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THE THEATRICAL PRESENT IN SIX
SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDIES

by

Margie M. Burns

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The six plays to be discussed are The Merchant of Venice, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Measure for Measure, and All's Well That Ends Well. These are the comedies from what Hardin Craig calls the second and third periods of Shakespeare's career, leaving out only The Merry Wives of Windsor. This progression of plays is apparently chronological, reflecting this part of the playwright's historical career. It is the thematic progression from play to play, however, which is of greatest interest. By virtue of the overarching thematic pattern into which these plays fit, they form a self-contained phase in the playwright's artistic development.

The plays fall into three pairs: The Merchant of Venice and Much Ado About Nothing are thematically linked, as are As You Like It and Twelfth Night, and then Measure for Measure and All's Well That Ends Well. It is my argument that these three pairs of plays in their several ways reflect beginnings, middles and ends in the developing artistic consciousness behind them. And this artistic development is revealed as much in what we usually call the "thematic" as in the "esthetic" in these plays; the thematic
frequently concerns itself with the problems of drama itself.

Assured though we are that Shakespeare the man was not of an age but for all time, the plays nevertheless fall into distinct phases in the historical career which produced them. And time indeed provides the measure by which these plays are scaled, in more senses than one. It is a temporal process which connects these six very plays, an artistic history which they record. And the overall temporal process is reflected in part in each play along the way. It is my contention that the "virtual history" (the phrase is Suzanne Langer's) in each of these plays fits into the larger pattern provided by the larger history behind them all; the form of each is determined partly by the thematic progression which connects them all. This larger progression is temporal: thus the "virtual history" of the two plays first named emphasizes the past, the second two emphasize the present, and the two last move into a problematic future.

Concepts of time as they relate to drama have been discussed by Langer, whose treatment of this time or "history" is worth quoting at some length:

It has been said repeatedly that the theater creates a perpetual present moment, but it is only a present filled with its own future that is really dramatic. A sheer immediacy, an imperishable direct experience without the ominous forward movement of consequential action, would not be so. As literature creates a
virtual past, drama creates a virtual future. . .

The 'now' created by poetic composition is always under the aegis of some historical vision which transcends it; and its poignancy derives . . . from the fact that the two great realms of envisagement--past and future--intersect in the present, which consequently has . . . a peculiar appearance of its own which we designate as 'immediacy' or 'now'.

I think that one or the other of these "two great realms of envisagement," past and future, can be emphasized in a play so as to rearrange or to distort our sense of "immediacy" or "now." It is the former of these "realms of envisagement," the past, which is thus emphasized in The Merchant of Venice and Much Ado About Nothing, while in Measure for Measure and All's Well That Ends Well it is the future which is so emphasized.

That leaves As You Like It and Twelfth Night to represent an affective "present," an affective realism. It was the playwright Thornton Wilder who enunciated the truism that "the action on the stage takes place in a perpetual present time." I am saying that this "perpetual present" can be so manipulated as to call up a kind of theatrical past and future. Or to put the matter another way, the perpetual present can be so manipulated as to call attention to its own speciousness, its own dubiousness, as "present." This line of thought is perhaps best suggested by playwrights--not only Wilder above, but also Friedrich Dürrenmatt:
... a play is bound not only to a place, but also to a time. Just as the stage represents a place, so it also represents a time, the time during which the action takes place as well as the time in which it occurs.

Time can be shortened, stretched, intensified, arrested, repeated; the dramatist can, like Joshua, call to his heaven's orbits, 'Theater-Sun, stand thou still upon Gideon! And thou, Theater-Moon, in the valley of Ajalon!'.

What Dürrenmatt is saying is what, I think, no one would deny: that time in drama has an affective motion all its own. And this kind of time, like "real" time, has its affective modes; it has its affective past, present, and future. And since past and future are merely, in Langer's terms, modes or realms of "envisagement," it becomes apparent that what is affectively realistic in drama is what strikes us as "present." It is our orientation to the present, in drama as in psychology, which determines our sense of being in touch with reality.

The theatrical occasion, that is, becomes the external reflection of what psychoanalysts call the "inner space-time" of the individual minds. This inner space-time, after all, can also be oriented toward different phases of time, can emphasize past or future at the expense of the present. In these six plays of Shakespeare's, the vitality of the dramatic occasion or the theatrical present varies, and the variance forms a sort of dramatic history. This history can be pursued by following the fortunes of a single figure in each play: Shylock, Don John, Jaques, Malvolio, Lucio and Parolles. These figures, all neither
lover, lunatic nor poet, are in some way isolated from the characters around them. They generate a kind of complication which is not strictly demanded by the exigencies of plot or story in the plays in which they appear (this is the case even with respect to the two villains, Shylock and Don John). They occupy a peculiar position in the structures of these plays, seemingly separable from these structures just as the attitudes they embody seem to be alien to those of the people around them.

The intensity of their alienation is, however, significantly varied; they have very different fates, which are revealed by—and related to—the endings of the plays in which they figure. Thus, Shylock and Don John are forced out of the communities which surround them, although with a fully willing animosity on their parts. Jaques and Malvolio voluntarily seclude themselves from the ongoing comic community at the end of As You Like It and Twelfth Night. Lucio and Parolles, on the other hand, are taken in and protected by comedy just as they are taken in by the communities from which their egregious incorrigible attitudes have set them apart: Lucio "gets married," and Parolles is taken under Lafeu's wing. The plays' overall progression moves from Shylock and Don John, who are expelled from the action, to Jaques and Malvolio, who simply move aside, to Lucio and Parolles, who characteristically
refuse even to move aside or move offstage, just as they refuse to be silent.

Shylock is an Old Testament villain, and Don John is a paste-board villain, and the resolution of the plays in which they appear is, as it were, the turning over of a new leaf: at the end of the action, the problems they generated for the other characters and for the plays are a matter of the past. With certain kinds of problems relegated to the past, then, in more senses than one, the next plays deal with concerns or problems related more directly to action in the present. Jaques and Malvolio are not villains and the problems they represent are not those of conscious malice or conspiracy against other individuals or against society collectively; they do not endanger life, but the quality of life. For characters like Rosalind and Viola, Jaques and Malvolio embody concerns and ills which threaten to diminish life as it is lived. The threat takes the form of an obsession about the passing of time, an ever-present awareness of the fact of death in the midst of human activities which, transposed from theology to the secular, vitiates the human community.

Jaques and Malvolio are in some sense opposed by the overall action of the plays in which they appear. They are even defeated, or at least outdistanced, by the endings of those plays. The issues they raise, like those raised by
Shylock and Don John in the two earlier plays, are in different ways settled by the plays, although Jaques and Malvolio of course meet a different fate from that of the villains. Both these characters' isolation and their plays' quality of resolution set these plays apart from the next two; neither are Lucio and Parolles as sequestered, nor are the problems they serve to ventilate as fully resolved, as in the earlier plays. Measure for Measure and All's Well That Ends Well rush to meet their ends, at whatever cost to the quality of the action, it seems. The final forced resolution in each is achieved at the expense of both audience sympathy and the comic itself. This forcibly "comic" ending, in the plays, is paralleled or pointed up by the esthetically forcible retention of Lucio and Parolles in the comic community. Whether the two plays must be called "tragicomedies," which is a suspiciously definite description for these diaphanous gray tracts, is uncertain; what is certain is that they move toward the outer limits of comedy as a genre.

In their precipitate conclusions, that is, Measure for Measure and All's Well That Ends Well exhibit a sort of leap into the future—a highly dubious future, a future which includes Lucio and Parolles (and for that matter, Angelo and Bertram). The comic future at this point seems to be significant for the development of the genre itself;
it is almost impossible not to be reminded by the unresolved ambiguities of these endings that the next plays in Shakespeare's career will definitely not be comic. Shakespeare's imminent turning point on genre seems to be heralded within these plays, albeit in different ways in Measure for Measure and All's Well. That is, the dubiousness or insecurity of the comic endings of these plays imitates the fact that comedy is postponed to a distant future in Shakespeare's own career, and while this parallel may be accidental, it is nevertheless interesting.

Overall, these six plays move from problems connected largely with the past, to those which stem directly from the present, to those which intrude themselves from a disturbing futuristic vision. All the plays deal with a central concept of time. And since the drama exists in time, has moving time as its medium, the manipulation of this central concept of time has certain consequences for the dramatic action. I have already said that the thematic "present" in these plays, in its various degrees, is related to the dramatic realism of the plays. To return to this conception of the theatrical present: Langer and others have premised that all of drama is "present-tense" in comparison with the other literary genres. What I am saying is that some plays, for example some of these under consideration here, are more "present-tense" than others,
for thematic reasons. Sometimes the plays retain and do battle with a dramatic "past," as in The Merchant of Venice and Much Ado About Nothing, whose ills and villains alike come from causes in the past—hence the revenge which stems from past grudges. Measure for Measure and All's Well That Ends Well, on the other hand, seem artificially to induce a premature "future," one which is fraught with its own kinds of problems (the submerged metaphor of childbirth is employed advisedly here, in respect to these plays in which childbirth and pregnancy are so important). Whether such motion in the dramatic action is toward the past or the future, however, in either case it veers away from the realistic. As You Like It and Twelfth Night fall in the middle of this range of plays with a relative realism, because they are neither depressed in spots by a flat character like Dogberry or Don John or an emblematic one like Aragon, nor tortured out of shape by the uncontrollable drives of a Lucio or a Parolles. Jaques and Malvolio are problematic characters, but they are nevertheless fully "present," in psychological terms; they are not unrealistic as characters.

The thematic realism of As You Like It and Twelfth Night is in harmony with the actual theatrical present, the theatrical occasion, which the plays celebrate. The viability of the present is proved in each play by the stability of their artistic resolution, by their comic
fulfillment, and even by the psychological maturity and sympathetic potential of their central characters. These elements of the plays are the plays' affective constituents: such affective constituents realign or readjust the viewer with respect to the dramatic illusion. Dramatic realism, then, as I use the term, is an affect, and it is an affect which is determined by subordinate affects. This notion of realism could also be described as the inviolability of the poetic illusion, or the uninterruptedness of the illusion or the roundedness or evenness of the illusion. We are returned by these temporal and spatial descriptions to the notion of the theatrical event as an external space-time reflecting an inner one. The theatrical present is the "present" in both its senses of space and time, "realistic" in being the "here and now."

It is this "here and now" which is celebrated by *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* more than by the other plays in question. Rosalind and Viola, in their efforts to make something fruitful, something productive, of the present time which is theirs to shape, are thus representative of the plays in which they appear. The various affective constituents of these plays--including the characters of these heroines--are in some sort of harmony over-all, some sort of balance. This description returns us to the notion of dramatic realism as the inviolability of the dramatic
illusion. The illusion is maintained, in plays the most "realistic" according to my terms, by a kind of balance, a kind of poise; the play's various affective constituents are nearly equiponderant. As You Like It and Twelfth Night are not unbalanced by either a Shylock or a Parolles. Instead we have Rosalind and Touchstone in the former play and Viola, Feste and perhaps Maria in the latter, to provide the realistic norm of alertness, perceptivity, confidence and sympathy, or whatever similar combination of qualities is demanded for the portrayal of a psychological complexity and emotional maturity which are still comprehensible.

It is a truism of Shakespearean criticism that these plays, centered in their heroines, present such a psychological roundedness even more than the earlier great comedies. Rosalind and Viola are even more generally admired than Portia and Beatrice, and they are much more admired than Isabella and Helena, whose characters always create problems for critical attention. On close examination, however, it seems that the characters Rosalind and Viola are not as different from those of the other heroines, as their plays over-all are different from those before and after. Part of the superior charm of these heroines, that is, seems to come from the fact that they are placed in situations in which straightforwardness and initiative
show them to advantage. Their realism is comfortably paralleled by the sanity of the reality with which they are in touch. No one points out that Isabella's eagerness to be cloistered in a nunnery is not an entirely unreasonable mode of dealing with the world of Vienna shown in *Measure for Measure*.

To suggest that the character of the heroine is very similar to what might be called the "character" of the play in which she appears brings up a point which should be emphasized here. What is important in this line of thought is that it allows the play—any play—to be treated as a formal unity. To discuss the affective constituents of drama in terms of a sense of time which is, if anything, metaphysical rather than affective, is to assert that drama's affects are examined in the very themes of the plays, however unrelated those themes seem to be to esthetic concerns. The "metaphysical" or "philosophical" and the "dramatic" are not separate; "thematic" and "theatrical" considerations are not at odds. Affective and intellectual evaluation yield the same result. There is no fundamental dichotomy between what Wellek and Warren call "outer" and "inner" form: the latter, we find ("attitude, tone, purpose" as Wellek and Warren call it), comments on the former ("specific . . . structure"). It has always been recognized, surely, that "outer" and "inner" form are inseparable
in that it is the "outer" form which constitutes the other. What I am saying, however, is that this relationship works both ways, as it were. Not only is the play created by the dramatic structure; these plays are partly "about" drama itself.

At this point such a statement can be bolstered only by a few examples. It is obvious, perhaps, that the large affect of realism is susceptible of such exploration by its own dramatic form. Isabella's and Mariana's final situations in Measure for Measure, when judged strictly by realistic standards, are weird compared to Viola's or even Olivia's. The progression from Twelfth Night to Measure for Measure is from the more lifelike to the less, and from the more realistic to the less. From this notion of realism to nonrealism it is possible to deduce a thematic progression through the plays over-all; it is further possible to suggest that if realism is capable of such diminution it is also capable of other kinds of change or de-emphasis or exploration.

The final incident of Much Ado About Nothing presents an example of such exploration. The ending of this play is almost like a miniature version of the winding-up of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn in its regression to the control alike of relatively uninteresting characters and of relatively formalistic artistic technique. Beatrice
and Benedick are finally forced to stop quarreling by the
discovery and flaunting by Claudio and Hero of the former
characters' ludicrous attempts to write sonnets to each
other. This development occurs long after we had thought
we were done with anything new from Hero and Claudio, long
after the establishment of Beatrice and Benedick as the
active intelligences in the play (rather like Elizabeth
Bennet and Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, to which *Much Ado*
has been compared before). That is, the bickering of the
two interesting characters is overcome by a mechanistic
device, implemented through two characters who are far from
interesting in themselves. It seems that Claudio and Hero
are being allowed some sort of triumph over Beatrice and
Benedick--which seems inappropriate in light of the play's
apparent concern with the development of emotional maturity
as manifested in the ability to love another person.
Furthermore, these literary attempts by Beatrice and Bene-
dick do not seem particularly consistent with their own
personalities and concerns. What this incident shows is a
*literal* example of the limitations of realism, repeating
the thematic lesson already learned by--for example--Bene-
dick. Benedick's and Beatrice's control of the play has
its bounds, just as their self-control, or rather their
self-definition, had its bounds. The power of conventions,
no slight factor in this or any other play, must be
asserted and the means employed to assert the power of conventions (this incident) surmounts "character development" itself, the means thereby reflecting the message.

What *Much Ado About Nothing* has in common with *The Merchant of Venice* is the implicit concern to override what is past, what is codified, rigidified, and mechanistic. To call this particular moment (above) from *Much Ado* "regressive" is to relate it to the structure and concerns of the play as a whole. We compare this incident, in a way unfavorably, to the play's over-all development. The discovery of Beatrice's and Benedick's "hands" (meaning their writing) against their "hearts," when it had long seemed that both were under the control of their heads, is felt to be regressive because it undoes some of the effects previously created in the play.

There is a displacement of audience interest at this point: Beatrice and Benedick are momentarily pushed out of the limelight--and out of their position of intellectual superiority to the other characters--by Claudio and Hero. Audience interest, audience involvement, are manipulated in such a way as momentarily to shift the play's focus from one set of characters to another. And as can be seen from this one example, it is not always realism which "wins" in such a displacement of audience interest, not even in plays whose genius is in their lifelike quality.
Sympathy for Shylock's situation is displaced by Portia's game with the rings, in spite of—or perhaps because of—the highly rhetorical passages in which it is carried out. The urbane, understandable wit of Beatrice and Benedick is virtually drowned out by the humor of those stylized clowns, Dogberry, Verges, and the Watch. What we would call modernity, and even what we would call relevance, suffer losses in such contexts.

The six figures of particular interest to me in these plays are progressively more often advantaged by this phenomenon of displacement, less and less often its victims. Shylock and Don John disappear from their plays before Act V, but Parolles—to take the last term in this peculiar sequence—is still egregiously in attendance at the end of All's Well and must therefore be preserved, if only for Lafeu to make sport with. Far from being submerged in the continuing action and graver interests of All's Well, Parolles retrieves the play from Bertram's caddishness and Helena's oppressive adversities. Throughout this sequence of plays, then, the use of displacement is progressively less forceful. The later plays allow disparate elements to survive which would perhaps have been removed or re-aligned in the earlier ones. By the end of All's Well That Ends Well, which is the end of the sequence, displacement as a dramatic effect has been thoroughly explored and almost
relinquished.

The last plays can be generally described as more cumulative in their over-all quality than the earlier plays. Where Shylock and Don John are definitively prepared for, introduced, then committed to their own activities, and finally emphatically dealt with, Lucio and Parolles are simply "on" almost from the start, follow the action in their own seemingly random and erratic ways, and are still "on" at the end. Lucio and Parolles, that is, appear in plays which allow several different strands of action to run out concurrently, no matter how disparate are the various emotional situations so juxtaposed. The final, solitary exit is not employed as it was for Shylock or Jaques or Malvolio.

All's Well That Ends Well ends with a general dispersal of the characters—except for the King, who steps forward to the audience to deliver an Epilogue. The ultimate extension of the play's cumulative quality, of its concurrence or community or inclusivity, seems to be extension outside the play into the real world. It is even possible that this extension does not wait for the end of the play: All's Well, like Measure for Measure, often tempts critical analysis to move "outside" the play. These two plays are becoming more "Jacobean" in their issues and emphases; their concern with total inclusion in the society
they present is a little like that of *Bartholomew Fair*. Like the ending of *Bartholomew Fair*, the all-encompassing inclusivity of the comic community at the end of these plays is such as to gloss over unresolved ethical tensions in the plays. In these plays, that is, concern for the community is on the verge of decaying into a "neo-classic" (in its most pejorative construction) concern for the merely public. And in the discomfort entailed in this movement out into the world, the plays can be considered--in a sense--overrealistic. Artistically they become off-center, off-balance. In terms of a paradigmatic comic fulfillment, *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well* are what might be called overfulfilled--or simply too full; they spill over.

The concept of balance brings us back to those plays which are in some respects the most difficult to deal with, paradoxically because they seem to be the least problematic: *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. It is in these plays that balance is presented as realistic, balance whether of the individual characters' psychological states or of the mood of the play over-all. This fact alone would serve to distinguish these two plays from those immediately preceding and following. Further distinguishing them, however, is the continual commentary on the action provided by a figure like Jaques or Malvolio. Detached from the
interests of the other major characters without being either fools or clowns themselves, Jaques and Malvolio are singular figures; not villains, they still represent what Barber called the comic "kill-joy" principle.  

The difference between Jaques and Malvolio in these two plays and the similarly isolated figures of the other plays is—to employ again the descriptive metaphor of balance—that these two characters do not draw the action of the whole plays to them. Even the gulling of Malvolio remains a sub-plot which does not affect the outcome of the romantic main plot; it is Jaques and Malvolio who are off-balance, not the rest of the action. "Remain thou still in darkness," Malvolio is told, and at the play's end he dashes off to the darkness of the wings.

Jaques and Malvolio come very close to being "humor" characters in Jonson's sense of the term, and as such they are as definable, as isolable, in the main action, as a Fool or a villain or a clown might be. They are not, however, separated out from the plays' action before the end; they are fitted into the over-all balance of As You Like It and Twelfth Night throughout, to exit only at the ending of the play. They are thus far different from Shylock and Don John. And Jaques' and Malvolio's final exits take a form which is itself a balance of sorts, or indeed a suspension. Jaques ends almost literally in a state of suspended action:
in what is virtually a state of suspended animation, he remains in the cave in Arden "to see no pastime," a hermit. He could not be more completely outside the action of the play, but he has exited without animosity, as his patterned, ritualistic blessing of the other characters shows. This blessing, in fact, is itself presumably a form of balance or recompense for his earlier animadversions against the human community upon which he now bestows his blessing.

The ending of Twelfth Night is of course very different from that of As You Like It, because of the stronger feelings and different nature of Malvolio, but it is still related to the ending of the other play. Malvolio runs offstage vowing revenge and Olivia sends someone after him to propitiate him. Since the outcome of this gesture is unknown--although projected--we have again a suspended action. The situation is one which will remain in suspension; it is, to be exact, a perspective "which is and is not," in which what might happen or might not are equally perceptible, equally envisioned.

Jaques and Malvolio are not plotters; they are perhaps chiefly purveyors of specific emotions or attitudes. In this respect they are, of course, most unlike Shylock and Don John, the two decided villains in this sequence of characters. I said earlier that Shylock as an Old Testament villain and Don John as a rather melodramatic villain both
have their places in "virtual history," in drama. They are both figures who, as it were, warp the dramatic illusion toward the past. Thus, Shylock is linked with old Time ("old" in the sense of pre-Christian, sub lege as well as in its connection with the senex or "blocking figure" Northrop Frye pinpoints in Shakespearean comedy), and Don John with at least a very old motive in drama, that of revenge (however pointless or causeless). Both these figures work—in more than one sense—behind the scenes. And the plays, as it were, take action against them—put them back, put them away, enforce a collective get-thee-behind-me on behalf of the comic community. Shylock is apparently forgotten at the end of *The Merchant of Venice*, and the brief allusion to Don John's "brave punishments" at the end of *Much Ado About Nothing* breaks upon the viewer, I think, as a reminder from the past—the affective past: by the end of this play, surely, Don John has been forgotten for some time.

We are often led to sympathize with Shylock, of course, and by the same token we are in some danger from him—in a danger which lasts beyond his final appearance on the stage. The threat stemming from Shylock's realistic motivation is that his human appeal, his "Hath not a Jew eyes?" will obscure the real action of the play at a later point, which is to say throughout Act V. It is a dangerous
realism, in such a figure, which distracts our attention from reality itself.

In Much Ado About Nothing the situation is more complex. In agreement with Benedick's dictum that "Man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion," the play is full of displacements of audience interest and involvement. Beatrice and Benedick displace the conventional lovers, Beatrice and Benedick themselves are displaced as a source of humor by the clowns of the Watch, the apparent success of the plot against Hero displaces the foregoing humor, etc. The final such displacement, of the earnest lovers' relationship by a trumped-up dramatic trick, has already been discussed. Such is the number of displacements, in all, that the effect is always of some action being put behind us. The danger is that displacement may become too facile: it may become too easy to put all the action behind us, in which case the ado will indeed have been about nothing. This danger of too-great, too-easy audience detachment is reflected in the character of Don John, who is himself a tool for detachment. He detaches Claudio from Hero and ultimately the audience from Claudio.

The villain or the evil in Much Ado About Nothing, then, is "detachment" in more than one sense; the isolated figure of Don John reflects something about the quality of the play. In such a way is this play, like the others,
partly "about" drama. What is perhaps chiefly important in the assertion that these plays are partly about drama itself, is that this very point is part of drama's imitation of life. That is, the "action" of life itself is, after all, full of esthetic decisions ("esthetic" from the point of view of some imaginary spectator). Any individual must act, in one way or another; the decision is how to act. The play—any play—reflects this fact; in representing behavior or action it also represents this formal cause of behavior or action. Thus the esthetic decisions in drama themselves become part of the mimesis of man's activity.

This element of decision in human activity as represented on the stage, however, does not usually seem to be an esthetic decision. The individual's decisions on how to act in real life become "role-playing" only from the point of view of a sufficiently detached spectator. Since this point of view always exists for a character on the stage, since there is always a spectator for a character on the stage, the character's role-playing defines his being. Esthetic decisions seem to be individual decisions, meaning that how a character acts defines him as a "person." Character is the mediator which makes drama formally understandable to the viewer or reader; when it is said that someone steps "out of character," what is usually meant is
that the effect created derives directly from the whole play rather than (literally) the part.

The possibility of someone's straying out of character is only one way the form of the play can produce distortion or discrepancy, however. There are other manifestations of such discrepancy. Thus, a character like Shylock can appear to overbalance or outweigh the play's intended comic resolution. Conversely, the effects produced by Don John as a villain—by the exigencies of plot, it appears—are out of all proportion to his effectiveness as a character. It is my contention that such characters as the figures under discussion here manifest just such discrepancies in dramatic action. And, of course, they provide the play's comment on such discrepancies (while reflecting the discrepancies inherent in human action in general). Jaques' supineness, his tendency to constant speechmaking, reflects or parallels the over-all lack of "action" and plenitude of speechmaking in *As You Like It*.

What can be seen by these six discrepant figures are the various structural accommodations for discrepancy in dramatic action. We can also learn from them about the effects of such discrepancy: it is chiefly these figures who are responsible for warping their plays toward an affective past or future. It is, therefore, of some interest to us to see what ends they meet. All of these
plays. from Merchant to All's Well end in some sort of suspension with respect to the eccentric figures under discussion. Whether the character ends up totally outside the comic community, like Don John and Shylock, or totally inside it, like Lucio and Parolles, or as it were half-way between the two positions, like Jaques and Malvolio, there is always some ambivalence in his situation. In other words, these characters embody the logical paradox of the ending which has no finality; their ends are no endings, or not so much ending as gaps. In the perspective, so destructive of the dramatic art, which makes the play's teleology its ending, they provide the vanishing-point.

This structural function is related to the peculiar moral natures of these characters. None of them is primarily what could be called a good man, and none of them is substantively altered by the action of the plays; they present the gap where the increment between beginning and ending drops out, as it were. It is my feeling that they represent "the end of the self"—in both senses of the phrase. And the end of the self, in the community onstage, is the moral reflection of the dramaturgical end of the part. These characters are the ones who above all the others are likely to be referred to as "parts," I think, and this point is reinforced by the structural pun in which what remains in the play after such a figure exits, is either all or nothing.
FOOTNOTES


2Ibid., p. 38. Hardin Craig's analysis and conclusions are certainly representative of the issues involved in trying to date the plays. For my purposes, as I said, it is not so much the actual as the thematic progression which is significant.


6Friedrich Durrenmatt, "Problems of the Theatre," in Calderwood and Toliver, p. 34.


CHAPTER II

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

The Merchant of Venice shows a world made up of only symbolic elements, a world in which only the fact of change is provably real. In this play oppositions are set up which undermine the play's own illusions, its own reality: is Portia really a figure of Mercy, even vis-a-vis Shylock's Justice? The play is so unsupportive in its pervasive symbolism that we finally look for reality outside the play—as does any critic who concentrates on the character of Shylock, for example. Looking back, however, we still find value in the play's realm of art; it is not values which are lacking in The Merchant of Venice, it is certainties.

The play's symbolic quality is often shown: in the casket trial, the courtroom battle, and the very character of Shylock himself. And so powerful is the symbolic within the play that it drives us to search for reality outside it. Thus the critical response to Shylock is almost always one which goes outside the play. Shylock, who is actually a highly imaginative figure, almost an ideogram, seems to be an intensely "realistic" creation, as the general critical response to him on a humanistic level shows. But the
critic's seemingly realistic view of Shylock's situation—as a Jew in an unsympathetic society—threatens to unhinge the play's comic balance. The complex figure of Shylock reveals the dangers in a realism which threatens to distort the reality of the play.

Shylock, powerful figure though he is, is out of the play's action by the beginning of Act V, but audience interest and engagement in the play are not lacking thereafter. There might, however, be a sense of slight guilt attached to this continuing interest. Even though we are successfully distracted from Shylock's fate by the doings of Act V, we still have a sense that the play's interest and appeal are not necessarily placed where the play's values are placed. Portia's ring hoax is, to say the least, a lightweight sequel to Shylock's courtroom trial, in the artistic effort to get the audience involved in the play. And the ring plot is not only rather light in tone, apparently rather un-serious, it is also highly patterned and even at moments ritualistic. Especially in the If-you-did-know-to-whom-I-gave-the-ring exchange, the whole action of the ring plot can be viewed easily with detachment. There is a great difference between this plot and Shylock's; while Shylock seems to be a realistic figure, the ring hoax doesn't even seem to be anything but a joke a trick. Something about the play's development is discrepant: the
values established by the play are sown in an obviously artificial environment rather than in the comparatively realistic environment of Venice.

To say that an opposition is set up within the play between what seems real and what does not is to say, of course with many other writers, that the world of this play is divided. This division is apparent not only in the obvious difference between Venice and Belmont, but in subtler ways as well; the play is divided ideologically, following the green-world or golden-world pattern of several of Shakespeare's comedies. In Harry Berger's description, this pattern, "the tendency first to separate, then to interrelate, different fields of experience," becomes the very source of "the novel and significant mark of the Renaissance imagination."¹ Berger's discussion, which itself delivers a gleaming reflection of the intellectual convolutions in Renaissance artistic production, is particularly valuable here because of his use of the word "experience." The concept of experience allows this play's profound ideological division or cleft to be described in other than mechanical terms.

There is a very noticeable difference between golden world and other kinds of world in The Merchant of Venice. Problems arise in determining the boundaries dividing these realms, especially when these boundaries
shift with every shift in the viewer's perspective. The play conducts what are virtually psychological experiments with audience response if not indeed with its own success as a play: crucial psychological displacements occur more than once. Such psychological displacement is almost as crucial in the play as the projected changes or displacements which ought to occur, and do not. We wonder that Shylock's fate is not made more satisfying to us.

Our response at such moments is, I think, an example of perception's stubborn resistance to even visible change. This phenomenon is called "perceptual constancy" in the study of psychology. Perceptual constancy can be simply illustrated by the approaching acquaintance who does not seem to double in size with every two steps although he should seem to, according to the rules of optics. As elementary psychology assures us, "The world we see is by and large a stable one"; what is seen is intensely influenced by what has been seen. This concept brings us to Act V of The Merchant of Venice which, vis-a-vis the rest of the play, opposes not only Portia to Shylock but also the force of an emotional displacement or distraction to the inertia of perceptual constancy. This opposition is very like that of the axiomatic immovable object and irresistible force, as far as immediate resolution is concerned; the outcome is poised above, or rather in, the
viewer's head. What we see in this play, and what we might project or "come away with," are of almost equal impact.

The play's divisions are multiple: green world and second world, the symbolic and the realistic, fairy-tale and Christian patterns, erotic and theological values are poised in interaction. The play's over-all illusion is multi-faceted and glitteringly specious. The play dangles before our eyes first an illusory conquest over the unpleasantness of reality, and then an illusory corrective for the insubstantial quality of fantasy. But we are left with a question as to whether the values established by the play are indeed capable of changing reality, or only of blocking it out. Whether the positive values of art improve nature or just improve on nature depends on our response.

This question is like the question as to whether the play is truly a heterocosm in Berger's sense of the term, an entire "second world." It is to be hoped that the play is more like a second world than like a merely "golden world," since the former description makes a larger claim for the work of art:

The clarity and simplicity of the green world may be balanced by the variety of an imaginary field in which a number of such worlds coexist. The particular virtue of an imaginary world lies in the fact that, since it is neither actual nor ideal, it is potentially an image of both. Thus
it seems . . . accurate to apply the terms second world and second nature to the heterocosmic element . . . 5

Heterocosm in its barest and most generic sense is simply a gestalt, a unified field which--like any system--is coherent, self-sufficient and finite. Modern thought commonly reserves the term universe for organized wholes of this sort and understands them as hypothetical in that they are constructed by thought rather than given in experience.6

Problems of definition in Merchant are complicated by the play's extensively symbolic action and imagistic language--I have already mentioned the play's obviously emblematic casket scenes and the highly patterned exchange of arguments about the rings. What is realistic in this play is not necessarily made up of realistic components, nor is the symbolic necessarily "unrealistic." Shylock is ridden with iconography, and Belmont--a realm which seems to be pure wish-fulfillment--is first shown as prosaic, even boring (to Portia). The fairy-tale patterns in the play are not lacking in moral significance, nor is the Christian or theological symbolism lacking in relevance to the love story. Both serious moral problems and a lighter kind of interest are generated by what appears realistic and what appears symbolic, alike. It is easy to see that every kind of pattern is manipulated for dramatical ends; it is therefore not easy to discriminate among these patterns morally. Is Portia's joke with the rings less substantive than her finesse with the law of
Venice, or does it just seem to be?

We are left with a desire to search for some values in the play which are not merely dramatic or poetic values, some values which are not apparently esthetic. This desire reflects the obvious themes of the play. The conflicts in the play stem from problems in discrimination over-all, just as in the trial of the caskets. If the difference between the values of romantic love, of Christianity and of flourishing commerce are not as the difference between gold and brass, it is still suggested that there must be some discriminations which are as the difference between gold and brass.

This intellectual faculty of discrimination is tested three times at least: we move from shadow to substance on three separate occasions, in the casket trial, the courtroom trial and the ring trial. I think that this very repetitiveness of structure makes the play more problematic over-all and makes the play's resolution more problematic. There is a lingering suggestion that the play as a whole moves not from shadow to substance, but only from symbol to symbol (which is exactly what it does, on the literal level). The most easily proveable change is change itself.

What becomes apparent in the play is that a difference in value is not necessarily a difference in
kind. Aragon is as far wrong in his way as Shylock is in his, even though Aragon's doctrinal dilemma is romantic and Shylock's is theological. That is, the values in the different stories or sub-plots are the same, even if the dramaturgical currencies (the stories or sub-plots themselves) are different. As I said before, however, the viewer may not feel this fact immediately; the auditor's infected will may feel the pull of the material itself—notably in the case of Shylock.

As Göddard pointed out some time ago, the moral issue in the play's three trials (casket, ring, and courtroom) remains the same. And this central moral problem—the discrepancy between "inner" and "outer"—becomes as well the play's central image. The three trials or tests are images of each other, reflections of each other—as is hinted by the metaphor of reflection which recurs in the play (notably in Aragon's speech on the silver chasket). The central image in these scenes remains the same, in its different materials; the play is about a merchant partly because it involves so many kinds of exchange.

This notion of the unchanging image in a changing medium is of course fundamental to artistic imitation. It is, therefore, dealt with, as one might expect it to be, in Sidney's famous Defense:

Nature's world is brasen, the Poets only deliuer a golden . . .
Nyetheir let it be deemed too sawcie a comparison to ballance the highest poyn of mans wit with the efficacie of Nature: but rather giee right honor to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who, hauing made man to his owne likenes, set him beyond and ouer all the workes of that second nature, which in nothing hee sheweth so much as in Poetrie, when with the force of a diuine breath he bringeth things forth far surpassing her dooings, with no small argument to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam: sith our erected wit maketh vs know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeh vs from reaching vunto it.8

It is interesting that Sidney's evaluation of art is, like the Merchant's, a "metallurgical" one. Perhaps the implicit metaphor of an image stamped on metal (similar to that of the image worked by the hands on clay) was so attractive to Renaissance artists partly because it avoided a too-simple "form-content" dichotomy (unlike the metaphor of the vessel to be filled, for example). In any case, the subject, the principle in Sidney's discourse, is a reflection of sorts in which the image remains constant. In this passage quoted, the difference between art and nature is--again--one of medium or material (a distinction which itself of course tilts the balance here in favor of art).

There are, in fact, several significant points of similarity or relation between The Merchant of Venice and this passage from the Defense of Poesy. That quality in the play, for example, which puts Christian myth and
fairy-tale on the same level, is analogous to Sidney's quiet impudence in making poetry a grounds or proof for the Christian myth of the Fall. And if there is a metaphor of reflection at work in both the play and the Defense, Sidney's discourse is again like the play in using a kind of artistic reflection to illustrate this reflection itself. In the same way that the caskets trial is reflected by the courtroom trial and the ring trial in the play, the opposition of brass and gold is reflected by the opposition of the erected wit and infected will in Sidney's discourse. In the conflict between wit and will, as in the distinction between gold and brass, the image (of what is right) remains a constant. It reflects the fact that man himself is made in the divine image, where again the reflected image is a true correspondence.

In the play as in Sidney's discourse, good-enough art is the proof as well as the desired attainment of our "erected wit"; the image it presents to us is also the standard to which we wish reality to correspond. But this defense of the (artistic) image always suffers from its underlying philosophical suggestion, the "Platonic" notion of the image as something corrupted by virtue of the very fact that it is not the real thing. Against this suggestion the exculpation of the art work proceeds in two directions. That is, there is a twofold difference between imitation
and counterfeit, a difference based on both the author's intention and the viewer's or reader's understanding. The image, after all, is what is ab origine and does not of itself pretend to be anything else; confusion between image and reality, or between different images, is the fault of human understanding or human agency. If the divine stamp is printed on debased currency, it is because the mind has been seduced from the "real" (to use Donne's pun) image by the material.

Human intelligence is the variable quantity to be tested in the play (intelligence in the broad sense, of course, rather than the sense of mere cleverness), and we return to the problems of discrimination with which the play is concerned. One such problem, as suggested before, is the discrimination between golden world and second world, between fantasy and something of more enduring value. This discrimination can be approached by the perhaps uneasy distinction of Belmont from—what is not Belmont in the play.

Initially, Belmont is a fairy-tale world, and Bassanio's speeches so establish it even before it is presented onstage: he calls it "Colchos' strand," where Portia's "sunny locks/ Hang on her temples like a golden fleece," and "many Jasons come in quest of her" (I,i, 169-72). Portia herself is "nothing undervalued/ To Cato's
daughter, Brutus' Portia" (165-66). The allusions to classical legend and history here emphasize Belmont's magical remoteness; Belmont is a world both geographically and temporally removed from Venice.

In fact, there is a suggestion that Belmont is a world removed from time altogether; this is a function of the play's famous double time, that while are are excruciatingly conscious of time's passing in Venice, there is no indication that three months are passing in Belmont. Belmont is a world ordered for lovers, for whom time stands still; it seems to be presided over in part by the strange prophetic power of its late lord and partly by the "Lord Love" (II,viii,101) to whom Nerissa prays. Lorenzo and Jessica after all set out for Belmont for unexplained reasons as though they are intuitively aware of its different order as the right atmosphere for romantic love. Such indeed seems to be its atmosphere, since Gratiano and Nerissa as well as Bassanio and Portia also find love there.

Nerissa's prayer to "Lord Love" is that Bassanio be sent to Belmont, and this romantic deity is another of the interventions of fantasy in the fairy-tale Trial of the Three Caskets. Nerissa's prayer also enhances the suggestion that Bassanio is somehow elected to succeed in his quest. Bassanio himself gives rise to this suggestion: "I have a mind presages me such thrift,/ That I should
questionless be fortunate!" (I,i,175-76). The hint of a special election arises again in the casket scene, where Bassanio's choice of the lead casket is not entirely explained by his own reasoning. His argument, after all, seems to be that since "fair ornament" so often conceals "grossness," an unsightly exterior must signify inner beauty. This conclusion is not merely extralogical (in spite of being dramatically or esthetically logical), it is an inverse example of judging "by the view," like Morocco and Aragon.

There are, of course, reasons for Bassanio's choosing as he does, not the least of which is the magic about the caskets which prescribes that the third young man must choose the third casket. (This is paradoxically related to the hard fact of stage fiction that, had he chosen otherwise, "there had been an end to our play"). Goddard remarks that it is "almost cruel" to recall the inscription, "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath," on the lead casket, because of what Bassanio "received from Shylock," and what he "let Antonio risk in his behalf." Even in a more extenuating view, Bassanio's decision seems to be based partly on a guilt which repels his original motive (a golden one) for coming to Belmont.

Goddard's point that Bassanio alone of the three
suitors does not read the inscriptions on the caskets is well taken. However, Goddard's skepticism seems to pass over the fact that the inscription on the third casket is still appropriate to Bassanio, just as those on the first two caskets are appropriate to their choosers. In swearing if he chooses wrong "Never to speak to lady afterward/ In way of marriage" (II,i,41-42), Bassanio does indeed "hazard all he hath," which is the possibility of marrying a wealthy woman.

The relationship between Belmont and Venice is in large part a wavering one of guilt and wish-fulfillment. As Goddard points out, it is money which supports both Venice and Belmont; the difference between the two realms lies in the extra element of magic or mystery in the latter. Thus, Portia's wealth seems to be miraculously unlimited, and its origin, as with all fairy-tale treasures, is a mystery; the wealth is something of a miracle itself. Similarly, the play ends in a mystery: Portia explains the conundrum of the doctor and his clerk at the same time she announces the unexplained miracle of the return of Antonio's ships. Portia may be merely the actress that Goddard considers her, and thus reluctant to forego the possibilities of surprise and obfuscation in this scene (as a character, Portia is closely related to Jane Austen's Emma), but the suggestion nevertheless remains that she has
worked the latter miracle as well as the former.

With great symmetry, the wish-fulfillment aspects of Belmont point up the limitations and evils of Venice. The timelessness of the courtship in Belmont contrasts to the streaming away of Antonio's crucial three months in Venice; the fairy-tale quest contrasts to the ventures of commerce; and Bassanio's prophetic confidence and election reflect Antonio's misplaced confidence in his ships and his own perverse election as "tainted wether of the flock,/Meetest for death" (IV.i.114-15). There is nothing magical about the commercial realm of Venice. The ruthless exactitude of its accounting is set over against Portia's miraculously unlimited wealth, and its enclosed and finite system of debtors and creditors, masters and servants, is opposed to the order of things at Belmont, where debts become marriages and Portia's maid marries Bassanio's friend. Shylock's house, representing Venice at its worst and most stifling, is a "hell," and Jessica, escaping from the enclosure of Venice, goes to Portia's house where lord Love rules.

Portia herself is in some ways antithetical to Venice, and is transformed from both romance and femininity when she arrives there: the fairy-tale princess becomes a young "doctor," a neuter creature called into being by the law rather than by flesh and blood. Venice is a totally
masculine society. Jessica must disguise herself as a man to go out into the streets—the only woman there, she leaves—and Portia must disguise herself as a man to enter the city.

Portia goes to Venice and Jessica to Belmont, upon marriage. In doing so, the two women almost exchange types of fatherly authority: Jessica at Belmont comes under the aegis of "lord Love," and Portia in Venice apparently submits to Shylock's authority, before it is revealed that she really submits only to the Duke and the "strict law" of Venice which Shylock tries unsuccessfully to manipulate. The destinies of the two women are entwined; one result of Portia's case against Shylock is the establishment of Jessica and Lorenzo. And the fact that Portia and Jessica in a (literal) sense "trade places" seems to be related to Shylock's emphasis on the doctor/Portia's youth in the courtroom scene. Shylock's exultation in his seeming vindication by the "wise young judge," the "Daniel come to judgment," seems to derive equally from the apparent vindication by legitimacy and by youth—by someone in Jessica's generation. There is a submerged dynastic principle at work in his fervency on both counts.

Shylock is very much like Portia's late father in the fact that both represent, as it were, the will behind the action in the play. But the conflict between
generations in Venice is another aspect of the difference between Venice and Belmont: there is no conflict of
generations in Belmont, where even "the will of a dead father" serves to bring Portia and Bassanio together. In
this respect as in others, Belmont is a timeless world. This timelessness is the most important difference between
the two realms: the difference, often expressed sym-
bolically, between the temporal and the eternal. The
cruelly exact three-months' limit on Antonio's bond is the
power of time itself, and when Portia saves Antonio from
Shylock she saves him from the very motions of time.

By means of the symbolic or imagistic details
which characterize him, Shylock is identified with tra-
ditional iconographic representations of Time. Even that
distracting quality of the grotesque surrounding Shylock
and the bizarre revenge he asks for fit in with the blood-
thirsty figure of Time whose sanguine history is given by
Erwin Panofsky. There is nothing strange about the
iconographic transformation of all-devouring Time into a
literal monster. Or rather, there is nothing stranger
than the monster itself, as described by Panofsky. Called
"Serapis' extraordinary pet" by Panofsky in reference to
its Egyptian origins, the figure is "a tricephalous
monster," which "bore on its shoulders the heads of a dog,
a wolf and a lion."
The importance of this figure, however, resides not in its dim origins, but in the fact that the Renaissance retrieved it and used it. Titian's Allegory of Prudence is the case at hand in Panofsky's essay: the so-strange monster described above is directly connected with a portrait of three men (in its own way, a "tricephalous" portrait), and the whole painting is connected with the concept of time. The figure, that is, stands for time itself; in the interpretation cited by Panofsky,

The lion's head . . . denotes the present, the condition of which, between the past and the future, is strong and fervent by virtue of present action; the past is designated by the wolf's head because the memory of things that belong to the past is devoured and carried away; and the image of the dog, trying to please, signifies the outcome of the future, of which hope, though uncertain, always gives us a pleasing picture. 12

Panofsky describes in some detail the growth of an iconographic tradition which expresses the three modes or forms of time by a "triple-head." 13 The symbol indeed comes not necessarily to be connected to any body at all. In this context, incidentally, it is interesting that the casket trial in the play is itself what might be called a "tricephalous" emblem: there is a death's head in the first, a fool's head in the second, and a painting of Portia's head in the third.

It is my contention that the choice of the three caskets is related to the concept of time. For the moment,
however, the figure described above seems most relevant to the character of Shylock. The symbol, it seems to me, is converted by the dramatist into a personality. What Panofsky calls "an ideographic vocabulary" (p. 159) is used to present a character. This is not to argue that when Shylock is called "dog" and "cur" we are to ignore his situation in the society around him. However, it is my contention that this particular kind of epithet is used with a peculiar and apparently unnecessary emphasis and repetition:

You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, . . . Should I not say, 'Hath a dog money? is it possible A cur can lend three thousand ducats?'
(I,iii,112,121-23)

Thou call'est me dog before thou hadst a cause; But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs
(III,iv,6-7)

It is the most impenetrable cur That ever kept with men
(III,iv,18-19)

This imagery culminates in Gratiano's horrible courtroom diatribe:

O, be thou damn'd, inexcusable dog! And for thy life let justice be accused. Thou almost makest me waver in my faith To hold opinion with Pythagoras, That souls of animals infuse themselves Into the trunks of men: thy currish spirit Govern'd a wolf, who, hang'd for human slaughter, Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet, And, while thou lay'st in thy unhallow'd dam, Infused itself in thee; for thy desires Are wolvish, bloody, starved and ravenous
(IV,i,128-38)

Why not some other kind of animal, or some other kind of
opprobrious epithet entirely, if all we are being shown in such speeches is the extent to which Shylock is spurned by his community? But he is invariably characterized as a dog and a wolf—a "dog" while payment of the bond is still in the future, who becomes a "wolf" when it has lapsed. I think the "lion" aspect of his character is obliquely alluded to in the courtroom trial, by the reiterated line, "A Daniel come to judgment."

The movement of time in the play is important for what Goddard at least considers the play's most significant theme, "the difference between inner and outward." This is the fallacy, in the play's terms, of choosing "by the view." It should be pointed out here that it is Belmont which brings Venice to judgment on this crucial issue in all three of the play's stories or trials. This is most evident in the casket trial, where the issue is also most clearly (if most symbolically) formulated. Bassanio passes the test merely by recognizing that there can exist a discrepancy between inner and outer. The same issue is driven into Christian terms in the courtroom trial; Shylock chooses "by the view" in choosing the letter rather than the spirit of the law. In the ring trial, Bassanio and Gratiano again choose "by the view": they are misled by appearances when they give away the rings, and they are forgiven through Portia's and Nerissa's
knowledge of the reality which underlies appearances.

The relation of time and eternity to appearances and reality is a philosophical given: appearances are transient, and true reality pertains only to the eternal, the immutable. This relationship is emblematized in the casket scenes. The first casket contains an obvious emblem: the death's-head, the crudest form of the *memento mori*, the skull beneath the skin. This symbol, incidentally, reminds one of the rather macabre undertones in Bassanio's comparison of Portia's hair to the golden fleece. Indeed, Bassanio himself reminds us of these undertones:

> Look on beauty,
> And you shall see 'tis purchased by the weight;
> Which therein works a miracle in nature,
> Making them lightest that wear most of it:
> So are those crisped snaky golden locks
> Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,
> Upon supposed fairness, often known
> To be the dowry of a second head,
> The skull that bred them in the sepulchre.
> (III,i,88-96)

These lines are imagistically similar to his earlier description of Portia: "... the four winds blow in from every coast/ Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks/ Hang on her temples like a golden fleece" (I,i,168-70). The associations between hanging golden hair and the wind, in conjunction with the morally dubious connotations of words such as "crisped," "snaky," and "wanton," might lead one to suspect that Bassanio is trying to suppress a fear that
he too has been misled by appearances.

The second casket contains a fool's head. It contains, that is, a mirror, and the long stage tradition which demands this prop is supported by the scene's language over-all. We sense instantly that the "fool's head" might well refer to Aragon's or to a mirror reflecting his own face; perhaps the phrase "portrait of a blinking idiot" suggests a reflection of motion. Furthermore, the casket and portrait are "silvered o'er," and mirrors were made of silver. The notion of reflection is implicit throughout the scene—as in the word "shadow" for instance: the line "Some there be that shadows kiss;/ Such have but a shadow's bliss" looks like an allusion to narcissism. When Aragon says, "With one fool's head I came to woo,/ But I go away with two," he emphasizes the doubleness of reflection. This line and the line, "Take what wife you will to bed,/ I will ever be your head," reinforce the implied statement that every time Aragon sees his head in a mirror the image will be a fool's head, or what he sees in the casket.

Aragon's speech in the process of decision-making further brings out the metaphor of reflection. The inscription on the casket reads "Who chooses me shall get as much as he deserves," a statement of one-to-one correspondence in itself, and Aragon endorses the rightness of
such exact representation: "And well said too." His speech, with its emphasis on appearance, also emphasizes his false self-image:

> Who shall go about to . . . be honourable
> Without the stamp of merit?
> (II,viii,37-39)

> O that . . . clear honor
> Were purchased by the merit of the wearer!
> How many then should cover that stand bare!
> (42-44)

> And how much honor
> Picked from the chaff and ruin of the times
> To be new varnished
> (47-49).

The iconographic connection between the mirror and the allegorical figure of Time is thoroughly documented for the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Time holds the mirror up to experience, and tempus docet; therefore, the mirror is frequently a symbol of wisdom or of prudence. However, it is also a symbol of vanity, of the concern with appearances which will not recognize that appearances pass with time, and as such it is often part of the representation of the memento mori. With respect to Aragon it is safe to say that the mirror is an emblem of vanity. The scene is ironic to the last, when Aragon questions the judgment from the casket. The lines "To offend, and judge, are distinct offices/ And of opposed natures" (61-62) suggest not only the mirror which is opposed to what it reflects, but also Time, the old Justice that tries all offenders. Hence, Aragon's forced and
half-punning conclusion, "Still more fool I shall appear/
By the time I linger here" (73-74).

Now we come to the lead casket. Critics frequently mention the supposed cheat or hint in Portia's song while Bassanio chooses, the fact that the "bred/head/nourished" rhyme in the song also rhymes with "lead." No one suggests that this rhyme may as well point to the "head," which is part of the rhyme, in all three of the caskets. Inside the gold casket is the axiom, "All that glisters is not gold," which looks forward to Bassanio's ("crisped") "golden locks . . . often known/ To be the dowry of a second head . . . ." Inside the second casket is the mirror saying, "Take what wife you will to bed,/ I will ever be your head." And inside the third casket is the picture of Portia, which stands for the maidenhead she will give to Bassanio in the aforementioned marriage bed. It seems to me, that is, that the contents of all three caskets refer ultimately to Portia herself as to, again, a constant value in a changing setting. In even a grisly way, the caskets testify to the permanence of value in the face of change.

Like the first two caskets, the lead casket is related to the problem of time in the play. But this casket presents the other side of time, which is eternity. Here there is a picture of Portia of such verisimilitude
that Bassanio stands exclaiming over it for thirteen lines, before turning to the real Portia. This speech reveals in Bassanio a latent propensity to be duped by appearances, a propensity which is played upon in the ring hoax. The speech thus reveals, in little, the dangers in the too-constant image: Bassanio before the portrait of Portia is like the viewer presented with Act V of the play: there comes a time when one must turn from images like the painting of Portia and the character of Shylock.

The portrait is also, however, a fairly straightforward instance of the captured moment, the existential escape from time, and the different look of this third emblem is thematically appropriate. For, while medieval/Renaissance and essential/existential oppositions should not be too rigid, it does seem that Shakespeare is using medieval emblems in the first two caskets to express a problem arising from essentialist thought, and Renaissance trompe l'oeil to present an existential solution.

This difference between "old" and "new" values is part of the play's thematic progress. It reflects (naturally) another aspect of the same progress, one which is also revealed in the casket scenes. The basic difference between the first two caskets and the third resides in the words "gain," "get," and "give": while the inscriptions on the first two caskets offer the hope of gain, that on
the third extends the possibility of giving. Morocco and Aragon emphasize the desire for gain in their speeches. Only Bassanio distrusts the material promise, and his consequent success illustrates the Christian paradox that he who gives most, gains most. Bassanio is the only character to attempt the caskets who has any grasp of this paradox underlying the appearance of things.

Conceptual paradox is also the mainspring of the second trial, the courtroom scene, where the conceptual tension between gaining and giving is again present. We are aware that Shylock is the one who is in jeopardy, not Antonio, and that if Shylock had extended mercy, his own would have been the greatest gain. The issue, however, is driven into higher terms; the paradox which Portia develops in her famous speech is that of the mercy which both opposes and fulfills justice.

The dispute between justice and mercy here defines the distinction between the Old Law and the New Law which fulfills but transcends the Old. This distinction is symbolized by Shylock's peculiar position. Shylock's spiritual redemption depends on Antonio's physical redemption: he could save his soul by releasing Antonio, and even when he refuses to do so, he is still saved (or converted) when Antonio is redeemed. The soul of the Jew is balanced against the body of the Christian--and this
implicit equation states the Christian view on the killing of Christ. That is, in the orthodox line, the Jews could have chosen not to sentence themselves by choosing not to kill Christ's body. The choice past, however, the only remaining hope of salvation is that of mercy or grace, the hope arising from Christ's ascendency over physical death.

Shylock's "My deeds upon my head" is very close to Biblical expression: "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). Typifying the Jews who lived under the Old Law (sub lege), Shylock is a figure of the Old Man whose spiritual redemption gives rise to the New, and the latter replaces the former. Shylock's acquittal is simultaneous with Antonio's gain in new power, after which twin development Shylock exits, leaving the rejuvenated Antonio onstage.

This view of Antonio as the New Man supposes that his rescue and survival are symbolic, like Shylock's conversion, of salvation in Christian terms. His salvation is rebirth before death, rebirth within life; it is, in other words, the escape from time or the divorce of time from death. Both locutions work if Shylock is considered as a figure for Time: Antonio both escapes Shylock's grasp and redeems him from death. The point of the forced conversion, by the way, may be related to that
of Shylock's name, which suggests his reluctance to seize the lock of Opportunity (conventionally featured with one lock of hair), in this instance the opportunity of salvation.

It is not difficult to visualize Portia in the courtroom scene as a figure of Mercy, pleading before the Justice represented by the Duke and the false or parodic Justice represented by Shylock with his knife and scales. Thus, Belmont in the person of Portia not only brings Venice to justice, but also extends justice by tempering it with mercy. This is part of the interaction between Belmont and Venice which makes the whole play a heterocosm. The transformation of Portia from fairy-tale princess to Mercy is one aspect of this interaction: had her money been enough to redeem the bond, the courtroom scene would have presented simple justice, repayment of a debt. But Portia's money was not sufficient, nor was simple justice; Portia herself had to come to Venice, and it is her appearance in Venice which reveals her in the guise of Mercy.

The amoral fairy-tale terms of Belmont are transformed into Christian terms in Venice. Thus, in Belmont, Portia's generosity stems from romantic love and is related to the miraculous absence of limitations on her wealth; in Venice generosity is defined in theological
terms and is related to the absence of limitations imposed by wealth. The fairy-tale wealth of Belmont becomes, it is to be hoped, the spiritual wealth of Venice; one result is that presumably Antonio will have more money to lend gratis. It is, of course, Antonio who sends Bassanio to Belmont, and it is another Venetian, Bassanio who brings Portia out of Belmont. Venice, that is, is necessary to the process which extends Belmont beyond fantasy. Portia is both incomplete as a Shakespearean heroine alone, and insubstantial as a fairy-tale princess, before she falls in love with Bassanio.

The interdependence of Venice and Belmont is most significant in terms of the whole concept of time in the play: the awareness of time in Belmont and, conversely, the awareness of eternity in Venice, brought about by the interaction of the two worlds, brings salvation to Venice and substantiality to Belmont. The play's symbolism, romantic or theological, is largely concerned with values and value-systems; its real action shows the change which surrounds all values with the fact of process. Thus the very ending of the play provides another emblem of permanence in change: "keeping safe Nerissa's ring" establishes a permanence of value while at the same time it has a sexual meaning which participates in the fact of process. One task of art is so to reconcile opposites,
to provide a suspension or balance of conflicting demands, and it is my feeling that this play not only achieves this suspension but also gives it a positive value.

This concept of suspension brings us back for the last time to the problem of Shylock. It is my view that, in light of all the patterns in the play, we are meant to consider Shylock's salvation as encompassed by the action. If the fact of the play's process leaves behind Shylock and our own doubts about the quality of the mercy shown to him, static and unaccommodated, it also leaves behind the unregenerate real world. Shylock unredeemed, that is, becomes synonymous with the unredeemed unpleasantnesses of reality, because we go—literally—outside the play to make way for such concerns; there is no place in the play for them. It is not just an unease with Shylock which we feel, it is an unease about the realistic itself. Thus, the play refers us outside itself, and what is outside it refers us again to what is within, providing us with a paradoxical proof of the comparative value of art to life which derives from a sort of infinite sequence of reflections between the two. For the play ever to be finished, a certain sense of what might be called "old" time must be left behind, and it is left behind in the person of Shylock.
FOOTNOTES


3 Ibid.

4 I am using the terms "green world" and "second world" as Berger uses them; see below.

5 Berger, p. 42.

6 Berger, p. 50.


9 Goddard, p. 86.


12 Ibid., p. 153

13 Ibid., p. 161.
14 Goddard, p. 82.

15 See, for example, the chapter on Father Time in Panofsky, above.
CHAPTER III

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

In moving from The Merchant of Venice to Much Ado, we move from a villain with altogether too much realistic motivation to one with altogether too little. We are presented, therefore, with another kind of discrepancy in dramatic action and with another kind of structural accommodation for this discrepancy. It is perhaps our sense in Merchant that Shylock, isolated, cornered, desperate with hatred and his desire for violent revenge, has as it were no one in his corner but the playwright. The playwright, that is, does what no one else does: he makes gifts to Shylock, these gifts consisting of some of the play's greatest lines and a certain amount of provocation from the other characters, which make Shylock's position more sympathetic. Don John, too, is basically alone except for the playwright, but in a very different sense from Shylock. If Don John has any genuine motivation to account adequately for his deed, only the playwright knows about it. Don John really has no one else's ear but the playwright's, and this deprivation is significant in a play in which listening and auditory images are so important.

Don John's title of "plain-dealing villain" is more
illuminative of his function in the play than of the subleties of his character as a person, to which only the author himself is privy. Don John, in short, is first and foremost the playwright's creature. He comes as close as any other character in Shakespeare to being the embodiment of a dramatic effect, pure and simple: the effect of detachment. His function throughout is detachment—he detaches Claudio from Hero, the audience from Claudio, and action from motivation. Because he makes the detachment of motivation from action so open, so apparent, so obvious, he in some sense becomes the representative of this disjunction. And the way he effects what he represents becomes apparent when the result of his plot against Hero is to make the audience hate Claudio, to detach the audience from Claudio.

Don John's so-called revenge against the society around him reveals the paucity of his realistic motivation. His interest in the plot against Claudio and Hero hardly seems to exceed Borachio's. It is Borachio who invents the plan; his speeches in laying the plot are both more detailed and more to the point than Don John's (II,ii). Borachio is of course receiving a thousand ducats ("flat burglary" though the sum is); his motivation is more fully grounded by the playwright than Don John's. Don John's reasons for hating Claudio are vaguely and hurriedly
presented, and they are not supported by any emotional development on his part (or of his part). He has of course no reason at all to hate Hero. It is worth remembering, therefore, that Don John's "real" victim, his literal victim, is Claudio, who comes to grief in terms of the audience's estimation and even in terms of the audience's concern. Don John's animus—which is really the playwright's—is directed against not Hero, but the hero, who goes far toward becoming a villain himself. Claudio is irrecoverably wounded as a character. When he ceases to inspire our sympathy or even perhaps our interest, the revenge against him is complete indeed. It is my argument that the very completeness of this effect is significant.

Don John, that is, is in league with the playwright; it is as though the open secret is at least revealed, that the villain is really Shakespeare. Thus the ostensible villain's first interest is in making a plot, which he will direct. When Borachio says, "I can give you intelligence of an intended marriage," Don John's response is "Will it serve for any model to build mischief on?". The question is couched in language which itself reflects (parodically) the concerns of the craftsman, the artisan. The words "model" and "build" suggest even the physical aspects of stagecraft. And the introduction of "mischief" is of course as vital a concern in this play for the author
as for Don John; "mischief" serves to complicate the action and add interest to the play.

Seen in this light, perhaps, any character is the playwright. But the difference is that we are not always aware of this ever-existent truth, and so it is this added factor of our awareness which is important. My interest is in how the affective constituents of drama can be explored or examined in the action and themes of the plays. Don John's obvious flatness has thematic significance as well as dramaturgical effect. Since we are aware that he is unrealistic even as a character, he in a sense "stands for" the unrealistic in the play. Where Shylock represents the danger or threat in a disruptive "realism," Don John represents the threat posed by a lack of realism. This lack of realism is especially dangerous against romantic love, as shown when Don John falsifies reality by playing (easily) on Claudio's latent sexual distrust and fear. Don John is a totally conventional figure, a figure of purest convention, a "villain" solely. He thereby sums up the dangers of convention, and the insecurity attendant on a convention-ridden love. He falsifies reality as a type, just as he falsifies reality within the action of the play; his dramatic flaw ("flatness," or stereotyping) reflects his story-villainy.

The differences between Don John and Shylock in
this regard is obvious. In this play, realism or apparent realism in character is an affirmative rather than a negative quality. Benedick and Beatrice, who are sometimes said to "take over" Much Ado just as Shylock is said to "take over" The Merchant of Venice, do so just as Shylock does (in a way). They "take over" by virtue of that affective realism which gives the audience a greater interest in them than in the characters around them. The difference between this play and Merchant is that Beatrice and Benedick are benign creations, affirmative figures where Shylock is of course a negative one. And the characteral realism Beatrice and Benedick (especially Beatrice) display has also, therefore, an affirmative quality.

Let us return to the notion of Don John's partnership with the playwright or his playing into the hands of the playwright. ("Don John is the author of all," we discover in Act V). It seems to me that this view relates not only to Don John's own apparent lack of motivation, but also to the eagerness with which the other characters often perpetrate his evil. His evil is taken over by others--clearly the playwright's doing--to such an extent that he himself is quite outstripped and indeed almost cut off from the consequences of his deeds. And in fact, Don John hardly does anything besides talk--and not too much
of that. As a man "not of many words," he has only thirty-five speeches in the whole play, most of them short. This is not many speeches for what Sherman Hawkins called "that play upon words, Much Ado About Nothing."¹ Don John's villainy is submerged by the evil ready to hand in the society around him—for example, in Claudio's and Don Pedro's mercenary and gullible qualities and Leonato's self-centeredness—just as he is himself submerged by the action of the play after a few brief scenes.

It is this partnership or ulterior relationship between the playwright and his creature which explains why Don John's plot against Hero succeeds. That is, the plot itself is riddled with implausibilities, as has been pointed out before.² But what I am saying is that this flummery fabrication against Hero would destroy the play if we were seriously concerned in it, and that we are not seriously concerned because the playwright has already displaced this plot by directing our attention to Beatrice and Benedick. We are able to accept and gloss over the thinness of the melodramatic plot, because of our low level of expectation about the characters involved in it to begin with. The playwright, manifestly, sneaks one by us.

Since the playwright is the source of it all, we are frustrated in the attempt to pin down the play's true evil. Throughout the play, we are rather in Benedick's position
during those scenes in which he tries to force Claudio to take him seriously and fight a duel with him. We too are sidetracked, our earnest concerns displaced, by low humor (in the person of Dogberry). We can direct very little punitive animus against the figure of Don John, once we lose sight of him so early in the action; perhaps we direct this animus against Claudio. Or perhaps it is simply dissipated in the messa in scena, like Benedick's challenge to Claudio which is obfuscated by the rest of the scene and the action with follows.

Here is a far different case from that of Shylock, who is dismissed from the action of Merchant before the end of the play but not before he has been encountered head-on. Shylock, like Don John, represents in some ways the will "behind" the action of the play, but he is not out of sight behind the action; his isolation intensifies rather than reduces his impact on the audience. The playwright deals with Don John very differently, or rather this villain makes his effect in a way very different from Shylock's: Don John's direct affective impact is reduced to the irreducible minimum. In fact, his character is reduced virtually to the irreducible minimum; if he were a man of even fewer words, he would cease to exist. His being a man "not of many words," given the fact that characters are made of words, approaches the very limits of the dramatically
possible. We do not engage in any sympathy with Don John—unless it is at the very end of the play, when we hear that he will be punished while we see Claudio getting off scot-free.

Himself almost invisible, Don John draws our attention to the difference between vision and outlook, and what each is capable of perceiving. We do not see much of him or sympathize much with him, but the outlook which he exploits is found in Claudio, Don Pedro, Leonato and even Benedick. This list of the characters influenced by Don John, by the way, shows the aptness of Barbara Everett's rough division of the play into masculine and feminine realms.  

No one could say that Don John represents some sort of masculine principle or male energy, but it is the case that his ability to persuade is confined to the men in the play. He has a coterie of men who are regular followers, in spite of the demeanor which Beatrice says gives her heartburn from the first. His credibility, in other words, is confined to the masculine community, a fact which supports the idea that one aspect of his falsity or lack of realism is a sort of paranoid sexual distrust. Thus, Claudio was as ready to distrust Don Pedro in the play's first act as to distrust Hero in the later scenes, but there are no divisions among the women, who are all affectionate friends. None of the women seem
to believe the accusation against Hero, and even Margaret's innocence of complicity in the plot is insisted upon.

The friar and Benedick are the only men who seem to share the women's awareness about the relative values of Hero and Don John as moral counterweights, and both these men have assistance, the friar presumably that of divine teaching, and Benedick that of Beatrice. The friar's goodness, apparently natural and unaffected (as shown in his idiom: "if ever love had interest in his liver . . .", he says of Claudio) as well as disinterested, is an interesting quantum in the play. We believe in the friar's goodness perhaps in the same way we believe in Don John's badness and in the goodness of Hero herself. The qualities of these characters are almost titular; like Don John's villainy, the value with which the friar enclouds Hero becomes a titular value. Claudio says, "O Hero! what a Hero hadst thou been,/ If half thy outward graces had been plac'd/ About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!" (IV,i,101-103).

It is somehow difficult not to see the characters of Hero, Don John, and perhaps Dogberry as polar or structural or titular in the sense just employed. Don John and Hero are of course obviously antithetical. She represents the innocence and the affectionate ties to society which
are undone by his kind of detachment. Beyond this, however, there is something at times almost allegorical about the structures which sort themselves out in this play over-all. Somehow Dogberry represents humor (Humor) in the same way that Hero represents Young Love and Don John, Villainy. It will be noticed that all these terms signify not so much personal characteristics as dramatic functions; individual psychological development in these characters is subordinated to dramaturgical classification. In comparison to these rather stylized figures, Benedick and Beatrice seem refreshingly realistic; they stand out in a play in which even the humor is formulaic or artistically self-conscious. (Not that Dogberry is self-aware; when he says "Write me down an ass" his humor, like Don John's villainy, is actually the playwright's).

In *Much Ado About Nothing*, therefore, we have again an exploration of the relative weights and forces of what is affective in drama, although the exploration is of a different order from that of *The Merchant of Venice*. There is almost a *trionfi* progression in *Much Ado*: young love is blocked by villainy, villainy by comedy; sentimentality is countered by realism which is in turn confused by sentimentality or by the conventions in revenge. Out of this sequence of displacements, whose conclusion seems to be that "Man is a giddy thing," come Benedick and Beatrice,
who are endowed with a kind of affirmative realism. And if they pull the play off-center, the change is—like Benedick's change—for the better. That is, Benedick's change—"doth not the appetite alter?"—is presented as evidence of his emotional maturity in the play (although this is presented comically). And it is this same rationale of changing for the better which might be employed to justify the play's whirligig sequence of emotional or affective displacements. The viewer's own alteration or giddiness provides the rationale for the development of the play itself.

Emotional maturity, as the term is used here, implies a certain awareness or intelligence and a certain psychological complexity in the central characters which makes them different from other, flatter characters. And in the developing progression of Shakespeare's comedies, the emotional maturity of the central characters seems to increase as time goes on. This is the trend at least through *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. *Much Ado About Nothing*, which has Beatrice and Benedick, leads us on to *As You Like It*, which has Rosalind and Orlando.

Beatrice and Benedick seem to be "off-center" to the play's action, in spite of the fact that their "merry war" is actually introduced and prepared for before Claudio's and Hero's less scintillating engagement. The
reason they, and not the other couple, seem off-center in this play is exactly the reason that they would be on center in a play like _As You Like It_. Their story, unlike that of Claudio and Hero, is concerned with the development of their maturing emotions. They are not merely involved in a concrete sequence of events called a "plot"; their activity is less concrete, although more "felt."

In this play as in _Merchant_, affective realism is attached to psychological complexity, to the internal conflicts of individual characters. In terms of her importance to the plot of the play, Beatrice is more like Rosalind than like Portia: her actions are inseparable from her words and attitudes. Her experience is of course related to Hero's by the parallel plots of deception which involve both women, but her actions do not seem to be determined by the exigencies of plot.

One footnote must be attached to this question of "realism" in _Much Ado About Nothing_. This is that almost all the characters can be described by some definition of realism, although only a carefully limited definition in each case. If Beatrice is "realistic" the way Rosalind is, Claudio is perhaps "realistic" the way Bassanio is. There is a deadly-conventional realism entailed in marrying an heiress. Even Dogberry and the Watch are realistic in one equally limited way: they are generically,
presumptively realistic in the way that buffoons always have been "realistic" in comedy. That is, Aristotle said that comedy was devoted to the correction of men's flaws and absurdities through the accurate portrayal of these flaws and absurdities—and by a theatrical convention, such absurdities are then circularly accepted as accurately mimetic or realistic. By any such definition of realism, however, Don John is still the least realistic character of any significance in the play. He is as it were the still or static point (or flat place) in this giddily turning world. And this fact is important, because the one form of unrealism completely rejected by the play is that of stasis: even the ending of the play, its final resolution, is a dance.

I have been saying that Much Ado presents a fairly rapid sequence of overturnings or displacements of our interest or reroutings of our expectation, somewhat like the sequence of exchanges in the play's own masked ball scene (II,i). This sequence of events takes place equally in our minds as onstage; it is half internalized. Indeed, the play's shift in focus from Claudio and Hero to Beatrice and Benedick, or from Beatrice and Benedick to Dogberry and the Watch, can be called "events" only by virtue of the shift of interest which is internalized, which is in the minds of the audience. The play's order,
which thus invites the exercise of our "metacritical" faculties, is not related to a form of mental landscape. More than in most other Shakespearean plays, in this play we often feel ourselves at one remove from the real action of the play or the real action behind the play. And it seems to me that this feeling is related in part to the play's own extreme displacement from its romance origins.

The Merchant of Venice and Much Ado About Nothing are both plays of exquisite symmetry, both composed of three stories which are joined thematically. But where Merchant is openly schematized, Much Ado is in analogous respects rather diaphanous. Where Merchant presents us and perhaps its own characters with allegory (Portia probably sees herself as Mercy), Much Ado presents us with romance or quasi-romance whose order is perceivable from above, as it were, but which is mysterious when seen from the level of the community in the play. The forces let loose in this society are sometimes like those of romance—either those of romance, or its failure. Hero is wounded, like Serena, by Slauder; Don John is almost an evil magician whose power can change what the eye sees even in the very moment of looking. He is like Iago, to whom of course he is often compared, in this respect; and Iago operates in another play in which the elements of romance are potent.
Such evil enchantment is of course child's play in this society, in which hardly anyone seems to see clearly (even Benedick, seeing Don Pedro's white hair, takes his veracity on faith). While hearing is often effectual in the play, seeing almost never is (except for the friar). The enchantment, however, has to do with our lack of faith as well as Claudio's; it has to do with our sense that the whole action is displaced. A. P. Rossiter describes this sense:

That the 'main' plot of Hero and Claudio turns on misapprehension leading to the misprision of violent disprizing, is too obvious to need commentary, but much of the play's total effect hangs on the structural mainness of this plot being displaced. As sometimes in Mannerist pictures, the emphasis is made to fall on what appears structurally to be a corner. This displaced emphasis helps to maintain the sense that the 'Ado' is about 'Nothing.'

The sense is that the play's ground of meaning is, if not a forest of wonders, at least removed from what we see; its ground is covered from recognition by the urban establishment of Messina. This point is related to more than the critical consensus that the play is largely about appearances-versus-reality, although such a theme is obviously important. The sense is that the play is somehow transposed, as one could transpose the music which is so predominant a form in it. The supersubtle society of Messina proves to be, not the stuff of romance, but perhaps the stuffing, in Beatrice's sense of the word: "he
is no less than a stuffed man; but for the stuffing—well, we are all mortal" (I,i,59-61).

Being in some sort a moral wilderness, Messina is as much a wilderness as is found in romance. This element of romance in the play is certainly related to its sources, which are Italian romance; in fact one tends to turn to the play's sources in order to illuminate its problems more often here than with most of the other Shakespearean plays. The play seems to convert the reader, as it does Benedick, to knight-errantry (Save the play!). But Much Ado is nevertheless far removed from its origins; this is romance transposed to a city in which range is limited and conflicts almost miniaturized.

Thus we discover in Act V that Hero is a hero, a "virgin knight," is the phrase which could apply equally to all four of the young lovers. If the emphasis is placed on the first term rather than the second, the phrase could be applied even to Claudio, who is generically related to priggish young men all the way back to Euripides' Hippolytus, not to mention Shakespeare's own Adonis.

Beatrice is a version of the Shakespearean heroine who in whatever sense dons a disguise--in her case, a disguise of language and attitude--in order to engage in the romantic quest for erotic fulfillment. Benedick, a "tyrant to the sex," is at first a comic Busirane or perhaps Marinell who
then becomes a defender of ladies' honor. Benedick, like Bottom (and like Claudio), can play both a lover and a tyrant. Much Ado does not necessarily cover a lot of ground (hence its title), but it does as it were diagram a lot of ground. We sense a great underlying potential for emotional or psychological exploration.

Only Beatrice and Benedick carry on emotionally realistic exploration of this ground. They are the characters who move, who change, in the large undifferentiated tracts of experience drawn toward poles constituted by other, rather static, figures. Compared to theirs, the relationships among the other characters are almost schematic, easily visible from the vantage of superior intelligence like an aerial map in grays. What is most dangerous in this community, however, is not what is most visible. Danger comes from the virtually invisible but powerful forces of fear and especially rumor, or Slaundery, on the loose. There is even a kind of Occasion (cf. Spenser's adaptation of the same story in Bandello from which this play was taken) in Don John's opportunism—as well as the Fury in Claudio's incredible readiness to repudiate Hero when she is accused.

In the context of 'Rumor,' by the way, the parallels between this play and very different literary works are especially interesting. There is, of course,
the obvious parallel between the power of hearsay in this play, and the power of Slauder in Book VI of the *Faerie Queene*. Or, again, the confusion between word and fact which is so pervasive in *Much Ado* is found also in Jonson's Epigram LI, on the rumored death of King James. What the poet says to the King, spoken by one "Who this thy escape from rumour gratulate, / No lesse than if from perill," could as well be applied to Hero. Her escape from "rumour" is the same as an escape from "perill." In this same poem we find that confusion of bodily senses which is also prevalent in *Much Ado*: "For we, that have our eyes still in our eares, / Looke not upon thy dangers, but our feares."⁵ Claudio too has his eyes in his ears, when Don John persuades him to believe that he sees Hero talking to Borachio from her window. The result of too-great dependence on hearing is to weaken or disparage vision, just as in Jonson's poem.

Such aspects of what I called "displacement" are joined by one more. As Barbara Everett suggests in her essay on the play, there is very little in *Much Ado* which can be called "natural."⁶ That is, very little of the natural world is presented in the play. There is plenty of "human nature," and there is an abundance of nature imagery in the play's self-conscious language, in its speeches, but we see little of nature directly. Such
imagery is too prevalent to allow full citation, but a
typical example is Hero's speech setting up the benign
trap for Beatrice in III,i:

Now begin:
For look where Beatrice, like a lapwing, runs
Close by the ground, to hear our conference,

and Ursula's reply,

The pleasant'st angling is to see the fish
Cut with her golden oars the silver stream,
And greedily devour the treacherous bait:
So angle we for Beatrice,

Hero's further, lovely characterization of Beatrice,

I know her spirits are coy and wild
As haggards of the rock.

It is not only Beatrice who is described in such terms;
Hero is called a "march-chick" by--of all people--Don John.
Benedick compares Hero and Claudio to birds singing in
their nest, and the singers of II,iii to a dog howling and
the night-raven croaking. Claudio says of Benedick him-
self that, as he is about to be gulled, "the fowl sits."

Over and over again we find metaphors and similes
using elements from nature: a dog barking at a crow, a
jade's trick, a canker in a hedge, a curst cow, hurt fowl,
the willow garland, drover and bullocks, a star danced,
choking a daw, etc. Such language is frequently used by
Beatrice and Benedick, but not only by them. Nature con-
stantly creeps into the action through some linguistic
trick. Thus the names of Hugh Oatcake and George Seacoal,
like the name of Dogberry himself, are like the names of the fairies in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, random gleams from the natural world which remind the hearer of the world of nature obscured by the society or the action in the play. Examples like these abound: it is as though language or speech becomes the soil, as it were, on which the energies of nature are expended in the play; the only fruits of nature here are those in the language.

As the importance thus attached to the elements and ornamentation of language indicates, it is language which is "uppermost" in *Much Ado About Nothing*. The play, indeed, is partly "about" language or the faculties of language in much the same way that *Merchant* is partly "about" the faculties of intelligence: it tests them, weighs them and evaluates them. To say this is a far cry from saying that the language has become objective. Indeed, the word is so often frightened out of his right wit in this play that the characters seem to have given up trying to accommodate language to reality. Instead, they usually try to alter reality to fit the language, in a procrustean operation which savages personal relationships. Thus, in Claudio’s hideously domestic little blast, Hero becomes a "rotten orange," which is the most extreme such distortion of right nature.

This particular image is related to another pattern
in the imagery of the play over-all, that of words and phrases which concern food and eating. Hero is called an orange by Claudio who was himself once "civil as an orange" and is now "Count Comfect," a "sweet gallant." Benedick foresees himself converted into an "oyster" by love, and his projected duel with Claudio is looked to as a "feast"; Claudio says "he hath bid me to a calf's-head and a capon, the which if I do not carve most curiously, say my knife's naught" (V.i). Beatrice opens the merry war against Benedick by remarking that she had promised to "eat" all of his killing in the war; Benedick is "a very valiant trencherman," food to feed disdain, and in fact "a stuffed man." (When she has fallen in love with Benedick, Beatrice herself becomes "stuffed," a term which loses its connection with food and changes to mean pregnancy). In what is probably the most famous example of this linguistic strain in the play, Beatrice says of Claudio that if she were a man, "I would eat his heart in the market-place." And when Benedick rationalizes his change of heart about Beatrice, he employs the same strain: "Does not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age" (II.iii.).

Periodically in the play two or more of these linguistic themes are joined in one relatively substantive statement. Thus the nature imagery and the eating
imagery are joined in the joke on Benedick and Beatrice, "now the two bears will not bite one another when they meet." The objectification of language is also joined with the image of eating more than once: Benedick says of Claudio that "his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes"; and the same conjunction of images is present in Beatrice's and Benedick's mutual confession of love: Beat. "Will you not eat your word?" Bene. "With no sauce that can be devised to it." (IV.i.)

The images of eating relate to the equally prevalent references to the realm of nature; they manifest another aspect of the nature—human nature, physical nature—which is so largely denied by the customs of this society, apparently. Just as the dissociation between hearing and seeing, between the senses, represents a kind of attempted disembodiment insisted upon by a hyperbred society, so do these frequent reminders of the appetite. Language takes its revenge on repression through what becomes at times almost an imagistic cannibalism. Like the "bones" which are surprisingly the grisly subject of repeated emphasis at Hero's funeral rites, like death itself, the appetite underlies physical nature and man's efforts to circumvent that nature, and creeps back into the language by the same measure it is excluded from the action.

Behind the mask of convention, appearance,
language or ceremony there is a metaphorical emphasis on eating which is not the manifestation of a healthy community. It seems to me that the mouths (in this mess or messa) doing all this talking do so partly that they may not bite. Benedick's reference to Beatrice as "my lady Tongue" makes her a "dish" which he cannot "abide," his victim, but it also makes her an object of some fear. Beatrice's complaint that "men are only turned into tongue, and trim ones too" almost certainly refers in part to the sword-like damage done Hero by Claudio's words.

To this unhappy strain is opposed a different pattern: the other major imagistic pattern in the play is that of music, the song and musical notes, supported at times by actual songs. (This is a pattern which supported by reality, which is fulfilled in reality.) Like speech, singing may sometimes provide a form of oral sublimation for aggression or hostility, but unlike speech it is a form which is harmless against others. And in its connection with the art-form of the dance, music provides for an exceptional harmony or union between the physical and the ceremonial in the play. Thus the play's ending is a dance, which is a highly conventional but nevertheless vital image of general reconciliation.

The image of dancing, by the way, is connected especially to the character of Beatrice, lending substance
to the notion that Beatrice herself embodies a kind of harmony, like Rosalind after her. Her analysis of wooing and wedding is an example of her use of the dance image:

The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time; if the prince be too important, tell him there is measure in everything, and so dance out the answer. For, hear me, Hero; wooing, wedding, and repenting, is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque-pace: the first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly-modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes Repentance, and with his bad legs, falls into the cinque-pace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave. (II,i,73-84)

It is Beatrice also who says, "a star danced, and under that was I born." Indeed, this speech about the dancing star in its entirety presents a perfect example of the kind of harmony which is connected both to the image of dancing and to the character:

Don Pedro. Your silence most offends me, and to be merry best becomes you; for, out of question, you were born in a happy hour.

Beatrice. No, sure, my lord, my mother cried; but then there was a star danced, and under that was I born. Cousins, God give you joy! (II,i,347-52)

Beatrice, it will be noticed, is able to face physical facts which other characters tend to forget. The submerged suggestion here is that a star danced when seen through the tears in her mother's eyes, as a light seems to move when seen through a mist. The dancing star at her nativity becomes both cause and effect of her happy
birth (the birth of joy, beatus meaning happy, fortunate).

The associations of music or the power of music have other functions in the play than as they are related to dancing, however. The play's use of music, and the appropriateness of the particular musical images and songs in the play, have been discussed in other essays. What chiefly concerns me has to do with the more abstract features of music as an art form. Two of these features are especially relevant to the play. 1) In music to which lyrics are set, the length or duration of the words or syllables does not depend on their stress or emphasis in language, but on the melody. 2) Music is alone among the arts in requiring an interpreter in order merely to exist.

The first point, that meaning or emphasis in songs cannot be measured quantitatively because the music demands otherwise, is immediately relevant to a play called Much Ado About Nothing. It is as though the theme described by this title is a piece of music, to which the particulars of language and action in the play are set. The cumulative effect of this play, at the end of which we discover that all the ado has been about nothing, is not really "cumulative"; it is a form. And unless the whole is indeed to sum up as nothing, we must go back again and again to the form, to reexperience it. It is thus that we
participate in the extension of meaning and not just its measure. The extension of meaning, in other words, is not quantitative in this play any more than in any other work of art; this play simply comments on that fact.

"The fault will be in the music, cousin, if you be not wooed in good time." Shakespeare uses the same pun on these two different senses of time, musical and extra-musical, in other plays besides this one ("We did keep time, sir, in our catches," TN; "We kept time, we lost not our time in the song," AYL). This is a pun which makes its point by paradox: 1) by reducing all of time to nothing more than the opposite term of musical time, it puts an all-important emphasis on the time within the song (like the time within the play. 2) It reduces time to "measure," pointing by indirection to the artistic significance of this "measure" which is precisely to escape quantitative time, time which is otherwise measured by decay, by passing. Much Ado is a play which pits the duration against the quantitative, experience against measure.

We come to the second point about music, that it requires the existence of an interpreter in order to exist itself. Obviously this concept is related to much of the play's action, because facts often depend on interpretation for their existence in this play. Hero, the most
literal embodiment of this concept, depends for her very life on the accurate interpretation of her character. (It is for such reasons that I keep wanting to call her name a pun on the word "hero"; after all, every character's life in drama depends on adequate interpretation). The musical adornment of the play, whether in musical imagery or in actual songs, thus reflects the play's thematic concerns, including its concern with the nature of drama.

V. B. Fortino says in her excellent article, "Emotion and Musical Structure," that "music as a language lacks assigned connotations." "Music is meaningful because of the pattern or patterns embodied in it, and these patterns are the 'connotations' ... that indicate music is a part of the world of ordinary experience, for patterns occur in all experience." Music as a language in Much Ado therefore reflects a signal quality of the play's language as a language: they both lack "assigned connotations." I said earlier that the play's language could not be termed objective; music is the only realm beside which that of the language becomes almost objective in comparison. The "objective," in this context, is like the quantitative in songs; both are opposed to the experience of the duration, to the meaningfulness of artistic patterns.
This emphasis on the duration, which revolves giddily into the past before our very eyes, is of course another manifestation of the unreliability of vision or of the visual in the play. It is fascinating how neatly this play splits off from The Merchant of Venice in this regard: where in Merchant we were asked to keep our eyes on the real action, in this play it seems to me that we are asked to have our eyes still in our ears. The emphasis on visual images and emblems in Merchant is replaced by an emphasis on musical images and songs in Much Ado. There is nothing to correspond to the three caskets here, where even the temporarily successful play-within-a-play directed against Hero takes place offstage (we don't see it). There are significant repetitions or reflections in both plays, but where Merchant employs what I called a constant image, Much Ado employs a consistent pattern.

Emphasis on the static, that is, has been replaced by an emphasis on the active, the revolving, the "giddy." Where in Merchant our interests were focused on intensely emblematic scenes (Portia confronting Shylock in the courtroom; the suitors choosing their caskets), in Much Ado our interests are shifted or altered more often than they are focused at all. What we do not get are images in stasis. As in Merchant we are intended to change, to develop, and also as in Merchant we are intended to have enough
detachment in order to adapt to change. The danger in this play, however, unlike the danger in _The Merchant of Venice_, is that we will overadapt, agree with the title of the play and dismiss the action, coming away from the conclusion with nothing more than a conclusion.

The ending itself does more than this; in fact the ending is one which comes as close as possible to not ending in any absolute sense. Thus the occasion is a dance rather than any static grouping of the characters, an image of dynamic flow in these human relationships. And Benedick's assumption of the role of Master of Ceremonies in charge of Don John gives rise to other aspects of irresolution. We are not only reminded of Don John's imminent presence, the presence of this tool for detachment, at the moment when we are finally to leave the action of the play. A "tomorrow" is also projected in Benedick's "I'll devise thee brave punishments for him" which could kick off a whole new action, by inspiring a new vengeance against and from Don John. Thus we are at once projected into the dance, out of the play, and--via Don John--back to the start.
FOOTNOTES


2 The consensus seems to be that this plot "is not to be taken too seriously," as Francis Fergusson says--although there are different explanations for this lack of seriousness. "Ritual and Insight," in Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Much Ado About Nothing, p. 56.


6 Everett, p. 273.

7 Walter R. Davis, ed., Twentieth-Century Interpretations, p. 3.

8 See, for example, "'To Grace Harmony': Musical Design in Much Ado About Nothing," in Davis, pp. 80-87.

9 This is the same distinction which separates metric analysis of verse, as in Old English from quantitative analysis.


11 Fortino, p. 88.
CHAPTER IV

AS YOU LIKE IT

In dealing with Jaques, we are again examining the structural accommodation of discrepancy in dramatic action, but Jaques represents a new and different kind of discrepancy. Instead of the villain, we have in Jaques another kind of misfit, a misfit more by virtue of psychological than ethical systems. Jaques is characterized first and foremost by the Renaissance definition of the melancholic. Indeed, melancholia is the key to his whole being. This is a point of some importance, for it is not often that Shakespeare uses a character who is a personification of a "humour" in the vogue which Jonson made famous. Surely, when such an apparent "type" is so used, the critic cannot dismiss any mention of it as reductive; to do so is to ignore, for one thing, the importance of "type" itself in drama.

This particular "type," furthermore, serves to underline the very fact that Jaques is a type, by isolating him from the rest of the action of the play. The stereotype which carries Jaques away from realistic psychology is also the melancholy which removes him from spontaneous social intercourse with the other characters.
For an authority like Burton, melancholy becomes identified with the follies and miseries of almost all alike; the treatment of melancholy leads him through digressions and disquisitions on an unsurpassed range of topics. It also conducts him to an exhaustive self-awareness not shared by Jaques. Burton is nevertheless an apt reference for Jaques, for Jaques is also a contemplator of life's spectacle, a would-be satirist, one who thinks himself a narrator of life's follies and limitations. This characteristic is remarkable in Jaques, that he is likely to conceive of himself not as the hero of the piece, but as its narrator. The foremost example of such narrative is of course his famous discourse on the seven ages of man in Act II.

This characteristic separates Jaques fundamentally from the action of the play: a play cannot have a narrator. The narrative principle, as it might be called, is absent in the play because it is a play. Unawares to himself, however, Jaques can serve as a commentator on the action (or in this play, non-action); like the other commentator, Touchstone, he can function to connect scenes which might otherwise seem disconnected. His running commentary is connective for the play as a whole, even if it might seem disconnected as the expression of an individual personality. It is striking that Jaques and
Touchstone each have exactly seven scenes, out of a total of twenty-one, in the play. These two spectators, and not the busier actors, are thus the characters who are limited to seven (st)ages in the whole pageant, in line with Jaques' famous speech.

Jaques and Touchstone do have important differences, of course; while both are commentators to some degree, Touchstone is unlike Jaques in becoming involved in the action by marrying Audrey. Fool that he is, with the self-conscious wit of the avowed Fool, the awareness of the eiron is finally too much for him; Touchstone at last settles for a simpler kind of foolishness and presses in with the rest of the "country copulatives." He, therefore, becomes part of the play's resolution even while he parodies it: he, too, joins male with female, court with country, wit with folly, and even Fortune with Nature. In contrast to Touchstone, Jaques accepts an unlimited role of spectator which finally isolates him from the community.

The difference between Jaques and Touchstone is not as interesting, however, as the difference between Jaques and Rosalind. Like the rest of these singular figures isolated by the context of comedy (Don John, Malvolio), Jaques is in a way the inverse of what is represented by the heroine. He shows us the end of the self, while the heroine shows the expansion of selfhood to a fruitfulness
of individual purpose and dramatic pleasure. While Rosalind engages in an exploration of the possibilities of life, Jaques narrates its difficulties or limitations. Jaques' final situation in the play, in the cave from which "to see no pastime," is the extreme of confinement or reduction. It seems to me that since the pastime of the play has been the play's very life, this seclusion is the symbolic statement of Jaques' removal from the course of life itself. Rosalind's progress is exactly opposite Jaques': she expands throughout the play, both in the sense of personal, temporal development to maturity and in the sense that she finally gathers the whole play to her in collecting all the characters around her.

The heroine—or at least a heroine like Rosalind—is the force or figure that joins space and time to make the theater an image of the "inner space-time" of the mind. Rosalind produces a fulfilled "dramatic present" which unifies the play; she provides the node of metaphorically spherical harmony and resolution, in this case symbolized by Hymen's circular bands. While uniting herself with the hero, she also unites the audience with the play. And opposed to her is Jaques, a figure of solitude, disharmony, discrepancy, in the Latinate pun "extempore out of time, tune, and temper."\footnote{Jaques and Rosalind are perhaps the clearest examples of these archetypally}
opposed kinds of characters in the plays.

If Jaques' interest does not stem from his individual characteral development, however, the question remains as to how he can become so important a character. If his discourses are not merely excessive in their length and oftenness, they must be basic to something in the play. And it seems to me that Jaques' importance to the play stems from the function of connectedness mentioned before. _As You Like It_ is a comedy peculiarly noteworthy for the fact that nothing "happens" in it; it is not strung together by any but the most exiguous of plots. Its organization is that of one conversation or _debat_ after another. The threat to the play's artistic success is this lack of intrinsic connections; the dramatic/artistic/personal issue of "connectedness" itself, therefore, is important. Significantly, the character who himself lacks connectedness in several ways, Jaques, is the one who is symbolically excluded from the play's resolution.

_As You Like It_ is a play which might be called "Senecan," if the term were properly applied to comedy. It is a play which returns to a dramatic organization we tend to think of as primitive, a play which is just a series of declamations or dialogues, "the Senecan conception of drama as oratory plus lyric,"\(^2\) what we would call "all talk and no action," or in Henry James'
distinction more telling than showing. Paradoxically, it
is also a triumph of high-Renaissance artistry; there is a
great technical achievement involved in making drama out
of this peculiar eventlessness. That is, while
Renaissance dramatic achievement consisted partly in
going away from drama which was just a series of speeches,
this play is mostly a series of speeches.

The central love story, and its various psycho-
logical satellites of subsidiary conflicts and encounters,
is the true source of interest in the play. This is the
esthetic lesson of Beatrice and Benedick magnified or ex-
panded through the scope of a whole play. And the psycho-
logical encounters are developed through relatively little
external incident; after Act I, in which a great deal of
the action is disposed of, there is very little event in
the usual sense.

Simple juxtaposition seems to take the place of
action and even of cause-and-effect. 3 The more drastic
revolutions of interest in Much Ado About Nothing are re-
placed in As You Like It by a larger, calmer revolution
which is the magic circle of the forest. The characters
and sub-plots here (if there is anything which can really
be called a "sub-plot" in this play) do not fight for the
audience's concern and attention as in Much Ado, but move
in their separate courses concurrently and in parallel.
If commentary predominates over action to this extent, Jaques is the play's fit representative. Just as Don John reflects in his own person the feature of detachment in Much Ado, so Jaques' own inertia reflects the absence of action in As You Like It. This is another case in which an esthetic issue becomes a personal or moral issue. The play finds its missing connections in people: the problem of connecting becomes the problem of relating. Jaques, as a spectator and a commentator on the action, provides some of that continuity the play might seem to lack. The only character who does not "relate" personally, he tries to fill in the gap by "relating" verbally, in the process filling what might otherwise be the play's gaps.

There is a close correspondence between the "inner" and "outer" dimensions of this play, between the play's technical undertaking and the ultimate undertaking of its characters: to make a unity out of a fragmented field of potential experience. This correspondence gives the play its unusual evenness, its unusual "balance" or "poise," in critical terminology. This quality, whatever it is called, is often emphasized in criticism on the play. Barber describes Jaques and Touchstone as though they were satiric ballast of a sort, helping to maintain the play's over-all "poised liberty." The same kind of balance is suggested in Goddard's description of the play: "And not
only do we have a sense of constant natural beauty around us; we are in the presence, too . . . of life, song and laughter, simplicity and love; while to guard against surfeit and keep romance within bounds, there is a seasoning of caustic and even cynical wit, plenty of foolishness as a foil for the wisdom, and, for variety, an intermingling of social worlds from courtiers and courtly exiles to shepherds and country bumpkins." 5 Harold Jenkins makes the same point about the way the play serves as its own foil: "Shakespeare . . . builds up his ideal world and lets his idealists scorn the real one. But into their midst he introduces people who mock their ideals and others who mock them . . . one judgment is always being modified by another. Opposite views may contradict one another, but of course they do not cancel out. Instead they add up to an all-embracing view far larger and more satisfying than any one of them in itself." And Helen Gardner, discussing this same "radiant blend," says simply that this is a play "to please all tastes." 7

There is always a sense in these comments that the playwright is including enough of everything to make all odds even, to balance esthetic equations. That is, the commonplace is that the play's perfect balance proceeds from its inclusion of the elements which, excluded, would threaten its beautiful illusion. I think this consensus
is largely right. However, it is hard to believe that Jaques' and Touchstone's function in As You Like It is nothing more than as "a sharp sauce to contract with the romantic diet of the play." Jaques may in part demonstrate the play's all-inclusiveness, an "all" which includes even its own negative, but surely this ubiquitous character also has other functions. For one thing, he raises interesting questions about the very basis for inclusion and exclusion in the play.

Admitting, however, that Jaques does in any case contribute to the play's "evenness," we may direct our attention to the result of this same evenness. What the play's sequence creates is the magic circle of the forest, the "pastoral circle" discussed by Walter Davis. Jaques leaves this pastoral circle temporarily created by the play, the circle into which Hymen can call all the fools in the forest, to go into an even smaller circle—the hermit's cave—of what seems to be solipsistic darkness. His experience is different from the other characters. Arden as a pastoral enclosure, a field of experience, is ultimately not a place of removal from reality but (as has been pointed out before) of exercise in it. It is a seeming escape which becomes an intelligible prospect, the field of possibility discussed by Berger and others in connection with Shakespeare's comedy.
In this respect the pastoral enclosure resembles the stage-play itself, which is what it finally suggests; the Forest of Arden as a magic circle is of course a "wooden O," the stage, artificially illuminated by pastoral conventions. Rosalind and the other characters sojourn to Arden to create life upon a stage set. My sense of the use of pastoral in this play is that it is a framing device. It is a divider or a partitioner, building egregious and sometimes frivolous oppositions between art and nature, Nature and Fortune, court and country, etc. In this regard, it seems a mistake to overemphasize the play's "artificiality"; what is interesting about pastoral in this play is surely not its difference from real life, but its difference from other kinds of literature. Thus Corin and Audrey are no more "realistic" than Silvius and Phebe; they are all conventional figures in spite of the fact that the former partly mock the latter. Such self-mockery is itself one of the conventions of the genre. Corin (like William and Audrey) is actually a "Ruzzante," a rustic figure whose rudeness is exaggerated beyond verisimilitude, but who seems "actual" in contrast to the version of pastoral which emphasizes its own effete. Artificiality is a matter of degree; it is a relative term.

The notion of relative distinctions brings us back to the idea of pastoral as a framing or dividing device—
which brings us back to Jaques, who is what might be called a connective device. He stands outside and alongside all the "pastoral" dialogues and debates, turning differences into sameness, grist for his self-made satiric mill. He undermines the very notion of relativity, and therefore stands disengaged from the experience which makes things relative—or which makes things relate. When Jaques leaves the pastoral group, he leaves a realm in which "all diverse things live together in unity"\textsuperscript{10} because they share a common ground in experience. The power of this experience, by the way, is shown by those "divers" characters, Oliver and Duke Frederick, who are transformed by its strange force.

Close examination of the play's language will bear out the notion of its "evenness" or relatedness. Such examination reveals an almost surprising consistency in the ground of experience mentioned before; the power of experience in the play as a whole is such as to produce close relationships in unexpected ways. We find this true about Oliver and Celia; it is also true about the play's language itself. It is perhaps not surprising that Rosalind and Orlando are so closely in tune that they first reveal their love with similar expressions: Rosalind says, "Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown/ More than your enemies," and Orlando says to himself, "O poor
Orlando, thou art overthrown! / Or Charles or something weaker masters thee." The relationship between Orlando and Rosalind is more than just anagrammatical; their attitudes toward Jaques are alike, their attitudes toward the sudden falling in love of Celia and Oliver are alike; Rosalind's faint is preceded by Orlando's own fainting—as his final, fatigued, "I can live no longer by thinking" is an echo of her own tired, sad, "I would I were at home." When Orlando says that all thoughts are "winged" (IV,i), he seems to have caught the notion of the subjectivity of experience from Rosalind's analysis of the different motions of time. At times even their exact words are very close: Rosalind's term "inland man" (III,ii), describing her non-existent "old religious uncle," is very like Orlando's "inland bred" (II,vii).

Not only Orlando and Rosalind are so related by language. There is one point at least at which Orlando, in love, is related to no one else as closely as to Silvius, also in love:

Silvius: . . . if thou hast not brok from company
      Abruptly, as my passion now makes me,
      Thou hast not loved. O Phebe, Phebe, Phebe!
              (II,iv)

Orlando: Run, run, Orlando, carve on every tree
      The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she.
              (III,ii)

The dash off-stage and the rhymes are the same, although Silvius's rhyme-scheme involves the term "me" and Orlando's
only the "she."

Such relationships are established by linguistic echoes and parallels. Jaques refers to the deer as men ("fat and greasy citizens"), while Orlando refers to himself as a deer: "... like a doe, I go to find my fawn/ And give it food." Orlando's "these trees shall be my books" (III,ii) echoes the Duke's "books in the running brooks,/ Sermons in stones" (II,i). Some patterns of dialogue continue throughout the play. Thus, Orlando says to Oliver during their quarrel in the first scene of the play, "Thou hast railed on thyself." He seems later to remind himself of the same concept, in speaking to Jaques:

Jaques: we two will rail against our mistress the world and all our misery.

Orlando: I will chide no breather in the world but myself, against whom I know most faults.

(III,ii)

Jaques' low opinion of Orlando after this conversation is contrasted to his high opinion of Touchstone, which is based on the fact that Touchstone has "railed on Lady Fortune in good terms, in good set terms" (II,vii).

Celia and Rosalind set out so to rail on Fortune in I,ii: "Let us sit and mock the good housewife Fortune from her wheel." This proposal introduces the Nature/Fortune exchange which follows, and connects this scene with the opening scene, in which Orlando's problem with the discrepancy between nature and fortune is presented. And
the girls, in dealing with the dichotomy between nature and fortune, are led naturally enough to the dichotomy between "fair" and "honest" which much later still perplexes Audrey.

This scene, indeed, introduces several of the issues which come up again later in the play. Touchstone's joke about swearing on a non-existent "honor," for example, is a precise premonition of what Duke Frederick does in banishing Rosalind: "If you outstay the time, upon mine honor,/ And in the greatness of my word, you die." And Celia's and Rosalind's "By our beards, if we had them . . ." is a prospective hint at Rosalind's later masculine disguise and the whole concept of exploration of sexual roles in which the hypothetical becomes a disguise, an act.

One such linguistic echo is Jaques' proposal to use language and role-playing as a cleansing medicine:

Invest me in my motley, give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of th' infected world
(II,vii).

That is, Rosalind's proposal is similar in some respects:

He was to imagine me his love, his mistress; and
I set him every day to woo me . . . And thus I cured him; and this way will I take upon me to wash your liver as clean as a sound sheep's heart, that there shall not be one spot of love in't.
(III,ii)

There is another version of pastoral love, in the facetious
realism which resembles Corin's discussion of kissing hands. What is important in this speech, however, is the way the hypothetical ties up with the actual: not only is this "Rosalind" really Rosalind, but the "cure" she says she effected in her fictional pupil, "to forswear the full stream of the world and to live in a nook merely monastic," foreshadows Duke Frederick's conversion--and perhaps Jaques' final situation. In this respect the speech here is like her other fiction, about the "old religious uncle of mine" who becomes her real uncle, Duke Frederick. This phenomenon is matched by only one other; by some chance, Rosalind refers to Silvius as a "tame snake" just before the entrance of Oliver with his narrative about a real snake. It is as though Rosalind calls the beast into being, or has some extra-sensory perception of its being.

What Rosalind is doing at such moments, what the play is doing, is "to make all this matter even"; as Rosalind says, "To make these doubts all even" (V,iv). The play's unity is the "mirth" which comes "When earthly things made even/ At one together" (V,iv). Things are made "even" here, it seems, in a peculiar way, by doubling them: not only is there frequent linguistic repetition or doubling, there is also frequent thematic doubling by one means or another. Many of the play's scenes are structured by dialogues between two characters; Rosalind
and Celia play two roles; there are two pairs of brothers, in each of which one brother plays an unnatural part. Orlando makes this comparison explicit in going "from tyrant Duke unto a tyrant brother" (I,ii). Rosalind and Orlando both come to grief in terms of "fortune" because their virtues are said to show others at a disadvantage. Oliver compares himself to Orlando the same way Duke Frederick compares Celia to Rosalind: Orlando, he says, is "so much in the heart of the world . . . that I am altogether misprised" (I,i), and Duke Frederick says to Celia that Rosalind's "very silence and her patience,/ Speak to the people . . . She robs thee of thy name" (I,iii).

The play has two closely related villains—until they are (both) converted—in Oliver and Duke Frederick; it has two commentators on the action in Jaques and Touchstone; it has two characters named Jaques and two characters named Oliver—in spite of the fact Shakespeare seldom doubled the name of one character in any one play, let alone two. There are two young women who escape to the forest, and two are already to be found there, Phebe and Audrey. In two different versions of pastoral, there are two indigenous couples, Silvius and Phebe on one hand and William and Audrey on the other; in both cases the woman's eye is caught by the courteous stranger (as in
Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*). Last but not least, most of the characters are paired off at the end of the play, and this "doubling" is so emphasized that it turns the comedy into a masque.

This final doubling crowns the whole: the earlier doublings just discussed prepare the way for a kind of doubling, marriage, which is meant to be final. The final marriages fulfill the earlier engagements of character with character, scene with scene; thus, romantic love is finally united with poetry itself or the dramatic art.

In this context, we find out about Sir Oliver Mar-text's place in the play. That is, if the play finally reconciles the aims of romantic love and dramatic art, Sir Oliver Mar-text exists as the antithesis of both. The final marriage scene in the play is a sacrament which connects love and poetry; the scene in which Sir Oliver appears is an anti-sacrament. Mar-text appears in III, iii, which is the midmost scene in the play after Act I: that is, it is the midmost scene in the Forest of Arden. It is my feeling that this character is a sort of inverse Colin Clout; his marring, as opposed to marrying, is the opposite of the hymeneal epiphany celebrated by Colin Clout in Spenser as by Hymen himself in Shakespeare.

The marred text suggested by this figure is the very opposite of revelation or of revealed unity and harmony; symbolically, the scene in which Mar-text appears is
the point at which things threaten to bottom out, the
hole in the fabric of the play through which the unities
of marriage and of poetry alike threaten to escape or to
be expelled. Act III, scene iii is one kind of "anti-
masque" in As You Like It. One other scene could also be
called "anti-masque"; it is the "hunting" song in IV,ii:

Take thou no scorn to wear the horn,
It was a crest ere thou wast born,
Thy father's father wore it,
And thy father bore it.
The horn, the horn, the lusty horn,
Is not a thing to laugh to scorn.

Both scenes are antithetical to the Hymeneal masque at the
end of the play, which is the true "center" of the play,
as opposed to the false apparent center of III,iii. The
opposite of Mar-text is Hymen as what might be called a
Make-text; he brings about the play's form by providing
both its unity and its ending.

The subject of Sir Oliver Mar-text brings us back
to those other mar-texts, Jaques and Touchstone. It is
interesting that the only scenes in which these two
characters meet on stage are III,iii, which is presided
over by Mar-text, and V,iv, which is presided over by
Hymen. There seems to be a connection between Jaques and
Touchstone, and between both and Mar-text, and the con-
nection apparently has to do with marriage. Each time
Touchstone meets Jaques (on the stage), he is on the point
of getting married, and each time Jaques presents an
alternative to marriage. In III,iii, Jaques insists on legal marriage as an alternative to Mar-text, and in V,iv he insists in his own person on the alternative of celibacy. He certainly suggests the dubiety of Touchstone's own marriage, in the negative blessing bestowed on Touchstone and Audrey: "thy loving voyage/ Is but for two months victualled." In both scenes, what Jaques does is to substitute speeches for marriage: in III,iii he offers his "counsel" and in V,iv his (seemingly uncharacteristic) all blessing. This is what Jaques has done along in the play, to substitute verbal relating for relationships.

Touchstone finally proves that he is a touchstone, albeit one of dubious utility to himself, by proving his contact with experience: he gets married. Jaques, the one odd man out among all the "evens" around him, remains at a remove from experience throughout. Individual identity, however, is established by experience, and Jaques becomes a negative exemplar of the importance of experience as Rosalind becomes a positive exemplar.

Jaques' detachment from genuine experience is perhaps best illustrated by his most famous speech:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players
(II,vii)

This first line, however, holds no surprises; this first line is not only Renaissance commonplace but for all time;
it is this line, out of the whole speech, which is most often popularly remembered. I think that popular recall in this case reflects something about the speech: that the rest of the speech actually does not fit with this first line. The speech as a whole undercuts the implications of the first line.

That is, that the world's a stage is a philosophical commonplace; its treatment in full is found as early as 1518, in Vives' *A Fable About Man* (*Fabula de homine*). As Vives expands this metaphor, however, and as a writer like Pico treats it, man's ability to play roles is the supreme instance of his power and control; acting on the stage of the world expresses the quasi-divine nature of man, who can expand through imagination and change shapes to fit his own conception of himself. As Jaques uses the commonplace, it changes somewhat: this passage emphasizes not power but a kind of predestination and a final helplessness which is obviously the opposite of imaginative expansion. The variety and interest of role-playing are not suggested, but rather a deadly predictability in the roles which may be played. In Jaques' view, man does not write his own script, nor is he free in acting from it.

Furthermore, as Frederick Turner points out, there is a strange discontinuity between one role and another in the sequence described by Jaques. What is lacking is any connection between, for example, the lover and the
soldier; there are no transitions from one part to another. As Turner says, "If one takes an individual out of his temporal context at various stages of his development, as Jaques does, one will inevitably falsify as well as omit much of what he is . . . To take temporal cross-sections is to ignore the process of growth, concentrating only on its effects and results." Jaques' speech is an abstract pattern with seeming individual variation, which is imposed on mankind; the individual is not really taken into account. The subjective responses of the individual to his situation are not given, not even in each separate phase, and certainly not for the whole "history." Indeed, nothing about this "history" can be expressed subjectively, because nothing of it is experienced; hence its fragmentation and its meaninglessness.

That the definition of identity proceeds from a continuum of experience in time is a psychological truism. In presenting seven separate and distinct stages of life without any connection at all, Jaques' speech is discrepant with both the theory and the actuality of our experience. This is why, as I said earlier, Jaques is appropriately served in being allowed seven—separate—scenes in the play (like Touchstone). The play's statement is obviously that there is a difference between the experience of a commentator or spectator, and that of a
"busy actor" like Rosalind. What is affirmed—beyond Jaques' own awareness, of course—in this speech, is the connection of drama with experience. The play has come around to drama's paradoxical self-affirmation as a part of and an expansion of experience; this speech is part of what keeps Arden from being an escape, a retreat.

This point is supported by the fact that, in more than one sense, this speech which denigrates genuine experience is also lacking in "drama." Remarkably, in this extended comparison of the world to a stage, there is very little of what we would call the "drama of life"; there is no suspense, no interest, no joy, nothing of "play" at all in this image of man as a player. Jaques himself moves from the metaphor of the stage in the first line to that of "history" at the end. The kind of stage described by Jacques is one which is deleterious both to life and to drama. When both life and playing are bound to time, drama is robbed of its power to use time against time itself.

This speech, furthermore, is a speech rather than an action; in this regard its form reflects its tone. It is not a presentation of experience, it is a description. It is, finally, narrative rather than drama, itself. This brings us back to what I commented upon at the beginning of this essay: Jaques, wanting to be a narrator, is
inevitably separate from the play's community. His exclusion is that of narrative itself from the stage-play. In this sense *As You Like It* represents an artistic triumph not only over earlier dramatic tradition, but also over its dimly-recalled narrative antecedents. There is a dual reference in the play's peculiar eventlessness unstrung-together by any narrative connection: it is not only a great drama, it also bests narrative.

One characteristic of this play is the number of mythological allusions in it: Rosalind's disguise as Ganymede, Orlando's "prodigal portion," which is a Christian myth, and the various versions of a "golden age" shown to us are a few of the examples of the use of myth. In this regard, the play has a lot in common with a literary category which might be called that of "Ovidian incident," in which disguises and changes of role are multiple and it is the reader's quest to string together the various myths which are presented. I said before that the esthetic task facing this play is that of connectedness itself. The various squibs of myth which decorate *As You Like It* have more purpose than just to give the play a softer color or a greater fancifulness; they bring out the play's engrossing question as to how myths are strung together.

The immediate answer to this question is that it is
experience which organizes myth or which grounds myth in life. This point is most easily illustrated through the play's treatment of the myth of the golden age. At the very opening of the play, in Orlando's complaint that his brother has not educated him as a gentleman, the myth of a "golden age" is introduced, albeit in a submerged form. Orlando's situation, in which he does no work, is an enforced and parodic version of the Ovidian golden world in which men did not have to work; Orlando has grown entirely in nature with no help from nurture. How far this condition is from the "golden world" of his society about which Orlando chiefly cares, of course, is made clear by his comment on his scholar-brother Jaques, of whom "report speaks goldenly." The ease of the classical golden world proves to be only the idleness treated in Christian parable: Orlando says to Oliver, "Shall I keep your hogs and eat husks with them? What prodigal portion have I spent that I should come to such penury?"

Orlando's parodic situation is pointed up by the play's next reference to a golden age. "They say he is already in the Forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world." The legendary quality of this forest
community is emphasized not only by the reference to two myths, that of Robin Hood and that of the golden world itself, but also by the two "They say's" which add to the suggestion of its removal in time. This description is almost too powerful in setting a tone for the play; it has had the effect for some critics of taking Arden out of the realm of reality entirely.

We move into this world through paradox, a kind of thematic analogy to Spenser's coexistent spring and fall in the Gardens of Adonis. Celia says, "Now go we in content/To liberty, and not to banishment" (I,iii). Her speech provides the link to a different scene and different people (another of the close relationships between different parts of the play): Duke Senior begins the next scene with "Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,/ Hath not old custom made this life more sweet/Than that of painted pomp?". Since it notices the change of seasons, the golden world has lost its ease and its sense of timelessness, but artistic paradox "can translate the stubbornness of fortune" into "so quiet and so sweet a style" as that of the Duke's speech. The "penalty of Adam" here gives an almost Spensierian sense of the "eterne in mutability."

The next allusion or implied allusion to the same myth comes, I think, in a pun: in the generosity of the
aged Adam to his young master (II,iii), we are shown a true "golden age":

The thrifty hire I saved under your father,  
Which I did store to be my foster nurse  
When service should in my old limbs lie lame  
And unregarded age in corners thrown.  
Take that, and he that doth the ravens feed . . .  
Be comfort to my age. Here is the gold . . .  
(11.38-45)

The gold here is generosity itself, and affection, like the chain which Rosalind gave to Orlando. Orlando's reply to Adam supports the connection between the two senses of the word "age": "O good old man, how well in thee appears/ The constant service of the antique world . . ." (56-57).

Since Orlando had the enforced privilege of wasting "the creeping hours of time" from his youth, he seems never to confound the ideals of an "antique world" with "fleeting the time carelessly." Orlando's consciousness of the gap between his enforced idleness and his apparent ambition, indeed, leads him to a preoccupation with time which enables Rosalind to catch his attention with her "I pray you, what is't o'clock?" (III,ii). Thus he characterizes the Duke and his company with, "whate'er you are/ That in this desert inaccessible,/ Under the shade of melancholy boughs,/ Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time" (II,vii). The hint of sadness here at his own time-wasting situation works ultimately to Rosalind's
advantage; she is charming to Orlando because she provides a pastime which is also rehearsal for a hoped-for reality.

Orlando's situation provides a serious comment on the ideal of an attainable golden age. Touchstone, by means of his connection with Audrey, provides a not-so-serious comment on the same ideal. Touchstone is the only character who explicitly mentions that Ovid whose fund of myth is so frequently drawn upon in the play: "I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths" (III,iii). The youth and romantic love which Rosalind and others do manage to convert into some semblance of a golden world, Touchstone converts into bawdy and doggerel: "Come, sweet Audrey./ We must be married, or we must live in bawdry." He undercuts the marriages which make the end of the play a true myth of origin: "I press in here, sir, amongst the rest of the country copulatives, to swear and to forswear, according as marriage binds and blood breaks. A poor virgin, sir, an ill-favored thing, sir, but mine own; a poor humor of mine, sir, to take that that no man else will" (V,iv). Jaques, incidentally, confirms the myth-of-origin in the play's ending, albeit of course satirically: "There is, sure, another flood toward, and these couples are coming to the ark."
The myth of a golden age in *As You Like It* proves at last to be the myth of a golden youth, with marriage as its crown. Myth and reality are finally connected in the play when the human and the divine are connected, in the marriages at the end. Through its verification by youthful experience, the mythological becomes sacramental (in the marriage sacrament) and thus newly or even originally meaningful. The myth itself becomes, as it were, youthful.

The experience which verifies some myths, or some aspects of some myths, is identified with the kind of dramatic action in which Jaques does not participate. We come back to the notion of Jaques as someone who belongs outside the realm of the play as drama. The kind of order he tries to impose on life, being verbal rather than experiential, draws him away from dramatic presentation itself to that of another form. Thus he becomes the embodiment of a function most inimical to drama: that of narrative.

This function is Jaques' reason for being. Commentary is Jaques' life, in somewhat the same that the stewardship which boils down to withholding cakes and ale is Malvolio's life. In this respect he is most unlike Orlando and Rosalind, who are working toward a more individual goal (if perhaps a less unique goal). Jaques provides a commentary on the play's action not only
consciously, however, but also unconsciously. In his own person he shows, as it were, the reason we need drama.

The difference between the kind of "relating" done by Rosalind and the kind of relating done by Jaques is the difference between the kind of "relationship" formed by character, and that formed by narrative. Walter Davis discusses this distinction in *Idea and Act in Renaissance Fiction*:

The novel works by analysis: we see ourselves in a character . . . A tale, on the other hand, works by a special kind of relation. With its emphasis on events in time and on the ambiguity of any human act within that continuum, it tells us who we are by placing us in the universe which is so puzzling to us, by placing us in relation to the other. . . .

In *As You Like It*, Jaques represents this "special kind of relation" which Davis mentions, the kind of "relation" which is necessitated by the absence of what we would call "relationships." He does not have—nor in the illusion of the play, seems not to have—the nature of a character in Davis's sense, who has ties with other characters. He places himself by means of the "narrative line" which he spiels.

This characteristic isolation, which Jaques shares with the other figures I have discussed in these plays, governs the category into which Jaques fits. My own use of the term "character" is not that of Davis, who gives it a connotation of personhood to which I would oppose it.
However, my sense of Jaques' status is well expressed in Davis's terms:

In this view, the difference between novel and early fiction is like Gilson's distinction between the modern concept of personality, an individual mind which psychology can analyze in isolation, and the Christian concept of a person, based on the examination of the human condition in relation to the earth and its Creator, which Christian philosophy provides.\[13\]

The distinction between "personality" and "person" cited here expresses the difference between Jaques and the characters around him. The use of the word "personality" is synonymous with my use of the word "character" (as opposed to "person"). Jaques and the other figures like him present a range of personal idiosyncrasies which demands to be analyzed "psychologically" in isolation. In this sense they represent the lengths to which "character" can be taken; for my purposes, they represent "character" itself.

In As You Like It, the characters Jaques and Touchstone are purely Shakespeare's own inventions, his own additions to the story from Lodge. And while the figure of the Fool has venerable antecedents, as shown in Enid Welsford's fine book, some question remains as to the source of a figure like Jaques (or Malvolio). Jaques of course displays the affectations of the melancholic of Elizabethan convention, and Malvolio displays the more drastic affectations of one kind of melancholic, the
malcontent. The very fact that these salient characteristics are the product of modern tradition, Renaissance tradition, seems important. It seems to me that these characters, like Lucio in *Measure for Measure* and Parolles in *All's Well That Ends Well* in a different mood, are the product of post-Medieval thinking about the nature of character itself.

If this point seems speculative, it must be noted that such melancholics and malcontents as Jaques and Malvolio, Marston's Malevole and Webster's Bosola, the melancholic or Saturn-dominated villains Aaron in *Titus Andronicus* (even) and Don John, and the melancholy revengers Antonio, Hieronimo, Vindice and in some respects Hamlet, have one thing in common besides their obvious melancholy. They are among the playwrights' most useful creations: the melancholy character is in many such cases the mainspring of the play's action. The figure may be a psychological type, but the effect is nevertheless "real" action. Action, in other words, stems fairly directly from character itself, and the fact that the character in these cases is a "type" serves chiefly to generalize this point, to abstract it, to elevate it to the nature of a principle.

I said earlier that such figures as Jaques and Malvolio are more immediately described by the very term
"character" than by any other; if the heroine illuminates the possible range and importance of the dramatic character in one direction, so do these figures in another. That is, Portia, Beatrice, and Rosalind have a range of expression and fullness of possibility as "people"; Shylock and Jaques and Malvolio have a range of expression and display the ways in which character can be used in drama, as characters. It is as though each play could be read as an allegory on play-writing, and while the heroine represents the affective aspects of character, character from the audience's point of view, wooing hero, audience and literary tradition alike, Jaques and Parolles represent the possibilities of character viewed intellectually, viewed from the playwright's perspective. Look how absurd I can make Parolles, says the playwright, how "typical" one villain (Don John), how empathic another, how superficial but interesting the affectations of a Jaques and how ludicrous but effectual the crudities of Lucio. In every case it is the tremendous usefulness of these figures which is remarkable, their effectiveness as "characters."

Jaques' own particular utility derives from his "narrative" or undramatic nature. What narrative does is relating; what drama substitutes is relationships, and this is exactly where Jaques is left out (and where
Touchstone wilfully thrusts himself in). Jaques, lacking the sort of interpersonal connections which make him a part of the community in the play, fills in with the sort of connections (a running commentary from one appearance to the next) which still give him a part in the play. His part, however, is only a part, as opposed to what we feel about Rosalind's role. Like the rest of these inherently solitary figures, Jaques reveals the function of character by revealing the fragmentary or incomplete quality of his own experience.

Arden is only partly what Ja... seems to want, "the ordered life of the mind" as opposed to the "disorders of time," in Davis's words. What goes on in Arden is what goes on in Sidney's aptly-named realm of Tempe, which is the testing of ideas through action. From the viewpoint of a character like Rosalind, indeed, this play might be named after another romance, The Triumph of Time (otherwise known as Pandosto). Rosalind herself brings up the concept of testing by time: "Well, Time is the old justice that examines all such offenders," she says to Orlando, "and let Time try."

This line is only the explicit expression of the experiment which Rosalind conducts throughout the play, or throughout her stay in Arden which turns into the play. The pastoral interlude becomes, after all, the whole play;
at the end of *As You Like It* the characters have not returned to the court. This ending reinforces the play's themes. Rosalind's role-playing is a heroic testing of concept by experience; through her acting she proves to be what she acts--she incorporates the act into reality. And this process is reflected in the fact that what begins as a pastoral interlude proves to be the real play. The only move out of Arden that we see is in the Epilogue, in which Rosalind steps out of every role but the basic one of player and addresses the audience. *As You Like It* is thus analogous to *The Taming of the Shrew* in this respect, rather than to, for example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with which it shares some "green world" characteristics.

The pastoral circle is the projection of a psychic field; the task confronting Rosalind is to make the various components of such a field connect, to make the experience a continuum, which means to make it meaningful. Again, the interlude must be shown to be a whole, a totality; the temporary escape into the "eternal present" of the pastoral mindscape is intended to yield a fruitful present for all of time, all of subsequent experience. In this regard *As You Like It* is the most "present-tense" of the plays so far discussed.

Davis describes the *Arcadia* as using "plot as
speculation"\textsuperscript{15} in order to test precept by experience; \textit{As You Like It} could be similarly described as using "speculation as plot," to serve the same end. If the work of narrative fiction uses the action as idea, in terms of Davis's key dichotomy, the dramatic fiction here uses the idea as the action. Realism in the play is thus pinned to attitude, of which Rosalind is the foremost example, rather than to "action" in any narrow sense of the term. Indeed, some of the play's (few) most crucial "events" are among its least realistic elements—as for example the conversion of Oliver and of Duke Frederick, Oliver's and Celia's falling in love, the sudden appearance of the playwright's own "tame snake"—the one which threatens Oliver—and the killing of the lioness.

So little realistic are these events, indeed, that they do not "actually" occur; they happen offstage and are reported to the audience in (again) narrative form, instead of being presented dramatically. It is my contention that the fact that all these "unrealistic" elements lie offstage both underscores their unreality and, paradoxically, reinforces the realism of the play as a whole—on its own terms. The exclusion of the unrealistic from visual or dramatic presentation is a structural pun; it is a kind of perceptual or intellectual shorthand signifying that the "unrealistic" elements in this play have been deliberately
reduced to a minimum—literally reduced to nothing. The "unrealistic" here is not allowed a dramatic existence.

Added to the kinds of time in the forest which Touchstone and Rosalind describe is what might be called offstage time, narrative time, the time required to produce the "tame snake" through whatever eons of fictional evolution it took to create such a beast, the time required to convert Duke Frederick. The relatively brief time for such events to be narrated onstage seems to be infinitely extensible for their occurrence offstage; time gallops in the latter situation even if it does amble in the former. It is, again, the experience of this time which matters, as in Rosalind's speech about the different motions of time for different people—which is of course opposed to Jaques' non-experiential speech about the seven ages of life. This same concept of experience is that which is preeminently relevant to our very consideration of this play in which nothing seems to happen. Our same, subjective experience of time in the play determines whether the play seems to "trot" or to "amble." We are rather like the other spectators, Jaques and Touchstone, in using an internal commentary, a running commentary, in order to fill in the connections required to turn an action into an experience and to make the experience, therefore, meaningful.
The play thus reinforces its own present, our sense of the present. The importance of the present or of making fruitful use of the present time means an emphasis on action. Action is opposed both to stasis and to mere non-participation or spectatorship in the narrowest sense. Part of the immense technical feat of the play is that "action" in the narrower sense is not even needed here, because this metaphysical (apparently metaphysical, illusorily metaphysical) aim of experience as action is so fully attained. Rosalind does not need to be doing anything more than she does (in fact, she does not need to do as much as she does, but this unnecessariness is not trifling, it is the artistic manifestation of the richness of her life and of the play's life).

The importance of this "present" which means both time and place, literally the "here and now," is symbolically reinforced by Rosalind's Epilogue, which delivers the play over to the forces of reality in their most immediate form--the audience in the theater. The "central idea" in a play like As You Like It is teleological; the central idea of this play is that Rosalind is going to get married, and the marriage expresses the possibility of disposing of a life(time) in a meaningful way. It expresses every kind of union, the harmony of a personality integrated in itself and in tune
with the outside world—even, as "Rosalind" reveals in the Epilogue, the world outside the play. The heroine, a boy/girl who becomes a woman securely and inevitably attractive to men, weds the play to the audience when she weds herself to the hero, providing the center and therefore the source of the play's reconciliatory power. Ultimately, she joins the play to "real life," as is made explicit in the Epilogue, which in this sense is a recapitulation of the play in little. The play would, it seems, be incomplete with it, even "if it be true that good wine needs no bush."

As the means to every kind of significant unity in the play, the heroine finally ranges outside the play to provide the only kind of unity lacking within—the union of the play with what is outside it. There is, indeed, a suggestion of a sort of union or even of breeding, in the Epilogue itself:

I charge you, O women, for the love you bear to men, to like as much of this play as please you; and I charge you, O men, for the love you bear to women (as I perceive by your simp'ring none of you hates them), that between you and the women the play may please.

We discover that, among the various other possibilities uncovered by the drama, this play may please in the way that other kinds of play between men and women please; surely there is a double meaning in "between you and the women the play may please." And like sexual play again,
the final purpose of this play is not just that it may please; it is also an image of a larger kind of unity or harmony.

The "Rosalind" who speaks the Epilogue, even while stepping out of her character, emphasizes the reconciliation or unity of male and female in her own person:

If I were a man, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me, and breaths that I defied not; and I am sure, as many as have good beards or good faces, or sweet breaths, will, for my kind offer, when I make curtsy, bid me farewell.

The speech moves from sexual union to a kind of hermaphroditism. Even while emphasizing the fact that she is not a woman, the figure of Rosalind, still dressed in her costume, speaks in terms of a woman's pleasure, referring to "beards that pleased me," etc. The play's reconciliation of opposites has proceeded to the union of opposites in one person. All the odds have been made so even that Rosalind herself becomes--again--two people in one.
FOOTNOTES


3 As pointed out by, among others, Harold Jenkins, in "As You Like It," *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of As You Like It*, pp. 28-43.


6 Jenkins, p. 36.

7 Helen Gardner, "As You Like It," in *Twentieth-Century Interpretations*, p. 55.


9 Davis, p. 9.


12 Davis, p. 9.

14 Ibid., p. 68.
15 Davis, p. 67.
CHAPTER V

MEASURE FOR MEASURE

A brief episode from the last act of Measure for Measure will illustrate some of the peculiarities of this play's action. This is the scene in which Lucio disrobes the "unreverend and unhallowed friar" who is actually the Duke in disguise. "Cucullus non facit monachum," Lucio has said with perfect truth, and,

Come, sir, come, sir, come sir. Foh, sir, why, you bald-pated, lying rascal, you must be hooded, must you: Show your knave's visage, with a pox to you; show your sheep-biting face, and be hanged an hour. Will't not off?

[Pulls off the friar's hood, and discovers the Duke.]

Duke. Thou art the first knave that e'er mad'st a duke. (V,i,348-52)

Those among the audience who have thought the Duke only a low schemer from the outset will disagree with his pronouncement, which point of course adds to the many potential ambiguities in this scene. But leaving all grounds for subjective dissent alone for the present, the iconography behind the scene, and the objective terms which it yields, are still productive of sufficient ambiguity. The esthetic concerns of this play are not "straight"; art--iconographic or dramatic--is askew, asquint, awry in Measure for Measure,
and when it is the Duke's art, for example, art can hurt.

The half-imaginary figure who, as a sneaking friar, has supposedly slandered the Duke, is a perfect case in point. This figure—not only not a real "person" but not even a real character—constructed by the Duke's artifice with unwitting aid from Lucio's own scheming, is one known to art-historical tradition as a conventional image for Slander, a "rayler against Truth," a devil garbed as a friar. The Duke is being accused of, and seized for, "Slander to th' state." But the point to the allegory here is misdirected; as the audience knows, the supposed slanderer is actually the Duke himself, and the real slanderer is actually Lucio. What we have is a perfectly emblematic scene—the unmasking of falsehood, the stripping of the false face from deceit—whose emblem is neatly addressed to a reality diametrically opposite to its effect.

And the ambiguity is compounded by the fact that the Duke really is, on some levels, a deceiver, although he is wrongly accused of the particular offense for which he is seized. This dubiousness of his activities is not diminished by the nature of the disguise in question, incidentally; given the anti-Papist quality of much iconographical tradition—and, one assumes, of the temper of the time—Lucio, and Shakespeare, find it easy to play upon
negative expectations about friars. Thus the equally dubious quality of the Duke's pursuit of Isabella, or hers of him, is aggravated by a suggestion so delicate as to be almost subliminal, produced by the allegorical convention which represents Lechery as a nun and a friar kissing (Lavache, the clown in All's Well That Ends Well, refers to this convention in his "As fit as . . . the nun's lip to the friar's mouth," II,i,23,28). For all the reader knows, after all, Isabella is still in her white novice's robe to the very end of the play, and the moment at the end at which the--false--nun and the--false--friar leave the stage hand in hand must inevitably produce a queasy image of romantic union.

Indeed, this last scene of the play becomes a positive fairground of possible or approximate iconographic images. Thus, in view of the earlier set debate between "justice" as represented by Angelo and "mercy" as represented by Isabella, the final union of Angelo and Mariana and of the Duke and Isabella seems to be an allusion to a familiar topic in representations of the virtues, the reconciliation of the Daughters of God. The passage from the Bible is Psalms lxxxiv: "Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness (or Justice) and Peace have kissed each other," and while the inconsistencies involved in visualizing Isabella and the Duke, and Angelo and Mariana,
as Mercy and Truth, Justice and Peace, respectively, are too numerous to point out, these inconsistencies do not obscure the very existence of the iconographic motif. Isabella and Angelo in their dispute over Claudio's fate clearly echo the debate between Mercy and Justice over man's soul. The five-year idyl behind Mariana of the Moated Grange has no "realistic" significance as weighty as the restful quality which it reinforces in her very title and her beautiful song; her situation and character provide a sort of interlude--of Peace--in the play. And the Duke, whatever the nature of his machinations, does finally deliver up the Truth about Angelo's character, Mariana's, and perhaps Isabella's as well (those truths we suspect about the Duke's character, of course, are among the ambiguities which interrupt the allegorical consistency of his role qua allegory).

There is a painting of the action of Justice described by Guy de Tervarent in "Veritas and Justitia triumphant," Warburg Journal, VII, 95-101, which presents "... Envy and Treason overthrown, Truth exalted, Innocence free at the feet of Excessive Severity and Dilatoriness in Procedure enchained, and the prisoners, the widows and orphans who have been allowed to present their supplication." The panel as a whole is opposed to one of Injustice. In its rather overwhelming multiplicity
and sense of the busyness of the workings of justice, this painting reminds one of the crowded last scene in Measure for Measure, I think, which brings together the Duke, the second friar, Angelo, Escalus, the two women, Claudio, Lucio, and various bystanders and enforcers. The problem arises in trying to assign precise correspondences—as always in this play—between title and meaning. Thus, while Angelo might well represent "Excessive Severity" or some such quality, it is the Duke to whom Isabella, as "Innocence," kneels—and whose severe punishment of Lucio is called into question by the terms of forgiveness the play seems to establish. "Dilatoriness in Procedure" here, most aptly represented by Lucio, who serves in this scene largely to uphold the workings of justice, is what has saved the action of the play from a decidedly non-comic decapitation; a certain kind of "dilatoriness" is one of the effects the Duke has striven to produce. And among those "who have been allowed to present their supplication" to the Duke is one whom he is apparently intent on making a widow—albeit a rich one: Mariana, who has to beg the Duke not to mock her with a husband. It is the Duke himself who has made the two women prisoners to begin with, and the only "orphan" involved in the action is Lucio's child by the bawd—and which, again, the Duke seems intent on making an orphan, by hanging Lucio.
The inconsistencies which arise through such an "allegorical" approach—and this is a play which, like *The Tempest* to which it is closely related, unceasingly provokes such interpretation—are, it must be reiterated, myriad. The common factor in those elements of the play which invite such an approach, indeed, is as much a disappointment at the results of allegorical exegesis, as it is the allegorical outline—the allegorical dotted lines, as it were—itsel's. In this pattern of expectation and disappointment we find, I think, what Wylie Sypher would call the "dramatic firmament" of this play. What characterizes the community of images in *Measure for Measure* is the notable presence of discrepancy or disparity, or deviation from a normative level of expectation, which calls attention to itself as insistently as Lucio ever does—one respect in which Lucio can be considered representative of this peculiar quality in the play.

In other words, the fact that such discrepancies call attention to themselves is intentional; those aspects of the play which strike us as unsatisfactory are meant to be unsatisfactory—and this aspect of the upsetting, over-all, is thematically important. Thus, Mariana's wonderful song, "Take, O take those lips away," which is one of the most beautiful details in the play, is nevertheless somehow striking in its particularity, its quality
of being extruded from its context. Some of its significance derives from the fact that, although it is a song which charms the audience, we nevertheless remember that it is of small comfort to Mariana herself—she is no source of peace to herself. We retreat from the particular to the abstract, the idealized, just as we do in comparing the Duke's machinations to "power divine." And the discrepancy between the particulars on one hand, and the idealized resolution of particular problems on the other (for example the play's ending, with its forced marriages), throws us back, in turn, on the problems: we retreat ultimately, in carrying the concerns of the play outside the play to the real world. The action of the play is thus analogous to a theological--teleological--process in which one is drawn by the unsatisfactoriness of this world to the next. And the ending of the play has this much in common with what is conventionally represented, in a religious context, as our introduction to the next world: it may not be the Last Judgment, but it is the last we get. (The Duke's conscious attempt to utilize the iconography of Judgment Day will be discussed later.)

Like Mariana's song, the passage in which Lucio describes Juliet's pregnancy is one of those gemlike moments which persist in rendering their context (and the play itself) dubious. "Fewness and truth," he says,
tossing away one of the play's most lyrical passages,
"'tis thus":

Your brother and his lover have embraced;
As those that feed grow full, as blossoming time
That from the seedness the bare fallow brings
To teeming foison, even so her plenteous womb
Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry.
(I,iv,39-44)

These lines of Lucio's are like no one else's in the play, and least of all are they like his own earlier description of the culmination of the same natural processes: "Thy bones are hollow; impiety has made a feast of thee." This speech telescopes the movement of time into a kind of inverted *carpe diem* in which the end of life is found to be already present, with a suggestion of the "worm" which later makes a "feast" of the body. In the grotesque play on the word "sound" which opposes it to health, Lucio reduces his auditors to the clattering skeletal forms of a *danse macabre*:

Gent. Thou art always figuring diseases in me; but thou art full of error. I am sound.
Lucio: Nay, not—as one would say—healthy, but so sound as things that are hollow. Thy bones are hollow; (I,ii,50-53)

Nor is Lucio's description of Juliet's pregnancy anything like Claudic's own description of his situation:

Our natures do pursue,
Like rats that ravin down their proper bane,
A thirsty evil, and when we drink we die.
(I,ii,124-26)

These three terribly disparate passages are not, be it noted,
unrelated; the natural hunger described by Lucio is contrasted to Claudio's image of a perverse thirst, and his vision of the plenitude of sex as procreation is contrasted to the emptiness, sick hollowness, of sex as commerce in scene ii. This relationship between the three passages, however, is one which again serves to emphasize the discrepancies between them; they are part of the same play, but they are not part of the same reality. They reveal the jogs, gaps, in a reality (or a view of it) which is, like the Duke, subject to "crotchets."

It is illuminating to try to determine wherein consists the beauty of this play—as in, for instance, Mariana's song and Lucio's description of Juliet's pregnancy, already mentioned. There are also Isabella's speeches to Angelo about proud man making the angels weep, and the Duke's lines at the end of IV,ii, "Look, th' unfolding star calls up the shepherd. Put not yourself into amazement how these things should be; all difficulties are but easy when they are known," and Isabella's moral development, which leads her to tear herself apart in public out of a blind trust which results in the deliverance of both her brother and Angelo. The beauty of such elements in the play is equalled, I think, only by the strange disappointment engendered by an attempt to fit together a unified, consistent "interpretation" of their significance. Such a
catalogue presents the consistency only of being off-
balance throughout; art-form in the play calls attention
to itself even in little, with the result that perspectives
are off-center and the art throws itself off-balance.

This quality of being what I termed "off-balance,"
indeed, is highly characteristic of Measure for Measure, and
it is even definitive in the sense that it places this play
squarely in the category of art history called mannerism.
It is suggestive, for example, to apply Wylie Sypher's
language describing manneristic art (from Four Stages of
Renaissance Style) to the play: surely the phrase, "an
art of bad conscience," is as appropriate a description of
Measure for Measure as of the category--mannerism--in
general. And the play has other, specific characteristics
which serve to affix the "mannerist" label more securely:
the "passionate naturalism" of, for example, Claudio's
speech about dying; the presentation of situations in which
"the iconography does not correspond to the psychology"--
Sypher applies this observation to Parmigianino, but it is
surely just as appropriate to the unmasking of the Duke by
Lucio, already discussed. And the fact that iconography
and psychology do not always mesh, as it were, is largely
the result of the fact that a forced perspective is being
employed in the play at times, a perspective which relies
not on the realistic logic of cause and effect, but
apparently only on the author's warped vision. As in Parmigianino (again, in Sypher's terms), "there are signs of unexplained overresponse to unknown stimuli . . . the emotional implications are incongruous with the logic of the composition." This latter observation is perfectly descriptive, it seems to me, of—for example—Isabella's outburst against Claudio, a vitriolic blast which is somehow out of keeping coming from a virgin "enskied and sainted."

Aiding in the effect of what I have called a "forced perspective"—of which the temptation to read the Duke as a figure in some sort for the deity is perhaps the foremost example—is the superimposition of details of medieval faith upon the play, as though "medieval faith" were primarily an artistic lexicon from which a vocabulary can be lifted in chunks. Several of the allegorical and quasi-allegorical elements in the play fall into this category. Sypher says that "the mannerists reverted to an almost gothic inwardness and spirituality—Verinnerlichung and Beseelung—yet with a 'private' unrest and complexity (Unruh und Komplikation) gothic man is unlikely to have known."

Claudio's fears of death present such a gothic/mannerist hybrid in the play; they resemble Hamlet's—and Donne's—in this respect.

To call Measure for Measure "mannerist" is not merely to apply to it a catalogue of descriptive tags, however—
no matter how tempting it is to do so, cf. the "demented ingenuity" and mixture of "melodrama and levity" by which Sypher characterizes the Chigi Palace, phrases which seem more than equally applicable to the play. What is behind the notion of a wrenched perspective, a distorted perspective, for example, is more basic than the humorous or skeptical possibilities inherent in the scene of Lucio's unmasking the Duke. Art becomes (naturally) metaphysics at some point: the difference between mannerism and what went before is in part the difference between high-Renaissance metaphysical assurance, stability, regularity and order on one hand and a subsequent upset of all these. Thus the distortion of perspective implies a corresponding distortion of, at least, mood. If, as Panofsky says, "exact perspective construction means a perfect unification and systematization of three-dimensional space," then a wrenched perspective means a corollary interruption and incommensurateness of space. When the perspective is distorted, that is, the illusion created is that one is working with essentially different substances or materials; the effect is, as I said earlier, that of gaps or jogs in "reality."

The "space" of painting, in this context, is translated in terms of the dramatic work of art into personal psychology—and interpersonal relationships. Regular or realistic perspective would be the actions of a character
in accordance with a consistent and realistic psychological development, while Isabella's hysterical outburst against Claudio—for example—shows the effect of Sypher's "unknown stimuli," as mentioned before. This notion of "unknown stimuli," in fact, is one which is highly relevant to Measure for Measure; its action is initiated, after all, because the Duke suddenly and, as it seems, arbitrarily, decides to experiment with both the government of the city and perhaps the moral development of Angelo. The forces which operated to produce this decision on the Duke's part are never made fully apparent or understandable to the viewer.

Goddard's idea about Measure for Measure is that it asks us to renounce power, and while this view is, I think, incomplete, it is also most engaging. This concept of "power" is one which, among other things, serves to link this play to The Tempest—which certainly deals with power—in ways which point up the differences between the two plays. Measure for Measure is in some ways the mannerist cognate of the later play. Prospero abjures his power, as Duke Vincentio cannot or will not, but then Prospero's renunciation of magic still leaves him able to wield an earthly power in Milan: Prospero, even after voluntarily diminishing his status, will still be equal to a Duke Vincentio. Prospero's power, therefore, is not only greater than Duke Vincentio's, it comes to be more in line with
human or earthly possibility. It is interesting that where the critics want to call Duke Vincentio God, they want to call Prospero the playwright; less divinity, in this context, means more power. As I said, Prospero's claims are capable of more fulfillment, capable of being actualized.

Part of the ambiguity of Measure for Measure, on the other hand, is the discrepancy between as it were the dotted lines of the Duke's figure, "like power divine," and what we see of the products of this power, what we see of its limitations. If Goddard's idea that it is the reader, we who watch Measure for Measure, who are supposed to renounce power, is correct, then the notion of a sort of perspective again becomes relevant: if the reader or viewer has to be brought around to the renunciation of power which should by all rights have occurred in the play, then the reader or viewer as it were completes the orthogonal. Perspective is truncated in the play, where it is completed through Prospero himself in The Tempest.

There is a moral statement behind the different schemes of the two plays: Prospero can complete his action and our understanding of it, revealing an open vista at the end of the play, because he does only what man can in a human or earthly context (even the command of the spirits is the work of a magician--who is still a man). Duke Vincentio truncates the same sort of perspective partly because he
tries, unsuccessfully, to range into the quasi-divine. (I should point out here, incidentally, that this kind of perspective, from the inside looking out to us, is called "inverted" or "introspective"). Prospero's stagecraft works, perhaps because of the greater range of his own vision, where the Duke has to support his staging attempt by imposing the fiat of authority (and "authority," as Goddard points out, is a word used more often in this play than in any other of Shakespeare's). And the fiat, the command, is also a truncating of perception or of the free play of reason.

It is power which is behind the action of "Justice," in this play, and power which inanimates the abstractions throughout. And behind this secular power is the power of the playwright which animates empty words and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name--but it is very difficult (I think) to feel this power as affirmative, or indeed to feel it at all, in a direct or immediate way; if the art of the playwright is as mind to the body of the play, then Measure for Measure is another example of a mannerist art which "already shows the disturbing dis-relationship of mind and body which became a major problem in Descartes." I said that the playwright animates empty words, and so he does, but they remain empty; their power is not explicable by their sense--the clearest illustration
of this phenomenon being, perhaps, "Justice." For an explanation we fall back on fiat, on the playwright's power, divine both in its absoluteness and in resembling the power of a God himself becoming dubious at the beginning of the seventeenth century, since he had to be accommodated either by Jesuitical casuistry or by the absolute submission of the Calvinists. The playwright's power is like that of Descartes' god: "Descartes . . . never succeeded in explaining how mind acts on flesh or flesh on mind. The best he and his followers could do was to accept a psychology of 'occasionalism' assuming that the body itself has no power to move but is controlled in even its slightest action by God . . . ." Such an occasionalism operates in the play; or, I should say, such an occasion is the play, in which every moment is the mannerist "moment of dualism—a Spannung, a strain not decisively resolved."

It can readily be seen that a drama composed of moments of "dualism," strung on moments of tension, does not yield easily satisfying answers for the particular questions it raises—and it may be assumed, surely, that such a drama is not meant to produce such answers. Just as we fall back from Duke Vincentio's inadequate stagecraft to the playwright's absolute power "like power divine," so we fall back from unsatisfactory particulars, from the uncertainty of the "here and now," to universals.
That is, the play is resolved through the universal because its particulars are so unsatisfactory: the universal wins, as it were, by default. This process is most obviously in operation when we liken the Duke's machinations to "power divine"; it is in operation as well, as suggested before, when we withdraw from the play to the real world--the ultimate retreat to what is, compared to the play, "universal."

Somewhere between allegory and reality, we also fall into the universals of comedy--forgiveness, absolution, marriages, and LITERALLY last but not least, an ending, our Last Judgment, which ushers us into the next world. It is highly interesting that the Duke self-consciously makes use of the iconography of the Last Judgment. Angelo murmurs that the Duke's actions "show much like to madness" (IV,iv), and wonders, "And why meet him at the gates, and redeliver our authorities there?"--but there is a reason for the "gates" which suggests why they are mentioned three times. The Duke orders that "trumpets" be brought to the "gate" (IV,v); and Friar Peter says,

Twice have the trumpets sounded.
The generous and gravest citizens
Have hent the gates  (IV,vi).

The significance of the gates and the "trumpets" (also mentioned more than once) is connected to that of the "consecrated fount" which is another part of the Duke's stage setting in the command to Angelo, "To meet me at the
consecrated fount /A league below the city" (IV,iii). All three of these props or stage devices—gates, trumpets, and fount—are conventional iconographic accessories to representations of the Day of Judgment (the "last trump" and the "great gates" are still commonplaces in this context).

It is obvious that the Duke intends to give his utterances, his judgment, a great weight, and for the characters in the play they are indeed absolute; it is only for the spectator or reader that questions linger beyond the nonetheless-final resolution. Our reconciliation must proceed from the structural pun involved in the "finality" of this Last Judgment, as discussed before; as in the casuistry of the age in question in dealing with this play, the Occasional—and in this case the occasion—becomes the Ultimate.

Thus this structural pun entailed in the ending is related to what happens throughout in the play or to the play as a whole, in which the "occasion" is always the ultimate. The dramatic happening is at every moment an emergent occasion which every instant and in every slightest action evinces the immediate power of the god-like playwright. In this respect art reconciles opposites which the philosophy of the age cannot; art becomes analogous both to casuistry and to Calvinism: "Calvin and the casuists allow for the incommensurate: Calvin making everything contingent
upon the despotic personal will of God, and the Jesuit making everything contingent upon the occasion." The occasion, in the context of art, becomes identical with the "despotic personal will" which activates it. And in this particular work of art, this identification is presented: the Duke's despotism at the end of the play is a peculiar combination of fiat and the casuistic "strategy of exacting penance by treating each sinner as an exceptional case." As Sypher summarizes its advantage, "Thus the casuist could 'loosen' or 'adapt' the law to suit the particular person involved in a particular instance, here and now, immediately."

The word "sentence" (or "sentenced") is found more often in this play than any of Shakespeare's others; it is present in both its senses, of simple language or statement—the grammatical unit, and of judicial degree or punishment. The term is appropriate for this play, in which almost everyone comes under some kind of sentence at some time—and in which, indeed, life itself seems at times to be the serving of a sentence (not to mention the serving of language in its other forms). This feature of the play is important with respect to all the characters and not least with respect to the Duke, but it is perhaps especially relevant to the character of Angelo, who goes around speaking in sentences—doubly. As the play on the
word hints, to enter the realm of language here—which means to enter into the play itself—is virtually equivalent to serving some sort of term. This perhaps is the basic reason why most of the characters in the play are put into prison, or at least are seen in prison, at one time or another. Life itself, in this "problem play," closely resembles imprisonment and therefore the setting for the play's life, which is the stage, is frequently identified with the prison which is its central feature. The despotism behind these sentences is of course that of the playwright—ruler of his creation more like James I, perhaps, than like Milton's God or poet. We come back again to the notion of personal fiat, which calls into being that which it states. And there is an ongoing confusion in this play between statements and states of being, between language and reality.

Nowhere is this confusion more evident than with respect to the issue of justice which is all-pervasive in the play. In spite of the inconsistencies involved in a rigid allegorical interpretation of Measure for Measure, I still believe that the play is largely "about" justice, and it is about justice in a peculiarly literal sense: characters, actions, and themes in the play all shuffle around the abstraction without ever finally realizing it, or even fully defining it. "I do lean upon justice,"
Elbow says, and he is by no means the only character to do so. The secondary, ironic, meaning of Elbow's statement, indeed, is significant for the play even in imagistic terms: his use of the word "justice" is explicitly as a figure, with both the clumsy mechanical quality and the quasi-spiritual allusive power of the figure.

Such figures throng the stage—almost all the characters speak in a figurative or sententious or moralizing vein—exploiting both the power of figures to provide emblematic statements and formulations, and their (opposite) power to suggest an allegorical framework which they do not actually quite support. Thus, in the first act alone, the themes so introduced include Justice (over and over), power (also reiterated), grace—the topic of scene ii, and honor; Nature, mortality, mercy (Madame) Mitigation, Authority, tyranny, and liberty. Personification is used again and again: Claudio refers to "the demi-god, Authority" (I, ii); Mistress Overdone is "Madame Mitigation" (I, ii)—the kind of "mercy" which does prove to become a bawd. Claudio says that "surfeit is the father of much fast" (I, ii), and compares the "body public of Vienna" to "A horse whereon the governor doth ride" (I, ii), using the traditional symbolic representation of Flesh and Reason (the Duke himself refers to the laws as "needful bits and curbs to headstrong wills"). The Duke says that
"Liberty plucks Justice by the nose" (I,iii); Escalus asks, "Which is the wiser here, Justice or Iniquity?" (II, i); he later comes to the reluctant conclusion that "Mercy is not itself, that oft looks so; /Pardon is still the nurse of second woe" (II,i). Isabella tells Claudio in her fit that "Mercy to thee would prove itself a bawd" (III,i); the Duke says, "Virtue is bold, and goodness never fearful (III,i); Escalus says that Madame Overdone is enough to "make mercy swear, and play the tyrant" (III, ii); and he says of Angelo that "my brother justice have I found so severe that he hath forced me to tell him he is indeed Justice" (III,ii). The Duke says in the last act of the play that "The very mercy of the law cries out /Most audible" against Angelo.

This treatment of abstractions as sentient beings, this linguistic conversion of the abstract to the personal, is so prevalent in the play that it must be significant. (Angelo's propensity to reverse this conversion and to treat people more or less as abstractions comes to mind as a related aspect of the process.) Particularly in the case of the two most important abstractions, Justice and Mercy, the significance of their frequent iteration seems to be that the characters themselves realize that these qualities are not firmly grounded in their world—so they compensate linguistically, giving them a home in language.
The qualities--such qualities--are reduced to abstractions and relegated thence to a world of Forms, literally to a matter of form.

In discussing the metaphoric identification in this play of life with a prison sentence, for example, or the psychological conversions which confuse the abstract with the concrete, we approach the topic of the ways in which the characters enter and leave various realms of life or of language. As exemplified not least by the Duke at the great gates, the play emphasizes the movements of entering and leavetaking. There seem, somehow, to be an unusually great number of entrances and exits in this play, and given the play's emphasis on various kinds of form it is only predictable, perhaps, that the forms of greeting and parting are played up to an unusual extent as well. Isabella is particularly lavish with greetings which are phrased as blessings, as in "Heaven keep your honor safe," "Save your honor," and "peace and prosperity." This beneficent but ironic reference to "your honor" is repeated five times to Angelo in two scenes. Even Angelo finally recognizes the (unintentional) irony and extracts it for himself: Isabella's final "Save your honor" is answered by "From thee: even from thy virtue."

Again, when Isabella enters the prison with her rather overwhelming "What ho! Peace here; grace and good
company," the Provost replies appropriately—if, it seems, somewhat drily—with "Come in, the wish deserves a wel-
come." Such forms—as this greeting—are not only employed, they are emphasized, both by the speakers and by those who respond to them. The Duke's own godlike "Peace be with you" introduces his highly stylized set speech, in rhyming couplets, on the determination of justice, at the end of Act III. And when the Duke, masquerading as friar, greets Isabella with a "Good morning to you, fair and gracious daughter," she replies, "The better, given me by so holy a man." It is Isabella and the Duke who most regularly bless in greeting and parting; their forms of speech manifest the same inner need as their religious habits for the emotional luxuriousness of ceremonial religion. Such outward forms——of dress and speech——have the effect of exploiting religion as an emblem; like many of the other principles touched on in the play, the principles of orthodox religion are made visual and emblematic and are thus narrowly defined or even diminished. Here, again, the tangential relation of "spirituality" to the play's action becomes apparent: the figures of would-be nun and friar pass on and offstage frequently, moving to and from dark corners and affecting but not necessarily ennobling or uplifting the course of events.

The fact that the action of the play is directed or
stage-managed by "the old fantastical duke of dark corners" is itself enough to focus attention on the play's various exits and entrances. There are, however, at least two figures who pass in and out of the action and, in different but equally deceptive ways, affect it crucially: the Duke and Lucio. The eclat of the Duke's formal leave-taking in the play's first scene is opposed to the rather scurvy non-distinction of Lucio's entrance with the two gentlemen in scene ii, but Lucio does at least as much as the Duke to influence the outcome of the play; it is he who persuades Isabella to intercede for her brother with Angelo, thus setting up the train of Angelo's rapidly developing corruption. That is, the Duke pretends to leave the city in order that he may direct a play of government—or be a spectator to such a play—from behind the scenes, but much of the real directing thenceforth is done by Lucio. This "directing" is particularly blatant in II,ii, in which Isabella first confronts Angelo with her plea for mercy—-with Lucio behind her skirts urging her on to more vehemence. The man who remains on-stage for much of the play proves to have as much to do with influencing the course of the action as the man who willingly removes himself offstage. It is being there, in short, which is important.

And in this respect, oddly enough, the issue of
purely dramatic concerns becomes analogous to Aquinas' argument about the nature of justice--perhaps the play's key "theme," among the principles with which it deals. It is necessary at this point to state briefly the first principles of this particular cardinal virtue of justice. The unique characterizing feature of justice is that it is primarily directed to man's relations with other men--rather than with himself or with God: Justitia est ad alterum. It is, therefore, it might be noted here, eminently suitable for exploration in that most "interpersonal" of forms, drama. Basically, justice is the virtue which enables man to give to each other man what is his due. And from this first statement, Aquinas derives the limits of justice. "If the act of justice," he says, "is to give to each man his due, then the act of justice is preceded by the act whereby something becomes his due." And this obvious argument is followed by the not-so-obvious conclusion that, since nothing at all precedes creation, "creation itself is not an act of justice; creation is not anyone's due." It is the man who has entered the realm of human activity who is subject to the workings of justice or who is obliged to extend justice to others himself. In a way, there is a sense in which Lucio's slander of the absent Duke is permissible; when the Duke has absented himself from the strictly
human realm of the play—the stage—in order to impersonate "power divine" (an invisible power), he is no longer either subject to the same laws which govern other men or entitled to the same claims on human justice. It is only after the Duke, as it were, re-creates himself in his own image (as Duke) that he can expect the workings of justice to proceed through him.

This is what is fundamentally wrong with the Duke's experiment, I think: that he has forgotten the limitations of human justice, in more senses than one. If the Duke has forgotten these limitations, however, there is one other character—Angelo—who has gone even further beyond the pale. It is as though Angelo's rigid application of the law against fornication (a moribund law) proceeded from a too-literal interpretation of Aquinas' "creation itself is not an act of justice."

Angelo is, it seems, only too willing to consider procreation as one of the forms of injustice and to punish it as such:

'tis all as easy
Falsely to take away a life true made,
As to put mettle in restrained means
To make a false one. (II,iv,46-49)

For the law's vision, that is, Claudio's fornication is identical to murder:

It were as good
To pardon him that hath from nature stol'n
A man already made, as to remit
Their saucy sweetness that do coin heaven's image
In stamps that are forbid . . . (42-46)

What seems to bother Angelo is the fact that there are
easy actions--murder and procreation--which lead a man
out of, or into, the scope of justice; mortality in both
cases proves the limits of justice, and the higher
morality which points to a difference between procreation
and murder--or by extension to a difference between life
and death--seems to be lacking in Angelo. Relative
values are absent for him. The very notion that there is
something "false" about a whole life because it was con-
ceived illegitimately indicates the falsity of Angelo's
own moral position; he is allowing the origin to outweigh
the creature itself.

The distortion of "justice" by Angelo's actions, of
course, reveals that it is not merely justice which is at
issue in the play, but, as Goddard recognized, the power
behind justice. The creation of life is outside the
scope of human power, as is what becomes of a life when
it is ended. Angelo, in punishing Claudio, is punishing
or revenging himself against the limits of his own power--
against his own limitations. This is a point which be-
comes poetically obvious when the "prenzie Angelo" succumbs
to exactly Claudio's same weakness or frailty. It is
power which animates the forms of justice, and so we are
brought up once more against the disjunction between the forms, and the life, of such a principle as justice. It is terribly important—as expressed in this play—that justice be made into a real, living force; the laws—like the play itself—must be made into something besides words.

Paradoxically, however, the realm of justice—again, like that of the play itself—is exterior: "Men are ordained to one another by outward acts, per exteriores actus, whereby men live in communion with one another." It is the "act" which is important; "every external act belongs to the field of justice." This is a point which Angelo seems in part to understand: "What's open made to justice, that justice seizes," he says to Escalus (II,i). There is an unenforceable necessity which operates in justice, therefore: this principle which properly exists only in external actions must nevertheless be individually internalized in order so to exist. The infamous mannerist "dissociation of sensibility" obtains in this concept of justice as in other aspects of the play.

The "dissociation of sensibility," of course, obtains in acting itself; it is fundamental to the play—the actor, and the part he plays, are the two disjunct terms in just such a "dissociation." It is an unusual
feature of Measure for Measure, however, that its themes mirror this basic disjunction in drama. The connections I have mentioned between the action of the play and the action(s) of justice are not incidental; they are part of the play's reflection of itself, a kind of artistic mirroring of its own action. That is, the dissociation between spirit and act which I have discussed in relation to the workings of human justice is, as I said, also fundamental to dramatic action—but that, of course, itself refers to an aspect of every kind of action: the difference between the spirit of the actor, and his role, is a part of all life.

As in society as it is perceived by the law, the only "communion" among the characters onstage is the realm of what might be called "exterior acts." And to extend the analogy between the action of the play and that of the realm of social relations, it is in both cases a form of power which bridges person and action. The mediator between the two in the play—the mediator between the actor and his part—is the director, a fact which is reflected in the character of Duke Frederick in Measure for Measure. In this play, it is the Duke who, in the cant phrase of anti-segregationists, tries to "legislate social attitudes," to bring together spirit and law in Vienna. He unites the related problems of society or its
leadership and of the play or its direction in his own person. He is, in more than one context, symbolic of the central power in charge of human activity.

His direction, however, is not entirely successful; at the least, it is somewhat suspect on moral grounds—the forced marriages at the end of the play are of course the foremost example of this dubiousness. In this play, therefore, the Duke himself, the figure for authority, is as much a source of the kinds of discrepancy in dramatic action which I have discussed in other contexts, as is a figure like Lucio. The discrepancy is, I think, about equally divided between the two. And this relationship between Lucio and the Duke is, again, thematically relevant: if the Duke is a figure for the director of the play, then Lucio is aptly fitted to suggest the "busy actor" (Rosalind's phrase) in it. This correspondence becomes especially apparent in the last scene, in which Lucio is squelched with such great difficulty. He gives the impression, however, of being similarly somehow "on" throughout much of the play; onstage, meddling, loquacious, and irrepressible, he is virtually the embodiment of the intractable human material of dramatic action. The Duke, on the other hand, resembles the director even in the mundane fact of being offstage most of the time (and in his own person, as Duke, he is almost always off), trying
to produce a play which doesn't entirely get off the ground--and might not at all, if it were not for Lucio/the actor.

There is, in short, a "dissociation of sensibility" here between the director and his very busiest actor--a dissociation which resembles that between mind and body; Lucio is a little like some sort of crude reality-principle (his language is certainly highly physical). It is only the actions of the actors, and not their spirits, which can be seized in any formal way by the director, as the Duke compels Lucio to get married without being able to command his heart.

If Lucio figures the actor himself in this play, it will be noted that what can be encompassed under the rubric "discrepancy" has gotten very basic indeed. There is something in this play which is as queasy as anything in the comedies of, for example, Ben Jonson, when the possibility of human relationships itself--figured by the relationships of the actors--is cast into doubt. And the unfeasibility of casting out or rejecting this character as an actor, as Jaques and Malvolio or excluded (or self-excluded) from the action of their plays, becomes immediately apparent. Both the discomfort and the unfeasibility of such a rejection, incidentally, are exponentially increased in the next play (All's Well That
Ends Well, indeed), in which the idle corner of discrepancy is a character who suggests the power or use of words.

The play's escape from this kind of discrepancy is by means of form—the form of the play, the form of comedy. Unfortunately, however, "form" in such a context becomes largely synonymous with the ending. The ending of the play, like Isabella's ceremonious leavetaking ("Save your honor," etc.), is a ceremonious look into a quasi-blessed state which is also a parting. It is as though the only vista of a blessed futurity possible in this play comes about by means of parting from others—another aspect of the dubiousness of the human relationships portrayed. This particular parting—that of all the characters at the end of the play—is comic, or rather proves to be comic; but again, it is the ending which is proof of the form or definition of the form. Up until the very end, there is more than adequate material in the play to make the play, at best, a tragi-comedy rather than a comedy. The fact that the "future" (the comic vision of futurity) is actually the end is pronounced in this play.

There is no "here and now" in Measure for Measure; the particular which is the "here and now" is always slipping out of our grasp in definition and significance,
like Lucio himself. The "now" is constantly gliding into
the past and future, and the effect, symbolized by the
"Last Judgment," is to dramatize something which is al-
ways before us--in the two senses of the word "before."
The play in the abruptness of its Judgment Day is like El
Greco's "Crucifixion before Toledo"; what seemed to be
before us is actually before us. The future has suddenly
proved to be, or rather, has been suddenly discovered to
be, the present, already existent. The last scene is
like the El Greco painting or like Donne's meditations
(or anyone's meditations), in which a first step is a
"composition of place" which really means a visualization
based on the concept of the co-presence of time in
eternal perspective. The "There becomes the Here," as it
does in a very different sense for the suffering young
Werther; the Ultimate is, again, found in the Occasion,
as in the emergent occasions which produce Donne's
devotions.

The point about the ongoing nature of past events
in a context like that of the painting, of course, is that
the past is still living, still event. The elements
abstracted from the past--mainly in the sense already
mentioned, of having been lifted from the "gothic"--is
in the play, on the other hand, are mainly forms, and often
moribund. What is inherited is frequently dead--as with
the forms of justice. This fact, of course, calls the play's resolution into some question, since the ending is established on an example of form which is particularly inherited, it might be said—that is, the form of marriage. This inheritance from the past, however, is one which carries us immediately into the future; the challenge is to revivify the form in each individual case, to bring it to fruition—partly through childbirth, which is one image of love that survives time.

It is the "end of marriage" with which the play is partly concerned, in more than one sense—the end it is, the end of the play, and the end it has, of childbirth. The play on words is basic to Measure for Measure, in which it becomes apparent that the "end itself has two senses, of termination and purpose. In this play, as well as in All's Well That Ends Well, these two senses are drastically separated in order to be newly recombined—not that the two plays provide such resolution in exactly the same way. In All's Well That Ends Well the title itself provides the keynote; we get the cynical impression that termination is the extent of the play's "purpose"; in such a way the end becomes all-important. In Measure for Measure there is at least an uneasy cohabitation of the final and the meaningful in the forms of the ending—a locution which also serves to describe the marriages presented.
The dubiety of the marriages here is only the culmination of the quality which obtains in human relationships throughout the play, in which the cloudy abstractions which move between the characters, the "intervals between structural elements," in Sypher's words, "seem more expressive than the structural elements themselves." These so-important "figures" which I mentioned at the outset illustrate or embody the impediments to relationships, the particular dissociation of sensibility which destroys communication between the characters. We do not know the outcome of these marriages; their outcome, as shown by the moment-to-moment quality of the play itself, will be determined by the outcome of each moment. And in this respect the form of marriage reflects the form of the play, whose frequent unbalance is also the outcome of the moment, at any given moment. The play, however, has an end; it is itself subject to a Last Judgment, in which we find that it is a comedy and was a comedy all along.

The future, it is suggested, lies in the present to be discovered in this play by virtue of the fact that the present is all we have; there is nothing known beyond the present. The quasi-eternal perspective which gives us a sense of the co-presence of time, therefore, is based on a lack of knowledge rather than on omniscience. Our apparent god's-eye perspective is thus the comic
perspective, in which human limitation fosters the illusion of divine knowledge, divine awareness. We are dropped, end-stopped, at the end of the play, but we do not realize it because the ground— the comic form— rises to meet us. It might be said, of course, that the ground rises to meet us at every moment in the play— we are poised, balanced, and thrown off into question on each of frequent occasions. But, again, the last moment gathers into itself all the others; we move forward to a great Greek Tau which tells us whether the play is comic or not, perhaps a crooked balance, owing to the peculiar arbitrariness of some of the forgiveness and punishment, but nevertheless one which swings us to the right side of tragi-comedy.