

I4

The Soul as a Kingdom

AS THE ACTORS in the down-going stream showed horror at hell's mouth, so those who reached the 'gate of heaven' would naturally exhibit joy. All writers have found it easier to depict crime and horror than well-doing and bliss. Shakespeare is no exception. But quite early in his career (1594) we may sense the 'gate of heaven' in the dying speech of Richard II:

Mount, mount, my soul! thy seat is up on high,
Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die.

These last words of Richard bring us to the second of Shakespeare's elements: the idea of the soul as a kingdom in which the true self should be enthroned. Shortly before Richard rose to what is at least an approach to a realisation of heaven, his long soliloquy tells us that the kingship of his own soul is what he is pathetically struggling to attain. And the implication would seem to be that because he made this attempt, which was right, therefore he achieved the heavenly confirmation at his death. The whole speech merits most careful study as a foreshadowing of Shakespeare's method in later plays, where the inner dramas at which Richard hints are actually staged.

I have been studying how I may compare
 This prison where I live unto the world:
 And for because the world is populous,
 And here is not a creature but myself,
 I cannot do it; yet I'll hammer it out.
 My brain I'll prove the female to my soul;
 My soul the father: and these two beget
 A generation of still-breeding thoughts,
 And these same thoughts people this little world,
 In humours like the people of the world,
 For no thought is contented. ...
 Thus play I in one person many people,
 And none contented: sometimes I am king;
 Then treason makes me wish myself a beggar,
 And so I am: then crushing penury
 Persuades me I was better when a king:
 And I am king'd again ...

Richard, and perhaps Shakespeare also, is feeling his way through a twilight of self-knowledge, in the right direction. It was with similar meditations, we may reasonably suppose, that the Duke of Vienna and Prospero began the study of themselves. But this speech was written about seventeen years before Shakespeare created Prospero; and if he himself practised introspection for so long (the passage is clearly the fruit of some personal experiment), and if he had even half the gift for it that he had for poetry, he must have come to his final plays with a sound knowledge of psychoanalysis. The seed of this idea he may also have found in the old religious drama; for the conflict in the soul was the subject of the Morality Plays, where it is exhibited by the aid of simple, rather crude allegorical figures. Shakespeare's allegory, with its extraordinary

subtlety, owed something to the Moralities, but it is worlds beyond them.

Rulership of the inner kingdom, truth to oneself and sovereignty of spirit are three phases, three dressings of thought, for a single intuition. And this psychological experience, however variously arrayed in words, is one of the habitual discoveries of deep introspection. Shakespearean and Buddhist temptation scenes, without any conscious connection, are measurable by one standard. And Shakespeare's intuition of the inner kingdom, its conflict and its pacification, has similar confirmations of universality. That it should harmonise with the text, 'The kingdom of heaven is within you', is, of course, intended; but that it should have found almost identical expression in the mysticism of China, of which no sixteenth-century European knew anything, shows that it is not an embroidered blossom, but the flower of a living seed. This correspondence is pertinent to Shakespearean ethics; but I will not, now, pursue it further than a brief quotation from *The Secret of the Golden Flower*:

The lower heart moves like a strong, powerful commander who despises the Heavenly Ruler because of his weakness, and has seized for himself the leadership of the affairs of state. But when the primordial castle can be fortified and defended, then it is as if a strong and wise Ruler sat upon the throne. . . . When the Ruler at the centre is thus in order, all those rebellious heroes will present themselves with lances reversed ready to take orders.*

It is important to notice that not only is the imagery

* *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, translated by R. Wilhelm, with commentary by C.G. Jung.

similar, but so also is the nature of the victory: the ‘rebellious heroes’ are not destroyed, but given perfect employment; in the same way, the weapons of the fiends were not annihilated by the Buddha, but transformed; and the Shakespearean ethic, whether applied to the inner world or the outer, is in conformity with this; condemnation and destruction are never presented as the right solution, but always creative mercy, which includes mercy to oneself. An essential part of the regeneration of Leontes, after his full repentance, is:

At the last,
Do as the heavens have done, forget your evil;
With them forgive yourself.

All must be forgiven, because none is without fault:

O! think on that,
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new made.

We uncover, here, a common objective – Shakespearean, Christian, Buddhist, Taoist – *man new made*, first within and then without. And it is because the ideal is the same that the ethic which leads to it is similar.

We now come to the third element: Shakespeare’s allegorical construction. In his soliloquy, Richard finds, or breeds within himself, a fully populated world; and it is the interrelation of these thought-children, their harmonies and discords, which determines the state of his soul. Shakespeare, by means of his dual characters, put these thought-children on the stage, and we see the strife in the hero’s soul enacted before us. The first sentence quoted above from *The Secret of the Golden Flower* could be

the abstract of a tragedy and its resolution, and is not unreminiscent of *The Tempest*, a preliminary usurpation, and a final victory for the rightful ruler.

Once again, the seed-idea of this principle of construction was not of Shakespeare's own conceiving: it was an inheritance from medieval poetry, and in particular from that part of *Le Roman de la Rose* composed by Guillaume de Lorris. I do not know if Shakespeare read French, but he certainly read Chaucer's translation, *The Romaunt of the Rose*, which had its first printing in 1532. In this beautiful flower of the Middle Ages, the lover, in his courtship, encounters a number of people, some helpful and some not, who are in reality moods and qualities of the lady herself. By Bialacoil (*Bel Accueil*), for example, he is greatly assisted:

I sawe come with a gladde chere
 To me a lusty bachelere
 Of good stature and of good hight
 And Bialacoil forsoth he hight
 Sone he was to Curtesy
 And he me graunted ful gladly
 The passage of the vtter hay
 And sayd/sir: howe that ye may
 Passe if your wyl be
 The fresshe Roser for to se ...* 2981-89

Bialacoil is the gracious reception, child of her good manners, who is second nature to the lady; and he is a great help to the lover, allowing him to pass easily through the 'vtter hay', outer hedge, and to glimpse the Rose, which is the symbol of her love. But the lady is not all sugar and spice. Daungere (*Danger*) is a tempestuous mood of rebuff:

* *Chaucer Society Texts*, First Series, LXXXII.

With that anone sterte out Daungere
 Out of the place where he was hydde
 His malyce in his chere was kydde
 Ful great he was and blacke of hewe ... 3130-33

When this monster springs upon him, the lover is put to flight!

I durst no more make there abode
 For the chorle he was so wode
 So ganne he thrette and manace
 And through the haye he dyd me chace
 For feare of him I trymbled and quoke
 So chorlissly his heed he shoke ... 3159-64

And so a whole company of moods and qualities not only affect the lover, represent the lady, and dramatise the courtship, but are also characterised as individuals and carry on a play among themselves. It is a form of psychoanalysis, not in the service of science but of art. Shakespeare had only to carry this method of construction a step further, to mask the allegory completely by replacing symbolic with realistic names, in order to be able to write two plays in one – a surface drama which would appeal to everyone, and an under-drama expressing his deepest thoughts to a circle of the select. From Guillaume de Lorris, probably, he learnt one of the most subtle secrets of his art.

If this kind of construction seems artificial to us, that is only because we have ceased to be familiar with allegory at all. Even a little systematic introspection will prove to anyone that he has within him many ‘selves’, which, or who, when circumstances favour them, will appear, and either take command or strive for it, with astonishing

vitality. It is by no means unnatural to picture the 'I', or centre of self-consciousness, as a king surrounded by a populous and often turbulent court. And until these sub-selves are tried by the test of circumstance, their true power or even their existence may be unknown. Many people have been astonished by their own conduct – either for better or for worse – in an unprecedented situation.

In his commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung writes:

If the unconscious figures are not accorded the dignity of spontaneously effective factors, one becomes the victim of a one-sided belief in the conscious, which finally leads to a state of mental tension. Catastrophies are then bound to occur, because despite all one's consciousness, the dark psychic powers have been overlooked. It is not we who personify them; *they have a personal nature from the very beginning*.*

The importance of the *Roman de la Rose* is partly this: Guillaume de Lorris is the first poet deliberately to clothe the inner population with personality and to present its activities as a drama in the outer world. He had, of course, many imitators – some of whom were extremely dull and clumsy; but Shakespeare bettered his instruction. He produced a fusion of realism and allegory in which there are not only dual characters, but also a dual plot. The fourth act of *The Winter's Tale*, for example, is acceptable at two different levels – objective and subjective – in the same sense that Daungere, in the *Romance of the Rose*, may be taken as either a swarthy villain, leaping from an ambush on the unsuspecting lover, or as the lady's most unpleasant mood. But if we ask, What is the full *significance* of

* *Op. cit.*, p.119.

Daungere, of Ophelia, or of the fourth act of *The Winter's Tale*? – we must then proceed, through an analysis of the realistic and allegorical components separately, to an integration of the two. Poetry and drama of this kind can only be the fruit of much introspection, along the lines of Richard's soliloquy; and the fact that the integration, the union of the inner and the outer, is reminiscent of certain types of mystical experience may not be irrelevant. It also leads to a genuine exploration of the unconscious.

In reviewing Shakespeare's many examples of dual characters, three types seem to be outstanding. First is the beautiful young woman who symbolises Love – Ophelia, Mariana, Desdemona, Hermione, Perdita. Second is the aged counsellor symbolizing Fidelity – Polonius, Escalus, Camillo, Gonzalo. Third is the personified fault in the hero's soul, of which Iago is a clear instance. The resemblance between these and the principle archetypes that Jung has found in the unconscious cannot but give one pause. In Jung's terminology, they are the Anima, the Wise Old Man and the Shadow. According to him, these archetypes exist in us all; they frequently appear in dreams, and always at some point in the course of a full analysis.

The interrelation of the archetypes, as revealed by psychoanalysis, is often suggestive of Shakespeare's methods. When, for instance, the Anima in her fair aspect is repressed, the dark forces of the unconscious present her destructive counterpart (Mariana pleading for life, replaced by Isabella clamouring for death), or by a similar inversion process, the pure sweetheart or wife is conceived and treated as a harlot. In *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology*, Frieda Fordham says of the Anima: 'She is also two-sided

or has two aspects ... on the one hand the pure, the good, the noble, goddess-like figure, on the other the prostitute, the seductress or the witch. It is when a man has repressed his feminine nature, when he under-values feminine qualities or treats women with contempt, that this dark aspect is most likely to present itself.' Shakespeare has staged this in his allegory of the rejection of Love as the cause or pre-requisite of tragedy; and the principle of psychic inversion is one of the most important elements in his technique.

What Jung calls the Shadow is the personification of the dark side of the soul; it is a residue of primitive impulse and barbarous desire which is repressed, because it is incompatible with civilised conduct, but not dissipated. Jung says of the Shadow that it is – 'a moral problem which challenges the whole ego personality'. This phrase also characterises the tempter's voice – the hero's fault in flesh and blood – of Shakespearean tragedy. The temptation scenes are precisely that: a challenge to the 'ego personality'. And the correct reply, as we have seen, is to assert the integrity of the central self: 'I am nothing altered; what I was, I am.'

Shakespeare's use of dual figures is, then, not arbitrary; for it appears to touch the bedrock of psychology. The imagination naturally projects the archetypes on to individuals, creating dual figures unconsciously. Shakespeare does so deliberately; because he has learnt the art, as distinct from the science, of psychoanalysis from medieval poetry. The science of it belongs to the twentieth century; the art was in full flower in the thirteenth. And by this I mean that a psychoanalytical technique was then being used for artistic creation as consciously as a psychiatrist

uses one to-day for the healing of a neurosis; and these two objectives, the creative and the curative, are curiously akin; indeed, in Shakespeare's resolutions of tragedy, they are almost the same. The principles of allegorical construction which stem from the *Roman de la Rose*, Shakespeare applies to the healing of the tragic wound.

It is characteristic of a poet that he should have more easy access to the unconscious than the majority, and the greater the poet, the fuller his exploration is likely to be. This is true of Virgil, who was looked on as a magician in the Middle Ages; and it is true of Dante. Shakespeare's personifications of Love, the allegorical aspect of Dante's Beatrice, and the Anima of psychoanalysis, are certainly akin. However different they appear, they have an archetypal identity. Beatrice, more obviously than Shakespeare's heroines, is dual: she is the girl Dante saw on the bridge, the woman who distracted him in church, and probably an ordinary young Florentine; but when the projection of Dante's Anima is added to her, she is transformed into the guide of his soul, leading him to paradise, of whom he exclaims:

*O, isplendor di viva luce eterna!**

The fusion of the individual and the archetypal, the real and the allegorical, is almost as nearly perfect here as imagination can make it; but it is also wonderfully clear-cut, for Dante is a conscious artist: for him, the real and the allegorical, the incarnate woman and the celestial guide, are two 'beauties', the one within the other; and the 'splendour of living and eternal light', is the second beauty:

* 'O, splendour of eternal, living light!' *Purgatorio* XXXI.

*La seconda bellezza che tu cele.**

This second beauty, hidden within, is, in Shakespeare's heroines, the Love that to reject is tragedy and to follow is redemption. When Hamlet kills Polonius and disavows Ophelia, when Angelo disregards Escalus and spurns Mariana, they are as much lost, allegorically, as Dante would have been had he wandered alone in the world of souls without Virgil or Beatrice. But however much Dante may regard Virgil and Beatrice as objective existences, they correspond to archetypal patterns in his own soul nevertheless; and it is these, projections out of the depths of himself, that are his true psychopomps. A neurotic patient is also a soul that is lost; and the work of the psychiatrist is not to become his guide, but to show him that there is a guiding power in himself. 'Since no outward support is of any use to them,' writes Jung, 'they must finally discover it in themselves – admittedly the most unlikely place from the rational point of view, but an altogether possible one from the point of view of the unconscious.' †

The analogies are so strong that it is reasonable to draw the inference that we are confronted here not by opinions, predilections or poetic invention, but by psychical facts. It is not just a charming notion on Shakespeare's part to assert, in allegory, that the symbol of love must not be cast out, or tragedy will ensue; there is an archetypal reality behind the symbol without which the soul really is lost. Much that has been expressed by the arts, in the centuries when they were the prime activity of genius, is now being confirmed by science in another language.

* 'The second beauty which you now conceal', *Purgatorio*, XXXI.

† *Psychology and Alchemy*, p.28.

Some of Blake's illustrations of the *Purgatorio* make the same statement in terms of visual art. His engraving of Beatrice leading Dante up the rocky path clearly suggests the peril of a soul that refuses the ideal guide. This conception of the path which can be mounted or descended – light above, darkness below and the pilgrim soul between – is wonderfully expressive of the principles of Shakespearean construction. The point is so important that I hope I may be pardoned for repetition: all Shakespeare's protagonists are envisaged by him as wayfarers on a similar steep road, at the bottom of which is the tragic act, chaos and death, while at the summit is creative mercy, cosmos and divine rebirth. The response to the temptations, which are the critical scenes, determine the direction of movement. The accepting of the guidance of Fidelity and Love – variously personified in each play – ensures the correct answer; but when these are rejected, there is always another guide – the ghost, the witches, Iago – personifying the sinister and retrograde contents of the psyche, ready to lead downwards to crime and disintegration. It is a choice between the Anima at her fairest and the Shadow at its worst. But both these guides, in their allegorical and psychoanalytical sense, are within: both of them affirm, as did Iago to Othello, 'I am thine own for ever.' 'If, says Jung, 'the Supreme Value and the Supreme Negation are outside, then the soul is void: its highest and its lowest are missing.' That the soul is never void, is, as we have seen, one of Shakespeare's cardinal principles.