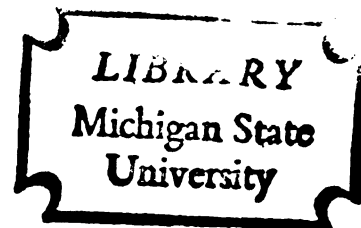


SHAKESPEARE AND MOLIÈRE:
A COMPARISON OF
THEIR COMIC WORLDS

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
JUDITH ANN SORUM
1973



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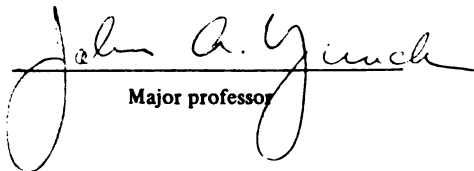
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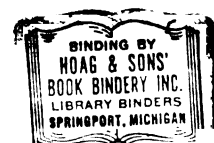
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ABSTRACT

SHAKESPEARE AND MOLIÈRE: A COMPARISON OF THEIR COMIC WORLDS

By

Judith Ann Sorum

The importance of the contributions of Shakespeare and Molière to the Western dramatic tradition, as well as their use of similar plot lines, motifs and characters, suggest the fruitfulness of a comparison of their works. Past studies which have compared the two playwrights have been limited to brief discussions of the similarities of their lives or of particular comic figures which they developed. The purpose of this study is to provide a basis for meaningful detailed comparison of their complete comic works by comparing the interior worlds of their comedies.

The method used for the study included a close reading of the texts of the comic works, from which was sketched an outline of the interior worlds of the comedies. The two comic worlds were then compared. Chapter I of the study defined the concept of comic vision and outlines the existing scholarship. Chapter II is an analysis of

four Shakespearian comedies: Love's Labour's Lost, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night and The Winter's Tale. Chapter III outlines the Shakespearian comic world as seen through these comedies. And Chapter IV compares that world with the comic world of the Molière comedies. Chapter V provides a brief summary.

This comparison of the two playwrights' comic worlds suggests that Shakespeare's comic world, rather than differing radically from that of Molière's, goes beyond it, including, but expanding upon the intimate social group of Molière's comic world. The Shakespearian setting which alternates between urban and rural settings suggests the tensions and dualities of the comic world. The Molière setting, on the other hand, is usually simply a backdrop to the various social groups who are a part of Molière's comic world.

In both comic worlds, the movement of life is from disorder and separation to order and union. In Shakespeare's comic world this movement proceeds on many levels: social, political and natural. In Molière's comic world, however, the movement is social only, and lacks the actual physical and geographical movement which we find in Shakespeare's world. The comedies of both men end with marriage and union, and in both comic worlds marriage seems to represent order.

In Shakespeare's comic world, the return to order is marked by some sort of celebration, while Molière's plays come to an abrupt conclusion, as if to suggest the very irrationality, the absurdity, of life. The return to order suggests man's powerlessness in Molière's world, as it suggests man's role in a sexual, seasonal cycle of life in Shakespeare's world.

The character of fixity, who appears in many variations in Molière's comic world, is seen as well in Shakespeare's comedies, although he is not so unswervingly the center of attention there as he is in Molière's works. Molière focuses on the character of fixity as he is a block to order, while Shakespeare focuses on the characters who provide an impetus for order as they encounter various blocks to that order.

Both playwrights use parallels between master and servant to suggest the universality of the human situation. And both consider the servant and clown to be the wiseman, the teacher of truths, the person who brings order. In both worlds the nature of the play itself is of importance. Both men suggest the tension between the play which deludes and the play which reveals truth. Both suggest that theatre is at once an entertainment and a lesson, a dream and a cure for man's irrationality.

Both comic worlds place a major emphasis on love and suggest a tension between the rhetoric of love and

the reality of love. And both worlds deal with death. Death in Shakespeare's world suggests the end to the individual life, while it affirms the role of the individual as part of a seasonal cycle of life. Death, in the Molière comic world, is an irrationality which suggests the absurdity of life.

The Shakespearian character moves through a vast comic world, learning his proper attitude toward his fortune, toward that which time brings, while the Molière player hides behind his fixity of character, his mask, in an attempt to prove that he has the power to live life as he wishes.

As Shakespeare's comic man learns to deal with fortune, so Molière's comic man tries to deal with present reality, with the real life behind the illusion. Where Shakespeare's hero, however, seems to learn about the nature of that existence, Molière's hero, while no longer a block to the establishment of order at play's end, never seems to quite understand the irrational nature of life. He is, until the play ends, the heroic player in a comic universe.

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OF THEIR COMIC WORLDS

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation has been written in order to provide a meaningful way of comparing the comic works of Shakespeare and Molière. Most comparisons of the two playwrights have briefly focused on the men's lives, their social situations, their theatre backgrounds and the importance of each to the history of Western dramatic traditions.¹ Those few critics who have ventured to compare the actual works of the two men at any length have limited themselves to similarities in plot, setting and character.² This study will go farther, arriving at an understanding of the view of the comic world which each playwright develops through his comedies and then comparing those two comic worlds. My hope is that this study will increase my understanding and appreciation of the works of the two playwrights individually, and will provide a basis for teaching the two playwrights' works as part of a single college course.

I have chosen the term "comic world" to refer to the world within the comedy which is developed in

and through a comedy or a playwright's comic works. This concept of "comic world" focuses our attention on the interior world of the comedy. For this concept I am indebted to E. M. W. Tillyard whose Elizabethan World Picture suggested to me the richness to be found in analyzing the world view of a body of literature. Yet the approach of this study differs greatly from that of Tillyard's. While Tillyard's world picture encompasses the entirety of Elizabethan literature, my concept of the comic world is limited to the works of one man. And while Tillyard was focusing on the society which produced a given body of literature, I am looking at the relatively limited world view found within a piece of literature or a body of literature. So, while Tillyard defined the world view of the society of which the playwright was a part, I am writing about the world view of the society of which the playwright's characters are a part--the inner society of the play.

My reason for wanting to compare comic worlds rather than dramatic traditions, or motifs, or characters, lies in my feeling that much Molière and Shakespeare criticism is limited by its tendency to draw our attention to the part at the expense of our understanding of the whole. G. Wilson Knight in his introduction to The Shakespearian Tempest points to this very tendency:

In any intellectual study we expect first some principle of unity; but it is exactly this that has been lacking to our understanding of Shakespeare. If no unity be apprehended, the result will be an intellectual chaos such as surely emerged throughout recent Shakespearian investigation. My purpose here is to replace that chaos by drawing attention to the true Shakespearian unity: the opposition, throughout the plays, of 'tempests' and 'music.'³

Knight bases his discussion of unity in the Shakespearian plays on the images of the tempest and music. Nonetheless, while our approaches vary, his objective is one with which I am in great agreement. I find in his reasons for writing The Shakespearian Tempest, feelings very much like my own. He says, for instance, further on in the introduction to his work:

This tendency to neglect the Shakespearian imagination has wrecked our understanding. Perhaps it is but the natural result of the excessive importance attached to Shakespeare's psychology and 'characterization' by the criticism of the last century. While we view the plays primarily as studies in character, abstracting the literary person from the close mesh of that poetic fabric into which he is woven, we shall, by continually over-emphasizing certain qualities in each play and attending closely to no others, necessarily end by creating a chaos of the whole. If, however, we give attention always to poetic colour and suggestion first, thinking primarily in terms of symbolism, not 'characters,' we shall find each play in turn appears more and more amazing in the delicacy of its texture, and then, and not til then, will the whole of Shakespeare's work begin to reveal its richer significance, its harmony, its unity.⁴

Knight's insistence on viewing the comedy as a complex whole, of searching for the "delicacy of its texture" seems to me a valid one. And indeed, I find that

attention to patterns of imagery does point us on our way to an understanding of the richness of the play. Yet, we cannot limit our view to just imagery.

I have chosen to write this paper, in effect, because of my desire to articulate the way in which the many parts of a comedy--setting, character, language, silence, imagery, music, dress--all contribute to a consistent view of a comic world. Thus, rather than dwell on a single motif, or on certain character developments, I have taken that approach which I feel brings me closer to an understanding of the integrity of the works of each playwright, and subsequently to the way that those works in their wholeness relate to each other.

In order to arrive at a comparison of the comic worlds of the two playwrights, I have used the following method: I have first surveyed existing Shakespeare/Molière comparisons and noted their shortcomings in relation to the objectives of this paper. Then I have defined as precisely as possible the concept of the "comic world." In Chapter II, an analysis of four individual Shakespearian plays points the way toward a definition of Shakespeare's comic world. Chapter III outlines that comic world in detail. And in Chapter IV, then, this comic world is compared with that of Molière with an emphasis on several topic areas including the

play, love and death. Chapter V is a brief conclusion. There is no attempt to balance the emphasis placed on the works of the two playwrights. Since an analysis of four of the comedies of Shakespeare provides a demonstration for arriving at a view of the comic world of a playwright, his works are by necessity treated at greater length.

Although this paper is comparative in nature, it does not proceed with the more common comparative literature methodology.⁵ That is, it does not study the playwrights as part of an international movement nor from a particular historical perspective. Limitations on space and time have demanded that we leave the question of the cultural and theatrical traditions which impact on comic vision to a later study. Nor will this study attempt to develop any particular theory of the comic, the type of study for which Susanne Langer is so well known.⁶ This is an area proper to aesthetics. This dissertation will not discuss any theories of laughter. This is an area proper to psychology. Nor will it endeavor to refute or corroborate any theory of Molière or Shakespeare criticism. The volumes of such critical work make any such forays unmanageable as well as superfluous. It will not argue the question of whether or not certain comedies are properly considered comic genre, as opposed to tragi-comedy

or tragedy. For the purposes of this dissertation, a "comedy" is that which is generally termed a "comedy" by a majority of critics and so labeled in indices and summaries.

And finally, this paper does not claim originality in its analysis of individual comedies. Although the analysis represents my own thinking and approach, and thus may be original, the originality of the paper as a whole remains in the outline of the comic worlds of the two playwrights and the comparison of those two comic worlds.

Let us turn now to the material, however meagre, which compares the works of Shakespeare and Molière and/or the similarities of their lives. Vera Mowry Roberts writes,

It is of special interest to note that the greatest playwrights in both France and England were first of all actors. . . . Indeed, Molière ended his days as an actor, and most of his contemporary fame rested upon this facet of his ability. . . . They were different, it is true, in their views of life--the Englishman's genius was larger, more comprehensive, more sympathetic; he did not have the satiric bent that is evident in all of Molière's work . . . to both of them, however, the art of acting was at least as important as that of writing plays--if not more important.⁷

Unfortunately Ms. Roberts neither develops nor supports the comparison which she has begun. We are left to wonder what constitutes a "larger, more comprehensive genius," and in what ways their "views of life"

were different. Here we note the generalizations about the nature or quality of one or the other playwright's works which often plague even the briefest comparison of the two playwrights.

Eric Bentley in his In Search of Theatre is a bit more precise, but his comparison is the same type of undeveloped listing of similarities which leads to little conclusion:

The modern naturalist can destroy Shakespeare by the inordinate demands he makes in the realm of motivation. Iago has no adequate motif. Neither have the comic villains of Jonson and Molière. . . . But Molière characters, like Shakespeare's, have very often a background as well as a foreground. In Shakespeare's hands the stage Jew becomes Shylock; in Molière's the stage rascal is also a person. He not only is a stage convention but is related to life.⁸

Bentley begins an interesting discussion about the way in which the two playwrights expand upon the given stage conventions. Yet he fails to develop the idea. He does not explain how the stage tradition comes to life in the playwrights' hands--what it is that makes Shylock more than the "stage Jew."

Although many English critics are reluctant to compare Shakespeare to any other mortal, some Shakespeare critics do note similarities between the works of the two playwrights. James Brander Matthews is one of those few who compare the two men and their works at some length:

The comparison of Shakespere and Molière, which the Germans did not care to draw, imposes itself upon us who speak English and who have been taught to hold Shakspere as the standard by which the foremost writers of every other language must be measured. . . . The Englishman is the master of tragedy, who has also left us a group of delightful comedies; and the Frenchman is the master of comedy, who might have attained to the tragic, if only his life had been a little longer. . . . In the merely external circumstances of their careers Shakespere and Molière are often curiously alike. . . . Many of these resemblances in the career of the two great dramatists may be merely fortuitous; but some of them are strangely significant. And it would not be difficult to pick out other points of similarity or of contrast in their works.

The 'Comedy of Errors' is not unlike 'Amphitryon' in one of its devices (derived in both cases from Plautus); and 'Richard III' is not unlike 'Dom Juan' in its dominating character. . . . Alceste can be compared better with Jacques than with Timon. Harpagon repays a comparative study with Shylock, and Tartuffe with Iago. Hamlet's advice to the players can be set over against the personal discussion of actors and of the art of acting which Molière put in the 'Impromptu de Versailles.'⁹

We can see in the glancing comparisons between Shakespeare and Molière an inconclusiveness which suggests the need for a more thorough comparison of the works of the two playwrights. However, Matthews, who seems by virtue of the time he devotes to comparing Molière and Shakespeare, the critic most likely to develop such comparisons, cautions against carrying the discussion any further.

To push the comparison between these two great dramatic poets too far would be unfair to Molière, since Shakspere is the master mind of all literature. He soared to heights and he explored depths and he had a range to which Molière could not pretend. His is the spirit of soul-searching

tragedy, of youthful and graceful romantic-comedy, of dramatic romance, of dramatized history; and in no one of these is Molière his rival. But in the comedy of real life he is not Molière's rival.¹⁰

Many critics seem, like Matthews (in comments more based on personal preferences for one or the other playwright than on any particular objective comparison) to insist that the comedies of the two playwrights are too unlike to be compared or that one or the other of the two writers was so superior to the other that no comparison is possible. But the playwrights' use of similar motifs, characters and plot lines suggests at least some grounds for comparison. And to refuse to compare the two because one is greater than the other seems to be precarious reasoning.

E. E. Stoll, like Matthews, believed in limiting comparisons to notable similarities in plot and character and to biographical affinities. Thus his comparisons really come to few conclusions:

By some critics Shakespeare has been thought in the person of Falstaff to be poking fun at the chivalric ideals of bravery and honor; but he is only doing what Molière did by the same traditional technique of self-exposure--nowadays as Stendahl says "par trop contre nature"--in the person of Sganerelle who chose to be a cuckold (as in that of Falstaff, who chose to be a coward) rather than fight. Discretion is his pet virtue too, as with many another artful dodger then and afterwards on the stage; . . . With such external and more or less obvious, though wholly dramatic and direct contrasts, however, the critics generally are not content.¹¹

Although Stoll complains that the critics unwisely are not content with the obvious contrasts, I find them too easily content with just the sort of direct and limited comparison which Stoll prefers. Consider the comments of Jules Guillemot as he lists several points of comparison between the two playwrights and then cuts off his discussion abruptly:

Si Shakespeare a fait Shylock, Molière a fait Harpagon; si le premier a son misanthrope, le second a aussi le sien. Prenons d'abord l'avare. Vous savez ce que celui de Molière répond à sa fille, lorsqu'elle implore la grâce de Valère et rapelle que celui à qui Harpagon impute le vol de sa cassette, a risqué sa vie pour la sauver . . . Eh! bien, il est curieux de trouver, dans la bouche de l'avare anglais, l'expression d'une égale tendresse paternelle. . . . Ici encore, on en conviendra, l'analogie est frappante; et la servante de Shakespeare est cousine germaine du valet de Molière . . . les beaux esprits se rencontrent . . . Voilà tout ce que j'ai voulu faire voir à l'aide des rapprochements. On pourrait assurément les multiplier. Je me suis contenté de relever quelque similitudes, que je crois curieuses, et d'indiquer une voie qui pourrait, ce me semble, ouvrir le champ à de fécondes observations.¹²

Certainly it seems to us that the similarities between the works of the two playwrights do open the way for further comparative study. In any case, the fact that the two men made major contributions to the Western comic tradition at approximately the same time in history would suggest that we might want to compare their works. And certainly since the average student is exposed to the works of both men (unfortunately

usually without reference to any points of comparison between the two) a study which would develop meaningful ways to teach the works of the two playwrights simultaneously would seem to be in order.

And so this dissertation follows the "path" which Guillemot has suggested but goes beyond a comparison between the elements of the plays to a comparison of the comic worlds of the two playwrights.

In the process of sketching the comic worlds of the two playwrights, we answer many questions about those worlds. What are the boundaries of the comic world? What kind of development does man undergo in that world? Does he have any power, any control over his own destiny? Does he think he controls his destiny? What are the governing concepts and ideas in that world? To what do people owe allegiance? Do the characters change? If so, how? Do men learn? If so, what? Who, or what, teaches them? What are the most powerful forces in that world? What are the most important values? What causes conflict? How is it resolved? How does man's view of himself differ from our view of him?

The elements which one may look at in arriving at this view of the comic world include character, parallels in character, inconsistencies in character, the use of symbol, allusion, language, silence, metaphor,

timing, setting, song, dress, masks, speech, recurring motifs and repeated themes.

This method demands a very close reading of the text and a sort of "jig-saw puzzle" curiosity whereby we question the significance of each part of the play to the integrity of the play. The assumption is, of course, that there is a consistency in a single comedy and among the various comedies by a single playwright. We assume that the parts do relate to the whole and that it is appropriate to ask how a single element contributes to the direction of the play.¹³ As a critical approach, the concept of comic vision probably finds most support in the myth and ritual school, in motif indexes, and in the works of G. Wilson Knight, Carolyn Spurgeon, Francis Fergusson, Northrop Frye, Lionel Gossman, Ramon Fernandez and W. G. Moore, whose critical approaches deal with the unity of the play and the way in which the myriad elements contribute to a coherent and effective whole.¹⁴

It might be suggested that the greatest weakness in the concept of the comic world lies in the possibility that one of the elements of the play may be gratuitous or that an element may be attributable to tradition rather than the playwright's creative genius. However, since we are only discussing the function of the parts of the play and their contribution to the development of a consistent view of the interior world of the comedy, neither their

source nor their originality are of primary importance. It matters not, in terms of this study, whether an element of a play is a sign of the playwright's genius or a simple adaptation of a long-standing dramatic tradition. In either case, the element functions and contributes to the play as a whole. So although the influences of culture and tradition on the comic development of both playwrights are considerable, we have, while looking at the play's internal world, set aside for a moment those questions of influence, and turned our attention instead to that world and its players which are found within the bounds of the play. As part of that focus on the interior world of the comedy we now turn to a discussion of four of Shakespeare's comedies and the comic world which is developed through them.

NOTES--CHAPTER I

¹See pages 6 and 7 below for examples of such comparisons.

²See pages 8 through 10 below for examples of comparisons of the playwrights' works.

³G. Wilson Knight, The Shakespearian Tempest (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 1.

⁴Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁵Jan Brandt Corstius' Introduction to the Comparative Study of Literature provides a brief summary of comparative literature methodology.

⁶Susanne Langer's Feeling and Form is especially useful in its discussion of the tragic and comic rhythms.

⁷Vera Mowry Roberts, On Stage (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 221.

⁸Eric Bentley, In Search of Theatre (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), pp. 162-204.

⁹James Brander Matthews, Molière (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1910), pp. 361-65.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 366.

¹¹E. E. Stoll, "Molière and Shakespere," Romanic Review, 35 (1944), 14.

¹²Jules Guillemot, "Shakespeare et Molière," Molieriste, 2 (1879-1880), 209, 214-15.

¹³The original plan for this paper called for an analysis of all the comedies, as I felt, and still do feel, that one must read them all to fully understand the comic world. However, an analysis of all was not possible within this paper. Such an analysis was done, however, in preparation for the writing. Therefore, many of the conclusions reflect a study of other plays than those discussed at length within this paper.

¹⁴I have found several works to be especially useful in their analysis of comic works. They include: G. Wilson Knight's The Shakespearian Tempest, Carolyn Spurgeon's Shakespeare's Imagery, Francis Fergusson's Shakespeare, The Pattern in his Carpet, Alfred Harbage's A Reader's Guide to William Shakespeare, Northrop Frye's "The Mythos of Spring: Comedy," W. G. Moore's Molière, A New Criticism, Lionel Gossman's Men and Masks and Ramon Fernandez's Molière: The Man Seen Through the Plays.

CHAPTER II

SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES

Beginning with a vow of abstinence and ending with a promise of marriage, Love's Labour's Lost is an affirmation of man's role in the natural cycle of birth and death through his participation in courtship and marriage. The movement of the play is away from an arbitrary unnatural order--an order in which men and women are forbidden to meet and in which life is spent in austere study and contemplation--toward a natural, physical order in which men and women meet, love, and are eventually married.

But unlike most of Shakespeare's comedies in which the marriages are solemnized, the marriages of Love's Labour's Lost are only a promise. Instead of the usual scene in which revelry and games are either a prologue to, or a celebration of, the actual marriages, this play ends with a scene in which the men vow to do a year's penance, at the end of which time they may be married. And against the pattern of broken promises in the play (none of the men remain true to

their vow of society without women) we must suspect, as the women do, that these promises of marriage, too, will be forgotten in time.

Despite Ferdinand's attempt to establish an academic society, the play as a whole suggests that man's proper role is that of lover. Biron insists that the men must

. . . lose our oaths to find ourselves,
Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.
(IV, iii, 361-62)¹

And it is Biron, cynically reluctant to sign the pledge, who acknowledges that the order of love is more natural than that of abstinence:

As true we are as flesh and blood can be.
The sea will ebb and flow, heaven show his face,
Young blood doth not obey an old decree.
We cannot cross the cause why we were born;
Therefore of all hands must we be forsworn.
(IV, iii, 215-19)

The "cause why we were born" is abundantly reflected in the predominance of natural images--images of growth, cyclical movement, seasonal change, natural life and fecundity.

But the power of nature is reflected in more than imagery. The very setting of the play is an affirmation of nature's supremacy. Although the dialogue at first draws our attention to the court and the palace, with their denial of the physical, the action of the entire

play takes place in the park, with its beauty and its promise of physical fulfillment. The first thing we learn about the park is that it is where Armado has caught Costard and Jaquenetta together. So from the start, it is a place where men and women meet and love.

However, the concept of the park suggests more than the union of men and women. Like the image of the garden which is developed in many of Shakespeare's later plays, especially in the histories, the park in Love's Labour's Lost represents a balance between two opposing forces: the court and the forest, the mind and the body, order and disorder, society and nature. This dichotomy is often expressed in terms of a tension between the philosophical and the physical, between life in the court and life in the forest, between the order of man and the order of nature, between the constraints of society and total freedom. The park, then, is a meeting-ground between forest and court, a compromise between two ways of life.

In many of the later comedies, tension between the two forces is represented by a change in setting from the court to the forest, and back to the court. In Love's Labour's Lost this tension is developed by setting the entire play in a park, thus suggesting the power of nature slightly ordered by the hand of man. And it is echoed in the appearance of the horseman at

the beginning of Act IV, a figure who suggests man's harnessing and guiding of nature's power. It is also seen in the social contract of marriage which is a harnessing, a channelling of the drive for procreation. Marriage is, like the park itself, an ordering of the procreative power of nature.

Thus the denial of the physical, which would have been necessitated by the new academic order, is moderated by directing the human desire for sexual fulfillment into the socially acceptable form of marriage. (The only exception to this pattern of moderation is Jacquenetta, whose troth to Armado is consummated before it is sanctified.) The play begins, then, with the unnatural order of study, of "barren tasks," and ends with a promise of fecundity through love and marriage.

The song which ends the play is a final echo of the power of the natural, defined in terms of the cyclical movement of the seasons:

THE SONG.

Spring. When daisies pied and violets blue
 And lady-smocks all silver-white
 And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
 Do paint the meadows with delight,
 The cuckoo then on every tree
 Mocks married men; for thus sings he, "Cuckoo;
 Cuckoo, cuckoo,"--O word of fear,
 Unpleasing to a married ear!

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws
 And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,
 When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,
 And maidens bleach their summer smocks,
 The cuckoo then on every tree
 Mocks married men; for thus sings he, "Cuckoo;
 Cuckoo, cuckoo,"--O word of fear,
 Unpleasing to a married ear!

Winter. When icicles hang by the wall
 And Dick the shepherd blows his nail
 And Tom bears logs into the hall
 And milk comes frozen home in pail,
 When blood is nipp'd and ways be (foul),
 Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 "Tu-whit, tu-who!"--
 A merry note,
 While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow
 And coughing drowns the parson's saw
 And birds sit brooding in the snow
 And Marian's nose looks red and raw,
 When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
 Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 "Tu-whit, tu-who!"--
 A merry note,
 While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.
 (V, ii, 904-39)

This is the song of the cycle of the seasons, replete with rich imagery and sexual overtones. The song of spring--of flowers and fecundity--is followed by the song of winter, marked by snow and coughing, perhaps a hint of impending death. But even in its suggestion of death, the play acknowledges that man is subject to the same natural forces which shape the destiny of all life, and that to resist those forces is futile.

Unfortunately, those very natural forces, which are defined in terms of love and marriage, and later,

death, are not always benevolent. Even though Love's Labour's Lost defines love, it hardly provides a ringing endorsement of its joys. Within its five acts, we find an intricate pattern of images, actions and language which point toward the complex and paradoxical nature of human love.²

Standing in sharp contrast to the stylized romantic love poetry of the four men, and to their protestations of undying fidelity, is the reality of the final cynical song in which the joys of spring are marred by the lyric of the cuckoo--the suggestion of deceit and betrayal. And the curtain rings down, not on a union of lovely lasses and gallant men, but on a tenuous promise of marriage and the song of winter. We are left, not with the vision of the maids of spring, but of "greasy Joan" who stirs the pot.

The play's final words belong to that most ridiculous of lovers, the braggard Armado, who says in response to the song of the seasons, "The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo" (V, ii, 940). His meaning is uncertain. Perhaps the song of Apollo is the promise of the glory of the gods or a hint of the immortality towards which Ferdinand strives and which this play denies. Or perhaps it is a suggestion of some modicum of truth, that is, if we

consider Apollo as the god of truth. Or his comment might draw our attention back to Biron's words that love is,

. . . as sweet and musical
 As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair;
 And when Love speaks, the voice of all the gods
 Make heaven drowsy with the harmony.
 (IV, iii, 342-45)

In any case, the promise of Apollo, be it of heavenly joy, a hope for eternity, the grasp of truth, or a promise of love, is drowned out by the words of Mercury. And if we consider Mercury in his role as messenger of death and the guide to the land of the dead, those words can only be a promise of the inevitability of death. This inevitability is the message of the song of winter. The play ends with the suggestion that all things--even love and life--pass. Death claims all.

The transient nature of life and love is a harsh reality in the world of Love's Labour's Lost. The play is, in a sense, a definition of reality, of truth, as it relates to love. Against the exaggerated images of the flowery love poems and the protestations of undying, all-consuming love, are balanced the reality of broken vows, forgotten pledges and the memory of the slightly pregnant Jaquenetta. As the play is a definition of, or a search for, the truth about love, so its characters are involved in various quests for truth.

Biron reminds the King of the need to speak openly. The princess is unimpressed by flattery because she searches for the truth. And the play pokes fun at the pedant and the scholar alike, both of whom obscure the truth with their ridiculous language.

Love's Labour's Lost also emphasizes the search for truth by emphasizing those things which corrupt truth. The King is sentenced for the sin of "perjury." Vows are broken. Oaths are forgotten. Great speeches are spoken in jest. And the play's most ringing endorsement of love is only a "salve for perjury" (IV, iii, 289-365). In the course of the play almost all the characters lie--in earnest or in mocking jest. The only exception is the clown, Costard, who says: "I suffer for the truth, sir; for true it is, I was taken with Jaquenetta, and Jaquenetta is a true girl; and therefore welcome the sour cup of prosperity!" (I, i, 313-15).

When later he says, "Walk aside the true folk, and let the traitors stay" (IV, iii, 213), he is referring to himself and Jaquenetta as "true folk"; for the traitors are the King and the three lords. In the play as a whole, only Costard consistently represents the truth. He, like Jaquenetta, represents an acceptance of one's role and a fulfillment through that role.

(Remember that Jaquenetta is the only woman who is pregnant, the only female whose role within the comic

natural cycle is completed.) It is Costard who admits his sin and suffers for it. It is he who inadvertently reveals Biron's hypocrisy. It is he who carries messages between the lovers. And it is he, who like the fool or clown of many a Shakespearian comedy and tragedy, teaches others.

Costard, too, teaches the proper use of language through wit and truth. He suggests that man should accept his fortune. His attitude toward the vagaries of life is one which the other characters are forced, in the course of the play, to emulate. It is he who says philosophically: "Affliction may one day smile again; and until then, sit thee down, sorrow!" (I, i, 316-17). Biron acknowledges Costard's wisdom when he says: "Well, 'set thee down, sorrow!' for so they say the fool said, and so say I, and I the fool; well proved, wit!" (IV, iii, 4-5).

In his role as teacher, Costard is a precursor to both Feste of Twelfth Night who sings, "For the rain it raineth every day" (Twelfth Night, V, i, 401) and the Fool in King Lear who teaches the aging Lear to accept life's hardships. This view of the clown, or fool, as the wiseman is a recurring motif in Shakespearian drama.

Another recurring motif is the "play within a play," which is ultimately perfected by Shakespeare in

the production of the rude mechanicals in A Midsummer Night's Dream and is represented in Love's Labour's Lost by the play of the Nine Worthies. This theme is underscored by the numerous references to other kinds of play: entertainment, jests, jokes and games. And these references to a kind of "play" which detracts from the truth are balanced against the concept of the "play" as a teacher of truths. Thus, there is a tension in the very meaning of the word itself.

Contributing to the emphasis on the "play" in Love's Labour's Lost are many references to the theatre. Biron realizes that the men have been tricked into betraying themselves by a "Christmas comedy" (V, ii, 462). And we are witness again and again to the "plays" within the larger play, each marked by an unexpected ending in which, as in the framing play, nothing turns out as expected. Biron's hypocrisy is exposed before the three men with whom he'd been playing a role. The women turn the would-be-Russian's intentions into a losing game. The play of the Nine Worthies ends in confusion when it is cut short by the death of the King of France. And the greater play, Love's Labour's Lost, ends without its expected conclusion of marriage. As Biron notes,

Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
 Jack hath not Jill. These ladies' courtesies
 Might well have made our sport a comedy.
 (V, ii, 884-86)

If we are to accept the life/play analogy which seems to be suggested by the comedy, we must conclude that each of us is no more able to direct the outcome of our lives than the Nine Worthies were able to direct the outcome of their play.

And this conclusion applies to king as well as peasant. The King, like all other mortals in the play, exercises no power over his own future and continues to be subject to powers stronger than himself. Without a doubt, the contrast between Ferdinand's role as king and his actual pitiful performance as human and lover, serves to emphasize the power of love over all mortals. When one can laugh at a king, then indeed all mankind is vulnerable.

Unlike many of the later plays which present love as redemptive and healing, cleansing and fulfilling, Love's Labour's Lost depicts it as a natural, but very temporary and eventually painful force. The numerous references to horns and cuckoldry, lies and deceit, broken pledges and vows, point unerringly to the inevitability of love ending in betrayal. Thus Love's Labour's Lost is perhaps more akin to the disillusionment of Troilus and Cressida than the light-hearted early comedies with which it is grouped chronologically. And perhaps its title refers to the inevitability of

the loss of love's labours through betrayal and broken vows, rather than the postponement of consummation within the play.

A Midsummer Night's Dream views love from a perspective different than that of Love's Labour's Lost. In this play's confused matching of couples, love shows itself as a powerfully irrational but eventually productive and healing force. Although the lovers insist that their passions are rational, we must agree with Egeus that they are indeed "bewitch'd" (I, i, 27).

Unlike the play's characters, we know about the magical prescription which has precipitated their passions. We realize that their "undying love" is a response to drops in their eyes rather than to an objective appraisal of their beloved. And although the lovers are in the end united, that union cannot obliterate the memory of the May night madness, the magical powers which brought them together in the first place.

Fickle, irrational and insane as love may be in the wood outside Athens, it is nevertheless a gripping, powerful and overwhelming force in man's life. Gone are the games of the gay lovers of Love's Labour's Lost. In their place we find the alternately overjoyed, miserable, estatic and glum lovers of A Midsummer Night's Dream who, although unaware of what is happening to them, believe to the depths of their souls that they are playing the game

for "keeps." A Midsummer Night's Dream unlike Love's Labour's Lost ends in the sexual union of the lovers celebrated by Oberon's benediction:

So shall all the couples three
 Ever true in loving be;
 And the blots of Nature's hand
 Shall not in their issue stand;
 (V, i, 414-17)

With the play's happy ending, all the lovers except Bottom are included in a nuptial celebration and thus become part of the natural sexual cycle of life, love and procreation which the play affirms. This completed cycle is not, however, the only view of love to be found in the play.

The tragic implications of the comic love plot lie in the inner play of Pyramus and Thisbe which ends in death and separation--an ending following a series of events not unlike those of Romeo and Juliet. As it mirrors the situation of the Athenian couples, this inner play of the star-crossed lovers is the negative image of the action of the larger play. It is in effect, a "minority report" on the nature of love. This inner play underlines the destructive potential of love and provides a balance to the positive view of love affirmed by the play as a whole.

The images of dreams, visions and bewitching which often refer to love, point as well to another

central concern of A Midsummer Night's Dream, that of the nature of the theatre. The changing roles, the confusion of the senses, the continued mention of "eyes" and "visions," "dreams" and "fantasy" all suggest that the medium here used to describe love (that is, drama) partakes of the very nature of that love.

Theseus' famous statement about the "lunatic, the lover and the poet" (V, i, 7) makes explicit the relationship which is suggested within the play: the poet who writes the play and the lover who is its subject share a similar approach to the transformation of reality through the medium of imagination. Both rely on imagination, a mixing of the senses, a suspension of reason.

The relationship between the play of Pyramus and Thisbe and its audience is certainly expressive of the relationship between the larger play, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and us as its audience: the play in each case is a particular view, a particular vision of a segment of human experience which the audience is living.

It is certainly not by chance that the Pyramus and Thisbe story is in many ways an echo of the plot involving the young lovers in the greater play of A Midsummer Night's Dream. As the lovers see in the play within a play a particular view of their own life struggles, so we see in Shakespeare's play a particular

perspective on our own lives--especially in terms of the power of imagination over our human experience. And we should note that since the main play is set on the eve of May Day (not on Midsummer Night as we would expect from the title) the Midsummer Night's dream to which the title refers must point to the larger play itself as a "dream" which its audience experienced first on Midsummer Night or which is typical of the experiences of a midsummer night. Thus as the incident in the wood is a "dream" to the lovers, so the dramatic experience is a "dream" to us.

Although it is the play within a play which suggests the life/theatre analogy, this inner play is only part of the complex of images relating to the nature of theatre. While the Pyramus and Thisbe tragedy is generally viewed as the play within a play in this comedy, in a greater sense there are several such "inner plays" to be found in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

The story of Hippolyta and Theseus serves as a frame for the story of the two young couples (which in a sense makes that story which we generally consider the "main plot" to be a "play within a play" itself). This second story, that of the young lovers, frames the love/hate relationship of Titania and Oberon, which in turn reveals the crazy love of Titania for Bottom. And running across these three levels of love-plot are found

the antics of the rude country players as they rehearse for the playing of the love story of Pyramus and Thisbe.

An image for the complexity of the love story theme and the myriad "plays" might be the placing of two mirrors face to face, so that each is reflected in the other and the succeeding images draw the eye deeper and deeper into the reflections. Or perhaps one might compare this multiplicity of visions of love to the multiple paintings which Monet made of the cathedral at Rouen, in which he captured the changing impressions of a single edifice by painting it in a variety of atmospheric and lighting conditions. So Shakespeare captures the many "faces" of love by developing within a single play, a variety of inner plays, each reflecting a view of love.

Thus the variety of "love plays" within the single work reflect varying views of love. And often the verbalized views are in direct contradiction to the view of love presented by the comedy as a whole. While its players are insisting that their passions are rational, sensible and comprehensible, the play's plot suggests that a good-natured insanity is more responsible for the infatuation of the lovers than is any rational decision on their part.

The tension between love as presented by the play and love as verbalized by the players is only one of the

contradictions in the play. We see the tension between the inept, bumbling inner play and the beautiful complexity of Shakespeare's work. The elements of timing, speech, proper acting--those elements which Bottom's players handle in such a comically clumsy manner--are in the greater play of major importance and are handled gracefully.

And there is a tension in the play in the constant alternation of scenes between the young lovers, the country players and the fairy royalty. In a sense one can view the Athenian gentry (the three sets of lovers) as a middle ground, a compromise, a mean between the rude country players--those literal folk who deal in the real "here and now," those "hard handed men" whose play acting is without any imagination, any belief in the fantasy world--and the fairies, who on the other hand partake only of the world of the imagination, the magical moon-lit world which exists between sundown and sun-up.

The lovers seem to represent a balance between the literalness of the country folk and the fantasy world of the fairies; they partake of both. And it seems in their loving of each other that these two worlds meet, much as for the poet-dramatist the real and the imaginary are fused in the theatre. The play suggests that both love and theatre are "but a dream,"

that both mix the real and the imaginary. Thus the midsummer night's dream is not the night which the lovers spend in the forest, but those moments which we spend watching the comic tale unfold before us on the stage. It is this which is Puck's "dream."

Puck is, in many ways, analagous to Costard, the clown whom we met in Love's Labour's Lost; for the role which Costard played in the earlier play is here shared by Bottom and Puck. It is Puck who orders things, who directs the events, who makes sure that the lovers get together, and who has special kinds of knowledge. It is he who constantly worries about timing.

Bottom, on the other hand, is (consciously or not) the speaker of truth, the one character who admits that "reason and love keep little company together now-a-days" (III, i, 147). He is most concerned about acting appropriately, especially in his role as Pyramus. And he certainly accepts that which fortune hands to him--even if it does make little sense to him. We note that both Bottom and Puck are excluded from the final pairings; this is a situation in which the Shakespearian clown often finds himself at the play's end.

As in Love's Labour's Lost, the power of nature and the natural is central to this comedy. The movement from the city to the magical forest and then back to the city suggests the tension between the social bonds and

the natural world. It also reflects the movement from the reality of the "here and now" to a fantasy world and back again. Constant reference to storms and natural portents which result from the separation of the fairy lovers points to the role of sexual union in the natural scheme of things in this comic world. And the barrenness suggested in the play's opening scene when Hermia contemplates life in the convent and even later when we find that Titania and Oberon have foresworn each other's beds, is resolved in the final unions. It is the natural power of the fairies, combined with the "magic" of the imagination, which cures the disease of barrenness and separation threatened by the first scene and does so within the bounds of the laws of the city of Athens.

There is much emphasis throughout the play on rules and laws. Dramatic roles and conventions are a concern to the country players. The laws of Athens are a worry to the young lovers. Children are reminded that they owe allegiance to their parents. And the bonds of friendship tie the young girls. The fairies' legal question of who has the right to the young boy is central to the play. And the lovers must wait a certain time in order to be married. Thus the natural union of love and sexual fulfillment is effected within the limits of all these laws and bonds.

Music, as in Love's Labour's Lost, again plays an important role in the Shakespearian comedy. Here it partakes of the magic of fairyland, ushering people into a dreamland, attending the ministrations of love, contributing to the final nuptial celebration. It is closely linked to the elements of fantasy and love and is a soothing and healing force. It is music which, as Titania notes, "charmeth sleep" (IV, i, 86).

The emphasis on time, on the ordering of life within time which we saw in Love's Labour's Lost, is again evident here. The fairies must operate within certain time limits. Theseus and Hippolyta must wait four days to be married. And time, as in the earlier play, threatens all things, even love, with change.

The image of the eye, however, seems to come the closest to the "soul" of A Midsummer Night's Dream. It is often mentioned in connection with "love"--who is pictured as blind--and with the theatre, fantasy and visions. The transforming power of imagination over the eyes of man is well proved throughout the play.

And perhaps more than any theme, that of the play, of reality in tension with the world of the imagination, of the mixture of timing and speech, action and music, which makes up the theatre, is the one central to A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Like A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night is a play of tensions--tension between order and disorder, between love and celibacy, between union and separation, between two households. Much of this tension, as well as its attendant resolution through marriage, is reflected in the settings of the play.

In the early part of the play, the scene moves back and forth between the Duke's house and Olivia's house--as if to emphasize the tension between the love-sick Duke and his cloistered beloved, who is paying no attention to his protestations of love, but closets herself in her house to mourn her brother's death. This alternation of scenes also acts as a backdrop for Feste and Olivia's roles as go-betweens for the two households, for throughout the play these two are the only characters who have open access to both households.

Interspersed with scenes in the two houses are the two scenes at the seashore in which first Viola and then her brother, Sebastian, each come ashore believing the other to have drowned. The sea from which they emerge seems to represent fortune, fate and the inexorable movement of time. Its waves, tides and storms suggest the ebbing and flowing of fortune in man's life. The sea also symbolizes rebirth or baptism--perhaps a rebirth to a new life in Illyria which both Viola and Sebastian certainly find. Or perhaps it

is a baptism to the need to accept the vicissitudes of fate. The sea also suggests the power of nature, a power whose urge toward creation contrasts with the barrenness of the two households.

That barrenness is evident in Valentine's comment that Olivia will be a "cloisteress" for seven years, in Viola's naming of her role as that of "eunuch," and in Feste's belittling of Malvolio as a "barren rascal" while Malvolio calls him a "barren fool." In this barrenness is an anti-life tendency which Toby sees clearly when he says, "I am sure care's an enemy to life" (I, iii, 2). It is as if the forces for life--for love and procreation--are subverted to the anti-life powers of the two households: to mourning, to Malvolio's idea of order and to Orsino's stylized infatuation.

In opposition to the barren, anti-life setting of the interiors of the two households, stand not only the sea, but also the garden and the out-of-doors. There are a total of eighteen scenes in the play, and there is a startling difference between the setting of the first nine and the setting of the second nine. Six of the play's first nine scenes are set inside one of the two houses. It is during this time that Malvolio is yet in power in Olivia's house, Olivia has not yet renounced her mourning, and Orsino is still madly infatuated with her. Not one of these first nine scenes occurs in the garden.

But with the second nine scenes, everything changes. The first of these final nine scenes is set in the garden. It is here that the gulling of Malvolio gets underway, and his power as an anti-life force is weakened. In the second of these scenes, which is also set in the garden, Olivia admits her love to Cesario/Viola. In fact, six of the last nine scenes occur outside--either in the garden or before one of the houses. Thus, as the anti-life forces are converted and over-powered, the scene shifts to a more natural setting--from interior sets to the out-of-doors. Thus the garden becomes representative of nature with its powerful forces, forces of love and time.

As suggested by the settings, the movement of the play is from celibacy to marriage, marked by the triple union of Sebastian and Olivia, Orsino and Viola and Toby and Maria. The play also moves from stylized infatuation to love, from separation to unity, from strife to peace. The early disorder, seen in the unnatural stances of Olivia and Malvolio, as well as in the chaos which Toby's group has effected, dissolves before a new order of love and marriage, and a civil order symbolized by the return of rule to the household.

Initially, Orsino's infatuation with Olivia seems to have cut him off from reality, from all action. In the first four acts he does absolutely nothing but moan

of his all-consuming love and send people off to talk to Olivia. He is a Duke who makes no rulings, a man with many followers who is "best when in least company" (I, iv, 37), a man of breeding and law who counsels Cesario to "be clamorous and leap all civil bounds rather than make unprofited return" (I, iv, 21).

Yet by the end of the play, his infatuation for Olivia has been exchanged for a deep love for Viola and his role as leader changes radically at the same time. He takes Viola for his beloved with a very measured, thoughtful speech:

Your master quits you; and for your service done him,
So much against the mettle of your sex,
So far beneath your soft and tender breeding,
And since you call'd me master for so long,
Here is my hand. You shall from this time be
Your master's mistress.

(V, i, 329-34)

Thus in Orsino's development we see a movement from infatuation, a form of love which is almost an immobilizing sickness and which cannot end in consummation, to love which demands consummation and thus belongs to a natural and sexual life cycle. It is this natural cycle which the other couples--Sebastian and Olivia, Toby and Maria--are a part. Thus the movement of the play is from celibacy, reflected in the terms "eunuch" and "barren," to marriage which will ensue when "golden time convents."

But the play emphasizes various kinds of love-- not just romantic love which ends in marriage. We see the loving friendship of Sebastian and Antonio, the devotion of Sebastian to his sister, Viola, and even the love of Orsino for the page whom he thinks is a young boy. And the play as a whole moves, not only from celibacy to marriage, but from a variety of kinds of separation to unity. In the beginning Viola and Sebastian are separated. The men are apart from the women. Sebastian and Antonio are lost. The two households admit no communication. Slowly, through the intermediaries of Viola and Feste, the characters are brought closer together. Brother and sister find each other. The two households admit communication, and Viola and Sebastian, who were strangers in the land, are, with their marriages to Orsino and Olivia, included in the society of Illyria and become the link between the two households. The only character who refuses to be a part of the union at the end is Malvolio, who, sick with self-love, can only think about the fact that he has been duped.

So the disorder of an unnatural way of life is replaced by the order of marriage. But there is another kind of disorder which is resolved. That is the civil disorder represented by the strife in Olivia's household. This conflict which pits the extravagant Toby and his

companion, Sir Andrew, against the puritan, Malvolio, results in the establishment of a new order of peace with the jokers reprimanded and Olivia once more in control. Orsino's call for peace in the household reflects that new order.

Twelfth Night is rich with parallels which give the play a complex tapestry effect, as if one were repeating various patterns in a weaving or various themes in a musical work. The most obvious of these repeated patterns are the parallels between the characters in the main plot and those in the sub-plot.

There is a similarity between Orsino and Sir Andrew: both men are idiotically infatuated with Olivia. And we note that Viola and Maria are alike in that they are both caught up in a play, Viola in the "play" of being a page to Orsino, and Maria in the "play" of gulling Malvolio. Both continue in their roles in order to win the man they love. Both are able to hold their own with Feste, displaying delightful quick wits.

Viola also resembles Feste. Both she and the clown act as go-betweens for the two households. Both speak the truth freely, Feste from his immunity as a clown, and Viola by using "double talk" to conceal her real meaning. Both play roles: Viola as Cesario and Feste as the Curate. Both are accomplished singers.

Both are witty. And both wait for time to cure the problems of life.

But there are also parallels between characters within the main plot. Olivia and Viola have both lost a brother, and both fall in love. These similarities serve as a backdrop for the contrast between their acceptance of their fortunes: while Viola waits for "time t'untie the knot," Olivia takes things in her own hands wooing Viola and winning Sebastian.

There are also similarities between Sebastian and Viola. Both are aided by a friendly sailor, perhaps suggesting the purity of those who come from the sea. Both fall in love at a time when they least expect to. And both assume a role--Viola as Cesario and later Sebastian as Cesario, as well.

Along with parallels in character, we find parallels of incident. The scene in which Sebastian is rescued from the sea is almost exactly like the one in which Viola is rescued, thus emphasizing the motif of the sea and the shipwreck as reflections on the nature of life and fortune.

The fourth scene of Act II, in which the Duke calls for music as a relief from his passion, is almost an exact re-enactment of the first scene of Act I in which he calls music the "food of love." The repetition of this scene emphasizes the music motif, suggesting

that music is a combination of harmony and proper use of language. But it also shows that Orsino's love has in no way progressed. He is in the same situation in Act II that he was in Act I and is no closer to actually winning his beloved.

The images of the play serve to complement the uses of parallels and the setting. Sebastian speaks of the sea's "blind waves" (V, i, 236). And we remember that dame Fortune is often described as blind. He mentions the "flood of fortune" (IV, iii, 11) again linking the sea with fate. Viola speaks of love and the sea saying, "O, if it prove, tempests are kind and salt waves fresh in love" (III, iv, 418). And the sea images, especially those of the shipwrecks, also suggest death, a death which is the final gift of fortune and of nature. But here death is only a cleansing, a sea bath which ends in a "rebirth" in a foreign land.³

The play is rich with images of natural growth. Olivia swears by the "roses of spring" (III, i, 161) while Viola speaks of a sister who "never told of her love, but let concealment, like a worm, i' the bud feed, on her damask cheek" (II, iv, 113). This natural imagery, especially as it points to seasonal growth, links the idea of the natural to the passage of time.

In Twelfth Night as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, the image of song and of music plays a large role.

Both Viola and Feste are talented singers. The Duke sees music as healing. And music, in this particular play, suggests a mixture of harmony and order which is to be found at the end of the play not only in Feste's song, but in the return to social order.

Song is, in a very real sense, a mixture of harmony and rhythm, a mixture of the elements of language and timing. And as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, it is linked here with love, acting as a kind of prelude to the fantasies of human passion.

Time itself is a central image in the play. The Duke attempts to deny the passage of time. Like Ferdinand of Love's Labour's Lost, he seeks to avoid time, not through a little academe, as in Ferdinand's case, but by hiding in some golden world of love and poetry. He asks Cesario to sing,

. . . That old and antique song we heard last night.
Methought it did relieve my passion much,
More than light airs and recollected terms
Of these most brisk and giddy-paced times.
(II, iv, 3-6)

And later he says that the song,

. . . dallies with the innocence of love,
like the old age.
(II, iv, 48-49)

Through music Orsino seeks a time long past.

But in Twelfth Night time is more than the simple passage of years. Time represents fortune. Viola, when she realizes that Olivia has fallen in love with her disguise, makes no attempt to straighten out the dilemma in which she finds herself:

O time! thou must untangle this, not I.
It is too hard a knot for me t'untie!
(II, ii, 41-42)

Throughout the play, Feste like Viola, accepts his fate. At the end of Act V, he admits his motive for gulling Malvolio was revenge, but he gives "time" the credit for bringing about that revenge: "And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenge" (V, i, 384).

It is Feste of all the play's characters who seems most aware of man's role in time, of his need to accept fortune. His realization that he is growing older and is beginning to lose favor with Olivia is part of that awareness. Thus he sings:

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O, stay and hear, your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low.
Trip no further, pretty sweeting;
Journeys end in lovers meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter.
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come and kiss me, sweet and twenty,
Youth's a stuff will not endure.
(II, iii, 40-45 and 48-53)

Feste seems more aware than are the other characters of the temporary nature of love, realizing full well that it is a very earthly, temporal emotion--not at all the ethereal, unconsummated infatuation which the Duke espouses. Thus, while Feste's song is an affirmation of love which ends in marriage, he is also well aware that there is more to life than love--that love, like youth, is only a passing stage of life.

Feste's final song, the one which closes the fifth act, reflects his attitude toward life as a whole, of which youth and its love is only a small part:

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 &c.
 'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
 For the rain, &c.

But when I came, alas! to wive,
 With hey, ho &c.
 By swaggering could I never thrive,
 For the rain, &c.

But when I came unto my beds,
 With hey, ho &c.
 With toss-pots still had drunken heads,
 For the rain, &c.

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

It is this song which most clearly shows the wisdom of the fool. The song suggests that the life of man is part of a great cycle: "A great while ago the world begun." And rain, or misfortune, is an integral portion of that life. The chorus of the song is the same for each phase of man's life: "For the rain it raineth every day." It is this acceptance of fortune, this understanding that time brings some misfortune to every man, which marks the fool in Twelfth Night as it did in Love's Labour's Lost.

The Winter's Tale, like the three comedies which we have already examined, opens on scenes of disorder. Leontes, with no one to lead him astray--no Iago, no Iachimo--suspects his sainted wife and Queen of adultery with King Polixenes. Leontes orders Polixenes killed, the Queen imprisoned, and their baby abandoned on a distant shore. And he causes the death of his only son by ignoring the warning of the oracle.

Throughout the first two acts, the disorders (which are often described with images of disease) multiply until, in the middle of Act III, Leontes is forced to recognize his error. A resolution of the disorder, and a cure of the "diseases" begins, then, in Act IV, as the infant Perdita, now grown to a lovely country lass, is wooed by Florizel, son of Polixenes.

There is a tension in the play between the disorder of the two courts, with their dissension between fathers and sons, and the natural beauty and order of the shepherd's life. Although all the royal characters eventually return to the court, the bucolic life seems to leave its stamp on them, as it certainly does on Perdita. All are, like Polixenes, "refreshed" by the good life in the country. As the characters, one by one, are drawn back to Sicilia, a new order and a new society are established.

From the disorder a new familial order is discovered. The dead live. Father and son are reconciled. The young lovers are free to marry. King and Queen are reunited. The two boyhood companions are again fast friends. The servants are rewarded for their faithfulness to a higher moral code. All become part of a new society.

This establishment of a new order is effected by Time, who in this play is more than an element but an actual character who speaks openly of his role. His speech, in the exact center of the play, opens Act IV and marks an abrupt change in time, setting and tone. His appearance indicates the passing of sixteen years and reveals what has happened during those years. It separates the court from the country, and Sicilia from Bohemia. It marks a change from a courtly, serious

milieu to one of bucolic revelry. Yet it reveals much more than a movement in time and space. Time defines himself as:

I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror
Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error . . .
(IV, i, 1-2)

Such a definition well reflects the role which Time has played in the first acts of the play. Time has "pleased" some: the passage of time has marked the birth of a child to Hermione, the acquisition of wealth by the Shepherd and, for many years, the unchanging love between childhood friends, fathers and children, husbands and wives. But Time "tries" all through the destruction of those very things by which he has "pleased." Time tests the love of the two kings, the relationship of father and child and the bonds of marriage. Thus Time has been the "joy and terror" of all the characters and to all he has brought a mixture of happiness and suffering.

It is the passage of Time which has made and "unfolded" error, revealing the mistakes of Leontes and the crime of Antigonus. Time acts independently of man's desperate attempts to order existence by law and custom. His passage makes, changes and destroys those things which man thinks are wholly his own. Time

even claims the power, with impunity, to over-step the custom of time in a play, and leap fifteen years.

What kind of a tale is The Winter's Tale? Time's own assertion is that it is his tale:

. . . But let Time's news
Be known when 'tis brought forth. A Shephard's
daughter,
And what to her adheres, which follows after,
Is th' argument of Time.

(IV, i, 26-29)

This is Time's tale, and the story of Perdita is the "argument," the very point, of the tale. As we read on in the play, we see that this "argument" defines man's relationship to the passage of time and to his own individual fortune.

The play suggests through plot and imagery that time is one of the many commodities valuable to man. Time himself speaks of time "spent" (IV, i, 30). The money images of the first scene are linked with time when Polixenes speaks of a "debt" of thanks for time spent in Sicilia (I, ii, 6). The money imagery throughout reminds us that Leontes "pays" for his mistakes with sixteen years of his life. Even the Shepherd gives up his fortune in the realization that the most valuable thing is his life, his existence in time.

Another item of great value in the play is one's child, one's heir. Camillo says that little Mamillius

"makes old hearts fresh" (I, i, 43). And Polixenes says of Florizel:

He's all my exercise, my mirth and my matter,
 Now my sworn friend and then mine enemy,
 My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all.
 He makes a July's day as short as December,
 And with his varying childness cures in me
 Thoughts that would thicken my blood.
 (I, ii, 166-71)

The child keeps his father young. And in a historical and biological sense, the begetting of children keeps the family and race alive. In both the main plot and the sub-plot, the life of the family, and especially that of the father, is guaranteed in the potential of its children. The importance of child to father is emphasized in the repeated mention by Hermione of her father, by the kings of their sons, by the clown of his father, and even by Autolycus of his father.

The development of the play shows, however, that the relationship of father and child is subject to change. Leontes denies Perdita, and Polixenes disowns Florizel. This act of denying one's child has great significance in the play. Politically, it means the end of the royal family. Socially it means an end to the family unit. Biologically, it implies an end of the race. Such denial means the end of the seasonal cycle, the coming of eternal winter. Thus the play's title: The Winter's Tale.

Throughout the play we see an emphasis upon the seasons. The first lines of the play mention "this coming summer" (I, i, 6). Mamillius says that "a sad tale's best for winter" (II, i, 25). Perdita passes out "flowers of winter" to Polixenes (IV, iv, 78). Such emphasis upon seasons suggests that man's endurance through time, a promise inherent in his children, is analagous to nature's endurance through time, a promise inherent in the cyclical regularity of the seasons. The denial of one's children is analogous to a perpetual winter. And the loss of a child is analogous to death. Mamillius is right: "a sad tale" is best for winter, for the winter of one's life signifies the inevitability of death. It is the saddest tale of all--the tragic vision.

The play does not rest, however, on this tragic vision. Winter is not eternal. The Winter's Tale shows not only death, but also a return to life through marriage and the possibility of future generations. The reconciliation of father and child and the reaffirmation of the coming of spring are not a matter of revelation or intuition, but are "brought forth" by Time itself. The play moves forward in time, and the characters are defined in terms of the way in which they accept or try to manipulate time.

Hermione accepts the changes which time brings.
When she is imprisoned she says,

There's some ill planet reigns;
I must be patient till the heavens look
With an aspect more favourable.
(II, i, 105-07)

There is never any indication that she questions that which has happened to her. She accepts suffering and joy with equal good grace.

In the course of the play, Leontes, too, learns this calm acceptance of fortune. Early in the play, he tries to change that which he thinks is happening to him by an attempt on Polixenes' life. Then, in order to end his personal anguish, he resolves to imprison and kill his wife. Only when he has suffered completely, through the death of his son and his wife, does he see his own mistake, accept his fortune and resolve to face willingly that which time metes out to him. He speaks of his penitence:

Once a day I'll visit
The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there
Shall be my recreation. So long as nature
Will bear up with his exercise, so long
I daily vow to use it.
(III, ii, 239-43)

The reluctance of Hermione to question fortune, or to manipulate that which time brings, is analogous to Perdita's reluctance to accept human manipulation of

nature through art. As her mother is completely passive to that which fortune brings, so Perdita is equally passive in accepting that which nature creates. She rejects all of man's attempts to modify nature through art. One might say that she rejects art for the real, for the natural. Yet her attitude, like that of Hermione, is not the only one presented in the work.

Polixenes defends art which "does mend Nature, change it rather, but the art itself is Nature" (IV, iv, 95). And the play in its entirety, emphasizing as it does various art forms, establishes in the end a positive attitude toward art. Throughout the play people sing, dance and write poetry. There is a long discussion of sculpture. People play roles and don costumes, suggesting that the play itself is an art form.

But the people in the play perceive the difference between nature and art. Art is not real. It is timeless. Perdita herself, her play with Florizel ended and the costumes removed, says,

I told you what would come of this. Beseech you,
Of your own state take care. This dream of mine,--
Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,
But milk my ewes and weep.

(IV, iv, 457-60)

She well knows the difference between the art and reality, a difference marked by the passage of time. The "statue" of Hermione is not art because she is real, that is,

she exists in time. This is the distinction between art and nature in the play--that only art is free from the power of time. Nature remains subject to the changes, the cycles, the growth and decay which come in time.

Art does not corrupt nature as Perdita fears. The "statue" of Hermione suggests that art can well and faithfully copy nature herself, as the sculptor Junio Romano was said to have done. But art remains outside the reign of time. It gains its immortality from changelessness, while Nature gains hers from "copying," from the "printing off" of the image of the individual on succeeding generations.

The final vision of the play is that of man reconciled with his heir, and thus in a sense, free from absolute death in time through the promise of generations to come. But there is an accompanying vision, and it is that of a freedom from time in art.

NOTES--CHAPTER II

¹The Shakespearian text used for this paper is the New Cambridge Edition of The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare, edited by William Allen Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill.

²Carolyn Spurgeon's classic work, Shakespeare's Imagery, is an indispensable aid to anyone who considers such patterns of imagery as keys to the comedy's major concepts.

³G. Wilson Knight's The Shakespearian Tempest treats at great length the significance of this particular complex of images.

CHAPTER III

SHAKESPEARE'S COMIC WORLD

Now let us look at the conclusions which we can draw from the analysis which we have just completed of these four Shakespearian plays. What commonalities can we see in the plays which suggest a consistent view of the world within the comedy and point toward a coherent, recognizable role for man within that world? What recurring motifs, themes, character types, incidents, symbols and other elements contribute to this Shakespearian view of the comic world? And who is the human being who inhabits that world?¹

The first thing which we might note about Shakespeare's comic world is its expansiveness, the great distances between its boundaries, the exotic places which lie within its reaches. It is a world of foreign-sounding places (Sicilia, Bohemia, Illyria, Rome) and a world whose characters travel great distances in search of their fortunes. Although Pericles is certainly the Shakespearian comic hero who travels

the greatest distances, the characters in the four plays which we have examined also contribute to the pattern of voyages and travels in a world marked by its immensity and diversity.

The Winter's Tale alternates its scenes between Sicilia and Bohemia. Sebastian, Antonio and Viola of Twelfth Night are shipwrecked on a foreign shore. The Princess of Love's Labour's Lost comes from France to visit the King. And A Midsummer Night's Dream finds the Athenian gentry traveling from the city to a magical forest peopled by fairy folk who in a moment can travel the world over.

Because of the expansiveness of the setting, in speaking of the "movement" within the play we may mean the "geographical" direction of the travels of the characters as well as the direction of the play as a whole. And often, a character's geographical movement is accompanied by a movement in the play's direction, by a change within the characters, or by their adjustment to the new values with which the play ends.

For instance, the actual geographical movement within The Merchant of Venice from Venice to Belmont can be seen as a movement from the world of economic and legal bonds ruled by money, to a world of emotional and human bonds ruled by love. Or the movement from the Athenian forest back to the city in A Midsummer Night's

Dream can suggest the changes within the characters as they move from a world of fantasy into the real world of Athenian law and tradition.

This use of dual settings within the comedies and the alternation of those settings contributes to the dynamism within the comic world. Very often the two settings represent conflicting values which must be integrated in the final scenes. If we look at all of Shakespeare's comedies, we are struck by the pattern of dual settings. This pattern can be seen in the following listing of the comedies and their settings:

<u>Love's Labour's Lost</u>	Navarre/the country near it
<u>A Midsummer Night's Dream</u>	Athens/a wood near it
<u>The Merchant of Venice</u>	Venice/Belmont
<u>The Taming of the Shrew</u>	Padua/Petruchio's country house
<u>Much Ado About Nothing</u>	Messina (in the house, orchard and garden)
<u>As You Like It</u>	Oliver's house/Duke F's court/the forest of Arden
<u>The Merry Wives of Windsor</u>	Windsor/the neighborhood
<u>Twelfth Night</u>	City in Illyria/sea coast near it
<u>Troilus and Cressida</u>	Troy/the Greek camp
<u>All's Well that Ends Well</u>	Rousillon/Paris/Florence/Marseilles
<u>Measure for Measure</u>	Vienna (court, prison and moated grange)
<u>Pericles, Prince of Tyre</u>	Various countries
<u>Cymbeline</u>	Britain/Rome/a cave
<u>The Winter's Tale</u>	Sicilia/Bohemia
<u>The Tempest</u>	An island

In many cases, one of the two locations is a city or court and the other a nearby country setting--a forest, garden or park. In such a case the suggestion of values

in conflict is easily seen: society and nature, the mind and the body, the sophisticated life and country simplicity. In other cases, as we noted in The Merchant of Venice two cities represent the tension between two value systems.

Sometimes the two locations can be seen as representative of two warring tendencies within the human psyche. Navarre represents the desire for an academic, intellectual society; the park represents the impulse for a sexual, procreative world. Athens represents the world of everyday reality with its rules and regulations, while the fairies' forest represents the world of imagination with its unreasoning powers, its magical forces, its mystical way of changing things. Venice represents a legalistic world of conflicting laws and bonds, while Belmont represents a world of love and harmony. Duke Ferdinand's court in As You Like It represents the use of power gone awry, while the forest of Arden suggests the impulse toward a more human, harmonious society.

This is not to say that there is to be found a single meaning in each of these settings, that each place "equals" a single value, a single life style. Rather we find that each setting is rich in its suggested meanings, in its contribution to the tensions within and around man.

Thus if we were to examine the setting of a single play, for instance that of Love's Labour's Lost, we would find a multiplicity of meanings in the tension between the dual settings. The tension between the Duke's palace and the park (although there is no actual movement between the two) can represent the tension between study and action, the academic society and the sexual society, abstinence and fulfillment, the separation of the sexes and the union of men and women, intellectual life and the physical life, the unnatural and the natural, anti-life forces and life-giving forces, disorder and order, barrenness and fertility. This is not to say that this tension between the park, which is the actual setting, and the palace, where Ferdinand had planned to start his academic society, must have all these meanings, but only that the dualities suggested by the setting seem to relate naturally to other tensions in the play. We can see in the very setting of the comedy parallels to the tensions, conflicts, dualisms and conflicting values within the society of man in the comic world.

Each play seems to focus on its own complex of tensions, of dueling values, of conflicting powers. So the Shakespearian comedies as a group, and certainly those four which we have examined rather closely, represent a rather clear view of man operating in a

world of conflicting values in which his growth and eventual survival is marked by his movement away from one set of values and toward another, or by his ability to integrate the two conflicting sets of values.

These dualities may be articulated as order and disorder, society and chaos, nature and society, the court and the country, mind and body, the intellectual and the physical, the philosophical and the physical, the order of man and the order of nature, animality and gentility, barrenness and fertility, abstinence and fulfillment, social constraints and total freedom, reality and imagination, conflict and harmony, legalism and human justice. Obviously many of these sets of values are not mutually exclusive and thus many of the plays end with an integration of values, as in The Merchant of Venice where the demands of both legalism and human love are met. But in other cases, the comic character must choose between values, as Prospero chooses to leave the kingdom of his island and return to his role as ruler.

Generally, the Shakespearian comedy opens on an urban setting marked by some type of disorder, moves toward a second setting more representative of the order of nature, alternates the two settings, and then finally returns to the original setting by which time the characters have been transformed by their exposure to some sort of "natural" values and thus are prepared to establish a new social order.

We can also see the movement of the play as being a transition from disorder to order. Natural disorder which is seen in tempests, shipwrecks and ravenous beasts, usually reflecting some kind of unnatural order among men, is resolved by a new social order and marked by an end to storms and tempests. Social disorder which is seen in abstinence, separation of the sexes, virginity and prostitution, is resolved when the natural urge for procreation is channeled into the institution of marriage. The reestablishment of the family often marks the end of social disorder. And political disorder which we note in wars, strife, usurpation of rule, lawlessness and the abdication of responsibility by rulers, is resolved in a return to justice and the rule of the rightful leader.

This resolution of tension and the integration of values with the attendant movement toward order, results in the formation of a new social order which recognizes the forces ignored by the original, unsuccessful society. And the establishment of a new society carries with it the promise of success. The new social order of Twelfth Night will prosper because it is based on a more natural view of love, because it takes into account man's role in the biological scheme of things, and because it recognizes his need to accept that which fortune brings. The original society, on which the play opens, accepts none of these things.

This establishment of a new order at the play's end is usually marked by a celebration of some sort which precedes or is a part of the actual physical movement from the forest, or natural setting, back to the city. The original settings--Athens, Olivia's house, Leontes' court--are all transformed or renewed by the changes which have overtaken the characters.

The new society of Athens in A Midsummer Night's Dream is marked by love and marriage, in direct contrast to the familial strife and barrenness which we saw in the opening scenes. The city itself seems to have been transformed by the imaginary world of the forest just as the society of Sicilia is changed by the contact which some of its people have had with the bucolic life among Bohemia's shepherds. Thus the return to the original setting is not a return to the old social order but to a newly established order which represents the supremacy of new values: usually these values include acceptance of fortune and a realization of man's role in the sexual cycle of birth, procreation and death. And it is that return to order which is marked by some kind of celebration.

The celebration at the play's end may take the form of a telling of tales (as is true in The Winter's Tale) or of a play (as is suggested in Love's Labour's Lost) or a blessing (as we see in A Midsummer Night's

Dream). Whatever the form of this celebration it marks man's acceptance of his part in the sexual scheme of things and is usually rich with references to the seasonal cycles of which all nature is a part. The final celebration is often presided over by the clown, whose role has been that of a teacher of the new values. And this same clown is usually left out of the final couplings at play's end as if to underscore his importance as mentor. His is the role of observer, the one who interprets but in many cases does not participate in the human comic cycle. The final celebration usually includes the clown's commentary on the significance of what has happened, his interpretation of the human condition.

Thus Costard closes Love's Labour's Lost with his song of man's fortunes through the seasonal cycles, while Feste ends Twelfth Night with his song of the "rain" which is inevitably a part of human fortune. A Midsummer Night's Dream closes on Robin Goodfellow's statement about the nature of the "dream" which we, as well as the comedy's players, have experienced. And Leontes, who has shown a "clown-like" acceptance of fortune, in his closing lines, urges all to exchange stories on that which has happened to them in the years of their separation. These final scenes bring all factions, all social strata into harmonious society.

With the exception of Malvolio who refuses the invitation to be a part of the new peace, all characters are a part of the celebration with which the play ends.

The clown's role throughout the comedies is an important one, for it is he who exhibits and teaches those values which the play's final scenes usually affirm. It is usually the clown who ties together the diverse elements of society, who brings together the shepherds, kings, nobles and country folk who people the Shakespearian comic world. This demands a great sensitivity and talent on his part. The ability of the clown to judge people quickly and accurately, to act appropriately within the limits of time, to suit his jest to the situation is well remarked by Viola who says of Feste:

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,
And to do that well craves a kind of wit.
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
The quality of persons, and the time,
And, like the haggard, check at every feather
That comes before his eye. This is a practice
As full of labour as a wise man's art;
(Twelfth Night, III, i,
67-73)

And rightfully so it is the clown who usually acts as the go-between for lovers, who communicates with all groups within the Shakespearian society, and who finally effects a union of all members of that society.

The clown speaks the truth, thanks to the combination of a sort of "fools immunity" and a delightfully sharp wit. In each play it is the fool who sees through the facade to the truth of the matter. Costard and Feste both "tell true." It is the clown of The Winter's Tale whose insistence on the old Shepherd's telling the truth brings about the play's final happy ending. And even Bottom, in his part wise-fool, part idiot role, admits that love and reason have little to do with each other; and his admission comes at a time when the other lovers are insisting upon the rationality of their passions. Indeed, the role of the clown or fool as the "speaker of truth" can be seen in all of Shakespeare's plays--histories and tragedies as well as comedies--a role perfected in that of the fool who ministers to the storm-wracked king in King Lear. It is the clown or fool who interprets the meaning of human existence to the rest of the comic world. He is the teacher of truths.

The clown is usually a singer, as well, and one whose songs are found throughout the plays. Love's Labour's Lost is laced with Costard's songs, as is Twelfth Night rich with Feste's singing. The fool's song usually speaks for the proper combination of language, harmony and timing. As music becomes, throughout the comedies, increasingly a metaphor for social harmony, the clown's ability to sing becomes

even more a positive value. In the final song which the clown often sings in the play's closing moments, is to be found his wisdom, his ability to sense the lesson inherent in the human experience, the commonality in the great diversity of human trials and problems. And it is the clown who usually affirms, in that final song, the social view on which the play ends.

The clown, from the play's start, usually understands the nature of man's role in the comic universe and the necessity for his own acceptance of that role and of the fortune which is part of that role. Often his songs are explications of the meaning of man's life and the need for man to accept the fortune which time has meted out to him. In his own actions the clown is often an example, too, of the proper acceptance of fortune. Costard accepts philosophically that which time brings him and finally teaches Biron that same willing acceptance. Feste relies on the "whirligig of time." Each takes calmly that which time hands him.

The view of fortune, which is central to the Shakespearian comedies, is that of man existing within the dictates of time and learning to accept that which time brings. The emphasis throughout the plays on time--on the passage of days, hours, minutes, months, on the cycle of the seasons, on the ebb and flow of the sea--suggests that time is the great changer, the great

leveler. And Fortune, which is Time's co-worker, brings to each man that which is his assigned role in life.

There is, in the comedies, no central image for Fortune like that of the balance of fortune which we see in the Shakespearian histories or the wheel of fortune which we find in the tragedies. Here the image which most suggests fortune seems to be the sea with its ebb and flow, its tempests and calm, its giving of life and its giving of death in a pattern unintelligible to man but in adherence to a rhythm of her own. Thus the concepts of time, nature, role and fortune are all inter-related and in each play it is the clown, who teaches man these relationships.

The role of the clown also suggests the great human diversity to be found in Shakespeare's comic world. Although the main plot line usually follows the actions of a society of noble folk, we usually find a second society of country folk in the Shakespearian comedy, folk whose actions mirror those of the nobility, or perhaps offer an alternative to the actions of the gentry as is true in As You Like It. The clown is often the go-between for the two societies. It is he who communicates with both the country folk and the three lords of Love's Labour's Lost. It is he, in Twelfth Night, who is a part of Maria and Toby's antics as well as being privy to Olivia's feelings. In A Midsummer Night's

Dream it is Bottom who through drama brings the two societies together while Puck, with magic, marries (if only temporarily) country bumpkin to fairy aristocracy. The clowns, then, are the folk who bring together the diverse societies of the plays, whose values and lessons allow for an inclusion of both societies in the play's final celebration.

Shakespeare makes good use of the characters in the sub-plots. By building parallels between the incidents in the sub-plot and the main-plot, he suggests the universality of the situations in which man finds himself. That Orsino makes an idiot of himself over Olivia may be seen as one man's foolishness. When, however, we watch Sir Andrew and Malvolio go through the same throes of passion, what might have been one man's error becomes a common human failing, a mistake of which all mankind is guilty. Thus the parallels between what happens to nobility and what happens to slave suggest the universality of the problems and trials which confront each man in a Shakespearian comedy. They point out the commonality of a single man's action and make each of us a potential player in Shakespeare's comic world.

Parallels also function to emphasize certain aspects of Shakespeare's comic universe. As a motif or scene is repeated again and again, its impact becomes greater, its significance more central to the direction

of the play. At other times what happens literally to the characters in the sub-plot happens figuratively to the nobility. In Measure for Measure the diseases which are literally contracted by the characters in the sub-plot are figuratively infecting the nobility. In Midsummer Night's Dream, while the low characters are struggling over how to put together a play--how to play the proper role--the nobility is also trying to decide what each person's proper role is. In Twelfth Night while the household revelers are trying to cure Malvolio's anti-life tendencies, those same tendencies are being cured in Olivia and Orsino.

And the two parallel scenes in Twelfth Night in which first Viola and then Sebastian escape death by shipwreck, suggest that fortune is the strong but unpredictable force which we have seen reflected in other elements of the comedies. The repetition of Orsino's call for music underlines the motif of music as an accompaniment of love, as well as functioning to suggest that the Duke's love is no closer to consummation in the second scene than in the first. The two scenes in which first Camillo and later Antigonus are asked by Leontes to kill an innocent person, serve to emphasize their differences and Camillo's superior moral sense, a superiority affirmed not only by Antigonus' death but by Leontes' naming of Camillo as Paulina's husband.

The use of repeated scenes emphasizes the idea of the scene, or provides a means of evaluating the different way in which the two characters react to the same situation.

Much of the tension and movement which we have outlined thus far in our discussion of the settings and the parallels of plots in the comedies is reaffirmed in the plays' imagery. A close look at the recurring images tells us much about Shakespeare's comic world.

The sea is a major symbol within the Shakespearian comedies and one with a multi-faceted complexity. It suggests nature's changeability and unpredictability. Its storms and shipwrecks represent "natural portents" of disorder--often mirroring the disorders within the society of men. We remember the fierce storm in which Antigonus of The Winter's Tale loses his life and the storms in A Midsummer Night's Dream which echo the fairy battle. Yet those same storms and the shipwrecks which they cause can also mean a rebirth, a baptism to a new life as we note in Twelfth Night. Through these natural portents both Sebastian and Viola are introduced to a new life through the ordeal of a shipwreck.

In its changeability the sea suggests the transformation nature herself undergoes from malevolence to benevolence. And at the same time the sea's changes can represent the ebb and flow of man's fortunes. In

fact, as we noted earlier, the sea seems to function in the Shakespearian comedies as a major metaphor for fortune. Sebastian says,

Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune
 So far exceed all instance, all discourse. . . .
 (Twelfth Night, IV, iii,
 11-12)

Linked very closely to these images of sea, storms and shipwrecks is the movement of the seasons and a great wealth of natural imagery suggesting growth and fecundity. The view of the passage of time as part of a seasonal cycle is integral to the "comic vision" of the plays. We note that of the four plays which we examined, three of the four titles (A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night and The Winter's Tale) make reference to a season or time of year. And the fourth (Love's Labour's Lost) ends with a song of the seasons.

Throughout the plays there is constant mention of the seasons, of their passage, of the flowers which represent them--all suggesting that the comic world is linked to the seasons and is part of the cyclical movement through time which they imply. In many ways the celebrations of the plays (both "ending" celebrations and other festive occasions) point to important rites in that seasonal cycle.² And nowhere is the implication of man's part in the seasonal cycle stronger than in The Winter's Tale, where the disowning of one's heir

jeopardizes the continuation of the cycle, and threatens eternal winter. Thus when Leontes greets Florizel and Perdita in the play's final act, his comment that they are welcome "as is the spring to the earth" (The Winter's Tale, V, i, 151) is especially apt; for the very fact that they are alive is his promise of spring out of a life which had promised to be, as Paulina named it, "winter in storm perpetual" (The Winter's Tale, III, iii, 213-14).

So we see that the seasonal cycle which the plays emphasize in imagery as well as title, is analagous to the human cycle of birth, procreation and death, of which all the characters are a part. As the sonnets so beautifully suggested, man's avoidance of eternal death is to be found through this cycle of the "printing off" of images of the father on succeeding generations. The comedies suggest quite clearly that man's role is that of a sexual, natural being. So comic man learns in the course of the comedy that if the winter of his life is to be only temporary, then he must acknowledge his place in the natural sexual cycle whereby in winter is to be found the promise of spring. Robert Corrigan in the introduction to his anthology on comedy suggests that this endurance of mankind is to be found in various forms in all comedy:

The constant in comedy is the comic view of life or the comic spirit: the sense that no matter how many times man is knocked down he somehow manages to pull himself up and keep on going. Thus, while tragedy is a celebration of man's capacity to aspire and suffer, comedy celebrates his capacity to endure. Eric Bentley put it another way in his magnificent book, The Life of the Drama: "In tragedy, but by no means comedy, the self-preservation instinct is over-ruled. . . . The comic sense tries to cope with the daily, hourly, inescapable difficulty of being. For if everyday life has an undercurrent or cross-current of the tragic, the main current is material for comedy."³

This role of man in the natural scheme of things is also seen in animal imagery--imagery suggesting man's harnessing or taming of nature's forces. Some of these images would seem to point to the role of marriage as a channeling of man's procreative energies into an acceptable form. Thus we remember the horseman who appears in Love's Labour's Lost and recall how Theseus tells of his hounds whose baying he likens to a well-tuned musical instrument. In opposition to these trained, harnessed animals we see the ravaging beasts of the tempests, who suggest the power of nature in its most destructive and uncontrollable form.

Music is another metaphor central to the Shakespearean comedies and to our visualization of his comic world. Music plays a major role in all the comedies which we have considered: Costard sings in Love's Labour's Lost; Orsino asks repeatedly for music in Twelfth Night; Titania sings Bottom to sleep in A

Midsummer Night's Dream and Perdita sings for her guests in The Winter's Tale. Hermione is revealed to Leontes to the accompaniment of music.

Like the sea, music seems to represent at once many things. As it exhibits harmony it suggests the development of order out of disorder. And as harmony is itself a metaphor for union, order and measure, it reflects the note on which the comedies end. In the emphasis on "natural" kinds of music--in Theseus' talk of his baying hounds and Oberon talking of the mermaid astride the dolphin singing to calm the sea--we are reminded of the natural order, the natural harmony at play's end. Oberon says to Puck,

. . . Thou rememb'rest
 Since once I sat upon a promontory,
 And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
 That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
 And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
 To hear the sea-maid's music?
 (A Midsummer Night's Dream,
 III, i, 148-54)

The images remind us of the description of Sebastian's actions during the storm:

. . . Where, like Arion on the dolphin's back,
 I saw him hold acquaintance with the waves. . . .
 (Twelfth Night, I, ii,
 15-16)

Since Arion was saved from death by the beauty of the music which he played, the image suggests clearly the

power which music has--a power over nature herself--the ability to calm tempests, to bring harmony and peace.

The role of music in putting people to sleep (as it does in both Twelfth Night and A Midsummer Night's Dream) or of preceding the awakening from a dream (as in Hermione's awakening in The Winter's Tale or the fairy queen's awakening in A Midsummer Night's Dream) suggests its close relationship to the world of the dream, the world of the imagination. We note that music is most often associated with love and dreaming; perhaps it has a transitional function, the power to open the doors between the world of the imagination and the real world. This would make the use of song at the end of the comedies even more significant, as it ushers us, the audience, back from the world of the imagination, from the dream which we have experienced during our viewing of the play.

The third major metaphor of the comedies is that of the "play." There is a constant tension throughout the comedies between "play" which is a trick, or a sport and play which is a revealer of truth. The nature of play--of its interrelatedness to dreaming and visions--is treated most completely in A Midsummer Night's Dream but we can see the same concern with the nature of dramatic art throughout the comedies. Love's Labour's Lost suggests the life/play analogy through the play of

the Nine Worthies and at the same time makes clear that man himself is not the director of his own fortunes.

Biron notes:

Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
 Jack hath not Jill. These ladies' courtesy
 Might well have made our sport a comedy.
 (Love's Labour's Lost, V, ii,
 884-86)

Even Biron expects that life, like the comedy, should culminate in marriage.

With the use of inner plays, the interior "scenes," the donning of costumes, the playing of roles, we begin to see the various functions of the play. The play can give us a particular vision of reality; just as the play of the rude mechanicals in A Midsummer Night's Dream gives the Athenian gentry a different perspective on that which they are experiencing, so the larger play gives us a perspective of our own existence. As the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is a view of the power of love and thus is presented to an audience which is also experiencing love, so the Shakespearian play presents a particular view of the relationship between fantasy and reality, between man and nature, and between man and his fortune. And all of these concerns relate to our experience. Thus the play is a vision of our own lives.

The play is a revealer of truth about man's foibles, as is the play which tricks Malvolio into revealing the truth about his ridiculous love for Olivia. And the play may also provide for a return to order, as Malvolio's anti-life power is thwarted. Thus the play is also a cure, a force for order. It can, however, delude men, as well, providing them with a false view of things, as does the play within Much Ado About Nothing. Indeed many of the allusions to play as sport, or jest or joke suggest the various kinds of play which do not always lead to truth.

Throughout the comedies, however, the images of "play" suggest that man's life, like a play, has a direction of its own, and that he must accept the role which is assigned to him and act it out to the best of his ability. Thus to a great extent the metaphor of the play suggests man's powerlessness.

But theatre is not the only art form which the comedies are concerned with. As a group, the Shakespearian comedies are illuminations of the nature of art and its relationship to life. The dramas feature inner plays, dumb show, music, song--all forms of art. People dance and sing. They don costumes and play roles. Certainly art is an integral part of this comic world.

The emphasis on art forms points to the fact that although art is perfected within the bounds of time, the art object itself is outside of time's realm. The play is not reality, but an ordering of reality outside of time's control. The statue of Hermione is said to be exactly like the Queen; but the Queen is touched by time, she ages, and a statue would not. Music and dance likewise manifest a harmony which is not changed by time.

The images of dreams, visions and imaginings which often refer to the "play," point as well to another central concern of the comedies: the nature of love. The continued mention of eyes, visions, dreams and fantasy which we saw in A Midsummer Night's Dream all suggest that love and the theatre both partake of the same experience:

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.

(A Midsummer Night's Dream,
V, i, 4-8)

Love is an integral part of the human situation in the comedies. It is part of the natural cycle, an agent for the return to order. And there are varying views of love which are developed throughout the comedies. In the early comedies, like Love's Labour's Lost, love is unpredictable and unavoidable. People fall in

love despite their best intentions. Love is temporary, momentary; lovers are fickle, changeable and seemingly incapable of any control over their emotions. Love is often seen as a paradoxical power: at once a blessing and a curse. Biron speaks of his passion:

And I, forsooth, in love! I, that have been love's
 whip
 . . . This wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy;
 This senior-junior, giant-dwarf, Dan Cupid; . . .
 And I to be a corporal of his field . . .
 Go to; it is a plague
 That Cupid will impose for my neglect
 Of his almighty dreadful little might.
 (Love's Labour's Lost,
 III, i, 175-205)

The mature comedies continue to suggest that love is fickle and irrational. Orsino loves Olivia irrationally while she in turn stubbornly resists his wooing. The passions of the Athenian youth in A Midsummer Night's Dream are certainly irrational. Yet in both these comedies, love is powerful and lasting. We sense that Viola and Orsino's bond will be an enduring one and that the lovers of A Midsummer Night's Dream will probably remain united. We encounter the faithful lover, the devoted beloved. Love seems more permanent, less infantile, less of a curse and more of a blessing. But as always, it is a force over which man has little control.

The dark comedies, which our analysis neglected, provide another vision of love, and one important to the Shakespearian comic vision. Suddenly the plays face more

directly the violent side of human passion. We are privy to the predatory nature of the relationship between men and women. Somehow, "love" or the attraction of the sexes is seen in a more stark light. Although the dark comedies usually end with the establishment of new unions through marriage, the body of the plays tend to portray sexual relationships which are a perversion of the usual cycle of love, marriage and procreation. Instead of the infatuation of the earlier plays, we see incest, adultery, lechery and rape.

With the late romantic comedies, like The Winter's Tale, we turn away from the dark side of love to its potential for redemption and its role in the establishment of the new society. There is an emphasis on various kinds of love--not only romantic love, but the love of father for daughter, husband for wife, friend for friend. Love here has a potential for purity and beauty, for giving life, for renewing the race. The youthful lovers are even more pure than before--Perdita and Florizel are almost ethereal in their lovely innocence.

Thus we see in the plays a great emphasis upon love, its various forms, its many faces. Throughout the comedies, however, love stands as an unavoidable part of man's fortune, a passion dictated by his role in human existence, something over which he has no control,

but which binds him tightly to the sexual cycle of which all life is a part.

But at the same time the plays emphasize life, they also speak of death. And it is somehow startling that death should play such a large role in plays which are essentially a celebration of life. However, the death of the individual is part of that cosmic cycle which the comedies celebrate; and thus while the society continues on through future generations, death remains an integral part of Shakespeare's vision of the individual role in a comic universe.

The promise of death is surprisingly strong in the early plays--especially in Love's Labour's Lost where its spectre seems to preclude immediate sexual fulfillment. Although death is not all-pervasive in these early plays, it does seem at odds with life in a way which it will not be in the final plays.

The mature comedies are rich with references to death. Antonio is to die to pay the bond to Shylock. Hero is believed dead in Much Ado About Nothing. Both Viola and Sebastian are believed dead in Twelfth Night. But death in these plays is almost always illusory, a misunderstanding, a mistake. People "die" and are then rediscovered; death does not get in the way of the comic conclusion of marriage and the establishment of a new social order.

The dark comedies also show death as illusory, momentary. But at the same time, they portray it as pervasive, ignoble, predatory, and rather oppressive. The pall of death is heavy in Measure for Measure and even more sobering in Troilus and Cressida. These are plays in which many people die or are threatened with death, and in which death seems meaningless and ignoble.

With the late romantic comedies, however, death loses much of its fearsomeness. Often it is only an illusion, a mistake. But it is also more clearly a part of a great cycle--the natural end of individual life. Death is even cleansing and redemptive, a sleep to be welcomed, a thing of beauty. Perdita finds life in a "stormy death" and Hermione "comes alive" before her husband's eyes.

What then is Shakespeare's view of the human role in a comic world? It is a view of man as part of a great tapestry of human existence, a world of immensity and variety. Within that world man's part in the natural cycle of birth, procreation and death is evidenced by the social institution of marriage. His propensity to love, marry and procreate are part of his fortune, his role, that which is assigned to him by time and nature.

This comic vision suggests that man's only hope for immortality within that comic world lies in the avoidance of time's erasure--either through

procreation or art. And in this world, man's fortune is to love and marry. Love, which is unavoidable, is the vehicle for his inclusion in nature's cycles.

Man's existence is often seen as a play in which he is given a role and a brief time in which to play that role. Through comedy whose movement is from disorder to order, from social dissonance to a new harmony, Shakespeare looks beyond the life of the individual man to that pattern of life and death of which every individual existence is a part.

NOTES--CHAPTER III

¹Although the analysis supporting the view of Shakespeare's comic world in Chapter II was limited to four plays, the view of the comic world which is developed here takes into consideration many other of the Shakespearian comedies. In fact, this outline of the comic world of Shakespeare was developed with the complete comic works of Shakespeare in mind. Thus, even though the written analysis of this paper was limited to four plays, the conclusion reflects the analysis of the playwright's comic works as a whole, and is consistent with such an analysis.

²C. L. Barber's Shakespeare's Festive Comedy provides much insight into the way in which the folk celebration, the festival, is central to the development of the comedies.

³Robert W. Corrigan, Comedy: Meaning and Form (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1965), p. 3.

CHAPTER IV

A COMPARISON OF THE COMIC WORLDS OF SHAKESPEARE AND MOLIÈRE

Within our outline of Shakespeare's comic world in the preceding chapter, we have established some of the points of comparison between the comic worlds of Molière and Shakespeare. Others are suggested by Molière's view of the comic world. However, as we compare Shakespeare's view of the comic world with that of Molière, we are outlining, without the prior analysis which we provided in our development of Shakespeare's comic world, a view of the comic world which Molière developed through his comedies. So we begin, in a sense, with our conclusions; we begin with a discussion of the way the comic world of Molière compares with that of Shakespeare.

And as was the case in our discussion of Shakespeare's comic world, the discussion to follow will focus on four of Molière's better known plays even though it is with consideration of all the comedies of Molière that this outline of his world view was developed. Thus while we pay special attention to Dom Juan, Tartuffe,

Le Misanthrope, and L'Avare, the view of the comic world which we develop here is consistent with an analysis of all Molière's works and includes references from many of them.

Setting and Focus

Molière's comedies often focus on man as part of a family unit. This family unit includes servants, in-laws, parents, children and an occasional outsider who, like Tartuffe, has been "adopted" by some member of the family. In L'Avare, for instance, it is one man's family and the outsiders who are potential members of that family who stand in the play's "spotlight." Sometimes the focus of the comedy is broadened slightly to include two families as in L'École des Maris, or a god, as in Amphitryon. At other times, the basic unit is the salon or rehearsal stage, rather than the family setting. But in almost all cases the focus of the comedy is on a limited, rather intimate group, and most often that group is the family.

Generally the Molière comedy sees man in terms of his relationships with the other people who are part of this intimate social unit. Tartuffe is not simply a vision of a hypocrite, but rather a view of Tartuffe's relationship with Orgon and the impact of that relationship on Orgon's family. We remember that Shakespeare, too, portrayed man against a social backdrop. Measure

for Measure, the Englishman's comedy about hypocrisy, shows the hypocrite, Angelo, against the backdrop of the corrupt society of Vienna, much as Molière shows Tartuffe and Orgon in relationship to Orgon's household. Harpagon is silhouetted against the frustration of his family, whose members find their plans continually blocked by his avarice, much as Shylock is drawn in relationship to the society around him which sees his demand for legalism as an anti-life force.

But we begin to note in these few examples a difference in focus between the two playwrights. Shakespeare expands his view beyond that small society which is Molière's comic world to include not only a larger society, but the vastness of the natural universe. We see Shylock's impact not only on Jessica, but on myriad members of his society. And Angelo's hypocrisy is both a reflection of, and a contributor to, the general moral decay of the society of Vienna. As the vision expands, Titania and Oberon's conflict is reflected in the entire natural world, through storms and tempests.

It would be inaccurate to say that the focus of the two playwrights differs radically. Rather, Shakespeare's comic world goes beyond the boundaries of that of Molière; it is Molière's comic world and much more. It includes the Molieresque comic world as only part of a more universal perspective.

We note that Molière defines comic man's relationships with the others in the intimate social unit without reference to any higher laws--to laws of either nature or the universe. Thus, although Tartuffe and Dom Juan both refer frequently to religious belief and would seem at first to be concerned with man's relationship to a higher power, we see that these plays are still really indications of man's relationship to the social fabric of the world around him. In addition, these plays which at first seem to deal with religion, speak for comic man's view of himself as a free agent in contrast with the view which we, as his society have of him.¹ So even these plays which mention the gods are concerned with the relationship of man to his fellow man and the paucity of freedom and independence inherent in that relationship.

Even as Molière's comic players speak of the appropriate "saison" they are referring to the social climate, to the customs and codes which constrain man's behavior, rather than to the seasons of the year which were so central to the Shakespearian comic world. The vast natural universe in which Shakespeare's comic characters played out their roles is nowhere to be seen here. We find no Molieresque comic universe, no natural cycles, no tempests, no forests, no wild beasts--only a single room and those human beings who wander in and out of it.

Generally the Molière comedy does take place within a single room. And so the settings of his plays reflect the limitations of his comic world. Tartuffe is set "à Paris" and all we know about it is that there is a desk under which Orgon is able to hide while Tartuffe attempts to seduce his wife. Le Misanthrope is set in a similar room "à Paris" with the additional editor's notation:

Dans l'appartement de Célimène, au premier étage où se trouve le pièce de réception. Un récent décor du Français particulièrement heureux montrait au fond à gauche le débouché de l'escalier du rez-de-chaussée et le départ de l'escalier qui mène au second où loge Éliante. Les arrivées et sorties de personnages, éléments essentiels dans l'action du Misanthrope étaient ainsi spectaculairement soulignées.²

And we note that the setting, rather than reflecting a variety of tensions and values as it did in Shakespeare's comedies, seems simply to be a location through which players pass. It is the players, rather than the places, which stand for conflicting values and thus set the scene. So not only is the Molieresque setting different from the Shakespearian, but it plays a different role within the comedy: Where the setting in A Midsummer Night's Dream reflected the tensions within the play and was an echo to the actions and images of the entire play, the setting in L'Avare is simply a backdrop against which the various characters play their roles. Only as

that setting suggests by its very limitations the limits on comic man's freedom and as the presence of the garden at the rear of the stage suggests the omnipresence of Harpagon's avarice, does the setting in Molière's comedy approach the importance which Shakespeare's setting enjoys in his comedies as a whole.

Even when Molière deviates from his habit of using the very limited setting and moves, as he does in Dom Juan, from one location to another including some natural, outdoor scenes, he is not pointing to any natural power as much as he is using the varied scenes to mirror the various social groups which Dom Juan encounters. Thus, even in this atypical Molière play, where the setting is far from the expected, the variety of settings seems to be a backdrop to the relationship between the libertine, Dom Juan, and the variety of "true believers" whom he encounters in those settings, rather than a reflection, in itself, of any central tension in the play.

Despite the usually intimate setting of the Molière comedy, however, we encounter a constant stream of people--matchmakers, servants, relatives, valets, visitors of all kinds--who wander into the limited world of which the main character and his family are a part. This constant stream of social life seems to reflect the main character's inability to secede from the human race,

to live life as he wishes. Alceste's tremendous desire to flee humanity while he is at the same time drawn to the society of Célimène's salon, is indicative of the conflict between man's desire to be left alone and the reality of the harassment of society which he experiences.

Often these interlopers are the voices of the social codes of the day: Dom Carlos and Dom Louis both demand that Dom Juan adhere to a code. Cléante and Madame Pernelle each demand that Orgon behave in a different way. Froisine encourages Harpagon to marry against his own better judgement. Philinte lectures Alceste on the folly of his misanthropy. Some of these people speak for the most ridiculous social customs. Others advocate a reasonable stance. But each player who passes through this limited social setting, regardless of the life-style which he or she espouses, reflects the limited freedom which the main character has to live his life as he wishes.

Shakespeare's comic heroes, too, unsuccessfully seek freedom from "other voices"; they too try to live life in their own peculiar manner. Ferdinand tries to shut out all life except the academic. Olivia locks herself up in her house and talks of nothing but mourning. Hermia and Lysander flee Athens to avoid the law. And Leontes ignores the voice of the oracle. Yet each

of these is not so much confounded by others as he is caught by his own resistance to his fortune. On the other hand, the Molière hero seems continually confounded by the advice, ministrations and insistences of others. Éraсте of Les Facheux, for instance, is continually cut off from his attempts at wooing his beloved by the presence of bores. Their chatter is a consistent testimony to his powerlessness to live as he wishes. Thus, as a constant flow of humanity seeks out Molière's comic hero, we are reminded that comic man is not able to live as he desires. And through this parade of humanity which violates comic man's privacy, we see a redefinition of man's role in the comic world.

Where we saw great emphasis in Shakespeare's comic world on expansiveness, distance, travel and physical movement, Molière's comedies turn our eyes to a limited and generally stationary world. Unlike Viola and Perdita, Mariane and Célimène go nowhere. We find in Molière's comedies none of the tension between dual settings which we noted in Shakespeare's works. Instead the tension is between comic man and the people who exert pressure on him to behave in a different way. This pressure is suggested by the closed setting within which Molière's comic hero plays his role. Molière's comic world has no natural component, no sense of a great universe beyond. Instead the limited

setting seems to speak for the constraints on man's freedom--a theme which we will see again and again in Molière's works. While Shakespeare's comic man is constantly searching about for his appropriate role, reaching out to others, Molière's comic hero remains in a closed setting as he tries to avoid the "fate" which society would impose on him.

The Movement of the Comedy

The movement of the Molière comedy is usually from disorder to order and from ignorance to understanding. The disorder is reflected in battles between husband and wife as in Amphitryon, father and daughter as in L'Avare, and father and son as in Tartuffe. It is reflected, too, in the separation of young lovers, in the attempts of old men to marry young girls, and in the opposition of many characters to marriage.

This movement is very much like that which we noted in the Shakespearian comedies, although here it is not accompanied by any geographical movement. We note the similarities in plot. Leontes accuses Hermione; Amphitryon suspects Alcmene of infidelity. Egeus threatens to send Hermia to a convent; Mariane offers to become a nun when she learns what Orgon has planned for her. Ferdinand promises to do without female companionship; the Princess of Élide vows to

never marry. The disorder which we saw in the Shakespearean world is also seen in Molière's comic society.

Both playwrights open their comedies on a view of disorder: the separation of lovers, familial strife, men and women apart. Amphitryon opens with the lovers separated, the family divided, just as does Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors. L'Amour Médecin begins in disorder as does Twelfth Night. And both playwrights end the comedies with a return to order or with the establishment of a new order.

This ending, in the case of both Shakespeare and Molière, is usually marked by the union of lovers, the reunion of family members, and an end to strife. The final scene of The Winter's Tale shows lovers and families reunited, as do the final scenes of L'Avare and Tartuffe. This new order is most often celebrated by marriages and is generally characterized by the formation of a new society in which a majority of the characters are included. Those who are not included are usually those whose fixity of character makes their inclusion impossible, who refuse to be included: Jacques, Malvolio, Shylock, Alceste, Tartuffe and Arnolphe. Thus both The Tempest and Le Malade Imaginaire end with a promise of marriage and the inclusion of all the characters in a new social order. We note, however, that in Molière's comic world, the disorder and attendant establishment of order are

limited to the purely social sphere of engagement, marriage and family unity rather than drawing our attention to any natural passions which these social institutions suggest. Nevertheless disorder and the attendant order are defined in much the same terms in the comic worlds of the two playwrights.

The movement from ignorance to understanding, which is of major import in the Molière comedy, however, is not so central to the Shakespearian comic world. This is not to say that the Shakespearian comic world does not include the revelation of identities and the discovery of truth, rather that these revelations and discoveries do not have the same significance, the same central importance which they do in Molière's comic world. In the Molière comedy, ignorance is reflected in mistaken identities and successful imposters. Both Tartuffe and Amphitryon are, for instance, marked by a movement from mistaken identities and successful imposters, to understanding and the unmasking of the imposter.

Shakespearian comedy also includes the motif of the "lost children found" and of people playing roles, but the impact is different. In the Shakespearian comic world, the revelation of identities and the unmasking of imposters seems to speak more for the playing of the appropriate role, for the supremacy of certain values, and for the acceptance of fortune, than it does for the

ability of the characters to discern reality from illusion. Thus the revelation of Perdita's identity as Leontes' daughter speaks for Leontes' acceptance of his fortune. The unmasking of Angelo speaks for the supremacy of the value of justice--but with mercy. And the revelation of Viola's true identity speaks for her ability to accept her proper role and the vindication of those who accept that which time brings.

In Molière's comic world, on the other hand, the achievement of new understanding is often a part of the return to order at play's end, and often accompanies the character's rejection of his fixity. Thus Orgon's comprehension of what has happened to him begins a return to order in his household. And *Amphitryon*'s final understanding of what has transpired allows for a return to order in his family.

We can see this movement from disorder to order and from ignorance to understanding in many of Molière's comedies. Tartuffe opens with Orgon and Madame Pernelle being badly duped by Tartuffe. Two sets of lovers are separated. And Orgon is irrationally taken with Tartuffe in a fixity of approach both laughable and distressing. The end of the play is marked by Orgon's understanding of what has happened to him. It is also marked by a removal of all blocks to the lovers' marriages and the abandonment by Orgon of his fixity of character.

Especially important in this play is the disorder within the household which culminates in the actual loss of the home to the hypocrite, Tartuffe.

It is ironic that many of the references to disorder in the comedy are to the role which Dorine, the servant girl plays.³ Many of the characters see in her "take charge" attitude, a threat to familial order, when in reality she is a force for order as she works for the ouster of Tartuffe and the marriages of the lovers. Tartuffe's unhealthy supremacy over the family is documented in his legal right to the house itself and his eviction notice to Orgon and his family. The disorder evidenced by Orgon's disowning of Damis and the transferring of the rights of heritage from Damis to Tartuffe is righted with the hypocrite's arrest. The intimate focus which we discussed earlier as typical of Molière's comic world is here especially important as we note the repetitious references to "ceans," "chez-moi," "ce ménage-ci" in the early lines of the play. The play is very much concerned with the home, with the household and with order within that very limited society. As Tartuffe and Orgon both struggle for the role of "maître" of the household, Tartuffe's eventual defeat allows for a return to social order and the reestablishment of the family unit at play's end.

Dom Juan, on the other hand, is in many ways atypical of the Molière comic tradition. And yet many of the elements of this play which at first seem to contradict the view of the Molière comic world as seen throughout the other comedies, really confirm that same comic vision. The play opens with marriages being violated, and potential marriage contracts threatened: Dom Juan both ignores his commitment to Done Elvire and threatens the engagement of Pierrot and Charlotte. Yet as the play ends with the destruction of the man who threatened the marriage code, it is typical. The removal of Dom Juan as a block to marriage and a threat to the social codes of the day is an echo of the conversation of Argan at the end of Le Malade Imaginaire or of Orgon at the end of Tartuffe. To the extent that Dom Juan understands throughout the comedy the power of social codes (remember that he becomes a hypocrite to avoid the power of social and religious rules which plague him), he is not typical of the Molière comic hero. Orgon's understanding does not come until late in the play. Neither does Alceste's. Yet Dom Juan's very existence is testimony to the fact that man who believes himself free of all constraints is in the end no freer than those whom he ridicules for the adherence to social codes. For Dom Juan, the limitation on his actions comes in death, but it comes nevertheless. And for the society around him, that death means a return to social order.

Le Misanthrope opens on misunderstanding and conflict and ends with Alceste having realized that in order to live life as he wishes he must forsake society. Although Alceste and Célimène are not married, the play does end with the betrothal of Éliante and Philinte. It is Alceste, with his anti-social attitude who is the block to social order in the play. So his admission that he will forsake human society and will no longer insist that his values be a part of Célimène's society allows for the reestablishment of order. The movement of the comedy is from disorder to order and from misunderstanding to understanding.

L'Avare is, like Tartuffe, typically Molièresque. It opens with two sets of frustrated lovers and closes with the block to their marriage removed. If Harpagon does not come to any understanding of what has happened to him, nonetheless he is no longer an impediment to the marriage of his children. We see a movement toward understanding, as the identities of many characters are revealed. And a new social order emerges which is marked by marriage and understanding. Although Harpagon is not included in the marriages, and doesn't really understand what has happened to him, he will probably coexist peacefully with this new society.

Thus we see in the Molière comedies a pattern whereby the end of the comedy is marked by the

establishment of order and the achievement of new understanding. In some cases, where the character does not achieve understanding, or at least does not forsake his fixity, as in L'Avare and Dom Juan, the order at the end is not necessarily a new order but perhaps only the reestablishment of an old order to which the comic hero was a threat or block. Still marriage is a part of that order and the return to order is symbolized by the union of lovers and a return to peace in the household, while at the same time, the movement toward understanding is represented by the revelation of identities, the unmasking of frauds, and in some cases, the abandonment of the fixity of character which has precipitated the disorder in the first place.

We can see that the basic movements inherent in the comic worlds of both playwrights are similar. Yet Shakespeare goes beyond Molière's disorders of the family and immediate society, to depict social, political and natural disorder as evidenced by the lawlessness of Measure for Measure, the political disorders of As You Like It and The Tempest, and the natural disorder of A Midsummer Night's Dream. In Molière's comedies there is occasional allusion to political order or disorder; in Tartuffe there is reference to a political situation in which Orgon is involved, and to the influence of the King. However, there seems to be little attempt to

suggest that the order of the small society is a metaphor for governmental order or disorder. And as we noted before, there is little mention of any natural or biological disorder. The "disease" which was in Shakespeare's comedies an image of disorder in the society of man, in Molière's work usually reflects a fixity of character or a means of duping someone, as in L'Amour Médecin.

The Significance of the Return to Order

Most of the comedies of both playwrights end with marriages and the establishment of order. Yet the means by which each playwright establishes that order differ. The concluding movements of the comedies of both playwrights are marked by revelations of identity: Leontes learns that Perdita is his daughter and Orgon learns that Tartuffe is an imposter. Orsino learns that Viola is a girl and Anselme learns that Valère and Mariane are his long-lost children. But the revelation of identity in Shakespeare's comedies speaks for the happiness which comes to those who accept that which fortune gives to them. And the same revelation in Molière's comedies speaks for the movement from misunderstanding to understanding, from illusion to reality which is central to the Molieresque comic world.

The Shakespearian conclusion more often encompasses some sort of joyous celebration of the new order--a visible, joyful ceremony which transcends the mere establishment of a new order and the promise of marriage--than does the Molière conclusion. Thus Twelfth Night ends with a song and A Midsummer Night's Dream ends with a blessing. Only a few of the comedy-ballets of Molière, notably Le Malade Imaginaire, which ends with the mock graduation ceremony, approach the "celebration" scene usually found at the end of the Shakespearian comedy--and then that celebration is an ironic "spoof" of human irrationality. Perhaps it is Shakespeare's attention to the natural cycles, to the seasonal movement of life that makes such celebrations more central to the final order of the play. Or perhaps it is the play's attention to the combination of "rain" and joy which come to each man, which makes the celebration of the moments of joy a natural response on the part of comic man.

Molière's final scenes are more likely to be marked by a sense of relief that the fixity which was a block to order no longer exists, that familial disorder is replaced by order. In place of the jubilation of the Shakespearian comedy, the Molière comedy closes with a more measured sense of pleasure, a sense of resolution, of a return to "normalcy," perhaps not

unlike that which we feel in Measure for Measure when all the wrongs are righted, when the hypocrite is unmasked, and when order is reestablished.

In Molière's comic world, that final resolution comes suddenly. With little warning, the disorders are dissolved into a new order, and the lovers marry. In Shakespeare's comic world, the resolution of conflict, the replacing of disorder with order, all takes place as part of a process which we see throughout the play, not only in the action of the play itself, but through imagery, language and many other elements. The movement toward the union of lovers builds throughout A Midsummer Night's Dream as it does in Twelfth Night. The movement toward a restoration of familial order is developed throughout Acts IV and V of The Winter's Tale. From the moment that the oracle reveals Leontes' folly, the play moves slowly and inexorably toward a final resolution of disorder. From the time that Ferdinand declares himself absolutely against any contact with the opposite sex, it is inevitable that he should fall in love. So in the Shakespeare play, much of the action is part of the establishment of order, and there is a sense of the inevitable in the fortune which comes to comic man. There are no real surprises in the Shakespearian comic world, for that entire world moves inexorably to the conclusion of order and marriage.

In Molière's comic world, on the other hand, the resolution of conflict and disorder comes suddenly. Dom Juan is destroyed in the final seconds of the play, and despite the continual insistence of the other characters that he will be punished for his infamous activities, the death which he meets is a surprise, a sudden irrational event. The final resolution of L'Avare is not even possible until the startling unveiling of the identities of many of the characters which takes place in the final scene. And this revelation is as much a surprise to us as it is to the other characters in the comedy. Orgon's household is only returned to order by the sudden decision at the end of the comedy that it is Tartuffe who is to be arrested. Until that moment, nothing suggests to us that Orgon's actions are leading to Tartuffe's defeat. Le Misanthrope ends with the sudden declaration of Alceste that if Célimène won't marry him and join him in his withdrawal from society, he will forsake society alone. Although he has been threatening throughout the play to flee mankind, his final resolution comes suddenly and is a surprise to us and to the members of his society. Thus we note in the Molière plays a preponderance of "deux ex machina" endings, which promote a sense of the irrational, the absurd in the final actions of the play and in the establishment of order.

Therefore, the resolution of the comedies of the two playwrights, though marked by the same movement toward familial order and the marriages of the young lovers, seems to suggest different things. The final order of the Molière play speaks for the movement of the characters from illusion to reality, a movement which Shakespeare does not emphasize in the same manner.⁴ And the final order of Molière's comedies, coming as it does suddenly and without any real dramatic preparation for the establishment of order, suggests the irrational, absurd nature of human existence. Shakespeare's final scenes are more often marked by celebrations as if to suggest the close relationship between the final order of the play and the order to be seen in the seasonal cycles of nature. Thus the final moments of his plays speak for mankind's role in a reasonable, predictable cycle of life.

Resistance to Order Versus an Impetus to Order

Although both playwrights deal with the disorder of lovers separated and families sundered, their perspectives differ. As we noted, in Tartuffe and L'Avare, Molière usually focuses on that character who is a block to the impetus for order, who stands in the way of marriage and understanding. In Dom Juan the spotlight is on the libertine; in Le Malade Imaginaire it is on Argan.

It is the character who resists order who demands our attention in the Molière comic world.

In Shakespeare's comedies we often see a similar comic situation. Egeus blocks the marriage of Hermia and Lysander. Ferdinand outlaws marriage. Angelo is a block to the natural, healthy union of the sexes. Polixenes opposes Florizel's marriage to Perdita. Yet the spotlight is not on Egeus, or Ferdinand, or Angelo or Polixenes. Rather the comedy focuses our attention on the entire fabric of the society of the play as we see the power of fortune through man's role as a lover.

We can speculate that given three sets of separated lovers and a character who opposes their marriage, Molière will focus on the blocking character and his fruitless struggle to prevent the marriages, while Shakespeare will instead concentrate on the lovers and their struggle toward union. Given A Midsummer Night's Dream Molière would probably focus on Egeus and his attempts to separate the lovers. And given L'Amour Peintre, Shakespeare would probably concentrate a greater portion of the play on the plotting of the lovers. We can note the same difference in perspective by comparing Shylock with Harpagon. We note that in Shakespeare's comedy, a great portion of the play deals with Antonio, with Belmont, with the lovers, while

Molière's play holds its spotlight almost unswervingly on the miser as he resists all attempts to weaken his power over the household.

Thus both playwrights are looking at the same comic world--although Shakespeare's vision is more expansive--and they are seeing many of the same characters. But each sees these characters from his own perspective. Molière is watching a particular character of fixity as he resists the movement toward a new order, while Shakespeare gives a more equal division of his attention to all the characters, with a special interest in those who are a force for, rather than a block to, the new society. Hence Molière focuses more on a single individual against the backdrop of his society; Harpagon is seen as a man of fixity against the flexibility of his society. And Shakespeare looks at the fabric of that society and sees the comic character as only a part of that fabric: Shylock is seen as a part of a social panorama, of a social fabric held together by the bonds of law and justice.

Parallels: A Repetition of the Themes

Molière's work is often termed "comedy of character" suggesting theatre in which the attention is drawn to one character rather than dispersed over a whole group, or various groups of people as it is, in

say, Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. Sometimes, however, we take this too literally and expect that a Molière comedy will be a caricature of a single person. It is far from that. While the focus of a Molière comedy is often on a single character, it is through the situation of the other players that we often see reflections of the major character's predicament. Thus the use of parallels in Molière's comedies is similar to that which we noted in Shakespeare's comedies. Amphitryon's situation is mirrored in his servant Sosie's predicament. The parallel serves to compare the practical wisdom, the pragmatic spirit of the servant with the fixity of approach of the master. Orgon's blindness is mirrored in his mother's refusal to accept the truth. His frustration with her fixity is even funnier when viewed in light of his recent conversion to rationality. Dom Juan's rejection of all codes is echoed in Dom Carlos' frustration with the code of nobility. His speeches to Dom Juan about that frustration are comic, as the libertine listens without comment to thoughts that are only a mild version of his own. Harpagon's avarice is reflected in Froisine's desire to make some quick money. But she sees the miser as inhuman while she views her own quest for money as necessary to her survival. Thus the main character may be in the spotlight, but the minor characters'

situations are often a reflection, an echo, a variation of his own predicament.

And the main character, while he has the audience's attention for most of the comedy, is far from atypical, and is in no way an anomaly. Rather, his situation, echoed as it is in that of the other characters, speaks for the universal situation of man in a comic world. As was true in the Shakespearian comedies, parallels between the main character (or characters) and the other players suggest the universality of the situation of the comic character. Sir Andrew's passion for Olivia suggests the universality of Orsino's dilemma; so does Damis' inflexibility and unthinking action reflect Orgon's fixity of character. In both cases, the universality of the human situation is suggested by parallels between characters.

The Comic Hero--A Character of Fixity

The Molière comic character, often thought of as typically a "monomaniac," like Harpagon, comes in many variations. We remember Sganerelle, Eraste, Dom Garcie, Dom Juan, La Princesse D'Élide, Argan, Orgon, Tartuffe, Arnolphe, to name a few. And we note immediately that not all, in fact not very many, of them are monomaniacs. All, nonetheless, exhibit some type of fixity of character, of which the monomaniac is the most extreme variety. Thus despite the great number of comedies

which Molière wrote (he provided us with over thirty in all) and the great number of heroes which he created, the Molière comic man has certain character traits which appear again and again, and become typical of the human role in the Molieresque comic world.

The comic hero is usually middle-aged or exhibits a middle-aged inflexibility which stands in opposition to the more tractable young people. We think immediately of Harpagon, Orgon, Tartuffe and Arnolphe. But sometimes the comic character is young and plagued by some sort of youthful inflexibility or fixity--the jealousy of Dom Garcie, the infatuation of Eraste, the passion of Dom Juan.⁵ Other times he is ageless and bound to an eternal fixity of character as is Jupiter. So the Molière comic hero exhibits some sort of fixity, and often, as we will note as we look at several of the comedies, is opposed to or destructive of, the institution of marriage.

In Dom Juan, despite the hero's opposition to the fixity of those who believe in a variety of codes and laws, we see in his own actions a powerful kind of fixity to which he seems oblivious. Dom Juan, at the very moment that he is insisting on his personal freedom, is prey to an uncontrollable desire for female conquests. We note that early in the comedy Sganerelle points out that his master is totally predictable:

. . . je connois à peu pres le train des choses; et sans qu'il m'ait encore rien dit, je gagerois presque que l'affair va là. Je pourrois peut-être me tromper; mais enfin, sur de tels sujets, l'expérience m'a pu donner quelque lumières.
 (Dom Juan, pp. 715-16)⁶

Like the other comic characters--Argan and Arnolphe included--Dom Juan is the man who believes that he is acting freely, but who is controlled by a fixity of character of which he seems unaware. Thus he is predictable. And Dom Juan, as he is destructive of marriage, is typical of the Molière comic hero.

Orgon, who shares the spotlight of Tartuffe with the hypocrite, is inflexibly convinced of the value of Tartuffe to the welfare of his family. His fixity of character is his irrational belief in the man who is destroying his home. Orgon also stands in the way of the marriages of his children. And the fixity of Orgon is echoed in the fixity of the play's other characters. Tartuffe is betrayed by his fixation on Elmire, by his irrational desire for her. Damis is absolute for truth, for telling all. His inability to evaluate the most rational, effective means of dealing with Tartuffe almost destroys the family's chances for removing the hypocrite from the household. Madame Pernelle is absolute for religion and her unthinking devotion to Tartuffe so blinds her to the truth that she will not believe her own son when he insists that he has seen

Tartuffe's infamous actions with his own eyes. And Mariane and Valère are, despite their desire to be reasonable, absolute for love; theirs is a fixity which marks most young lovers. Thus we see in the many characters of Tartuffe a pattern of rigidity.

In Le Misanthrope, Alceste's fixity of approach is contrasted with the pragmatism of most of the society of which he is a part. With the exception of Oronte's rigid demand for revenge for Alceste's denunciation of his ability as a poet, the society in which Alceste lives provides a remarkable contrast to his rigidity. Alceste is, like Damis of Tartuffe absolute for truth, and thus as part of a society based on wit and repartee, is a ridiculous figure. By insisting constantly on his own type of perfection, he precludes the possibility of his marriage to Célimène, and almost brings the society of Célimène's salon to a standstill.

With L'Avare we meet the comic hero who is most often associated with Molière. Harpagon is the monomaniac; he is absolute for avarice. His rigidity stands in the way of his children marrying and makes him inflexibly unable to deal with what happens to him. He, like the other monomaniacs, makes his mistake not in the cause which he espouses, but in the rigidity with which he takes a stance. We can certainly find no fault in a certain amount of freedom to live one's

life, but Dom Juan carries this desire for freedom to a dangerous extreme. Nor is there anything wrong with a serious interest in religion; but Orgon is almost destroyed by his fanaticism. A desire for truth is laudable; but Alceste is absolute for truth at moments when such perfection is inappropriate. And while fiscal responsibility is certainly to be commended, Harpagon over does it. The comic here is not comic in the cause which he champions, but in the absolute rigidity with which he champions it.

Throughout the Molière comedies we see the repetition of the trait of fixity which in its most extreme state plagues Harpagon, Argon, Alceste and Dom Juan. Yet in noting the importance of this character trait in the comedies of the Frenchman, we should not ignore the fact that the same character types do occur repeatedly in Shakespeare's works as well.

Malvolio is absolute for order in the household. Jacques is absolute in his melancholy. Angelo shows a definite fixity of character as do Egeus, Shylock, Olivia, Orsino and Leontes. All these characters have a rigidity akin to that which we see in the Molière comedies. Perhaps it is the fact that most of them (Olivia, Orsino and Leontes) are "cured" of their fixity, which makes us think of them as being different from Molière's comic hero. Or perhaps it is the fact that

the attention of the audience is not so constantly on them as it is on Harpagon or Alceste. In any case, when Shakespeare's comic character gives up his ridiculous fixity, it is usually with the realization that his fortune lies in a different type of attitude toward life, and thus he is usually in the end a part of the sexual cycle.

It is important, then, as we compare the comic works of the two playwrights, to note that the character of fixity is not alone the possession of Molière, the inhabitant of his world alone, but rather that he is more central to Molière's comic world because our attention is so rivetted upon him and upon his fixity.

The Hero as Bourgeois

Many of the comic characters of Molière are of the middle-class. A few are royalty or leaders--as are Dom Garcie and the Princess of Élide--but many are in that middle economic and sociological group which suggests both conventionality and universality. So Harpagon, Orgon and many others represent the bourgeoisie

In Shakespeare's comic world, by contrast, the suggestion of universality is accomplished by the use of parallels between the ruling class and the servant, between master and slave. And there is little emphasis throughout the Shakespearian comedies on the bourgeoisie. Sometimes, as we tend to think automatically of Molière

as the playwright who wrote of the middle-class, we forget that many of his characters do not come from among this group. Dom Juan, Dom Garcie, Amphytrion all are noblemen. In these particular cases, however, it is interesting to note that Molière uses the same technique as Shakespeare to suggest the universality of the comic situation: he provides the comic hero with a servant or slave who functions as a foil, whose situation is an echo of or a contrast to his master's. Still, if we were to characterize Molière's comic world, it is most often focused on the middle-class man who sees himself as powerful and free and who is proved to be neither.

Anti-Social Man

Molière's comic hero is often anti-social in some way. He may feel that he is not governed by the laws which bind other men, or by morals or custom. Of course, Alceste is the most renowned of these anti-social men, but Dom Juan is also anti-social in his feeling that he is exempt from moral law. Often this anti-social tendency is reflected in a character's feeling that he is not subject to the same human emotions which most men feel: Orgon and Argan both insist that they are free from the usual mundane human emotions which complicate the average man's life. If we look back over the major Molière plays we can see this tendency quite clearly.

Both Madame Pernelle and Orgon counsel Orgon's family to cut down on their social contacts, to avoid the society of man so as to not be led astray by the wrong attitudes which that society promotes. And Tartuffe is anti-social in his belief that he is, by virtue of his hypocrisy, free to do whatever he wishes with impunity. Orgon is typical of the Molière comic hero in his insistence that he is not prey to the same human emotions which others feel. Dorine says of Orgon in reference to his relationship with Tartuffe:

Il l'appelle son frère, et l'aime dans son âme
cent fois plus qu'il ne fait mère, fils, fille et
femme.

(Tartuffe, I, iii, 185)

And as unlikely as Dorine's assessment of the situation seems at first, Orgon himself echoes her view:

Il m'enseigne à n'avoir affection pour rien,
De toutes amitiés il détache mon âme;
Et je verrois mourrir frère, enfants, mère et femme,
Que je m'en soucierois autant que de cela.

(Tartuffe, I, v, 276-79)

Orgon insists that he is in no way interested in earning the love of others, that their feelings do not matter to him. He declares, "Je ne veux pas qu'on m'aime."
(Tartuffe, II, ii, 545)

Harpagon, too, believes that he is not bothered by human emotions. When Élise begs him "par l'amour parternel" to think of her feelings he responds:

Non, non, je ne veux rien entendre; et il faut
 que la justice fasse son devoir.
 (L'Avare, V, iv, p. 312)

The main character's denial of human emotions, his insistence that he is not governed by the same bonds which tie the rest of mankind is seen in some of the Shakespearian comic characters. Ferdinand insists that he can do well without any social contact with women. Angelo is beyond the call of human decency. Toby insists he is not subject to the demand for order in the household. And Leontes insists that he is in no way touched by the plight of the baby whom he sentences to death on a distant shore. A few characters are blatantly anti-social: Malvolio and Jacques are among them. It is interesting that it is Shakespeare's anti-social characters who are not integrated in the final order of the play. Both Malvolio and Jacques elect to be apart from the final society. At the same time, those who, like Leontes and Ferdinand, insist that they are not touched by human emotions, are educated to their human role and become part of the play's closing society. We note, however, that Molière's anti-social character is often (although not always) a part of the play's final order. Harpagon despite his anti-social insistence on parsimonious treatment of guests, is a grudging part of the final order which is established. He is still the miser, but he is not an outlaw.

The Hero As Unique

Molière's anti-social comic man is often convinced that he is different from other men, that he is superior to them. He is a better woodcutter, a more wronged husband, a sicker invalid, a more powerful father. He is someone special, apart from the rest of humanity.

Yet in the course of the play, we become aware, as the comic character seldom is, that he is indeed like all other men, that there is nothing particularly different about him. His human situation is much the same as those around him. And if he is indeed different from all the others, it is not, as he feels, in his superiority, in his freedom from custom, law and human emotions, but in his ridiculous rigidity, his insistence in a fixity of approach.

Sganerelle of Le Médecin Malgré Lui is typical in his belief that he is special, extraordinary. His last lines in the play echo this feeling:

. . . Mais prépare-toi désormais à vivre dans un grand respect avec un homme de ma conséquence, et songe que la colère d'un médecin est plus à craindre qu'on ne peut croire.

(Le Médecin Malgré Lui,
III, ix, p. 48)

And earlier in the comedy, when Sganerelle is yet a simple woodcutter, he says to his wife,

Trouve-moi un faiseur de fagots qui sache, comme moi, raisonner des choses, qui ait servi six ans un fameux médecin, et qui ait su, dans son jeune âge, son rudiment par coeur.

(Le Médecin Malgré Lui,
I, i, p. 5)

Like Sganerelle, who insists that he is an extraordinary woodcutter, Argan of Le Malade Imaginaire insists that he too is far from an ordinary man. He is delighted when Toinette, disguised as a doctor, assures him that his medical case is deserving of special attention:

Je dédaigne de m'amuser à ce menu fatras de maladies ordinaires. . . . Je veux des maladies d'importance. . . . et je voudrois, Monsieur, que vous eussiez toutes les maladies que je viens de dire, que fous fussiez abandonné de tous les médecins, désespéré, à l'agonie, pour vous montrer l'excellence de mes remèdes, et l'envie que j'aurois de vous rendre service.

(La Malade Imaginaire,
III, x, p. 835)

And if we turn to the major plays which we have considered, we note the same pattern of character traits. Orgon insists that he is particularly blessed to have Tartuffe in his home and that everyone misunderstands his guest except he, himself. Alceste insists that no one loves as he does and Célimène's response that "the method is, after all, unusual" suggests the ridiculousness of that kind of extreme passion. We note that the very love which Alceste feels sets him apart from the rest of common mankind, indeed, as it is focused on the

coquette Célimène, confirms him as a member in good standing of that very human race which he scorns.

Dom Juan is typical of the Molière comic hero in his insistence that he is special, possessed of more freedom than others, able to do as he pleases with impunity. And Harpagon, as the miser, sees himself as the most put-upon of all men, the one most cruelly deceived, most mortally hurt.

This sense which the Molière comic hero has of his specialness, of the extremity of his situation, of the power of his passion, of a perfection which sets him apart from mankind, is a recurring theme throughout the comedies. And it is a trait which we do not generally find in Shakespeare's comedies. Except in the cases of many of the lovers who feel that no one loves as they do, there seems to be little sense in the Englishman's comedies of the on the part of characters that they are apart from the rest of humanity, that they are somehow superior. Perhaps the only case would be Malvolio who feels that he has been most unjustly put upon and that he is indeed superior to those of his society.

Thus we note throughout the Molière comic world the feeling which the main character has of his uniqueness, his specialness; and in the course of the comedy we come to see, if he does not, that indeed if he is

unique it is only in his ridiculous rigidity. That pinnacle of emotion, that special knowledge, that unusual freedom which he feels he enjoys is only an illusion. He is, like Alceste, at the very moment that he insists on his uniqueness, a member of good standing of the human community which he ridicules.

The Man and the Mask

As we have suggested, Molière's comic hero is marked by some form of fixity of character, some inflexibility or rigidity which precludes his reacting appropriately to the society around him. In some ways, this rigidity can be seen as a mask, a facade which hides from us the human response of the character, which makes it impossible for him to adjust, to adapt to changes in the world around him. The source of Molière's fascination with the mask has been a matter of great interest to Molière scholars.⁸ But for our purposes it is necessary that we simply note the impact of this fixity, of this mask on the comic hero and his ability to function in the world of which he is a part.

The Mask and Language

The first thing which we note about the character of fixity is that his rigidity seems to affect his ability to communicate with others. The Molière comic hero stutters. He talks to himself. He is

speechless. He doesn't hear what people say to him. He gives answers which have nothing to do with the question. He speaks in incomplete sentences. His staccato language is often a reflection of his mental rigidity, as his physical clumsiness is a reflection of his lack of social grace.⁹

Orgon's ridiculous litany of "et Tartuffe" and "le pauvre homme" which render the fourth scene of Tartuffe laughable are a classic example of the Molieresque comic hero's inability to communicate with others. As Dorine informs him that his wife has been gravely ill, Orgon's robot-like response is to ask how Tartuffe is, and to sigh that he is, indeed, a "pauvre homme." The response has nothing to do with the conversation. Later on in the play, when Cléante asks Orgon to tell what kind of man Tartuffe is, Orgon is speechless:

Mon frère, vous seriez charmé de le connoître,
Et vos ravissements ne prendroient point de fin.
C'est un homme . . . qui, . . . ha! un homme . . .
un homme enfin.

(Tartuffe, I, v, 270-72)

Dom Juan, on the other hand, is articulate man at his best. It is his servant Sganerelle, his alter ego, whose language is as clumsy as his physical actions. The comic hero, himself, is never at a loss for words, except perhaps when he is confronted by those two people who most care for him: Done Elvire and Dom Louis.

In both cases he is silent, and having listened to their tirades, he responds in a way which is not at all an appropriate rejoinder to that which they have said.

Alceste's fixity of language stems from his need to be truthful at all times. He takes language too seriously. When the world around him demands wit, he insists on truth. Thus, when the would-be-poet is simply asking for a kind word about his poetry, Alceste insists on giving him literary criticism; his response is inappropriate to the situation. And when Alceste is confronted with the uselessness of his insistence on truth, he, too, is speechless:

Je me verrai trahir, mettre en pièces, voler
 Sans que je sois . . . Morbleu! Je ne veux point
 parler,
 Tant ce raisonnement est plein d'impertinence.
 (Le Misanthrope, I, i,
 179-81)

Harpagon's mental rigidity is often reflected in his language. He talks to himself. He doesn't hear what others are saying. And in his confrontation with Valère in the play's final act, his conversation admits of no real communication as he and his daughter's lover toss words back and forth, each speaking of a totally different situation. One is preoccupied with the theft of the fortune and the other with the seduction of the daughter. Each is so caught up in his fixity, that

he does not understand what the other is saying, but rather interprets it to fit his own inflexibility of thinking. This same inflexibility of thought is seen in Harpagon's repetitious use of the phrase "sans dot" when he talks about Élise's marriage to Anselme. And, of course, Harpagon's famous speech which opens scene vii of Act IV, is typical of the Molièresque comic hero's inability to articulate. Harpagon, on realizing that someone has stolen his treasure, becomes absolutely inarticulate:

Au voleur! au voleur! à l'assassin! au meurtrier!
Justice, juste Ciel! je suis perdu, je suis assassiné,
on m'a coupé la gorge, on m'a dérobe mon argent.
Qui peut-ce être? Qu'est-il devenu? Où est-il?
Où se cache-t-il?

(L'Avare, IV, vii, p. 302)

This speech which echoes Shylock's cry of "my daughter, my ducats," is testimony to the fact that the miser's fixity is reflected in every facet of his being.

Speech, too, is also important to the Shakespearian comic world. Those characters who speak well, and who also sing well, combining music and speech, harmony and language, are usually those who best understand their roles. They are the clowns, the lovers, those who have come to accept their fortune.¹⁰ So like the Shakespearian comedy, Molière's comedies use the element of language to indicate the grace, the flexibility of the comic player.

We should note, however, the incidence of courtly, noble, dramatic, almost Cornelian language in the Molieresque comic world. Alceste says to Célimène,

Hé! le puis-je, traîtresse?
 Puis-je ainsi triompher de toute ma tendresse?
 Et quoique avec ardeur je veuille vous hair,
 Trouvé-je un coeur en moi tout prêt à m'obéir?
 (Le Misanthrope, V, ii,
 1747-50)

The language which he uses to speak of his love for a coquette, for a light-headed girl of twenty, is that of the great tragic play, of the heroic character. We note in L'Avare that Harpagon speaks of his fortune, and of its theft in heroic, dramatic terms. And throughout Tartuffe we note the elegant, heroic language which is used by almost all the characters except for Dorine and Elmire. It is important to note that in Tartuffe all the characters who seem to exhibit a fixity of character use heroic language, while the two people who are most reasonable, most able to deal rationally with what is happening to them speak in ordinary terms. We have to laugh, with Dorine, at Mariane's heroic declaration that she will "die" rather than marry Tartuffe. As Dorine is trying to engineer some practical means of extricating the girl from what promises to be a certain fate, Mariane's suggestion that she will die is indeed ridiculous.

A Tragic/Heroic Figure in
a Comic World

The use of heroic, dramatic language by the character who exhibits a fixity of approach suggests that, indeed, it is the comic player who believes himself to be heroic, who is in the end, the most human, the most laughable, and the least heroic of all the players. As we note the use of terms like "mérite" and "gloire," we realize that the Molièresque comic hero is marked by his belief not only that he is special, that he is unique, but that he has been assigned an important role, a "starring" part, in a drama of great consequence. He is convinced that everything that he does is of tremendous importance. Throughout the Molière comic world we see the character who insists on taking himself too seriously. Alceste insists on supplying the truth when less than the truth would suffice. Harpagon likens the theft of his treasure to a homicide. Mariane will die rather than marry Tartuffe. Each character sees himself as an important player in a heroic world, a world where his every action matters a great deal. But we see, as he does not, that his is a comic role in a world marked by its absurdity, its irrationality, its myriad codes and rules which are less than universal and far from deadly serious. It is not the eye of God which is on Molière's comic hero but simply the eyes of others. So Molière's

comic hero insists on playing a heroic role in what is essentially a comic world. In his insistence that he is heroic, that he stands out from the common herd of mankind, he is comic. For example, Alceste's infatuation with Célimène certainly does not approach the passion of Tristan for Iseult or Romeo for Juliet. Yet Alceste does not see this: he insists that his is the passion of which great tragedies are made, and he insists on making one.

The Shakespearian comic character sometimes suffers from this same delusion. Orsino insists on the power of his passion for Olivia. Olivia insists on the depth of her sorrow at her brother's death. Malvolio suddenly develops a deep, passionate interest in his mistress. The characters who are most resistant to accepting that fortune which is theirs are the ones most likely to see their comic struggle in heroic terms. By play's end, however, most are cured of their myopia and accept their places in the cycle of life, within which the individual's petty struggle is but a small part.

Molière's comic heroes, on the other hand, never seem to quite understand the comic nature of the life of which they are a part. Ramon Fernandez notes this very nature of the comic character's relationship to the world around him:

The comic character lives a life without measure, without suppleness, without shadings, wholly engrossed in himself and his petty level of existence. His isolation results, on the one hand, from his refusal to adapt to life and to accept the language of a common understanding, and on the other, from his total concern--as though bewitched--with the satisfaction of his desire, to the exclusion of everything else. . . . Their [the comic character's] perception of themselves and of others never coincides with that of the spectator. . . . In order to understand the spirit of comedy, one must distinguish between pragmatic reason and ideal reason. Pragmatic reason is concerned with knowing the world as it is, with all its densities and incoherences. Ideal reason seeks to achieve a harmony between the world and all its norms, among which unity is on the highest level. The need to unify the world, and in consequence, to find its innermost movement, is the very essence of ideal reason. The theme of the comic spirit is precisely the impossibility of this unification. The comic vision of the world amounts to saying: "The world is false and absurd and is therefore incompatible with reason." . . . Molièresque reason, in essence, is the lucid acceptance, whenever possible, of things as they are, which necessarily implies weak character.¹¹

Shakespeare's players may learn about the nature of life in the comic world, but Molière's comic heroes, on the other hand, never seem to quite understand the comic nature of the life of which they are a part. Orgon may be cured of his fixity, of his passion for Tartuffe, but he doesn't seem to see the irrationality in the life which is his. Marianne never seems to realize that her passion for Valère is not really the sort of thing one dies for. And Sganerelle, the wood-cutter turned doctor, is still convinced at play's end that this is a very serious business in which he is involved. Perhaps it is this unresolved sense of high seriousness in a

world in which such seriousness is out of place that marks the comic hero of Molière and differentiates him from Shakespeare's comic player. The Molière comic player may be cured of his fixity, as is Orgon, but he never comes to a full understanding of the irrational nature of life in the comic world.

The Human Being Beneath the Mask

Beneath the fixity of character which we see in the Molière comic world, there is a human dimension. Behind the "mask" we can glimpse the human being who has two very human needs. The first is for control, for power, for mastery. And the second is for love--for affection and human understanding.

Like Leontes and Ferdinand in Shakespeare's comedies, the Molière comic hero believes fiercely that he is in control of his little world--his family, his salon, his comedy troupe. He is convinced that he knows all that is happening, and that he can control all that occurs. He feels that his future is in his own hands, and he believes himself to be a figure of power. Thus Argan, who believes himself in control of his household, remains supremely ignorant of what is happening. And Orgon who believes he controls all finds that suddenly he has no power.

The desire for control, for power, on the part of the comic hero can be seen throughout the comedies. In

Tartuffe, for instance, one of the key words is "le maître" for it is the role of master for which both Orgon and Tartuffe struggle. Each is fighting for control over the household--not only over each other, but over the unruly children and servants who are a part of that household. Damis says that Tartuffe holds "un pouvoir tyrannique" over the household (Tartuffe, I, i, 46). When Mariane resists Orgon's choice of husband for her, he reminds her that "enfin, ma fille, il faut payer d'obéissance" (Tartuffe, II, iii, 577). When Damis confronts Orgon with testimony to Tartuffe's evil intent, Orgon insists that the family is insulting Tartuffe as a direct means of threatening his own power, as father, over the household:

Oui, traître, et dès ce soir, pour vous faire enrager.
 Ah, je vous brave tous, et vous ferai connaître,
 Qu'il faut qu'on m'obéisse et que je suis le maître.
 (Tartuffe, III, vi, 1,128-30)

And when Tartuffe is finally exposed as a hypocrite, he responds with a declaration of his power:

C'est à vous d'en sortir, vous qui parlez en maître:
 La maison m'appartient, je le ferai connaître. . . .
 (Tartuffe, IV, vii, 1,557-58)

Orgon finally comes to his senses and admits what has happened to him; and that admission is in terms of his control over the household:

Il est vrai; mais qu'y faire? A l'orgueil de ce traître,
De mes ressentiments je n'ai pas été maître.
(Tartuffe, V, iii, 1,709-10)

Dom Juan is caught up in the same desire for control. He refuses to be subject to anything--to law, to religion, to fear. His desire for power, for control, comes in his insistence that he is absolutely free of everything which might control him. In this sense he is a classic example of this type of Molieresque hero.

Alceste, on the other hand, tries subtly to control others by insisting that they behave in the manner which he finds acceptable. He wants Philinte to behave coolly to his other friends, so that his friendship with Alceste will see more significant.

Harpagon, who like Orgon, is caught up in maintaining order in his household, struggles vainly to remain "maître." His main objection to the fact that his son is in love with his own fiancée seems to be that such a thing is a threat to his power in the home:

J'aime une fille, que je veux épouser; et le pendard
a l'insolence de l'aimer avec moi, et d'y prétendre
malgré mes orders.

(L'Avare, IV, iv, p. 297)

As he says to Cléante, "Ne suis-je ton père? et ne me dois-tu pas respect!" (L'Avare, IV, iv, 296). He is delighted when Valère suggests taking a "hard line" approach with Élise: "J'en suis ravi, et je veux que

tu prênes sur elle un pouvoir absolu" (L'Avare, I, v, p. 258). Thus each comic hero in Molière's plays seems caught up in a desire to be in charge, to have power, to be able to control the small world of which he is a part. And each, throughout the comedies, becomes an example of the minimal control that man has over his life.

The second need which the comic character has, which can be glimpsed through the mask which he wears, is the need for love, for affection. This need exhibits itself in many ways--the desire for respect, for adulation, for compliments, for affection, for friendship, for sexual conquest, and for lasting love. It takes various forms with various characters, emerging from beneath the character's stubborn insistence that he cares for no one, that society is corrupt, that he feels no human tenderness.

Despite Orgon's attempts to be hard-hearted, he is touched by Mariane's pleas. We note, too, that what finally forces him to come out of hiding, to confront the hypocrite, is Tartuffe's statement about him, that,

Qu'est-il besoin pour lui de soin que vous prenez?
C'est un homme, entre nous, à mener par le nez;
De tous nos entretiens il est pour faire gloire,
Et je l'ai mis au point de voir tout sans rien
croire.

(Tartuffe, IV, vi, 1,523-26)

It is only when Tartuffe boasts that he doesn't really care about Orgon, but considers him someone to be duped,

that Orgon comes out of hiding. It is his realization that he is not loved by his friend which jolts Orgon into action.

And despite his insistence that he will be a hermit, Alceste really seems to yearn for the love and acceptance of others. When he berates Philante for his flattery of others, he is really admitting that when Philinte flatters others, he calls into question his affection for Alceste. Alceste is threatened by the possibility that his friendship is, too, a pretense. Alceste, the very man who says he hates human society, wants to be liked. In fact, his main problem with Célimène, is that as the coquette shares her attention with a number of men, Alceste is increasingly unable to believe that she really loves him--despite her protestations (which we can believe) that she cares about him more than the others.

From time to time, the mask of the misanthrope, the anti-social misfit, slips to reveal the real Alceste behind--the powerless human being who is miserable because he is in love with a coquette. His love for Célimène is beyond his control and he realizes it:

Je confesse mon foible, elle a l'art de me plaire:
J'ai beau voir ses défauts, et j'ai beau l'en blamer,
En dépit qu'on en ait, elle se fait aimer.

(Le Misanthrope, I, i, 230-32)

Part of Alceste's need for love is a desire to control others. He says of his love for Célimène:

C'est qu'un coeur bien atteint veut qu'on soit tout
à lui,
Et je ne viens ici qu'à dessein de lui dire
Tout ce que là-dessus ma passion m'inspire.
(Le Misanthrope, I, i,
240-42)

Unfortunately, the very fixity, of which Alceste is unable to divest himself, comes in conflict with his love for Célimène. It is obvious that the young girl has not ruled him out completely as a suitor, but she is certainly not interested enough to forsake society and take up hermitage in the desert as Alceste demands.

As the play proceeds, Alceste's human needs continue to come in conflict with his fixity of character. Despite his insistence on truth at all costs, when that truth is about Célimène, he prefers not to hear it. When Arsinoé tells him the truth about his beloved, he replies,

Cela se peut, Madame: on ne voit pas les coeurs;
Mais votre charité se seroit bien passée
De jeter dans le mien une telle pensée.
(Le Misanthrope, III, v,
116-18)

He begs Célimène for any explanation, true or not, for the suspicious letter:

De grâce, montrez-moi, je serai satisfait,
 Qu'on peut pour une femme expliquer ce billet.
 (Le Misanthrope, IV, iii,
 I, 363-64)

Throughout the play Alceste's insistence that he will leave society is coupled with his frantic efforts to find acceptance and affection in that society. He is the misanthrope who wants love and affection.

Harpagon, too, looks for human affection. He is delighted that Froisine has found someone who loves him-- and in a scene much like that in which Malvolio is gulled in Twelfth Night, he vows to be that very perfect lover which Froisine assures him will be cherished by the young Mariane. It is the same motivation which causes Harpagon to urge Maître Jacques to tell him what people think of him. Obviously, Harpagon believes that the news will be good, that he will find that others are fond of him. Instead, when the faithful servant tells him the truth, he loses his temper and beats the man for his honesty. We remember, too, the scene in which Valère gives away Harpagon's ring to Mariane, while the father, speechless, is unable to stop what is happening. Were Harpagon the completely unfeeling miser, he would have taken back the ring. Instead he allows the girl to keep it. It is obvious that his desire to be loved is in conflict with his monomaniacal avarice.

With Dom Juan, the impetus for love, for respect, is difficult to analyze. One could say that his uncontrollable desire for conquests stems from a desire to both love and control others. And one could suspect that his gentle treatment of Dom Carlos stems from a desire to retain the respect of the other man.

For most of the characters in Molière's comic world the mask, the fixity of character, comes in conflict with human needs. The rigidity which initially seemed to guarantee the comic character both the control and affection which he desired, begins to conflict with those needs. It drives people away from the comic character. It renders him powerless. Thus the end of many of the comedies is marked by a loss of power, or the realization of his powerlessness by a character who believed himself to be in control. Often the very marriages which mark the formation of a new social and familial order emphasize that loss of control. And usually the character is "cured" and drops his mask--as does Orgon--or is forced by the actions of others to assume it even more tightly, with even greater rigidity--as is Harpagon.

Thus Valère, who initially believed that his role as servant in Harpagon's house would give him a better chance of winning Élise's hand, finds that he is instead witness to her betrothal to Tartuffe. And

Harpagon who seemed to feel that his parsimonious behavior would guarantee him both control over his household and a thrifty wife, in the end has neither. Orgon, who in his fixity of approach seemed to have found a means of keeping his household in line, as well as a means of earning the enduring friendship of Tartuffe, in the end finds that he has neither of the things he desired. Alceste, whose demand for truth and for life apart from society, seems to have promised him faithful friends and the love and control of Célimène, in the end finds that his fixity affords him none of these things. And Dom Juan, whose repetitious skirt-chasing, coupled with the hypocrite's pretense of a religious life, see to have promised him impunity and power, is destroyed.

So comic man, who has assumed a mask in order to fill his human needs for power and love (although the assumption of the mask may have been unconscious or involuntary), finds in the end that the mask conflicts with those human needs, that it frustrates them. The mask, the fixity of character, which the Molière comic hero exhibits, seems to suggest the tension between appearance and reality, truth and the lie, illusion and the real world, the facade and the human being beneath it. And while in the Shakespearian comic world such fixity of character and its attendant "cure" is

concerned with man's relationship to his future, to his fortune, in Molière's comic world that fixity points to the tension between the illusion and reality.

The Mask and Its Variations

Now we shall turn to that mask which suggests the tension between reality and illusion. What form does it take? What effect does it have on the comic character? In Molière's plays the mask appears in many forms and is seen on all levels of character development. The comic lead usually displays some sort of fixity; but so do the servants. One of the more common types of "mask" is that of the "role," of the identity willingly assumed.

The role is a mask which is assumed as part of a "play," an intrigue. Just as Viola plays the role of Cesario in order to bide her time, so Elmire plays the "wanton" to catch Tartuffe. Argan feigns death to see how much his family loves him. Valère plays the role of household servant to be near Élise. Sometimes the character must accept the role in order to survive, as Sganerelle of Le Médecin Malgré Lui must. At other times, he must accept the role to satisfy his monomania, as Jupiter of Amphitryon or Dom Juan. Often it is assumed in order to attain something, as in the case of Le Médecin Volant or to avoid something, as in the case of Sosie of Amphitryon. Sometimes the character

is forced into the role, as is Sganerelle of Le Médecin Malgré Lui and other times he accepts it willingly, as does Argan.

In most cases, as we noted above, the character who assumes the role, who puts on the mask of another role, begins to feel uncomfortable. As with Viola of Twelfth Night or Rosalind of As You Like It, the mask conflicts with human needs--as if the comic character's nose itched and he had to remove the mask in order to scratch it. Thus Cléante in Le Malade Imaginaire assumes the role of "apothicaire" in order to see his beloved, and finds himself trapped behind the mask and a witness to her wooing by another man. Argan willingly agrees to feign death because he is sure it will prove his wife loves him. But instead he discovers the truth about himself and her hatred of him. These are all assumed roles, masks consciously donned, which make the characters increasingly uncomfortable, but which they wear until the truth is out.

The second kind of mask is that of hypocrisy. This is a mask taken consciously by the character as a means of reconciling his own needs with the demands of society. Both Dom Juan and Tartuffe are hypocrites, and their masks are much like the facial fixity of those who play roles. Tartuffe, like Cléante, finds that his mask conflicts with his human needs, and thus it begins

to slip. Dom Juan takes up his mask of hypocrisy to gain impunity for his activities, but is punished nonetheless. Both assume the mask as a means of doing what they wish with impunity.

The third kind of mask, unlike the first two kinds, is an unconscious mask, one which is so much a part of the character that he perceives it as his identity. This mask is the facade of fixity, of extremism, of single-mindedness. These characters, among whom are G ron te and Pandolphe, have not yet become monomaniacs, but they are certainly well on the way. This type of character is especially visible in the early comedies and the farces. He is seen in the strict father, the old man stubbornly insistent on marrying, the jealous husband, the infatuated youth, the affected woman. This mask also seems to guarantee the comic character love and control, but in the end comes in conflict with both of these needs.

We see this kind of fixity in the young lovers of the plays we have looked at--in Val re and  lise, in Cl ante and Mariane. We see the same fixity in the youthful impetuosity of Damis and the continual state of fright of Sganerelle. This character is much like the monomaniac, but lacks the total rigidity of that type of character. He is the monomaniac in his formative stages.

The fourth kind of mask is the one for which Molière is justly famous: the monomaniac. The monomaniac has a single, absolutely involuntary mask. He is almost totally motivated by a single idiosyncrasy: for Orgon his religious devotion to Tartuffe, for Argan his reverence for medicine, for M. Jourdain, his desire to be a gentleman. Because of this extremism, this absolute fixity, such a character ignores human emotion, social dictates, manners, custom--all. He is absolute for a single value. He is like Alceste, absolute for truth, or Harpagon, absolute for money. But occasionally, the mask of even the monomaniac slips, and we see for a second, the human being behind the rigid facade. We see Alceste's desire to know with certainty that he is loved, Harpagon's wish to control his household. Like the other masked characters, the monomaniac usually seeks a combination of love and power. Also, like them, his mask conflicts with his needs.

The Nature of the Play

The importance which Molière's comedies afford to the mask, or fixity of character, suggests much about his comic world. The mask speaks for the comedies' concern with man's relationship to reality. It gives man a means of avoiding reality or seeming to change that reality. It is the mask, too, which leads one to

a consideration of the nature of the theatre, of the play as defined through the comedies.

If it is eyes and dreams and visions in Shakespeare's comic world which suggest the nature of the play and its relationship to the power of the imagination, it is the mask of Molière which speaks for that same concern in his comic world. Like Shakespeare, Molière makes good use of the "play within a play." Elmire sets the scene for the inner play with which she catches Tartuffe. This "play" is a means of revealing truth, of curing Orgon's error. Cléante plays the role of the dutiful son to his prospective step-mother in order to tell her the truth about his feelings for her. Here the play is a means of telling the truth with impunity. Philinte likens Alceste's actions to a comedy:

Le monde par vos soins ne se changera pas;
Et puisque la franchise a pour vous tant d'appas,
Je vous dirai tout franc que cette maladie,
Partout où vous allez, donne la comédie,
Et qu'un si grand courroux contre les moeurs du temps
Vous tourne en ridicule auprès de bien des gens.

(Le Misanthrope, I, i,
103-08)

The endings of the interior plays, like the endings of many of the "frame" plays are sudden, unexpected, surprising. And they, like the deus ex machina endings of the "frame" plays, suggest obliquely the real powerlessness of the comic character. They point to the inescapable irrationality, the unpredictability of life

in Molière's comic world and to the fact that man in no way controls the direction of his life in that world.

Thus we note in Molière's comic world a variety of uses for theatre. The play can reveal the truth, as it does in Le Malade Imaginaire. It can cure human error, as does Elmire's play in Tartuffe. It can provide a means of communicating as in Le Médecin Malgré Lui. It can speak to man through his mask, his human irrationality, as it does in Le Malade Imaginaire. Thus, Molière, like Shakespeare suggests that comedy is an echo, or a mirror of human reality, by which the playwright can cure human error and help each of us better understand our own roles. And if Le Malade Imaginaire and A Midsummer Night's Dream are any indication, both playwrights see drama as a means of dealing with man's irrationality.

It is Le Malade Imaginaire which, more than any other of Molière's plays deals directly, through statements in the dialogue and indirectly, through the use of "inner plays," with the nature of theatre. People don costumes, assume roles, and direct plays. And between the acts of this comedy-ballet, we and the comedy's players are presented with artistic musical and dance interludes. The interludes, with their graceful dancing and emphasis on love themes contrast with the physical clumsiness of many of the comedy's characters--especially Thomas Diaphorus who "fait toutes choses

de mauvaise grâce et à contre-temps" (Le Malade Imaginaire, II, v, 800)--and underline the importance of love to the play's story line.

It is Argan's brother, Béralde, who in his defense of Molière's comedies (Argan insists that they are an attack on the medical profession) points to both the focus and purpose of the Molière comedy:

Béralde: Ce que j'en dis n'est qu'entre nous, et j'aurois souhaité de pouvoir un peu vous tirer de l'erreur où vous êtes, et pour vous divertir, vous mener voir sur ce chapitre quelque une des comédies de Molière.

Argan: C'est un bon impertinent que votre Molière avec ses comédies, et je le trouve bien, plaisant d'aller jouer d'honnêtes gens comme les médecins.

Béralde: Ce ne sont point les médecins qu'il joue, mais le ridicule de la médecine.

(Le Malade Imaginaire,
III, iii, p. 826)

The emphasis is on the word "ridicule": Molière makes fun of the ridiculous in medicine, the ridiculous in man. Béralde also suggests the role of comedy in entertaining and in curing man of error. In the introduction to the final interlude of the comedy, Angélique asks Béralde what he is planning. His response suggests other important functions of comedy:

Béralde: De nous divertir un peu ce soir. Les comédiens on fait un petit intermède de la réception d'un médecin, avec des danses et de la musique; je veux que nous en prenions ensemble le divertissement, et que mon frère y fasse le premier personnage.

Angélique: Mais mon oncle, il me semble que vous vous jouez un peu beaucoup de mon père.

Béralde: Mais, ma nièce, ce n'est pas tant le jouer, que s'accommoder à ses fantasies. Tout ceci n'est qu'entre nous. Nous y pouvons aussi prendre chacun un personnage, et nous donner ainsi la comédie les uns aux autres.

(Le Malade Imaginaire,
III, xiv, p. 846)

Perhaps the suggestion is that each of us plays a role in a comedy of our own, that each of us lives with certain fantasies. So the theatre, which is an entertainment and a revealer of truths, is also a means of dealing with our human irrationalities. Perhaps by laughing at the mask which another man wears, we loosen for a moment, that mask, that fixity which is our own.

The role of theatre as the healer, the cure, is suggested by Uranie in La Critique de L'Écoles des Femmes. She says:

. . . Et je trouve, pour moi, que cette comédie seroit plutôt capable de guérir les gens que de les rendre malades.

(La Critique de L'Écoles des Femmes, scene iii,
p. 486)

And she suggests, too, the basic comic situation which Molière uses throughout his works, that of man who, despite numerous warnings, is unable to avoid that fate which is his.

Pour moi, je trouve que la beauté du sujet de L'Ecole des Femmes consiste dans cette confiance perpétuelle; et ce qui me paroît assez plaisant, c'est qu'un homme qui a de l'esprit, et qui est averti de tout par une innocente qui est sa maîtresse, et par un étourdi qui est son rival, ne puisse avec cela éviter ce qui lui arrive.

(La Critique de L'Écoles
des Femmes, scene vi,
p. 509)

Her comment confirms both the myopia and the powerlessness which we have noted in Molière's comic character. And it is ironic that a play which suggests man's powerlessness and fixity can be at the same time a cure for the foolishness of men, a medicine for the fixity of character which makes all human life a comic interlude.

Thus the comedy is, as it was in Shakespeare's comic world, a mirror to our own lives, a means of exposing our human foibles, of teaching the nature of our existence in society, the meaning of our struggle. In Shakespeare's comic world that "mirror" shows man as part of a sexual cycle of life, learning to accept his role in that cycle. In Molière's comic world it shows man, who believes himself powerful, confronted with his powerlessness in a world marked by its irrationality, its absurdity.

Related to the importance of the theatre to Molière's works is the tension between illusion and reality in the comic world. We can see the same tension in Shakespeare's comedies, in the confusion of lovers

in A Midsummer Night's Dream, in the mismatching of couples in Love's Labour's Lost, in Feste's successful gulling of Malvolio in Twelfth Night, in the tension between art and reality in Hermione's appearance at the end of The Winter's Tale. In Molière's comedies, this tension is seen in the difference between what comic man sees and what really is, in the difference between how he sees himself and how we see him, and in the proliferation of self-delusions, mistaken identities, confused roles.

In Tartuffe, for instance, there is a tension between error and correction, ignorance and understanding. The play abounds with the terms "aveuglement," "apparence," "vu." And the tension between appearance and reality culminates in Orgon's argument with his mother over the justification for his charges against Tartuffe. Madame Pernelle insists that there must be a mistake, that Orgon's sinful household must have turned him against a true "dévot." Orgon, almost beside himself with the frustration of witnessing his mother's refusal to accept the evidence against Tartuffe shouts:

Je vous ai dit déjà que j'ai vu tout moi-même. . .

Je vous di

Que j'ai vu de mes yeux un crime si hardi. . .

Je l'ai vu, dis-je, vu, de mes propres yeux vu,

Ce qu'on appelle vu:

(Tartuffe, V, iii, 1,669-77)

The word "vu" resounds like a knell. But Madame Pernelle refuses to hear it. The play's balance between the forces of appearance and reality, deception and truth, is so precise, so delicate, that not until the play's final scene are we certain which force will triumph. Throughout this comedy, as well as in Dom Juan, Le Misanthrope, and L'Avare, we are constantly reminded of the tension between what seems and what is, the illusion and the reality.

The Role of the Wise Servant

The role of the clown, which was so central to the comic world of Shakespeare, is echoed in Molière's comic world in the person of the wise servant, the quick-witted slave. We recall Dorine's important role in Orgon's household. She is the one who brings the lovers together. It is she who first notes the threat which Tartuffe poses to the household. It is she who suspects his motivation. It is she who uses language appropriate to the situation, whose common sense approach stands in contrast to the religious and heroic pomposity of the other characters. When Tartuffe orders her to cover her bosom with a hanky, she retorts,

Certes je ne sais pas quelle chaleur vous monte:
Mais à convoiter, moi, je ne suis point si prompte,
Et je vous verrois nu du haut jusques en bas,
Que toute votre peau ne me tenteroit pas.

(Tartuffe, III, ii, 865-68)

She is reasonable, flexible, quick-thinking, practical--all the things which Orgon is not. Like Feste, she is the one who directs inner plays, who brings lovers together, who helps eliminate the anti-life forces. Sganerelle of Dom Juan is another such servant. He understands the motivation of his master. He can predict his every move. Despite his lack of grace, it is he who foresees that Dom Juan will not, in the end, be free to do as he pleases. Molière's servant, like Shakespeare's clown, is a teacher of truths, the one who instructs the master in proper action, the person whose common sense and understanding are a sharp contrast to the master's fixity. And often, in Molière's comedies, the power of the servant stands as a reminder of the master's impotence. Molière's servant, like Shakespeare's clown, is usually more deft than his master. And like the clown he teaches a proper attitude--though in Molière's case that proper attitude is an understanding of the difference between reality and illusion, while in Shakespeare's comic world it is an attitude toward fortune.

Love in the Comic World

As in Shakespeare's comic world, love in Molière's comedies plays a large role in the movement, in the impetus for order. Almost every play ends with the marriage of young lovers, and every comedy, too, boasts

a love theme somewhere in its structure. Yet love is in no way romanticized. Many of the marriages which are presented are real battlegrounds, and where there are not open quarrels, there is no great sense of love or devotion either. Marriage seems, as it is part of the over-all focus of the plays, to be an affirmation of familial order without reference to the great passions which might motivate that marriage. The rhetoric of love suggests the great passions, but the reality does not. The Molière lovers are seldom of the Romeo and Juliet variety. They are foolish, infatuated, scatter-brained, verbose and irrational--but certainly not intense. Their love seems to stand less as a great natural force than as a visible block to the power of one of the main characters. The irrationality of love also speaks to the powerlessness to which all men are prey.

We remember that in Shakespeare's plays love is powerful. Be it temporary and destructive, or eternal and cleansing, it is almost always a power to reckon with, a biological imperative. Viola, Ferdinand, Touchstone, Rosalind--all are in the very throes of love. And even the passions of Angelo and Troilus, Leontes and Posthumous suggest the power of human passion, if only in a negative way. Love may be an irrational urge in the plays of Shakespeare but it is nothing to scoff at.

Molière's plays, however, give us a different view of love. Love is irrational, and for those few older men who seem to love deeply, it is destined to cause pain. The young lovers are foolish, infatuated, verbose, fickle--in a word light. Mariane and Angélique are a far cry from Viola and Hermione. One seldom senses any seriousness about their love, and except for the case of Alcmène and Amphitryon, we find no hint of great sexual passion in Molière's lovers. Love is a kind of youthful fixity, an irrationality of the young. It is their monomania. And it leads to order.

Thus marriage, which is the final measure of the power of love, in Molière's comedies is a visible testimony to man's lack of power--to his inability to order things as he wishes, and to his part in the social scheme of things. In a Shakespearian comedy, on the other hand, marriage is an unavoidable fate which speaks first of all for the character's inclusion in the natural sexual cycle, and only secondarily for his powerlessness to order life as he wishes.

Death in the Comic World

Death, like love, is a part of the comic world of both playwrights. Hermione and Perdita both "die." Dom Juan goes to Hell. Mariane will die rather than marry Tartuffe. The mention of death is common throughout the plays which we have discussed, but the import

of death in the Molière comedy is vastly different from that in Shakespeare's comic world.

Throughout the Shakespearian comedies the predominant view of death is that of an end to an individual life while the cycle of which that life was a part continues on. Thus death has meaning; it is part of a larger panorama of human and natural life. Only in rare cases, like that of Hector, is there a suggestion that death is meaningless or irrational. Often actual death is erased or negated through marriage--as the death of Antigonus is erased by Paulina's marriage to Camillo, and Mamillius' death is negated by the inclusion of Florizel in Leontes' family through his marriage to Perdita. Other times "death" turns out to be a misunderstanding and is negated by the revelation of identities. But even when death is actual, or when it is mentioned again and again in imagery, it remains in Shakespeare's work a testimony to the natural cycle of which all living things are a part.

In Molière's plays, however, without the backdrop of natural growth and cosmic cycles, death is only a threat, a trick, a game, a burlesque. Certainly Tartuffe will not die for his love of Elmire. Argan's death is only a trick which he plays on his family. Dom Juan's death is a sudden end to his insistence on

his freedom. Death in the Molière comic world is sudden and arbitrary, an illusion or a joke, but always a testimony to the basic irrationality of all life. And in this world, to threaten death is a heroic gesture in a comic universe.

Perhaps, then, the difference between the view of death of the two playwrights is related to another difference between their views of the world. They seem to have a different perspective on man's struggle. Shakespearian comedy defines man's relationship to his fortune; it suggests his proper behavior toward that which time brings him. Each comic character learns or fails to learn about the nature of that fortune. Orsino, Leontes, Prospero, Ferdinand--all learn their proper roles. And Feste, Touchstone and Viola are the teachers of that lesson. But in Molière's comedies, man is defined in relation to a present reality. The comic character struggles to understand and deal with the world around him: Amphytryon, Harpagon and Argan all try to deal appropriately with what they perceive to be the reality of their world. They are concerned with what is presently happening to them. By contrast, Orsino and Ferdinand are learning to deal with fortune, with what time brings in the future.

NOTES--CHAPTER IV

¹For a further discussion of the contrast between comic man's view of himself and our view of him, see the section which follows entitled "The Hero as Unique," IV, p. 120.

²R. Jouanny, ed., Oeuvres Complètes; Molière (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962), p. 935, note 986.

³For a further discussion of the role of the servant in Molière and Shakespeare's comedies, see the section below entitled "The Role of the Wise Servant," IV, p. 150.

⁴A Midsummer Night's Dream, Love's Labour's Lost, Twelfth Night and The Winter's Tale all show characters who gain understanding throughout the play, who better understand the reality of what is happening. But in the case of Shakespearian comedy, this understanding seems always related to their understanding of their fortune, of their relation to time and what it brings.

⁵Gustave Lanson, in his work on Molière and farce, outlines the nature and source of the vision of rigidity in Molière's comic characters.

⁶Quotations from Molière's plays are taken from the Garnier Edition of Oeuvres Complètes; Molière, ed. by R. Jouanny (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962); quotations indicate act, scene and line or page number as appropriate.

⁷For some excellent ideas on Molière's bourgeois character see Lionel Gossoman's article "The Comic Hero and his Idols," and Paul Benichou's "The Anti-Bourgeois."

⁸ Alfred Simon, in "The Elementary Rites of Molière's Comedy," indicates the debt which Molière, in his use of the "mask" owes to farce, and also points to the tension between the mask and the human face to which we have alluded.

⁹ W. G. Moore, in his article "Speech" from Molière: A Collection of Critical Essays, has some excellent ideas on the nature of language in the Molière comedy.

¹⁰ Milton Crane's study on the use of prose in Shakespeare's plays is a good source of information for people interested in the matter of language in the comedies.

¹¹ Ramon Fernandez, "The Comedy of Will," in Molière: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Jacques Guicharnaud (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 50-52.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

We have, then, provided a means for comparing the comic works of Molière and Shakespeare. We have traced the outlines of the comic world of Shakespeare through a detailed analysis of four of his major comedies. We have outlined that comic world. And we have compared that world with the comic world developed through Molière's plays. We have found that some elements which initially seemed similar (the characters of Shylock and Harpagon, for instance) in the end suggested contrasts in the comic world. And other points which would not have seemed comparable at first (the image of the dream and that of the mask) suggested points of similarity.

Our conclusions have increased our understanding of the two playwrights' works. Shakespeare's comic world rather than differing from that of Molière's goes beyond it. The Shakespearian focus includes, but moves beyond, the intimate social group of Molière's comic world. It includes not only the family, which was often Molière's focus, but a vast natural and political universe as well.

Shakespeare's comic characters travel throughout that universe in search of their fortunes, while Molière's comic heroes remain within a closed setting trying, through a rigidity of approach to fend off those forces for change which their society forces upon them.

The Shakespearian setting, which alternates between urban and rural settings, suggests the tensions and dualities of the comic world. The Molière setting, on the other hand, is usually a backdrop to the various social groups who wander through Molière's intimate comic world. Only as it is limited by the four walls of a single room, suggesting thus the limitations of man's freedom, does the Molière setting approach the importance which the Shakespearian setting has to the movement of the comedy as a whole.

In both comic worlds, the movement of life is from disorder and separation to order and union. In Shakespeare's comic world this movement proceeds on many levels: social, political and natural. In Molière's comic world, however, the movement is social only, and lacks the actual physical and geographical movement which we find in Shakespeare's world. In both worlds the play ends with marriage and union and in both worlds marriage seems to represent order.

In Shakespeare's comic world, the return to order is marked by some sort of celebration--a joyous

affirmation of life itself. The return to order is a logical conclusion to the movement of the comedy as a whole and suggests man's role in a sexual, seasonal cycle of life. In Molière's comic world, however, the return to order, coming as it does so suddenly, seems to speak for the very irrationality, the absurdity of life. Thus this return to order is less a matter for celebration than for a sense of measured joy, a feeling of relief that the blocks to order are removed.

The character of fixity who appears in many variations in Molière's comic world, is seen as well in Shakespeare's comic universe. In Shakespeare's comedies, however, the character of fixity is not so unswervingly the center of attention as he is in Molière's comic world. Molière focuses on the character of fixity as he is a block to order, while Shakespeare focuses on the impetus for order as it encounters blocks to fulfillment.

Both playwrights use the parallels between master and servant to suggest the universality of the human situation. And both see the servant or the slave, as the wiseman, the teacher of truths, the one who returns the world to order. The servant girl of Molière's comic world and the clown of Shakespeare's comic universe are brother and sister. For each exemplifies a common-sense, flexible attitude toward life,

an understanding of the proper, natural way to live in the comic universe. The pragmatism and common sense approach which they exemplify stands in contrast to their master who takes himself much too seriously and who refuses to accept life as it is.

In both comic worlds, the nature of the play itself is of major importance. Both suggest the tension between the play which deludes and the play which reveals truth, between the mask which covers the truth and the mask which allows man to speak the truth. Both suggest that theatre is at once an entertainment and a lesson, a dream and a cure for man's irrationality. And both suggest that the theatre holds a mirror to the audience, teaching each of us important truths about the nature of our existence. In both comic worlds this is accomplished through the use of the play within a play, through the development of inner "scenes," the donning of costumes, and the assuming of roles.

Both comic worlds place a major emphasis on love. In both there is a tension between the rhetoric of love and the reality of love. Shakespeare's comic world sees the tension between the rationality with which people think they chose the object of their affection, and the real irrationality of their passions. But love, in the Shakespearian world, is a powerful force. Molière's comic world suggests the tension

between the heroic rhetoric of love, between its tragic-heroic potential, and its actual petty reality. Love in Molière's world, while a power for order, is more of a curse than a blessing, more of a threat to man's power than an earth-shaking passion.

And death, which in Shakespeare's works, suggests the end to the individual life while it affirms the role of the individual existence as part of a seasonal cycle of life, is in the Molière comic world an irrationality which suggests in the most graphic terms, the absurdity of life. It is, too, like love, a suggestion of the tension between the heroic nature of life as man sees it, and its comic absurdity as it is actually lived.

Our comparison of the comic worlds of Shakespeare and Molière as offered the opportunity to look at the works of both playwrights in their entirety, and to stress how each element of the comedy contributes to a consistent whole. As we have looked at the complete works of each man, the elements of each of those works have begun to take on a greater meaning, to become more obviously part of a pattern, of a consistent view of the comic world. And our comparison of their comic worlds has suggested many important similarities as well as some significant differences in those worlds.

When such a study is done honestly, without attempting to draw unnatural comparisons, but simply

remaining open to those points of comparison which are suggested by a careful reading of the texts, our understanding of the two playwrights is enhanced. It is such a study which we have attempted here.

This study suggests many directions for further exploration. One might continue with a discussion of how the various traditions from which the two playwrights issue effect the similarities and differences in their comic worlds. Or one might take a single element--perhaps the concept of the theatre or the use of language--and compare it at greater length.

But for now, our task is completed. We have sketched the comic worlds of the two playwrights and compared those two worlds. We have developed an approach for teaching the two playwrights as part of a single college course, an approach which might well be extended to other courses which present two playwrights at once. And we have gone beyond a simple comparison of similarities of character or of incident, to provide a meaningful basis for comparison of some of the more profound aspects of the two playwrights' comic works.

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