner of speech was terse, even as Shakespeare presents it in the address to the people at Caesar's funeral. His dislike for bloodshed makes him spare the life of Antonius and unwisely permit him to deliver Caesar's funeral oration. "He was a marvellous lowly and gentle person, noble-minded, and would never be in any rage nor carried away with pleasure and covetousness, but had ever an upright mind with him, and would never yield to any wrong or injustice", so that all were persuaded that his intent was good.

The character of Cassius as drawn by Plutarch is treated with perhaps a little more sympathy by Shakespeare. Cassius is less scrupulous than Brutus and possesses a keener judgment.

"Men reputed him commonly to be very skillful in wars, but otherwise marvellous choleric and cruel, who sought to rule men by fear rather than with lenity". In the play his confession on the eve of his death--"O, Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!"--bears out the conclusion of the "Life of Caesar". "But his great prosperity, and good fortune that favored him all his lifetime, did continue afterwards in the revenge of his death, pursuing the murtherers both by sea and land, till they had not left a man more to be executed, of all them that were actors or councellors in the conspiracy of his death".

Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra is drawn from Plutarch's "Life of Antonius" which is a brilliant historical romance, full of glow and movement. In this story Plutarch's Greek origin gave him a special insight into the temperament of the semi-Greek city of Alexandria. Shakespeare adhered closely to this plot and at times turned the quiet prose almost word for word into poetry. Shakespeare seems to have felt a conscientious obligation to introduce every incident mentioned by Plutarch. The character of Antonius is one of the best achieved by the Greek biographer and is the very Antony of Shakespeare, who had only to put the finishing touches on the lines. The manly, hardy, warrior who endured every hardship is portrayed

by Plutarch when he says Antony was "so carried away with the vain love of this woman.....that she could not have removed without moving of him also: for when he saw her ships under sail, he forgot, forsook, and betrayed them that fought for him, and embarked upon a galley.....to follow her that had already begun to overthrow him". As for Cleopatra, "her beauty was not so passing as unmatchable of other women, nor yet such as upon present vein did enamour men with her: but so sweet was her company and conversation that a man could not possibly be taken, and besides her beauty, the good grace she had to talk and discourse, her corteous nature that tempered her words and deeds, was a spur that pricked to the quick. Furthermore, besides all these, her voice and words were marvellous pleasant". It is interesting to note that Shakespeare never once betrays Plutarch by insisting that Cleopatra is beautiful. Antony calls her "a right gipsy", his "nightengale", his "serpent of old Nile". Shakespeare emphasizes her coquetry more than Plutarch. She charges her messenger,

> "If you find him sad,
> Say I am dancing: if in mirth, report
> That I am sudden sick."

To escape the torture of Caesar's triumph Cleopatra of the stage only threatens to starve her body but in Plutarch's

version Caesar finds her "marvelously disfigured". Yet in the play as in "The Life of Caesar" the manner of her death shows the reality of her passion.

The character of Enobarbus is practically created by Shakespeare. From three sketchy incidents related by Plutarch Shakespeare built up the blunt, rugged warrior. Lepidus, too, is developed from a few slender details.

It has been suggested that Shakespeare based his play Timon of Athens on the story of Timon, the misanthrope, found in Plutarch's "Life of Antonius". There are several close resemblances in the play to materials in North's translation. Timon's epitaph is direct from North.

> "My wretched catif dayes expired now and past:
> My carren corps intered here is fast in grounde:
> In waltring waues of swelling Sea by surges cast,
> My name if thou desire, the Gods thee doe confounde."

Other details common to both the play and Plutarch's account are the story of the fig tree, and the elements of the characters of Apemantus and Alcibiades, who realizes in the drama Timon's prediction in Plutarch that he would "do great mischief unto the Athenians." It is almost certain that Shakespeare drew also, directly or indirectly, from another classical version of the story, Lucian's Misanthropos. He was familiar with an unpublished play of Timon which contained the figure of the loyal steward and the episode of the banquet, neither of which are known to classical tradition.

Shakespeare adhered almost with documentary accuracy to Plutarch's version of the "Life of Coriolanus". There is but one incident that is Shakespeare's own; namely, the scene in which Coriolanus forgets the name of his poor friend at the very moment when he is pleading for his life (I. ix. 82-91). Shakespeare treated the plebs and the Tribuni Plebis with less dignity than Plutarch; this was done however because of dramatic necessity. Shakespeare's purpose was to make Coriolanus a tragic hero, and it was necessary, in order to arouse our sympathy for the patrician, that he give us a picture of a rabble devoid of political ideas and so fickle as to cause his ruin.

The ladies, Volumnia, Virgilia, and Valeria, are treated with much clearness in Plutarch and they are typically Roman women in the play. The minor characters are more Shakespearean because they are treated with the slenderest details by Plutarch. The passages in which Shakespeare most closely resembles North's language are the fable of Menenius (I. i.), the speech of Coriolanus (III. i.), and his speech to Aufidius (IV. v), and the address of Volumnia to raise the siege (V. iii). Coriolanus stands out in Shakespeare, more than in Plutarch, as an embodiment of the aristocratic ideals of heroic Greece and of feudal chivalry. His parallel is found in Alcibiades, the

Greek general in Timon of Athens.

Another translator in the Elizabethan Age was George Chapman (1559-1634), a graduate of both Oxford and Cambridge. He was a student of the classics, and is best known by students of English Literature for his numerous plays, poems and translations. We have already mentioned his part in the writing of Marlowe's Hero and Leander. Chapman knew Shakespeare and enjoyed a prolonged theatrical relation with him. It has been suggested that Chapman had a hand in a number of Shakespeare's plays, that he wrote the first cast of the play and gave it to Shakespeare to put in the master touches.[3] Such a proposition is not easily proved when one considers that the Elizabethan playwrights had relatively the same mode of expression; a study of the style of any one passage in Shakespeare cannot but result in conjecture on who was the writer assisting him. It is not altogether impossible that Chapman worked at times with Shakespeare. However, he made a more direct contribution when he translated Homer's Iliad from the Greek.

In 1598 there appeared Seven Bookes of the Iliades of Homer—Prince of Poets and Achilles Shield. The books were very popular and revived interest in the story of Troy among theater goers. In the following year the Admiral's Men

3. Cf. J.M.Robertson, Shakespeare and Chapman.

produced Brute, Troy's Revenge, Agamemnon, Orestes, Furies, and Troylus and Cressida.

Shakespeare had always shown a liking for the story of Troy. In his greatest moments of poetic outburst he turns to the theme. In his earliest poetry he gives long passages describing the siege of Troy. In the Rape of Lucrece he devotes over two hundred lines to a description of a tapestry or painted cloth depicting scenes of Priam's Troy. Out of the forty-two plays and poems attributed to his authorship twenty-four make mention of characters and events of the Iliad.

When Shakespeare wrote Troilus and Cressida he was well acquainted with the subject. He knew the contents of ~~the~~ recently published translations ~~by Chapman~~ and there is a possibility he had access to the manuscripts of his friend's further translations which remained unpublished for a time. The matter of Troy had been worked over by poets the world over; Euripides, Sophocles, Ovid, Virgil, Chaucer and Lydgate were only a few. Many variations were introduced; such as the story of Peleus and Thetis, the history of Jason and the Golden Fleece, the lives and achievements of Hercules and Theseus, with the first destruction of Troy in vengeance for the treachery of Laomedon, the return of the Greek heroes, including the murder of Agamemnon, the vengeance of Orestes, and the accidental killing of Ulysses by his son.

Shakespeare ~~did not give~~ gave the legendary version of the story of Troilus and Cressida ~~as told by Homer but dealt instead with the legendary version. In fact~~, the Iliad makes but a few sketchy remarks about the two characters. It is known that Sophocles wrote a play called Troilus, but only four lines are now extant. In the sixth century of the Christian era two fraudulent translations by a supposed Phrygian priest called Dares and a Cretan warrior named Dictys gave to Europe its earliest knowledge of Troy. Both related stories from the Iliad. These writers became the sources for a Norman Trouvere, Benoit de Sainte-More, who wrote a long epic poem Le Roman de Troie in the twelfth century. He took liberties with his subject and he admitted that he inserted many "bon dits" when the occasion offered. The episode of Troilus and Cressida is one of these fancies. In the Historia Destructionis Troiæ (1287) by Guido della Colonna the story appears again. Boccaccio gave it a special treatment in Il Filostrato (1341-46), whence it passed to Chaucer (1377-85). In 1475 Caxton translated Raoul Lefevre's Recueil des Histoires de Troie, which was based on Guido. Lydgate's Troy Book was a version of Guido.

With much handling, the story of the Iliad received a distinct transformation which became deliberate in medieval writers. The Romans traced their descent from the Greeks,

and later the Barbarians came to consider themselves Roman Cousins, descendants of AEneas. An historian of the fifteenth century states that the French, Venetians, Romans, English, Normans, Turks, and Austrians were all descendants of Trojans. The English celebrated Brutus, the great-grandson of AEneas, who, some claimed, changed the name of Albion to that of Britain, after his own name, and who was also considered the founder of Troynovant (London) on the banks of the Thames. The England of Shakespeare's time boasted of a proud history among the descendants of Brutus. The more illustrious of his descendants were Locrinus, one of his sons; Hudibras, a contemporary of Solomon; King Lear, famous in Shakespeare's tragedy; Gorboduc, whom Sackville brought to the stage; Lucius, the first Christian prince; and King Arthur, founder of the order of Knights of the Round Table. The story of Trojan descent in England, as on the Continent, was not considered poetic fiction but was a popular belief and an article of patriotic faith. Because men never dreamed of submitting this tradition to critical examination the error persisted and found its way even into the most serious transactions in politics. There is little wonder that a tradition so firmly fixed in the minds of the people would not find its place in a Shakespearean drama.

It was only natural that medieval writers would glorify the Trojans as superior to the Greeks both in loftiness of soul and military valor. The supernatural element, the Olympian gods, was omitted and the classical atmosphere was exchanged for chivalric coloring. The Trojan heroes became Medieval knights fighting on horses. Mention of honor, fidelity, gauntlets, devices, lists, falconry, gorgets, and lady-loves were common errors. Even in Shakespeare we find errors of detail such as the mention of Aristotle by Hector, of Milo of Crotona by Ulysses, of Friday and Sunday by Pandarus. Trojan cookery seems closely to resemble the culinary art in England of the seventeenth century.

Shakespeare used his material for this play much the same as he used the old chronicles in producing his historical plays. He used the story as it was told in legend and breathed into it the breath of life. Some of the outstanding passages in the play reveal how he gathered together the threads from various sources and wove them into his plot. We find a hint for the scene in which Pandarus praises Hector (I. ii. 215),

> "That's Hector, that, that, look you,
> that; there's a fellow! Go thy way, Hector!
> There's a brave man, niece. O brave Hector!
> Look how he looks! there's a countenance! is't
> not a brave man?"

in Chaucer's poem in the conversation between Pandarus and

Cryseide on the qualifications of Hector and Troylus. Another scene is a presentment of Cressida's unfaithfulness (III. ii.),

> "O that I thought it could be in a woman--
> As, if it can, I will presume in you--
> To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love;
> To keep her constancy in plight and youth,
> Outliving beauty's outward, with a mind
> That doth renew swifter than blood decays!"

The same scene is treated with much concern in Chaucer.

> "But nathles, myn ladi bright!
> Yit were it so that I wist utterly,
> That I youre humble servaunt and your knyght
> Were in youre herte yset so fermely,
> As ye in myn, the whiche thing truly
> Me lever were than this worldis tweyne,
> Yit schulde I the better endure al my peyne."

The scene in which Calchas appeals to the Greeks (III. iii.) is similar to the same circumstance in Chaucer's poem.[4] The character of Pandarus has its prototype in the poem. This is very noticeable in the banter (IV. ii.) which displeases Cressida. The scene of the parting of the lovers has a deeper pathos in Chaucer's poem than the corresponding scene in Shakespeare's play. And later the cry of anguish (V. ii.),

> "O Cressid! O false Cressid! false, false, false!
> Let all untruths stand by thy stained name,
> And they'll seem glorious."

reminds us of the lines in Chaucer's poem,

> "O, lady myn Creyseyde,

4. Cf. Howard Staunton Edition of Shakespeare's plays, "Troilus and Cressida", notes.

Wher is youre feith, and wher is youre beheste?
Wher is youre love, wher is youre trouth?"

It is very noticeable that Shakespeare confounded the two Ajaxes as portrayed by Lydgate in his Auncient Historie and onely trew and syncere Cronicle of the warres betwixt the Greecians and Troyans (fol. 1555, Bk. II, Ch. 15),

"Oleus Ayax was right corpulent,
To be well cladde he set all his intent
In rych aray he was ful curyous,
Although he were of body corsyous
Of armes great and shoulders square and brode;
.....
Another Ayax Thelamonyous
There was also dyscrete and vertuous
Wonder fayre and semely to beholde,
Whose heyr was black and vpward ay gan folde
In compas wise rounde as any sphere
And of musyke was there none his pere."

The raving of Cassandra (II.ii.)was also borrowed from Lydgate as it does not appear in Chaucer's poem or in Chapman's translation of the Iliad.

"This was the noise and the pyteous crye
Of Cassandra that so dreadefully
She gan to make about in every strete
Through ye towne."

It is also believed that Shakespeare took from Lydgate the idea of the scene (V. ix.) in which Hector when unarmed is overpowered by Achilles and his followers.

The character of Thersites has every evidence of being Shakespeare's own conception. The Homeric character is a vulgar, irascible railer devoid of wit or intelligence,

whereas, Shakespeare has given Thersites remarkable intelectual vigor, besides portraying him as hideous in person, cowardly in character and coarse in speech.[5] The scene in which Hector and Ajax fight (IV. v.) is suggested in the description of the combat in Chapman's Iliad.

It is my opinion that Chapman's Iliad was the occasion for the writing of Troilus and Cressida just as the reading of the Field Edition of Plutarch's Lives produced the Midsummer-Night's Dream and the Roman Plays. The first mention of Troilus and Cressida is in February 1603 when the Chamberlain's Men took steps to prevent its publication. This makes a lapse of five years after the publication of Chapman's translation of the Iliad. It is not unlikely that Shakespeare may have had drafts of some scenes written before 1598 and that when Chapman's publication proved to stimulate stage versions of episodes of the Iliad, he brought the play to completion.

5. Compare Chapman's Iliads Bk.II with Troilus and Cressida (II. i.).

CHAPTER FOUR

GREEK TENDENCIES IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

Whatever may be said of Shakespeare's "little Latin and less Greek" he was, at least, familiar with the subject-matter of many classical stories. One of the oldest and most famous of these tales is Romeo and Juliet. By analogy, its principal elements take us back to the older love tales of Hero and Leander, and Pyramus and Thisbe. All these stories have a basic connection, which one editor chooses to analyze in the following manner,[1]

> (a) The separation of two lovers by some obstacle.
> (b) Their ruin brought about by an error which one holds in regard to the other, or by a misfortune, which, happening to one, the other shares.

Pyramus and Thisbe are separated by the wall. They arrange to meet at the tomb, where nothing shall part them. Pyramus mistakes the stained veil as evidence of the maiden's death and kills himself; Thisbe discovers his lifeless body and kills herself. In the story of Hero and Leander the lovers are separated by the Hellespont, which Leander swam of nights to visit his love. One night a tempest arose and the sea was rough; his strength failed and he was drowned. The waves

1. Cf. I.Gollancz Shakespeare Library Classics, "Romeus and Juliet".

bore his body to the shore, where Hero became aware of his death, and drowned herself.

The story of Troilus and Cressida, though of Medieval origin, belongs to this same cycle of stories. In this story we have the following elements added,[2]

(a) The meeting of two lovers, who for some reason, probably the existence of a family feud, are obliged to keep their love secret.
(b) A philosophical confident who advises them and assists them to meet and helps them.
(c) Their betrothal.
(d) Their separation.
(e) An affecting parting scene at dawning.
(f) The advent of a new lover, who becomes a great danger to the hero and heroine.
(g) Disaster which ruins them.

An interesting Middle Greek romance of the fifth century is found in the Ephesiaca, "The Love-Adventures of Abrocomas and Anthia", of Xenophon of Ephesus. This tale deals with the separation of Anthia from her husband. She is rescued from robbers by Perilaus, who induces her against her will to wed him. From Eudoxus, a physician, she procures a potion and drinks it. She is buried and later awakes. Thieves enter the sepulchre and carry her off. The second type of theme deals with a potion,[3]

(a) Two lovers, probably married, whose relations are

2. Cf. I.Gollancz, Ibid.
3. Ibid.

endangered by the advent of a new lover.
(b) The subterfuge of the sleeping potion obtained from a physician friend.
(c) The burial of the heroine, as if dead.
(d) The forcing open of the tomb by night.

These two fables are fused in the story of Romeo and Juliet, which in turn has many points in common with the story of Shakespeare's Two Gentlemen of Verona. When Shakespeare took up the story for dramatic purposes, it was already well known in England because of the popularity of the poem Romeus and Juliet by Arthur Brooke.

The theme of the Winter's Tale, too, has an interesting history. The greater part of the story is taken from Greene's Pandosto, or Dorastus and Fawnia. Both may have been influenced by the Phoenissae of Euripides, an adaptation of which was produced at Gray's Inn in 1566. The motif, of the exposure of a child by a cruel parent and the rescue of the child by a shepherd, is in the play,

> "For so it chaunched, a shepherd passing by,
> With pity moved, did stay his guiltless death:
> He took him home and gave him to his wife
> With homlier fare to feed and foster up."

But Shakespeare's most remarkable modification is in the story of the Queen, Hermione, which shows a resemblance in the entire situation to the climax of Euripides' Alcestis.[4]

4. A resemblance to the Alcestis can be noted in the character of Katherine in Henry VIII.

In both, the injured wife does not speak to her husband. No English adaptation of the Alcestis is known to have existed before the date of the Winter's Tale (1610-11), but Shakespeare may have read a literal Latin version of it, such as that of Stephen (1567).

In the previous chapter Shakespeare's use of classical subjects from the Iliad and from Plutarch's Lives has been discussed. His knowledge of the tales was facilitated by the English translations of classical scholars, North and Chapman.

Shakespeare's dramatis personae may sometimes be traced to a classic source. Autolycus in the Winter's Tale can be referred back to the twenty-ninth book of the Odyssey and to the Metamorphoses of Ovid. His use of Ghosts and supernatural beings developed from the Roman poet, Seneca, who had imitated Sophocles, Euripides, and AEschylus. The Ghost of Hamlet's father, of Julius Caesar, of Banquo are the most well known examples. Other characters such as the unnamed persons in the plays have a lineage that can be traced back to the Greek dramas. Some of Shakespeare's best characters belong to this family. The Nurse in Romeo and Juliet, the Doctor in Macbeth, the Knight in King Lear are outstanding.

Several of Shakespeare's plays are not without the

Chorus. In Henry V the Chorus is a necessary part of the action. The second act of Romeo and Juliet begins with a chorus which explains the action to the audience. The Chorus is also used with good effect in Henry IV, Part Two, by the use of Rumour in the Introduction and of a Dancer in the Epilogue. The Epilogue of The Tempest is in the form of a Chorus as is the last speech of Puck in the Midsummer-Night's Dream, and Rosalind's speech in the Epilogue of As You Like It. These are but a few of the examples. The supplementary dialogue filling the interstices of the action, which in Shakespeare's plays is contributed by "First and Second Lords, First and Second Gentlemen" and others,[5] is furnished by the Chorus of a Greek play.

Action had a more prominent place on the Elizabethan stage than on the ancient stage. The Elizabethans liked to witness actual "business" which the Athenian was satisfied to be informed of by a messenger. The profoundly moving events of the first OEdipus take place almost entirely off stage and are reported to the audience through dialogue. This restraint is to a certain extent true in Shakespeare. No scenes can more closely approximate the classic than Lady

5. For example All's Well That Ends Well (I.ii.) and Measure for Measure (I.ii.).

Macbeth's reading of the letter (I. v.) or the murder of Duncan (II. i,ii.) behind closed doors and out of sight of the audience. Hotspur's reading of the letter in Henry IV, Part One (II. iii.) is a similar example.

The ruthless spirit of violence and bloodshed which characterized the Elizabethan stage was due to the popularity of Senecan tragedy of Revenge which spared no detail of physical horror. Take for example the bringing of Suffolk's mutilated body on the stage (Henry VI, Part Two. IV. i.) and the introduction of Queen Margaret with the head in her hands (Ibid. IV. iv.). Iden brings on the stage Cade's head in Henry VI, Part Two (V. i.), and Richard that of Somerset in Henry VI, Part Three (I.i.). All through the Third Part of Henry VI the slaughter is accompanied by great inhumanity, such as the mock crowning of York before his death, the murder of Rutland and of the Prince of Wales. In Macbeth the audience sees the murder of Banquo and in King Lear the blinding of Gloucester. The last scene in Hamlet (V. ii.) in which Hamlet forces the dying King to drink the poison was often made more cruel by the actor's placing his knee on the king's breast. Although the general atmosphere of Richard III is repulsive, the murder of the young princes is narrated, and the executions take place off stage, only Clarence and Richard

die in the sight of the audience.

Titus Andronicus carries the "tragedy of blood" to a greater extreme than any other play of Shakespeare. Both Demetrius and Chiron stab Bassianus in the presence of Lavinia (II. iii) and later Demetrius throws the body into a pit. Aaron cuts off Titus' hand (III. i.) in the presence of the audience and later a messenger brings on the stage two heads and a hand. Lavinia with her hands cut off and her tongue cut out is requested by her father to bear his severed hand between her teeth (III. i.). Aaron stabs the Nurse (IV. ii.). Titus cuts the throats of the two sons of Tamora and Lavinia receives the blood in a basin (V. ii.),

> "Receive the blood: and when that they are dead,
> Let me go grind their bones to powder small
> And with this hateful liquor temper it;
> And in that paste let their vile heads be baked.
> Come, come, be every one officious
> To make this banquet; which I wish may prove
> More stern and bloody than the Centaurs' feast.
> So, now bring them in, for I'll play the cook,
> And see them ready 'gainst their mother comes."
> (Exeunt, bearing the dead bodies.)

Titus kills Lavinia and forces Tamora to eat of the gory banquet (V.iii.). The play ends in the slaughter of Tamora, Titus, and Saturninus. The audience is spared the sight of seeing Aaron buried alive.

We can hardly be wrong in assuming that the tragic fortunes of Lavinia are modelled on those of the Philomela of

Ovid, and the grim vengeance of Titus on the legend of Atreus.[6] The influence of the Kydian tragedy of Revenge is noticeable in the characters Titus and Tamora. Their revenge is in retaliation for a wrong. Aaron resembles the type of tragedy of intense and active ill-will that Marlowe presented in Barabas in the Jew of Malta.[7]

"Revenge is secondary to ambition, lust or mere murderousness, and the protagonist is a self-conscious, energetic and capable schemer who bustles his way to the end. In revenge plays of Kyd's inspiration the wrong is a derivative or inherited one, some crime perpetrated on one beloved, a son (as in The Spanish Tragedy), a father (as in Hamlet); and vengeance becomes a thing sanctified by supernatural incitement."[8] The protagonist is then a righteous man with a wrong to redress, influenced by the supernatural, filled with doubts and presentments, and fatalistic in his philosophy of life.

Every tragic action consists of a great crisis in a great life presented in such a way as to move the hearts of those who see and hear to experience emotions of pity and of terror. This definition is equally true of Athenian and of

6. Cf. Seneca's Thyestes.
7. Cf. Richard III.
8. F. Shelling, Elizabethan Drama.

Shakespearean drama. There is a real analogy between the legends of these two types of drama because both deal with a limited range of motives. The changes in the fortune of the great, the judgment following the defiance of religious sanctions, vaulting ambition, abuse of power, jealousy prevailing against love, the crimes of one generation leaving a burden of vengeance to the next, filial ingratitude--such universal motives are inherent in the plots. Analogy has been frequently observed between OEdipus and Macbeth, between Orestes and Hamlet, between the sons of OEdipus and the daughters of King Lear. The similarity lies in the universalit of the story. The poets were dealing with the eternal aspects of human nature.

In both ancient and Shakesperean tragedy the place of the supernatural determining the catastrophe is capable of comparison. In Greek mythology the Fates--Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos--were the spinners of the thread of human destiny, and they were provided with shears with which they cut it off when they pleased. They are related to the Norse "Norns" or "Wyrds", the Fates, which Shakespeare used in the persons of the "weird sisters" in Macbeth. The Greek idea of Nemesis, who represented the righteous anger and vengeance of the gods, is modified and Christianized by Shakespeare. No dramas are more specifically tragedies of unhappy destiny than the first

OEdipus and the Trachiniae--the tyrant rushing to conclusions in reliance on his own power of insight which is baffled by hidden powers, the pathetic horror of his discovery, the constancy of Deianira who is guilefully entrapped by false intelligence referring to her lord. The same inscrutable working of divine power is the cause of Macbeth's downfall. Fortune smiles on a man only to carry on the vengance of the gods. The evil-doer must suffer. Slowly we see unfolding before us the embitterment of Clytemnestra, the pathos of Cassandra's fate, the darkness enveloping the house of the Pelopidae; we sympathise with the agony of Agamemnon's children, and follow Orestes in his wanderings; we rejoice when he is again restored by the grace of Athena to return to reign in his father's country.

After the chaos presented on the stage, Shakespeare like the Greek tragedians, brings everything back to order, and truth and right rule again. The speech of Malcolm at the close of Macbeth, and that of Fortinbras at the close of Hamlet, may be cited as examples. It is an optimism which fills the heart with a confidence that after all this is a just world in which virtue is rewarded, evil is punished, and order is eternal.

Shakespeare was acquainted with Greek philosophy through

the great mass of floating traditional lore of Platonic and Pythagorean origin. Traces of this philosophy can be detected in a number of his plays. The Greek idea that music purges the soul is clearly expressed by Lorenzo in the Merchant of Venice (V. i.),

> "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
> Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
> Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
> Become the touches of sweet harmony.
> Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins,
> Such harmony is in immortal souls;
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

This conception can be found in the tenth book of Plato's Republic where a diapason is described as the harmony of the singing sirens who each occupied one of the eight planetary spheres, composed of the sun, the moon, the five planets and the heaven of fixed stars. Upon each of the spheres is a siren, who is borne around with the sphere, uttering a single note; and the eight notes compose a single harmony. But Shakespeare attributes song not to the "spheres" in which the planets were set, not even only to the planets, but to all the myriad stars of the firmament. Pythagoreans spoke of the body as the tomb or prison of the soul and an old Orphic doctrine called the body "the soul's garment". The immortal

soul of each one of us has its counterpart in the octave.

In Troilus and Cressida (I. iii.) a description is given of the Ptolemaic system which was still generally accepted in Shakespeare's time:

> "The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre
> Observe degree, priority and place,
> Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
> Office and custom, in all line of order;
> And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
> In noble eminence enthroned and sphered
> Amidst the other; whose medicinable eye
> Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil,
> And posts, like the commandment of a king,
> Sans check to good and bad; but when the planets
> In evil mixture to disorder wander,
> What plagues and what portents! what mutiny!
> What raging of the sea! shaking of earth!
> .....
> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And, hark, what discord follows! Each thing meets
> In mere oppugnancy."

This idea may have come to Shakespeare from Spenser who was an ardent student of Greek philosophy. In the Faerie Queene there is an allusion similar to this idea of planets wandering from their course:

> "For who so list, into the heavens looke,
> And search the courses of the rowling spheares,
> Shall find that from the point where they first tooke
> Their setting forth in these few thousand yeares
> They all are wandered much."

Some prefer to attribute Shakespeare's idea to Chapman's translation of the second book of the Iliad, where the idea of degree is also prominent:

"Stay, wretch, be still,
And hear thy betters; thou art base, and both in power and skill
Poor and unworthy, without name in council or in war.
We must not all be kings. The rule is most irregular,
Where many rule, One lord, one king, propose to thee; and he,
To whom wise Saturn's son hath given both law and empery
To rule the public, is that king."

A hundred lines before, there is the figure of the bees flocking to their leader,

"As when of frequent bees
Swarm rise out of a hollow rock, repairing the degrees
Of their egression endlessly, with ever rising new.....
They still crowd out so; this flock here, that there, be laboring
The loaded flowers; so from their ships and tents the army's store
Trooped to these princes and the court."

Shakespeare uses this thought in Troilus and Cressida; Ulysses speaks,

"When that the general is not like the hive
To whom the foragers shall all repair,
What honey is expected? Degree being vizarded
The unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask."

The same figure occurs again in All's Well that Ends Well where the dying king expresses his wish:

"Since I nor wax nor honey can bring home,
I quickly were dissolved from my hive,
To give some labourers room."

All these are parallels to the Platonic idea of a well-ordered government. It is probable that Shakespeare had recourse to the Republic which was accessible in Latin for eighty-two years before 1600, and in the French version of Loys Leroy.

The speeches of Gonzalo in the Tempest remind us of the ideal state pictured in More's Utopia, inspired by Plato's Republic.

> "I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
> Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
> Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
> Letters should not be known; rich, poverty,
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
> No occupation; all men idle, all;
> And women too, but innocent and pure;
> No sovereignty;.....
> All things in common nature should produce
> Without sweat or endeavour: treason felony,
> Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
> Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,
> Of it own kind, all foison, all abundance,
> To feed my innocent people."
>
> (The Tempest, II. i.)

Again in Henry VIII (V. v.) Cranmer pictures the ideal government of England under Elizabeth.

Plato's opinions on democracy were familiar to Englishmen through the fragments of Cicero's De Republica quoted by St. Augustine in his De Civitate Dei and to a slight extent through the Aristotelian tradition and the Neoplatonism of the Renaissance, the Latin and French translations of Aristotle's Politics, and J.D.'s English translation of Leroy's French version in 1598. The dangers of democracy had become a political platitude. Those who read English only could have become familiar with Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy through the expositions which J.D. appended to his translation. The psy-

chology developed in the Republic was kept alive by the Timaeus; and, in the Aristotelian Nicomachean Ethics, the idea dominated the schools of the Middle Ages. Numerous translations existed in Shakespeare's time; these included one in French by de Plessis (1553) and an earlier English paraphrase by Wylkinson (1547).

However, it cannot be stated with certainty that Shakespeare derived his material directly from Plato or from Aristotle. Their philosophy was modified by Christian ethics by the time it had reached Shakespeare--the essence of Greek philosophy is present although it has changed its front.

There remains another phase of Greek influence in Shakespeare's plays. His use of direct reference to classical myth displays a wealth of knowledge for which it is difficult to account. The references are so aptly put and show such intimate knowledge of the stories and personages of the myths that one wonders what could have been the source. Possibly he acquired much of this knowledge as a result of extensive reading of contemporary Elizabethan literature, which we know was rich in its display of classical allusion. I am certain, however, that the ordinary Elizabethan was better acquainted with classical mythology than the average Englishman to-day and that Shakespeare in making these references was

merely recalling thoughts of the stories of mythology with which every one was familiar. Because of the similarity between Greek and Roman mythology I have not attempted a study of Shakespeare's references to Greek mythology, as there is no satisfactory method for assigning them to a definite source.

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