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SHAKESPEARE: THE PLAYS OF PASSION

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by

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ABSTRACT

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Shakespeare's love-passion plays—Troilus and Cressida, Romeo and Juliet, and Antony and Cleopatra—constitute a sub-genre within the tragedies. Each play explores the destruction of the principal characters through an excessive passion which leads to death, suicide, or at least to an irresponsible state of recklessness. Although Shakespeare could have included villains in these plays, they are unusual in that there are no major characters who function as villains—villains are not dramatically necessary because the major characters destroy themselves or are destroyed by fate or circumstance. Within this smaller grouping of love tragedies, Shakespeare presents a wide spectrum of characters in whom the conflict between love and honor remains central: among
the six major characters are the opportunistic, young Cressida, and the "infinitely various," mature Cleopatra (the two extremes of the destructive female) and Juliet representing perhaps the Aristotelian mean; Romeo, Troilus, and Antony are lovers in ascending order of experience; and among the several supporting characters are those in whom the conflict of love and honor is also paramount—Enobarbus, Mercutio, Hector and various others. An examination of these three plays demonstrated how they constitute within Shakespeare's tragedies, a sub-genre, perhaps best named, the love-passion plays.
Shakespeare's love-passion plays—*Troilus and Cressida*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*—constitute a sub-genre within the tragedies. Each play explores the destruction of the principal characters through an excessive passion which leads to death, suicide, or at least to an irresponsible state of recklessness. Although Shakespeare could have included villains in these plays, they are unusual in that there are no major characters who function as villains—villains are not dramatically necessary because the major characters destroy themselves or are destroyed by fate or circumstance. Within this smaller grouping of love tragedies, Shakespeare presents a wide spectrum of characters in whom the conflict between love and honor remains central: among the six major characters are the opportunistic, young Cressida, and the "infinitely various," mature Cleopatra (the two extremes of the destructive female) and Juliet representing perhaps the Aristotelian mean; Romeo, Troilus, and Antony are lovers in ascending order of experience; and among the several supporting characters are those in whom the conflict of love and honor is also paramount—Enobarbus, Mercutio, Hector and various others. An examination of these three plays will show how they may constitute within Shakespeare's tragedies, a sub-genre, perhaps best named, the love-passion plays.

This unique sub-genre may be first illustrated by
Troilus and Cressida. In this play, Troilus, the unfortunate recipient of the pains and sorrows of love, suffers from his overwhelming passion which ultimately leads him to a strange mixture of disillusionment and recklessness. Cressida, on the other hand, escapes relatively unscathed. For Cressida, loving Troilus or any man, is no more than a game—manipulated and controlled by her. Her need to maintain the upper hand in their relationship may be illuminated by the image of Cressida as the hunter and Troilus as the hunted. For example, after their night of lovemaking Cressida declares: "You men will never tarry. / O foolish Cressid, I might have still held off, / And then you would have tarried. . . ." (IV, ii, 17-18). This speech reveals Cressida's usual technique of keeping men on the defensive. Her emotional superficiality nullifies any chance for intimacy, other than physical intimacy. Incapable of loving Troilus, she survives nicely. However, Troilus's love for Cressida is scarcely more noble than her love for him.

Troilus's love is basically physical infatuation: "My will [was] enkindled by mine eyes and ears. . . ." (II, ii, 64). This love, a passion induced wholly by his sight, the sense most liable to err, shows an impaired judgment. Enraptured by Cressida's beauty, Troilus becomes a slave to sensual passion.

Though Troilus indulges in all the conventional be-
behavior of the courtly lover--watching, fasting, pining, writing poetry, and swearing eternal devotion, his love, unlike that of the conventional lover, is not presented as altogether noble or ennobling. The rapture and the poetry are, to a degree, outside casings masking the reality of sensuality and lust. Troilus himself is deluded by courtly love--he does not hypocritically pretend as Cressida does. He believes in the truth of his professions and of those uttered by Cressida.

Nevertheless, in the course of the play, Troilus undergoes a change. He witnesses Cressida's infidelity, marked by her crowning act of treachery: she gives Diomedes, as a pledge of her future surrender to him, the very sleeve with which Troilus had pledged himself to her. Yet the evidence of his own eyes brings about no true enlightenment in Troilus; the change he experiences is not for the better. Significantly, he tries first to deny the truth of what his senses convey to him: "This is, and is not, Cressid" (V, ii, 146). He refuses to accept what his reason tells him is true--that Cressid is false.

Although he eventually accepts the truth of Cressida's infidelity, this acceptance does not lead him rationally to surrender her to his rival as unworthy of continued devotion; it merely stirs him to continue the conventional line of behavior by vowing vengeance on Diomedes. In the final act, Troilus's lust-based passion leads him to
recklessness on the battlefield. As Troilus puts it:
"Fate, hear me what I say:/I reck not though I end my life
to-day" (V, vi, 25-26). It is apparent that his sexual
energies have now been transmuted into energies of war.
Thus Shakespeare strongly suggests that his inability to
see past Cressida's superficiality—to see beyond appear­
ances—will result in his downfall and probable death in
battle.

Since Troilus is the bringer and bearer of his own
doom, a villain is not needed. Villains function as agents
of destruction whose energies are devoted to the ruin of
others. There are no characters in Troilus and Cressida
who play this role. Even the bitter raillery of Thersites
cannot be said to have villainous effects. He acts more as
a commentator who speaks the truth when no one else will.
Moreover, Thersites's nihilistic view of life does not
torment, tease, or prod Troilus to his rash, revengeful
end, whereas the machinations of the evil Iago certainly do
bring Othello to his ruin.

The themes of love and honor mingle throughout the
play and proceed along three lines as the drama unravels.
The patterned game of love in the Troilus and Cressida
story is matched by the diplomatic game of the Greek
generals and by the game of chivalry by which Hector lives.
As the themes grow and become inextricably mixed, love is
shown as false, and honor reveals itself as hollow and
Cressida, wise to the game of love, responds to Troilus in a patterned or ritualistic way. For example, in her grief at parting with Troilus she sheds tears; but when she crosses to the Greek camp and is handed from general to general her responses to each are those of one experienced in the game of love. Her behavior does not seem as quixotic when her philosophy of love is considered. Cressida has known men before and she is not about to be victimized. She has been made to feel subservient in the past and refuses to undergo this again. Thus in her relationship with Troilus she must keep the upper hand, even to the point of cruelty. In the first act, Cressida convicts herself from her own mouth: "Men prize the thing ungained more than it is. . . /Therefore this maxim out of love I teach, /Achievement is command; /Ungained, beseech" (I, ii, 315, 318-319). Unfortunately, Cressida has learned that once she shows a man that she cares for him, she loses her control over him; thus, she conducts her relations with men according to conscious and deceptive stratagems. Her intelligence, imagination and wittiness, hide her cruel and false interior.

Troilus's own shallowness and his lust for Cressida allow him to become attracted to her tantalizing facade. There is nothing romantic about their love. Troilus announces: "I am mad / In Cressid's love. . . " (I, i, 51-52);
however, nothing fresh and idealistic is implied in his words. Troilus wants only to "wallow" in the fields with Cressida (III, ii, 13). This ugly image is compounded by Troilus's statement later in the same scene: "This is the monstruosity in love... that the will is infinite, and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless, and the act a slave to limit" (III, ii, 87-90). Both lovers are solely preoccupied with sexual performance--no tender emotions or words of love are felt or shared by them. It is not surprising, then, that when Cressida deceives Troilus, his sexual lust becomes frustrated into blood lust.

Parallel to the love-plot of Troilus and Cressida is that of Paris and Helen. Like Troilus, Paris is unmanned by love. His physical valor is destroyed by his sensual passion. Pleasure and sensuality have reduced him to the uxorious, doting husband who complacently alleges, "I would fain have armed today, but my Nell would not have it so" (III, ii, 149-150). Thus Paris forsakes his honor for sexual frivolity.

The anarchy and discord, the havoc and corruption which fill the play are the result primarily of the mistaken conception of honor which has led both Greeks and Trojans to undertake and persist in a great, pointless, and costly war. Troilus's shortsightedness and his simplistic code of honor contribute to the general
confusion and misconception about honor in the play. Troilus discloses his code of honor in his argument for the Trojans keeping Helen: "We turn not back the silks upon the merchant/When we have soiled them, nor the remainder viands/We do not throw in unrespective sieve/Because we now are full. . ." (II, ii, 69-72). Troilus's code is one of revenge for revenge and an "eye for an eye." Thus, Troilus's vow of revenge on Diomedes at the conclusion of the play comes under his code of honor. Yet, like his love for Cressida, his honor is superficial—he refuses to go beneath the surface of things. He lacks the perception to see the real triviality of the Trojan War.

As opposed to Troilus, Ulysses possesses an unusually perceptive mind. Like Thersites, Ulysses acts as a chorus giving clear-sighted views of what he sees taking place. Nevertheless, Ulysses has a rather negative outlook regarding love which is exhibited in his immediate and categorical assessment and rejection of Cressida: "Fie, fie upon her!/There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,/Nay her foot speaks, her wanton spirits look out/At every joint and motive of her body" (IV, v, 54-58). He proclaims this the first moment he views Cressida's entrance into the Greek camp. Equally perceptive in affairs of state, Ulysses knows what occurs when order in any society has been disrupted. Unlike Troilus who acts rashly and out of passion without thinking things through, he
is aware that a breach in any particular order of things has disastrous consequences in all other orders.

Hector presents another type of honor— that of false chivalry. He chooses as an issue for combat not the very valid one of ending a long strife, but the artificial, conventional one of fighting to maintain the superior beauty and virtue of one's mistress. The initiation of his duel with Ajax, nothing more than a petty chivalric game, arises from empty honor and false love.

Thersites puts forth an even grimmer estimation of honor and love— for him they are nothing but "wars and lechery" (V, ii, 195). Ultimately, the play leaves the reader holding this as true since all that is base and bestial in man is triumphant. The play ends with total disillusion and utter despair, unredeemed by any single ray of hope or light. The themes of love and honor converge showing Troilus betrayed by Cressida, and Hector vanquished by Achilles. Troilus goes into battle to die because of his disgust at the world, but a part of his disgust lives on in Pandarus who bequeathes his diseases to the sickened audience. Thus, Shakespeare chooses not to redeem any of his characters in this bitter play of love-passion.

In *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare displays two lovers who are destroyed by their love-passion as a result of adverse forces working from without. They are identified
as "star-crossed" lovers from the outset of the play, and their love is referred to as "death-marked" (I, i, 9). They are so because they are members of feuding families. The first scene sets the atmosphere of the violent strife to come by juxtaposing the quarreling servants of the feuding families.

As the play progresses the lovers meet and fall deeply into love. Juliet, changed by her instantaneous attraction to Romeo, reveals a maturity beyond her years. After the dance, while questioning her nurse, Juliet proclaims: "If he is married, / My grave is like to be my wedding bed" (I, v, 136-137). At this point, Juliet loves more strongly and more deeply than Romeo since she will die if she does not get him. She is the child no more the child. Lifted into full womanhood by her love, Juliet knows she is a match for Romeo--mentally, physically, and spiritually. She looks ahead and weighs her feelings for Romeo, judging him perfect for her. Thus the likelihood of a totally intimate and loving relationship between the two lovers is introduced in the first act. Unlike the purely sexual attraction between Troilus and Cressida, the love of Romeo and Juliet represents completeness on every possible level.

Their love does reach fruition, primarily as the result of Juliet taking control of the situation. Shakespeare carefully parallels Juliet's realism with Romeo's idealism. Romeo truly adores Juliet, yet it is her clear thinking
which causes her to correctly identify their relationship as "too rash, too unadvised, and too sudden" (II, ii, 118). Nevertheless, overwhelmed by their love-passion, Juliet suggests marriage and Romeo agrees.

As the events of the play snowball into confusion and eradicate any possibility of the lovers revealing their love and marriage, Juliet makes her decision to feign death—without Romeo's knowledge. Throughout the play Juliet repeatedly asserts that without Romeo she would not wish to live. Faced with the threat of marriage to Paris, she soliloquizes: "I'll to the friar to know his remedy./If all else fail, myself have power to die" (III, v, 243-244). Love and death are inextricably mixed in this play and the numerous references to death foreshadow the tragic outcome of the play.

Romeo, too, would freely sacrifice his life for his beloved Juliet. Chance has it that Romeo remains unaware that Juliet is only feigning death. He buys a dram of poison and with all the passion of his heart kisses Juliet one last kiss before his death. Juliet awakes, sees her dead lover, and stabs herself with his dagger. Their passionate intensity and love for each other force them both to choose suicide as their only viable alternative to a life which would otherwise be loveless without each other.

The words of the Prince at the end of the play serve to ennoble the lovers: "For never was a story of more woe/
Than this of Juliet and Romeo" (V, iii, 309-310). Not only is the conclusion of Romeo and Juliet more aesthetically pleasing than that of Troilus and Cressida, but the lofty love of the tragedy stands in marked contrast to the bitterness of the dark comedy.

As in Troilus and Cressida, there are no real villains in Romeo and Juliet. Because the play relies so heavily on circumstances determining the fate of the lovers, the need for villains is removed. Certainly the Friar, concerned as he is with the reconciliation of the feuding families, cannot be considered evil. Likewise, the nurse and her involvement in the concealment of the lovers is not villainous. Although both characters influence the resolution of the play by hiding the fact of the lovers' secret marriage, neither of them consciously or unconsciously wish the lovers to die. The final disastrous destiny of the lovers is expedited by a combination of their love-passion with the coincidences and consequences of the developing plot.

In this second play of love-passion the conflict between love and honor remains highly significant. Codes of honor range from those which are influenced by the forces of convention through those which rely on personal or chivalric codes. The points of view of the characters on love vary from the extreme of the Nurse's earthy practicality to the Friar's stolid, upright, conventional ideas
on love and marriage. These claims, codes, and comradesely conventions of Verona conflict with the imperious demands of love which require Romeo to no longer participate in a feud that would make him ready to fight against Juliet's kinsmen at the slightest affront to his honor. Romeo and Juliet are trapped amidst the opposition of these two forces.

Romeo, possessed of honor and imagination, becomes set apart from his companions by his capacity and his readiness to be fired by a high passion. This is the case in Romeo's love for Juliet; however, Romeo is first seen suffering from love melancholy over Rosaline. This first love infatuation, an example of courtly love, finds Romeo in love with the notion of being in love. Like Cressida (but without the underlying insidiousness) Rosaline observes the rules of courtly love by holding Romeo off. Like Troilus's love for Cressida, Romeo's love for Rosaline is superficial and has no depth of feeling—it is a love of appearances.

Mercutio chides Romeo for being full of love melancholy. He makes fun of Romeo by undercutting love's pretence. Mercutio also debunks courtly love as an elaborate rationalizing of sexual appetite. His jokes satisfy both sexual and aggressive impulses. In addition, his jokes allow Shakespeare to bring attention to Mercutio's ingenious mind and sharp tongue. For example, Mercutio's advice to the lovesick Romeo is: "If love be rough with
you, be rough with love;/Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down" (I, iv, 27-29). Thus Mercutio's witty, verbal bawdiness lets him pull down to earth the emotions that others put up as ideal or important.

There is another side to Mercutio—he is capable of light-hearted flights of fantasy, as illustrated by his Queen Mab speech. He lives on verbal wit and is endowed with all the elements of a poet. His verbal bawdiness contrasts with this fairy talk. Mercutio is constantly sensible, interesting, and imaginative. Even when slain by Tybalt he maintains his wit and jests at his own wound: "No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve" (III, i, 97-98).

Mercutio recognizes the trivial reasons for which men will fight, but his code of honor forces him to observe its conventions. Accordingly, when Romeo refuses Tybalt's challenge to duel, Mercutio accepts the challenge in order to save Romeo's honor. The dueling code dictated that a public insult had to be answered to save face and to prove bravery. Consequently, when Tybalt slays Mercutio, Romeo is obligated to avenge a dear friend who died defending his honor.

In this poignant scene, Romeo is doomed no matter what he does. If he fails to act he will be considered a coward; however, he realizes the dreadful consequences of killing Tybalt. The Elizabethan concept of love unmanning the male
is also present in this scene. Romeo declares: "O sweet Juliet,/Thy beauty hath made me effeminate/And in my temper soft'ned valor's steel" (III, i, 115-117). Pulled from both ends, Romeo is forced to act according to the conventional code of revenge. After the act of vengeance has been completed, Romeo's pitiful outcry resounds: "O, I am Fortune's Fool" (III, i, 138). He has been befooled by luck and convention and feels that he has been doomed by destiny.

Unlike Romeo's strict adherence to convention, Juliet's behavior is anti-conventional since she refuses to accede to the authority of her parents. Her parents represent the forces of convention directed toward arranging a marriage of convenience for Juliet with Paris. Juliet firmly upholds her love for Romeo and shows not the least concern for Paris. She knows what she desires and refuses to accept anything less. Even when it meant feigning an interest in Paris for her parents, Juliet stood her ground. Her unusual strength of character is commensurate to her strength and capacity for loving Romeo.

To Romeo and Juliet, love is an enlightenment of the human condition perfectly fulfilling all needs of flesh and spirit. Contrary to the purely lustful involvement of Troilus with Cressida, Romeo and Juliet are lovers of a sublime order. For instance, the partings of the two pairs of lovers after their respective nights of lovemaking may
be placed side by side. Romeo and Juliet, the young, pure, and idealistic lovers, reluctantly part while sharing the language of love; whereas Troilus and Cressida's curt remarks to one another and their discussion of sexual appetite and performance illustrate a perverted and sullied love.

In addition, the part played by honor in the two plays may be compared. In both plays, codes of honor yield terrible results. In the case of Romeo, the conventions of chivalric honor force him to seek revenge for Mercutio's death. However, if Romeo had felt that another alternative existed, he would never have murdered Tybalt. Troilus's code of honor, like Romeo's, dictates revenge; however, Troilus has an additional motivation for vengeance. Deceived by Cressida, his love shrivels and becomes metamorphosed into blood lust. Troilus's allegiance to codes of honor is due to individual hurt, whereas Romeo acts from a sense of loss of a close friend as well as from a code of honor. This combination in the case of Romeo gives the audience and Romeo a sense that his life is dictated by fate.

Antony and Cleopatra, the final play dealing with the topic of love-passion, reveals a love which has an aura of animal vitality; but, as opposed to Troilus and Cressida, it is based more on an affinity of temperaments than on a lust for physical sex. Each lover provides the
other an ideal audience. They egg each other on to "outrageous" performances. And the final test of their love is a willingness to give up everything else for it.

Nevertheless, the love-passion of the lovers is flawed. Philo, Antony's friend, pinpoints the flaw which will result in the lovers' death as an outgrowth of their love-passion: "Nay, but this dotage of our general's/0'erflows the measure" (I, i, 1-2). This dotage of Antony's, his excessive foolish fondness for Cleopatra, will eventually bring them both to their doom. Antony is unmanned by his love for Cleopatra, just as Troilus was by his love. His knowledge of his effeminacy in his love relationship does not alter his choice of actions. Similarly, he recognizes his foolish, excessive love for Cleopatra: "These strong Egyptian fetters I must break/Or lose myself in dotage" (I, ii, 129-130). Yet this recognition does not influence his decisions of state. He refuses to play his role as Triumvir--thus, the affairs of state fall apart. Antony knows that he has been deflected from his duty: his dotage has made him lose touch with reality.

In his relationship with Cleopatra, Antony should dominate but he does not--he is too enchanted by her "infinite variety" (II, ii, 287). Thus, like Cressida, Cleopatra holds the upper hand in their affair. Shakespeare clearly illustrates her dominant role in the image of Antony as a caught fish: "My bended hook shall pierce/
Their slimy jaws; and as I draw them up,/I'll think them every one an Antony,/And say, 'Ah, ha! y'are caught!'" (II, v, 15-18).

Equal to Antony in wit and intelligence, Cleopatra never ceases to surprise him. She plays with and manipulates Antony as Cressida did with Troilus, and shares with Cressida a deep sense of her own staginess. At times Cleopatra is sadistic and cruel in her love: she seems incapable of the tenderness of a Juliet toward her Romeo. This exotic Queen of Egypt is capable of ranging from meanness to foolishness in a moment. Although Cleopatra never loses control, she often stops just short of catastrophe.

All judgment is against the royal pleasure these elderly lovers would reserve for themselves. They have not the excuse of youth, they defy the decrees of religion and morality, they act absurdly in terms of self-interest, and they are too worldly-wise to fall victim to idealism as Romeo and Juliet do. Thus, their love has a strange kind of purity, it is a thing in itself, and yet until the end it is as entangled in the frustrations of life as Antony is in the strong coils of the serpent of the Nile.

Antony and Cleopatra, the last Shakespearian play in which the theme of love and death is employed as an integral part of the dramatic situation, relates to Romeo and Juliet, the earlier tragedy in which the images of love and death predominate. The death images which foretell
and attend the lovers' deaths are significantly related to Shakespeare's portrayal of passion culminating in death. Imagery of death accompanies Antony's tragic passion and decline, demonstrating with forceful irony the strengthening of his attachment to Cleopatra and the weakening of his judgment in the command of practical affairs.

However, death personified does not seem merely Antony's opponent as he is Romeo's, but the symbol of Antony's emotional subjugation to Cleopatra and the image of his own destruction in the toils of passion. As the drama moves toward its climactic conclusion, the omnipresent theme of love-death becomes more pronounced. Cleopatra, afraid of what Antony may do to her in his anger feigns death in order to win his sympathy and love once again. Deceived by her falsehood, Antony commits suicide. He lives just long enough to assure the audience that he thinks Cleopatra is worth the sacrifice. But, far from asking her to share his fate, he spends his dying moments advising her on the future and leaving an image of his own valor to comfort her. This lifting up of Antony furnishes a splendid visual image of the strength love has to convert a dying weakness into a living transcendence of the mortal predicament.

Partially because of her grief over Antony and partially because of the humiliations Caesar has in store for her if she lives, Cleopatra chooses suicide. It is
not an agonizing choice since it provides an opportunity to make an exit befitting her royal occupation—she offers herself to death with triumphant abandon (unlike Juliet who, almost dumb with grief, knows only that she must dispatch herself before the noise of the outside world arrives to intrude on her private sorrow). Nevertheless, Cleopatra's death is proof of her earlier devotion. The nobler "fire and air" (V, ii, 346) to which she dreams that she is resolved, gleam for a fitfull instant in her cry "Husband, I come" (V, ii, 344). Cleopatra's lines do not express the pang of unsatisfied appetite or of frustrated longing in Troilus and Cressida—her thoughts linger over the delicious memory of a fulfillment that is maternal as well as sexual. Furthermore, the injurious gods cannot cheat Cleopatra as the stars cheated Juliet, because she has known years of love and revelry with Antony.

Like the two other love-passion plays, Antony and Cleopatra has no villains. Not even the opportunist, Octavius, can be labeled a villain. Calculating politics have drained off his passions, and in his political efficiency he rejects everything personal, whether it is the reeling camaraderie of Pompey's banquet, or Antony's challenge to individual combat. Shakespeare portrays the most cold-blooded Roman of them all in Octavius. Nevertheless, Octavius does not lead Antony to his destruction, as for example the wicked and evil schoolmaster Squeers
does Smike in Dickens' novel *Nicholas Nickleby*. Villains are unnecessary in *Antony and Cleopatra* since Antony is devastated by his excessive passion which results in his dotage.

The characters and events of this final drama of love-passion are motivated by, and dependent on, the underlying discord between the themes of love and honor. A man of powerful will, Antony, remains manipulated by both Caesar and Cleopatra. For Antony, Caesar represents the affairs of state, which call upon Antony's honor and reason, while his excessive, foolish, fond love is fed by Cleopatra. Antony is very fortunate: he is superbly endowed to be beloved by women and to be a leader of men. For a long moment--most of the play--he is precariously able to straddle both worlds, that of honor and that of love, but from the very beginning the odds are hopelessly against him--as Philo perceives in the opening lines of the play. Antony fights valiantly to convince himself that he can be a noble Roman and the "fan to cool a gypsy's lust" (I, i, 9-10). But he is unsuccessful. Between them, Cleopatra and Caesar tear him apart. Thus, Antony suffers more from his love-passion than Cleopatra does.

Caesar's code of honor involves a keen sense of the importance of decorum, of a proper public show of things. His coldness of character reveals a man who does not love or feel deeply. For him, honor means being a shrewd
warrior and politician. His lack of love is exemplified in his response to his sister's return from Antony. He displays no brotherly affection for Octavia when he furiously exclaims "But you are come/A market-maid to Rome..." (III, vi, 61-62). More concerned with dignity than personal feelings, he is enraged because she returns not as a Queen but as an ordinary plebian. Furthermore, he is angry with Antony for violating their agreement. 

War for Caesar remains an instrument of high policy. For Antony, war is a vehicle for valor. Wars are fought to demonstrate the prowess of the generals. The political power which victory includes comes only incidentally, a by-product of chivalry. Once imposed on Antony, war's prime use is to add luster to his name and to allow him to lavish fitting rewards upon his friends.

Caesar's power, on the other hand, is basically the outcome of a calculating, cold nature. By creating such opposite characters, Shakespeare gives expression to a vital political truth—that loving and ruling are two activities which require totally different qualities of personality. What is beneficial in the lover is most likely a liability in the politician. Thus, the codes of love and honor are shown to be directly opposed.

Enobarbus, the level-headed and intelligent companion to Antony, presents the most reasonable view of love and honor in the play. As the voice of reason, Enobarbus sees
and describes the conflict between love and honor which eventually causes Antony's failure and doom. The astute Enobarbus states that Antony's will outdoes his reason; that is, his love-passion is stronger than his reason. This imbalance causes Antony's flight after Cleopatra in the midst of his battle by sea. Antony, though torn by his own keen sense of honor, chooses to forsake honor and reason and to chase after Cleopatra and the sensual pleasures of love.

Enobarbus deeply loves Antony as a companion and as a leader. However, after witnessing Antony's repeated mistakes and failures resulting from his dotage, Enobarbus himself must choose between love and reason. His reason tells him he must desert Antony. Thus, his old allegiance and affection are gone when he declares: "When valor preys on reason/It eats the sword it fights with. I will seek/Some way to leave him" (III, xiii, 240-241). Nevertheless the audience does not hold Enobarbus in contempt for his desertion because he is following the example which Antony set by fleeing after Cleopatra before the issue of the battle had been resolved. The audience next finds Enobarbus brokenhearted by Antony's generosity, Enobarbus says that he will "seek some ditch wherein to die," (V, ii, 438-441) and he dies of a broken heart. His love for Antony thus stays pure and unperverted; he remains the honest and noble Enobarbus.
As a fitting conclusion to this play of strife and passion, Octavius Caesar's last speech serves to ennoble the lovers. In words similar to those which provide the noble ending of Romeo and Juliet, Caesar says, "High events as these/Strike those that make them; and their story is/No less in pity than his glory which/Brought them to be lamented" (V, ii, 438-441). This final mournful tribute to the lovers from Caesar reinforces the audience's conviction that something noble existed in the love-passion of Antony and Cleopatra. Unlike the unpalatable ending of Troilus and Cressida where a hope for a better future remains doubtful, the final ennoblement of Antony and Cleopatra pays a last respect to the glitter, luxury, and high style which dies with them.

In these three love-passion plays, Shakespeare presents an array of types and an array of variations on the theme of love and honor. The characters he depicts are complex and dynamic individuals. Among the females, the expression of love-passion ranges from the manipulative, shallow, and "false" love of Cressida; to the ostentatious, emotional, and debilitating love of Cleopatra; with the pure, young, strong, and tender love of Juliet between these two extremes. Among the males, love-passion is characterized by the short-sighted, superficial, purely sensual, and lecherous love of a Troilus; the excessive "dotage" of an Antony; and the sincere, idealistic, and
enraptured love of Romeo. In all the plays, excessive passion brings the players to their doom, thus precluding the need for villains in the plays. Shakespeare, maintaining a firm control of his art throughout the plays, clearly illustrates how the love-passion results in disaster for those involved. Troilus's sexual lust becomes transmuted into blood lust and recklessness by Cressida's deception; Romeo and Juliet are "star-crossed" and ill-fated lovers whose love-passion for one another is at odds with fate; and Antony's foolish fondness for Cleopatra makes him lose touch with reality and thus lose all. These love-passion plays with all their similarities and dissimilarities deal with couples wed and unwed--struggling under the demands of love. Similarly, in these plays the love leads to suicide or recklessness; villains are dramatically uncalled for; and the conflict between love and honor remains significant in the plays. Consequently, the view that these dramas constitute a sub-genre which we may title "love-passion plays" is justified.
A Selected Bibliography


