

THE OCCULT IN SHAKESPEARE

ROMEO AND JULIET



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THE LAW OF POLARITY

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MAIN

The occult significance of **Romeo and Juliet** is less obvious than that of a number of Shakespeare's other plays. It is confined to principle rather than to phenomena. In a play like **The Midsummer Night's Dream**, wherein the entire action has to do with the world of the fairies, we have both. In the **Tempest** also, the supernatural element is predominant, and in both **Hamlet** and **Macbeth** occult phenomena enter prominently into the main plots, the ghost in the one and the witches in the other being prime movers in their respective dramas.

While such supernatural phenomena are largely absent in **Romeo and Juliet**, it will, nevertheless, be found upon examination to be as profoundly occult as any other of the poet's dramas, and to reveal no less consistently the operation of divine law in its manifestation in human affairs.

In each of Shakespeare's plays attention is focused on some one fundamental principle or aspect of the Universal Law. In **Romeo and Juliet** the underlying esoteric theme is the Law of Polarity.

Polarity, as defined in physics, consists of "that quality or condition in virtue of which a body ex-

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hibits opposite, or contrasted properties or powers in opposite, or contrasted parts or directions." Occultly defined, polarity is that aspect of cosmic law by which all things are centered in the positive pole of Divine Love. Such polarization establishes perfect harmony and equilibrium. Man was thus polarized originally. He lived obedient to divine law, knowing neither discord nor death. Later, when he violated that law, he shattered the one perfect polarity into lesser polarities which manifest on the physical plane as the law of opposites, and under the play of which he henceforth experiences confusion and tragedy. The nature of the operation of the law as it works itself out in human life, is the material out of which is fashioned the drama of **Romeo and Juliet**.

A Play of Contrasts

True to its basic pattern, **Romeo and Juliet** proceeds by vivid contrasts. It opens with a street brawl; it closes with a scene of reconciliation. Servants begin the trouble; masters bring it to an end. The first scene is ludicrous; the last is sublime. Hate sounds the opening keynote; love strikes the final chord. Between the blasting blare of the one and the lyric melody of the other, there emerges a symphony of love and hate perhaps unequalled in all literature.

The Prologue states the plot of the play briefly and reveals the duality upon which it is built.

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,

Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
The fearful passage of their death-marked love,
Which, but their children's end, nought could
remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to
mend.

Note the pairs of opposites catalogued in these few opening lines. Two households are in opposition. An ancient grudge breaks into present mutiny. Civil blood makes civil hands unclean. From two foes spring a pair of star-crossed lovers. Love increases life, but in this instance it brings death. Contrariwise, it was death that brought reconciliation to the rival houses. Also, true to its numerical design, this story of duality is unfolded in the course of the "two hour's traffic" of the stage.

In considering the purely technical treatment of the subject, observe that this play of contrasts literally opens with the words, "Two households," and concludes with the names of the two characters, Romeo and Juliet, in whom are embodied the dominant duality of the drama. Two characters, Sampson and Gregory, open the play. These are encountered presently by two others, Abraham and Balthasar. The first couple are servants of the house of Capulet; the second couple serve the

Montagues. Thus, we have the two couples meeting in opposition and setting the play of contraries into motion. The street brawl begins.

Another pair enters upon the scene, Benvolio and Tybalt. Between these two is opposition, Benvolio being a Montague and Tybalt a Capulet. Benvolio exhorts the rioters to peace. This he does by drawing his own sword. Tybalt, his enemy, accuses him of thereby adding to the tumult rather than allaying it, and charges him in effect with an opposition between his action and professed motive, and exposes the common fallacy that peace may be established by instruments of war. Tybalt asks contemptuously:

What, drawn, and talk of peace! I hate the
word.

As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.

They clash. During the melee, Capulet and Lady Capulet come on the scene excitedly, followed a moment later by Montague and Lady Montague. Thus we have two more couples, each of masculine and feminine polarities, meeting in feudal opposition. Yet another pairing occurs between the masters and their servants. Finally, there comes on the scene yet another dual representation, namely the Prince, the embodiment of the civic soul, and attendants, the citizenry of the community. Thus, in accordance with the basic pattern of the play, one duality and opposition follows another endlessly throughout the entire play.

The Major Polarity

So far we have touched only the outermost as-

pects of the play. We come now to the deeper and the more powerful polarities that find expression in the life and circumstances of the two title characters, Romeo and Juliet. In these two characters the mutual attraction of soul for soul is irresistible. Yet the mutual hatred of their respective houses is implacable. Love and hate become the polarity that enter upon open battle. It is a bitter struggle in which hate exacts a heavy toll. Romeo and Juliet, foiled by the hatreds of their respective houses to consummate their marriage, seek and find union in death. In the feudal strife, others, too, meet death, but in the end the forces of hate expend themselves, and love triumphs. The rival houses, humbled and repentant, bury their age-old enmity and clasp hands in lasting amity.

When we first meet Romeo, he is in a melancholic mood. His father, Montague, is distressed over his "black and portentous humor." Romeo is in love, doting on one Rosaline "whom love for love doth not allow." His ardent intatuation is opposed by a complete indifference. Says Benvolio:

Alas, that love, so gentle in his view,

Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!
Benvolio's statement of these opposing aspects of love is followed by another of like nature by Romeo, who adds:

Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still,

Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!

But "what fray was here?" asks Romeo. Then instantly answering his own question, he adds:

Love & Hate

Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.
Here's much to do with hate, but more with
love.

In these words Romeo states the great pair of opposites on which rests the tragedy, and out of which spring the numerous minor opposites that collectively make up the drama.

Since polarity is the basic theme of the play, it is to be expected that its definite announcement by Romeo should be amplified to such an extent that none could miss it. So it is. Romeo follows his simple statement with a whole catalogue of opposites, voicing them in the most graphic and extravagant terms:

Why then, O brawling love! O loving hate!
O anything, of nothing create!
O heavy lightness! Serious vanity!
Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming form!
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick
health!

Still waking sleep, that is not what it is!
This love I feel, that feel no love in this.

Romeo is in love, and yet dejected; a contradiction possible only on the lower levels of sense, for were Romeo completely polarized in the all embracing divine love, his humor would be light and joyful. His hours were lengthened with sadness, "not having that which makes them short." In other words, he was centered in the things of the time world instead of the realities of the timeless sphere of the spirit.

Absorbed to the point of detachment from all

practical concerns, Romeo is an enigma to himself and others. He is so self-involved in his own feelings, so steeped in mere emotion, that he is not himself. Again, a contradiction. He readily admits that he is "some other where." The higher control being absent, the emotional body was expressing itself in exuberant gladness on the one hand and in despairing gloom on the other. His will was passion's slave, not its master. Truly then, he, his own real self, the ego, the higher will, wherein equilibrium always exists, was virtually absent; he was "some other where."

The Capulets give a ball. Romeo is in no mood to go, "for", says he,

I have a soul of lead
So stakes me to the ground I cannot move.

The soul's rightful sphere is in the upper air, but man, earth-bent in his desires, has staked it to the ground.

Romeo, whose soul knows that the oppositional forces warring in his nature must result in some sort of calamity, voices his conviction in no uncertain terms. Says he:

My mind misgives
Some consequence yet hanging in the stars
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels and expire the term
Of a despised life closed in my breast
By some vile forfeit of untimely death.
But He, that hath the steerage of my course,
Direct my sail!

What Romeo's prophetic soul sensed, came true.

Little did he suspect the particular incident that would mark the fatal hour. How could he have thought there lived for him a Juliet when he was all sighs for Rosaline. But such are the confusions of the heart of humanity, wrought by a disobedience to the perfect law of love wherein every relationship is held secure in eternal concord.

At the ball, Romeo first encounters Tybalt, to whom the mere sight of a Montague is as a spark to dynamite. Tybalt challenges Romeo to a duel, but the incident stops short of violence at the prompt and firm intervention of Capulet. From this flare of hate, Romeo turns to behold the blazing light of love. Again, extravagant opposites, which multiply as the action progresses. The hate of Tybalt is contrasted with the love of Juliet, and Romeo's sentimental attraction for Rosaline gives way to a soul affection for Juliet. An intuition of the blood yields to a recognition of a bond of the spirit, or in the words of the play:

Old desire doth in his death-bed lie,
And young affection gapes to be his heir.

The love scene that follows between Romeo and Juliet is contrasted at the outset by an outburst of hatred between Tybalt and the host, his uncle Capulet. Tybalt announces that Romeo must go. Capulet insists with equal decisiveness that Romeo shall stay. Tybalt is unyielding. Capulet exclaims defiantly:

You must contrary me!

To which Tybalt yields unwillingly, and on leaving bitterly informs Capulet that

Patience perforce with wilful choler meeting
Makes my flesh tremble in their different
greeting.

I will withdraw: but this intrusion shall
Now seeming sweet convert to bitter gall.

Again, the language of opposites.

After the explosive ejaculations of hatred and resentment uttered by Tybalt and Capulet, there follows the music of love and recognition which comes from Romeo and Juliet. The moment their eyes met, their souls knew unity. So completely did they become absorbed in each other that it was not until after parting that it occurred to either of them to inquire who was who. As Juliet later contemplates this extraordinary fact, she thinks of it in the end as being not over-strange. After all, asks she, "What's in a name?" Subconsciously, if not consciously, Juliet knew that the name belonged to the transient personality only, and not to the permanent individuality within. She recognized it as belonging to but one of many masks that the eternal spirit within has used from time to time as it played its parts in successive embodiments. Be that mask, therefore, what it may, be its name this or that, she is content to know that the spirit which she has again encountered and recognized and which she now meets under the name of Romeo and a Montague, would by any other name mean to her no less. She meets a hated name but a beloved soul.

As Romeo and Juliet awaken to their plight as this is now conditioned by family feuds, they realize the beginnings of the tragic fate which they had

both sensed previously in moments of psychic intimations. "O dear account!" exclaims Romeo, "my life is my foe's debt." Juliet sighs:

My only love, sprung from my only hate,
To early seen unknown, and known too late!
Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
That I must love a loathed enemy.

Being members of rival houses, they are forbidden under penalty of death to even so much as see each other. But as

Love is a spirit, all compact of fire
Not gross to sink, but light, and will aspire,
they found the means, "tempering extremities with extreme sweet." So despite the darkness of the night and the reputed blindness of love, Romeo found his Juliet. He "o'erleaped the walls" leading to Juliet's balcony, and as he did so, he heard the teasing taunts of his friends Mercutio and Benvolio, who likened him to the love-bewitched King Cophetua, whose love for a beggar maid stands as another classic instance of inward unities over-riding outward differences.

Juliet appears above at the window.

But soft! What light through yonder window
breaks?

It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief,


That thou her maid art far more fair than she.
In astrology the sun represents the spirit, the moon, the form. The two form a polarity. Romeo sees

*Jul ^{loves}
love kills hate*

Juliet as the sun and bids her, the spirit, to arise and kill the envious moon, the personality, that masks that spirit, so that he might view it the more clearly. He would have her cast off the vestal livery of the moon so that the spirit might shine in all its undimmed glory.

Through the lunar garment, the physical form, Juliet's radiant spirit looks out through its double windows of the soul. Her eyes discourse; they are alight with the fires of the inner spirit.

Her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so
bright
That birds would sing and think it were not
night.

It is the spirit within, "the winged messenger from heaven," the eternal identity, that Romeo recognizes in Juliet and that Juliet in turn loves in Romeo. (Here exists the bond that no contrary forms may sever) (The opposites on the lower plane resolve into unity on the higher) Though the "orchard walls be high and hard to climb," yet "with love's light wings" did Romeo "o'erperch those walls, for stony limits cannot hold love out." Barriers that divide are levelled before the operation of the unifying law of love. 

Juliet, no less than Romeo, voices the duality of human nature, differentiating between the abiding essence within and its passing manifestation without, when she declares to Romeo that

'T is but thy name, that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.

What's a Montague?

O, be some other name!
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title! Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

We have already alluded to the changing personality which alters with each earth embodiment, and to the fact that it is governed astrologically by the moon. When, therefore, Romeo is about to swear his true love by the moon, Juliet stays him sharply:

O swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.

(As we look upon the sublime beauty of the Balcony Scene and listen to its magic melody, we are awed by a sense of the transcendent in the mundane, the permanent in the transient, the light of knowing shining out from ignorance, the harmony that lies behind discords, the unities that embrace differences, and the love that dissolves all hate.) The lesser polarities are resolved into one that is more embracing. When we shall have climbed spirit-ward to higher levels, every opposite will be swallowed up into the one perfect unity that is God.

In this scene, Romeo and Juliet appear to be struggling to penetrate the mists of matter and to see their essential selves more clearly. This spirit-yearning constitutes the overtone that permeates the scene as a whole. In their effort to transcend the world of mere sense, they rise for moments to

exalted levels and catch at least a fleeting glimpse of its divine perfection. It makes all else seem unreal. Says Romeo:

I am afeared,

Being in night, all this is but a dream

Too flattering sweet to be substantial.

From the point of view of the spirit, this earth life is as Romeo now thinks of it, a mere dream. It is "only an appearance," as Kant puts it, "a sensuous image of the pure spiritual life, a picture swimming before our present knowing faculty like a dream, and having no reality in itself." It is the polarity of spirit and matter.

Thus, to summarize, we observe in the Balcony Scene the action between two separated, oppositely-sexed forms that recognize each other as one in spirit. We observe, also, two members of houses, long divided by hate, united by love. This is the process of unification by which lesser polarities that now bring chaos are swallowed up in the one great polarity of divine love wherein is joy and fullness of life.

The Emotional Pendulum

The interplay between the higher spiritual awareness and that of the lower personal consciousness finds expression at each critical juncture of the lovers' experience. In the light of the higher consciousness they know all to be well on the spiritual level, just as by the testimony of their lesser consciousness they know all to be ill in the more limited sphere of personal experience. (There is constancy in the one, variability in the other.) Hear Juliet:

I have no joy in this contract tonight;
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden;
Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
Ere one can say, 'It lightens.'

On this plane of opposites the emotions rise and fall like the tides of the sea. (There is periodic alternation of joy and gloom, hope and despair, love and hate.) (Listen, for instance, to Juliet's extravagant praise of Romeo, followed suddenly by blame, no less vehement.) In one breath she tells us how

when he shall die,
Take him out and cut him out in little stars
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.

Then, in almost the next breath, the same intensity of emotion finds expression at the opposite pole of detraction. Her very tirade, appropriately enough, is couched in the language of opposites. It follows upon learning that Romeo slew Tybalt, her kinsman. She then exclaims:

O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face!
Did ever dragon keep so fair a cave?
Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!
Dove-feathered raven! wolvish-ravering lamb!
Despised substance of divinest show!
Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st,
A damned saint, an honourable villain!
O nature, what hadst thou to do in hell,
When thou didst bower the spirit of a fiend
In mortal paradise of such sweet flesh?
Was ever book containing such vile matter

So fairly bound? O, that deceit should dwell
In such a gorgeous palace!

Thus, page after page, scene after scene, Shakespeare goes on amplifying the play of opposites, the central theme of the drama.

This law of opposites is also emphatically set forth by Capulet who, caught like others in the maelstrom of passions, has suffered under its violent sway. Recall but the rage in which he cursed and disowned his once so much-loved daughter; then later, in a moment of restored calm toward the end of the play, his reflective words:

All things that we ordained festival,
Turn from their office to black funeral;
Our instruments to melancholy bells,
Our wedding cheer to a sad burial feast,
Our solemn hymns to sullen dirges change,
Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corse,
And all things change them to the contrary.

(In the comedy relief, even puns run to contraries.)
Peter calls to the musicians:

'Heart's ease:' O, an you will have me live,
play 'Heart's ease.'

First Mus. Why 'Heart's ease'?

Peter, Because my heart itself plays 'My heart is
full of woe; O play me some merry dump, to
comfort me.

They will not play. So Peter himself turns minstrel.
He sings:

When griping grief the heart doth wound,
And doleful dumps the mind oppress,

Then music with her silver sound'—

Why 'silver sound'? Why 'music with her silver sound?'

First Mus. Marry sir, because silver has a sweet sound.

Second Mus. I say 'silver sound,' because musicians sound for silver.

Peter. What say you, James Sound-post?

Third Mus. Faith, I know not what to say.

Peter. I will say for you. It is 'music with her silver sound,' because musicians have no gold for sounding.

Peter then concludes the song with a line which tells how music "with speedy help doth lend redress" to one who has fallen into the dumps of melancholy.

Thus, throughout the play we meet an unending series of shuttling, alternating opposites such as are common to all humanity in its present unregenerate stage of development. These conditions pertaining to the spiritual life of the race have their external counterpart in nature wherein we experience the alternating cycles of night and day, summer and winter, the ebb and flow of the tides.

The intensity of the departure from the neutral point between the pair of opposites is compensated for or equalled on the other side of the neutral point. As Emerson points out in his **Essay on Compensation**, every excess causes a defect, every defect an excess. Solomon speaks to the same effect when he declares that "a false balance is an abomination to the Lord."

The wise Greeks knew that there was no way whatsoever of evading the automatic compensation

in nature by which every kind of emotional joy was balanced sooner or later by a corresponding emotional pain; hence their ideal of temperance in all things. "Nothing too much" was a slogan they lived by. They recognized the folly of extremes and the virtue of the middle path. They counselled as did Solomon when he admonished that we "be not righteous overmuch," or again, as the King in **Hamlet** puts it:

For goodness, growing to a pleurisy,
Dies in his own too much.

The Player King in **Hamlet** also makes exact definition of the law that secures balance by cancelling one extreme with another of opposite nature.

The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures doth themselves destroy:
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.

The subject is of such importance that at the risk of over-quoting, we append a poem entitled, **The Play of Opposites.**

All that belongs to the Lower Self
Is built of Clay
And the fingers of a Wish
Can change its Form
And make of Beauty—
With a single stroke—
A thing repellent.

With Power so Great
Within a slender Thot,
How can we boast of Strength

When the Gossamer touch
Of a changing Mood
Can wreck It?
Good may be swept to Evil
By a sudden wish
And Love itself may turn to Hare
By the breath of a jealous Whisper.

In the hands of Desire
Peace may be changed to War,
The Generous Mood
Give way to greed,
And calm Dispassion
Yield to Lust.

All Opposites are One,
And ever will remain
Until the Higher Self
Takes full possession.
For under his dominion
There is No Desire
Nor plastic Clay
To work with.

The figure of plastic clay, subject to the changing mood, applies perfectly to Capulet's description of Juliet whose excessive emotions, following her father's furious execrations on the occasion of her rejection of Paris, aroused his parental fury. Capulet calls her little body

a bark, a sea, a wind;
For still thy eyes, which I may call the sea,
Do ebb and flow with tears; the bark thy body
is,
Sailing in this salt flood; the winds, the sighs;

Two such opposed kings encamp them still
In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will;
And where the worser is predominant,
Full soon the canker death eats up that plant.

Good and evil, vice and virtue, right and wrong as we know them, represent relative conditions, not absolute realities. "Beyond good and evil" is not an idle phrase; it is the goal of our endeavors. That which helps today, hinders tomorrow. Says the Friar:

The earth that's nature's mother, is also her tomb;

What is her burying grave, that is her womb.

The tranquility of the Friar's cell is interrupted by Romeo's entrance, whose emotions rise to new excesses; they run into a virtual tempest. Juliet's grief over his banishment being inconsolable, he begs the Friar to marry them that very day. He stands on "sudden haste." "Wisely and slow," counsels the Friar; "they stumble that run fast."

*he hasn't been
yet, finished*

The Penalty of Excess

The pace quickens. Juliet impatiently awaits the outcome of Romeo's visit to the Friar. Says she:

Love's heralds should be thoughts
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's
beams.

She answers the summons to meet Romeo at Friar Lawrence's cell where the marriage ceremony is to be arranged. This completed, Romeo is satisfied and resigned:

Come what sorrow can,
It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
That one short minute gives me in her sight:
It is enough I may but call her mine.

To this reckless, emotional abandon the Friar counsels with the calm declaration that

These violent delights have violent ends
And in their triumph die, like fire and powder
Which, as they kiss, consume:
Therefore love moderately; long love doth so:
Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow.

Romeo lacks this control. He rushes off to church **NO!**
where the marriage is to be performed. Enroute he
meets Tybalt, his enemy. In a fiery-eyed fury Tybalt
challenges Romeo to a duel. Romeo rejects it.
Mercutio takes it up in his stead and is slain. Thus
did he

aspire the clouds
Which too untimely here did scorn the earth.

Romeo, having lost his friend Mercutio, whose soul he says is "but a little way above their heads," awaiting Tybalt to keep him company, turns on his enemy and sends him thither also.

Following the death of Tybalt, the Capulets cry for revenge. They demand the law, eye for eye, life for life. By the mercy of the Prince, Romeo is sentenced to banishment, not death. At this he becomes frantic. The Friar tries to tame his tempestuous passion and offers him "adversity's sweet milk, philosophy." "Hang up philosophy," cries Romeo, (throwing himself on the ground like a mad man) and

weeping until drunk with his own tears. The nurse observes that Juliet is in the very same condition—"even so lies she."

Romeo asks the Friar:

In what vile part of this anatomy
Doth my name lodge? tell me, that I may sack
The hateful mansion.

The Friar reprimands him severely.

Hold thy desperate hand:
Art thou a man? thy form cries out thou art:
Thy tears are womanish; thy wild acts denote
The unreasonable fury of a beast:
Unseemly woman in a seeming man!
Or ill-beseeming beast in seeming both!
Thou has amazed me; by my holy order,
I thought thy disposition better tempered.
Why rail'st thou on thy birth, the heaven, and
earth?
Since birth, and heaven, and earth, all three
do meet
In thee at once.

Juliet escapes marrying Paris by feigning death through taking a sleeping potion. When Romeo returns, thinking her dead, he takes his own life. Juliet awakens and on finding Romeo lifeless beside her, joins him by making a "dateless bargain with engrossing death."

The turbulence subsides; the storms of passion pass; the Montagues and the Capulets meet, this time in a common sorrow, to look upon the sacrifices of their enmity. The Prince, too, is present. He speaks:

See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
That heaven finds means to kill your joys with
love,

And I for winking at your discords too,
Have lost a brace of kinsmen:
All are punished.

When Romeo came upon the street brawl at the opening of the tragedy he observed that there was "much to do with hate, but more with love." In that utterance he spoke for himself, his community, and all the world. Love is the eternal reality; hate is a temporary negative condition. In the end it must yield to love, the greater power of the two.

It is from a violation of the law of love that man suffers. The polarity by which he is centered in divine love has been broken; the equilibrium has been destroyed. One of the two columns at the Temple door is partly shattered, as masonic symbolism represents it. Love has been subverted to separative ends; lesser polarities have been established. As opposites they set up antagonisms in the form of love and hate, joy and despair, health and disease, life and death. Only when these opposites are dissolved by a re-polarization in God, will the play of the opposites cease and at-one-ment be re-established with the divine order.

This restoration is sometimes represented symbolically by the figure of the Egyptian goddess Isis, standing between two pillars, emblematic of the fact that true wisdom and understanding are attainable only at a point between the polar opposites, the two thieves of apparent contradiction between which the perfect order is still crucified.²

This crucifixion is, in the words of the Prince, heaven's way of killing our joys (personal joys) with love (divine love) in order that we may be resurrected through suffering, from the lesser personal joys to the greater realization of our divine selfhood. The pain of conflicting opposites will then yield to the joy of an all-embracing unity.

Karma

The law of opposites with which **Romeo and Juliet** is primarily concerned, must necessarily be closely linked to karma, since it is by the action of that law that every disturbance in nature is restored to equilibrium. This being so, it, too, finds emphatic expression in the play from first to last. Take for instance Romeo's statement:

This day's black fate on more days doth
depend,

This but begins the woe, others must end.

Romeo realized that present events are the effects of past causes, and that similarly, present events are causes which set forces into motion that will find fulfillment in days to come.

It is difficult to discern the causes that lead up to present events, since these, for the most part, antedate present memory. This truth is voiced by one of the watchmen when coming upon the tragic scene in the churchyard where Romeo and Paris lie dead beside the seemingly lifeless form of Juliet:

We see the ground whereon these woes do lie;
But the true ground of all these piteous woes
We cannot without circumstance descry.

Just so. We see the ground of effects, not the ground of causes. To see and understand the causes, the true ground of which the poet speaks, we need more circumstance — that is, more detail, added knowledge.

In Thornton Wilder's story, **The Bridge of San Luis Rey**, the philosophically minded monk, Fra Juniper, believed that if he had all the facts, he would be able to determine just why certain individuals had lost their lives when a bridge they were crossing collapsed. "If there were any plan in the universe at all," thought he, "if there were any pattern in human life, surely it could be discovered mysteriously latent in those lives so suddenly cut off." Thus thinking, he set out to gather all available facts, but this done, he was no wiser than before; his material remained incomplete; he had not been able to uncover the facts pertaining to the "true ground," the realm of causes, that extend back into previous lives. Consequently, the answer sought was not within his reach. His premise was correct, but his capacity for investigation was inadequate.

We reap as we sow, but that sowing extends over many lives. Our character becomes our destiny. We generate forces, good and bad, all of which expend themselves according to their nature. Whatsoever we release into the atmosphere cannot be recalled, but its reaction may be modified by subsequently generated forces of a counteracting nature.

In **Romeo and Juliet** we witness the outworking of ripe destiny; hence the atmosphere of fatality

which pervades the play from first to last. In the words of Romeo there is, "a serious consequence hanging in the stars" awaiting manifestation; this is first voiced in the Prologue and repeated later again and again, until the events foreshadowed find fulfillment.

In the Prologue we are introduced to Romeo and Juliet as springing "from forth the fatal loins" of two dear foes; they are a "pair of star-crossed lovers," and their love is "death marked." Together they were writ in "sour misfortune's book," and Juliet, reconciling herself to destiny's decree, concludes that "what must be shall be." At the close of the tragedy the Friar remarks philosophically that "a greater power than we can contradict hath thwarted our intents." In other words, the forces of destruction, set into motion by the victims of the tragedy, had grown to a momentum where none could stay their devastating sweep.

All were punished — punished by "heaven," that is, by the law. That law is also love, the universal love that is ever striving to counteract man's disobedience to the law and to emancipate him from his bondage to desire, the lower reflection of the will.

There is also a collective karma generated by families, communities, and nations. Individuals share in this to the degree of their responsibility in its causation. In the case of Romeo and Juliet, both were at the very heart of a whirlpool of forces that involved both their households and the community at large. Note how effectively the dramatist has brought out the collective aspect of the karma that

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centered chiefly in the two title characters. Neither Romeo nor Juliet were present in either the opening or the closing scenes, whereas the Prince, the embodiment of the civic soul, is a dominant figure in the street brawl that opens the play, and appears again among the mourners and the reconciled enemies at the close of the drama.

Critics' Opinions

Among dramatic critics it is not considered heresy to dismiss the opening and closing scenes of **Romeo and Juliet**, not only as unimportant, but even irrelevant. Stage productions generally omit the final scene, and often the opening scene also. This is in itself a striking commentary on the blindness of the age to the wider import of the drama. Both the opening and the closing scenes are essential to an adequate and rounded development of the theme. The one introduces causes while the other reveals their ultimate effects.

By way of illustration we quote from a New York review in which the critic states that the play was rather too slow in getting under way. But, says he, "part of the fault may be ascribed to Shakespeare, who got well into **Romeo and Juliet** before he touched on the essential problem of the drama."³ Did he? The essential problem of the play revolves around the operation of the law of polarity and its closely associated law, karma, and these are dealt with in the very first words of the Prologue and are further shown in their logical outworkings from that point on to the very last line of the play. To dismiss the opening scene as mere preliminary padding

is to confess to an unawareness of the fundamental theme of the drama.

As an example of critical comment on the closing scene, we quote from an English critic's review of a London production, in which this scene was omitted. Says the writer: "Little unnecessary violence is done to the text save the conclusion, and that matter may be left to pedantry. The story, after all, is of Juliet and her Romeo. People who think that the reconciliation of Montague and Capulet matters, are suffering from an insane desire for edification."⁴

Well, then, so be it; the reconciliation of the two rival houses matters everything. To close the play with the churchyard scene, as is customary, is to end it with frustration and death. Such is not the true end; nor does Shakespeare leave it thus unfinished. He carries it to its heartening conclusion wherein is shown the sublime truth that we attain to peace and joy only when we shall have resolved the warring opposites into unity.

The heavens will cease to "lour upon us" when we cease "to cross their high will." When we shall have healed the polarity that has been broken into the many conflicting contraries and let our personal desires become prisoners of the Divine Will, then will come reconciliation between the opposites even as this is presented in the concluding scene of the play. Such tragedies as that of Romeo and Juliet, the story of all mankind—and "never was one of more woe"—will then be no more; there will be "no more pain, nor death, for the former things shall have passed away."

We have cited examples of critics who would

remove scenes from the play that are necessary to its adequate exposition of the spiritual law of sowing and reaping. There are also critics who would improve the play by eliminating elements in it that are essential to the portrayal of the workings of the law of polarity. Macaulay seems to have missed the poet's purpose of employing contraries to the extent that he did in **Romeo and Juliet**, since it was his opinion that the play contains the best and the worst of Shakespeare in the closest juxtaposition. It is of more than passing interest to observe that this very criticism of Macaulay's brings out an opposition such as is fundamental to the play and its basic theme. Had this been recognized for its full value, those portions that Macaulay dismissed as the poet's worst would no doubt have been judged in many cases, if not in all, as being among his best, since they serve so perfectly to illustrate the principle on which the drama is built.

Agreeing with Macaulay's dictum on the subject, a London reviewer commented that, regretfully, "there are lurid clouds of smoke rolling before the pure spiritual flame." This same critic cites instances of vivid contrasts as examples of the dramatist's weakness, but which as already observed, constitutes the very essence of the principle unfolded. "At the end, indeed," concludes the reviewer, "when Romeo is told of Juliet's death, the flame shines out with a clear and terrible light, and through two earlier scenes upon the balcony, and again in the parting of the lovers to the lark's song at dawn, there is nothing but that supreme power which makes poetry the life of life itself.

But these are among so many 'excellent conceits,' so much tortuous striving after effect, so much trying to do better than well, that you cavil, ill at ease." Following this, the writer concludes that this is the "final invincible reason why no one has ever seen the ideal Juliet. The dream Juliet," he adds, "the Juliet who is forever in the world's memory as the love of women, 'all wonder and a wild desire' is the Juliet of that music of 'summer's ripening breath' upon the balcony, the Juliet who sang the song of night, who sighed and clung at dawn. But the Juliet of the play has to be 'excellently conceited' over Tybalt's death and elaborate the most flesh-creeping eloquence about 'loathsome smells' and forefathers joints, 'and some great kinsman's bone,' when she thinks of living burial. We shall never see the ideal Juliet, because Shakespeare forbade."

The reason we shall never have the ideal Juliet is not because Shakespeare forbade; it is because Juliet herself forbids; it is because she, as a representative of humanity, has not yet attained to the perfect ideal. It is because we live in just such a condition of opposites as those portrayed by Juliet. Shakespeare was holding the mirror up to nature and letting us see ourselves as we are. He let us look upon the pure flame of the spirit and also upon the lurid clouds that arise from the emotional nature and obscure the clear view. This it is that makes up life's tragedy. When the turbulent storms of the emotional nature shall have been stilled, when personal inclination shall have come into perfect alignment with the Divine Will, then will the spirit

appear in its true celestial radiance. Then we shall have the ideal Juliet, and not before; then we shall have the "woman clothed with the sun" of the spirit, and the moon of the personality under her feet.

The Drama's Zodiacal Setting

Our destiny is written in the stars, and so were Romeo's and Juliet's. Not that the stars were the authors of their fate; like the clock, they are recorders, not creators. We learn that the two lovers were "star-crossed." The heavens are referred to repeatedly as being in correspondence with that which was being enacted in their lives. Romeo knew for instance, that he was "writ in sour misfortune's book," and that there was a "serious consequence yet hanging in the stars," awaiting manifestation in his life. He speaks of the "inauspicious stars" under which he must battle. When he concludes that they were definitely against his dearest design, he exclaims in desperation: "Then I defy you stars."

Juliet, a "betossed soul," is well aware of the stellar squares and oppositions operating in her life and has need of many orisons to move the heavens which are "cross and full of sin" so that they may smile upon her.

Is there no pity in the clouds
That sees the bottom of my grief?
Alack, alack, that heaven should practice
stratagems
Upon so soft a subject as myself.

In that "unkind hour, guilty of so lamentable a chance," as that which concludes the play, the Friar bids all to "bear this work of heaven with patience."

Attention has already been called to the sun and moon polarity, symbolically alluded to in relation to life and form, spirit and matter, as these are encountered by Romeo and Juliet in the Balcony Scene. The "all cheering" sun is related to the eternal spirit, as the "inconstant moon" correlates to the variable personality. The sun and moon symbolize the alternating cycles of light and darkness, life and death, youth and age, joy and sadness; they also symbolize the imperfect blending of the masculine and feminine principles and the resultant discordant conditions under which humanity is at present learning its earth-plane lessons.

From the Friar, the spiritual exponent of the play, comes an admirable statement, clear and concise, virtually defining the whole philosophy of astrology. It is addressed to Romeo, when in a frantic mood the distracted lover rails against his fate. Says the Friar:

Why rail'st thou on thy birth, the heaven, and
earth?

Since birth, and heaven, and earth all three
do meet

In thee at once.

This statement would serve as an admirable superscription over every birth horoscope. It indicates its scope and nature, for is not the natal chart the diagrammatic presentation of how birth, and heaven, and earth, all three meet in one? They are

*NO how suited to
writer's mind is for understanding
Rem-ideas - to believe them*

all of a piece; on this unity rests the science of astrology, for man is an epitome of the universe, the microcosm of the macrocosm. This truth is clearly stated in scientific terms by John Hazelrigg in the following words:

"Division is but a relative term, not an absolute fact; it is through a comprehension of the law of unity that we accept the truth of a universal interaction between the parts of the whole. This law is comprehended on the physical plane in the Newtonian theory of attraction and gravitation, which demonstrates that 'every particle of matter in the universe attracts every other particle of matter, with a force directly proportional to its quantity of matter, and decreasing as the square of the distance increases.' In other words, there is a sympathetic cosmic energy operating throughout all nature, which acts in direct ratio upon the several parts commensurately with their attracting forces."

"By virtue of their organic structure the planetary orbs are mighty batteries or magnetic centres by solar induction, throughout which spiritual energies seek external manifestation. They represent principles which co-exist throughout all forms of material expression. ⁶

So then why rail at fate? Why rail at birth, and heaven and earth? If these seem unkind, we have but to look to ourselves for the causes. As Shakespeare puts it in **All's Well**,

The remedies oft in ourselves do lie
Which we ascribe to heaven.
The fated sky gives us free scope

*March
occult
physical
Cosmic
energy
etc.*



Only doth backward pull our slow designs
When we ourselves are dull.

The heavens are within, and in the present moment, both the past and future meet. Our destiny is determined, not by arbitrary powers extraneous to ourselves, nor fated by accidental turns and times; it is a product of our own creative will.



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Romeo and Juliet comes under the zodiacal sign Gemini, the Twins. The Twins represent the eternal individuality and the transient personality. They are two centres of consciousness in and through which Deity is manifestating in a differentiated form. In this duality the spirit experiences for a season separateness and all the conflict and pain that arises from such division. There is for a time the pull of opposites, a condition continuing until the lesser or personal consciousness shall have become completely sublimated and attuned to the greater or individual spirit consciousness. The twain, having then completed the cycle of division, will return to unity.

Romeo and Juliet are the Castor and Pollux of Gemini. According to mythology Pollux was the son of Zeus, or spirit; Castor the child of Tyndareus, or of nature. It is the clash of the will of the Divine Spirit and the desires of the personal nature that leads to the discords and conflicts which culminate in tragedies like that of Romeo and Juliet.

Exaggeration is a characteristic of Gemini. We have it in Romeo and Juliet. So too, does the play exhibit this dual manifestation of Gemini which on the physical plane is contraction and expansion and on the mental-emotional plane, joy and sorrow. It is the play of the alternating opposites.



Since it is the destiny of the lesser polarities now manifesting under Gemini to ultimately be resolved in the one polarity wherein all things are centered in the single Divine Reality, that part of the twelve-fold Lord's Prayer which is addressed to this sign, is the one petitioning for unity of divine love and human purpose: "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."⁷ It is to this end that the Prince enjoins his citizens: "Move no more" the heavens that now lour upon us "by crossing their high will."

Occultism in Basic Structure

This does not exhaust the esotericism of **Romeo and Juliet**. There is much, for instance, about dreams and premonitions, indicating a clear knowledge of their nature in relation to our higher vehicles and the soul's activities on the inner planes during sleep and between earth lives. The nature and activity of the spirit on entering the psychic worlds at death is also correctly stated in so far as it is touched upon. The Queen Mab speech of Mercutio familiarizes us more fully with the life of the fairies. Herbalism is dilated upon by the Friar in terms of the true science that it is, and the magical arts involving the utilization of nature's subtler forces is casually referred to in several passages. Whenever the magical or supernatural is introduced, it is not by way of mere diversion, but for the purpose of properly unfolding the fundamental theme of the play.

As stated at the outset, **Romeo and Juliet** is deeply occult. It depicts the tragedy of separate-

ness; it is a poetic version of the biblical episode of Cain and Abel. It is an esoteric treatment of the one becoming two. It is a story of the children of the "sorrowful star," the earth, with emphasis placed on humanity's passage through the phase of duality.

The characters, Romeo and Juliet, voice the longing of the human soul for completeness; they portray humanity's struggle to surmount separateness and to regain unity; they represent all mankind in its efforts to regain the spiritual vision which it possessed before taking on the veils of dividing forms.

The play opens with conflict and confusion; it closes with reconciliation and unity. Romeo and Juliet become one in death; their households reach unity in life. Lesser polarities are swallowed up in the greater. Such is humanity's path from present division and discord to future unity and equilibrium.

Oh Brother!

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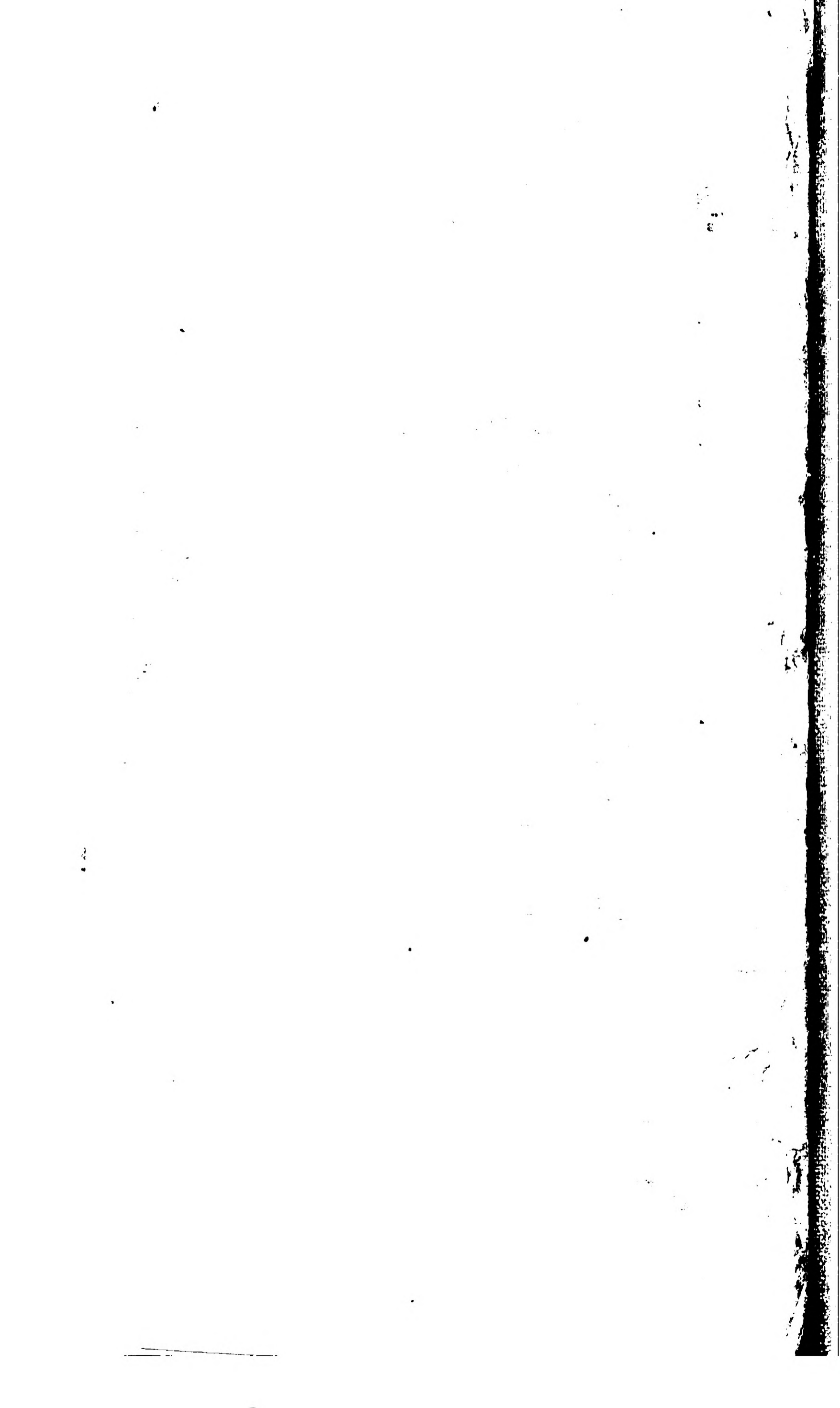
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