VISION AND REALITY: SHAKESPEARE'S METHOD IN FOUR COMEDIES

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ABSTRACT

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By

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Reading the text or watching the performance of Shakespeare's comedy, we sometimes feel our responses to be divided by two distinct impulses--to participate and to stand aloof. To draw a brief example, we rejoice at the union of the lovers at the end of As You Like It, and willingly let our imagination go free to join the marriage dance which is taking place on the stage. But our critical awareness, which demands proportion and balance of the whole, cannot be completely hushed, nor is it meant to be put to silence. Such an awareness tends to cut us off from spontaneous enjoyment and make us ponder whether the play's vision of human happiness is established upon any sense of confidence which can resist life's contradiction. And a good comedy has to somehow satisfy such a question by its own inner intensity of thought and tightly knit intellectual coherency. In short, comedy is meant to present the ideal, but at the same time it is required to satisfy the expectations as a drama which deals with reality more or

less starkly. One impulse tries to concentrate on the particular moment in time, particular group of people, and particular sense of unity. But the other impulse is always there to stretch meaning, to widen the perspective, and to include the broader range of experience in its grip.

Shakespeare's early comedies, which see their consummation in As You Like It and Twelfth Night, tell us most eloquently how the dramatist who is capable of responding to such mutually opposing tendencies with tender flexibility can produce a rewarding work of art. The critics have tried for a long time to define the essence of his comedies, but in many cases their conclusion has been to return to the most obvious virtue--that Shakespeare's comedy presents the most harmonious vision of ideal human relationship and society. "Happy" is the key word, however trite and worn out by long use the term may appear. At the bottom of every comedy from The Comedy of Errors to Twelfth Night lies the instinct for the ideal, or to put it in a less elevated way, our fondness of day-dreaming, childish castle-building and wish-fulfilling fantasy. But this also means that the play exposes the most vulnerable part of ourselves to the ridicule and cynicism of our more sceptical parts, which are waiting to greet it. To see the vision of human happiness in its most self-sufficient moment is a solemn experience, but it can too easily degrade itself to the worst kind of

self-indulgent act. It requires an unusually acute sense of balance and normative sensitivity to distinguish the one sharply from the other, and it is a talent that can rarely be found even among the best of the comic writers, because it is a matter not only of technique, but of belief and its strength, the belief that, as one modern comic writer says, comedy is not an escape from truth, but from despair.

This thesis, therefore, tries to explain how Shakespeare's art, which is constantly supplied with a knowledge of reality and organized by a qualitative relationship among different parts of the play, is seen in the process of working successively in A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Merchant of Venice, As You Like It and Twelfth Night. The plays are discussed chronologically, and as a consequence there will emerge some kind of development in the dramatist's awareness of reality which takes its final and most profound form in Twelfth Night.

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INTRODUCTION

"What does it mean to Shakespeare's characters to belong to nature?" asks Professor Geoffrey Bush in his Shakespeare and the Natural Condition (1956), and the question seems to be of vital importance regarding Shakespeare's comedy. The word "nature" has numerous implications, but two chief connotations are implicit--"the nature of things and natural things themselves."

> There are the two ways in which nature is defined in The French Academy: "When they speake generallie of nature, they make two principall kindes: the one spirituall, intelligible and the unchangeable beginning of motion and rest, or rather the vertue, efficient, and preserving cause of all things: the other, sensible, mutable, and subject to generation and corruption, respecting all things that have life, and shall have end."[1]

Thus, when the word "nature" occurs in Shakespeare's plays, it can mean an ideal human condition or men's spiritual independence from their environment on one hand, and men's corporal limitations in the world governed by the law of

[1] Geoffrey Bush, Shakespeare and the Natural Condition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 4.

mutability on the other. It is because of this double-edged recognition of men's basic condition that the word "nature" functions with infinite richness in Shakespeare's plays. His comedies written before 1600-1601 are not exceptions. Nature in comedy is sometimes an indication of the presence of universal order and unity beyond the perception of the individuals, and sometimes a power which instinctively controls the issue toward human happiness. To depict the working of such a law or power among men is the main staff of Shakespeare's comedy. And if the dramatist is loath to suspend the duty of judgement, and tries to maintain a proportion by being consistent to the other half of the implication of the word "nature," the only possible way is through implicit judgement and indirect statement. Shakespeare's comedy is not merely the product of the dramatist's amused tolerance for human folly. It also involves judgement and choice in the same sense that Shakespeare's tragedies and history plays do: only the angle has changed.

Shakespeare's comedy is called "romantic." There is still much argument and discussion as to the validity of that particular title, but it at least does justice to Shakespeare's comedy's most obvious concern--the romantic ideal of love and marriage. The natural condition for men first of all presupposes that one lives in a close relationship with others by forming a society motivated

by mutual trust and love, and the marriage relationship is the most perfect expression of such a society. In Shakespeare's comedy, love is chiefly described as an ennobling emotion which finally leads to social unity. But in an implicit manner which does not jar with the play's purpose, there is a constant suggestion of the other aspect of love --an irrational, disturbing element in life, which often leads one to destruction and violence. From this angle, love is viewed as the by-product of men's confinement in the mutable world, which is constantly changing, fading and finally vanishing into the vacuum. Thus the romantic ideal of love is counterbalanced by the more realistic notion of love which questions the sublimity of the legend of love.

Another major connotation of the natural condition for men is one's relationship to time. In Shakespeare's comedy, to borrow Miss Helen Gardner's phrase, time is felt only as "a space in which to work things out."[2] It is an upward movement which finally sees the goal in the fulfillment of love in marriage. Comic Fortune is always benevolent to those that are free and open, but it punishes the arrogant and the obstinate who refuse to admit that they are somewhere "writ down an ass." But the

[2]Helen Gardner, "As You Like It," from John Garrett, ed., More Talking of Shakespeare (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1959), pp. 17-32, rpt. in Kenneth Muir, ed., Shakespeare: The Comedies, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 69.

dramatist deliberately inserts the passages or characters that provide a different notion or perspective of time which enlarges our vision and urges us to face the quite objective concept of time whose account is available almost everywhere in Shakespeare's sonnets: time as a destroyer, a downward movement which, after passing several stages, concludes in death and oblivion. In fact, the process of growing and decaying is the selfsame phenomenon. Also time is unpredictable, and the future can take what form it pleases, often contrary to men's calculation.

The important thing is, as emphasized throughout the following chapters, that these realistic elements do not undercut the romance of the play. As Professor C. L. Barber observes, love becomes independent of illusions by exposing itself to the impurities of life, and "To emphasize by humor the limitations of the experience has become a way of asserting its reality."[3] Likewise, presentation of the image of time as a destroyer does not reduce the benevolent working of time in the play. Instead, it contributes to the total experience, giving the sense of immediacy and preciousness to the moment of brief enjoyment--"How that a life was but a flower. . . . And therefore take the present time" (A.Y.L. V.iii. 29-33),

[3] C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 236.

or "What is love? 'Tis not hereafter,/Present mirth hath present laughter,/What's to come is still unsure" (Tw.N. II.iii. 48-50). The discovery of the unique quality of each moment is refreshing, because it is only by living those moments that we can realize ourselves and our own potential productivity. The comedy is meant to present the image of human happiness, and therefore it is granted that it concerns itself mainly with the aspect of nature as a guiding principle, an ideal condition and source of order and harmony. But in order to secure its place among life's contradictions, the play raises the question which makes us face the other aspect of nature and less pleasant facts about life.

CHAPTER I

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Before beginning the discussion of A Midsummer Night's Dream, it is necessary to make a brief preliminary remark on the particular problem which haunts the mind of the critic whenever he tries to talk about the play in an analytical manner. That is the "airy" quality of our play. A Midsummer Night's Dream is the most fantastical of all Shakespeare's comedies. The play shows us a tribe of fairies in the wood of Athens, and it urges us to believe that certain herb contains magical power to alter a lover's faith, and that a man is transformed into an ass by magic. Today, the fairies belong to the feeble memory of the folklore and the children's picture book. Trying to imagine their physical outlook, we can only think of an adolescent figure with an angelic face and a pair of silken wings on his back. This picture of the fairies is certainly far different from what the Elizabethans conceived them to be,[1] but it is this perverted view of the fairies that helped to create the operatic rendering of the play during

the Restoration and in the eighteenth century. Thousands of artificial stars were manufactured to adorn the painted sky, the mist crept on the wet, grassy ground, and the fairies of the same description flew to and fro hitched by the invisible steel wire. The audience willingly submitted themselves to this pageantry of high fantasy, and enjoyed the secret sensation of regaining their childhood innocence.

This way of enjoying the play is legitimate. But the problem is that the audience are too ready to suspend their sense of disbelief, sitting back in their chairs indulging themselves in nostalgic reverie. Some people still believe that the best audience are children, who are free from all sorts of prejudices and prepared to absorb everything without judging it hastily. But this is a fallacy. Children are not capable of responding to the recurrent pattern of ideas or subtly organized intellectual statement which constitutes no small part of the total dramatic experience. Especially in case of such a master playwright as Shakespeare, we miss everything if we fail to recognize such implicit judgements.

Nevertheless, even in the recent criticism of A Midsummer Night's Dream, we can find what might be called general antipathy against trampling dreamland with the muddy boots of critical inquisitiveness. The play has been admired for the dramatist's skill in combining apparently alien materials into a unified piece of drama, or because

of its poetry invoking the beauty of the native woodland wild. The final product is marked with the sense of finality and exquisite perfection. Some critics are reluctant to dismember the living body, relishing the sweetness of particular lines such as Oberon's "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows," or caressing the smoothness of the genius's technique in dramatic construction. As a result, to borrow Professor J. R. Brown's phrase, they "take refuge in the platitudes of praise, making large claims which define little and explain nothing."[2]

The present inquiry into this play aims at isolating and describing some aspects of the dramatist's concern with the vital issues of all times--the nature of love and the proper function of imagination in the course of human activity. The attempt may involve looking at certain emphasis of details with disenchanted eyes. This must be done, not to satisfy one's prying habit, but to substantiate our original response to the play's particular charm. The instinctive appreciation of the "airy" quality of the play does not contradict the analytical approach to it. Critical method only serves for the purpose of increasing our pleasure in attending the performance or reading the text.

The central theme of A Midsummer Night's Dream is love, as in most of Shakespeare's comedies. The first thing that should be noticed in this regard is the absence

of a fully developed, mature female figure around whom the discussion of love takes place. There is no Rosalind and Viola in the play. Instead, we have two pairs of lovers whose characters are only superficially sketched. Helena is not far from the conventional image of a forsaken girl, pale and forlorn. Hermia is shorter than Helena, and as seen in her willingness to tear her opponent's face with her fingernails, still retains the shrewishness of her childhood when she was a "vixen." As for Lysander and Demetrius, they are almost interchangeable.

It is easy to explain this by pointing at the dramatist's incompetent skill in characterization. This is the view of Professor Charlton, and he admits, with a suggestion of regret, that "the weakest part of the play is its characterization."[3] But reflecting back on the dramatist's previous achievement, we find many evidences against such an opinion. Even Adriana in The Comedy of Errors is a well-drawn character, leaving her prototype in Plautus's Menaechmi, a mere caricature of the shrewish and jealous wife, far behind in the point of "credible personality." So is Katherina in The Taming of The Shrew. Against the background of knock-about farce, the process of her "growing up" is marked with tender emotion and sense of dignity.

The superficial characterization of the lovers has its own dramatic function. In other words, the realistically

drawn character with whom the audience can share the sympathy would destroy the dramatist's scope. It is now universally believed, especially after Miss Welsford's valuable research into the topic, that A Midsummer Night's Dream inherited and used extensively the conventions and artifices of the court masque. The scholars conjecture that the play was probably written to celebrate the marriage of noble personages, and that the play's first night was performed at Court or the private household of some aristocrat.[4] Anyway, it is undeniable that the special qualities of the court masque came to the dramatist's aid: symmetrical arranging of the groups of people, elegant pattern of dance, compliment to the Queen in a subtly disguised manner, pageant-like presentation of the emblem of nature, all these helped to re-create the splendor peculiar to such an occasion.

What chiefly concerns us here is already stated in Miss Welsford's discussion of A Midsummer Night's Dream's structural indebtedness to the court masque conventions.

> A Midsummer Night's Dream is a dance, a movement of bodies. The plot is a pattern, a figure, rather than a series of events occasioned by human character and passion, and this pattern, especially in the moonlight parts of the play, is the pattern of a dance. . . . The lovers quarrel in a dance pattern: first, there are two men to one woman and the other woman alone, then for a brief space a circular movement, each one pursuing and pursued, then a return to the first figure with the position of the women reversed, then a cross-movement, man quarrelling with man and woman with

> woman, and then, as finale, a general setting to partners, including not only lovers but fairies and royal personages as well.
>
> This dance-like structure makes it inevitable that the lovers should be almost as devoid of character as masquers or masque-presenters. The harmony and grace of the action would have been spoilt by convincing passion.[5]

This makes clear that from the start Shakespeare intended an effect other than depicting a conflict between credible characters: the poet had in his mind a structural pattern which goes beyond individual's volition, a general scheme which in turn bestows significance and comments upon each individual's action, whether he is aware of it or likes it.

The existence of this larger perspective is what matters in our discussion of love as it is treated in the play. The size of the human figures is reduced to the minimum, and as a result love is chiefly described as a force which suddenly strikes upon the individuals and works upon them by its own law. The heroine of the later comedies, for instance, Portia in The Merchant of Venice, can be so self-correcting as to check her violent surge of affection when Bassanio chooses the right casket: "O love, be moderate, allay thy ecstasy,/In measure rain thy joy, scant this excess!/I feel too much thy blessing. Make it less,/For fear I surfeit!" (III.ii. 111-14).[6] In her effort to put love under reason's control, Portia shows the sign of maturity and self-possession. But the love which attacks the lovers in A Midsummer Night's Dream is blind,

irrational, and uncontrolled by reason and judgement. Our attention is led to the presence of impersonal power rather than to the integrity which underlies the lover's particular action.

> I do entreat your Grace to pardon me.
> I know not by what power I am made bold,
> Nor how it may concern my modesty,
> In such a presence here to plead my thoughts.
> [I.i. 58-61]

> I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight.
> Then to the wood will he tomorrow night
> Pursue her; and for this intelligence
> If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.
> But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
> To have his sight thither and back again.
> [I.i. 246-51]

Hermia can only half-guess what made her so bold before the presence of her father and the Duke himself. Helena determines to inform Demetrius of Lysander and Hermia's flight, hoping that she will be able to feed her eyes on Demetrius's sight on the way to, and back from the wood. But she is not cynical enough to take into account the apparent possibility that "this spotted and inconstant man" (I.i. 110) will not only despise to give her due thanks, but leave her company for the one he loves, and this is exactly what he does later in the wood.

The word "dote" is frequently used to describe the sort of love which sways the lovers. Helena "dotes/ Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry" (I.i. 108-9) on Demetrius who does not care for her a jot. He is instead

"doting on Hermia's eyes" (I.i. 230). The charm of the love juice which later causes all the errors of the night resides in its power to "make or man or woman madly dote/ Upon the next live creature that it sees" (II.i. 171-72). This sense of deception implied by the word is stretched to the furthest extreme in Titania's love for Bottom with an ass's head. She does not hesitate to admit, at the cost of her own dignity, how she "dotes" on this monstrous creature (IV.i. 48). Love-madness of the lovers is always a delight to the spectators. The essence of this celebrated comic encounter between Titania and Bottom is reductio ad absurdum of the irrational love which holds the Athenian lovers in a tight grip. As Professor E. K. Chambers says, "The magical love in idleness really does nothing more than represent symbolically the familiar workings of actual love in idleness in the human heart."[7] It only accelerates love's anarchy and capriciousness.

This aspect of love which the play continually evokes finds its compact expression in Helena's soliloquy near the end of Act I, scene i.

> Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
> Love can transpose to form and dignity.
> Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
> And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.
> Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;
> Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.
> And therefore is Love said to be a child,
> Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
> As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
> So the boy Love is perjured everywhere.
> [I.i. 232-41]

The first two lines clearly forecast Titania's love to Bottom. The rest of the passage is the diagnosis of blind, irrational love to which Helena is one of the victims. We can see how the conventional image of Cupid's blindness is elaborated here to suggest the irresponsible, anarchic aspect of love. The opposition of love and judgment is very early established in the presentation of sober Egeus, a blocking figure who stands in the way to the fulfillment of romantic love in New Comedy. Egeus understands his daughter's love only as the confusion of youthful blood wrought by amorous rhymes and love-tokens. This view is publicly seconded by the Athenian law which gives filial obligation precedence over socially unapproved love. Helena's choice is an ethical one. The following exchange between Theseus and Hermia shows the difficulty involved.

> Theseus. Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.
> Hermia. So is Lysander.
> Theseus. In himself he is;
> But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
> The other must be held the worthier.
> Hermia. I would my father looked but with my eyes.
> Theseus. Rather your eyes must with his judgement look.
> [I.i. 52-57]

The opposition and parallelism is there in such a way that it is hardly likely that the two views could be accommodated peacefully. In fact, according to the Athenian law, the penalty for disobedience to the father's will is either death or entering a convent. As Professor

Northrop Frye says, the harsh and irrational law which tries to regulate sexual drive is finally "internalized" as the part of the crystallizing of the new society around the newly married couples.[8] A Midsummer Night's Dream follows the same pattern. But at the present moment, it is more important to understand this legal enforcement more in its immediate context rather than in its import in the over-all structural pattern of New Comedy. It briefly reminds the audience of the fact that Athens in festivity is still ruled by the workaday standard of values, involving ethical choice and moral judgement. The fact is only suggested, but enough to drive the point home: that passionate love can become a potential danger to the harmony of community, and its lack of judgement sometimes leads the person to more than a laughable folly.

But once within the wood of Athens, our serious concern with love-judgement opposition is simply suspended. As Professor C. L. Barber has pointed out tentatively, the play's transfer of location from town to green world finds its archetypical pattern in the May Game, the native folk custom which was widely observed still in the sixteenth century English countryside.[9] On May Day, it was the custom for the villagers to set up the Maypole, a symbol of holiday freedom, decorating it with garlands and hawthorn, country lads and lasses dancing round it. The day often ended with the all-night revelling in the wood.

Following the pattern, love-madness in the play enjoys the full license of freedom and displays all kinds of absurdity, released from the hands of the Athenian law and hostile father. The rational judgement upon the lovers' behaviour is singularly out of place. The audience enjoy the mad caper of the lovers, just as Puck enjoys the hilarious interlude: "Shall we their fond pageant see?/ Lord, what fools these mortals be!" (III.ii. 114-15). We are meant to laugh at them, not to sympathize. They are no more than puppets skilfully manipulated by the super-natural creatures, which in turn represent the unpredict-able working of fancy.

Love's integrity and constancy is impossible in the wood of Athens. One oath of love is quickly discarded and soon replaced by another as in a game. Helena laments the perjury of Demetrius:

> For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,
> He hailed down oaths that he was only mine;
> And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
> So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.
> [I.i. 242-45]

Demetrius's change of heart has nothing to do with values. He changes, because it is natural, as often seen in the area of natural phenomenon: the ice "melts" before the heat of the sun, the water runs to the lower ground, the spring makes things grow and the winter makes things perish. It is as simple as that. There is no space left

for the demonstration of human integrity. When one tries to justify the change in terms of reason, he can be as ridiculous as Lysander when he wakes up from his enchanted sleep to find Helena, his new created goddess, before his eyes:

> Content with Hermia! No, I do repent
> The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
> Not Hermia but Helena I love.
> Who will not change a raven for a dove?
> The will of man is by his reason swayed,
> And reason says you are the worthier maid.
> Things growing are not ripe until their season.
> So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
> And touching now the point of human skill,
> Reason becomes the marshal to my will,
> And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
> Love's stories, written in love's richest book.
> [II.ii. 111-22]

The audience know too well that the effect of love juice is working on his eyes, and that what is giving Lysander a cue is not reason but the command of irrational passion. The fake-logic of growing up to maturity is particularly ironical, because his every action and gesture unshamefacedly points to the contrary.

Hermia is very slow in coming up to the rule of the game. She cannot believe that Lysander has left her while she was sleeping. Rather than that, she chooses to believe, "This whole earth may be bored, and that the moon/May through the center creep, and so displease/Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes" (III.ii. 53-55). The hyperbole is extravagant and deliberately ridiculous. The last

thing she can accept is that Lysander can and would show his back to her, while she can find no cause for it. The change is too sudden, too unexpected, and with no explanation at all. "Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?/ I am as fair now as I was erewhile" (III.ii. 273-74). The recognition is puzzling, and potentially dangerous as well in its revelation of nightmare quality and the sense of disharmony between reality and appearance. The discovery can be developed into more serious matter if the dramatist wants, but the play is a comedy and the issue finds another solution.

> Puppet? Why so? Aye, that way goes the game.
> Now I perceive that she hath made compare
> Between our statures, she hath urged her height.
> And with her personage, her tall personage,
> Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.
> And are you grown so high in his esteem
> Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
> How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak --
> How low am I? I am not yet so low
> But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.
> [III.ii. 289-98]

This is as comic as Lysander's rationalization. Hermia positively refuses to be bewildered by her lover's apparent perjury, and she picks up the thread of rationalization; her rival talked contemptuously of her low stature, and that is the cause why Lysander has left. The next step she takes is to commit herself to the sway of violence. The action brings back the criss-cross movement of farce, kicking aside the introspective tone. Hermia's

own choice of rationale invites from Lysander the verbal parade of "Get you gone, you dwarf,/You minimus, of hindering knotgrass made,/You bead, you acorn" (III.ii. 328-30). The lover's reasoning is a delight for the audience in every way.

We have so far looked at the kind of love depicted through the conduct of the lovers: a lunacy in the brain, uncontrollable passion which refuses the correction of judgement and sense perception. The dramatist skilfully manipulates our response so that we are delighted rather than becoming fully aware of the serious implications. But they are nevertheless there. As we have seen, the nature of Hermia's choice at the start of the first act can be a potential problem, and so is her momentary loss of self-identification at her lover's apparent perjury. Most important of all, the suggestion that love is "not an integral part of life, but a disturbing element in it"[10] is constantly there. It follows the course of nature that the lovers behave in this way, but it does not necessarily promise an all round happy ending. We have to keep in mind Friar Laurence's warning: "These violent delights have violent ends,/And in their triumph die, like fire and powder/Which as they kiss consume" (Romeo and Juliet, II.vi. 9-11).

The chronological relationship between Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream has not been

established definitely, but it is now a common practice to assign their date of composition to 1594-95, the comedy following the tragedy immediately.[11] The most direct link which connects the two plays is their concern with blind, irrational love. The course the lovers take in A Midsummer Night's Dream strongly parallels the main action of Romeo and Juliet: the lovers repudiate the duty to their guardian and commit themselves to the sway of passion. Shakespeare's choice of Pyramus and Thisbe story for the mechanicals' interlude is significant in this respect. Opposed by parents' will, Pyramus and Thisbe steal forth from their house to meet at Ninus' tomb, and the story ends with the double suicide acted upon the false knowledge that the other is dead. The death both in Romeo and Juliet and Pyramus and Thisbe story is, significantly enough, the consequence of an accident: If Friar Laurence's letter to Mantua had not been prevented by the plague, the tragic catastrophe would have been easily avoided. In the same sense, if the lion had not torn Thisbe's mantle, and if Pyramus had not jumped to his conclusion so hastily, their plan to meet in the orchard would have been performed without any disturbance. It is also important to notice, as Professor Dickey points out,[12] that Romeo and Juliet maintains the tempo and atmosphere of a comedy during the first two acts, with the help of Mercutio's humorous ridicule of love and the Nurse's low

jokes. The succession of violent actions in Act III thrusts the play into the tragic current, but until then the audience are allowed to watch the love of Romeo and Juliet with certain detachment and light-hearted enjoyment.

The moralizing habit of the Elizabethans found a good illustration of the destructive power of passionate love in the two stories. Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is a complex work which goes beyond simply moralizing on the lovers' conduct. But the purpose of Arthur Brooke, the author of the long poem The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet (1562), from which Shakespeare has taken the main action of his play, is not even thinly disguised. In the preface attached to the story, Brooke promises the readers a story about "a coople of unfortunate lovers, thralling themselves to unhonest desire," conferring with "dronken gossyppes, and superstitious friers," "abusyng the honorable name of lawefull marriage," and finally "hastyng to most unhappye deathe," and he hopes that the readers may be touched by "an hatefull lothyng of so filthy beastlynes."[13] From this we can imagine how the story of Pyramus and Thisbe was received by the readers in the late sixteenth century. It is conjectured that there had probably been a stage version of the story before 1594,[14] and it is more than likely that the audience of A Midsummer Night's Dream were familiar with the story, not

only in its aspect of Ovidian lament on the death of true lovers, but also in its emphasis on the danger of blind passion.

The affinity between Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream first becomes clear as early as Act I, scene i. After the quick repartee on the subject of "The course of true love never did run smooth," Lysander breaks into something almost near to despair.

> Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
> War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
> Making it momentany as a sound,
> Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
> Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
> That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
> And ere a man hath power to say "Behold!"
> The jaws of darkness do devour it up.
> So quick bright things come to confusion.
> [I.i. 141-49]

The lines capture the glimpse of love's helplessness before natural and physical threat--war, death, sickness--its temporary bliss and transition to darkness and nothingness, with full recognition of man's mortality. This sense of love's vulnerability is best understood, as Professor Kermode suggests,[15] when set beside a passage from Venus and Adonis, in which Venus makes a catalogue of infirmities within perfection of physical beauty, hoping to invite Adonis to the temporary pleasure of flesh.

> "And therefore hath she bribed the Destinies
> To cross the curious workmanship of nature;
> To mingle beauty with infirmities
> And pure perfection with impure defeature,

Making it subject to the tyranny
Of mad mischances and much misery,

"As burning fevers, agues pale and faint,
Life-poisoning pestilence and frenzies wood,
The marrow-eating sickness, whose attaint
Disorder breeds by heating of the blood.
Surfeits, imposthumes, grief and damned despair,
Swear Nature's death for framing thee so fair.

"And not the least of all these maladies
But in one minute's fight brings beauty under.
Both favor, savor, hue, and qualities,
Whereat the impartial gazer late did wonder,
Are on the sudden wasted, thawed and done,
As mountain snow melts with the midday sun."
[733-50]

Lysander's lament is a variation on the same motif of mutability in human life, conceived in terms of love. The image of snow melting before the sun's heat has been already used to describe Demetrius's change of heart. Venus's carpe diem argument--"enjoy yourself while you are young"--is underlain with pessimism, and her goal is seduction, not the confirmation of permanent love. Everything in nature changes, because constancy and perfection are not available there. Why does not man change his mind, of all the creatures the most unaccommodated and helpless? The question is deadly, and the play affirms it implicitly.

In Romeo and Juliet, Friar Laurence forebodes the destructive power of human will in his soliloquy in Act II, scene iii, and the moral of the speech has a direct reference to our play.

> Within the infant rind of this small flower
> Poison hath residence, and medicine power.
> For this, being smelt, with that part cheers each part,
> Being tasted, slays all senses with the heart.
> Two such opposèd 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.
> [II.iii. 23-30]

The image of the canker eating the fresh petals of the rose is familiar to the readers of Shakespeare's sonnets as the sign of general corruption in the natural course of human life. When we read the passage with the two lovers in our mind, its implication is an obvious one. If the human will and reason manage to control passion, love can be transformed to the source of all worldly goodness, as the Florentine Neo-Platonists believe. On the other hand, if the lover becomes the blind prisoner of passion, degenerating the role of will to that of a bawd or pander to desire, then the same power turns destructive.

Lysander's insight into the depth of love experience finds its direct echo in Juliet's lines which express her anxiety over the rash meeting with her new found lover.

> Although I joy in thee,
> I have no joy of this contrácт tonight.
> It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden,
> Too like the lightning, which doth cease to be
> Ere one can say "It lightens."
> [II.ii. 116-20]

Love is a sudden flash, illuminating momentarily both heaven and earth, but soon sinking under oblivion. Looking back upon it, the lovers find it only a dream, a deception, a false vision which allures the lovers with sweet bait. Shakespeare rings out the same nuance of the word "dream" in his sonnet 129 which denounces the vanity of lust.

> Mad in pursuit, and in possession so,
> Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme,
> A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe.
> Before, a joy proposed, behind, a dream.
>
> [9-12]

Though in a different context and not related to the theme of love, the dejected heart of Richard II finds itself some ease in the same illusionary quality of dream.

> Learn, good soul,
> To think our former state a happy dream,
> From which awaked, the truth of what we are
> Shows us but this.
>
> [Richard II, V.i. 17-20]

This sense of dream, a deceptive vision from which, being awaked, a man sadly creeps to reality with bitter disillusionment, is opposed and finally overcome by another kind of dream, as we shall see later. In order to achieve the "real" sense of harmony and happiness, the play has to solve the problem which the "seriousness" of the play itself has raised. To borrow Professor Barber's

phrase, the true pleasure of comedy depends on "how much reality it masters by its mirth."[16]

Nothing could be made right, unless we take seriously the interlude of Pyramus and Thisbe and its mirror-like reflectiveness within the whole structure. The enterprise is undertaken by a group of rude mechanicals, but this does not reduce its importance. Professor Bullough and Professor Young think that Shakespeare is here "parodying himself,"[17] after finishing the task of writing a tragedy about a pair of lovers, "as a relief."[18] This is a definitely wrong approach. Professor Young goes further by saying that Shakespeare was probably satirizing the excess of contrived rhetoric in quasi-Senecan tragedies, plays like Kyd's Spanish Tragedy (1586?) and Richard Edwards' Damon and Pithias (1564-5), the first tragicomedy in England. There is an unmistakable parallelism between such passages.

> O Sisters Three,
> Come, come to me,
> With hands as pale as milk,
> Lay them in gore,
> Since you have shore
> With shears his thread of silk.
> [M.N.D. V.i. 343-48]

> You Furies, all at once
> On me your torments try.
> Why should I live, since that I hear
> Damon my friend must die?

Gripe me, you greedy grief,
  And present pangs of death!
You sisters three with cruel hands,
  With speed now stop my breath!
[Damon and Pithias, 608-15][19]

The same halting doggerel, the extravagant hyperbole, and though not fully shown in the quotations, the frequent use of heavy alliteration, are unmistakable. Professor Young concludes: "'Pyramus and Thisbe' calls attention to recent improvements in the dramatic arts, an evolution experienced by audience and artist alike."[20] He finds the meaning of the interlude only in its aspect as an artistic failure, which, he thinks, makes a nice contrast to the mastery execution of A Midsummer Night's Dream.[21] Following the same criteria, he judges Bottom's lines, "The raging rocks/And shivering shocks . . ." as "properly grandiose and meaningless."[22]

This is a fine and coherent interpretation, but nevertheless partial. It is also quite reasonable to assume that Bottom and the rest of the mechanicals speak in an absurdly mock-heroic manner simply because the dramatist is following literary decorum. Suppose a group of country rustics torturing their minds to devise a play which has to please the sophisticated taste of the courtiers. The first thing that comes into their minds will be very likely the memory of the plays once they have seen at the town square or on the cart--the unfortunate lovers lamenting their doom, the figure of Herod

"making all split" with his wild ranting. They would imitate them as faithfully as possible, elevating themselves as they think it fit for such a high occasion. They might appear absurd to the courtiers, but they are in dead earnest: they firmly believe in the solemnity of the occasion and behave with a certain air of dignity and self-importance all through their performance. They are not imaginative, as seen in their extra-dramatic effort to bring in the moonshine on the stage and make the lion reveal his real identity lest the appearance of the fearful beast may frighten the ladies out of their wits. The audience know better that the play is but a play, and that zealous endeavour to establish "reality" sometimes destroys the whole dramatic illusion. But the mechanicals have the imagination of children, who do not discriminate between reality and fiction. Professor Barber's tribute to the mechanicals' simplicity is a valuable lesson.

> But they are not unimaginative: on the contrary they embody the stage of mental development before the discipline of facts has curbed the tendency to equate what is "in" the mind with what is "outside" it. They apply to drama the same sort of mentality that supports superstition--it is in keeping that the frightening sort of folk beliefs about changelings are for them an accepted part of life: "Out of doubt he is transported." Because this uncritical imaginativeness is the protoplasm from which all art develops, the clowns are as delightful and stimulating as they are ridiculous. Even while we are laughing at them, we recover sympathetically the power of fantasy enjoyed by children, who, like Bottom, can be anything, a train, an Indian or a lion.[23]

The adaptability, the naive belief that man can become the moon or wall by equipping himself with a lantern, thorn bush, a dog and "lime and rough-cast," is deeply carved in the mechanicals' personality. They are ridiculous in their childishness, but it is not hard to believe that such naivety goes hand in hand with dignity and self-respect. Professor Young forgets that the interlude is undertaken by such people, and seems to be lavishing highly critical awareness on the wrong place. As a result, he succeeds in establishing a critical hypothesis which is valuable if taken out of context, but he sacrifices for it the truth of the drama.

Professor Young condemns Bottom's "Ercles' vein" as "grandiose and meaningless." But there is another way to look at it. Let me quote the full lines.

> "The raging rocks
> And shivering shocks
> Shall break the locks
> of prison gates.
> And Phibbus' car
> Shall shine from far,
> And make and mar
> The foolish Fates."
>
> [I.ii. 33-40]

As Professor Young indicates, the lines echo, rather crudely, a passage from Jasper Heywood's 1561 translation of Seneca's Hercules Furens. Probably Shakespeare was familiar with Seneca's tragedy, and consciously paralleled it. But we cannot simply dismiss the case as a parody.

Bottom's lines have peculiar charm, not in spite of, but because of the combination of hyperboles and curious images, especially because of the speaker's optimistic defiance of Fate.

The working of Fate is evident even in our play. Apologizing to Oberon for his mistaking, Puck strikes out an ironical view: "Then fate o'errules, that, one man holding troth,/A million fail, confounding oath on oath" (III.ii. 92-93). This is another variation on the familiar theme we have already seen: it is natural that the true lover turns false and the false turns true, as the snow melts before the sun. Considering that the fairy creatures do nothing more than to accelerate the natural tendency, we suspect that the Athenian lovers may after all change their partners without much stimulus of the love juice. Here inconstancy is the disguised name of Fate, the iron law within the forest. To challenge this force like Romeo, "I defy you, stars," is one way to cope with the difficulty as a human being. But another way is open, and that is Bottom's: just make fun of it and ignore it. And this is exactly what he does later in the interlude. His death after a long leave-taking is an anti-climax.

> Now am I dead,
> Now am I fled,
> My soul is in the sky.
> Tongue, lose thy light,
> Moon, take thy flight,
> Now die, die, die, die, die.
>
> [V.i. 306-11]

In spite of his emphasis on the finality of death, Bottom makes the audience suspect, "With the help of a surgeon, he might yet recover, and prove an ass" (V.i. 316-17). And in fact he rises again to join the circle of Bergomask dancers, and turns the tragedy into a country revel. He scares death away simply by being himself, an ass.

To say that the Athenian lovers are not central to the final vision of the play would sound pretentious, but nevertheless it is true. Professor E. K. Chambers observes that "the most important story from the point of view of the comic idea, and the one to which most space is devoted, is that of the Athenian lovers."[24] Admittedly the plot of the lovers is assigned the largest space, and it carries the central concern of the play--love-madness. We feel satisfaction and pleasure at the sight of the united lovers after all those confusions and adventures. But if we talk of the "comic idea," that is, the poetic principle which decides the degree of unity finally achieved, the lovers are in the background. They are the manifestation of certain values, but they are, so to speak, enveloped in the larger pattern or idea which expands our consciousness and finally establishes a sense of unity out of the wide area of human experience.

Dream and imagination conclude what fancy has bred, and that is what happens in the last two acts of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Oberon signals the end of the

frantic wooing game by bidding Puck to make the lovers fall asleep; and being once awaked, "all this derision/ Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision" (III.ii. 370-71). Likewise, "an exposition of sleep" attacks Bottom while he is couching comfortably upon Titania's lap, and the next moment he wakes up, he is no longer the Fairy Queen's paramour, and must peep with his own fool's eyes. Titania is also brought back to her natural eyesight and reconciled to her husband, though still uncertain of the circumstances how she came to dote on such a contemptible creature. The dream vision suspends all the laws of cause and effect, and all the victims of the night's errors literally "slide back" to their normal condition. But the return to normalcy is not simply winding the clock back: "And back to Athens shall the lovers wend/With league whose date till death shall never end" (III.ii. 372-73). The juice Oberon ministered on Lysander's eyes stabilizes the lovers' proper relationship. Also the effect of love-in-idleness is working on Demetrius's eyes, whether he's aware of it or no. Thus dream becomes the integral part of what we call reality, shaping and supporting the same by its own unique design.

But the lovers naturally do not have much time and are quick to jump to the happy conclusion without scrutinizing its status. The play affirms their human inconsistency and folly, cherishing the sense of happiness

finally achieved: "Lysander and Hermia, Demetrius and Helena enter, laughing and talking together." They still retain all their immaturities. But if they lack the charm of self-possessed personality, they have the attractiveness of the simpler kind--every "he" and "she," "Jack" and "Jill" of the country proverb. They are young, brisk, and above all capable of pursuing their passion unweariedly, half-blind as they are.

We may ask, "Is man no more than this?"--a puppet deaf in its fury, incapable of constancy, rebelling against reason and authority. But if he errs, he errs by nature, not by pretense or sophistication. And the minimizing of the lovers' stature strips off all kinds of "lendings" which would otherwise prevent our insight into the insignificance and contemptibleness of our own stature when set against the vast landscape of nature. But the recognition is not sceptical or sinister. Instead it directs our attention to the healthy limitation which is imposed upon every one of us. We are, after all, equals under the law of nature, beyond individual idiosyncrasy, in our vulnerability and spiritual ignorance. Therefore when we laugh at the lovers, the laughter is in a sense directed at ourselves. It is "we" that play the chief performers in this revelry of fools on a midsummer night.

As we have already noticed, the final resolution of love-judgement opposition is simply suspended, and the

issue has not received the clear-cut answer. The night of the mistake is over, and now the scene has moved to the daylight of Athens. The play has to somehow provide an acceptable rationalization of the past mysterious events, lest it become merely another old wive's tale. And the interpretation is given by Theseus in the famous lines on the lover, the madman and the poet:

> More strange than true. I never may believe
> These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.
> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact.
> One sees more devils than vast Hell can hold,
> That is the madman. The lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.
> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
> Such tricks hath strong imagination
> That if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
> Or in the night, imagining some fear,
> How easy is a bush supposed a bear!
>
> [V.i. 2-22]

The maturity of style, conceits, rhetorical articulation is obvious. Professor Dover Wilson proposes a tempting hypothesis that probably Shakespeare added most of the passage later, when he was released from the burden of composition and with the success of the play's first night behind him, now referring back to "the poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling" in an amused mood.[25] Apart from his

theory's credibility, this tends to turn the whole speech into a bravura on the subject of the artist's creative power. Yet when looked at in its immediate context, Theseus's speech provides the focus on the discussion of dream and imagination, giving them a clear-cut, if limited, status.

Theseus stands at the head of the state, and his austere philosophy spurns aside the dream and imagination as childish nonsense. His brain is not tainted by festive wine. Besides, he is not an imaginative man. Shakespeare's powerful imagination working at its maximum force should not beguile us here. We have heard the argument that Macbeth is a poet because he speaks marvelous blank verse. This is never true in the theatre. To suppose that Macbeth is a poet, we have to establish on the stage an individual busily engaged in aesthetic evaluation and selection of diction. This is simply absurd. Every word Macbeth utters expresses hope, anxiety, doubt, fear, but it never gives a cue to sound the speaker's poetic creativity, which certainly belongs to the dramatist. So in the case of Theseus. He talks of imagination and fantasy, only as a sceptic who questions the value of those airy nothings, not as a poet who affirms them. Therefore he equates the lover's and the poet's imagination with the madman's. He finally brings down the dignity of our imaginative faculty to the level of "Or in the night,

imagining some fear,/How easy is a bush supposed a bear"--mere deceptive illusion created by our fear. The two lines are anti-climax for Professor Dover Wilson, and with the help of textual evidence he assigns them to earlier and immature writing.[26] Admittedly there is an obvious gap in poetic beauty between the last two lines and the rest of the passage, but the continuity of thought is maintained intact. The last lines conclude, in the most prosaic and straightforward manner, that the imagination is the by-product of our weaker faculties. The sooner we get rid of it, the better. To the Stoic mind of the Athenian ruler, imagination is a disease of the weaker species.

Here is an explicit judgement on the value of dream and imagination from the mouth of one whom the play treats with respect. Unquestionably, he establishes a point of view through which everything becomes coherent and explainable. But cool reason is not the supreme value of the play, though Professor Charlton likes to think it is.

> At once, he sees that mere survival in the world depends upon man's ability to differentiate rapidly and certainly between bears and bushes, and thus perceives that the attribute of supreme value in the world is the "cool reason" which comprehends things as things are: that men without cool reason, who are the sport of seething brains and of the tumultuous frenzies of fancy and of sentiment, are the victims of the world, and the butts of its comedy. Comedy, leading its action to a happy ending, leaving its characters at the

> end in harmony with the world, is bound to put its highest values on qualities which make for worldly happiness and success. With Theseus, the philosophy of comedy is finding its voice, and his "cool reason" is its prevailing spirit.[27]

"Butts" is an unhappy choice of word, if Professor Charlton had the lovers in his mind. Above all, what guarantees the final happiness is not Theseus and his reason, but the irrational power of the fairies to shape the future.

To understand the point as the dramatist has set it, it would be necessary to re-examine Theseus's position within the whole play. As it becomes clear during the dispute between Oberon and Titania in Act II, Theseus has had his own version of youthful love affairs, stealing forth from one lover "through the glimmering night" to others whom he finally deserts. Most important of all, the play does not end in the way Theseus has designed. After the courtiers retire to their beds, the troop of fairies led by their king and queen sweep into the chamber, chanting the blessing hymn on the lovers' marriage bed. Oberon again prophesies that no physical deformity such as mole, hare-lip, or scar shall visit the issue of the lovers. Theseus and Hippolyta are no longer the rulers in this larger order, but only a pair of lovers as Lysander and Hermia, Demetrius and Helena are. Properly viewed in this general framework, Theseus and the authority of reason he embodies submerge to secondary importance. Or to put it in another way, he still

occupies the foreground, but our attention is led to the background landscape which surrounds and enfolds him from every direction, transforming the whole picture into an entirely different kind.

Theseus understands the lovers' experience only as the fruitless vision created by imagination: they have encountered a bush, and supposed it a bear. And in some respect, Theseus is correct, for the lovers saw things through the distorted glass all through the play. For instance, when the lovers were in the wood, we glimpsed quite another image of the wood in Demetrius's speech when he suggested, half-mockingly, the danger of a solitary maiden in the forest (II.i. 214-19). It is a dark, vicious place, miles apart from the town, not unlike the wood "Fitted by kind for rape and villany" in Titus Andronicus (II.i. 116). But this negative image of the wood is quickly discarded when Hermia contradicts it, presenting another picture produced by love's imagination: "Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,/For you in my respect are all the world./Then how can it be said I am alone/When all the world is here to look on me?" (II.i. 223-26). Love is a disease, but at the same time it brings an improvement upon reality and makes it bearable by its strong power of imagination. However Theseus may object with all reason and common sense on his side, the lovers can live the consequence of their imagination with ease. As Professor G. K. Hunter observes, "where the

imagined facts hang together with inner logic and consistency, as of a world that could be lived in, then the imagination may have some claim to truth."[28] In other words, "By being prepared to live the visions that have appeared to them they make them true."[29]

We find the most effective witness of the power of imagination in no other than Bottom the weaver. Here I firmly oppose Professor E. K. Chambers' opinion that "In the story of the handicraftsmen, the central idea does not find any direct illustration."[30] If we can assume that the play's ultimate concern rests with the discussion of dream and imagination, we cannot miss Bottom's somewhat troubled speech after he wakes from the magical enchantment.

> I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was -- there is no man can tell me what. Methought I was -- and methought I had -- but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream. It shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom, and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the Duke. Peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death.
>
> [IV.i. 208-24]

The echo from the Bible, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the

thing which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians, ii, 9 ff.) is apparent. It is interesting that St. Paul is here speaking of the way God's secret wisdom is revealed to man, "in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit." What Bottom is struggling with is the uncommunicable nature of his vision. He accepts the mystery quite offhand, and frankly admits the limitation of his understanding. We welcome his reaction, because we also sense the existence of mystery at the bottom of the play, as our understanding of reason and imagination, actuality and illusion fails us in our own uncertainty and ignorance. We may laugh at Bottom so completely lost and unable to cope with his wonder, but, as Professor G. K. Hunter warns us, "Here among the muddled roots of humanity it is dangerous to laugh too loud, for Shakespeare makes it clear that it is ourselves we are laughing at."[31] Besides, Bottom is not a man who is troubled long with arguing. He flies back to the rest of the mechanicals lamenting the wreckage of their plan due to the loss of their star actor. We are not quite sure whether he will impart his experience to his friends: "Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is that the Duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps" (IV.ii. 34-37). As Professor Barber remarks, "there is something splendid, too, in the way he exuberantly rejoins 'these lads'

and takes up his particular, positive life as a 'true Athenian.'"

> Metamorphosis cannot faze him for long. His imperviousness, indeed, is what is most delightful about him with Titania: he remains so completely himself, even in her arms, and despite the outward change of his head and ears; his confident, self-satisfied tone is a triumph of consistency, persistence, existence.[32]

Bottom's problem is also ours, because at the very end of the play the dramatist asks us to take the whole dramatic experience as a dream. Puck pleads to the audience:

> If we shadows have offended,
> Think but this, and all is mended,
> That you have but slumbered here
> While these visions did appear,
> And this weak and idle theme,
> No more yielding but a dream,
> Gentles, do not reprehend.
> If you pardon, we will mend.
> And, as I am an honest Puck,
> If we have unearnèd luck
> Now to scape the serpent's tongue,
> We will make amends ere long,
> Else the Puck a liar call.
> So, good night unto you all.
> Give me your hands, if we be friends,
> And Robin shall restore amends.
>
> [V.i. 430-45]

There is always an unmistakable pathos in the epilogues of Shakespeare's comedies, spoken at the time when the theatrical illusion mingles with reality: we can see through the half-slipping off disguise the face of an actor now covetous of applause. But more than this, here

the dream vision is not simply a device to make an individual part reconcile with the other: it concerns the whole play.

This kind of attempt to link the dramatic experience with a dream vision had already been done by John Lyly, a master playwright of the court. For instance, in the prologue written for the court production of his play Sapho and Phao, we read:

> Whatsoeuer we present, whether it be tedious (which we feare) or toyishe (which we doubt) sweete or sowre, absolute or imperfect, or whatsoeuer, in all humblenesse we all, & I on knee for all, entreate, that your Highnesse imagine your self to be in a deepe dreame, that staying the conclusion, in your rising your Majestie vouchsafe but to saye, And so you awakte.[33]

Or in the prologue of another play The Woman in the Moone:

> Ovr Poet slumbring in the Muses laps,
> Hath seene a Woman seated in the Moone,
> A point beyond the auncient Theorique. . . .
>
> This, but the shadow of our Authors dreame,
> Argues the substance to be neere at hand:
> At whose appearance I most humbly craue,
> That in your forehead she may read content.
> If many faults escape in her discourse,
> Remember all is but a Poets dreame,
> The first he had in Phoebus holy bowre,
> But not the last, vnlesse the first displease.[34]

Also in the prologue to his play Endimion, Lyly says: "Wee present neither Comedie, nor Tragedie, nor storie, nor anie thing, but that whosoeuer heareth may say this, Why heere is a tale of the Man in the Moone."[35] Lyly's

gesture of submitting himself lowly before the presence of the Queen and courtiers is elegant, and it is quite natural that he should point beforehand at the unreality of his play whose public purpose is but a compliment to the Queen, unquestionable source of authority and grace. His play must be a dream, a fiction, when the ultimate reality is there to watch it embodied in human figures. We can find the same element of meek humbleness and the gesture of self-denial in Shakespeare's epilogue. But parallelism ends at this point, and the further comparison only serves to illustrate how Shakespeare absorbed a certain court play convention and at the same time overcame its limitation.

Dream vision in Shakespeare is not simply a dramatist's gesture, but a unifying symbol which reorganizes the past events and dramatic oppositions into a coherent picture of life. Aided by the distance now created between them and the play, the audience see the whole play, with its flickering, shadowy creatures, its loud laughter and parade of human follies, as something near to the composite expression of truth about human life. For instance, the play's explicit judgement is given by Theseus, who values reason and sanity above passion and imagination. But the play's implicit judgement, strongly felt through the treatment of the lovers and Bottom, puts imagination above reason. The play

does not give us a definite answer, but we are not invited to feel a sense of ambivalence. Instead, the dream vision helps to maintain a kind of "comic equilibrium" which Professor Kermode speaks of.[36] The play consists of numerous and sometimes mutually opposing component parts, but the final product refuses to be resolved back to them, but somehow transcends them.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a "serious" play in the sense that it does not distort nature in order to end in a happy conclusion. What makes the play so complex and rich in meaning is the dramatist's constant awareness of human beings in the natural condition--always under the control of invisible force, hedged with numerous limitations, rebelling against the authority of higher reason. This might sound too sceptical to fit in the over-all impression of the play. But as we have seen in the play's relationship to Romeo and Juliet, we cannot completely get rid of this undertone which lurks at every corner and suggests the possibility of a quite different ending. But the manner of its existence is modest and is not powerful enough to threaten the balance of the comic design accomplished through the use of dream vision.

Some would like to call the play artificial, because the sense of unity is in one sense imposed upon the experience rather than reached at through the progression of dialectics. Especially comparing the play

with the maturity of the later comedies, we partly admit that the unified picture of A Midsummer Night's Dream is beautifully, and at the same time too easily obtainable. However, we should not take this kind of opinion too seriously, for it only occurs during the leisured speculation in one's study and not in the theatre where, at least in an ideal one, a mass of people feel the sense of belonging to a temporary community through sharing the common experience. Among Shakespeare's comedies, A Midsummer Night's Dream particularly stimulates this deep-rooted impulse among the audience to participate in theatrical activity, as eloquently witnessed by Peter Brook's recent production of the play.

Then why does this happen? I believe, with the help of Miss Welsford's chapter "Hymen" in her book The Court Masque, that A Midsummer Night's Dream has succeeded in dramatizing, not only the specific conventions and artifices, but the most essential spirit of Hymenaei, a distinct form of the court masque usually associated with Hymen, the god of marriage. In the last act of our play, Oberon and Titania unambiguously play the roles of the priest and priestess of the marriage rite. They dance and sing in the chamber illuminated by the tapers, and Oberon prophesies the future prosperity and the eternal unity of the lovers, very much in the manner of Hymen himself.

> Now, until the break of day,
> Through this house each fairy stray.
> To the best bridebed will we,
> Which by us shall blessèd be,
> And the issue there create
> Ever shall be fortunate.
> So shall all the couples three
> Ever true in loving be,
> And the blots of Nature's hand
> Shall not in their issue stand--
> Never mole, harelip, nor scar,
> Nor mark prodigious, such as are
> Despisèd in nativity,
> Shall upon their children be.
> [V.i. 408-21]

At the beginning of Ben Jonson's early court masque Hymenaei, Hymen with "his head crowned with roses and marjoram, in his right hand a torch of pine tree" leads the group of pages "attired in white, bearing five tapers of virgin wax," who dance around the bride and bridegroom, singing:

> Bid all profane away;
> None here may stay
> To view our mysteries
> But who themselves have been,
> Or will in time be seen
> The self same sacrifice.
> For Union, mistress of these rites
> Will be observed with eyes
> As simple as her nights.
> Fly then, all profane, away,
> Fly far off, as hath the day;
> Night her curtain doth display,
> And this is Hymen's holiday.[37]

The most important thing about Hymen is that he is not simply the god of marriage but also "a mystic symbol of national unity or of the harmony of all men with one another."[38] Jonson often has Hymen praise the

social unity of England, thus paying a homage to the benevolence and power of James I in presence. The idea is fundamentally political, but the immediate sensation of participating in the revelry was much more spontaneous, as partly guessed from the court masque's particular aim to invite the audience from their seats to dance among the performers. Those who join the circle of dancing become aware of the group, "not as his party to be upheld in opposition to the other man's party, but as something to be enjoyed without ulterior motive, something that lifts him out of himself."

> Revelling springs from high spirits, and when it develops into a solemn social function it naturally represents the community, not as an association founded through fear, not as a necessary or unnecessary evil to be perpetually attacked or changed, but as a society of which the essential principle is harmony and the chief object the supplying of the individual with a fuller draught of life and experience.[39]

What the audience of A Midsummer Night's Dream get at the end of the play is very similar to this court reveller's experience. Married life lies always at the center of the community, because it promises the society's continuity through procreation. Therefore, its celebration gives every member of the community a chance to confirm mutual fellowship. This notion of marriage as communal activity is strongly evident in Spenser's Epithalamion, especially in such lines as these:

But most of all the Damzels doe delite,
When they their tymbrels smyte,
And thereunto doe daunce and carrol sweet,
That all the sences they doe rauish quite,
The whyles the boyes run vp and downe the street,
Crying aloud with strong confused noyce,
As if it were one voyce.
Hymen io Hymen, Hymen they do shout,
That euen to the heauens theyr shouting shrill
Doth reach, and all the firmament doth fill,
To which the people standing all about,
As in approuance doe thereto applaud
And loud aduaunce her laud,
And euermore they Hymen Hymen sing,
That al the woods them answer and theyr eccho ring.[40]
[133-47]

The "strong confused noyce" of the town's people becomes "one voyce" through the chorus of "Hymen io Hymen." Here even nature itself echoes back the joy among the mortals.

But Shakespeare is not a leader of Hymenaei, and we are not the members of the marriage feast. The particular circumstance in which Hymenaei could fulfil its original function--the presence of the monarch, felt existence of the social unity, a banquet hall brightly lit by candles, gorgeous architecture on the stage--all these are lost in the public theatre. If the dramatist tries to convey the same sensation, he has to somewhat recapture the quintessence of the event by the sheer power of his imagination. The enterprise involves a great difficulty, because composing a drama is a more complex task than giving a cue to the revellers. The dramatist has to bring into his work an objective viewpoint which the reveller certainly feels no need for. Puck asks us

to take the whole dramatic experience as an insubstantial pageant enacted by shadows. But if the dramatist points to the unreality of his play, he must also point to the reality of his play, as Professor G. K. Hunter observes.[41] Or else, the play has to deny its claim of holding the mirror up to nature.

> When art is cut loose from actuality, its content as well as its form begins to change. To the ritualist fellowship is a stable possession, to the reveller a source of immediate enjoyment, but to the dramatist it is a difficult achievement, often endangered and disturbed, sometimes destroyed. For when the dramatist steps outside the circle of revellers, he glances at their environment and loses the blithe assurance of the 'dancing courtiers.' He sees that conflict, the threat to harmony, is inseparable from drama, and conflict is set in motion not only by faults of character but also by circumstances over which the human will has no control. . . . But always the dramatist looks to see how the environment affects the drama.[42]

Miss Welsford's remark clarifies the point I have tried to call into attention throughout the course of discussion: comedy is meant to convey the sense of happiness and unity, but at the same time it is an imitation of life, not in the restricted sense of depicting man's behaviour and idiosyncrasy, but in its interest in human frailty, limitation and our existence in the natural condition.

CHAPTER II

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Harley Granville-Barker and J. Middleton Murry both judged The Merchant of Venice as a fairy tale. "There is no more reality in Shylock's bond and The Lord of Belmont's will than in Jack and the Beanstalk"[1] is Granville-Barker's view. Middleton Murry clarifies the implication of Granville-Barker's statement by saying that the play "makes its secular appeal to that primitive substance of the human consciousness where folk tales took their origin," and is an "almost perfect example of the art-form which being prior to art itself, most evidently and completely satisfies the primitive man in us all."[2] Shylock is an ogre incarnated, and Antonio and Bassanio embody what is noble and affirmative in human nature. We should not ask too ardently why the white is white and the black is black, because the antagonism between the good and the evil is here self-explanatory.

Both critics' comments on the play's basic setting help to steer our understanding of the play along the right track. Expecially, they effectively warn those

readers who try to read intellectual and psychological coherence where the dramatist did not have the slightest intention to create it. Nevertheless, The Merchant of Venice is not a fairy tale in the sense that A Midsummer Night's Dream is. The whole dramatic action and the general scope of the latter play is motivated by the specific impulse to celebrate the idea of marriage and the sense of unity it brings, and the dream vision serves as a superb means to knit the individual parts into a well-organized piece of dramatic work. But in The Merchant of Venice, the dramatist is aiming at another kind of comedy. The ever green world of Belmont is matched with historic Venice with its lively turmoil and cosmopolitan atmosphere. Love's consummation becomes possible only after Portia appears at the Venetian law court and proves her life-principle superior to that of a bloodthirsty Jew. Besides, we can find numerous elements which do not easily conform to the calculated scheme, be it Antonio's melancholy or Bassanio's sometimes lamentably easy going manner or Lancelot Gobbo's low jokes which here and there acquire the intensity of sarcasm. Above all, Shylock's presence remains disturbing even after we have checked our sympathy based on the long humanitarian tradition which instinctively guards itself against racial prejudice.

It is easy to conclude, with the aid of these evidences, that The Merchant of Venice is not a genuine comedy and that it has a split purpose. This is the view of Professor Charlton and Professor E. K. Chambers. Professor Charlton, concentrating on Shylock and his dramatic life, concludes that "there can be no doubt that the wooing of Portia by Bassanio is not the main stuff of the play. . . . The Bond story, not the tale of the caskets, is the backbone of The Merchant of Venice."[3] Professor Charlton does not attempt to provide an answer to the obvious question: Then what kind of play is The Merchant of Venice, if its chief interest lies in other than romantic courtship? Professor E. K. Chambers, though he admits that the play is dominated by Portia's wit and her sunny hair, concludes that the play as a whole is a tragicomedy. He finds two kinds of dramatic interest, the drama of ideas and the drama of emotion, operating side by side to the effect of dividing our responses: "For such emotional or romantic comedy, as distinct from comedy proper, 'tragicomedy,' which the Elizabethans themselves sometimes used, is perhaps the happiest term."[4]

We do not have enough space here to discuss the status of this ambiguous literary genre "tragicomedy," but it is certain that the Elizabethans and their critics did not use the term to indicate a kind of ambivalence suggested both by Professor Charlton and Professor E. K. Chambers. Sidney's "mongrel tragi-comedy" is simply a

pejorative term for the popular plays which mingled kings and clowns shoulder by shoulder, and should be understood as an expression of critical frustration rather than as a term for a definite literary form. Generally speaking, the mixing of tragic and comic tones in the Elizabethan drama reflects the popular fondness for diversity for its own sake, and, as Miss Doran points out, "It is the success of the blending that entitles it to be called a form."[5] Above all, according to the definition of the Italian critics and playwrights, notably by Guarini, the author of the representative tragicomedy Pastor Fido (1580-89), tragicomedy shared its ultimate aim with comedy: to purge melancholy and to delight the audience. "But the purgation, which is the architectonic end, exists only as a single entity, restricting the mixture of the two qualities to one aim: the freeing of the listeners from melancholy."[6] The association of tragicomedy with the "problem play" with its unresolved irony is of modern birth, and it causes unnecessary barriers for the true appreciation of a play like The Merchant of Venice. The play is a comedy, or else there is no point in the last act's presentation of universal harmony within the rich atmosphere of poetry and music. If the existence of Shylock is too menacing to fit into a sort of comedy Shakespeare has previously written, we should understand that he is now attempting a different sort of comedy which tries to establish the sense of happiness and

unity, not by closing the play's channel to reality, but by inviting an intruder and letting the lovers meet his challenge. This is a technical difficulty, but the overcoming of the difficulty results in a maturer comic vision.

It is a valuable practice to examine the first scene of Shakespeare's play carefully, either tragedy or comedy, because it quite often sets the basic atmosphere and the important idea of the whole play. The marriage festivity of Theseus's court strikes the key note of A Midsummer Night's Dream, and the frozen platform before the castle, with armed soldiers fearfully whispering, decides the entire mood of Hamlet. Likewise, the opening scene of The Merchant of Venice is worth a close look. First of all, the casual dialogue between Antonio, Salarino and Salanio gives us the vivid picture of the particular society the play uses as the pole opposite to the romantic world of Belmont: a mercantile society where the reference to one's "venture" and "traffic" provides a daily topic for conversation on the street. The activity of the merchants is to buy goods cheaply there and sell it dearly here, and their interest is always opened toward the wide sea and the land beyond it. In such a society, wealth and its maintainance depends upon luck, and cannot reach the stability found in an agricultural society. Fluidity is its master-principle, and

the life-pattern of its members is formed accordingly. We are never introduced to the interior of Antonio's or Bassanio's house, and the whole action in Venice, except at the trial scene, takes place on the street where people are constantly coming in and going out. Salarino and Salanio depart from Antonio with "I would have stayed till I had made you merry/If worthier friends had not prevented me" (I.i. 60-61), meaning the approach of Bassanio, Gratiano and Lorenzo. Antonio knows that it is only an excuse: "Your worth is very dear in my regard./I take it, your own business calls on you,/And you embrace the occasion to depart" (I.i. 62-64). There is no intention of irony on the part of Antonio. To be busy with trade is an indication of health for the merchants, and here Antonio is only paying a compliment in a civilized manner. The chief means of maintaining communication between acquaintances is to make a promise to meet at such and such a place, at such and such a time, and this occurs to a degree which never happens in any other of Shakespeare's plays, perhaps except The Comedy of Errors, which depicts the same kind of commercial society and has a certain kinship to our play.

This lively society has its own image of wealth, and it is aptly expressed in Salarino's speech referring to Antonio's merchandise abroad.

> Your mind is tossing on the ocean--
> There where your argosies with portly sail,
> Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
> Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,
> Do overpeer the petty traffickers
> That curtsy to them, do them reverence,
> As they fly by them with their woven wings.
> [I.i. 8-14]

Our modern sensitivity is accustomed to conceive wealth as a heap of bank notes. But the Renaissance fondness for pageantry and visual spectacles could easily turn the image of riches into the fascinating picture of sea navigation. Here, wealth is no longer a static property possessed by an individual, but something that could be used for social and ceremonial purpose, impressing the onlookers with the pleasure of watching the flourish of human luxury at its most self-sufficient moment. Also notice the use of personification which metamorphoses the argosies into "signiors" and "rich burghers" who "fly" "with woven wings." In such a ceremonial occasion, even a ship can boast of life and panache.

This life-enhancing image of wealth makes a sharp contrast to Shylock's image of wealth. His wealth consists of hoarded money, and it has already lost its most elementary function--to buy something which supplies our want and makes living more comfortable. Shylock's belief that money breeds money leads to nothing--only piling up riches in the dark counting-house. C. S. Lewis's shrewd observation, "The real play is not so much about men as

about metals" points to this distinction between two kinds of wealth--wealth for social use and wealth for its own sake.

> The important thing about Bassanio is that he can say, 'Only my blood speaks to you in my veins', and again, 'all the wealth I had Ran in my veins'. Sir Walter Raleigh most unhappily, to my mind, speaks of Bassanio as a 'pale shadow'. Pale is precisely the wrong word. The whole contrast is between the crimson and organic wealth in his veins, the medium of nobility and fecundity, and the cold, mineral wealth in Shylock's counting-house.[7]

The comparison of Shylock with Barabas in The Jew of Malta (Ca. 1588) is generally helpful and indeed one can find a close parallelism in their vocabulary and behaviour.[8] But what strikingly separates Shylock from Barabas is that he is not allowed to pose in the atmosphere of luxury. Marlowe's play opens with the same kind of description of adventurous navigation, but it is assigned to the villain Barabas.

> So that of thus much that return was made:
> And of the third part of the Persian ships,
> There was the venture summ'd and satisfied.
> As for those Samitoes, and the men of Uz,
> That bought my Spanish oils and wines of Greece,
> Here have I purs'd their paltry silverlings.[9]
> [I.i. 1-6]

In our play, this worldly traffic is the occupation of the Christians, and our rich Jew shrinks from the idea of venture because of its risk. Shylock's maxim is "Fast bind, fast find" (II.v. 54), and he makes life intolerable

for his daughter Jessica with gloom and restriction. Shylock is never given to merriment and hates the idea of relaxing himself with music and game.

> What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica.
> Lock up my doors, and when you hear the drum
> And the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife,
> Clamber not you up to the casements then,
> Nor thrust your head into the public street
> To gaze on Christian fools with varnished faces,
> But stop my house's ears, I mean my casements.
> Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
> My sober house.
>
> [II.v. 28-36]

Before he is a Jew and a challenger of Christian morality, Shylock is a born enemy of comedy which loses the basis of its existence if all the people embrace extreme sobriety, and despise the idea of letting themselves go from time to time. As Professor Barber suggests, Shylock is like churlish Christmas who appears in Nashe's interlude Summer's Last Will and Testament (1592-3). He is a miser and stubbornly opposes festivity. To Summer's "Christmas is god of hospitality," Christmas replies: "So will he never be of good husbandry. I may say to you, there is many an old god that is now grown out of fashion. So is the god of hospitality," or "Aye, aye, such wise men as you come to beg at such fool's doors as we be."[10] Shylock's life-principle is thrift and husbandry. His pose is always on guard against possible calamity in future, and as a result he is perversely void of flexibility. Time is only a succession of safeguarded

but monotonous repetitions of the present, and its progression means nothing but maturing of bonds and increasing of interest. He cannot observe the timeliness of occasion, and fails to enjoy his share of humanity. Such a kill-joy figure is doomed to become the butt of comedy.

Bassanio has a foreboding that he would be fortunate at Belmont (I.i. 173-76), and what he lacks is only money to furnish himself with. Admittedly, Bassanio's idea of money is that of a child: it springs before his eyes whenever he needs it. He is a prodigal who has shown more "swelling port" (I.i. 124) than his income could allow, and the tale of two arrows he employs to beg another loan from Antonio cannot persuade us that what is involved is no more than "pure innocence" (I.i. 145). But he is not "predatory" as Professor Quiller-Couch would like to think.[11] Bassanio is good luck incarnated, and it is at this point that the play's fairy tale setting should be accepted in itself. Antonio's money is meant to be consumed for such a purpose. Bassanio describes Portia using the image of high flourish we have found in Salarino's speech.

> Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
> For the four winds blow in from every coast
> Renownèd suitors. And her sunny locks
> Hang on her temples like a golden fleece,
> Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strond,
> And many Jasons come in quest of her.
> [I.i. 167-72]

The mythical allusion and the image of navigation searching for riches ring out the key note of Bassanio's courtship to Portia. Furnishing himself richly with the money he has borrowed from Antonio, Bassanio can appear at the door of Portia's mansion as a worthy competitor, even making her servants spend "such high-day wit" (II.ix. 98) in praising his forerunner whom we have all reasons to assume to be clad in costly habit and laden with valuable gifts: "A day in April never came so sweet,/To show how costly summer was at hand,/As this forespurrer comes before his lord" (II.ix. 93-95). The money is thus properly changed to the medium of translating one's worth into an exterior form which can be seen and appreciated by others. In Belmont, there is no distinction between wealth and civility: "To wit, besides commends and courteous breath,/ Gifts of rich value" (II.ix. 90-91). Portia makes clear later that Bassanio's possessing of her love naturally includes her property.

> Myself and what is mine to you and yours
> Is now converted. But now I was the lord
> Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
> Queen o'er myself. And even now, but now,
> This house, these servants, and this same myself
> Are yours, my lord.
>
> [III.ii. 168-73]

Enjoying one's love means enjoying one's wealth.

The idea of love as a kind of wealth, or a commerce between man and woman is also evident in Shakespeare's

sonnets, especially in the sequence 1-13. In these sonnets, Shakespeare tries to persuade his friend who is unwilling to give himself to any woman to marry so that his beauty and nobility may live in time by creating an heir. Here the usury has a sexual meaning. It is "Making a famine where abundance lies" (1. 7), and to withhold one's love is to make "waste in niggarding" (1. 12). Usury is a name given to sterile self-love, and it is distinguished from love's "use": "That use is not forbidden usury,/Which happies those that pay the willing loan" (6. 5-6). The basic idea which underlies the whole association--usury and self-devouring selfishness, love's use and realization of one's potential productivity--is the notion that one's resources are only leased to those who are ready to spend them in an appropriate way. This is the theme of sonnet 4.

> Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend
> Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?
> Nature's bequest gives nothing, but doth lend,
> And being frank, she lends to those are free.
> Then, beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse
> The bounteous largess given thee to give?
> Profitless usurer, why dost thou use
> So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live?
> For having traffic with thyself alone,
> Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive.
> Then how, when nature calls thee to be gone,
> What acceptable audit canst thou leave?
> Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee,
> Which, used, lives th' executor to be.

What gives the poem its special sense of immediacy is the poet's anxiety over physical and worldly gift's

vulnerability before the law of nature, the fleeting time which digs wrinkles upon the smooth brow of youth. "Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea/But sad mortality o'ersways their power" (65. 1-2), physical perfection "Whose action is no stronger than a flower" (65. 4) is destined to corruption and decay. If the youth, like a usurer, does not give himself away to others, he is abusing his true self which is potentially capable of living beyond this world. On the other hand, those that are "free" and have "traffic" with others conquer time's incessant assault by preparing an "acceptable audit," a child. To get a child is only a metaphorical expression of one medium to transcend time's working, and what is most important is man's capacity to commit himself entirely and unselfishly to the good of others, without expecting any recompense.

It is within this context that Antonio's devotion to Bassanio, and the later casket scene, should be understood. Salanio tells us that Antonio only loves the world for Bassanio (II.viii. 50), after Salarino described the touching scene of the friends' parting at the port. There is no distinction between "mine" and "thine" in Antonio's idea of perfect friendship. He does not show any sign of hesitation in standing surety for Bassanio and thus walks into the fatal trap set by Shylock. Even when the bond is forfeited and his life is

in danger, Antonio's kindness suffers no change, his care being always on Bassanio's well-being.

The nature of Antonio's melancholy has been the target of speculation for a long time. The scarcity of information doubles the difficulty. We only know that he has changed marvelously very lately (I.i. 76), and that he is neither troubled about the prospects of his business (I.i. 41-45), nor in love (I.i. 46). Antonio himself does not know where and how he has got the melancholy he is now troubled with (I.i. 1-7), and thinks that the world is but a stage and the role he is assigned to is a sad one (I.i. 77-79). Professor Dover Wilson proposes in the notes of the New Cambridge Edition: "Is not the secret of his melancholy the fear that this lady may rob him of his dear friend?" and he concludes that it "scarcely admits of any other interpretation,"[12] recognizing in the play the same kind of love-friendship opposition as typically found in The Two Gentlemen of Verona. Professor E. K. Chambers invites our attention to Shakespeare's autobiographical sketch of his own unrequited love. Antonio's melancholy was not intended for the audience, but "rather the intrusion of a personal note, an echo of those disturbed relations in Shakespeare's private life of which the fuller but enigmatic record is to be found in the Sonnets."[13] Professor Mark Van Doren regards it as an elegant and graceful pose, "a beautiful sadness of that

sort which it is the highest pleasure not to explore"[14] Professor Traversi thinks that Antonio's melancholy confines him to "an existence which excludes the decisive act of self-surrender, of free dedication to the claims and opportunities which life offers and which constitute its supreme justification."[15] Professor Traversi sees much of the importance of free dedication in the play, but his explanation of Antonio's melancholy itself is somewhat unsatisfactory, because the gloomy mood, as he sees it, exists only to be discarded by Antonio's action to relieve Bassanio's predicament. But Antonio's gloom hovers around him even after the action, as is obvious from his farewell speech to Bassanio at the trial scene.

Such a diversity of opinions is puzzling, but each of them could probably be justified in its own interest and aim. However, if we look at the case as the specimen which suggests how much reality Shakespeare has encompassed within this play, Middleton Murry's observation cannot be dismissed.

> I am persuaded that Shakespeare intended Antonio's melancholy to be motiveless and that the half-line was deliberate. Shakespeare was taking advantage of that part of Antonio's character which was free to introduce a depth into his character, and still more a feeling-tone into the play, which he felt the play could bear, and which would enrich it. . . . Antonio would remain a presence in the responsive imagination, a character whose nature was not wholly expressed in the acts required of him.[16]

Middleton Murry does not state in what sense Antonio's melancholy enriches the play, but his explanation is sound and hits the target. Antonio is a full member of the Venetian society, but Shakespeare makes it sure that he is at the same time out of it due to his melancholy which does not square with the jocund atmosphere of his surroundings. We feel behind this solitary figure a vast landscape which is essentially unexplored in the play. This is confirmed whenever he speaks in his characteristic sober and sad manner: "I am a tainted wether of the flock,/Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit/Drops earliest to the ground, and so let me" (IV.i. 114-16). In Shakespeare, the ripe fruit falling from the branch is the image of inevitable working of time. The process of maturing and decaying is one and the selfsame phenomenon. Later, Touchstone in <u>As You Like It</u> gives the idea a compact expression: "And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,/And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot,/And thereby hangs a tale" (II.vii. 26-28). In the same manner, Richard II comments on old Gaunt's death: "The ripest fruit first falls, and so doth he./His time is spent, our pilgrimage must be" (II.i. 153-54). Ironically, Richard's fortune begins to decline exactly at the moment when he ascends to full command over his kingdom after the banishment of two influential lords and death of chiding Gaunt. Richard

remains inactive until the very last moment, and he literally "pines away" like a herb past its prime. His lament is "time hath set a blot upon my pride" (III.ii. 81).

The working of fortune and man's forced adjustment to it are not entirely absent in The Merchant of Venice. Antonio's farewell speech to Bassanio is pierced with the note of quiet resignation and acceptance of his fortune.

> Give me your hand, Bassanio. Fare you well!
> Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you,
> For herein Fortune shows herself more kind
> Than is her custom. It is still her use
> To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,
> To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
> An age of poverty, from which lingering penance
> Of such misery doth she cut me off.
> [IV.i. 265-72]

Antonio prepares for death, not with the aid of religious consolation, but with the Humanistic contempt of the world. Life is a constant declining movement, destined to death and oblivion. Why travail to prolong misery by clinging to life? This is the advice of the Duke to death-sentenced Claudio in Measure for Measure: "Be absolute for death." The Duke makes a catalogue of inevitable misfortunes which accompany life, preaching that death is a happy escape from all earthly calamities. Men are but made of "many a thousand grains/That issue out of dust" (III.i. 20-21), "Servile to all the skyey influences" (III.i. 9), and man is but a "death's fool"

(III.i. 11) who strives in vain to outrun the doom. In short, "Thou hast nor youth nor age,/But, as it were, an after-dinner's sleep,/Dreaming on both" (III.i. 32-34). The ultimate reality belongs to death and its eternal sleep, and what we regard as precious in life--riches, nobility, valour--all are deceptive illusions. Even friendship is not lasting, and the children curse the diseases for not ending their aged parents' life sooner (III.i. 28-32).

This recognition of human frailty and limitation within the larger framework of natural condition was evident in A Midsummer Night's Dream. But in The Merchant of Venice, its presentation is more immediate and less laughable, as it is embodied in the credible human figure. We are not meant to concentrate on Antonio's melancholy at the cost of losing the proper balance of emphasis, but to ignore its serious implication is to do wrong to the text. Antonio is melancholy, because the dramatist meant him as a man that can live outside of the comic sphere where fortune always smiles on the patient and the benevolent. His pose of melancholy and self-abandonment makes him capable of adjusting himself to the turn of fortune from good to bad. He might be grieved or frightened at the sudden visit of misfortune, but he is always ready to accept it without confusion. Antonio is utterly optimistic about the prospect of his ship's return: "My

ships come home a month before the day" (I.iii. 182). This is quite unlike the saying of a prudent merchant. He is forgetting to take into account the apparent possibility that the wind may change and at least delay the ship's return, not to say it might be wrecked by the storm or other accident. A good merchant always counts on the unpredictable nature of the future. It is for nothing that the wind suddenly changes on the night Bassanio intends a feast, hastening his departure to Belmont. Antonio chides Gratiano who is costumed for a masque being ignorant of the change of plan.

> Fie, fie, Gratiano, where are all the rest?
> 'Tis nine o'clock. Our friends all stay for you.
> No masque tonight. The wind is come about,
> Bassanio will presently go aboard.
> I have sent twenty out to seek for you.
> [II.vi. 62-66]

There is no point in this sudden change of plan, unless the dramatist intended to suggest the arriving of the future in an unexpected form. Several men promised to meet at certain place and on certain time, and some have purposed a masque which they thought would surprise the guests. But the wind has changed, and the meeting is cancelled. The gentlemen's straying around the city in the disguise of a mask only increases Antonio's pain to locate them. The future can take what form it pleases, often contrary to men's calculation.

The mutual faith of Antonio and Bassanio is constant and firm. There is no doubt about this. But beyond the basic fairy tale setting, there is a slight suggestion of the contrary concerning Bassanio's to Antonio. Gratiano and Salarino are waiting for Lorenzo's approach before Shylock's house, and they fall into a casual conversation to fill the vacant minutes.

> Salarino. Oh, ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly
> To seal love's bonds new-made than they
> are wont
> To keep obligèd faith unforfeited!
> Gratiano: That ever holds. Who riseth from a feast
> With that keen appetite that he sits down?
> Where is the horse that doth untread again
> His tedious measures with the unbated fire
> That he did pace them first? All things
> that are,
> Are with more spirit chasèd than enjoyed.
> How like a younker or a prodigal
> The scarfèd bark puts from her native bay,
> Hugged and embracèd by the strumpet wind!
> How like the prodigal doth she return,
> With overweathered ribs and ragged sails,
> Lean, rent, and beggared by the strumpet
> wind!
> [II.vi. 5-19]

The topic has nothing to do with the immediate context, and there is no sense unless we take it as referring to the important idea or viewpoint which illuminates some aspects of the play, as Hero's talk in Act III, scene i of Much Ado About Nothing, about over-flourished honeysuckle which clearly points to the bastard Don John. In general, the quoted passage says that people usually do not show so much zeal in observing the obligation and duty

afterwards as once they have shown in pursuing their pleasure. The references like "bonds," "keep obliged faith unforfeited," or "a prodigal" remind us instantly of Bassanio's relationship to Antonio. If we take the passage as forecasting future events, it has no point, because later in the trial scene Bassanio shows all signs of constant fidelity by doing everything he can to save Antonio's life. We should understand that the passage's real function is to point to the negative aspect of human relationship that cannot be fully resolved in a comedy, but can enrich it by supplementary suggestion of things as they really are outside its gate. In this sense, the effect is more than providing a foil to increase our favourable response to Bassanio's kindness. When we lift the fairy tale settings aside, Antonio's devotion can be disappointed by his friend's treachery. Love is not so pure and ethereal as the idealists would like to think. Trivial interests are often mingled with the rarest affection, and perjury is old as Cupid's history. Friendship often reveals its limitation before another kind of obligation. The present writer is not perfectly convinced of this, but it is rather bothersome that Bassanio does not act precisely as he says in the court scene. He encourages doomed Antonio by his "The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all/Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood" (IV.i. 112-13).

I do not take this as "a lie" as Professor Coghill does,[17] but, only on reflection, it is rather against his credit that Bassanio does not leap the railing to stab the Jew at the critical moment and afterwards submit himself to the law. Miss Bradbrook thinks that discontent of this kind is out of place with the play's artificiality in its meliorative sense,[18] and her opinion has much reason.

In the last six lines of the passage quoted above, Gratiano uses the consistent image of sea navigation. In the first three lines, he describes the departing of a gorgeous argosy from the native port embraced "by the strumpet wind," and in the following three lines he presents the almost twin picture of the same argosy's return, now miserably damaged by the same "strumpet wind." The simple method of juxtaposition emphasizes that it is the same wind that alternately cheers and does harm to the vessel. The lines effectively express the anarchic working of natural power, under whose domination growth and decay, luck and misfortune are inseparably knit together. Dramatically, this view offers an excellent counterpoint against Antonio's optimism. Later in the play, the same wind that has brought him prosperity suddenly turns to malicious power and destroys his hope; his ship is wrecked on the Goodwins "where the carcasses of many a tall ship lie buried" (III.i. 4-5). This harkens back straight to Salarino's speech in the opening scene.

> My wind, cooling my broth,
> Would blow me to an ague when I thought
> What harm a wind too great at sea might do.
> I should not see the sandy hourglass run
> But I should think of shallows and of flats,
> And see my wealthy Andrew docked in sand
> Vailing her high top lower than her ribs
> To kiss her burial. Should I go to church
> And see the holy edifice of stone,
> And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
> Which touching but my gentle vessel's side
> Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
> Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks--
> And, in a word, but even now worth this,
> And now worth nothing?
>
> [I.i. 22-36]

The whole speech is about a kind of hazard and sense of risk which accompany worldly ventures. The last two lines epitomize it in an immediate manner: "but even now worth this,/And now worth nothing?" The merchants draw profit out of the mouth of danger. To make a hazard means to challenge the unpredictable future by committing something dear to its working. One might lose everything, but the way to an inestimable wealth is also open. The high flourish of the Venetian society is in fact matched implicitly with this sense of risk all through the play. Antonio's commitment to Bassanio is a venture in terms of human relationship. He could have denied Bassanio's suit without marring their friendship in any way: Bassanio is one of those civilized Venetian gentlemen who are well aware that asking someone to stand surety is different from asking a simple favour. He is finally rescued from his predicament by Portia's hand, but his fall implies

that to love someone is to stand at odds with the world, making a man like Antonio vulnerable before the irrational hate embodied in Shylock. Love is a noble emotion, but a lover must somehow cope with the problem that it often restricts him with disadvantages, because by living in close relationship with others, he exposes himself to the dangers and uncertainties of the world to an extent he has never dared in his more self-sufficient moments. Shylock does not risk anything, and he is eternally safe in his counting-house.

We have so far discussed the topics centered in the Venetian society and its inhabitants. And it is now the time to turn to Belmont and the casket story. The preceding part of the essay will serve to illuminate the importance of the casket theme which is mightily underrated by some critics. The episode is based on such abstract meanings as the distinction between ornaments and reality, and the manner of Bassanio's choosing the caskets is ritualistic more than anything in the play: he is no longer a prodigal so much as a Greek hero attempting the rescue of a sacrificed virgin. Professor Tillyard proposes to "read the play as we have to read Spenser,"[19] perhaps with Bassanio and Portia at the casket scene in his mind. But if there is any allegory intended, and if it is related to the central theme of comedy, consummation of love and realization of its power, then the allegory

is an obvious one, because the dramatist here has elaborated the scene in order to direct our attention to the proper emphasis, "'cause' of the play" as Miss Bradbrook calls it.[20]

The most important implication of the casket scene is that the choice of Bassanio involves risk and danger. Morocco and Arragon were created to choose the wrong caskets. But the manner of their act partakes of some ceremonious and solemn elements we see later in Bassanio's. Morocco has no scruple about his merit, but he is sensible enough to be disturbed by fear of Fortune's interference: Hercules may be easily beaten by Lichas in the game of dice, "And so may I, blind fortune leading me,/Miss that which one unworthier may attain,/And die with grieving" (II.i. 36-38). Arragon, Pride incarnated, asks sententiously "for who shall go about/To cozen fortune, and be honorable/Without the stamp of merit?" (II.ix. 37-39). The question is how men's merit, if there is any at all, can survive the arbitrary working of fortune who like a strumpet smiles on anyone as she pleases. However a man may boast of his sincerity and self-integrity, fortune can confound him with the tip of her fingers. Bassanio cannot enjoy Portia's love unless he overcomes fortune's power by his sheer intuition derived from love's imagination. He has to somehow extend his inner desert by translating it into the exterior form unmistakable as

daylight--pointing at the right casket with his finger. Portia expresses her honest fear that Bassanio may miss the right casket, and tries to delay his hazard, though her inner feeling is almost choked with passion: "And so, though yours, not yours. Prove it so,/Let fortune go to Hell for it, not I" (III.ii. 20-21). Bassanio gains our sympathy partly because he is capable of admitting his treacherous misgiving: "None but that ugly treason of mistrust/which makes me fear the enjoying of my love" (III.ii. 28-29).

While Bassanio is advancing toward his choice, Portia commands her servants to play the music which effectively creates a pause before Bassanio's first line, "So may the outward shows be least themselves" (III.ii. 73).

> "Tell me where is fancy bred,
> Or in the heart or in the head?
> How begot, how nourishèd?
> Reply, reply.
> It is engendered in the eyes,
> With gazing fed, and fancy dies
> In the cradle where it lies.
> Let us all ring fancy's knell.
> I'll begin it.--- Ding, dong, bell."
>
> All. "Ding, dong, bell."
>
> [III.ii. 63-72]

Professor Dover Wilson believes that the song points to the casket which contains Portia's counterfeit, with its rhymes "bred," "head" and "nourishèd" -- "lead."[21] But I favour Professor Barber's opinion, "The dramatic point

is precisely that there is no signal."[22] Portia herself says that she would be forsworn if she gives out any sign (III.ii. 10-11). The audience can be benefited by the trick Shakespeare has rather playfully elaborated, but we are meant to assume that Bassanio does not notice its implication, or else the meaning of hazard of this scene loses its seriousness. Above all, the song is a dirge for Fancy, and in this connection it has an enormous implication. The term Fancy points at a kind of love we have abundantly seen in A Midsummer Night's Dream--irrational, blind passion. What Bassanio challenges is in fact the limitation of such an inferior emotion which cannot insist on its validity beyond corporal finiteness. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, the dramatist purposely dispensed with the fully realized character who was capable of undertaking such a challenge. But Portia and Bassanio are meant from the start to conquer the difficulty with their own hands. They have somehow to be convinced of their mastership over chance before they can live with each other in confidence. The task involves a kind of ritual death of Fancy. During his long speech on distinction between ornaments and desert, Bassanio refers to the image of golden hair which is already familiar to us. But this time it is the symbol of rottenness and squalor.

> So are those crispèd snaky golden locks
> Which make such wanton gambols with the wind
> Upon supposèd fairness, often known
> To be the dowry of a second head,
> The skull that bred them in the sepulcher.
> [III.ii. 92-96]

The association of the referred golden hair with Portia's is almost inevitable, but it is no longer the sunny hair which has attracted many princes, but the wig made with the hair plucked from the dead woman's skull. The same image appears in sonnet 68, where the deceptive charm of ornament is anatomized: "To live a second life on second head,/Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay" (7-8). As an object of distant admiration, Portia's image as a golden fleece was adequate. But now the play has entered the different stage, and Bassanio has to prove that his love derives its justification from other than sense perception to which golden hair is naturally pleasing. The essential stimulus is not Fancy "engendered in the eyes,/ With gazing fed." Therefore, Bassanio's denunciation of ornament has to include Portia's physical beauty which is after all subject to decay. The particular image would have been disgusting if it had not occurred during this ritual moment when what is spoken refers to an abstract idea rather than to an actual person. After the ordeal is done, Bassanio can go back again to "We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece" (III.ii. 244). Portia's hair is still beautiful, but something has changed after we have

seen the negative aspect of it: we are no longer surprised by the information that the myth of the golden fleece has another aspect, where Medea avenges Jason's perjury by killing her two sons and his new mistress.

But the entire ceremony is not yet over. The ordeal of the knight for the sacrificed virgin is immediately followed by a process which is less romantic and more practical, because it concerns their future. Portia's speech by which she gives herself to Bassanio is touchingly girlish in its pose of surrender. The important thing is that it speaks about the necessary sequel of courtship: marriage relationship. They are no longer a Jason and a golden fleece, but husband and wife.

> But the full sum of me
> Is sum of something which, to term in gross,
> Is an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpracticed,
> Happy in this, she is not yet so old
> But she may learn. Happier than this,
> She is not bred so dull but she can learn.
> Happiest of all is that her gentle spirit
> Commits itself to yours to be directed,
> As from her lord, her governor, her king.
> [III.ii. 159-67]

The speech is, as Professor Traversi points out,[23] the repetition of Katherina's long bravura on obedience near the end of The Taming of The Shrew, though the speaker's individuality is now more strongly felt than before.

> Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
> Thy head, thy sovereign, one that cares for thee,
> And for thy maintainance commits his body
> To painful labor both by sea and land,

> To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
> Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure, and safe;
> And craves no other tribute at thy hands
> But love, fair looks and true obedience,
> Too little payment for so great a debt.
> Such duty as the subject owes the prince,
> Even such a woman oweth to her husband.
> [V.ii. 146-56]

In both speeches, the marriage relationship is identified with that between the sovereign and the vassal. The quarrel between them is a "war" (The Shrew, V.ii. 162), and peevish wife is a "graceless traitor" (The Shrew, V.ii. 160). Among Shakespeare's five comedies supposedly written before The Merchant of Venice, this concern with the marriage relationship proper was evident in The Comedy of Errors and The Taming of The Shrew. Both plays are incidentally of the sort whose dramatic aim is to make best of slap-stick farce with little element of romantic courtship, which is abundantly seen in such plays as Love's Labour's Lost or The Two Gentlemen of Verona. A Midsummer Night's Dream deals with the idea of marriage, but has very little to say about the marriage in practice. The Merchant of Venice is Shakespeare's first comedy which reconciles courtship and marriage in a single fable, or to put it in another way, for the first time it shows us eloquently that romantic courtship is necessarily followed by the lovers' toil in maintaining the stable relationship in marriage. Marriage heralds the beginning of a new life,

which is in one sense more vulnerable and needs a good care by husband and wife.

The quality which helps to maintain the marriage relationship is not always the same quality which was valuable during the stage of wooing. Very often, something quite other than enthusiastic gesture and mild smile is required. The Merchant of Venice is also a study of the value of wit in a married condition, and Portia gladly and charmingly demonstrates her gift. To borrow the phrase of Professor E. K. Chambers, Portia is Shakespeare's first "questing heroine."[24] What differentiates her from the heroines of the previous comedies is her ease in reconciling within a single personality yielding girlishness and strong confidence in her self-integrity. She is at one time presented as a virgin who entirely commits herself to her lord's directions, and at another time is found in a relaxed posture, enjoying herself with every woman's privilege--gossiping. The important thing is that these different aspects of her personality are not simply juxtaposed only to be accepted as another instance of the Elizabethan dramatists' fatal malady, disregard of "consistency in characterization," but have a definite relationship to the play's maturer comic vision.

The function of her wit is mainly displayed in the ring episode. The critics' response to the episode varies from neglect to Professor Traversi's "the incident

parallels in a broadly comic key the central moral of love as consisting of accepted risk, of the spontaneous gift of self."[25] Professor J. R. Brown thinks: "The whole episode is a light-hearted reminder that Portia has saved Antonio's life, and that the claim of generosity must always rank as high as that of possession."[26] Both critics' attitude is to connect the episode with the main issue of the play, and their interpretation is sound and just. But it tends to become too literate, and does not completely square with the episode's humour and light quality. The real implication of the episode should be taken in the sense Professor J. R. Brown states in the passage immediately following the already quoted one.

> The bawdy talk, which the misunderstandings provoke, also serves an important purpose; hitherto Bassanio and Portia have conducted their courtship and love in unsensual terms, almost as if the body was always a quietly acquiescing follower of the mind and spirit, but the manner in which they weather the disagreement about the ring shows that their love is appropriate to the world as well as to Belmont, the 'beautiful mountain' of a fairy-tale.[27]

The episode is the source of laughter, and that is what matters chiefly. We see in Bassanio's confusion a sign of healthy human inconsistency which adds a credit to Bassanio the average man. Portia takes all the advantages of the stage convention that the disguise is impenetrable, and she can adapt it for a special purpose: to see herself from the viewpoint of others. Thus Portia borrows the

mouth of a lawyer who is entitled to scorn the jealousy of Bassanio's wife on the basis of his work at the trial.

> An if your wife be not a madwoman,
> And know how well I have deserved the ring,
> She would not hold out enemy forever
> For giving it to me.
> [IV.i. 445-48]

The Portia who gave the ring to Bassanio with "I give them with this ring,/Which when you part from, lose, or give away,/Let it presage the ruin of your love" (III.ii. 173-75) is thus counterpoised by the rival portrait of a more relaxed, flexible kind. Neither of them loses any credit, and the process is more than mere correction of one by another. We now recognize Portia as a full human figure who is capable of posing both as a devoted lover and as a mature woman who can condemn her own jealousy with ease, and the agent of this double recognition is her wit.

Portia is quite aware that marriage relationship is after all one of the many which a man has to maintain during his course of social life. Friendship is one of them. Antonio asks Bassanio to give the ring to the lawyer by reminding him of their past friendship: "Let his deservings and my love withal/Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment" (IV.i. 450-51). Bassanio has a debt of one kind to the lawyer, one of another kind to Antonio. He has sworn to keep the ring for the marriage oath's sake. But a man must face such a dilemma quite

often, and it is sometimes both inevitable and reasonable that he should give the other obligation the first place. The important thing is that Portia is present at the same scene and that she approves the unwelcomed fact implicitly. Later back in Belmont, she can be a jealous "mad woman" who accuses her husband's betrayal with all the heat and coil of any woman: "Nerissa teaches me what to believe./ I'll die for't but some woman had the ring" (V.i. 207-8). It is only a gesture playfully imitated, but it at least gives utterance to her disappointment as a woman made of irrational instincts and strong emotional urge. She knows, perhaps with a tint of sadness, that a man's oath of everlasting love cannot be taken literally, and that Bassanio <u>can</u> disappoint her again in the near future, despite the oath spoken through the borrowed mouth of Gratiano: "Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing/ So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring" (V.i. 306-7). It is not a pleasant thing to recognize the limitation of the marriage status, but both Portia and Bassanio must somehow cope with the fact to keep a stable and lasting relationship with each other. There is something especially charming in the way in which Portia seizes the opportunity to monopolize her husband's attention by hinting at the possible love affair with the imaginary handsome lawyer.

> Let not that Doctor e'er come near my house.
> Since he hath got the jewel that I loved,
> And that which you did swear to keep for me,
> I will become as liberal as you.
> I'll not deny him anything I have,
> No, not my body nor my husband's bed.
> Know him I shall, I am well sure of it.
> Lie not a night from home, watch me like Argus.
> If you do not, if I be left alone,
> Now, by mine honor, which is yet mine own,
> I'll have that Doctor for my bedfellow.
> [V.i. 223-33]

The passage is set in the verse form, but it has the best quality of Shakespeare's witty, crisp prose spoken by Beatrice and Rosalind. The vigour of competent womanhood is sparkling, and the gesture of childish naughtiness is delightful more than anything else. We know quite well that Portia is only joking. But taking advantage of that point, the passage manages to convey to us that Portia can be attractive to other men and that Bassanio's puzzled face at Portia's "No, not my body nor my husband's bed" could be a little more sour.

I have refrained until now from giving a full treatment to Shylock, because it was necessary to establish beforehand the central theme of the play to avoid misunderstanding him. According to how we interpret his presence, we can easily turn the play into a "problem" comedy with its tragic overtone. Shylock's voice of humiliation and provoked anger is so strongly felt that the lovers' plea for free dedication is sometimes obscured. But there is no need to underplay the part.

Shylock's menacing quality was surely meant by the dramatist to contribute to the over-all effect of the play as a comedy. To present him as a perfect comic butt with his tottering steps and exaggerated heavy Jewish accent is as wrong as turning him into a martyr or a tragic hero from the viewpoint of the nineteenth century humanitarianism. What matters is not his Jewishness, but his actuality, and the fact that he is a challenger of certain values with an alternative of his proposal on his side--"spirit of calculation,"[28] accounting principle, legalism, self-sufficiency on the basis of absolute refusal of fellowship. What is crucial is that we <u>can</u> live by these principles "conveniently" and "comfortably," whatever the content of such a life might be, protected safely from perils and unhappiness which can possibly accompany the lovers' way of life. The play presents before our eyes these two life-principles, and rejects one in favour of the other, not because the latter is more comfortable or profitable, but simply because it is irrationally and inexplicably "good." Portia's excuse about the shedding of blood is a clever trick, and we enjoy its cleverness and the sudden reversal of the situation it brings. But it does not prove logically that Shylock's demand is either outrageous or inferior in any way: the issue stood in an equilibrium, and the next moment the lovers triumph and the Jew is shattered to the ground. This never happens

in our life, where legal obligation and "reasonableness" are the supreme command of society. The play is artificial, but it is because the play has its own vision of "good" life: it mildly forbids us to take "happiness" as synonymous with "ease," "safety" or even "comfort."

Shylock embodies Hate, which refuses any rationalization. Instead of giving a definite answer to the Duke's question why he is thus following his "losing suit" against Antonio, Shylock tries to dissolve the issue in the area of one's likes and dislikes, "humours" to which legal mechanism has nothing to say and is naturally helpless before its demand. Shylock has shown us explicitly why he hates Antonio: because he is a Christian (I.iii. 43), because he has lent money without taking interest (I.iii. 44-46), because he has abused him on the Rialto and even spat at him (I.iii. 107-14). But his hate, like that of Iago to Othello, cannot be satisfactorily located in specific motives. It is quite important to see the way in which Antonio describes Shylock's unmovable antagonism.

> I pray you, think you question with the Jew.
> You may as well go stand upon the beach
> And bid the main flood bate his usual height,
> You may as well use question with the wolf
> Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb,
> You may as well forbid the mountain pines
> To wag their high tops and to make no noise
> When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven,
> You may as well do anything most hard
> As seek to soften that--than which what's harder?
> His Jewish heart.
>
> [IV.i. 70-80]

Professor Burckhardt complains of the poor workmanship of the passage compared to Shylock's concrete and tough passage beginning with "You'll ask me why I rather choose to have" (IV.i. 40-62). Antonio's speech is "flaccidly oratorical" and "pedantic," and he concludes: "True, the burden of his speech is resignation; but it is feeble rather than noble, a collapse from over-statement into helplessness."[29] But the dramatic purpose of Antonio's lines is not to show us anything of the speaker's inner state, but to point at the nature of the antagonist's hate. There is nothing outstanding or beautiful about this poetry, but the repetitious reference to natural phenomenon is unmistakable. Shylock hates Antonio, as the sea changes her height and the wind blows upon the mountain pines. It is something that has to be faced as it is. There is no room for retreat or looking for the chance of escape. Reality is nakedly there, and its pose is a challenge. The one possible response is ready in Antonio's resignation, and the play affirms its validity at least in a suggestive manner.

The meaning of Portia's speech on mercy is only too apparent. It is a kind of "'thematic' appendix"[30] which tells us how to interpret the action. As Professor Kermode says, "only by a determined effort to avoid the obvious can one mistake the theme of The Merchant of Venice."[31] The conflict between justice and mercy, the

Old Law and the New Law of the Gospel is unmistakably there:

> Duke. How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?
> Shylock. What judgement shall I dread, doing no wrong?
> [IV.i. 88-89]

It is important to notice that Portia speaks to those parts of morality which Shylock shares with the Gentiles.

> Therefore, Jew,
> Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
> That in the course of justice none of us
> Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,
> And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
> The deeds of mercy.
> [IV.i. 197-202]

As Professor J. W. Lever points out, the speech is the expression of "the broadest monotheism": "It is based on the principles held in common by Christians and Jews--belief in God and the after-life--and deliberately passes over the distinctions between the two faiths."[32] "None of us," "we," "us" emphasize the point. What Shylock is required to do is to check his justice from the viewpoint which sees something more valuable and precious above social dictates. Shylock once insisted upon his humanity on the basis of his vulnerability: "Hath not a Jew eyes? . . . subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?" (III.i. 61-66). Beyond religious beliefs, social customs, races and individual

idiosyncrasies, all men are brothers under the natural law which precedes "temporal power" (IV.i. 190) and "sceptered sway" (IV.i. 193). The play does not exclude Shylock from this fundamental territory, and allows our sympathy to move toward him at some moments. But as Professor Barber tells us convincingly, Shylock claims "only a part of humanness, the lower part, physical and passional:"

> The similar self-pitying enumeration which Richard II makes differs significantly in going from "live with bread like you" to social responses and needs, "Taste grief,/Need friends" (R.II III.ii. 175-176). The passions in Shylock's speech are conceived as reflexes; the parallel clauses draw them all towards the level of "tickle . . . laugh."[33]

Shylock has to show the sign of his ability to render the deeds of mercy so that his claim to justice and the right as a common man could be "seasoned" by something-for-nothing whose spontaneous observance completes one's humanity. "Humanness" as the play sees it is not again synonymous with "self-sufficiency" or "self-righteousness." "Gentleness" would be the best word from the play's context. The word "gentle" occurs fourteen times during the action of the play. It is sometimes used for the meaning of the Christians (e.g., II.vi. 51), and both Portia and Jessica are often referred to as "gentle" (e.g., II.iv. 20; III.ii. 165, 255). The Duke can only expect a "gentle answer" from

Shylock, as the matter stands outside of his authority (IV.i. 34), and Portia's mercy is the "gentle rain" (IV.i. 185). The word is full of rich variety of meanings, and it is impossible and also unnecessary to extract one final meaning from the play's use of the word. The point is rather that the word "gentle," having nothing to do with one's beliefs and moral principle, points to those qualities which help to create a smooth and pleasant human relationship beyond such disagreements as caused by the difference in one's background and beliefs: those who ideologically belong to rival schools can nevertheless be "kind," "courteous" and "generous" to each other, and that for their mutual profits. It is the quality which we are too ready to dispense with for the pursuit of our own content and ease. Shylock is not an exception. Being offered a chance to show "gentleness" to the one who has surrendered to his mercy, Shylock despises to respond to the opportunity properly and as a consequence he abuses his own humanity. It is because Shakespeare is an Elizabethan that he takes it for granted that "gentle" also means "of noble birth" and "being a Christian," and we regret it for the sake of Shylock.

Some modern readers and audience may sense a nasty taste in the mouth, when they see Shylock utterly crushed by the court's decree which forces him to become a Christian and to give up half of his property to the

state's coffer, with the other half destined to Lorenzo and Jessica. We no longer share the Elizabethans' optimism that to convert a Jew is a favour and a charity. There is a slight suggestion of ironic view in Lancelot Gobbo's answer to Jessica's "I shall be saved by my husband. He hath made me a Christian."

> Truly, the more to blame he. We were Christians enow before, e'en as many as could well live, one by another. This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs. If we grow all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money.
>
> [III. v. 23-28]

But Gobbo's remark is too poor to change or readjust our attitude toward the main issue of the play, and his existence is as incompetently vague as his Moor mistress whom the play mentions only once, with no apparent purpose. Our reaction to certain cruelty in Shylock's fall might be the specimen of what the dramatist did not intend, but somehow emerged due to the change in moral and ideological background. However, Shylock defied the values the play cherished, and he must stand for the consequence. The conflict at the trial resembles the instinctive resistance of any living organism, either herb or man, to the harmful influences which threat its life and continuance from outside.

> Life is teleological, the rest of nature is apparently, mechanical; to maintain the pattern of vitality in a non-living universe is the most elementary instinctual purpose. An organism tends to keep its equilibrium amid the bombardment of aimless forces that beset it, to regain equilibrium when it has been disturbed, and to pursue a sequence of actions dictated by the need of keeping all its interdependent parts constantly renewed, their structure intact. Only organisms have needs; lifeless objects whirl or slide or tumble about, are shattered and scattered, struck together, piled up, without showing any impulse to return to some pre-eminent condition and function.[34]

This passage quoted from Mrs. Langer's book Feeling and Form (1953) does not have a direct relationship to our play, but it illuminates the archetypal meaning of the conflict between the lovers and Shylock: Shylock is an intruder with his plague, and the lovers' society maintained by the impulse of free give and take has to purge the infection in order to live. The conflict is fierce, and the enemy must be defeated thoroughly and completely. Antonio shows us quite another face when he spits upon Shylock's Jewish gabardine, and Portia who presents one penalty after another to dispirited Shylock is different from the gentle lady of Belmont. Professor J. R. Brown justly comments on this aspect of the play: "The trial scene shows that the pursuit of love's wealth does not necessarily bring with it a universal charity, a love which reaches even to one's enemies."[35] To achieve one's happiness is not an easy task and something quite other

than warm heart is required to beat down such an opponent as Shylock. The crisis must be strongly felt if the sense of victory is to be engrafted in the audience's mind with any actuality. The lovers have "fought blindly"[36] in one sense, but we cannot condemn them as hypocrites who preached on mercy, but in practice rendered one only in the limited scale. The comedy is not after all an irresponsible game played by cherubim. It is the magic of the play that even the lovers' limitation adds a credit to their "humanness" as we feel it from the whole dramatic structure.

In the last act, we return to Belmont and to the fairy tale world, with our mind released from intense moral conflict and legal debate. We are reminded of Shylock by Lorenzo's description of "The man that hath no music in himself" (V.i. 83-88), but it is no longer felt as a threat because of its distance. Surrounded by night's silence and sweet melody that creeps from the house, any disturbing thought loses keen edge. For the first time in the play, we are invited to the orchard where, sitting on the grassy bank, we can breathe the fresh air and look up at the night sky with its glimmering "patines of bright gold." In Venice, we have encountered only with "humanized nature," so to speak: nature adorned by human artifice, framed within the rich tapestry for the pleasure of the viewers. In Belmont, we have never been encouraged before

to lift the window-pane and see what it feels like to be outdoors in this dreamland where the trees are surely greener and the moon is surely brighter. Here for the first time, we have the poetry of nature as an object of admiration and contemplation.

> How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
> Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
> Creep in our ears. Soft stillness and the night
> Become the touches of sweet harmony.
> Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold.
> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins.
> Such harmony is in immortal souls,
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.
> [V.i. 54-65]

The last two lines hint at our corporal limitation, but the recognition is deprived of immediacy and only serves to add an exquisite pathos to the whole poetry. The crucial thing is, as Professor Barber points out, to notice certain "openness" in the whole scene: "The openness to experience, the images of reaching out towards it, or of welcoming it, letting music 'creep in our ears,' go with the perception of a gracious universe as Portia's mercy speech invoked."[37] The ordeal is done and the enemy is defeated. It is now the play's turn to let us experience how one feels amid the people who live by free give and take and are eager to commit a hazard for the sake of others. And such a way of life necessarily involves

certain openness toward nature and universal harmony implied through its beauty. We have seen hostile aspects of nature--dangerous rocks, unpredictable wind, and in the wide sense, Shylock's hate which was identified with natural phenomenon. But the dramatist sees to it that we feel no impediments in regarding nature as completely beneficent as far as this brief scene is concerned. The lovers can open their mind freely without busily looking around for the ominous approach of an unknown enemy. There is no need to search for the subtle implications supposedly weaved among the sugary poetry for the pleasure of highly inquisitive readers. Instead, what is required is to give our imagination full rein and recapture with the aid of poetry's power the Elizabethans' rapturous sensation when they looked up toward the night sky which was full of revelations, though eliminated later by modern astronomy.

> Whatever else a modern feels when he looks at the night sky, he certainly feels he is looking out--like one looking out from the saloon entrance on to the dark Atlantic or from the lighted porch upon dark and lonely moors. But if you accepted the Medieval Model you would feel like one looking in. The Earth is 'outside the city wall'. When the sun is up he dazzles us and we cannot see inside. Darkness, our own darkness, draws the veil and we catch a glimpse of the high pomps within; the vast, lighted concavity filled with music and life. And, looking in, we do not see, like Meredith's Lucifer, 'the army of unalterable law', but rather the revelry of insatiable love. We are watching the

> activity of creatures whose experience we can only lamely compare to that of one in the act of drinking, his thirst delighted yet not quenched.[38]
>
> The 'silence' which frightened Pascal was, according to the Model, wholly illusory; and the sky looks black only because we are seeing it through the dark glass of our own shadow. You must conceive yourself looking up at a world lighted, warmed, and resonant with music.[39]

The whole play ends at the moment of suspension when everything is eternally present and satisfied. There is nothing superfluous or lacking, and in this sense, the play is a perfect example of comedy as the medium of wish-fulfilment. If we are not satiated with its "happiness," it is because we have abundantly seen the suggested serious aspects which could have easily changed the direction of the play. Even in the last scene, Portia wittily tells us that her husband may disappoint her again despite his fervent oath. Antonio has not learned to be "clever" after all those dangers, and again willingly stands surety for Bassanio: "I dare be bound again,/My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord/Will never more break faith advisedly" (V.i. 251-53). Here is an old Antonio still, with his free devotion and disregard for his own safety. He is quite unaware that his love makes him vulnerable in the world, being unconscious of the danger of his commitment. But this time it is not Shylock that seals the bond with him, but gentle Portia: "Then you shall be his surety"

(V.i. 254). Portia is not in earnest, and Antonio will receive only mild rebuke from her when he forfeits. The dramatist dissolves the issue in jokes and laughter, but we are somewhat aware that Antonio's virtue can someday betray his master to the enemy.

CHAPTER III

AS YOU LIKE IT

As You Like It is the most delightful of Shakespeare's comedies. The first act economically presents the oppressing circumstance in which the hero and the heroine of romance stand at odds with their seniors in power. Then the play quickly moves to the forest of Arden, where eternal spring rules and the people "fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world" (I.1. 124-25). In this idyllic world nothing can be a real threat. Rosalind is first compelled to put on doublet and hose, but later in the forest she makes use of her disguise in playing a "holiday foolery" (I.iii. 14) with Orlando. The play's cynics, Touchstone and Jaques, do not break the comic equilibrium though they are sceptical of the lovers' values. Touchstone joins the marriage dance taking the hand of Audrey, and Jaques gives a blessing on the head of each of the newly married couples. Two evil characters are miraculously converted by encountering human kindness and unworldly wisdom in the forest. We welcome their

conversion with the same readiness with which we affirm the existence of the mysterious hermit who hovers around the forest, probably giving a contemptuous glance at Orlando's bad love poems nailed to the bark of the trees. The comic vision which the play finally offers is complete, and there is not even a suggestion of evil force which may interfere with the joyous celebration of four marriages.

But "joy" does not always mean "confidence," and the play is not after all mere "May-morning frolic prolonged into a lotos-eating afternoon."[1] Even the forest of Arden is not exempt from cold wind and rain which cool the hot cheeks of the enthusiastic "voluntary exiles." Act II opens with Duke Senior's speech which heroically rejects court life in favour of rustic life in Arden. But its content is given a subtle twist, compared to a passage in similar vein from the folk play of Robin Hood from which it has borrowed the basic pose of idyllic contentment.

> Now, my comates and brothers in exíle,
> Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
> Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
> More free from peril than the envious Court?
> Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,
> The seasons' difference, as the icy fang
> And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
> Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,
> Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say
> "This is no flattery. These are councilors
> That feelingly persuade me what I am."
> Sweet are the uses of adversity,
> Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,

Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.
And this our life exempt from public haunt
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
I would not change it.

[II.i. 1-18]

Marian, thou seest, though courtly pleasures want,
Yet country sport in Sherwood is not scant;
For the soul-ravishing delicious sound
Of instrumental music, we have found
The winged quiristers with diverse notes
Sent from their quaint recording pretty throats,
On every branch that compasseth our bow'r,
Without command contenting us each hour.
For arras hangings and rich tapestry
We have sweet nature's best embroidery.
For thy steel glass, wherein thou wont'st to look,
Thy crystal eyes gaze in a crystal brook.
At court a flower or two did deck thy head,
Now with whole garlands is it circled.
For what in wealth we want, we have in flowers,
And what we lose in halls, we find in bowers.[2]

The court-country antithesis is the "cause" of both speeches, but the attitudes of the two writers toward it are different. The latter writer's assumption is quite naive, and secure in its belief that country pleasure is greater than courtly pleasure even in its quantity: "At court a flower or two did deck thy head,/Now with whole garlands is it circled." It does not pause to reflect the difference in qualities between the two kinds of living. On the other hand, the Duke's passage tells implicitly that in spite of the charms and beauty it possesses, country life is something that was forced to be taken by necessity, and not exactly an ideal life of everyone's heart's desire. Adversity is sweet to the tough-minded Duke, but its fangs are keen and, apart from its "precious jewel," it is still

an ugly toad. It needed the aid of "old custom" in order that the Duke and his party might be adjusted to the spare life in the forest. After all, as Touchstone honestly remarks, the life in the city provided such a thing as domestic comfort: "Aye, now am I in Arden, the more fool I. When I was at home, I was in a better place. But travelers must be content" (II.iv. 16-18). To which tired Rosalind can find no answer but "Aye, be so, good Touchstone" (19). The Duke's passage allows us to discount some of the speaker's heroic gesture, while at the same time it invites our admiration. And in fact, the figure of a man shrinking from cold, and yet welcoming it with a smile because it is not tainted by the corruption of the court is comic, especially from the viewpoint of such a cynic as Jaques. The following remark by Amiens allows a space for plural interpretations: "Happy is your Grace,/ That can translate the stubbornness of fortune/Into so quiet and so sweet a style" (II.i. 18-20). Amiens probably means it with best honesty, but his chattering teeth can betray the truth without shame.

It is interesting to notice that, in spite of the fame of the forest of Arden for its pastoral beauty, there are not more than ten lines of description which acquaint us with the visual details of the forest.[3] This is extraordinary, especially when we think of the abundance of such passages in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Instead, we

are here encouraged to see the forest through the views of the play's characters. For Jaques, the forest is but an extension of the human society which the Duke has left behind. At least society's cruel mechanism is kept intact in the law of men's survival at the cost of others, not men but deer this time: "we/Are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse,/To fright the animals and to kill them up/In their assigned and native dwelling-place" (II.i. 60-63). Duke Senior was banished from his kingdom by his usurping brother. But if we readjust our point of view, he is a usurper and intruder in the kingdom of deer. But Jaques is not an animal lover. A flock of deer pass by their wounded companion without giving him any notice, and Jaques does not miss the opportunity to rail on the selfishness of "fat and greasy citizens" (II.i. 55). The forest and its inhabitants are no more than the reflection of his humorous feeling.

For Touchstone, a "material fool," the life in the forest is tedious "in respect it is not in the Court" (III.ii. 18), and "as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach: (III.ii. 20-21). But above all, Orlando's first impression of the forest gives us the best illustration of the relativity of the forest's image. For him, the forest is not at all the golden world which abundantly yields honey and nectar. The first problem is to hunt the food for hungry Adam. The forest is a desert

(II.vi. 17; II.vii. 110), and its inhabitants are all savages (II.vii. 107). He rudely makes his way to the food on the Duke's banquet table, with a naked weapon in his hand: "Forbear, and eat no more" (II.vii. 88). To the doubtful eyes of a hungry youth, the Duke's men appear no finer than a bunch of outlaws who do not know the taste of nurture and civility. At this brief moment, words like "inland" and "gentleness" as opposed to "desert" and "savagery" ring sweetly in the ear, reversing the process of pastoral criticism of corrupted civilization.

> If ever you have looked on better days,
> If ever been where bells have knolled to church,
> If ever sat at any good man's feast,
> If ever from your eyelids wiped a tear
> And know what 'tis to pity and be pitied,
> Let gentleness my strong enforcement be.
> [II.vii. 113-18]

The Duke's response is to repeat each item in the affirmative: "True is it that we have seen better days . . ." There is an unmistakable pathos in this exchange due to the recognition of the truth which the Duke's praise of country life at the beginning of Act II has omitted. It is in town-life that civilized and humane living is available--worship in the church on Sunday, lively conversation and glowing faces around the dinner table, life filled with compassion and kindness--they are embodiments of positive values which supplement and counterbalance the negative aspect of human society symbolized by the

corruption in the court. The Duke's men's way of life is nearly the fulfilment of pastoral ideal--departure from the noise of the metropolis to the quiet, contemplative life in the country, feeding on what nature yields. But from another point of view, to "Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time" (II.vii. 112), which is characteristic of such a life, is nothing but a tautological excuse for idleness and digression from normalcy. This is to put the point too severely, and in fact the play does not go further than suggesting it. But through this process of "placing" one set of values against another, our selectivity is prevented from its limited working, and we are allowed to respond to the court-country antithesis in a more complex and dynamic way.

The discussion of the forest of Arden inevitably leads to Shakespeare's use of pastoral convention in the play. The important thing about pastoral convention is, as Professor Kermode says, "that it is an urban product."[4] It presupposes that there is an obvious gap between the two modes of living, city's and country's, and also that the poet is living in the noise of the city. This urbanity was at the heart of the sixteenth century vogue of pastoral in England. Under this particular circumstance, the philosophical discussion of Nature and Art could be treated with subtle complexity which was not allowed to satire, another urban "kind." Both genres were used as

the poet's weapon to criticize the shallowness and the moral degeneration of the present society in contrast to the age of innocence in the past, but pastoral alone offered a chance to exalt Art and civilization above Nature in its association with primtiveness and an age before Grace.

> And always at the back of this literary attitude to Nature is the shadow of its opposite; the knowledge that Nature is rough, and the natural life in fact rather an animal affair; by long cultivation men have improved the natural breed, and the difference between the cultivated and the natural is the difference between a Ferdinand and a Caliban. It is surely inevitable that in such a situation the poet should allow his complexities to colour his talk of the rustic subject, as the Epic poet projected his intellectual tensions on to the hero. Sarpedon appeared as a man of extra-ordinary sensibility; the shepherd appears as philosopher and poet.[5]

Corin in As You Like It is a true natural philosopher, but hardly a poet. He is utterly satisfied with seeing his ewes graze and his lambs suck, and is not meant to sustain the dramatist's "intellectual tension." Shake-speare's method in As You Like It was to create the two characters, Touchstone and Jaques, who criticize the pastoral ideal by reminding its devotees of the other half of the truth. Jaques is the mightier of the two, because Touchstone, as Miss Helen Gardner observes, is a parodist and "The parodist must love what he parodies."[6] Touchstone loves the country life immensely in spite of

his pride as a courtier and the rudeness of shepherd's life. The nearest point he comes to the criticism of pastoral ideal, apart from scattered brief remarks, is his conversation with Corin in Act III, scene ii. But even then his interest lies more in displaying his wit by ridiculing simple Corin than in pointing out the disadvantages of shepherd's life from a reasonably acceptable viewpoint. We enjoy his sharp wit, but apparently our sympathy moves to Corin's natural philosophy: "Sir, I am a true laborer. I earn that I eat, get that I wear, owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness, glad of other men's good, content with my harm, and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck" (III.ii. 77-81). The scene discovers Touchstone's lack of commitment to any definite way of living and his distance from a life in which labour is still the source of one's pride.

Jaques is the real critic of the play. He is a mocker of idyllic contentment, and unlike Touchstone, he is not bored but active in seizing the chance to manifest his principle. The pretty song of Amiens is easily turned to a nonsense song worthy to be placed at the end of a sottie. Amiens sings:

> Under the greenwood tree
> Who loves to lie with me,
> And turn his merry note
> Unto the sweet bird's throat,
> Come hither, come hither, come hither.
> Here shall he see
> No enemy
> But winter and rough weather.
>
> [II.v. 1-8]

Jaques' version goes:

> If it do come to pass
> That any man turn ass,
> Leaving his wealth and ease
> A stubborn will to please,
> Ducdame, ducdame, ducdame.
> Here shall he see
> Gross fools as he,
> An if he will come to me.
> [II.v. 52-59]

The Duke's patience is only a "stubborn will" and those who gladly accept the invitation to the forest's life are just as much fools as the Duke's men who think their exile an improvement. This is of course a distortion, and wilfully neglects the element of Christian humility, brotherliness and unworldiness which such a critic as Professor Barber finds in the folly of going to Arden.[7] Jaques' alien notion of things among the rest of the Duke's party and the "country copulatives" (V.iv. 57-58) is most clearly illustrated in his famous speech on the seven ages of man.

> All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players.
> They have their exits and their entrances,
> And one man in his time plays many parts,
> His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
> Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
> Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
> And shining morning face, creeping like snail
> Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
> Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
> Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
> Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
> Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
> Seeking the bubble reputation
> Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,

> In fair round belly with good capon lined,
> With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
> Full of wise saws and modern instances,
> And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
> Into the lean and slippered Pantaloon
> With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
> His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
> For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
> Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
> And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
> That ends this strange eventful history,
> Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
> [II.vii. 139-66]

The most important thing about the speech is that it presents the different notion of time which makes a sharp contrast to the sense of time we feel from almost everywhere in the play. Such phrases as "fleet the time carelessly," "willingly could waste my time in it" (II.iv. 95) or "Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time" are essential to the relaxed outlook of pastoral life. Miss Gardner remarks: "In Shakespeare's comedies time goes by fits and starts. It is not so much a movement onwards as a space in which to work things out."[8] If we consult Rosalind who thinks "Time travels in divers paces with divers persons" (III.ii. 326-27), for those who are out of the routine of workaday world time moves with jocund ambling. Against this "lazy foot of time" Jaques' speech presents a span of life, a history with its start, intermediate sections and the final goal. Time does not move by fits and starts as it is felt by an individual, but it moves forward steadily and mercilessly according to the

predestinated scheme. Man is but a player when he is located in this cold mechanism, fulfilling one role after another, and then finally dropping headlong into oblivion. The essential idea is the notion of time as a destroyer which is the recurrent theme of Shakespeare's sonnets, and we have partly seen both in A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Merchant of Venice. What the speech tells us is simple as Touchstone's "And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,/And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot,/ And thereby hangs a tale" (II.vii. 26-28): our life does not last forever and the process of growing ends in death. The nineteenth century critics tried to connect the philosophy of the speech to the speaker's personality.[9] The recent critics, though they are generally doubtful of the nineteenth century criticism's method, are still eager to point out what Jaques' speech omits. For instance, Professor Frederick Turner, who discusses Shakespeare's plays from the metaphysical idea of time, remarks:

> This celebrated passage is oddly hypermetropic: Jaques is longsighted, and cannot see the trees for the wood. The statistical studies of sociologists frequently give the same impression of selective blindness. The individual is devalued, exceptions are discounted, particulars yield to trends, freedom and significance are made to seem absurd or irrelevant. . . . Yet time is seamless. It has no stages. And it is in this intimate connection of each moment of time with the next that the possibility of being one person, not just an infinite sequence of stages, can exist. If one takes an individual out of his temporal context at various stages of his development, as Jaques does, one will inevitably falsify as well as omit much of what he is.[10]

This is a coherent and clear-cut diagnosis of Jaques' "objective" time, and as Professor Turner convincingly points out, the play rejects it in favour of the lovers' "subjective" time. And as if to illustrate the point, as soon as the speech is finished, old Adam who has actually lost his teeth in service (I.i. 87-88) is carried on the back of kind Orlando, and the Duke receives the old man with "Welcome. Set down your venerable burthen,/And let him feed" (II.vii. 167-68). An old age is not senility, but venerableness, when the society protects its weaker members on the basis of broad spirit of fellowship. Adam's presence defies eloquently more than anything else the falsehood of Jaques' "second childishness and mere oblivion." One memory which is still clear in the present writer's mind is the reaction of one actor who impersonated Jaques to old Adam's entrance. His good humour was suddenly cooled and he stared at the old man with sour disgust on his face, as if stinking dirt was thrown on the banquet table. He remained at the corner of the stage until everybody else had retired. Then he sat on one of the empty stools under the half-cut, dim light, and imitated Adam's greedy eating with exact mimicry of paralyzed hands and obscure eyes, and finally gave out a desperate, hollow, half self-mocking laugh.

But after all is said and affirmed, one cannot help but feel that our unfavourable reaction to Jaques'

seven ages of man speech has been given a too heavy emphasis, just as we feel that Jaques in As You Like It is a more agreeable person than the critics try to persuade us. While agreeing to Professor Turner's criticism of Jaques' sense of time, we are never sure how far our own cautiousness against the evils of the twentieth century mechanization and statistic analysis is affecting our response. Such a thought would probably have not troubled the mind of the Elizabethans who did not know the "subjective time" of Marcel Proust and Thomas Mann. Modern critics tend to miss the point, but it seems legitimate to say that Jaques' presence creates a reliable source of one kind of confidence upon which the entire play stands. Professor R. A. Foakes, who, as I take it, attempts a correction at the excessively intellectual appreciation of the part, comments on Jaques' "maturity."

> What Jaques represents here is a voice of maturity. It is not that he is 'right'; indeed, he is no more right than others, and all the perspectives on time are authentic. The point is rather that, although he is mocked on all sides as 'Monsieur Melancholy', Jaques carries a curious authority of voice, an authority derived from the sense he conveys of being mature, of being able to look at what is around him with a humorous detachment, of offering the voice of experience. He has been a sensual libertine at some time, if we can believe Duke Senior, and has evidently outgrown this, to act a part not listed in the roles he describes in his speech, that of intelligent, sometimes satirical, and generally compassionate observer, not so clever as to avoid mockery himself, nor so satirical as ever to suggest bitterness, but sane and reasonable.[11]

Miss Gardner remarks: "What Jaques has left out of his picture of man's strange eventful pilgrimage is love and companionship, sweet society, the banquet under the boughs to which Duke Senior welcomes Orlando and Adam."[12] True, but is the speech meant to bear any kind of finality and completeness? Is it not possible to assume that the speech had to leave out any reference to human kindness in order to accomplish unambiguously the dramatist's aim to establish an anti-comic viewpoint which cuts through the fabric of the play? Miss Gardner comments later that if Jaques were not there to give expression to "a certain sour distaste for life," "we might be tempted to find the picture of life in the forest too sweet."[13] Cannot we raise this facet of the speech from such a supplementary position?

Jaques' speech is the reworking of a commonplace in medieval and Renaissance literature, and we do not have to inquire into its metaphysical implication too earnestly. The important thing is the familiarity which does not fail to be recognized as soon as the first several lines are delivered. The key note of the speech is Humanistic, and can be easily transferred into the sermon which recommends detachment from worldly affairs as a crucial virtue. Any Elizabethan probably did not miss that by a slight push the argument could be advanced to

the radical Protestantism of Fulke Greville's fierce lines which depict the Day of Judgement.

> Whenas man's life, the light of human lust,
> In socket of his earthly lanthorn burns,
> That all this glory unto ashes must,
> And generation to corruption turns,
> Then fond desires, that only fear their end,
> Do vainly wish for life, but to amend.
>
> But when this life is from the body fled,
> To see itself in that eternal glass,
> Where time doth end, and thoughts accuse the dead,
> Where all to come is one with all that was,
> Then living men ask how he left his breath,
> That while he lived never thought of death.[14]
> [Caelica, 87]

Time can end, and the comedy cannot insist on its vision of human happiness in the region where "thoughts accuse the dead," and "all to come is one with all that was." Medieval romance and the tradition of courtly love invented the Religion of Love in order to expel the annoying shadow of religious commandment, but after all it was a "temporary truancy." Professor C. S. Lewis speaks of the limitation of the Middle Age's concept of Amor before its rival, religious piety.

> It may be solemn, but its solemnity is only for the moment. It may be touching, but it never forgets that there are sorrows and dangers before which those of love must be ready, when the moment comes, to give way. . . . The authors are all going to repent when the book is over. . . . We hear the bell clang; and the children, suddenly hushed and grave, and a little frightened, troop back to their master.[15]

Shakespeare's comedy is apparently the distant heir of the medieval courtly love tradition, though the process is disintegrated by the replacement of adultery by a romantic ideal of marriage. The religious implication cannot be successfully brought into comedy, unless its aim is other than depicting the fulfilment of romantic love in marriage. Measure for Measure is obviously enriched by its deep interest in the religious attitude toward life, but the play's main stuff is not the wooing of the lovers. Jaques' seven ages of man speech is not religious in its tone, but it is also quite unprotected by humour. This sense of exposure and independence from the context ensures the speech's function to point at a remote, but insistent presence of a sceptical idea which the comic writers are too willing to ignore. From there, it takes just a few steps to reach the religious absolutism of Fulke Greville. It is interesting that Sir Walter Ralegh who wrote the poem "On the Life of Man," in which he compares man's life to a play ("What is our life? A play of passion,/Our mirth the music of division;/ Our mothers' wombs the tiring houses be,/Where we are dressed for this short comedy;/. . . Only we die in earnest, that's no jest"[16]), was also a sincere Anglican.

It is important to notice that the play's optimistic notion of time presupposes its opposite as expressed in Jaques' speech. The song which the two pages sing for

Touchstone in Act V, scene iii gives a composite expression to the play's characteristic idea of timeliness and the carpe diem motif.

> And therefore take the present time,
> With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
> For love is crownèd with the prime,
> In the spring time, the only pretty ringtime,
> When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding.
> Sweet lovers love the spring.
>
> [V.iii. 31-36]

This notion of love as the child of spring and man's appreciation of one moment as opposed to another derives its justification from the recognition of life's limitation: "How that a life was but a flower" (V.iii. 29). "Prime" implicitly reminds us that there are decline and decay following at close intervals. As Professor Barber rightly remarks, "Holiday affirmations in praise of folly were limited by the underlying assumption that the natural in man is only one part of him, the part that will fade."[17] Thus Jaques' speech is not in opposition to the carpe diem motif of the play, but gives it the sense of immediacy and preciousness. The two words, "temporal" and "temporary," point to a kind of limited span of time, if we forget the range of awareness which differentiates them. As the former word is concerned with the wider awareness and enlightened by the knowledge that human consciousness is actually an isolated point upon the vast, nonhuman region, Jaques' speech creates a perspective which helps our total response to become inclusive as well as

concentrated. It is crucial that the process does not involve any kind of cynicism. As "seriousness" and "humour" are reconciled through the use of wit, judgement and feeling do not contradict each other in a comedy.

The pastoral ideal needs many assumptions to stand on its feet, and is quite vulnerable to a blow from the hostile attitude which it has dispensed with. Thus Marlowe's pastoral poem, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love," which idealized the lover's Arcadia where no amorous pleasure was wanting, met the difficult reaction of Sir Walter Ralegh in his "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd." Ralegh paraphrased Marlowe's lines in the spirit of parody and discovered the artificiality of idyllic grandeur. Ralegh's method was to insert the somber observance of nature's destructive force in the midst of pastoral landscape: "Time drives the flocks from field to fold/When rivers rage and rocks grow cold" (5-6), or "The flowers do fade, and wanton fields/To wayward winter reckoning yields;/A honey tongue, a heart of gall,/Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall" (9-12).[18] But in <u>As You Like It</u> the presentation of the pastoral ideal is already tried by such an argument, and the play can easily include it as the part of its whole dramatic experience. To the sceptical eyes of Ralegh, the wanton lovers who spend their days in singing ditties and dancing in the field are "In folly ripe, in reason rotten."[19] However,

the comedy offers the chance to master one's folly by laughing it away. To explore this aspect, we have to turn to the play's idea of love and its folly centered on Rosalind.

The forest of Arden is in the heyday of love's folly. It is no wonder that the most headstrong of love-despiser is converted at first sight of a handsome stranger. The tyrannical Phebe easily melts to fruitless sighs and tears, and the wooing of Oliver and Celia is as brief as Caesar's battle: "I came, saw, and overcame" (V.ii. 33-34). But in the play's source, Lodge's prose romance Rosalynde (1590), it is a different story. Ganymede and Aliena are attacked by the robbers, and Saladyne (Oliver) succours the ladies and Rosader (Orlando), who was wounded in the fight. Shakespeare omits this scene. Miss Gardner observes: "Maidens naturally fall in love with brave young men who rescue them. But Shakespeare needs to find no 'reasons for loving' in this play in which a dead shepherd's saw is quoted as a word of truth: 'Whoever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight.'"[20] Irrationality of love is infecting everyone, and no one is ashamed of his disease or tries to hide it. The extraordinary thing is that foolish behaviour is regarded as the sign of a true lover. Love-stricken Silvius implores the attention of somewhat half-minded Corin: "How many actions most ridiculous/Hast

thou been drawn to by thy fantasy?" (II.iv. 30-31). And his conclusion is: "If thou remember'st not the slightest folly/That ever love did make thee run into,/Thou hast not loved" (II.iv. 34-36).

Orlando even advertises his folly by running around the forest with a knife ready in his hand, carving the name of "unexpressive she" (III.ii. 10) on every tree. He comes straight out of A Midsummer Night's Dream in the sense that he is completely committed to love's passion holding nothing in reserve. His posture as a devoted slave to his mistress is heroic, but at the same time we are not asked to take his breathless adoration too seriously, as his verse is clearly the work of an amateur and compounded of adolescent innocence and mediocrity. Rosalind herself can be as ridiculous as Orlando when she lets her loving woman's part go ahead of her role as a lady incognito: "Alas the day! What shall I do with my doublet and hose? What did he when thou sawst him? What said he? How looked he? Wherein went he? What makes he here? Did he ask for me? . . . Answer me in one word" (III.ii. 231-37). To which Celia answers in an appropriately mocking tone: "You must borrow me Gargantua's mouth first. 'Tis a word too great for any mouth of this age's size" (III.ii. 238-40). If there is anything in the play which transcends the court-country antithesis, love's folly is the most

powerful one, because it strikes its root into a deeper place than particular social settings which are used as the vehicles of pastoral contrast. Touchstone's remark is illuminating in this respect: "We that are true lovers run into strange capers, but as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in love mortal in folly" (II.iv. 54-56). To which Rosalind replies: "Thou speakst wiser than thou art ware of" (II.iv. 57). The lines are cloaked in the speaker's pretended air of casualness, but they bear a serious import as they relate love's folly to the general sense of corruption and finiteness implied by the word "mortal." Folly is not an attribute of inferior emotions possessed by the country rustics who do not know the meaning of "honour" in love, but a sign of our common doom which is imposed upon everyone of us, regardless of age, sex, social status and individual creed.

Touchstone's solution for coping with love's folly is as unambiguous as it could be. He mocks away all the romantic nonsense about love and takes what remains--instinct. Professor J. R. Brown is somewhat generous in his understanding of Touchstone's affection for Audrey, believing that "Yet once Touchstone finds Audrey his attitude changes; the desire to possess involves him, by degrees, in the mutual order of love."[21] But this is surely to sentimentalize Touchstone's churlish, but consistent attitude toward love. He camouflages his

motive of marriage by decorating it with the monstrous exaggeration of the old joke about the horn (III.iii. 48-63), but we know that the sexual drive is in fact what hastens him to the door of marriage: "We must be married or we must live in bawdry" (III.iii. 99). Touchstone can step out of love's folly, but cannot completely part with his need of a woman. "As the ox hath his bow, sir, the horse his curb, and the falcon her bells, so man hath his desires; and as pigeons bill, so wedlock would be nibbling" (III.iii. 80-83). This is the part of the truth, as Jaques' seven ages of man speech is about the part of man's "erring pilgrimage." But as Professor Barber points out, it is a necessary part.

> But to assume that only one girl will do is, after all, an extreme, an ideal attitude: the other half of the truth, which lies in wait to mock sublimity, is instinct. . . . The result of including in Touchstone a representative of what in love is unromantic is not, however, to undercut the play's romance: on the contrary, the fool's cynicism, or one-sided realism, forestalls the cynicism with which the audience might greet a play where his sort of realism had been ignored.[22]

Love is not a matter of life and death, but the wanton child of spring. Touchstone is too ready to don a holiday jacket in which he can stretch himself comfortably, forgetting for a moment the vexing disputes about marriage obligation and its status.

It may sound too ingenious to say that the play's core as romance is expressed by frail and ineffective Silvius, but careful reading of the part confirms the impression. He is a simple shepherd and has never been to court, but as even Phebe admits ("But since that thou canst talk of love so well" III.v. 94), his devotion is continually expressed by the exact diction and sentiment of the Petrarchan love poems. His is essentially the pose of a court lover who humbly and exuberantly kisses the toe of his cruel mistress. At one point Silvius asks gentleness from Phebe, reminding her that even the bloody "common executioner" does not chop off the victim's head without asking pardon (III.v. 3-7), and another time he complains how he is suffering by the "wounds invisible/ That love's keen arrows make" (III.v. 30-31). All these faithfully follow the pattern of conventional complaints of an unrequited lover who appears so often in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century English secular love poems. What makes Silvius ridiculous is that the object of his adoration is a Phebe rather than a Stella, but if we forget this for the moment, his passion reflects the intense feeling that we might find in Rosalind's love to Orlando, or vice versa. But Rosalind scarcely expresses her emotion in a formal manner, and we are never invited to fathom the depth of Orlando's affection. Silvius' simplicity is the best vehicle to convey indirectly the

solemn and noble emotion which stirs the heart of our heroine. Rosalind speaks through the mouth of Silvius what is made difficult to say because of her disguise and the company of keen-eyed critics.

> So holy and so perfect is my love,
> And I in such a poverty of grace,
> That I shall think it a most plenteous crop
> To glean the broken ears after the man
> That the main harvest reaps. Loose now and then
> A scattered smile, and that I'll live upon.
> [III.v. 99-104]

None of this poetry's conceits and phrases has anything remarkable about it, but the speaker's humbleness and faith directly hit us. As You Like It is a comedy of encounters between various persons--Rosalind and Orlando, Rosalind and Jaques, Orlando and Jaques, Jaques and Touchstone. However, as Professor Harold Jenkins points out, the encounter which does not occur has its significance as well: "Touchstone is only once, and Jaques never, allowed a sight of Silvius before the final scene of the play. Silvius has not to be destroyed or the play will lack something near its center."[23] Orlando can stand Jaques' ridicule and even makes his opponent look absurd. But Silvius' simplicity admits no space for witticism, and he is an easy prey for the cynicism of either Touchstone or Jaques. Professor G. K. Hunter observes that "We may see the formality of Hymen as only the emergence of a subdued current which has run through the play."[24]

Rosalind gives herself to Orlando with "I'll have no husband, if you be not he" (V.iv. 129), and we realize for the first time that the sentiment which has stirred Rosalind was in fact much more awe-inspiring than we were allowed to know. But also our Silvius plays not a small part in sustaining the same sentiment in his solitary nook sheltered from the noise of the crowded avenue.

In the midst of this tumult stands Rosalind, and her weapon to cope with besetting problems is her wit. Touchstone is no Touchstone beside Rosalind. He ridicules Rosalind who appears reading Orlando's verse which she has found on a tree. She still does not know that the author of the verse is Orlando, but she obviously feels pity for this forlorn lover and is more than displeased by Touchstone's parodying of the verse: "If a hart do lack a hind,/Let him seek out Rosalind./If the cat will after kind,/So be sure will Rosalind. etc." (III.ii. 107-10). To Touchstone's "Truly, the tree yields bad fruit" (III.ii. 122), Rosalind retorts: "I'll graff it with you, and then I shall graff it with a medlar. Then it will be the earliest fruit i' the country, for you'll be rotten ere you be half ripe, and that's the right virtue of the medlar" (III.ii. 123-28). The fruit of the medlar tree usually bears late in the season, but if it is graffed with the yew (i.e., "you"--Touchstone), it will be already rotten in the middle of the season because of

the forwardness of Touchstone.[25] Medlar is also used here with a quibble on "meddler." In other words, Touchstone's cynicism is a virtue for those that love the half-rotten flavour of medlar, but it is a vice when it is graffed with, say, an orange tree whose fruit attracts the eaters with fresh smell and "ripe" taste. It is a difference between Jaques' love of affected singularity and Rosalind's love of normative temperament, between Touchstone's instinctive idea of love and the play's romantic idea of marriage.

Jaques is another butt for Rosalind's wit. Her poise is impressed in our minds by her criticism of Jaques' guise of melancholy: "Those that are in extremity of either are abominable fellows, and betray themselves to every modern censure worse than drunkards" (IV.i. 5-7). In spite of Jaques' careful definition of his melancholy (10-20), Rosalind goes straight into those part of his which are rarely shown to the audience: "A traveler!" For a brief moment, Jaques is identified with much satirized English traveler who has picked up every kind of vice from all over the Continent. Indeed, Jonson and the other Jacobean comic writers would be tempted to find the caricature of a country fop intoxicated by the luxury of city life in such a passage: "I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's; then, to have seen much and

to have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands" (IV.i. 22-25). It is characteristic of Jacobean satiric comedy that the fop has inherited a large sum of money and land from his rich father, but the estate is usually mortgaged or leased out to others, and actually he is penniless. This aspect of Jaques' shallowness and artificiality is not meant to stay in our mind. It finishes its function after it has aided to readjust our attitude toward this well-experienced critic. But most important of all, this brief scene provides Rosalind with a chance to subordinate, not Jaques himself, but also his "sundry contemplation" which otherwise would remain as a potential danger to the play's sense of harmony because of its isolated distinctiveness.

Rosalind was, like Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing, born under a dancing star, and her lively wit cannot be neatly contained within an ordered verse form. As her feeling is wild and unpredictable, free prose which allows quick movement and sudden change becomes the superb means of her expression. Prose in Shakespeare's earlier comedies was chiefly assigned to the country rustics and household servants, and though their "russet yeas and honest kersey noes" sometimes functioned as a silent criticism of their betters' linguistic affectation, it was still the language of lower intellect and could not serve for highly imaginative purpose. But when

Euphuistic wit gives it the ground to stand upon, it can be used as a competent vehicle to express the speaker's self-sufficient gaiety and alert intellect which manipulates pun, alliteration and quibbling. The most important function of Rosalind's wit is to suggest a distance which exists between the speaker's inner state and what is actually spoken. What Professor G. K. Hunter observes of Much Ado About Nothing is also applicable to our play: "Shakespeare uses the detachment of the person speaking from the thing spoken, which is an essential feature of wit, to limit our sense of these characters' irrevocable psychological involvement in the attitudes they deploy. Comic exaggeration of one's own standpoint is one obvious way of doing this."[26] We have numerous examples of this comic exaggeration in Rosalind's speeches. For instance, the following lines from Act IV, scene i, where Rosalind tells Orlando the absurdity of dying for love, are a good specimen.

> No, faith, die by attorney. The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet, in a love cause. Troilus had his brains dashed out with a Grecian club, yet he did what he could to die before, and he is one of the patterns of love. Leander, he would have lived many a fair year, though Hero had turned nun, if it had not been for a hot midsummer night; for, good youth, he went but forth to wash him in the Hellespont and being taken with the cramp was drowned. And the foolish chroniclers of that age found it was "Hero of Sestos." But these are all lies. Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love.
>
> [IV.i. 94-108]

Rosalind's feigned purpose is to cure Orlando of his love madness, and to that end she makes the famous lovers of the Western literature look absurd by monstrous exaggeration. On the pretended level where Rosalind is a doctor and Orlando is a patient, "Love is merely a madness," and "deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do" (III.ii. 420-22), and man is constant only when he is "in" (III.iv. 30). The old chroniclers elevated the heroic death of Leander. But death is not essentially heroic or even distinctive, but can be mockingly casual. Above all, how can love which is no other than an accidental outburst of irrational passion change the physical details of dying? Certain it is that men have died and worms have eaten them, and before the presence of this irrevocable cycle of birth and death, it appears rather trivial to discuss whether one has manifested his integrity in love until the point of death. As far as these lines are concerned, Rosalind is looking at things through the dark glasses worn by Jaques. But this takes place on the feigned level and we know that what is actually spoken does not exactly echo the speaker's real sentiment. Broadly comic key and comfortably relaxed situation make the impression a firm one. After all, Rosalind is only playing a part with relish, and as any romantic heroine desires, she wants to see her lover swimming across the stormy Hellespont even risking his life. It is just as we see

her exalted face behind her pretended mask when Orlando positively rejects her proposal to cure him: "I would not be cured, youth" (III.ii. 446). But an important thing is to notice that playing or feigning a part is also a mode of existence. Professor Barber's phrase, "leaving the judgement free to mock what the heart embraces,"[27] explains the crucial virtue of Rosalind's wit.

> Love has been made independent of illusions without becoming any the less intense; it is therefore inoculated against life's unromantic contradictions. To emphasize by humor the limitations of the experience has become a way of asserting its reality. . . . the humor functions in the play as a whole to implement a wider awareness, maintaining proportion where less disciplined and coherent art falsifies by presenting a part as though it were the whole.[28]

In some places, Rosalind's wit works into another, slightly different, direction, though the double-edged function of wit is kept no less intact. We have seen the discussion of the marriage relationship through Portia's witticism in The Merchant of Venice. Rosalind shows a great deal of interest in that field. To Orlando's oath to have Rosalind "Forever and a day" (IV.i. 145) after he is married to her, Rosalind expresses a doubt.

> Say "a day," without the "ever." No, no, Orlando. Men are April when they woo, December when they wed. Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives. I will be more jealous of thee than a Barbary cock pigeon over his hen, more clamorous than a parrot against rain, more newfangled than an ape,

> more giddy in my desires than a monkey. I will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain, and I will do that when you are disposed to be merry. I will laugh like a hyen, and that when thou art inclined to sleep.
>
> [IV.i. 146-57]

Here, Rosalind's disguise allows her to talk like a "saucy lackey," and taking that advantage, she can talk about the problems which might appear in the future after she is married to Orlando. Orlando cannot quite grasp the point, believing that his future bride is the paragon of all feminine virtues: "But will my Rosalind do so?" (IV.i. 158). To which Rosalind playfully replies: "By my life, she will do as I do" (159). There is an apparent gap between the two speakers' awareness. While Orlando is confined within the romantic love convention which believes its heroine to be virtually flawless, Rosalind steps out of the convention and sees herself as an ordinary woman, jealous as a Barbary cock pigeon, more clamorous than a parrot, giddy and newfangled in her desires. Benedick's conclusion in Much Ado About Nothing was that "man is a giddy thing" (V.iv. 109), and that particular foible served as a happy rationale for the play's all round ending. But human inconsistency is not always a welcomed element especially when a pair of male female is permanently living under the same roof. They have to somehow find a way to cope with each other's failings and trivial interests which the romantic love

convention usually omits rather inevitably. Even "brave" Orlando, who dared to try a combat with a lioness, freely shows human trait of unpunctuality: he is twice late for an appointment. Naturally he might not feel a boiling enthusiasm for meeting a shepherd boy whom he is only assuming to be Rosalind, and he is late the second time by reason of the battle with a lioness. But his unpunctuality implicitly tells us something of his foibles which might appear when he steps out of the role as a hero of romance. Rosalind swears by "all pretty oaths that are not dangerous" (IV.i. 193-94) that a lover who arrives even one minute behind the promised time is a "most pathetical break-promise" (196). She is, as usual, just feigning a part, but at least it is a part near the center of her heart. She is quite aware of the unpredictable nature of time ("Well, Time is the old justice that examines all such offenders, and let Time try. Adieu" (IV.i. 203-4), but her loving woman's part can easily occupy the central place, pushing aside her prudent reservation: "Alas, dear love, I cannot lack thee two hours!" (IV.i. 183). We laugh at Rosalind's folly, but she too laughs at her own folly with us. And amid this pleasant whirlwind of laughter, we are somewhat assured that this couple will make a successful marriage life in spite of difficulties and obstacles which might beset them.

Thus, Rosalind's wit is of central importance when we try to see how different attitudes or ideas are reconciled and made to contribute to a more complex statement. Among all characters in the play, Rosalind alone is appointed to provide a focus for the various views of things without marring their truth in any way. And at the same time, as she is involved in romance as its heroine, the ultimate impression which the audience get from the entire picture projected through that particular focus must be an affirmative and pleasant one.[29] Both Jaques and Touchstone have no such responsibility to the whole, and they can speak out their store of wisdom as much as they like. But what the play demands is not wisdom which throws light on a part of life's meaning, however correct and piercing it may be. Rosalind's wit stands in antithesis with wisdom in the sense that wit is inclusive while wisdom which is possessed either by Touchstone or Jaques, or even Corin, is exclusive and justifies itself by the negation of other "wisdom." Therefore, what the play finally recommends is not a particular set of values so much as normative temperament and the sense of proportion which can use wisdom to make out one's happiness. This might sound like "climbing the house-top to unlock the little gate,"[30] but comedy is after all the medium to confirm the commonplace and the obvious.

CHAPTER IV

TWELFTH NIGHT

Twelfth Night marks the conclusion of Shakespeare's early career as a comic writer. Several materials are now generally acknowledged as the possible sources--the anonymous Sienese comedy, "Gl'Ingannati, Bandello's Novelle (1554), and Barnaby Riche's Apolonius and Silla (1581). But as Professor Harold Jenkins thinks,[1] it is reasonable to assume that Shakespeare repeated the devices and interests of his earlier comedies, notably The Comedy of Errors and The Two Gentlemen of Verona. The romantic story of the twin's separation by the shipwreck and their subsequent reunion is already told in The Comedy of Errors, originally borrowed from Menaechmi of Plautus, and the "error" which is caused by the likeness of the twin forms the farcical core of our play in the mock-duel between Aguecheek and Viola. The Two Gentlemen of Verona has told the episode of disguised Julia playing a go-between for Proteus, the one she really loves. Such an exchange between Silvia and Julia, "How tall was she?" "About my stature" (T.G.V. IV.iv. 162-63) finds its direct echo in

the delicate conversation between Orsino and Viola: "But died thy sister of her love, my boy?" "I am all the daughters of my father's house,/And all the brothers too. And yet I know not" (II.iv. 122-24). There are also several echoes from the other comedies. Olivia's illusionary love for Viola is sketched less poignantly in Phebe's love to Rosalind in As You Like It, and Viola's description of her imaginary sister who "pined in thought," never daring to give her love utterance, is hinted at rather obscurely in Katherine's lines which tell how Cupid made her sister die in despiar for her love (L.L.L. V.ii. 13-15). And in one sense, Malvolio's self-love and inadequate earnestness partake some of Shylock's anti-comic attitude, making him the perfect target of festive abuse. Indeed, Twelfth Night is "a masterpiece not of invention but of recapitulation."[2]

Upon these basis, we naturally expect some kind of thematic interests are also transferred from the earlier comedies and given a final, conclusive form, for as Professor Quiller-Couch observes, Twelfth Night is the dramatist's "Farewell to Comedy."[3] The next time we meet the dramatist's attempt at comedy, it is in the different area of experience of All's Well That Ends Well and Measure for Measure. Evidences which support such a thesis are not lacking. For instance, the notion of extreme self-deception as a kind of madness, which has

been so broadly illustrated in A Midsummer Night's Dream, underlies the play's treatment of some characters and scenes. Olivia's maidenly decision to wear mourning weeds all the rest of her life cannot completely control what actually she is--a healthy woman ready for a proper wooer--and she soon finds herself entangled in the irrational passion which, without her knowing, leads to the absurdity of falling in love with a maid in page's attire. When Malvolio, another victim of wild imagination which releases fancy from all kinds of rational restrictions, appears in yellow stockings and with cross-gartered legs, Olivia gives a cry which is characteristic of the play: "Why, this is very midsummer madness" (III.iv. 61).

But, generally speaking, the belief that Twelfth Night says something conclusive and final about Shakespeare's idea of comedy finds its strongest support in our broad, less critical, and somewhat undefinable knowledge that the play stands at the extreme brink of the comic world, beautifully poised between feeling and judgement, artifice and spontaneity, and that to advance it a few steps further in the same direction is either to invite surfeit or to face another system of coherency which gives no promise to agree with human happiness. "Autumnal" or "mellow" are both used quite often as the epithets which define the spirit of the play in short term. They suggest the image of richness and softness, but at the

same time they imply a shade which forms a dark fringe around brightness. Some critics are tempted to view this shade as "tragic" elements in the play, meaning Malvolio's humiliation, which troubled the mind of Charles Lamb, and Feste's kinship to the Fool in King Lear. Apart from the misuse of the term "tragic" which applies to the dramatic structure and is not a name for merely sad and pitiful episodes, this is to distort the important point: the shade forms only the fringe, and it only serves to give assurance to the central brightness which is the unmistakable feature of the whole. Despite the critics' voice of doubt and anxiety, Twelfth Night is a pleasant and at some moments a most hilarious comedy. The graver aspect of the play ultimately takes origin from the dramatist's acute awareness of reality which has continually increased in its inclusiveness and depth since it saw the first consummation in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Shakespeare never repeats success. Twelfth Night departs sharply from As You Like It in dramatic form and manner of construction, and the way in which the sense of critical exposure is balanced against the play's vision of human happiness is unparalleled by any preceding comedy and indicates the peak of one kind of art form.

The play begins with Orsino's invocation of music, and the audience realize that they have stepped into a rather gloomy place compared to sunny Belmont and the

forest of Arden. In the center of the stage lies a desperate man in love, locked within melancholy, frustrated, calling for music in which he finds something like a temporary ease, only to discover that it is not what he sought.

> If music be the food of love, play on.
> Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken, and so die.
> That strain again! It had a dying fall.
> Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odor! Enough, no more.
> 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
> O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou!
> That, notwithstanding thy capacity
> Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there,
> Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
> But falls into abatement and low price,
> Even in a minute! So full of shapes is fancy
> That it alone is high fantastical.
>
> [I.i. 1-15]

The dominant effect of the poetry is languor and exquisite lyricism, but underneath it lurks the image of "surfeit" and the pose of self-abandonment. The comparison of love to "appetite" is characteristic of Orsino who later refers contemptuously to woman's capacity for love as mere appetite, "No motion of the liver, but the palate" (II.iv. 101). His love for Olivia cannot find a way of expression but in fruitless lament and solitary contemplation, and it has only a degrading effect on his qualities as a nobleman. The world esteems him to be "of fresh and stainless youth;/In voices well divulged, free, learned, and valiant;/And in dimension and the shape of nature/A

gracious person" (I.v. 278-81), but his passion works upon him only to dim these qualities. He cannot even find a constant voice of truth in any object, helplessly watching the things changing, dissolving and slipping off into unimportance. He likes to make an analogue of his huge capacity for love to the sea's. But it is not the sea of Juliet's "My bounty is as boundless as the sea,/My love as deep; the more I give to thee,/The more I have, for both are infinite" (II.ii. 133-35). His sea is the image of loss and meaninglessness, a hungry monster which devours every drop of rain, never being content, always gaping its mouth for another. It is the opposite of Bassanio's love which dares to hazard anything and is eager to give rather than to receive. Orsino hotly importunes the access to Olivia using messenger, ring and letters, but he does not risk anything and is eager only to receive. The peak of his emotional outburst is not the statement of his faith, but the imaginary vision, a daydream: "When liver, brain, and heart,/These sovereign thrones, are all supplied, and filled/Her sweet perfections with one self king!" (I.i. 37-39). As Professor L. G. Salingar suggests, Orsino's love resembles that of Troilus, in its vulnerability and "its grasping after the infinite."[4]

> I am giddy, expectation whirls me round.
> The imaginary relish is so sweet
> That it enchants my sense. What will it be
> When that the watery palates taste indeed

> Love's thrice repurèd nectar? Death, I fear me,
> Swounding destruction, or some joy too fine,
> Too subtle-potent, tuned too sharp in sweetness,
> For the capacity of my ruder powers.
> [Troi. III.ii. 19-26]

The ineffectiveness of Orsino is often pointed out by the critics in a manner to discount his affected pose as a devoted romantic lover. He is a "moony Duke" and a "thistle down amorist" who has fallen in love with being in love. Professor E. K. Chambers remarks:

> He deliberately cultivates his sentiment, stimulating it with music and flowers and poses of languishment. He pleases himself with the pomp and circumstances of courtship, sends embassies of love to a cruel mistress, and is rightly punished by the irony which makes his mistress promptly fall in love with the ambassador.[5]

Clearly, Orsino's obsession with the creature he loves is the specimen of the play's concern with self-deception and its absurdity, and in this sense we are entitled to a laugh or two, especially at such a moment as when Orsino cries, "Husband!" to Olivia's "Whither, my lord? Cesario, husband, stay" (V.i. 146). But we have to be careful not to emphasize the point too far. He is involved in passion so completely that he cannot see that his language tends to become hyperbolical. But he is not absurd in the same sense that the mad Athenian lovers are. Orsino is not meant as a self-controlling, mature figure, but surely he is meant to carry the main action with all the traits of noble disposition and broad understanding which the part

requires. And we feel far from laughing at his "deliberate effort to cultivate his sentiment," when we listen to his invocation of music. He expresses himself in resonant blank verse all through the play, and the sentiment which underlies it is always delicate and arouses our serious interest, as here our sympathy apparently moves toward the sense of agony and frustration which colours the whole speech. In the later scene, Orsino calls for Feste from Olivia's house and bids him to sing an ancient song once chanted by "The spinsters and the knitters in the sun/And the free maids that weave their thread with bones" (II.iv. 45-46). The song is about a man who died of his passionate love for a cruel mistress.

> Come away, come away, death,
> And in sad cypress let me be laid.
> Fly away, fly away, breath,
> I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
> My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
> Oh, prepare it!
> My part of death, no one so true
> Did share it!
>
> Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
> On my black coffin let there be strown.
> Not a friend, not a friend greet
> My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown.
> A thousand thousand sighs to save,
> Lay me, oh, where
> Sad true lover never find my grave,
> To weep there!
>
> [II.iv. 52-68]

The sentiment is quite solemn, and the song effectively reminds us that the unrequited passion can end by death.

Orsino shows a strong attachment to the song, as obviously it points to one possible catastrophe of his relationship with Olivia. Olivia shows no sign of changing her mind. We cannot regard her denial as the coy gesture of a courtly lady or as reflecting a sort of adolescent perversity such as we find in Phebe's cruelty to Silvius. Olivia makes clear that she is none of that kind, and even gladly praises the uncommon virtues of Orsino (I.v. 276-81), "But yet I cannot love him." When for the first time Orsino realizes that Olivia's affection is directed at someone else, his words become harsh and bitter, calling Olivia "the marble-breasted tyrant" (V.i. 127), and even suggest a violent action: "Why should I not, had I the heart to do it,/Like to the Egyptian thief at point of death,/Kill what I love?" (V.i. 120-23). Olivia's love to Viola is a comic irony, as long as it is accompanied by our understanding of Viola's true sexual identity and our knowledge that the time of dénouement is approaching near at hand. But the violent language and confusion at the middle of the last act, with raging Orsino and bewildered Olivia, somewhat manage to convey that the same kind of situation could be the highlight of the more poignant kind of drama where a page does not always turn out to be the disguised heroine. The Duchess of Malfi is not a very good example, but Orsino's accusation of Viola's treacherous act, "O thou dissembling cub! What

wilt thou be/When time hath sowed a grizzle on thy case?" (V.i. 167-68), could be uttered by indignant Ferdinand to the face of Antonio. As a matter of fact, such an implication does not trouble the mind of the audience very much, as the play is a comedy: the more furiously Orsino rages, the more outrageous is our pleasure. The confusion is soon to be hushed by the entrance of Sebastian, and from that point the process of resolution is almost mechanical until it finally sees the happy pairing of the lovers. But somehow the audience are keenly aware that the dénouement has been brought by the purely happy turn of fortune, and that the idea of providential reward for human integrity has nothing to do with it: there is no sense of inevitability in happiness. Professor L. G. Salingar, comparing our play's dénouement with those of Bandello and Gl'Ingannati, states as follows:

> At the same time, however, Shakespeare enlarges the role of her twin brother and gives unprecedented weight to coincidence in the dénouement, which in both Italian stories is brought about more rationally, by the deliberate action of the heroine and her nurse; so that Shakespeare's Viola is also unique in that her happiness is due to "good fortune" more than "long patience", and to "good advice" not at all.[6]

The right person arrives just in time when he is needed, and "nature to her bias drew in that" (V.i. 267). The force which instinctively follows the way to order and unity has controlled the issue of the play, and almost

everyone is benefited by it, but no one has made a positive contribution to it. It is merely a happy coincidence. Upon this knowledge, we do not take too seriously the implausibility of Orsino's suddenly sprung affection to Viola as a female. The play concludes happily, and the sense of "wonder" at this rarest occasion of encounter and revelation accelerates our joy. But on afterthought, we come to a rather chilling question: "What might happen, if nature did not draw to her bias? What if such a controlling force did not exist at all?"

We sense the same kind of happy manoeuvre and contrivance when we follow Olivia's love to Viola to its resolution. Olivia is a well-drawn, charming lady who combines in herself aristocratic poise and strong emotional capacity. The play's two locations, Orsino's court and Olivia's household, make a sharp contrast, because while Orsino's court is disorganized and infected by the languorous air of its master, Olivia's household is neatly and discreetly managed by its mistress' flexible discipline, and punctuated by the brisk, lively rhythm of life. The whimsicality of Feste and frivolity of Sir Toby have their places in this ordered atmosphere. We are in fact surprised by Olivia's first entrance with "Take the fool away" (I.v. 42), as we have imagined the pale-cheeked, dejected lady in black from Valentine's description: "But, like a cloistress, she will veilèd

walk/And water once a day her chamber round/With eye-offending brine" (I.i. 28-30). But actually she is well disposed enough to play a catechism with Feste and sharp enough to rebuke Malvolio for self-love (I.v. 97-104). And her speedy and discreet management of household affairs strongly impresses Sebastian (IV.iii. 16-20). Therefore, when she falls in love with Viola, we apparently watch the issue with something other than pure amusement with which we watched Phebe's love to Rosalind.

Passion attacks Olivia as suddenly as Helena's eyes struck down Demetrius, and she is helpless as a child before the anarchic force of love. And also it is true that Olivia's unwillingness to surrender herself to any man's courtship is, according to Shakespeare's doctrine of "love's use," a "forbidden usury" which makes waste in perverse withholding of one's beauty. Viola's female instinct is quick in detecting what is wrong with this lady: "Most certain, if you are she, you do usurp yourself; for what is yours to bestow is not yours to reserve" (I.v. 198-200). But, as Viola continues "But this is from my commission," the point is not developed further than its minimum implication, and the dramatist seems to have no great care in turning it to the major interest of the play. Instead, he seems to be absorbed in giving shape and colour to the quivering emotional waves which underlie the conversation between Olivia and Viola. Their

first meeting in Act I, scene v begins with rather mocking note, each, to her credit, playing the part of the proud mistress of the house or the outspoken, churlish messenger. This is one of the few places where Viola is allowed to show her talent for witticism. But as the scene develops, Olivia's mask begins to slip off, and the relaxed air of superiority which marked her speeches in the earlier part of the scene is now deserting her. Her words become short, and against her will they betray her emotional involvement with this saucy page: "Why, what would you?" (I.v. 286), "You might do much./What is your parentage?" (295-96), "Let him send no more,/Unless, perchance, you come to me again/ To tell me how he takes it" (299-301). Being left alone, she is free to tell us how Viola has snared her heart, but we also perceive that even at such a moment she shows a sign of noble resistance: "Not too fast. Soft, soft!" (312). And we are allowed to watch closely the fearful expectations stirring her to the irrational conduct of "I do I know not what" (327). Our attention is led, not to the inhuman force which controls her, but to this lady's internal capacity to respond to the cue in so delicate and complex a manner.

Next time she meets Viola, Olivia is discreet enough to be ashamed of her trick in sending a ring in chase: "So did I abuse/Myself, my servant, and, I fear me, you" (III.i. 124-25). The important thing is that

Olivia is quite aware of her folly which makes her vulnerable in the world, and that to declare her irresistible passion is to risk her honour: "What might you think?/Have you not set mine honor at the stake/And baited it with all the unmuzzled thoughts/That tyrannous heart can think?" (III.i. 128-31). She exposes herself completely with admirable boldness. But Viola's disguise enables her to see the matter more coolly.

> Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness,
> Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.
> How easy is it for the proper-false
> In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!
> Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we!
> For such as we are made of, such we be.
> [II.ii. 28-33]

Disguise works here as the medium of reveleation, and it brings to Viola the knowledge of women's vulnerability to fair appearance. As characteristically in the play, the knowledge is directly presented to us, without the softening of humour or wit. Olivia responds to love in rich terms, but at the bottom of the scale her love is not completely severed from inferior emotion which goes by haps, being caught in the eye, and servile to time and decay. In <u>As You Like It</u>, such a negative aspect of love as makes it an irresponsible, disturbing element in life was allowed existence in the play only to strengthen the total effect of the experience by adding different perspective of things: the audience are always assured what Rosalind

is driving at despite her feigned gesture. But here the knowledge is exposed and isolated in the comic context, and no visible way of connecting it to the whole is suggested. It is a revelation which enlightens, but its channel to action is closed, because there is so little that both Olivia and Viola can do to get out of this labyrinth of disparity between reality and appearance, where the girl who loves her master plays a go-between to woo a lady who falls in love with her.

The way out is found in the Plautine convention that the heroine has a twin brother who looks exactly the same. Olivia is rescued from the possible sad spectacle of watching herself pine in love thoughts as Viola's imaginary sister did. But the final resolution does not completely square with the preceding complication which appeared to be struggling with the intensity of feeling to which comedy can promise no successful answer. This is not to say that the dénouement fails to convince us. We follow the entire action with the expectation that we will be finally "tricked," and Sebastian's entrance is surprise enough to dissolve the issue in laughter and wondering. The point is that while enjoying the dénouement for all its worth, we are somewhat aware that we are in fact appreciating the fictional quality of the scene whose implausibility is the very life of our amusement. The exchange between Viola and Sebastian is deliberately slow

in tempo and formal in style: usually it does not take 33 lines for brother and sister to recognize each other. But this becomes understandable when we realize that what the scene is trying to come to terms with is not the one's emotional reaction to the other, but something which transcends and manipulates the individuals. This is why Viola does not jump into the bosom of her long lost brother.

> If nothing lets to make us happy both
> But this my masculine usurped attire,
> Do not embrace me till each circumstance
> Of place, time, fortune, do cohere and jump
> That I am Viola.
>
> [V.i. 256-60]

What Viola is instinctively trying to reverence is the notion of timeliness, the idea that one moment in time can create an unified relationship among men while another cannot. At the play's crucial moments, Viola and Olivia, or even Sebastian, postponed their decisive action in the hope that time will shape out what their small capacity to read the future cannot: "O Time, thou must untangle this, not I!/It is too hard a knot for me to untie!" (II.ii. 41-42), "Fate, show thy force, ourselves we do not owe./What is decreed must be, and be this so" (I.v. 329-30). We know that their commitment to time's benevolent working is not strictly speaking their deliberate choice; they did not have any choice but to accept what

time could serve them. The total effect is the comfortable relief that things came off happily as far as these particular people and this particular moment are concerned, but it also encourages the speculation, at least implicitly, that things might not turn out the same way if we shuffle the cards and re-start the story from the beginning. If Orsino and other creatures are devoid of feeling and psychological depth, belittlement can result no otherwise but in laughter. But as they are what they are, the fictional quality of the last scene becomes all the more evident.

Our heroine, Viola, is a radical change from her predecessors whom the dramatist seems to have explored with particular relish. Portia-Beatrice-Rosalind, the obvious association is the image of a competent, mature female who needs no guiding hands but her own to get what she wants. The image culminates in Rosalind who is the unmistakable center of the play and in perfect control of herself and her environment. The next time Shakespeare creates his heroine, he abandons all he has achieved and depicts before our eyes an entirely different female figure--less resourceful, of intense feelings but lacking the capacity of wit which neutralize them, and helplessly dependent on Chance. The only time Viola makes a positive decision to act is her rather abrupt "I'll serve this Duke" (I.ii. 55). She is quick in planning the part she

has to play, but as to the result of her disguise, she is quite nonchalant: "What else may hap to time I will commit" (I.ii. 60). This initial action leads her to the labyrinth of desperate relationship with Orsino and Olivia, and henceforward she is deprived of every means to act by her own volition. When she goes on a love's embassy to Olivia, she speaks rather like Rosalind, drawing from amused Olivia, "Are you a comedian?" (I.v. 193). But it is a feigning for feigning's sake and remains as something forced upon her: "I can say little more than I have studied, and that question's out of my part" (I.v. 189-90). She is obliged to live her potentialities rather than her deed. Act II, scene iv, in which Orsino and Viola exchange a delicate conversation, is well known for its poetic beauty, but it is also another place where the play presents the image of contradiction between reality and appearance, knowledge and action. Orsino speaks to Viola in his usual manner--unrequited lover suffering from passion.

> Come hither, boy. If ever thou shalt love,
> In the sweet pangs of it remember me;
> For such as I am all true lovers are,
> Unstaid and skittish in all motions else
> Save in the constant image of the creature
> That is beloved.
>
> [II.iv. 15-20]

But soon he begins to talk in a different, less formal tone, his cautious mask slipping off, relieved by the secure privacy of honest man-to-man talk.

Viola. About your years, my lord.
Orsino. Too old, by Heaven. Let still the woman take
An elder than herself, so wears she to him,
So sways she level in her husband's heart.
For, boy, however we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,
Than women's are.
[II.iv. 29-36]

Orsino does not realize his self-contradiction, but his pose as a perfect court lover is somewhat discounted by this cheerless fact about man's giddiness in his fancy. It is a humiliating fact for a romantic lover that a frequently exercised solution to maintain a peaceful marriage relationship is to choose a younger wife so that she can "sway level in her husband's heart." The idea is a compromise, but however it might appear discouraging to the romantic idea of love, it has its own voice of truth in exercise, especially for those who have less idealized notions of love. Time will sooner or later wash off radiant colour from his mistress' cheek, and if love is no more than something caught in the eye, what can a man do but delay the inevitable process? Orsino observes, "For women are as roses, whose fair flower/Being once displayed, doth fall that very hour" (II.iv. 39-40). "Therefore take the present time," which is usually uttered in the next breath, is out of place in this melancholic atmosphere. Orsino's remarks sink into Viola's introspection, and find an echo there: "And so they are. Alas, that they are so--/To die, even when they to perfection

grow" (II.iv. 41-42). The effect is the opposite of Rosalind's "Men are April when they woo, December when they wed. Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives" (A.Y.L. IV.i. 147-49), though speaking on the semantic level they amount to the same meaning--maids are not always maids and man's fancy is a giddy thing. In As You Like It, such a recognition is a necessary premise, but here we are shown no legitimate way of connecting it to the total effect of the play as a comedy. Instead, we let it sink in our consciousness, free to evoke whatever association and irony are available there. The play's dénouement dissolves the issue, and we soon forget that we had such a dark moment. The strongly fictional quality of the last scene makes it look absurd to speculate on the future marriage relationship between Orsino and Viola. But it also means that the play has no intention of convincing us of this couple's capacity to make an enduring, successful marriage. The dramatic emphasis is on the beneficent working of time and nature's bias, and Viola is not meant to provide a focus for the whole dramatic experience. The insight which Viola has acquired into the negative aspects of love is left at its fragmentary status, still free to respond to our imagination without the restrictions from any master design. And in one sense, this encourages one implicitly to ask the question: "What happens if things do not come off happily?

What, if such a controlling force did not exist or was a malignant one?" Viola is time's child. In the next moment we remember with regret that many of Shakespeare's tragic heroes cry "I'm Fortune's fool" in the face of invisible force which invites them to destruction and insignificance. Though unconscious of it, Viola and the rest have walked upon a narrow rope, for tragic Fate is here implicit in comic Fortune.

We have so far followed the action of the main plot with our attention on three important characters and have seen in each case how the final resolution is wrought in a different manner from that in any of the previous comedies. One question seems to be asked for clarification's sake: "How should we reconcile our critical response with our spontaneous enjoyment? For example, if the final scene's dramatic emphasis is upon the beneficent working of time, how shall we come to terms with the belittlement of the central creatures who, according to such an interpretation, are no more than the fools of time? Are we not troubled by such a thought, and does it not mar our pleasure in some way or other?" One way to answer the question is to say that our critical awareness is put to temporary silence once one sits in the theatre and allowed to resume its function only when one goes back to one's study. But this is not true. The keen spectator does not miss the serious implication of the play, or even

if he missed it the first time, he does not miss it the second, and Twelfth Night is the kind of play which increases in its sheer amount of pleasure as one's experience with the play's stage productions advances. The real answer seems to lie in the fact that drama can reconcile the opposites in a way which is impossible in real life, and the dichotomy between critical and spontaneous responses is too poor and incompetent a method to be applied to such a complex play as ours. The flawless comic vision of As You Like It, so to speak, stands on impossibility, because the play contains Jaques' scepticism which questions the very same vision. The total experience is the composite of numerous elements, but it refuses to be identified with any of those elements. Likewise, the knowledge that people in Twelfth Night are more or less time's servants, that the intense feeling of the lovers is not fully resolved at the end, does not jar with our pleasure. Strictly speaking, we do not even feel that Viola and Olivia are belittled. Viola is in so harmonious and close relationship with time, that we feel we are not invited to compare her stature with that of the invisible force which guards her. Admittedly, the play's dénouement is artificial, but, importantly, the dramatist seems to be aiming at nothing less. What matters is not plausibility, but contrivance which adds a special sense of vulnerability to the play's vision of human happiness. At

this moment, I borrow the mouth of Professor Clifford Leech, who seems to be struggling with the same question, though here he appears to have the action of the subplot more in his mind:

> To see Twelfth Night is to be reminded of occasions when we are making merry with those who are closest to us in sympathy and affection, and yet, though the pleasure is keen and genuine, we are fractionally conscious that the formula is not quite right, so that we cannot quite keep it from ourselves that an effort is needed for the contrivance of harmony. On such occasions the moment comes when we look coldly on the merry-making and the good relationship and see the precariousness of our tolerance for one another, the degree of pretence in all sociability. But that moment of disillusioned insight does not invalidate the experience of brief rejoicing that is possible in human encounters. There is an important sense in which any goodness in life is an artifact. Illyria, with the events it frames, is Shakespeare's image for this contrived thing: it impresses us the more deeply because from time to time Shakespeare seems deliberately to make us aware of the contrivance.[7]

The play as a whole is much more good humoured and gay than suggested by the main action, and this impression is produced by the action of the subplot which rocks with the lively rhythm of "good life." Samuel Pepys thought that the content of the play is "not related at all to the name or day,"[8] but if we listen to such critics as Miss Welsford or Professor Leslie Hotson, we cannot but think that the play is clearly related to Twelfth Night festivity, also called the feast of Epiphany, which was celebrated as the closing day of

Christmas festivity. The most remarkable feature of Twelfth Night is the custom of the Lord of Misrule, otherwise called the Abbot of Unreason, the Prince of Fools. The custom has a long history on the Continent, especially in France, believed to have stemmed from Kalends or Saturnalia of pagan Rome. The Lord of Misrule is the mock-king who has been elected very often by such means as picking up a coin or bean contained in a large cake served at dinner, and during the temporary period he ruled over the topsy-turvy world where the fools are exalted and the wise are abused. Here is a typical passage which illustrates the particular feeling which pervaded such an occasion:

> O, we shall have his Saturnalia, his days of feast and liberty again: where men might do, and talk all that they list -- slaves of their lords, the servants of their masters. . . . Time's come about, and promiseth all liberty -- nay, license. We shall do what we list![9]

The custom of temporary liberty and license found biblical justification in "He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and the meek," and was much observed in the churches in France and Germany during the Middle Ages, despite the voice of reformation from Rome. After the custom was expelled from the churches, it found hearty welcome in towns, law-courts and universities. In England, the custom flourished mostly in Court and among the students of the Inns of Court. At

Court, the Lord of Misrule, distinguished from the Master of Revels who is a permanent official responsible for the entertainment for the foreign ambassadors and other practical arrangements, is a temporary court official appointed to provide an entertainment during the Christmas festivity. At the court of Henry VII and Henry VIII, the Lord of Misrule was elected annually, and the custom took the most elaborate form under Edward VI, with pageants, masquerade, mock-combats and other ingenious devices. But as Miss Welsford observes, "After the death of Edward VI, the Lord of Misrule makes no more appearances at the English court,"[10] and in spite of his vigorous investigation into the buried documents concerning the occasion of our play's first performance by the King's Men, when the Queen entertained Don Virgino Orsino, the Duke of Bracciano, at Whitehall on Twelfth Night, January 6, 1600/1, Professor Leslie Hotson does not discover any facts which indicate that the Lord of Misrule custom was observed in the court of Elizabeth with the same flourish as her royal predecessors had used.

But the quintessence of the Lord of Misrule custom is kept intact in our play. Sir Toby is the temporary king of cakes and ale, and his fake-logic of "To be up after midnight, and to go to bed then, is early, so that to go to bed after midnight is to go to

bed betimes" (II.iii. 7-9) is the expression of the authorized Misrule of holidays. Feste, the licensed fool in Olivia's household, naturally becomes the leader of the rest, as the fool was the reverenced center of the Feast of Fools in the medieval churches and universities. Feste's preoccupation with the fool's wisdom and the wise man's folly, as Miss Welsford points out,[11] has something of the spirit of sottie, a crude dramatic form motivated by the Misrule impulse, in which the philosopher, the sage and the clergy all turn out to be wearing motley under their solemn costume and robe. Those who take themselves too seriously and do not admit that they are somewhere "writ down an ass" are doomed to become the butt of the others. Festive abuse is almost indistinguishable from the spirit of the Misrule, and Malvolio's air of self-importance, his arrogance, and his hostility against merry-making make him the perfect target. Malvolio does his job properly as a steward, advising Sir Toby and the rest of the members of midnight carousal to have a respect of place, persons, and time (II.iii. 92-99), but Sir Toby's retort is more in harmony with the play's relaxed atmosphere: "We did keep time, sir, in our catches. Sneck up!" (II.iii. 100). Sir Toby wilfully mistakes the meaning of "time," implicitly telling Malvolio that the only meaning of time relevant to the occasion is the rhythm in catches.

Observance of timely conduct and proper occasion for certain things is a commendable virtue in workaday life. But here the situation is different. During the period of the Misrule, all the social norms are tumbled upside-down, and time is only the space cut from its continuity to be devoted exclusively for one's enjoyment and merry-making. Respect of persons and places dissolves into spontaneous fellowship and care-freeing laughter. Malvolio is a sober and reasonable creature, much trusted by Olivia as a steward. But this trait of his is exactly what makes him inadequate in this society of care-free creatures, just as his affectation and self-love give Maria a cue for her excellent trick which finally leads him to the humiliation of confinement in the dark room as a madman. Malvolio thinks so nobly of the soul that he cannot accept Pythagoras' opinion that "the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird" (IV.ii. 56-57). More's the pity that Malvolio takes Feste's question too literally and cannot answer the catechism in "holiday foolery." The point of Feste's bringing up the tricky question is not to fathom Malvolio's beliefs about mankind, but to show the audience that his seriousness must make him play a fool as far as he is in this society which is maintained by different life-principles, essentially alien to him.

It is a pitiful labour to draw a moral from such a good-humoured custom as the Lord of Misrule, but

nevertheless to distinguish it from mere irresponsible game or foolery, we have to turn to its other aspect. If the Lord of Misrule serves any social function at all, it is that of the safety valve which releases the unquiet tension and frustration among society's members by giving them the privilege of freedom from time to time. And this is the explanation of the authorities of both churches and universities during the Middle Ages for allowing their friars and students a brief period of relaxation once a year around Christmas.

> A Doctor of Auxerre explained that wine barrels break if their bung-holes are not occasionally opened to let in the air, and the clergy being 'nothing but old wine-casks badly put together would certainly burst if the wine of wisdom were allowed to boil by continued devotion to the Divine Service'. . . . 'some sixty years since, in the University of Cambridge it was solemnly debated betwixt the Heads to debarre young schollers of that liberty allowed them in Christmas, as inconsistent with the Discipline of Students. But some grave Governors mentioned the good use thereof, because thereby, in twelve days, they more discover the dispositions of Scholars than in twelve months before.'[12]

As clear from these statements, the continuity of worka-day life is broken only to be resumed more effectively and smoothly: the monks dance round the sacred altar in the motley and coxcomb on their heads only to be able to kneel before the same with more tranquil mind, and the students mock Aristotle and Socrates only to clear out of their minds the disturbing thoughts which might hinder

their concentration on the philosophers' words of wisdom. The merry-making is the more hilarious, as one recognizes the temporary nature of the game. Significantly, Twelfth Night belongs to the latest period of Christmas festivity. The next day is Saint Distaff's or Rock Day, the day when the maids go back to their work of spinning: "Give Saint Distaff all the right,/Then bid Christmas sport good night."[13] Thqse who are well aware of the limitations of their pleasure can enjoy themselves properly. But for those who try to extend the days of license beyond its alloted span, some kind of crush and disillusionment become inevitable. It is at this point that the Lord of Misrule motive in the subplot comes to bear thematic parallelism with the main plot in its manner of presenting the most cheerful picture of human happiness together with the suggestion that it is not the whole. The play depicts the most self-sufficient moment of "good life," but it does not forget to remind us, as Professor Clifford Leech has said, "the moment comes when we look coldly on the merry-making and the good relationship and see the precariousness of our tolerance for one another, the degree of pretence in all sociability."

The crush comes in Act III, scene iv with the entrance of Antonio. Before his entrance, we are assured that nobody could be possibly hurt in the mock-duel between Sir Andrew and Viola, who are both equally willing to let

the matter pass. But Antonio is not a member of the Misrule society, and his earnestness can become the source of violence and disorder when he tries to force himself into the midst of the scene. Sir Toby challenges Antonio with "Nay, if you be an undertaker, I am for you" (III.iv. 349), and the duel is going to be a real one. But it is interrupted by the officers' entrance and followed by Antonio's arrest. Antonio's disappointment at Viola's ingratitude is based on mistake, but his harsh reproof is persuasive and even disturbing. It is no coincidence that the dramatist named this man of faith Antonio. In The Merchant of Venice, Antonio's fidelity was requited by Bassanio's constancy and Portia's succour. But the suggestion that unselfish devotion makes the one who gives it vulnerable in the world becomes nearly a reality in Twelfth Night. We admire, and at the same time, fear Antonio's love to Sebastian, whom Fortune has treated badly. Antonio's devotion is too pure, too unworldly, to cope with the impurity and contradictions of life. Antonio dismisses Sebastian's advice ("My stars shine darkly over me. The malignancy of my fate might perhaps distemper yours, therefore I shall crave of you your leave that I may bear my evils alone" II.i. 3-6), and risks the danger of exposing himself in his enemy's country. He is arrested, and worst of all, meets ingratitude in his dearest friend. The play dissolves the issue through the unravelling of the mistake

in the last scene, and Antonio silently steals away, unnoticed. The audience are too glad to forget him, because, as Professor Salingar says, they know that "The comedy has no answer to his problem of sincere devotion given to a false idol."[14]

Sebastian strays into Olivia's garden, and the entrance is soon followed by violence. Sir Andrew tries to strike Cesario with a more vigorous blow than before, but this time he is soundly beaten. This foolish knight is now compelled to see himself as actually he is--an ineffective would-be-lover that imagined himself to be a brave knight flattered by Sir Toby and Fabian. He needed not to fear losing face by assuming the valour he had not: "An't be any way, it must be with valor, for policy I hate" (III.ii. 32-33), because his bragging could not lead him before no less than Viola. But the pain on his head makes him more sensible, and he determines to avenge his humiliation by policy which he once so despised: "Nay, let him alone. I'll go another way to work with him. I'll have an action of battery against him, if there be any law in Illyria" (IV.i. 35-37). Even Sir Andrew senses the change in the air. When Olivia appears to stop the fight between Sir Toby and Sebastian, it is clear that she is no longer ready to dismiss Sir Toby's conduct as another holiday foolery: "Will it be ever thus? Ungracious wretch,/Fit for the mountains and the barbarous

caves,/Where manners ne'er were preached! Out of my sight!" (IV.i. 51-53). Sir Toby slinks off, as he knows that it is an unadvisable thing for him to do to offend his niece further, being anxious to keep the same roof over his head. At one point of the play, Sir Toby confesses his fear that they have gone too far in their sport of gulling Malvolio: "I would we were well rid of this knavery. If he may be conveniently delivered, I would he were, for I am now so far in offense with my niece that I cannot pursue with any safety this sport to the upshot" (IV.ii. 72-76). But he is a little too slow in catching up with the change which is taking place around him, and his extra-trick, humiliation of Malvolio by putting him in the dark room, makes it impossible for the matters to come off as "conveniently" as he wanted. The yellow stockings are a kind of joke we can laugh at and forget. But to lock someone in the cage and mock him as if he were a madman is a slightly different matter. If Sir Toby were prudent enough to resist the temptation of watching his deadly enemy mocked by the fool, we would not have to sense the sour distaste in the mouth at Malvolio's exit with "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you" (V.i. 386). This is not to say that Sir Toby is entirely responsible for this discordant effect. Responsibility is partly ours, and disillusionment must be shared by the audience who have laughed so heartily at this poor steward.

> The humiliation of Malvolio is the price that one pays for practical jesting: one cannot strip the self-important and the puritanical without sharing their embarrassment at nakedness. To put Malvolio on a tragic level is to disregard the general effect of his appearance on the stage: rather, he is one of those comic figures at whom it is too easy to laugh, so easy that, before we know it, we have done harm and are ashamed.[15]

But Sir Toby pays for his sport in some form or other. The second time he challenges Sebastian, he loses blood. Appearing on the stage with bandaged head, he calls for a surgeon, but Feste's answer is that the doctor is drunk and his eyes are "set at eight i' the morning" (V.i. 205). The time of drinking and jest is over, and Sir Toby feels in his pain the disillusionment of one who has gone too far in his sport. It is rather brutal of Sir Toby that he does not take kindly Sir Andrew's offer "I'll help you, Sir Toby, because we'll be dressed together": "Will you help? An asshead and a coxcomb and a knave, a thin-faced knave, a gull!" (V.i. 210-13). This is true enough, but the audience wish that Sir Toby had not said it. The harsh words from the mouth of one whom he believed to be a bosom friend crushes the heart of this fragile, but incredibly good natured knight, and he retires without making any sound, probably going back to his home where he should have been all the time, never dreaming of becoming a wooer. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria, Malvolio and Antonio cannot be seen on the stage at the

last moment of the play, and their absence makes the scene unable to initiate the marriage dance. As Orsino prophesies, the golden time will convent when the three couples are formally united and laugh at the past strange events. But it is not now: memory of injury and humiliation must be first wiped out.

Twelfth Night is a kind of comedy which Miss Welsford refers to when she says that comedy is the expression of the spirit of the Fool.[16] Both The Merchant of Venice and As You Like It find the most powerful spokesman of their essential spirit in Portia and Rosalind. Touchstone occupies a vital place in the latter play, but compared with that of Rosalind, it is almost of secondary importance. But Feste has no Rosalind to beat him down. As a consequence, his wise remarks are looked on as something authoritative and superior to others', and his effort to dissolve the issue in irony and jokes meets no rival effort to overcome it by establishing a final, coherent view of the whole. Feste puts question after solemnity and heroism, and the play implicitly adopts his attitude as its own by not judging it.

All through the play, Feste remains as a cool observer who stands out of the action, save when he visits Malvolio as a curate Sir Topas. He is free to move between Olivia's house and Orsino's court, and unlike Touchstone, he earns his living by his sheer talent for singing, and

shows casual aloofness to Maria's warning that he will be forced out of Olivia's house if he does not behave himself properly: "Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage, and for turning away, let summer bear it out" (I.v. 20-22). We get the impression that Feste is not deeply rooted in this society, and we do not feel difficulty in imagining him packing his bauble and coxcomb to go forth to find a better place than Illyria. Indeed, "Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun. It shines everywhere" (III.i. 43-44). Even Maria, who is expected to be "in" as to the whereabouts of the members of the household, cannot tell where Feste has been for a considerable period of time (I.v. 1-4). This sense of his freedom from the environments which surround him is deliberately stressed, as pointed out by Professor G. K. Hunter, by the fact that Feste has no personal history of his own to tell us.

> Feste (unlike Touchstone) has no history, and this affects his function in the play. I have already quoted Touchstone's use of his own experience, past and present, of Jane Smile in the past and Audrey in the present to make points about love and pastoralism. Feste has no personal life to use as a 'stalking horse'; there is no self-parody in his statements; his gaze is fixed relentlessly on the temperaments and actions of others, with a clear eye for their foibles and weaknesses, for the self-indulgent melancholia of Orsino.[17]

Feste is quick in detecting what is wrong both with Olivia and Orsino, and his wit makes them look ridiculous for their obsessions which, quartered, are but one part

noble, and ever three parts absurd. As to Olivia, Feste reminds her that "virtue that transgresses"--i.e., her determination to mourn for her dead brother for the rest of her life--"is but patched with sin" (I.v. 47-58). And as to Orsino, Feste warns him rather distantly that his trip of fancy is nothing but "a good voyage of nothing" (II.iv. 75-80). His far-reaching eyes do not miss any slight trait of affectation and vanity, and his witticism is always effective in depriving the proud and the arrogant of their self-valued importance. Feste is also quite strict with himself. Feste is the most unshamefaced money-beggar among Shakespeare's clowns, and he has no illusion about it. He deliberately alludes to Pandarus' service in bringing Cressida to Troilus in order to beg another coin from Viola, and when she praises his skill in begging, Feste flatly rejects it: "The matter, I hope, is not great, sir, begging but a beggar. Cressida was a beggar" (III.i. 61-62). Begging is not an honourable business, and Feste wants to keep the point straight.

After everyone has retired from the stage, Feste is left alone, to provide whatever he can devise for the epilogue of this most strange and eventful comedy. He begins to sing:

> When that I was and a little tiny boy,
> With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
> A foolish thing was but a toy,
> For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came, alas! to wive,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
With tosspots still had drunken heads,
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.
[V.i. 398-417]

The song is apparently a nonsense song, depicting a drunkard's progress through time. But being placed in this particular place and moment, it serves for a special purpose--a farewell to the time of merry-making, a knell for the Misrule society. Significantly, time which the song presents is a declining movement, or a series of uninteresting moments which finally lead to the sober fact, "for the rain it raineth every day." The image of the rain incessantly falling upon the ground, making it too wet to lie down and sleep upon, effectively conveys the repetitious, monotonous nature of life. The time has been when the meaning of time was no other but rhythm in catches. But the scale is soon going to be put upside-down, and the festive ideals have to give place to harsher facts about life. In this approaching new society, it

will be Malvolio, not Sir Toby, that will control the pattern and principle of life. Looking at the song's content through Feste's eyes, we notice particularly touching pathos, because Feste himself is counted among the drunkards and merry-makers that are kicked out of the door into the wet street: the fool no longer leads the revel. The song resembles Jaques' speech on the seven ages of man in the sense that both depict man's progress through time. But here, where there should be an oblivion and a destined end, we find a blankness, the expected conclusion being cunningly switched to "But that's all one, our play is done." It is as if to say, as Professor G. K. Hunter observes: "don't look for causal connections; a play is a play and not a treatise." Professor Hunter continues:

> In its illogicality and its bitter-sweet sense of the need to submit to illogicality, the song is a fitting conclusion to a play in which happiness itself is seen as illogical and chancy. . . . The comedy ends with happiness for some, but the happiness has no inevitability, and the final song sounds perilously like a tune whistled through the surrounding darkness.[18]

But the effect of the song is neither sinister nor bitter, and this impression owes a great deal to the fact that the passage is sung instead of spoken. As Professor Clifford Leech notes, "There has, after all, been song at Illyria's departure from us."[19]

Twelfth Night's joy is the most vulnerable kind that comedy can ever afford to give. The abyss of misfortune and suffering is successfully avoided, but we do not forget the grim visage of reality as it was glimpsed through a chasm of the play's bright texture. "Confident" is the last word we apply to the play's vision of human happiness. It is because of a different quality that the play succeeds in drawing our warmest and most hearty response. The dramatist creates before our eyes the most harmonious relationship of man with his fellow creatures, his environments, and time. At the same time, he inserts beside this vision the constant suggestion that things needed elaboration and contrivance in order to rest in the form which they are taking now. We feel that we are invited to gaze and wonder at this most subtle architecture, and afraid that it will collapse to grey ashes if we touch it with our hands. The play is extremely fragile because it has abandoned from the start all the efforts to forestall and satisfy our suspicion. As a result, we feel free either to embrace or to criticize, laugh with the people on the stage or laugh at them for their utter ignorance. Our choice is instinctively made, not for any specific reasons, but only because informed that by doing so we can keep ourselves sane and challenge any tendency or force which tries to belittle our statures and destroy our beliefs in human

dignity. At the present moment, I cannot think of a better way of closing this ragged discussion of Twelfth Night than quoting from the book of Miss Welsford, also to express my respect for this judicious scholar and critic whose insight into the nature of comedy has been an indispensable guiding hand throughout my attempt at writing something about Shakespeare's comedy. The way in which artifice is turned to the means of confirming men's aspiration toward the ideal in Twelfth Night could be experienced by a court lady "watching the masque with a prim yet wistful pleasure." Miss Welsford quotes Fuller's description of her sensation:

> 'Though pleasantly affected, she is not transported with Court-delights: as in their statelie Masques and Pageants. . . . He is no friend to the tree, that strips it of the bark; neither do they mean well to majestie, which would deprive it of outward shews, and State-solemnities . . . however, our Lady by degrees is brought from delighting in such Masques, onely to be contented to see them, and at last (perchance) could desire to be excused from that also.
>
> Yet in her reduced thoughts she makes all the sport she hath seen earnest to her self. . . . When she remembreth how suddenly the Scene in the Masque was altered (almost before moment it self could take notice of it) she considereth, how quickly mutable all things are in the world. . . . The lively representing of things so curiously, that Nature her self might grow jealous of Art, in outdoing her, minds our Lady to make sure work with her own soul. . . . But all is quickly ended: this is the spight of the world, if ever she affordeth fine ware, she always pincheth it in the measure, and it lasts not long: But oh, thinks our Lady, how glorious a place is Heaven, where there are joyes for evermore.'[20]

NOTES

NOTES

CHAPTER I

[1]Miss Latham's book, The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930) is still the best study on the subject. She argues that the irresponsible fairies of A Midsummer Night's Dream were a departure from their popular image, which often associated them with witches and devils, and assumed that they were of human size.

[2]John Russell Brown, Shakespeare and His Comedies (London: Methuen & Co., 1962), p. 12.

[3]H. B. Charlton, Shakespearian Comedy (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1938), p. 104.

[4]In his book, William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930), I, 358-59, Professor E. K. Chambers cites the catalogues of such weddings. For instance, marriage of William Earl of Derby and Elizabeth Vere at Greenwich on 26 January 1595, or Thomas Berkely and Elizabeth Carey at Blackfriars on 19 February 1596. He also points to the reminiscence of the entertainment provided for Queen Elizabeth's sake at Kenilworth in 1575, and by the Earl of Hertford at Elvetham in 1591, in Oberon's description of ."a fair vestal thronèd by the west" (II.i. 158), whom Cupid's arrows could not hurt. Professor John Dover Wilson has much more to say about these matters in his Shakespeare's Happy Comedies (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), pp. 191-207.

[5]Enid Welsford, The Court Masque: A Study in the Relationship between Poetry and the Revels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), pp. 331-32.

[6]All quotations from Shakespeare are from G. B. Harrison, ed., Shakespeare: The Complete Works (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968).

[7]E. K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1935), p. 84.

[8]Northrop Frye, A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), pp. 73-74. Chapter III, "The Triumph of Time," discusses the general structural pattern of Shakespeare's comedy.

[9]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy. The book has a chapter on A Midsummer Night's Dream, but the description of the May Game will also be found in Chapter II, "Holiday Custom and Entertainment," pp. 18-24.

[10]E. K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey, p. 80.

[11]Professor E. K. Chambers states as follows, discussing the possible date of Romeo and Juliet: "I should put it in 1595, preferably before Midsummer-Night's Dream, as its theme seems to be parodied in that of Pyramus and Thisbe, and its wall (ii.I, 2) in Snout's wall" (William Shakespeare, I, 345).

[12]Franklin M. Dickey, Not Wisely But Too Well: Shakespeare's Love Tragedies (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1957), pp. 63-88.

[13]Geoffrey Bullough, ed., Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), I, 284-85.

[14]E. K. Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923), II, 283.

[15]Frank Kermode, "The Mature Comedies," J. R. Brown and Bernard Harris, ed., Early Shakespeare, Shakespeare Institute Studies (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), p. 215.

[16]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 157.

[17]David P. Young, Something of Great Constancy: The Art of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 105.

[18]Geoffrey Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, I, 376.

[19]Joseph Quincy Adams, ed., Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), p. 584.

[20]David Young, Something of Great Constancy, pp. 47-48.

[21]Ibid., p. 105.

[22]Ibid., p. 36.

[23]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 151.

[24]E. K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey, p. 81.

[25]Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, eds., A Midsummer Night's Dream, The New Cambridge Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 80-86.

[26]Ibid., pp. 141-42. Professor Dover Wilson cites R. G. White's "Would Shakespeare, after thus reaching the climax of his thought, fall a-twaddling about bushes and bears? Note too the loss of dignity in the rhythm."

[27]H. B. Charlton, Shakespearian Comedy, p. 122.

[28]G. K. Hunter, John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 328.

[29]Ibid., p. 328.

[30]E. K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey, pp. 85-86.

[31]G. K. Hunter, Shakespeare: The Late Comedies, Writers and Their Work, No. 143 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1962), p. 20.

[32]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 157.

[33]R. Warwick Bond, ed., John Lyly: The Complete Works (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1902), II, 372.

[34]Ibid., III, 241.

[35]Ibid., III, 20.

[36]Frank Kermode, "The Mature Comedies," p. 216.

[37]Stephen Orgel, ed., Ben Jonson: Selected Masques (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 49-50.

[38]Enid Welsford, The Court Masque, p. 397.

[39]Ibid., p. 399.

[40]J. C. Smith and Edward De Selincourt, eds., Spenser: Poetical Works (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 581.

[41]G. K. Hunter, John Lyly, p. 308.

[42]Enid Welsford, The Court Masque, pp. 400-401.

CHAPTER II

[1]Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1930), Second Series, p. 67.

[2]J. Middleton Murry, "Shakespeare's Method: The Merchant of Venice" from Shakespeare (London: Jonathan Cape, 1936), pp. 188-211, rpt. in Kenneth Muir, ed., Shakespeare: The Comedies, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 33.

[3]H. B. Charlton, Shakespearian Comedy, p. 125.

[4]E. K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey, p. 111.

[5]Madeleine Doran, Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), p. 189.

[6]Ibid., p. 207. Translated from Guarini's Compendio, first published separately in 1601, then as an appendix to Il Pastor Fido in 1602.

[7]C. S. Lewis, "Hamlet: The Prince or The Poem?" Walter Hooper, ed., Selected Literary Essays (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 96.

[8]In her book, Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry: A Study of his Earlier Work in Relation to the Poetry of the Time (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), p. 171, Miss M. C. Bradbrook points out a verbal parallelism between such passages:

> I learn'd in Florence how to kisse my hand,
> Heave up my shoulders when they call me dogge,
> And ducke as low as any bare-foot Fryar,
> Hoping to see them starue upon a stall,
> Or else be gather'd in our Synagogue;
> That when the offring-Bason comes to me,
> Euen for charity I may spit intoo't.
> [Jew of Malta, II. 784-890]

> Shall I bend low and in a bond-mans key
> With bated breath and whispring humblenesse,
> Say this: Faire, sir, you spet on me on Wednesday last;
> You cald me dog: and for these curtesies
> Ile lend you thus much moneys.
> [I.iii. 124-30]

[9]C. F. Tucker Brooke and Nathaniel Burton Paradise, eds., English Drama: 1580-1642 (New York: D. C. Heath & Co., 1933), p. 196.

[10]Quoted in C. L. Barber's Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 164.

[11]Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, eds., The Merchant of Venice, The New Cambridge Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), Introduction xxv.

[12]Ibid., pp. 122-23.

[13]E. K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey, p. 117.

[14]Mark Van Doren, Shakespeare (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1953), p. 80.

[15]Derek Traversi, Shakespeare: The Early Comedies, Writers and Their Work, No. 129 (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1969), p. 36.

[16]J. Middleton Murry, "Shakespeare's Method: The Merchant of Venice," p. 45.

[17]Nevill Coghill, "The Basis of Shakespearian Comedy: A Study in Medieval Affinities," Essays and Studies, 3 (1950), p. 16.

[18]M. C. Bradbrook, Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry, p. 178.

[19]E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's Early Comedies (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), p. 184.

[20]M. C. Bradbrook, Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry, p. 178.

[21]The New Cambridge Edition, pp. 149-50. Professor Dover Wilson also remarks: "Furthermore, the sound of the tolling bell and the reference to Fancy dying 'in the cradle where it lies' both hint at the lead which ribbed the 'cerecloth' in the obscure graves of those times. After all this the dramatic purpose of the song is not likely to be questioned."

[22]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 174.

[23]Derek Traversi, The Early Comedies, p. 38.

[24]E. K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey, p. 107.

[25]Derek Traversi, The Early Comedies, p. 43.

[26]J. R. Brown, Shakespeare and His Comedies, p. 69.

[27]Ibid., pp. 69-70.

[28]The phrase is quoted in Professor Kermode's "The Mature Comedies," p. 222, but it is originally R. B. Heilman's in his discussion of the errors of Lear: "The Unity of King Lear" Critiques & Essays in Criticism 1920-1948, ed. R. W. Stallman (1949), pp. 154-61.

[29]Sigurd Burckhardt, "The Merchant of Venice: The Gentle Bond," Journal of English Literary History, 29 (1962), pp. 239-62, rpt. in John Wilders, ed., Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice, Casebook Series (London: Macmillan & Co., 1969), p. 210.

[30]Frank Kermode, "The Mature Comedies," p. 224.

[31]Ibid., p. 224.

[32]J. W. Lever, "Shylock, Portia and the Values of Shakespearian Comedy," Shakespeare Quarterly, 3 (1952), p. 386.

[33]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 182.

[34]Suzanne Langer, "The Comic Rhythm" from Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 326-50, rpt. in Robert Corrigan, ed., Comedy: Meaning and Form (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 120-21.

[35]J. R. Brown, Shakespeare and His Comedies, p. 74.

[36]Ibid., p. 74.

[37]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 188.

[38]C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 118-19.

[39]Ibid., p. 112.

CHAPTER III

[1]Harold Jenkins, "As You Like It," Shakespeare Survey, 8 (1955), pp. 40-51, rpt. in Jay L. Halio, ed., As You Like It, Twentieth Century Interpretations (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 33.

[2]The passage is from The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington (Quarto 1601, licensed 1598. By Munday and Chettle. Acted 1598, altered for court, Nov. 18, 1598). Quoted by A. H. Thorndike, "The Relation of As You Like It to Robin Hood Plays," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 4 (1902), p. 63.

[3]In her book, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 278, Miss Caroline Spurgeon remarks: "It has been pointed out, that although there is, in the play, a peculiarly vivid feeling of outdoor country life, there is very little nature description, indeed only two short passages, one of the sheepcote 'fenced about with olive trees,' and one of the oak 'whose boughs were mossed with age.'" Miss Spurgeon also leads our attention to the frequent use of similes and metaphors related to nature, and "an unusual number of animal similes, the highest in any of the comedies" (p. 279).

[4]Frank Kermode, ed., English Pastoral Poetry: From the Beginning to Marvell (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1952), p. 14.

[5]Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[6]Helen Gardner, "As You Like It," p. 69.

[7]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 227.

[8]Helen Gardner, "As You Like It," p. 63.

[9]A New Variorum Edition cites the following remark of Macdonald (The Imagination, 1883): "But what do we know about the character of Shakespeare? How can we feel the inner life of a man who has uttered himself in dramas, in which of course it is impossible that he should ever speak in his own person? No doubt he may speak his own sentiments through the mouths of many of his persons; but how are we to know in what cases he does so? At least we may assert, as a self-evident negative, that a passage treating of a wide question put into the mouth of a person despised and rebuked by the best characters in the play is not likely to contain any cautiously formed and cherished opinion of the dramatist. At first sight this may seem almost a truism; but we have only to remind our readers that one of the passages oftenest quoted with admiration is 'The Seven Ages of Man', a passage full of inhuman contempt for humanity and unbelief in its destiny, in which not one of the seven ages is allowed to pass over its poor sad stage without a sneer; . . ." (pp. 416-17).

[10]Frederick Turner, Shakespeare and the Nature of Time: Moral and Philosophical Themes in Some Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 33-36.

[11]R. A. Foakes, "The Owl and the Cuckoo: Voices of Maturity in Shakespeare's Comedies," Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, eds., Shakespearian Comedy, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 14 (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), p. 125.

[12]Helen Gardner, "As You Like It," p. 67.

[13]Ibid., p. 70.

[14]Robert M. Bender, ed., Five Courtier Poets of the English Renaissance (New York: Washington Square Press, 1969), pp. 544-45.

[15]C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 42-43.

[16]Robert M. Bender, ed., Five Courtier Poets of the English Renaissance, p. 626.

[17]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 10.

[18]Robert M. Bender, ed., Five Courtier Poets of the English Renaissance, pp. 613-14.

[19]Ibid., p. 614.

[20]Helen Gardner, "As You Like It," p. 60.

[21]J. R. Brown, Shakespeare and His Comedies, p. 152.

[22]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 232.

[23]Harold Jenkins, "As You Like It," p. 38.

[24]G. K. Hunter, Shakespeare: The Late Comedies, p. 41.

[25]The New Penguin Shakespeare Edition, ed. H. J. Oliver (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 168, cites Matthew 7. 17-18: ". . . a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. . . ."

[26]G. K. Hunter, Shakespeare: The Late Comedies, p. 26.

[27]C. L. Barber, Shakespeare's Festive Comedy, p. 223.

[28]Ibid., pp. 236-37.

[29]Professor G. K. Hunter's interpretation of wit in John Lyly's works as a capacity which reconciles the Humanistic learning and the courtly sophistication throws light on how As You Like It gives a solution to the dilemma of its heroine. Consult John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier, Chapter I, "Humanism and Courtship," pp. 1-35.

[30]H. B. Charlton, Shakespearian Comedy, p. 296.

CHAPTER IV

[1]Harold Jenkins, "Shakespeare's Twelfth Night," Rice Institute Pamphlet, 45 (1959), pp. 19-42, rpt. in Kenneth Muir, ed., Shakespeare: The Comedies, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 73-75.

[2]Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, eds., Twelfth Night, The New Cambridge Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), Introduction xvii.

[3]Ibid., Introduction xi. Professor Quiller-Couch also states: "--this Twelfth Night, analysed in the study, becomes a texture or tissue of shadows, of afterthoughts, the ghostlier the more poetical. Arden, with its greenwood sunshine, has faded into Illyria, perilously near fading into Elysium. The mirth abides; but it reaches us from a distance, its dramatis personae move in the beams of a lunar rainbow. They move to music, but to music with 'a dying fall' as a fountain in a garden at night, and it has changed from the robust note of 'Love is crownéd with the prime' to 'Youth's a stuff will not endure'--a very slight change, but subtle, delicate, if we listen" (Introduction xxvii).

[4]L. G. Salingar, "The Design of Twelfth Night," Shakespeare Quarterly, 9 (1958), p. 124.

[5]E. K. Chambers, Shakespeare: A Survey, p. 175.

[6]L. G. Salingar, "The Design of Twelfth Night," pp. 121-22. "Good fortune," "long patience," and "good advice" to which Professor Salingar refers, will be found in the following passages from Gl'Ingannati: "Two lessons above all you will take away with you: how great is the power of chance and good fortune in affairs of love; and how great too in them is the value of long-enduring patience accompanied by good counsel" (Geoffrey Bullough, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, II, 288). Also: "I truly believe it is God's will, who has had pity on this virtuous maid, and on my soul that it may not go down into perdition" (Bullough, II, 337).

[7]Clifford Leech, Twelfth Night and Shakespearian Comedy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), pp. 42-43.

[8]Horace Howard Furness, ed., Twelfth Night, A New Variorum Edition (New York: Dover Publications, 1964), p. 377.

[9]From Ben Jonson's masque, Time Vindicated, quoted by Leslie Hotson, The First Night of Twelfth Night (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1954), p. 158.

[10]Enid Welsford, The Fool: His Social and Literary History (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), p. 212.

[11]Ibid., p. 251.

[12]Ibid., pp. 202-13.

[13]Leslie Hotson, The First Night of Twelfth Night, p. 163.

[14]L. G. Salingar, "The Design of Twelfth Night," p. 131.

[15]Clifford Leech, Twelfth Night and Shakespearian Comedy, p. 44.

[16]Enid Welsford, The Fool, p. 320. Miss Welsford remarks: "The serious hero focuses events, forces issues, and causes catastrophes; but the Fool by his mere presence dissolves events, evades issues, and throws doubt on the finality of fact. The Stage-clown therefore is as naturally detached from the play as the Court-fool is detached from social life, . . . " (p. 320).

[17]G. K. Hunter, Shakespeare: The Late Comedies, p. 44.

[18]Ibid., p. 55.

[19]Clifford Leech, Twelfth Night and Shakespearian Comedy, p. 55.

[20]Enid Welsford, The Court Masque, p. 406.

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