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## RULING IDEAS IN SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES

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*For my family*

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# Introduction

A recent tendency in criticism of Shakespeare's comedies is to emphasize their variety, as Ralph Berry and Alexander Leggatt do.<sup>1</sup> Certainly it is wise to beware oversimplification. But the greatest virtue of both these critics' books is that, for all the talk of variety, we begin to recognize in them distinctive ways of viewing Shakespeare's comedies. There is after all a certain coherence.

Perhaps the true situation is best described by A. D. Nuttall: "the plays of Shakespeare do not constitute a series so much as an indefinitely complex system."<sup>2</sup> But in such a case how do we match our ideas to the actual relationships within and among plays, with neither too much nor too little schematizing? Perhaps there is a need for a middle level of generality, between such unifying descriptions as Northrop Frye's (stimulating and useful as these are) and an *ad hoc* approach to each play (sensitive as this may be). Instead of looking for one or more basic patterns governing whole plays—or, failing that, insisting that there is no continuity among the plays—we might well be as flexible as we can in our expectations. A set of concepts may have definite relations among themselves yet be present in various groupings (complete or incomplete) in various plays; and each grouping may have its own coherence within its own play. We learn the whole range of possibilities by surveying the whole set of concepts, and afterwards we can better appreciate the unique combination in each play.

To particularize: Shakespeare's comedies seem to range from the individual's puzzled encounters with the world in *The Comedy of Errors* through the normal concerns of lovers (best known in the romantic comedies) to the problems of government in *Measure for Measure* and the miracles of the last plays. I propose then to study a set of basic ideas that shape action and characterization, or characters' concepts of themselves, starting with the individual's self-definition and moving out to his relations with others, with society, and with whatever of the world is beyond human control. Outside the individual there is thus a continuum from personal (the responses of someone who loves him) to social (vows, whether in love or other matters; and more remotely, a relation to government) to cosmic (the action of various hostile forces, finally tempered, perhaps, by something like providence). These ideas radiating from self-definition, coherent and dominant as they are, may combine freely in any play; and

the relation of ideas helps to fix the unity of a play as well as to connect the plays as a flexibly unified group.<sup>3</sup>

The core of these ideas is a character's definition of himself by his own sense of purpose; though such self-declarations must frequently be right, comic situations often begin with a mistaken self-definition, a misplaced assertion of self-will. Here is the first or innermost idea in the scheme; one example of it would be the stubborn misperceptions of Claudio in *Much Ado about Nothing*. Yet even in this there may be a latent better self, to be coaxed or goaded into life by events or by other characters—that is, by external forces. So in response to self-will the most intimate of “external” influences, someone who loves the erring character, may try to draw out true selfhood by matching the error with another falsehood: disguise or feigned death, the favored stratagems of heroines in the middle and late comedies. Third, erring selfhood may be reclaimed through vows and obligations—which are personal, but also social in that society may sanction and enforce them (hence the importance in many plays of rings as symbols of vows). Fourth, events may mock and threaten even sympathetic characters, and other, perhaps hostile, characters (the most formidable one is Shylock) may try to dominate them. Next is the uncontrolled yet passing effect of exposure to the external through exile or wandering, the chronic danger in the last plays and some of the earlier ones. With the sixth step, government, our attention moves outward to society, whose interests are expressed by a ruler (who himself needs powers of individual self-government). Self-government of the same kind, but in a more strictly private role, may be important for disguised heroines, who must restrain their “real” selves (except in the hints or asides of a Rosalind or Viola) while teaching others self-control in love. Yet all pretensions to rule—political or private—are liable to parody: Shakespeare mocks governmental pride through the appealing yet subversive self-will of low-comic characters, Sly or Falstaff, whose attractiveness reminds us that a fascinating ambivalence is often at work in these ideas. Finally, a supernatural power may have ultimate control over all—or is this power really artistic, Shakespeare himself playing god as he describes, often self-mockingly, the power and limits of art? And if there is mockery at the outer edge of the play, may there not be also in those ideas which seem its more inward concerns?<sup>4</sup>

These seven steps make seven chapters. The concluding chapter puts the plays together again, and they should have gained from a multiple

view.<sup>5</sup> This plan, of ordering ideas before taking up works one by one, dodges for now the controversy roused by Frye's theories, whether one literary work is best referred to other works arranged in a system (and in practice to the system itself), or whether each work should be related immediately to life; the topics I want to discuss in Shakespeare's comedies are closely bound to each other, yet each applies at once to life too. But a faithful response to the plays will begin with the joining of related ideas in a play and with their working-out within the play; this working-out will show unresolved paradoxes and ironic undercurrents that give the play excitement and life.

For all the schematism in the plan of this book, it must allow for variety and complexity, and must return to the plays as wholes. Many critical ideas of the past two decades about Shakespeare's comedies (especially the insights of Northrop Frye, Robert G. Hunter, Philip Edwards, Alexander Leggatt, R. A. Foakes, Howard Felperin, and Larry S. Champion) fit somewhere in the pattern; yet the pattern itself makes new emphases and suggests ways of giving structure to critical insights. A firm sense of design reveals countless details of meaning in the action of the plays and shows how Shakespeare builds and elaborates actions from one play to the next. The dynamic of Shakespeare's art moves us always to new complexities and ambivalences, to harsher external chances and sterner internal tests of characters' wills. Thus the level of discussion in this book, and perhaps indeed all our subtlest responses to Shakespeare's comedies, must be strictly cumulative.

If we ask how the comedies, as presented here, would look in our own world, we must make a basic decision about literary form: we must recall the calculated unreality of comedy. Tempting as it may be to emphasize cynical, "realistic," possibilities in the plays, we must remember that comedy has one tradition of doing precisely not that, or of doing that only after it has done the opposite. If the unreality of what romantic comedy asserts is more obvious to us than to earlier eras, we must still pay the price of initial acceptance (however we may qualify our suspension of disbelief later); our awareness that we have paid the price will somehow enrich our experience of human ideals and their adjustment to actuality. Another challenge to comic idealism is Shakespeare's artful habit of letting the end justify the means, of sometimes allowing his "good" characters to win out by shady dodges. Again we pay the price, but we should be aware,

in an imperfect world, of how much we want to pay it. As a final response the reader should bring to the book as to the plays his remembered laughter of delight. Comedy needs its laughter, which is most natural in the theatre; criticism does best just to point up quiet ironies and notice parody. This book works best if it offers ideas that add to delight.

Indeed the best knowledge may only rationalize our awe at Shakespeare's achievements. We think of his triumph in creating living characters: the self-sacrificing, outward-looking ones like Viola and Portia, but also the self-absorbed, obstinately mistaken ones like Shylock and Malvolio. The mistaken characters may be yet more basic in his comedy than they have seemed to critics. The means of correcting error through outside engagements—disguises, vows, and the like, and the exchanges of rings that symbolize vows—are respected more now than in earlier decades; but unless we find Shakespeare a master of them even in detail, we owe him another look.<sup>6</sup> Whatever comedy may bear of supernatural pattern surely exists in his last plays; the precise nature of this ordering, and its relation to artistic form, may emerge from better general awareness of how his characters become involved with each other and how they come to terms with events.

## Proteus

Very early in his work as playwright Shakespeare began to make characters come to life. Perhaps he thought first of the motivations needed to make a plot work; in modeling *The Comedy of Errors*, which may well be his first comedy, on Plautus' *Menaechmi*, he would have examples for such concern. But he exceeds the basic requirements of motivation: sometimes his characters not only have objectives but think of these objectives as deep needs defining their own concepts of their whole being. Thus the wandering Antipholus of Syracuse, seeking the rest of his family, thinks his own selfhood is at stake in the search:

He that commends me to mine own content,  
Commends me to the thing I cannot get:  
I to the world am like a drop of water,  
That in the ocean seeks another drop,  
Who, falling there to find his fellow forth  
(Unseen, inquisitive), confounds himself.  
So I, to find a mother and a brother,  
In quest of them (unhappy), ah, lose myself. (I.ii.33-40)<sup>7</sup>

He cannot properly be himself unless he finds his "fellow," and he fears that he himself will lose all individuality in an unknown world. Inversely, Adriana, wife of the brother Antipholus of Ephesus (who is the "fellow" that is being sought), hopes that she already has such a merged identity with her husband, and she resists the thought that he or anybody else might cause a separation:

as easy mayst thou fall  
A drop of water in the breaking gulf,  
And take unmingled thence that drop again,  
Without addition or diminishing,  
As take from me thyself and not me too. (II.ii.125-129)

This is another attempt at self-definition, though it does not work at the time because she is not on good terms with her husband. The husband himself is not explicit about his concept of his own identity, but assumes it as given. So as far as we know his self-concept, we know it by what

he takes for granted in the play: his wife, his courtesan, his credit rating, and the Duke's favor, won long ago by service in battle (V.i.191-194). All these notions of selfhood, which are well known to critics of the play, fit a distinction in the plot between those who come to Ephesus from outside seeking something, and those who are already there and want to hold onto and enjoy what already seems to be theirs. But the difference does not only motivate isolated acts; it conditions the way the characters see the world.

The hilarious action of the play persistently assaults these concepts of self. Antipholus of Syracuse, who thinks he is and has nothing until he finds his family, is given almost everything else: a wife, a chain, a purse full of gold. Antipholus of Ephesus, who had been secure in the privileges of established social rank, must lose his comforts and have his word questioned in requital for his brother's pleasures: he misses his wife's dinner, he is dunned and arrested for the chain, and through the vengefulness of his wife and courtesan he is set upon by an exorcist. The wife, too, who would jealously bind her husband to her with the concept that they are one being, is confronted with the inconsistent actions of two men who seem to be one. The various mishaps upset not only particular plans but the characters' habitual ways of thinking about events. Each constructs new and wrong-headed explanations which govern his subsequent acts: the visitor that he is surrounded by madness or witchcraft or is walking in a dream, the husband that he is a victim of conspiracies, the wife that her husband is possessed. If the characters are not quite rigid in a Bergsonian sense, they are flexible only to flex in the wrong way, toward greater mistakes and rash vengeance for misunderstood events. But they are both the more comical and the more lifelike for their attempts to comprehend their misadventures and to fit in into their notions of themselves and others. The play gains immeasurably from its characters' habits of self-definition.

In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* the main characters take more explicit pains to define themselves. Valentine, taking leave of his friend Proteus, discusses with him the love that keeps him at home, and after Valentine's departure Proteus gives a pat formula for the difference: "He after honor hunts, I after love" (I.i.63). But soon Valentine is in love with the lady Silvia, and soon thereafter Proteus has changed his affections from his first love Julia to the same Silvia; both men find that they can now define their inmost natures by the lady they love. Valentine, banished from Milan and Silvia through Proteus' treachery, sees that "Silvia is myself: banish'd

from her / Is self from self, a deadly banishment" (III.i. 172-173). Proteus, looking to the consequences of his planned disloyalty, finds them inevitable if he hopes for self-realization through Silvia:

I cannot leave to love, and yet I do;  
 But there I leave to love where I should love.  
 Julia I lose, and Valentine I lose:  
 If I keep them, I needs must lose myself . . .  
 I cannot now prove constant to myself,  
 Without some treachery us'd to Valentine. (II.vi. 17-20, 31-32)

Earlier Julia too had found that love shaped her image of herself, though she reached this awareness through negatives; after her kittenish savaging of the love-letter that she would fain read, she blamed herself as "Unkind Julia" for her unreceptiveness to messages of love (I.ii.106).

All these characters, whatever we may think of their commitments, assert a deep involvement of selfhood in love. It is clear too, as a sign of Shakespeare's interest in getting his characters deeply involved in life, that their self-definition results from crises or tensions: except for Proteus' early formulation, which soon fails, the self-characterizations are not *données* (as in *The Comedy of Errors*) but responses. In *The Two Gentlemen* Shakespeare is more directly and obviously concerned with the dynamics of character, as events force conscious redefinition and the redefinition brings about complicating actions.

Doubtless there is something of a Platonic dedication to the ideal in the way the men try to devote themselves to Silvia and in their attempt to make love basic to their own natures.<sup>8</sup> But however desirable it may be on an abstract level to have many individual souls aspiring to the One, the flesh-and-blood analogue is rivalry for the hand of Silvia, who cannot well be shared and who, unlike the One, expresses her own preference for the man she loves. And Proteus' dedication to Silvia is inconsistent with his commitment to Julia, who also has asserted a self-definition in love that must be respected. Dramatically an audience will judge all these claims to self-awareness in love by their bearing on the proper comic ending: Proteus united with Julia, and Valentine with Silvia.

At first we lack this guide to a comic resolution, since the characters begin with other purposes, or at least without a readiness to love. Valentine abandons travel for love, Julia must tear the letter before she yields, and even

Proteus looks back to his bookish days before Julia “metamorphis’d” him and turned him from his studies (I.i.66-67). Similar complications are frequent in Shakespeare’s early comedies: the unmarried twin in *The Comedy of Errors* seeks a mother and a brother, but not a wife until he meets Luciana; Lucentio in *The Taming of the Shrew* is nominally a student, though he soon begins to specialize in Ovid; and the noblemen in *Love’s Labor’s Lost* take vows that would preclude any dealings with ladies. In *The Two Gentlemen* as in the other plays, the power of love is all the greater for its ability to transform someone who has other concerns and to make such a person concentrate his entire being on a woman.<sup>9</sup> As love becomes the major concern of this and many later comedies, the interplay of character and action shows us the stability or instability of characters dedicated to, sometimes overwhelmed by, love. Naturally the focus is on young people who may not yet know what they want and may not have been expecting Cupid’s golden arrow.

Whatever absurdities we find in all the lovers, Julia’s love guides our interests. She tears the letter near the end of the second scene. By the second act values other than love have been discarded by both men. With Julia at the center of attention (as she is even when Proteus is dismissing her in II.iv and II.vi, and when Silvia is rejecting Proteus in IV.ii), we know how events should turn out. If we have noted the emphasis in the play, we will be able to predict as well as Launce does to Speed that there will be a match between Proteus and Julia: “Ask my dog. If he say ay, it will; if he say no, it will; if he shake his tail and say nothing, it will” (II.v.35-37).

Obvious as these matters may be, they need to be pointed out because they should affect our reactions to much of the main action in the play. Julia’s love for Proteus harmonizes with Silvia’s love for Valentine and with the men’s vows of friendship to each other; all these forces together favor the pairings that are the final result in the play, resist Proteus’ attempt to dedicate himself to Silvia, and qualify our laughter at the lovers’ posturings. Proteus’ true self must abide with Julia as his ring does; when he purports to find his identity in Silvia, he must be overlaying this true self with a false one. The objective of the play must be to return Proteus to his true nature.

The significant names of the two gentlemen tell us that we can indeed define their natures by their behavior in love. Valentine, once he discovers Silvia, is the true lover, and he is a faithful friend. Proteus is changeable in both love and friendship; like his mythological prototype (as the



Renaissance often understood the myth), he is lustful, flattering, and generally deceitful.<sup>10</sup> Though the more innocent readings of the Proteus myth might allude first to the changing appearances of nature, Shakespeare's character passes beyond these into deliberate role-shifting and deception. He calmly resolves on treachery to his lady and his friend, whose plan for elopement he betrays to Silvia's father. He tries to deceive Silvia with reports that Julia and even Valentine are dead (IV.ii.106, 112). He so inverts values that for him loyalty to Julia and Valentine—that is, resistance to his new infatuation with Silvia's picture—would be the way to "lose myself" (II.vi.20). His excuse is that his change follows the dictates of his nature. Since he chooses to define his being through his desire for Silvia, her excellence as an object of desire becomes a pretext for his own self-indulgence and the infidelity it requires:

I to myself am dearer than a friend,  
 For love is still most precious in itself,  
 And Silvia (witness heaven, that made her fair)  
 Shows Julia but a swarthy Ethiopie.  
 I will forget that Julia is alive,  
 Rememb'ring that my love to her is dead;  
 And Valentine I'll hold an enemy,  
 Aiming at Silvia as a sweeter friend. (II.vi.23-30)

Though Julia's fidelity is enough to discredit this with us, we should also follow through the myth of Proteus and the reasoning about the self that is connected with it in this play. If Proteus can be caught and held, he will return to his true form. Through Julia we infer a true form for Proteus and look for him to return to her.

Although Proteus claims that his very being is bound up in Silvia, he must admit to but a flimsy knowledge of her (and therefore of himself, so defined), since by then he has seen only her picture:

'Tis but her picture I have yet beheld,  
 And that hath dazzled my reason's light;  
 But when I look on her perfections,  
 There is no reason but I shall be blind. (II.iv.209-212)

And indeed he blinds himself to her love for Valentine and the falseness of his own behavior:

the more she spurns my love,  
The more it grows, and fawneth on her still. (IV.ii.14-15)

In the concreteness of her presence and actions he persists all the more in illusory hopes and wishes. The famous song "Who Is Silvia?" is sheathed in the irony of his position. He has tricked Sir Thurio, the suitor favored by her father, into paying the musicians, and he is able to plead his own suit only because he has deceived Silvia's father and Thurio into thinking he speaks for Thurio. The words of the song that "all our swains commend" her heaven-sent graces do not strictly lead to her making any choice among admirers but leave her as a passive object of adoration (as she really should not be, of course, since she loves Valentine). The lines

Love doth to her eyes repair,  
To help him of his blindness;  
And, being help'd, inhabits there (IV.ii.46-48)

are undercut by Proteus' own words, quoted before, predicting his greater blindness. He does indeed run through more attempts at illusion—the lies about Julia's and Valentine's deaths, which Silvia does not believe—and ends, little advanced from where he began, by begging Silvia's picture. Since he must finally recognize her fidelity to Valentine, he makes a destructive admission about himself: "since the substance of your perfect self / Is else devoted, I am but a shadow" (IV.ii.123-124). He knows that in defining himself by his obsession with Silvia he has assumed an untenable identity.<sup>11</sup>

Next Proteus puts the disguised Julia in the false position of pursuing a false suit for the man who has jilted her, and later he is still more offensive. The apparent moral anarchy of the forest makes him wild. First he would follow out the convention of romance that the man who rescues the heroine from rape wins her love; but when Silvia withholds that, he himself thinks of rape, which he admits is "'gainst the nature of love" (V.iv.58). His awareness of the falsity in his role is one hope for returning him to his true and better nature.

Valentine of course stops Proteus from doing any harm and tries to reclaim him, though his methods have embarrassed readers and audiences of the play. He is wholly (and implausibly) concerned with Proteus' offense against friendship:

treacherous man,  
Thou hast beguil'd my hopes! . . .

Who should be trusted, when one's right hand  
 Is perjured to the bosom? Proteus,  
 I am sorry I must never trust thee more,  
 But count the world a stranger for thy sake.  
 The private wound is deepest: O time most accurst!  
 'Mongst all foes that a friend should be the worst! (V.iv.63-64, 67-72)

His position as outcast makes the loss of a friend more bitter—and in fact Proteus had instigated Valentine's banishment. Now Proteus repents, and Valentine overreacts:

Who by repentance is not satisfied  
 Is nor of heaven nor earth, for these are pleas'd;  
 By penitence th' Eternal's wrath's appeas'd:  
 And that my love may appear plain and free,  
 All that was mine in Silvia I give thee. (V.iv.79-83)

His astonishing gift of Silvia ostensibly proves his sincerity in accepting Proteus' apology. Apparently Shakespeare is intent on having Valentine present only the claims of friendship, with Julia standing by in disguise to urge the obligations of love.<sup>12</sup> And her presence reminds us that even if we credit Valentine's good intentions his offer cannot resolve the problems. If Proteus were to accept, he would still have been false to Julia; he can only be retrieved through his first vows in both friendship and love. Nor will it do to dismiss these vows, and Julia with them, and take the whole play as a satire on romance; like many other comic heroines (among them Viola and Helena) Julia, in loving someone we do not easily accept, makes us hope for better in her man.<sup>13</sup>

It may ease matters to find another meaning as well in Valentine's offer to Proteus. Even in his disillusionment he wishes it were still possible to believe in a friend: he had had "hopes," and once these are disappointed the world must be a "stranger." He is eager for a happier answer to his question "Who should be trusted?" and seems ready to trust again after Proteus repents. Suppose then that, despite Valentine's words, his offer of Silvia is a test or a sign of trust rather than a gift; then he would expect Proteus to prove himself worthy of trust by deferring to his friend and by consulting Silvia's own wishes.<sup>14</sup> In the theatre an audience would infer this motive if Valentine whispered with Silvia for an instant before accepting Proteus' apology (V.iv.77). Then her failure to speak, which otherwise is strange,

would be perfectly natural; she waits to see how Proteus responds to the challenge, and she can easily enough give her own kind of challenge in her looks. But Julia is not in on this stratagem, and she may well fear now that all is lost.<sup>15</sup> In fainting she diverts attention from Valentine's offer and its potential testing of Proteus; but she has a stronger claim, and her challenge is the real test of Proteus' return to himself.

Proteus belatedly begins to improve. He says nothing of Valentine's offer of Silvia, whom, if he were still his unreformed self, he would have been glad to gain by any means; instead he notices the disguised Julia fainting and urges, "Look to the boy" (V.iv.85). When Julia revives, she manufactures a confusion about rings to prepare for disclosing herself.

*Jul.* . . . my master charg'd me to deliver a ring to Madam Silvia,  
which (out of my neglect) was never done.

*Pro.* Where is that ring, boy?

*Jul.*                                 Here 'tis; this is it.                                 [*Shows a ring.*]

*Pro.* How? let me see.

Why, this is the ring I gave to Julia.

*Jul.* O, cry you mercy, sir, I have mistook;

This is the ring you sent to Silvia.                                 [*Shows another ring.*]

*Pro.* But how cam'st thou by this ring? At my depart

I gave this unto Julia.

*Jul.* And Julia herself did give it me,

And Julia herself hath brought it hither. (V.iv.88-99)

When Proteus inquires after the ring meant for Silvia, we can't tell whether he means to give it to her or to hold it back and take stock of the situation; but he is honest enough to admit that the boy has given him a different ring, and to be concerned enough about Julia to want to know how the boy got the ring. In this he compares favorably with Bertram, who at the end of *All's Well that Ends Well* is involved in a more gravely incriminating way with a mix-up of rings and is not at all ready to clear up the confusion. Julia now needs only to reveal herself and lecture Proteus on how much she has gone through for his love to make him repent and recognize his commitment to her. His comment—

What is in Silvia's face, but I may spy

More fresh in Julia's with a constant eye? (V.iv.114-115)

—should not be a gratuitous insult to Silvia or a proof of continued superficiality but a correction of the error of his eyes, which before had been distracted by a picture. His emphasis is on the word “constant”; he asserts the subjectivity of beauty in order to affirm an absolute commitment in love. If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, the true lover will give his own stability to his image of beauty. Proteus has found his own reality in dedication to Julia.

If nothing can argue away the faults of this play, still its one worst moment can be made bearable, and the characters have more than a fitful reality. Shakespeare makes a serious point about the true self and the false self; he shows how precarious self-devotion in love is and yet requires it as a sign of deep love; and he engages our hopes for the better side of Proteus through our sympathy for Julia. Here are the makings of later and better comedies; the heroine has begun to find her redeeming role. The carefully schematized self-definitions of this play must have helped Shakespeare work toward the freer and subtler self-awareness of his mature comic characters.

Distinctions of true and false selves make another kind of dialectic in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Petruchio comes to Padua ready to overturn accepted notions about the wisdom of taking rich, ill-natured wives and hence to deny the common report of Katherina's shrewishness. As a stratagem of wooing he plans to misconstrue her own behavior and thus, it seems, her concept of herself:

Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain  
 She sings as sweetly as a nightingale;  
 Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear  
 As morning roses newly wash'd with dew . . .  
 If she do bid me pack, I'll give her thanks,  
 As though she bid me stay by her a week;  
 If she deny to wed, I'll crave the day  
 When I shall ask the banes, and when be married.

(II.i.170-173, 177-180)

Though he allows her to act out her scorn and matches wits with her in repartee, he refuses to assign to her manner the meaning she tells him it has. Having canceled the overtly intended effect of her acts on him, he undercuts any public protests she might make and lies to Baptista about her private behavior:

yourself and all the world,  
That talk'd of her, have talk'd amiss of her.  
If she be curst, it is for policy . . . .  
'Tis bargain'd 'twixt us twain, being alone,  
That she shall still be curst in company.  
I tell you 'tis incredible to believe  
How much she loves me. O, the kindest Kate,  
She hung about my neck, and kiss on kiss  
She vied so fast, protesting oath on oath,  
That in a twink she won me to her love. (II.i.290-292, 304-310)

He refuses to let her be what she purports to be and what others have thought her, as if her shrewishness were falsehood; and she will finally let it be falsehood. If this were *The Comedy of Errors*, he might be describing a mild-mannered twin of hers; but here the discrepancies are not physical ones between persons but (as critics see) psychological ones between Kate as she now seems and Kate as she may really be or may become.<sup>16</sup>

This could hardly work if she were content with her shrewish role; she would have found some way to wrest her hand loose at the legally crucial moment when Baptista proclaimed the match and Gremio and Tranio stood as witnesses. But Petruchio, subtle as he is, has sensed the paradoxical in her character, the desire to upset established judgments. An audience would see, besides whatever evidence he may have, why she scorns the self-righteousness of the universally-sought Bianca, who protests to Kate:

Unbind my hands, I'll pull them off myself,  
Yea, all my raiment, to my petticoat,  
Or what you will command me will I do,  
So well I know my duty to my elders. (II.i.4-7)

(Of course, Kate's treatment of Bianca *is* extreme, a foretaste of what Petruchio does to Kate herself.) Baptista's favoritism rankles too, as Katherina tells him:

She is your treasure, she must have a husband;  
I must dance barefoot on her wedding-day,  
And for your love to her lead apes in hell. (II.i.32-34)<sup>17</sup>

The shrewishness through which she expresses her complaints only

compounds her problem. Though Petruchio's denial of her actions must be frustrating to her, he at least takes some pains with her and shows a kind of concern. She may have little hope for what she can become and may not know much about a "true" identity within her, but she can acquiesce (under protest, of course) in Petruchio's denial of her current role and his insistence that others have misjudged her.

His later conflicts with her are more public. He is working toward the idea that if she cooperates by agreeing to see and judge the whole world as he does—that is, will define her whole being through his—they can conspire to upset the smug conventional wisdom of all Padua. At first his actions seem like mockery or domineering to her (and they are, if the whole question is only whose will is to prevail). His lateness for the wedding seems to repeat Baptista's treatment of her as unmarriageable:

Now must the world point at poor Katherine,  
And say, "Lo, there is mad Petruchio's wife,  
If it would please him come and marry her!" (III.ii.18-20)

Petruchio obviously does have her on that hook; but when he appears, oddly dressed, his comment is a different one, directed rather at the men who take exception to his garb: "To me she's married, not unto my clothes" (III.ii.117). When he insists on leaving before dinner despite her protests, he pretends she has agreed and acts as if the others, who have simply entreated him to stay, meant to hinder them with arms. Their polite expectations, he implies, would have bound him to conventionality.

Petruchio sets a stern regimen for Katherine, without meat, sleep, or new clothing. As he explains, "all is done in reverend care of her" (IV.i.204); nothing that might be provided for her is good enough to suit him, whatever her own judgment might be. Chance mix-ups in *The Comedy of Errors* had presented characters with contradictions to their own recent perceptions and had forced them to try to adjust; now Petruchio purposely denies Katherine's perceptions on the spot and forces a change in her. After various crossings she must agree to Petruchio's misnaming of the sun as the moon and a strange man as a young gentlewoman, and she must bear Petruchio's reproof as he corrects her and returns to true perceptions. These deliberate denials of perception become a game that they learn to play together;<sup>18</sup> in effect she has learned to define her own perceptions by his

sense of sport. The open scorn expressed in her shrewishness has given way to private collusion in mockery of others' fixed notions of reality.

Of course the proper audience and butt for all this must be Baptista's household. Everyone who had ridiculed or patronized Katherina must admire her apparent tractability (expressed finally in the conventional doctrine of wifely submission) yet must succumb to her new show of superiority. When she wins the wager on "obedience" she proves that Bianca and the Widow are self-centered as she is not, and she demonstrates the misjudgments in the men who married them and the sound judgment in Petruchio, who preferred her. She seems another person, one who is worth more than she had been thought; so Baptista offers "Another dowry to another daughter, / For she is chang'd, as she had never been" (V.ii.114-115).

The guided realization of potential seen in Katherina's development is doubled when Benedick and Beatrice are brought together. It is not an easy match; its proposer, Don Pedro, thinks of it as "one of Hercules' labors" and a task surpassing all of Cupid's efforts (*Much Ado about Nothing*, II.i.365, 385). But the potential is there, recognized by Leonato: "O Lord, my lord, if they were but a week married, they would talk themselves mad" (II.i.353-354). This is of course what tells us that they can be brought together: they are so busy breaking jests on and about each other that it is obvious that they cannot let one another alone. They are also the two characters in the play who have the wit and sophistication for such talk, and so again they are a fit pair.

They are self-conscious about their assumption of witty roles, and therefore they are vulnerable to others' criticisms of their performance. When Beatrice uses the privilege of masquerade, whereby she can pretend not to know with whom she is speaking, to abuse Benedick a bit more directly than usual by calling him "the Prince's jester, a very dull fool," he is hurt: "The Prince's fool! hah, it may be I go under that title because I am merry. Yea, but so I am apt to do myself wrong. I am not so reputed. It is the base (though bitter) disposition of Beatrice that puts the world into her person, and so gives me out" (II.i. 137, 204-209). Benedick can just barely dismiss this as Beatrice's malice; he must believe that on the whole his audience's laughter is genuine and does not compromise their respect for him.

So when Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato arrange for Benedick to overhear their story, they plant the message not only of Beatrice's love but



of his probable scorn for it; Don Pedro says Benedick "hath a contemptible [contemptuous] spirit" (II.iii.180-181). And Benedick is bitten: "I hear how I am censur'd; they say I will bear myself proudly, if I perceive the love come from her. . . . I must not seem proud; happy are they that hear their detractions, and can put them to mending" (II.iii.224-226, 228-230). So also Beatrice overhears calculated comment from Hero:

nature never fram'd a woman's heart  
Of prouder stuff than that of Beatrice.  
Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,  
Misprising what they look on, and her wit  
Values itself so highly that to her  
All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,  
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,  
She is so self-endear'd.

She responds,

Stand I condemn'd for pride and scorn so much?  
Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adieu!  
No glory lives behind the back of such. (III.i.49-56, 108-110)

These criticisms attack in a basic sense the role that each character has acted, by taking the role literally, as if it were the sum of the whole person. Benedick and Beatrice, like Kate, are challenged to prove that they have something more to them than they have shown, that there are real persons underlying the roles. The joking that they must endure later implies another challenge, to sustain the roles and prove them consistent with the new reality of love.

Perhaps Benedick needs to make the greater adjustments of the two. He begins at once, before Beatrice has overheard anything that would change her behavior, and he begins by falsifying his perceptions: he says "I do spy some marks of love in her" (II.iii.245-246), and he manages to squeeze a loving meaning out of her usual flippant words. But his harder task in love is to sever his friendships and try to follow Beatrice's command, "Kill Claudio" (IV.i.289). His immediate reaction—"Ha, not for the wide world"—is right, and he himself has better judgment in locating the true source of evil:

Two of them [Don Pedro and Claudio, among Hero's accusers] have  
the very bent of honor,  
And if their wisdoms be misled in this,  
The practice of it lives in John the Bastard,  
Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies. (IV.i.186-189)

Beatrice's demand ignores the possibility that Hero may still love Claudio, and it conflicts with the Friar's plan for reforming Claudio, which Benedick has approved. In accepting the task, Benedick sets aside his better wisdom and tries to prove only what difficulties he is willing to undertake for love. His reaction to strain shows at once the seriousness in his character and the folly of which love is capable. But what counts for Beatrice is that he has dedicated himself, with a major sacrifice of past connections, to what is now most important to her.

The evil consequences are averted, of course, by Hero's vindication and Claudio's repentance. The good that remains for Benedick and Beatrice is their acknowledgement to each other and themselves of their love. Like Katherina they learn to play a game for love's sake, and the particular game they play reconciles love with their old mocking roles.

*Bene.* Do not you love me?

*Beat.* Why, no, no more than reason.

*Bene.* Why then your uncle and the Prince and Claudio  
Have been deceived. They swore you did.

*Beat.* Do not you love me?

*Bene.* Troth, no, no more than reason.

*Beat.* Why then my cousin, Margaret, and Ursula  
Are much deceiv'd, for they did swear you did. . . .

*Bene.* Then you do not love me?

*Beat.* No, truly, but in friendly recompense.

*Leon.* Come, cousin, I am sure you love the gentleman.

*Claud.* And I'll be sworn upon't that he loves her,

For here's a paper written in his hand,  
A halting sonnet of his own pure brain,  
Fashion'd to Beatrice.

*Hero.* And here's another  
Writ in my cousin's hand, stol'n from her pocket,  
Containing her affection unto Benedick.

*Bene.* A miracle! here's our own hands against our hearts. Come, I will have thee, but by this light, I take thee for pity.

*Beat.* I would not deny you, but by this good day, I yield upon great persuasion, and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption. (V.iv.74-79, 82-97)

By qualifying their professions they dupe the others (who pride themselves on achieving this match) into throwing in superfluous evidence. And beyond that it is clear that Benedick and Beatrice will continue to mock each others' love harmlessly. They can be their serious selves yet have their frivolous defenses.

The importance of the frivolous role as a counterbalance to the serious commitment in love shows up in the contrast between this witty couple and Claudio. Claudio is faced with a charge against Hero of exactly the sort, infidelity, that Benedick and Beatrice were wont to joke about as the chief peril in love. But Claudio, who seems altogether inexperienced in love, loses all judgment when presented with the mere accusation. With more sophistication, a jocular role of some sort, he might have been able to sift out truth from false appearance. Benedick and Beatrice, like few others in the play, are able at once to perceive Hero's innocence; from their role-playing, or from some other experience, they have gained a superior judgment of character. But of course the irony is that they do not read behind each others' roles, or behind their own, without some help from others.

The self-definitions or self-dedications in these plays assert the characters' deep involvement in what happens, even if the definitions are sometimes mistaken. Many of the definitions involve love, though other values or purposes are mixed in; the worst misconception of selfhood among these particular plays is Proteus' choice for a while of the wrong woman to love. Events may work against the notions of self, either by chance as in *The Comedy of Errors* or by someone's active control of what happens (such as Petruchio's taming of Kate or various persons' manipulation of Benedick and Beatrice). Though Julia is not the same kind of active controlling force in *The Two Gentlemen*, she does keep her fixed purpose before us and holds our sympathy for it. The result of control or of such sympathetic focusing is to guide character change in someone else from false self to true self. This true self (which may be unknown to its right possessor but guessed at by other characters and by us) could show up as a prior vow of

love that must outlast a misdirected vow that belongs to the false self (as in Proteus' changes); or the true self could be a potential for love that emerges through and yet harmonizes with some consciously assumed role ("false self" is too harsh a term here) as in Kate or in Benedick and Beatrice. The concepts of "true" and "false" result from our expectations in comedy, a notion of what a happy ending requires: so of course they cover very different cases, from Katherine's rageful cry for affection to Proteus' cool self-violation. We are aware both of the comic scheme and of our need to impose it. In his skill with all these matters, Shakespeare knew, perhaps from the very beginning, how to get his characters seriously into the action, how to use for the best his audience's sympathies and expectations, and how to build complexities into characters. His control over individual character gives us a vivid sense of that end of the comic spectrum.

## A Disguise of Love

One lover can hardly change basically without affecting the other in some way; this relationship of two (though other people may be involved as well) is the nearest broadening of concern outside the individual. The relation is often expressed formally by vows and symbolized physically by rings; in a comic action, specifically, it may be shown by the response of the other person to the first one's change. A powerful response may well guide, indeed reverse, the direction of change.

Thus the changes in Julia, in *The Two Gentlemen*, match in a rough way the most important changes in Proteus. Not that she assumes her first change, a masculine disguise to go visit him, in response to his infidelity; on the contrary, she trusts in his love and wants to join him just because she misses him. But the announcement of her plan is carefully placed: just before this (II.iv and II.vi), Proteus has declared his shift in loyalty from Julia to Silvia, in terms that equate his selfhood with love for Silvia. So while Proteus is misdefining himself Julia is taking on a false identity.<sup>19</sup>

The falseness of Julia's position is essentially the falseness of Proteus' love. He unwittingly gives us the best statements of the tenuous nature of her existence now that he does not love her. He lies to Silvia in telling her that Julia is dead (IV.ii.106), as if he were trying to make into fact his own prior resolve: "I will forget that Julia is alive, / Rememb'ring that my love to her is dead" (II.vi.27-28). And when he finds that Silvia will not love him, so that he can do no more than admire her picture, he finds a metaphor for the unloved lover that Julia thinks apt too:

*Pro.* Madam, if your heart be so obdurate,  
Vouchsafe me yet your picture for my love,  
The picture that is hanging in your chamber;  
To that I'll speak, to that I'll sigh and weep;  
For since the substance of your perfect self  
Is else devoted, I am but a shadow;  
And to your shadow will I make true love.

*Jul.* [*Aside.*] If 'twere a substance, you would sure deceive it,  
And make it but a shadow, as I am. (IV.ii.119-127)

He plunges her more deeply into falsehood when he asks her to give

his ring, which he had had from her, to Silvia. Julia, in disguise, hints on behalf of her own love and tempts him to repeat his lie about her death: "It seems you lov'd not her, to leave her token: / She is dead, belike?" (IV.iv.74-75) When he does not lie again but hints that he has jilted her, she can urge her case more: "methinks that she lov'd you as well / As you do love your lady Silvia" (IV.iv.79-80). Her disguise is a chance for her to try the Golden Rule on him, but with no success. He is beyond such reasoning, and she must go on an unwelcome errand.

Now her disguise helps her to self-dramatization, a stratagem also adopted by such famous disguised heroines as Rosalind and Viola; in this she is aided by Silvia, who is uninterested in Proteus and ready to discuss Julia with him sympathetically. Julia, describing herself in the third person and alluding covertly to her disguise, gives it a meaning that fits with the associations (set up by Proteus) of death and shadow-life:

since she did neglect her looking-glass,  
And threw her sun-expelling mask away,  
The air hath starv'd the roses in her cheeks,  
And pinch'd the lily-tincture of her face,  
That now she is become as black as I. (IV.iv.152-156)

She thinks of her present form, an obscuring of feminine beauty, as a product of grief. Sebastian the boy (who is Julia's *persona*) has earlier acted out grief in the role of Ariadne jilted by Theseus, and Julia imagines a situation full of variants of herself: Julia herself weeping for lost love, and Sebastian in Julia's gown playing Ariadne, the type of Julia's woes. Though the pathos of all this is not cut by the lightness and self-mockery of a Rosalind or a Viola, here are the beginnings of a complex self-awareness. And in this play itself the period of her false identity and self-contemplation through an assumed role matches Proteus' consciously false definition of himself and strengthens our reaction against it.

Silvia's refusal of the ring from Proteus leaves Julia with two: the one which she had originally given Proteus, and the one that in turn had been Proteus' gift to her. Her own gift had been a sign of her love and of Proteus' vows and obligations to her, now neglected by him: "This ring I gave him when he parted from me, / To bind him to remember my good will" (IV.iv.97-98). Instead he wants to make it into an offering to Silvia. When she prepares to reveal her disguise and remind him of his

commitments, she uses the rings to good purpose. In place of the ring he intended for Silvia, the true meaning of which had become perverted, she first produces the ring that Proteus had given her, his past acknowledgment of love and duty. She begins to remind Proteus of what he had been and had promised, and she hopes to return him to his proper being.

That return, which begins when Proteus repents his thoughts of rape, is completed only when Julia discloses her identity and thus too returns to herself. Though love was the motive for her disguise and the disguise is proof of her love, she likens the falsehood of her disguise to the period of falsehood in Proteus' loyalties:

Be thou asham'd that I have took upon me  
Such an immodest raiment—if shame live  
In a disguise of love!  
It is the lesser blot, modesty finds,  
Women to change their shapes than men their minds. (V.iv.105-109)

With this Proteus reverts to his original being and vows constancy. If we will accept this first self as the true self, following Julia's wishes, we can trust the future. Proteus is bound like his mythological type, and the circular movement of the comedy is perfected and brought to rest.

The heroine's changes of identity in this play—changes which are more carefully planned, with more significant details of action and dialogue, than critics usually want to notice—foreshadow another stratagem to reform an erring man, the lady's supposed death as in *Much Ado about Nothing*.<sup>20</sup> Here, of course, Claudio's error is not his own infidelity but his belief that Hero has been unfaithful, and the resultant change in Hero does not involve a disguise; but the basic structure is much the same, and again Shakespeare makes the contrasts of true and false selves. The man's error is a lapsing into a false state of being, which is matched and cured (in part) by the lady's pretense of death.

Claudio is insecure to begin with in his distinction of true from false appearances. His liking for Hero has only become love since his return from the wars (I.i.296-305), and since his wooing is done for him by Don Pedro he has fewer first-hand impressions of Hero's commitment to him than a more direct suitor would;<sup>21</sup> he cannot have his own remembered image (and images become important in the play) of how she looked at the first mention of his love. He is liable to error, too, just because he

has an intermediary, and his failure of trust (when he hears a wrong story) extends even to his friend and commander:

'Tis certain so, the Prince woos for himself.  
Friendship is constant in all other things  
Save in the office and affairs of love;  
Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues.  
Let every eye negotiate for itself,  
And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch  
Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.  
This is an accident of hourly proof,  
Which I mistrusted not. Farewell therefore Hero! (II.i.174-182)

His own self-doubt and his special insecurities about love (shared by Othello, who yet has a military self-assurance that Claudio may lack) make him deny in this one matter the trust that he usually gives to a well-known friend. By temperament and inexperience (a failing which his inability to declare his own love simply aggravates) he is disabled from sound judgment.

But if he easily falls from a better state of mind, that better self is idealistic enough that we want to believe in its potential. In *The Two Gentlemen*, our hope for Proteus' better side depended on our sympathy for Julia and for the love of Valentine and Silvia, and on our knowledge that old bonds of love and friendship should keep Proteus with Julia and away from Silvia. In *Much Ado*, Hero is too slight to arouse by herself the same sympathy as Julia, and Claudio's reason for breaking off with Hero, unlike Proteus' reason for change, would be adequate if only his facts were right. Rather we want the marriage to go forward partly because other characters whom we like, especially Beatrice, are hopeful, and also partly because we know that Don John is a villain; but there are grounds for our wishes too in Claudio himself. Even in embitterment he expresses the strength of the ideal he would like to read in Hero if only he would trust the present (and true) appearances:

Behold how like a maid she blushes here!  
O, what authority and show of truth  
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!  
Comes not that blood as modest evidence  
To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,



All you that see her, that she were a maid,  
 By these exterior shows? . . .  
 Out on thee seeming! I will write against it:  
 You seem to me as Dian in her orb,  
 As chaste as is the bud ere it be blown. . . . (IV.i.34-40,56-58)

Our greater knowledge of events strengthens our sense of Claudio's tribute to Hero's beauty: we can find in it a true sign of moral beauty, just as we know that Desdemona is truly the "cunning'st pattern of excelling nature" in a moral as well as physical sense. Othello's idealism (even if he will not trust it) is a necessary means of establishing his nobility as a tragic figure. We must be able to make the same kind of judgment, though with less urgency, in comedies such as this where an erring but later reformed hero is, if not noble, at least marriageable: his better self must make excuses for his worse. So it is Claudio who most of all provides his own credentials.

Even without knowledge of Don John's trick to make Claudio think Hero unfaithful, it is possible for a careful observer, like the Friar, to see her innocence "By noting of the lady":

I have mark'd  
 A thousand blushing apparitions  
 To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames  
 In angel whiteness beat away those blushes,  
 And in her eye there hath appear'd a fire  
 To burn the errors that these princes hold  
 Against her maiden truth. (IV.i.158-164)

He does better than Leonato, who doubts his own daughter without even the excuse of the deceit that had been put upon Claudio: "could she here deny / The story that is printed in her blood?" (lines 121-122) The issue that distinguishes among characters in the play is the right perception of appearances;<sup>22</sup> it is also the means of defining Claudio's return to his true self. The Friar thinks, rather too hopefully, that if he reports Hero dead to Claudio,

When he shall hear she died upon his words,  
 Th' idea of her life shall sweetly creep  
 Into his study of imagination,  
 And every lovely organ of her life  
 Shall come apparell'd in more precious habit,

More moving, delicate, and full of life,  
Into the eye and prospect of his soul,  
Than when she liv'd indeed (IV.i.223-230),

and he will want her back again. Claudio's original failure to form a stable image of Hero that would refute Don John's slander must be corrected by an appeal to his imagination. Hero's "change"—her supposed death—not only matches Claudio's change in its timing, as Julia's change matched Proteus'; it is meant to turn Claudio's change directly back. It continues and develops from *The Two Gentlemen* in another way: the story about a death, which had been Proteus' fiction to himself and then his lie to Silvia, becomes in *Much Ado* a supposed fact which is presented to the man by others. The Friar's lie about Hero's death is needed to counteract Don John's lie about her infidelity; as in many comedies, the good turn their enemies' weapons against them. But the result is not cynical (even if the Friar's plan fails to work as intended); if there were not a better self in Claudio that is capable of genuinely appreciating the pure, true image of Hero, no such plan would have been worth trying.

When Don John's successful plot is revealed (through no fault of the constables who overheard it) and Claudio again believes the truth about Hero, he regains his ideal picture of her: "Sweet Hero, now thy image doth appear / In the rare semblance that I lov'd it first" (V.i.251-252). Now the Friar's scheme comes into its own; if it had not caused Claudio to repent, at least it now makes a good test of his sincerity. Leonato urges strongly the supposedly irrevocable nature of events, and from there he gets right to the point of the reparation that Claudio and Don Pedro can make:

I cannot bid you bid my daughter live—  
That were impossible—but I pray you both,  
Possess the people in Messina here  
How innocent she died, and if your love  
Can labor aught in sad invention,  
Hang her an epitaph upon her tomb,  
And sing it to her bones, sing it to-night. (V.i.279-285)

If Claudio has really returned to his true being and has within him once more a true image of Hero, he will make it public to undo some damage that the false image has done.

Although the motivation seems bizarre even for this altered version of *vendetta*, there is more purpose than the comic rush to a happy ending in Leonato's next demand, that Claudio should marry his niece. This sounds like extreme generosity to Claudio (and he takes it as such), but it is presented as his duty of restitution: the niece matches Hero eye for eye and tooth for tooth ("Almost the copy of my child that's dead"—V.i.289), and Claudio must "Give her the right you should have giv'n her cousin. . . ." The likeness to Hero continues in an odd way one notion of the epitaphs that Claudio must write: he is to prove how much he had really loved Hero herself after all. These peculiarities are resolved in outcome (and to that extent in motivation) when the masked "niece" turns out to be Hero after all. Once Claudio has proved himself, duty becomes a pleasure and justice becomes mercy.

The exact form of Hero's revelation is important. Its penitential quality is exactly what Claudio had volunteered: "Choose your revenge yourself, / Impose me to what penance your invention / Can lay upon my sin" (V.i.272-274). He surrenders initiative and control over himself to Leonato; Leonato is not only to choose the nature of the penance but even, it turns out, to decide whom Claudio should marry. Claudio, the penitent, trusts Leonato, the wronged man, and looks for him to do justice; how much better than the reverse, a Valentine trusting a Proteus! So Claudio, by Leonato's command, must take the lady's hand before the Friar and assembled witnesses and must promise to marry her before he sees her face. He makes a legally binding commitment by Elizabethan standards;<sup>23</sup> only then can he be accepted and rewarded.

Hero's words of return emphasize the meaning of the changes she and Claudio have undergone: "when I liv'd, I was your other wife, / And when you lov'd, you were my other husband" (V.iv.60-61). She is returning to her original state now that Claudio has become himself again in his repentance. On Claudio's exclamation—"Another Hero!"—she explains, "One Hero died defil'd, but I do live," and Leonato adds (to Don Pedro), "She died, my lord, but whiles her slander liv'd." Her state of false being was both her feigned death and the slander that occasioned it. Slander had cast both lovers into a state of falsity: Claudio had ceased to be himself (implicitly defined through the person he loves) when he lost faith in Hero, and Hero had suffered a distortion of image or loss of name through the

false story. As the lovers are reunited, they are restored to themselves, and the process is described for us.

The Claudio-Hero plot of *Much Ado* takes for granted the conscious self-definitions of *The Two Gentlemen* and develops and generally improves several elements of the story. *All's Well that Ends Well* takes from both of these plays, builds greater complexities, and pushes the issues harder. Infidelity is again a problem, though it is not simple infidelity nor Bertram's only problem. Helena goes into disguise to follow her man as Julia does (though with better knowledge of his feelings) and, like Julia, finds him unfaithful; and her pose as pilgrim is an acting-out of Julia's metaphor of the "true-devoted pilgrim" who "hath Love's wings to fly" (*TGV* II.vii.9-11). Like Hero, Helena is supposed dead, though most of the characters do not know that this report was consciously planned (*AWW* IV.iii.47-59). As Proteus had imagined and then lied about his lady's death, Bertram implies the same wish in the words of his letter to Helena, "Till I have no wife, I have nothing in France" (III.ii.99), and he finds it convenient to promise Diana marriage after some unknown time when Helena may die (IV.ii.71-72). Shakespeare repeats himself to intensify the challenge in events.

But the newest development is the ultimate among disguises, the bed-trick. Like the other disguises or changes in the heroine that have been mentioned so far, it obviously corresponds in its own way to the man's refusal of the lady; if Bertram were not pursuing someone else there would be nobody for Helena to replace in bed.<sup>24</sup> But there is a closer connection in that Bertram's letter rejecting Helena virtually invites the trick: "When thou canst get the ring upon my finger, which never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to, then call me husband; but in such a 'then' I write a 'never'" (III.ii.57-60). He means these conditions that he forces upon her to be only nominal, since he thinks their fulfillment impossible. But Helena's sharp eye notices that she could fulfill the requirements if she could lure him into intercourse (and become instantly pregnant) without his knowing who she was, and if she could acquire the ring at the same time. Whether presenting him with these surprising fulfillments of his demands would make him accept the marriage any more than the King's command had, is another question; here is one of the gambles she must take. What is important for the basic structure of the play is that she reads his statement of separation from her as

a set of tasks through which she may be able to regain him, and that while she pursues this aim she assumes various sorts of false existence.

Is it fair to Bertram to say that his true selfhood is bound up with marriage to Helena? There is more strain in this assertion than in similar ones about Proteus and Claudio; here is one instance where this play pushes the issues harder. Again, as with Julia, we depend on sympathy with the heroine; in Helena's curing of the King we find our sympathy with her increasing. Her adoption by the Countess reinforces our feelings and weakens Bertram's argument about disparity of birth. It is already a feeble enough argument, as the King points out, being based as it is on nothing more than a snobbish concern for family name:

If she be

All that is virtuous—save what thou dislik'st,

A poor physician's daughter—thou dislik'st

Of virtue for the name. (II.iii.121-124)

Though Bertram tries hard to hold onto his ring as "an honor 'longing to our house, / Bequeathed down from many ancestors" (IV.ii.42-43), he agrees to part with it to Diana, thereby, through that and a related act, jeopardizing his family's and his own good name. In fact, then, he cares little enough about something that is hard to defend in the first place.

Another question, tending in the opposite direction, would be whether Bertram really does have a better self than the erring one we see through most of the play. Again the play raises difficulties, and perhaps we cannot do much more than make excuses for him. Bertram is expected to be overwhelmed by Helena's "virtue" in healing the King. But he fails to respond as theory, the King, Helena, and the audience would have him; given that fact, he may fairly object to being made the prize in what is really the King's rewarding of virtue. There is this modicum of justice in what is otherwise, for all we can tell from his reasons, merely a snobbish resistance. Beyond this, our hopes for a better Bertram must depend on Helena's love for him, the virtues of the Countess his mother and her love for him, and the remembered virtues of his father. Through the whole play his virtue remains mostly in potential.

Bertram goes further in infidelity than Proteus and is harder to reform; yet the demands for reform are more exacting in nature than they had been in other plays. When Helena is thought by all to be dead and Bertram is before the King and about to take a new wife, he claims that since Helena

died he has come to love her (V.iii.54). Such an admission, along with acts of penance, sufficed when it came from Claudio; indeed the Friar's whole plan to make Claudio lament Hero's loss depended on the principle

That what we have we prize not to the worth  
Whiles we enjoy it, but being lack'd and lost,  
Why then we rack the value; then we find  
The virtue that possession would not show us  
Whiles it was ours. (*Ado* IV.i.218-222)

The King lectures Bertram about the same principle, but although he is ready to let him remarry, his tone as he recalls the injury done Helena is not approving:

That thou didst love her, strikes some scores away  
From the great compt; but love that comes too late,  
Like a remorseful pardon slowly carried,  
To the great sender turns a sour offense,  
Crying, "That's good that's gone." Our rash faults  
Make trivial price of serious things we have,  
Not knowing them until we know their grave. (*AWW* V.iii.56-62)

Still, the King would let the past go; Bertram has offered, this time more willingly, to marry again by the King's direction (V.iii.29)—as the repentant Claudio had agreed to follow Leonato's choice. But the planned acceptance of Bertram, unlike Claudio's acceptance, does not go smoothly. In a more complex way than in *The Two Gentlemen*, rings reveal the truth by recalling past obligations. Bertram tries to send for his new bride with a ring that he thinks Diana had given him; if his supposition were true, he would be misusing it faithlessly, for he had promised her marriage, and her ring would be one token of that contract.<sup>25</sup> But since it is Helena's, his treatment of both women comes into question.

When Helena enters with Bertram's own ring she resolves everything: she has fulfilled the task Bertram had set her, and she has his pledge of love and obligation, given more freely to her than his marriage vows had been. She announces herself with a description of her state of false identity as a rejected wife: "'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see, / The name, and not the thing" (V.iii.307-308). Bertram, for all that he has twisted and turned before, acknowledges her at once in her full selfhood: "Both, both. O, pardon!" If this is rather brief as an expression of Bertram's reform

(he speaks one couplet soon after, professing love), it is concentrated and meaningful if we recall how Shakespeare has treated lovers' identities in other plays. Helena is returning to herself, and indeed beyond her past identity in that Bertram is now conscious of a real attachment to her; and in this movement to better and fuller reality she brings Bertram with her.

Other disguises or feigned deaths by heroines in response to changes in their husbands are Imogen's in *Cymbeline* and Hermione's in *The Winter's Tale*. In both these late plays the complexities of the situation require further contexts for discussion; for the moment it is worth just noticing the continuity and the degree of complication. *Cymbeline* features disguise by both husband and wife (if Posthumus' change of clothing counts), feigned death by the wife, suspicion by each of the other's infidelity, and much more. *The Winter's Tale* has Leontes' assumption that Hermione is unfaithful, her supposed death, and her miraculous restoration after he has repented. The situation at the end of *Much Ado*, when Claudio places himself under Leonato's direction in marriage, is repeated, with variants, in Leontes' acceptance of Paulina's guidance in remarriage:

Will you swear  
Never to marry but by my free leave? . . .  
Unless another,  
As like Hermione as is her picture,  
Affront his eye. . . .  
Yet if my lord will marry—if you will, sir,  
No remedy but you will—give me the office  
To choose you a queen. She shall not be so young  
As was your former, but she shall be such  
As (walk'd your first queen's ghost) it should take joy  
To see her in your arms. (V.i.69-70, 73-75, 76-81)

At the proper time she will offer him a wife as like Hermione as is her statue. The proper time is not before repentance has brought him sufficiently to himself; but unlike the situation in *Much Ado*, in this play it is not given to the persons directing the repentance to decide when there has been enough of it; Paulina must keep in mind that the oracle has implied the hope of other recoveries.

Another continuity is the possible suggestion of Hermione's statue by imagery in one source for *Much Ado about Nothing*, which has some structural likeness to *The Winter's Tale*. In Bandello's tale of Timbreo and

Fenicia, when Hero's (and in part Hermione's) counterpart, Fenicia, was falsely accused, the description of her as she fainted suggests that she looked like a statue.<sup>28</sup> If passages from a source for an earlier play did indeed reverberate in his mind for many years, Shakespeare must have made a connection in the behavior of the two heroines, and must have found a new intensity and complication in the old issues and situations as he returned to them in later plays.

The heroines of the plays discussed in this chapter have a powerful effect on their men through their passage into some sort of false existence. Their concern with change of identity once their love is threatened shows the nature of the problem as Shakespeare defines it: the men have somehow changed identity too, in an ominous way, and return to themselves is also a return to discarded vows. We can best react to the plays by letting the heroines guide us and by hoping for some better self in each erring hero. That we may not instinctively do this points to a weakness or problem; Shakespeare must have felt some kind of artifice in this story line himself, for he keeps returning to it, elaborating it, and especially loading it with new obstacles to our ready acceptance of the expected comic resolution. He dares us to believe that all may be well.



## Paying the Debt

Lovers' obligations to each other have a social aspect, at least insofar as society promotes marriage as a stable fulfillment of vows of love. The goal of Graeco-Roman New Comedy may be to harmonize lovers' commitments (in this case, already stable ones) with society's class-bound expectations and monetary arrangements.<sup>27</sup> And in Shakespeare's time, in life as well as art, even quite private vows of fidelity could easily become social in that they were legally binding betrothals, or actual marriages.<sup>28</sup> The facility of this societal involvement (which one could call external, as far as the lovers are concerned) shows in *Measure for Measure* when, on the strength of old vows since denied, Angelo is considered Mariana's "husband on a pre-contract" (IV.i.71). Others feel justified, then (although not all critics would agree), in bringing them together again, even without Angelo's knowledge; and their intercourse, though it involves a bed-trick played on Angelo, makes a legally valid marriage. And in *All's Well* when Helena produces Bertram's ring as proof of their intercourse, she has not only fulfilled the task set by his letter but consummated and therefore confirmed with his consent (also by a bed-trick) their binding marriage.<sup>29</sup> These deceptions are extreme, and Shakespeare took some pains to prepare and justify them;<sup>30</sup> but they differ mainly in degree from the erring Claudio's penitent betrothal in *Much Ado* to an unknown masked lady. When the truth comes out, these men prove their love in that, in a strange sense, they do not "alter when they alteration find." Legally they cannot alter; that is the point of society's involvement. But, for the ladies' sakes at least, we should hope that the men's private wishes too at last match up with their public obligations.

Society concerns itself also with the continued meeting of obligations after marriage. One of the "duties" of marriage, as then regarded, has some importance in Shakespeare's comedies, the marital "debt" of sexual intercourse implied in 1 Corinthians 7:3. "Debt" is the Vulgate word (*Uxori vir debitum reddat*), and the Rheims version translates verses 3-5 "Let the husband render his dette to the wife: and the wife also in like maner to her husband. The woman hath not power of her owne body: but her husband. And in like maner the man also hath not power of his owne body: but the woman. Defraude not one an other, except perhaps by

consent for a time, that you may giue your self to praier. . . ."<sup>31</sup> The headnote explains "That married folke may aske their debt, and must pay it," and the annotations mention "the bond and obligation that is betwene the married couple for rendring of the dette of carnal copulation one to an other. . . ." Though Coverdale translates *debitum* as "that due is," the major English Protestant Bibles of the Tudor age (Great, Bishops', Geneva) all try to make the meaning more general—"Let the husband giue vnto the wife due beneuolence, and likewise also the wife vnto the husband"—and Geneva's note says that "due beneuolence" "conteineth all duties pertaining to marriage."<sup>32</sup> But influential Protestants, though accepting this wording of the text, might read it as euphemism by Paul, implying still the sexual meaning above all; so Heinrich Bullinger:

thus with comly words expresseth he the actual worke of mariage. . . . But Paul commaundeth [the Corinthians] to marry, the one to geue due beneuolence vnto the other, no doubt for the auoiding of whoredom, and eschuing of vncleanes. For it followeth in Paul immediatly after. The wife hath no power of her own body, but the husband. Likewyse the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wyfe. Whereby hee forbiddeth that eyther of them shall deny hys body vnto the other.<sup>33</sup>

Whatever their opinion of this passage, Christians in Shakespeare's time would know the argument for a sexual duty in marriage.

When Bertram pursues Diana despite his marital vows, she answers him pointedly with exactly that argument:

*Ber.* In your fine frame hath love no quality?  
If the quick fire of youth light not your mind,  
You are no maiden, but a monument.  
When you are dead, you should be such a one  
As you are now; for you are cold and stern,  
And now you should be as your mother was  
When your sweet self was got.

*Dia.* She then was honest.

*Ber.* So should you be.

*Dia.* No;

My mother did but duty, such, my lord,

As you owe to your wife. (*AWW* IV.ii.4-13)

Her actual word "duty" appears in Henry Cornelius Agrippa's paraphrase of the passage from Corinthians, in the wording "the carnall duetie."<sup>34</sup> She insists that Bertram has a positive duty to Helena, not merely a constraint against seeking other women. Yet for all we know, Bertram might have avoided Helena, and perhaps got the marriage annulled, if he had been willing to remain celibate long enough; at least that is one protection against bed-tricks. But Bertram seems determined to go wrong both in shunning Helena and in seeking Diana, and one seems to follow from the other. And as the two ills are related, so are their remedies.

Helena's curing of Bertram consists of proving to him that he really wants what he had thought he did not: he must learn to redefine his status. When he first resisted her choice of him as husband, he asked the King, "In such a business, give me leave to use / The help of mine own eyes" (II.iii.107-108), and his objections to her birth and poverty seemed to the King like prejudice against virtue simply "for the name" of Helena's status as "A poor physician's daughter" (lines 123-124). But when he meets Diana he undermines his position: he changes from abstinence to importuning, he abandons concern for good name (at least his own), and in succumbing to a trick in the dark he above all makes his choice without using his eyes. Helena's paradoxes express his general state of delusion:

O, strange men,  
That can such sweet use make of what they hate,  
When saucy trusting of the cozen'd thoughts  
Defiles the pitchy night; so lust doth play  
With what it loathes for that which is away. . . . (IV.iv.21-25)

Unintentionally and in private he has submitted himself to an experience with the wrong label on it; when the experience is made public and given its right name, he will remain true to the experience itself and decide that he does not dislike the name after all.

Making the facts public—involving society in Bertram's adherence to his vows—is essential to Helena's plan. Public coercion seems needed with Bertram, and his acceptance of his wife would not be complete until public—indeed he does not know it is she that he has accepted until everything is public. The ring she gives him, besides being her individual commitment of love to him, can also be a cry of help to the King:

She call'd the saints to surety  
That she would never put it from her finger,  
Unless she gave it to yourself [Bertram] in bed,  
Where you have never come, or sent it us  
Upon her great disaster. (V.iii.108-112)

Since the King wrongly eliminates one explanation for her parting with the ring, he is left with the suspicion that Bertram, and later Diana, might be implicated in Helena's death; but the false lead is helpful, since the investigation puts pressure on Bertram and so contributes to making his deeds public.

Besides the private pledges conferred by the rings that Bertram and Helena exchange (however little Bertram means any promise), the rings had already had social meanings given to them by Bertram and Diana; Bertram said of his ring,

It is an honor 'longing to our house,  
Bequeathed down from many ancestors,  
Which were the greatest obloquy i' th' world  
In me to lose,

and Diana replied,

Mine honor's such a ring,  
My chastity's the jewel of our house,  
Bequeathed down from many ancestors,  
Which were the greatest obloquy i' th' world  
In me to lose. (IV.ii.42-49)

If their exchange, and what it implies, were really to take place, there actually would be such a loss on both sides; but in fact Bertram gives over the keeping of his reputation, and his actions as well, to Helena, who can save him more surely than he would save himself. Speaking for Helena, Diana gives a public meaning to the second ring, which privately is Helena's token of love to Bertram:

And on your finger in the night I'll put  
Another ring, that what in time proceeds  
May token to the future our past deeds. (IV.ii.61-63)

Even apart from its sexual meaning this speech is deliberately ambiguous: "what in time proceeds" may be any of the events that may result. But

especially Helena would look ahead to her pregnancy and to her claiming fulfillment of her task through pregnancy and through possession of the other ring. But though he cannot guess these matters, Bertram has had his warning that what happens now will be known and binding in the future, and he will need to face the social consequences of his vows.

When Helena arrives at the end to make her public claim on Bertram, she speaks as if still in her former state: "Tis but the shadow of a wife you see, / The name, and not the thing" (V.iii.307-308). She refers not only to the half-existence of unrequited love as described in earlier chapters (and also portrayed by Julia with a metaphor of shadows) but also to two matters of social concern in the institution of marriage: the incompleteness of an unconsummated marriage (which might still be annulled) and the failure of Bertram to pay the marital debt. Of course things have changed, as Bertram at once acknowledges. But until he makes this public admission, Helena's position as wife is not established. Only through the revelation of events does Bertram know that his private desires in the dark are now reconciled with his public marital vows, and only in his recognition of this harmony is it really true that Helena has received all the promises of marriage. With this we can begin to hope that the title of the play is, or may be, fulfilled.

The concept of the marital debt is more important still in another play, *The Merchant of Venice*; it is the metaphor that unites some major actions in the drama and shows the fitness of Portia's behavior. No sooner does Bassanio win the right to marry Portia than he learns the hard news that Antonio, whose loan had financed his wooing, is at Shylock's mercy for debt, which he intends to collect in flesh rather than cash. At once Portia offers to pay off more than the money owing, and she outlines with some care the sequence of events she plans:

First go with me to church and call me wife,  
And then away to Venice to your friend;  
For never shall you lie by Portia's side  
With an unquiet soul. You shall have gold  
To pay the petty debt twenty times over. (III.ii.303-307)

She will go on with the wedding service, but she postpones the consummation of their marriage until after she can free Antonio of his indebtedness to Shylock. She will not pay the debt until she has paid the debt.

But as Jessica has warned, Shylock will not be bought off with even

twenty times the sum owed him. Portia seems apprehensive about this problem, and besides sending money she follows after to Venice, disguised and provided with expert legal advice. Shylock is a hard case: he refuses offers of higher payment; appeals to mercy get nowhere with him; and he declines even to provide a surgeon out of mercy if he is not obliged to. He will back down only when threatened by unforeseen applications of law. Portia works hard in her judicial role, and by the customs of the time she deserves a reward, which Bassanio offers—with Antonio's seconding:

*Bass.* Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend  
Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted  
Of grievous penalties, in lieu whereof  
Three thousand ducats, due unto the Jew,  
We freely cope your courteous pains withal.

*Ant.* And stand indebted, over and above,  
In love and service to you evermore. (IV.i.408-414)

Now there is a new kind of debt, a recognition of Portia's merit in outwitting Shylock, and significantly the money that had been intended for him would now be diverted to her. But Portia is unknown because in disguise, and before she discloses herself she wants to make more of the nature of this new indebtedness; so she asks for something that is harder for Bassanio to part with, the ring that is token of her love.

Her gift of the ring to him had been phrased in the financial language that fills the play:

Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours  
Is now converted. But now I was the lord  
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,  
Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,  
This house, these servants, and this same myself  
Are yours—my lord's!—I give them with this ring,  
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,  
Let it presage the ruin of your love,  
And be my vantage to exclaim on you. (III.ii.166-174)

In keeping with this play's habit of talking about all kinds of values as if they were monetary, she sounds as if she were delivering a deed of property.<sup>35</sup> The ring should have a certain value to Bassanio, which is whatever value he finds in her offering herself and all her goods to him.

Valuation for her services as judge is also implied in her request for the ring—

if your wife be not a mad woman,  
And know how well I have deserv'd this ring,  
She would not hold out enemy for ever  
For giving it to me

—and in Antonio's urging that he give it up:

Let his deservings and my love withal  
Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment. (IV.i.445-448, 450-451)

Bassanio feels that his wife's value as summed up by the ring and the importance of the ring to her as a token ought to be greater than even the value of the judge who has saved his friend's life and the value of the token to the judge. So Bassanio holds out against the gift until the end, when he relents.

When Bassanio returns to Belmont and Portia is in her own role again, inevitably she must taunt him for parting with the ring. Again she alludes to its value:

If you had known the virtue of the ring,  
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,  
Or your own honor to contain the ring,  
You would not then have parted with the ring. (V.i.199-202)

If Bassanio had known the truth by now, this speech would carry its own answer: Portia-as-judge is worth even more than Portia-in-Belmont, since her virtues have been put into action; and so as judge she deserves the ring. But there is another valuation to consider, as the bawdy jests about the ring remind us; Portia-as-wife has not yet shown all her value, since she has postponed payment of the marriage debt and even, in fun, threatened to withhold it completely until the ring is returned. The competing valuations are brought together when Antonio makes another bond for his friend by pledging his soul that Bassanio "Will never more break faith advisedly" (V.i.253) and when Portia gives Bassanio the ring again and reveals her identity as judge.

Now Portia's actions are public, and her appreciation in value from bride to judge to wife can be realized. She has more than paid any debts that anyone has incurred, and all debts of gratitude, which always come back

to her, she freely forgives. She even seems ready to set Antonio up in trade again, on the pretense that some of his ships were saved; except for this, everything she does, as an expression of love, must be public so that it can be valued rightly. As Portia pays off "debts" in love, friendship, and marriage, her increasing "value" is a sign of an aspect of the whole play that one critic has called "love's wealth"<sup>86</sup>—and the ring, which therefore is worth more when she returns it to Bassanio than when she first gave it, is a tangible symbol of this wealth.

Thus far society's concern with vows has been seen in vows of betrothal, as in *Much Ado*, *All's Well*, and *Measure of Measure*, and in the sexual obligations in marriage, as in *The Merchant of Venice* and *All's Well*. There are other kinds of vows and involvements in *Love's Labor's Lost*. The vows of study and seclusion originally taken by the men create a little society with its own set of laws. And the King of Navarre, in describing this society as his court, gives it a place as a society within, yet withdrawn from, a larger society: "Navarre shall be the wonder of the world; / Our court shall be a little academe" (I.i.12-13). We are scarcely aware of that implied larger society, but another one soon impinges on the small society of oath-bound men: the Princess of France, with attendant ladies, comes on a diplomatic mission that cannot be ignored, and the men must break their regimen to meet with them. But among courtiers such as these the vows are doomed anyway, as Berowne's criticisms show; perhaps he joins the group partly in hopes of seeing the others break sooner than he: "I believe, although I seem so loath, / I am the last that will last keep his oath" (I.i.159-160).

Once the men see the ladies the race to forswear begins; all write poems to their ladies, and in their verses all except the King try, with little success, to excuse the fact that in vowing love they are breaking a prior vow. Thus Berowne:

If love make me forsworn, how shall I swear to love?  
 Ah, never faith could hold, if not to beauty vowed!  
 Though to myself forsworn, to thee I'll faithful prove. . . .  
 Study his bias leaves, and makes his book thine eyes,  
 Where all those pleasures live that art would comprehend.  
 If knowledge be the mark, to know thee shall suffice. . . .

(IV.ii.105-107, 109-111)

Though he pleads the superior power of beauty as a cause of oath-breaking,



he does not really resolve the paradox of the first line; and his defense is undermined by the equivocal suggestions of "know" and "mark" (the latter a subject of bawdy puns in the previous scene). Nor is Longaville's sophistry acceptable:

Vows for thee broke deserve not punishment.  
A woman I forswore, but I will prove,  
Thou being a goddess, I forswore not thee. (IV.iii.61-63)

Still less, Dumaine's feeble excuse:

But, alack, my hand is sworn  
Ne'er to pluck thee from thy thorn;  
Vow, alack, for youth unmeet,  
Youth so apt to pluck a sweet. (IV.iii.109-112)

"Apt" is another ambiguous word.<sup>37</sup> Though the men give likely reasons for their change, these are not reassuring of future stability. The ladies have doubts too, as in the Princess' comment to the King, "Your oath once broke, you force not to forswear" (V.ii.440). By masking and exchanging their gifts from the men when the men come dressed as Muscovites, they mock the vows of men who need tokens to recognize the objects of their eternal faith.

In all this mutability Berowne has a special problem in justifying himself, for besides breaking the vows that he shares with the other men, he has renounced his individual role as "love's whip," the mocker of others' folly in love:

Nay, to be perjur'd, which is worst of all;  
And among three to love the worst of all, . . .  
It is a plague  
That Cupid will impose for my neglect  
Of his almighty dreadful little might. (III.i.194-195, 201-203)

He is like a Benedick who has half predicted his fate; the others have less self-awareness and less spirit of mockery, but their fate is the same.

The "society" of the men disintegrates as they catch each other out in their oath-breaking poems, but it forms again with another common aim, their pursuit of love. Berowne is asked to give this new task a rationale—or as Longaville more frankly says, "Some tricks, some quilllets, how to

cheat the devil" (IV.iii.284). His reply is a heightened version of the now-familiar argument:

Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,  
Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.  
It is religion to be thus forsworn:  
For charity itself fulfills the law,  
And who can sever love from charity? (IV.iii.358-362)

Although the results are more agreeable, this is in principle something like multiplying Proteus by four. The redefinition of selfhood is still too facile. The King's "religion" consists of crying "Saint Cupid!" and Berowne continues with bawdry:

Advance your standards, and upon them, lords;  
Pell-mell, down with them! but be first advis'd,  
In conflict that you get the sun of them. (IV.iii.364-366)

Even in a serious moment at the end of the play, Berowne's argument to the ladies is the same, without the bawdry:

We to ourselves prove false,  
By being once false for ever to be true  
To those that make us both—fair ladies, you;  
And even that falsehood, in itself a sin,  
Thus purifies itself and turns to grace. (V.ii.772-776)

Although Berowne has improved his tone of professed sincerity—he has had practice enough—he still can find no way around the basic difficulty.

The resolution comes from outside in the French King's death, which forces an outcome, one way or another, by necessitating the ladies' departure and obliging them to go into mourning. Their discipline is a model for the men and a way for them to prove their faith by dedication that as such is selfless yet leads toward a reward for love. The two men whose specific tasks we learn are sent, in disparate directions, into alien experience: the King, to a hermitage, Berowne, to a hospital. The courtly constrictions of the play (which apply to the characters of the subplots too, since they are laughed at mainly from a courtly viewpoint, especially in the Play of the Worthies) are suddenly widened and its artifices and absurd vows are subjected to a more severe criticism. If the King wants to withdraw from the mundane, he will at least practice a kind of withdrawal

that, as society recognizes, has a severe regimen; if Berowne must dally with oaths even when the news of death has arrived, he will test this spirit against serious human concerns, among the sick and dying. Slender vows, which might be easily made and unmade, will be tried by confrontation with genuine adversity. The homely imagery of the seasonal songs is a foretaste.

Social enforcement of marriage seems on the way in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when Athenian law is invoked in an attempt to wed Hermia to Demetrius. But this is enforcement of a father's will contrary to lovers' free vows: Hermia and Lysander love each other, and Demetrius' first vow has been to Helena, who still loves him. Our sympathies work out the ideal solution in the return of Demetrius' stray desires, but neither the lovers themselves nor the officialdom of their society will bring this about. Only other powers, external even to the human world, can succeed. When they do, Demetrius, though baffled by his change of heart, accepts it as a return to his "natural taste" (IV.i.174), and the others, even Hermia's father, must support the harmonious outcome.

So it is generally with vows that have social consequences; the plays work toward a goal, easy or hard, of reconciling private wishes with public stability. Sometimes there is little strain: Demetrius' first claim to Hermia, even when supported by her father, is not a serious threat and arouses no ambivalence in us. The presence of a Bertram makes the problems less tractable: his right to see with his own eyes would be undeniable, at least now, if that were what he really wanted to do, and he goes out of control partly because he is denied that right. The harmony of inner passion and outer act (performance of vows) in a comic ending depends on the arts of the active heroine; Portia especially, among the ones discussed so far, acts out her promise of love and worth in her dealings with the outer world.

## Things that Befall Preposterously

For the moment *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice* offer handy examples of the way that forces outside the main characters—and indeed outside, or almost outside, the control of society—may for a time run counter to the main characters' wishes. The problem may thus at its worst appear to be greater even than hostility from society itself. In the *Dream*, society's obstacles to the lovers, as listed by Theseus, are a known quantity from the start; but Lysander assumes, apart from this, that "The course of true love never did run smooth," that even if social disparities do not exist between lovers there are the accidental threats of "War, death, or sickness" (I.i.134, 142). In running away the lovers expose themselves to the risks of the unknown, and they never do understand just what happens to themselves. Events may seem to happen by chance, though from time to time the men try to find rationales for their changes in love; finally the characters must give up the question in wonder. From our superior position, since we know about the fairies and their magic, the element of chance seems lesser and the role of purpose greater. We expect too that events are working toward the lovers' good. Finally, beyond the fairies themselves is another level on which purpose is possible, the artistic one where we look for the whole play to be intelligible and worthwhile. This level, which is usually left implicit but which becomes open in the Epilogue when Puck calls the actors "shadows" and the events of the play "visions," would exist even if all the events were presented as accidental. This play as a dramatic model, then, tends toward the explanation of apparently chance events, first through the purposes of hidden agents if possible, and then through any purpose, rationale, or meaning that appears in the whole sequence of experiences once the total pattern is known. Apparent mischance is to be explained away, if possible, by agents or results.

In the *Merchant*, by contrast, the character of the agent who may obstruct people's wishes is only too well known. As a merchant Antonio necessarily takes a certain amount of risk; but he compounds his perils by applying to Shylock for help, thereby potentially giving Shylock power over him. Shylock personifies external risks: he is an outsider to Antonio's company and is barely tolerated in Venice; and he is also "external" in that he offers a solution to a money problem that Antonio cannot solve by

himself. He is a risk (though underestimated by Antonio) in that he is openly hostile and offers a bond with ominous terms. Since Bassanio is beholden to Antonio for the expenses of his wooing and Antonio in turn is (in a strictly financial sense) indebted to Shylock, the lovers have a moral obligation that makes their happiness dependent on coming to terms with Shylock. The external threat or cause of adversity is known; the problem is to avoid the danger—to reform Shylock, as Portia first tries, or to outwit and overpower him.

These contrasted examples are the merest beginning of a survey of "external" forces (either characters or events—hostile, uncontrolled, alien) in some of Shakespeare's earlier comedies. These notions are broad enough to provide for a cornucopia, or perhaps a mare's nest; so they need to be used with care.

In *The Comedy of Errors* the home comforts of Antipholus of Ephesus are diverted or disrupted by the arrival, unknown to him, of his twin from Syracuse. He has no suspicion of the truth but instead evolves amusing paranoid explanations. When he is shut out of his house at dinner time (or somewhat after, since his lateness has added to the problem) because his twin has got there first and is inside eating, he blames his wife and servants and wants to break open the door with a crowbar. Balthazar the merchant reasonably urges him to keep an open mind:

Herein you war against your reputation,  
And draw within the compass of suspect  
Th' unviolated honor of your wife.  
Once this—your long experience of her wisdom,  
Her sober virtue, years, and modesty,  
Plead on her part some cause to you unknown. . . . (III.i.86-91)

He ought to withhold judgment and seek out unforeseen causes; if he could have done this he might have found the cause. But he sets out for vengeance instead. Worse troubles follow when his twin intercepts a gold chain: the Ephesian Antipholus, unable to pay at the moment and doubtful that the chain has been made, is arrested for debt, and the Courtesan to whom he had promised the chain seeks revenge by stirring up his wife to believe him mad. His wife's extreme response to this story, especially her use of an exorcist, in turn drives him to frenzy. The effect of unknown outside causes on his resistant and oversensitive mind is to magnify his faults by depriving him of things that he takes for granted as part of

himself. The wife too, being jealous to start with, is made worse by finding her supposed husband first apparently strange and distant (the twin) and then wildly accusing (her own husband). Although the most important outsider, the wandering twin Antipholus, might be expected to be more receptive to unexplained experience (especially the generally good fortune he meets) because he himself is on a search, he is so filled with Ephesus' reputation for magic and witchcraft that he becomes more and more wary of the gifts (and also fails to suspect his twin's presence). The events that result from the visitors' arrival increase the characters' foibles; we laugh at the further confusion that punishes the foibles and at the mistaken explanations of characters who do not detect an external yet simple cause of disorder. The chance events of the play are unerringly accurate in their revelation of laughable flaws of character.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, however much we may think of Petruchio as being at the center of the play, to the Paduans he is an outsider (a welcome one at first), and it is worth considering him so and looking at the results. He is also outside the norms of Italianate Renaissance comedy as represented by the Bianca plot, based on the *Supposes*, adapted by Gascoigne from Ariosto. While Petruchio is conducting his "taming-school," Bianca is learning lessons of a very different sort, for example in how to receive flattery and surreptitious wooing from suitors disguised as a schoolmaster and a musician. She had already displayed her natural wiles in playing the obedient daughter and making a spiteful contrast to her spirited sister and in the wager at the end of the play she proves that the aim of her trickery is to let her rule herself in everything.<sup>38</sup> But this description of the Bianca plot involves other norms; in itself, if it were to set its own (the usual Italianate Renaissance) standards, it would present the admirable scheme of a young lover and his clever servant to win Bianca despite the riches of an elderly rival suitor—in the lover's words, naming his rival as an Italian comic character, "that we might beguile the old pantaloone" (III.i.36-37). To this aim thus conceived Petruchio is merely an accessory: he removes an obstacle to marriage with Bianca by satisfying her father's Hobson's-choice demand that Katherine be wedded first. If the Bianca plot were the main one, Petruchio might have been fabricated in the same way that the tricksters produced an impostor father as the suitor to Bianca. But in all ways there is more honesty and frankness about Petruchio as he is, and as he chooses and wins a wife, than about Bianca and her appendages.

And his surprising descriptions and treatment of Katherina, not to mention his success in getting her to play his game, as discussed in the first chapter, all unsettle the smug values of the Paduans. The outsider holds up for criticism the world he enters, a world that happens to be modeled on a very definite notion of comic drama. Much occurs, especially to Kate, that is unexpected, but little if anything that is chance; Petruchio manages events so that he can call ordinary incidents misfortune. He has his own purposes, of course: he upsets Kate's self-conceptions (as chance events in *Errors* upset characters' self-conceptions) to bring out her better self. Both of them, returning as outsiders, will be subtle critics of Padua.

Thus far *The Comedy of Errors* approximates the pattern of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* except through purely chance actions that nevertheless have a rationale. And *The Taming of the Shrew* shows a benevolent and purposeful variant of the methods that chance had used in the other play. Still other situations apply in other plays. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (like *The Shrew*, though with a different model) takes a standard narrative and dramatic pattern, the romantic escapade, and alters it: what might be chance misfortunes in lovers' encounters with the perilous outer world (if they occurred in Heliodorus or Sidney), the banishment of Valentine or the attempted rape of Silvia, owe their being instead to the "internal" villainy of Proteus, which can be reformed. In *Love's Labor's Lost* the avowed intentions of the men are twice challenged and tested by visitors who represent major human concerns that would have been denied by the men's attempted seclusion: the ladies (love) and Marcade (death). The latter test of course is whether love can survive the stress of life as symbolized by mourning and penance.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as described before, complicates and surpasses what *The Comedy of Errors* had begun. The fairies' magic, an unknown external force, disrupts the lovers' attachments yet ends by resolving a problem they could not work out for themselves. But the disorderly complex of events, like the chance of *Errors*, calls attention to absurdities in the lovers and their love. Thus the first misapplication of magic results from a peculiarity of mortal love that Puck does not know. He thinks that the separation of Lysander and Hermia in sleep is a sign of discord, the problem he had been sent to correct: "Pretty soul, she durst not lie / Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy" (II.ii.76-77). In fact the two are in love and Hermia has kept Lysander off "in humane modesty"

(II.ii.57); so Puck gives Lysander the love-juice by mistake. No harm would have been done if the sleeping lovers had been let alone, but chance sends a discordant couple their way. It is an "unnatural" situation, Helena's pursuing Demetrius for love—as she says, referring to women, "We should be woo'd, and were not made to woo" (II.i.242)—and it is a fearsome one for her because she is left behind, alone in the dark wood. So in the disordered state that her love has got her into, she wakes Lysander and unknowingly creates more disorder by securing his affections magically.

The next complication is a start toward correcting this error, but the process of correction will bring for a time more complication, to the delight of the audience and Puck, for whom "those things do best please me / That befall prepost'rously" (III.ii.120-121). Demetrius is to be charmed into love for Helena, as first planned; but for a while he will be a rival with Lysander. Besides this conflict there is Helena's reaction to suddenly having two admirers instead of none as at first, that everyone has conspired to mock her. Recalling to Hermia their schoolgirl friendship, she makes a sweet and scornful appeal, a natural prelude to the eye-clawing that soon follows. And Hermia herself, having trusted (perhaps smugly) in the beauty that had procured her the man she wanted, is at a loss over the failure of her powers: "Am not I Hermia? Are you not Lysander? / I am as fair now as I was erewhile" (III.ii.273-274). She manages to find an insult to her appearance in something Helena says, and the fight is on. The magic is an occasion for the follies of love to bring the characters to blows. But after we and Puck have had this fun with them, they will be put straight by magic and rewarded with lasting love (whose follies, if any, may be less obvious).

The characters try harder than those in *Errors* to make sense of their mishaps (in *Errors* the magic of Ephesus was known to foreigners, and even the residents had an exorcist around; Athens should be the seat of reason). Most laughable is the attempt to justify change in love by reason, which might not apply even if no magic were involved. Thus Lysander, changing his loyalty from Hermia to Helena:

The will of man is by his reason sway'd;

And reason says you are the worthier maid.

Things growing are not ripe until their season,

So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason. . . . (II.ii.115-118)

The fallibility of such judgments has already been suggested in Helena's



comment on the folly of her and others' love, "Things base and vile, holding no quantity, / Love can transpose to form and dignity" (I.i.232-233), which is enacted in Titania's attempt to find grace and beauty in the metamorphosed Bottom; as Bottom says, "reason and love keep little company together now-a-days" (III.i.143-144).

Equally absurd but more engaging to us is Demetrius' explanation of his loss of interest in Hermia: "My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd, / And now to Helen is it home return'd, / There to remain" (III.ii.171-173). What he says is true to our hope and trust in a happy ending, and our sympathy for his first love, Helena, is something like our feeling for Julia, the first love of Proteus. Oberon and Puck too make a distinction: this is the one spell that will not be removed. As external agents controlling human concerns they show a constant purpose, to realign the lovers properly—though they do not mind a bit of mischief along the way. The uniting and reconciling that emerges by chance in *The Comedy of Errors* (a goal of the play as art, though achieved by what are called chance events) is here consciously willed by characters in the play (who in the Epilogue, along with the other characters, fade into "shadows," the materials of art).

In *The Merchant of Venice*, as suggested before, Shylock is the main embodiment of external peril. Such danger has not been prominent in earlier plays. In *The Comedy of Errors* the characters exaggerate and misconstrue most of their troubles (and the threat to Aegeon's life, though severe in his mind, is not so in ours once we know he has a son well established in Ephesus), and an unexpected good is on the way. The greatest danger in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is momentary and is not external but comes from Proteus, whose past involvements with the other characters give hope of reform. Lesser mishaps in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are controlled for good purposes, and the events in *Love's Labor's Lost* that happen to act as tests (but not serious threats) may well lead to happiness. The risk that Shylock presents is clear early, and, once we know that Portia's wealth will not buy him off, there is no immediate and obvious hope for a solution.

Antonio's agreement to put himself in Shylock's power functions as a rash promise, for he minimizes the signs of danger. Indeed he invites the hostility in Shylock's actions (though it existed already, and though Shylock rather than Antonio would be morally accountable):

If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not  
As to thy friends, for when did friendship take  
A breed for barren metal of his friend?  
But lend it rather to thine enemy,  
Who if he break, thou mayst with better face  
Exact the penalty. (I.iii.132-137)

They had been talking about whether the taking of interest was justified. Now Antonio severs the notions of interest and friendship, and he finds a quite different relation involved in commercial lending: the penalty for nonpayment of a debt (which is here made distinct from the charging of interest)<sup>39</sup> suits well with the dealings between enemies. Thus Antonio turns Shylock's attention from interest to penalties for forfeiture, and he puts his emphasis on hostility. At once, as if agreeing with this argument, Shylock offers, professedly from friendship, to forgo interest on the loan; but he suggests a forfeiture penalty of flesh. He is not pursuing a financial advantage—as he says, “A pound of man's flesh taken from a man / Is not so estimable, profitable neither, / As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats” (I.iii.165-167)—but rather expressing a hatred that he feels and that Antonio has encouraged him to indulge. Yet he does so under cover of a “merry sport,” indeed self-parody: if Antonio thinks that Shylock's way of life in effect feeds on his fellow human beings, Shylock will jokingly put that idea in the bond—and then make it come true.<sup>40</sup>

Since Shylock's loan finances Bassanio's wooing, love becomes in a sense dependent on hatred. It is morally natural, then, if not perhaps legally orthodox, for Portia, disguised as a judge, to try to convert Shylock's hatred into mercy.<sup>41</sup> She tests him again for signs of mercy in suggesting that he provide a surgeon to stop the blood (IV.i.257-258); he insists on the obligations of the bond alone, and so prepares for her strict enforcement of the bond, which does not allow the shedding of blood at all. When Shylock abandons his forfeit she introduces a new legal issue and a new moral question:

It is enacted in the laws of Venice,  
If it be proved against an alien,  
That by direct or indirect attempts  
He seek the life of any citizen,  
The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive  
Shall seize one half his goods; the other half

Comes to the privy coffer of the state,  
And the offender's life lies in the mercy  
Of the Duke only. . . . (IV.i.348-356)

Until now Portia had merely forestalled execution of the bond on technicalities (though they involved choice or refusal of mercy). When she invokes this law (with results that have seemed merely vengeful to some critics) she addresses for the first time the actual intent of the bond: to take Antonio's life in hatred. Although the forced religious conversion cannot be palatable today, the dickering over Shylock's possessions is not mere vengeance but an effort to respond legally to his hostile intentions, and the conversion itself seems to be an attempt to neutralize the hostility. All of this is second-best, of course: the preferred solution for everyone would have been for Shylock to volunteer mercy and reform himself. But Shakespeare is being realistic enough to show that this does not always happen, and to the extent that coercion must be substituted for free will, there is a sharp edge to the "happy" solution. Shylock is an alien, an external force that has tried to do harm (hence he falls under this law), and if he could he would remain the same. If he cannot be allowed to stay as he was, the reason must be for the protection of Venice and Venetians; meanwhile we can think without misgivings of the safety of these lovers and their friends. The celebration by Lorenzo and Jessica of ordered beauty in Belmont (V.i.1-88) returns us to the ideal in which all tones contribute to harmony.

In *Much Ado about Nothing* Don John is another treacherous outsider. Though newly accepted by his brother, he holds out against true reconciliation, and he keeps physically aloof from the innocent characters until he sees chances for mischief. In his major trickery he tries to minimize his known malice and let external evidence, supposed facts that an observer may see, speak for themselves:

You may think I love you not; let that appear hereafter, and aim better at me by that I now will manifest. . . . If you will follow me, I will show you enough, and when you have seen more, and heard more, proceed accordingly. (III.ii.95-97, 120-122)

Of course he wants to present the tableau of Hero's disloyalty, arranged by him and his accomplices, as unpleasant but unassailable visible proof, an intrusion of truth upon Claudio's idealism. The notion of an intruding

fact is basic in the play: the pattern of witnessing and overhearing throughout the events of the play makes us think about the ways that we know about the external (perceived) world and how we can decide whether to trust what we perceive.<sup>42</sup> This is a commonplace of criticism for this play, but some of the "external" factors in other plays suggest that the same questions might apply more widely. Antipholus of Ephesus should open his mind to other causes of events; Kate decides to alter her perceptions to fit Petruchio's for game's sake; the courtiers who have vowed to study should leave the King of Navarre's park and encounter the world; the lovers in the Athenian wood, affected perforce by magic, finally let a sense of wonder overspread their impressions of the mad night. These examples urge a welcoming receptiveness to new experience, though one might want to qualify it when villains are about. But in *Much Ado* ironies undermine the urges to perceive: Claudio's vulnerability to Don John's show does him no good, indeed makes him unable to perceive rightly Hero's innocent reaction to his charges; Benedick and Beatrice perceive Hero well but at first see each other ill, and Benedick's first attempt at a loving perception is mistaken. Perception of what most needs to be known, the villains' villainy, is given to dolts who mistake its nature. Still the movement of the whole play prompts us toward greater awareness of external appearances and greater judgment in sifting them. For all that outside forces may upset, mock, or threaten, we are to be receptive.

These matters certainly apply to *As You Like It*. But since "externals" in all senses are bound up in that play with a place, Arden, the question is best postponed a chapter. In *Twelfth Night* even more than in *The Comedy of Errors*, the main visitors are open to new experience, however puzzling, and in turn they open up the experience of the settled Illyrians. Sebastian announces, "my determinate voyage is mere extravagancy" (II.i.11-12), and goes to look at the town; Viola, though attracted to Olivia's seclusion, accepts an active life with only a disguise for privacy. Both find and welcome love. Viola is ready to allow whatever result time will work out—"O time, thou must untangle this, not I" (II.ii.40)—and Sebastian is ecstatic about his unexplained good fortune:

This is the air, that is the glorious sun,  
 This pearl she gave me, I do feel't and see't,  
 And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus,  
 Yet 'tis not madness. (IV.iii.1-4)

On the other side, Olivia is stagnating in a state of mournful seclusion and the Duke in a self-indulgent pose of hopeless love; but the visiting twins free both of them. Though it is Viola who evokes the figure of "Patience on a monument" (II.iv.114), her involvement makes her more complex than a smiling statue.

Quick descriptions of other plays may give some notion of the variety of externals ahead. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* treats Falstaff as an intruder (robber and lecher) to be expelled, whether by laundresses or fairies. In *All's Well* Bertram would risk his family name with an outsider, Diana, but Helena, who is very much at the center of things, retrieves him and cancels the risk. In *Measure for Measure* the whole point is that the problems are internal to Vienna and to the individual characters. In the romances the role of external forces and experiences is too great to be summarized, or by now to need summary; suffice that it is there.<sup>43</sup> Among these plays it might be best to leave *The Merry Wives* for now as an anomaly, to consider that the "dark comedies" or "problem plays" return us to the pattern of *The Two Gentlemen* where (appearances notwithstanding) evil is internal to someone who must and can be reformed, and to think of the romances in the opposite way, as showing more than ever a value in accepting the most challenging and perplexing external events as somehow leading to a restoration of good.

The main differences among these plays relate to distinctions among external agents and between moral purposes; differences in structure and attitude follow from these. In *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labor's Lost* external influences come initially by chance (though the ladies soon adjust to the absurd situation they meet, and they set about controlling events except for a few moments near the end); the events produce mockery, which the victims should welcome and endure, and beyond the mockery is a reward. In *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "external" characters control apparent misfortunes and upsets for benevolent purposes; again the values of mockery and receptiveness are the same, and the manipulated characters should be open to change. In other plays there is an agent seeking to bring about misfortune. Although he may be "internal" to the action—central to a society, or at least marriageable to the heroine or another important lady—as Proteus, Bertram, and Angelo are, yet he may try to cause external misfortune (Proteus) or dally with external risks (Bertram). For structure and attitude the important points

are that such characters need to be reformed, and can be if someone else sifts truth from appearance and recognizes better potential in them. Still other plays deal with malicious characters who are "external" as outcasts. These are the hardest to deal with—examples are Shylock and Don John—and reform seems unlikely. Here the need to perceive truth is greater than ever, and to handle a Shylock at least, one also needs a bit of power. On the outer edge of the "external," then, comic characters do not stand alone but must ally themselves with, or win over to their own purposes and values, the authority of society. With such powerful forces needed to impose a comic ending, the emotional stakes are high: comedy may become a transaction between victor and vanquished, and the vanquished may end as a scapegoat.

## The Uses of Adversity

The power of events over comic characters is heightened when the characters are banished or put to flight; these are not the worst of evils, of course, and in comedy they are temporary, but they control a character's total experience as other single events may not. Forced change of place sometimes has a symbolic function too: a new place may represent a change of fortune, new experience, new ways of looking at oneself—indeed an extension of selfhood. Or, especially if an exiled character does not settle but continues to travel, his movement may suggest rootlessness and self-alienation. In any case the fugitive must at last come home, or be ready to come home, to our and his starting point.

The most famous place of exile is perhaps the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*. Perceptive comments have been made about this and other woodlands or wilds in various plays as a "green world" which transforms and renews the characters who flee there.<sup>44</sup> The basis in this play would be the exiled Duke's enraptured moralizing:

Hath not old custom made this life more sweet  
 Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods  
 More free from peril than the envious court?  
 Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,  
 The seasons' difference, as the icy fang  
 And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,  
 Which when it bites and blows upon my body  
 Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say,  
 "This is no flattery: these are counsellors  
 That feelingly persuade me what I am."  
 Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
 Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
 Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;  
 And this our life, exempt from public haunt,  
 Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
 Sermons in stones, and good in every thing. (II.i.2-17)

We must not sentimentalize here, or think that the Duke is sentimentalizing, in ways that the rest of the play will not support. A few bits of stage

greenery will not suffice; the essential value of this experience is in the adversity, the poisonous toad. The icy winds are real—and, along with man's ingratitude, pervade the songs in the play almost till the end—though they are not felt. Despite the lessons he has learned there, the Duke does not claim that Arden is idyllic; others could easily remind him that it is not.

Indeed for all that the Duke prefers Arden to his court in its moral nature, he finds a moral injustice in his being there and supporting his life off the forest:

Come, shall we go and kill us venison?  
And yet it irks me the poor dappled fools,  
Being native burghers of this desert city,  
Should in their own confines with forked heads  
Have their round haunches gor'd. (II.i.21-25)

One of his lords agrees by reporting the moralizings of Jaques about a wounded stag as it wept into a stream,

Left and abandoned of his velvet friends:  
" 'Tis right," quoth he, "thus misery doth part  
The flux of company." Anon a careless herd,  
Full of the pasture, jumps along by him  
And never stays to greet him. "Ay," quoth Jaques,  
"Sweep on, you fat and greasy citizens,  
'Tis just the fashion. Wherefore do you look  
Upon that poor and broken bankrupt there?"  
Thus most invectively he pierceth through  
The body of the country, city, court,  
Yea, and of this our life, swearing that we  
Are mere usurpers, tyrants, and what's worse,  
To fright the animals and to kill them up  
In their assign'd and native dwelling-place. (II.i.50-63)

There is too much grief of this sort in the world, too much weeping into a stream, and at the end Jaques blames the courtiers for adding to the misery by plundering the natural world. Grief isolates the stag, as, to reverse the connection, separation from their fellow men is a cause of unhappiness (though overcome) for the Duke and his men. Divisions among men are basic causes of misfortune in the play, though nobody



in Arden is to blame: both the Duke and Orlando are victims of brothers who have turned against them. The whole scene and the moral comment on it portrays a world of injustice and separation of man from man and of man from his surroundings. Some of this may fit a tradition of complaint against hunting;<sup>45</sup> and there is besides an emblem by Barthélémy Aneau that explains the stag's tears as a lament that his friend, man, has violated their love.<sup>46</sup> Whatever good may have come to the Duke and his friends while in Arden, their presence is a symptom and a compounding of the disorder in the play, an expression of unnatural divisions and breaking of faith.

The value that the Duke finds in exile is parodied even to distortion by Jaques' melancholy posturing. Jaques has been not only an involuntary exile as now, but before that a traveller who willingly alienated himself from every place to perfect his melancholy. He calls his melancholy "the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness," and he assents to Rosalind's speculation, "I fear you have sold your own lands to see other men's; then to have seen much, and to have nothing, is to have rich eyes and poor hands" (IV.i.17-25). He is restless in his mockery and negation of values; if the Duke finds in Arden a critique of courtly life, Jaques will not stop there but must find faults in Arden as well as the court, and indeed everywhere. When Orlando enters tired and hungry, the Duke senses real misery beyond the adversity he has been enjoying and says,

This wide and universal theatre

Presents more woeful pageants than the scene

Wherein we play in. (II.vii.137-139)

Jaques is too ready to generalize that "All the world's a stage" and find woe in all of human life at every age: the infant's mewling, the schoolboy's whining, the lover's sighing, the soldier's jealousy, anger, and futility, the justice's hypocrisy, and then the decline in the senile man (II.vii.139-166). Not only is his vignette of old age belied by the arrival of Adam, as many critics have said; the whole speech trifles with the misfortune of Orlando and Adam by generalizing as if they suffered no more than the necessary lot of mankind. In travel and experience Jaques has compiled instances to support his melancholy, but he has not distinguished causes or degrees of unhappiness, and he has not learned compassion. He has passed through the world as an alienated observer.

Neither has he learned, as the Duke has, that misfortunes can "feelingly persuade me what I am" (II.i.11). He had laughed at Touchstone's apparently mocking sermon on the fact that as time passes "we ripe and ripe" and "rot and rot" (II.vii.20-34)—which is in effect a parody in advance of his own Seven Ages speech—and he craves the universal license to mock that is granted a fool.

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,  
If they will patiently receive my medicine. (II.vii.58-61)

But he lacks the self-knowledge to receive this purification himself before trying it on others. As the Duke says, he would be doing

Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin:  
For thou thyself hast been a libertine,  
As sensual as the brutish sting itself,  
And all th' embossed sores, and headed evils,  
That thou with license of free foot hast caught,  
Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world. (II.vii.64-69)

In the metaphor of disease, since he has not cured himself he will only spread the contagion. His apparent detachment from every folly he describes is not disaffection or conquest of passion but cynicism; his moral nihilism might really encourage the vices he seemed to vilify. In his lack of self-knowledge and his unwillingness to use the scourge on himself that he would apply to others, he is a foil to Rosalind; she is perfect in self-knowledge, and as she whips Orlando's affectations in love she is mocking herself.

Rosalind's conduct is our chief practical sign of the positive renewal that can take place in Arden. Even before her exile she had called herself "one out of suits with Fortune" (I.ii.246); by the time she and Orlando arrive separately in Arden their fortunes are low and their love too seems hopeless, for neither knows the other is there. Orlando succumbs to unhappiness and through it misses the possibilities of his new home; he decides that the boughs above him are "melancholy" and that Arden is a place to "Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time" (II.vii.111-112). In love too he falls into dismay and writes melancholy verses that travesty other complaints in Arden:

Some, how brief the life of man  
 Runs his erring pilgrimage,  
 That the stretching of a span  
 Buckles in his sum of age;  
 Some, of violated vows  
 'Twixt the souls of friend and friend. . . . (III.ii.129-134)

This catalogue of woes suggests that Orlando has less control than others over his griefs and disillusionments; and strictly as love poems they are laughable even to Rosalind. Orlando would surrender to the purely negative side of his surroundings, the adversity of his being there, separated (as far as he knows) from what he values. But in Rosalind's disguised presence there is more to value than he expects; and before she lets him know that she herself is there, she strengthens his endurance of separation.

Her powers of renewal come mainly from her disguise; and in her use of it she overcomes her own problems of adversity in a way that befits the Duke's concept of lessons to be learned in Arden. Disguise is first another severing from previous self-definition, like the banishment itself. Rosalind herself is plucky enough about a false identity in calling herself Ganymede, but her companion Celia shows the depressing possibility in her name of Aliena (more significant than the source's Alinda). Yet in disguise Rosalind is able, as she might not be in her own person, to mock and temper Orlando's adulation of her into a love that she can trust. The keynote for this action is her famous declaration that

Love is merely a madness, and I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punish'd and cur'd is, that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too. (III.ii.400-404).

She glances at her own dual role, for as the whipper who mocks love she herself is in love; and the whip must fall on her as on Orlando. In her double identity she holds together contrary attitudes: Celia charges that in her mockery "You have simply misus'd our sex in your love-prate," yet Rosalind answers, "O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love!" (IV.i.201-207) What began in adversity as self-alienation becomes redefinition in a more complex unity; ironic doubts of seriousness and fidelity in lovers strengthen her commitment just as the icy winds of Arden bring the Duke self-knowledge and augment

his appreciation of his woodland life. And Rosalind is both learning for herself and teaching Orlando, so that she is building a greater unity for both and reinforcing the values to which she commits herself.

In this pattern, then, adversity is part of a larger movement, is included as self-testing (though not at first voluntary) within self-affirmation; it is not a pleasure or value in itself. So when the chance comes, the Duke and his courtiers, and the ladies, must return to court. But for Jaques, who enjoyed adversity itself or found his pleasure in its opportunities for mockery, and whose mockery never turned in on his own faults, another direction is better. He had been alienated from Arden itself, had sought a kind of exile-within-exile. A truer goal for him, that adds self-knowledge yet does not require any greater involvement with outer life (even the outer life of Arden), would be the retirement of the religious hermit. This is what Jaques seeks. And for the first time, without the need to define his alienation by mockery, he praises others generously in leaving them (V.iv.186-190).

Though it is no match for Arden and has no literal green about it, the setting of Florence for the middle scenes of *All's Well that Ends Well* has a surprisingly restorative function—yet it partakes also of the notion of external perils, or at least hostilities. First, the restorative. The explanation of the war by the Duke of Florence moves a French Lord to some remarkable comments. Of a war about which we learn nothing more except the fiasco of the drum and a trick played on Parolles, he says,

Holy seems the quarrel  
Upon your Grace's part; black and fearful  
On the opposer. (III.i.4-6)

And he expresses the likelihood of more French volunteers by asserting,

I am sure the younger of our nature,  
That surfeit on their ease, will day by day  
Come here for physic. (III.i.17-19)

Somehow, we must understand, there is holiness and healing here. Bertram, as a self-proclaimed fugitive from his marriage, his family home, and his court, comes here with no such noble objectives; but he needs to gain by whatever cure might be available.

Indeed Bertram knows that he brings a sickness with him. He urges Diana,

Stand no more off,  
But give thyself unto my sick desires,  
Who then recovers. (IV.ii.34-36).

What he intends with Diana will entail still more impairment of his moral health; he can be cured only by Helena, the healer of the King. In leaving France he had tried to alienate himself from all his past connections (except the worst, with Parolles) and seek experience external to his past life. But Helena will not allow him to range outside marriage or repudiate her; she makes her own arrangements to hold him. She is bolder in following her man than the earlier heroines; no previous heroine-in-disguise had set out from the first to go where she already knew she was not wanted. She willingly confronts possible external difficulties and the known difficulty that Bertram bears in himself. She keeps him from harming himself and her by converting his instability to a firmer connection with her; thus she restores his true selfhood in his commitments at home. Yet there is a way in which his planned outside adventure is a self-enhancement for him, for she proves to him, when the truth is known, that there is something at home after all that he would really want.

In *Pericles* almost everything happens in exile, and Tyre is never vividly made into home; Pericles wanders through a world that, for all he himself knows at first, might be moral anarchy. Though we may know better from Gower's comments, he would think the chance of renewal slender. His need for flight begins in the danger he incurs at the court of Antiochus. His attempt to win a wife by solving a riddle recalls Bassanio's choice among caskets to win Portia; but all is perverted from that much neater situation.<sup>47</sup> The stakes are much larger, as we know from the display of former suitors' heads on Antiochus' gate. Bassanio risked a life of bachelorhood if he chose wrongly; Pericles would forfeit life if he failed, and he endangers his life when he succeeds by discovering the incest hinted in the riddle. The riddle, unlike the choice of caskets, is not a genuine test for a suitor but a threat against all suitors. In showing that he can see through appearances in the riddle Pericles only learns that the reward itself is illusory. And unlike Bassanio, who had Antonio to assume that risk and Portia to cancel it, he himself must accept the threat of death. His remedy is to flee Antiochus and expose himself to other external perils.

After he decides that Tyre is unsafe, his first port of call is Tharsus, which is ravaged by famine. Such coherence as there is in his experience

thus far would lead toward cynicism. In Antiochus' court willful evil was expressed in the riddle through a metaphor of cannibalism: "I am no viper, yet I feed / On mother's flesh which did me breed" (I.i.64-65). But in Tharsus human misery, caused by events outside human control, threatens to lead to actual cannibalism: mothers are ready to eat their children (I.iv.42-44). Pericles is able to do good by dispensing grain, but his success will be qualified by hidden danger, for he will later put more trust than he should in Dionyza, the Governor's wife.

So little can he judge whether external events are bringing him good or evil, that he thinks the storm at sea is the work of the "angry stars of heaven" (II.i.1) when it washes him up at Pentapolis, where he will find a wife; it even, as if at his wish (II.i.111-112), brings ashore his father's armor so that he can appear at the tourney in honor of his future love. There seem to be the beginnings of regeneration here; but the gain demands work, for Pericles must prove himself in arms, dancing, and musicianship; and he must endure a test in the father's pretended anger, an apparent echo of the threat from Antiochus. Pericles even thinks his life in danger again (II.v.44); but he keeps his integrity bravely and is rewarded.

When divine vengeance sends down a fire to consume Antiochus and his daughter, Pericles is free to return to Tyre. If he had got there without another storm, the play would have described a neat cycle from the shock and disillusionment of discovering a false love to the joy of winning a true one. Of course the sources of the play do not suggest such a simple pattern, but that is the point: for all the simple, archaic qualities of this story, it could have appeared to Shakespeare (if he was involved in choosing the story and planning the early part of the play) as a complication beyond the exile-and-return format of *As You Like It*. He would be subjecting Pericles to a harder test of fortune than earlier characters had met.

Pericles' earlier troubles had had a specific cause, the corruption in Antiochus and his consequent need to flee. They were products of a distinctly human corruption, not of a malevolent universe. Events turned to good after all, for the sea led him to his bride and in restoring his armor helped him win her. Now he seems to be at the mercy of whatever powers caused the storm and let his wife appear to be dead and be cast in the sea. This twist of fortune is more vividly present than the shipwreck and separation mentioned in *The Comedy of Errors*, which had taken place long

before the events of the play. Its woe persists longer than Viola's sense of loss in *Twelfth Night*, since she had to busy herself in Illyria. And it does not have the obvious sense of plan that underlies the feigned deaths (directed by human agents) in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *All's Well that Ends Well*. Any planning here must be supernatural and might be perverse. As Pericles says, Job-like,

O you gods!

Why do you make us love your goodly gifts  
And snatch them straight away? (III.i.22-24)

When Pericles is told that his daughter Marina is dead (as she would be if Dionyza's plan had held), he seems to have lost all. He mistakes human evil for a general malevolence of fortune; his apathy and despair complete, he begins a mournful wandering at sea. This is an ultimate expression of a progressive self-alienation brought about by apparent losses: of his kingship (in that he dares not stay home), his wife, his daughter. In misfortune he gives up his self-defining roles: his kingship to a viceroy, his daughter to foster parents. Now in total loss he abandons even the will to live and, like Lear wandering on the heath, puts himself at the mercy of external events, without any actual trust that there is a power guiding them. Yet for once there is something to trust about events, for they bring him within reach of Marina and recovery.

The burden of restoring losses falls most on Marina. She is given the trappings of this role as it is conceived in the last plays—a symbolic name, flowers, devotion to chastity—and she announces the apparent meaning of tempests as exiling, alienating forces: "This world to me is a lasting storm, / Whirring me from my friends" (IV.i.19-20). Yet despite continual misfortune she has the power to transcend her surroundings and overcome evil. Pericles was able only to flee evil and later to be duped by it in Dionyza; Marina protects herself in the brothel, reforms the patrons, and secures her own escape. She is an active force for good as her father was not, and she uses her own natural powers without revealing her birth (as if she were disguised). Her story is, as her father's had been for a while, a tale of patience victorious over erotic corruption.

Marina must draw her father out of himself entirely by her own powers of persuasion; he makes no effort himself, so far is he estranged from experience. She follows the urging of an unknown power that advises her, "Go not till he speak" (V.i.96). As soon as she has sung, he

does speak, as he begins to put together her report of high birth and misfortune with her physical likeness to his wife. The way he does this, as he goes over her words, is a response to her assertion that he and she have the same kind of parentage and history: "My fortunes—parentage—good parentage— / To equal mine—was it not thus? What say you?" (lines 97-98) At this moment in his life the slightest movement he makes of sympathy for anyone, and the slightest recollection of his past selfhood and connections in the world, will show him wonders.

To complete the restorations, the goddess Diana appears in a vision and sends him to Ephesus to find his wife, who has been Diana's priestess. In going there as an act of faith, Pericles completes a pattern of wandering that has brought losses and gains both, and that begins to be intelligible. In his travels he was exposed to the world's evils, rescued and rewarded briefly for his endurance of them, then presented with the harder case of external misfortunes that he could not assign to human evil but had to conclude were the unprovoked acts of cosmic powers. He was not at fault except as events brought him to a pardonable degree of apathy; he was being tested, not punished. He took risks by unwittingly trusting evil when he tried to find a wife in Antioch and when he left his daughter in Tharsus; but he needed also to risk himself while being open to possible good when he sought a wife at Pentapolis, and he had to learn openness again to recognize his daughter and, by trusting in a vision, to regain his wife. The necessary perils of life are exemplified in his travels. But he learns that flight and apathy shut out good as well as evil, and that even a world that seems amoral or hostile may be preparing good in a hidden divine plan.

In *Cymbeline* apparent moral chaos in the world at large is expressed not in ceaseless wandering by one character but in the scattering of characters from Cymbeline's corrupt court and in the dissatisfactions or dangers they meet when they leave.<sup>48</sup> Cymbeline had banished Belarius, who in reprisal had abducted his sons; now under his Queen's poisonous influence he banishes Posthumus for having married his daughter Imogen, while the Queen, Imogen's stepmother, plots to bring her to love the Queen's son Cloten (I.v.49). The separations and other ill consequences of banishment may be almost as bad as the evil of the court itself—and even more fearsome because less well known. As the cause of exile, Cymbeline acts as the usurping Duke and the unjust brother Oliver do in *As You Like It*;



at the end he repents, as they do. The great difference is that Cymbeline is the heroine's father; so the exile of Posthumus must be a greater wrench to Imogen's feelings than Rosalind's exile was. Yet when the characters are reunited and reconciled the central figure in court is the same man who had caused the separations; the exile is a hard one, and the transformation that ends it must be great.

While Imogen is to be tested at home, Posthumus meets the uncertain perils of exile. In *Cymbeline* Shakespeare mixes chronologies to produce a world with the greatest possible combination of evils and ambiguities: legendary Britain, whose chronicles show the moral extremes of folktale, coexists with Renaissance Italy, whose evil cannot be fathomed by honest Britons. Posthumus is in danger as soon as he makes a well-meant but idle boast about his lady in the uncertain moral atmosphere of international table-talk. Iachimo makes a cynical comparison of Imogen with the ring Posthumus is wearing:

If she went before others I have seen, as that diamond of yours  
outlustres many I have beheld, I could not but believe she excell'd  
many. But I have not seen the most precious diamond that is, nor  
you the lady. (I.iv.72-76)

To Iachimo women are possessions, to be assayed like jewelry. He is a threat to Posthumus' moral stability because he suggests applying a spirit of calculation and possessiveness to love. His cynicism stereotypes women and jewels in the process of valuing them; any comparison of values in this reductive way would demean them no matter which value won. The ring is an apt choice for such corruption, for it was Imogen's token to Posthumus of her love:

This diamond was my mother's. Take it, heart,  
But keep it till you woo another wife,  
When Imogen is dead. (I.i.112-114)

For Posthumus the ring is thus a symbol of his lady's love, and if one is worthless so is the other. In wagering the ring he implicitly questions the value of the love it represents and offends against the vow with which it was given.<sup>49</sup>

In this needless trial of his wife Posthumus clouds his love beyond Cymbeline's hopes or plans. Of course she passes the test and astounds even Iachimo with her peerless virtue. He can discredit her only by stealing

her bracelet, again a fitting choice of token because it is "a manacle of love" (line 122) embodying Posthumus' claim on Imogen and love for her; by telling Posthumus that Imogen has given away this bracelet to himself, Iachimo makes Posthumus repudiate the vow it symbolizes. Separation caused by exile has given the chance for this test and for the lying report that follows it; and villainy has seized the chance.

When Posthumus believes Iachimo's lie about Imogen's infidelity, the play develops in part like a mixture of *Much Ado about Nothing* with *All's Well that Ends Well*—as if to show how bad the lovers' entanglements can become even when both begin with good will. Iachimo's villainy is harder to penetrate than Don John's, and Posthumus carries disillusionment as far as plotting to kill his lady (unlike Claudio, who thought himself the accidental cause of her death). For her own part Imogen finds herself in a more bitter position than Helena; Helena was publicly scorned by her husband, but Imogen learns that hers is actually trying to have her killed. She explains this hard fact by reverting to Iachimo's story that Posthumus was unfaithful and suspects that her husband only accuses her to cover his own fault (III.iv.46-57). In this situation too the play goes further than *All's Well*: Bertram actually did plan infidelity, but he let his feelings toward his wife rest in a mere wish for her death. Like other heroines whose men change, Imogen matches his change: she lets him believe her dead and goes in disguise to seek him.

Again there is a complication beyond that of earlier plays, and physical separation (as in the first exile and resultant testing) contributes to it: Imogen, expecting to find Posthumus among the Roman forces, loses her way to Milford Haven and wanders among the Welsh mountains. But this time there is good fortune about the complication, for the natural world renews her. In the example of the two boys (actually her brothers) and the old man (really the banished courtier Belarius) she regains some faith in humanity:

Great men,  
That had a court no bigger than this cave,  
That did attend themselves and had the virtue  
Which their own conscience seal'd them, laying by  
That nothing-gift of differing multitudes,  
Could not outpeer these twain. (III.vi.81-86)

Belarius is happy in this tiny court—indeed, like the Duke in Arden, he draws lessons from exile and finds that in a low-roofed cave the

gate

Instructs you how t'adore the heavens, and bows you

To a morning's holy office. (III.iii.2-4)

But the boys, who have never proved themselves in a larger court, will not be satisfied until they have. All the characters here, even Belarius, who is at least willing to go along, have other destinies.

Imogen almost loses hers when she mistakes the headless body of Cloten for that of Posthumus.<sup>50</sup> Now there seems to be nothing to interest her among the Romans. Yet when the Roman general chances on her she goes with him. Without a clear aim, she serves him well, though his objectives are not at all hers. Meanwhile, Posthumus, hearing that Imogen is dead (by his own plot, he thinks), severs his loyalties too in obvious alienation from his past: having returned to Britain with the Romans, he leaves them to fight as a British peasant and, after fighting heroically, returns to the Roman side in hope of being killed. Even when husband and wife are aimless or misdirected and find nothing to hope for (and, in Posthumus' case, little to admire in his past), they perform well in roles to which they are indifferent, and their service will help to restore their losses. Meanwhile the exiled Belarius and the boys act heroically in battle along with Posthumus and prepare their own honorable return to court.

When Posthumus is imprisoned and expects the death he seeks, a redeeming pattern begins to emerge in events as Jupiter descends in a vision; but Posthumus distrusts and fails to understand the promise. Old wrongs are righted one by one systematically in the last scene, which is ruled over by a Cymbeline who, though he is not always aware of what he is doing, has shed the influence of his late Queen. Thus are banishments in effect repealed and reasons for flight or exile removed. First the earliest wrong, the expulsion of Belarius, is unknowingly corrected when Cymbeline knights him and the two boys as heroes in battle. Then in pardoning Imogen (disguised as a British boy serving the Roman general) Cymbeline begins to repair the breach with her that had followed from his banishment of Posthumus. Imogen follows out the wrong consequent on that banishment by asking about Posthumus' ring on Iachimo's finger; as a result more truths come out. Posthumus discloses himself, the lovers are cleared of

supposed offences against each other, and both are reconciled to Cymbeline. Cloten's death comes next, and his killer is pardoned, though awkwardly; as restitution this process brings out the true identity of Belarius and the princes, and we are reminded of their feats in battle (V.v.288, 306-7, 388), as if the corrective replaying of events had reached that crucial scene. Among recognitions only Posthumus' valor in the battle remains, and finally that comes out. Jupiter's prophecy of Posthumus and Britain is proved valid, and peace made with Rome. All these restorations resulted from Cymbeline's proper reward to unknown persons for service in battle, service whose full import the participants had not known. Shakespeare goes about as far as he can in this play in making redemptions result from good actions done in ignorance or despair by exiles. Even the person who can declare the exile ended, Cymbeline, begins in ignorance of his own acts.

The complexity of *Cymbeline*, even if we think it a flaw in the play, has a purpose. Shakespeare is trying to bring his characters to the greatest possible disillusionment; situations that would have passed with less question in earlier plays become suddenly more complex. The same is true in *Pericles*, with its simpler linear story that approaches yet evades neat formulas. He wants the quality of raw event or perverse fortune—yet he means to demonstrate a redeeming power. Similar redemption in adversity is true to the paradoxical character of Arden, except that the challenge in *Cymbeline* is harsher; and as the physical setting of Arden is basic in our sense of a regenerating exile, so (again in a harsher sense) the travels and separations in these first two romances show us the threats and hardships the characters face, along with the working of unknown and benign powers to bring them together.

In the breaking of pattern there is a more modest version of what happens in some of the later tragedies, when they toy with but deny a pattern of Job-like restoration by providence after self-knowledge and suffering. The greatest is the death of Cordelia, when Lear seemed already to have earned and gained relief; another is Coriolanus' inability to return to Rome after he has yielded to his mother and made peace; another, without even self-knowledge, is Timon's persistence in misanthropy and hatred of Athens, with no recognition of the folly in his earlier generosity. Shakespeare wants to evoke a milder version of such disruptive occurrences, one that can be finally tamed for comedy by a larger pattern. Thus, in *Lear*, an apparent pattern of restoration is broken by events and we are left to ask whether

there is after all a rationale for events and a providence controlling them; in *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*, an apparent pattern is complicated or broken by events, but a larger pattern inclusive of them reasserts a providential rationale.

Finally, this notion of a divine plan may be the outermost circle of Shakespeare's comedy, the possible source of strongest control. But for the moment it can be embodied humanly in the paradoxical faith and the uncalculating acts of good that help to resolve *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*. And beyond those are other human efforts to guide events through conscious self-control and rule over others.

## Self-rule, Sovereign Rule, Misrule

Attempts to control external events when more than one person is involved would in some way involve efforts at government, in the sense of control or manipulation. Government in this meaning may be manipulation of individuals by individuals, as well as the usual political sort, and it must certainly be supported by the "ruler's" own government of self. As the examples in the first chapter show, self-definition is not the same as such self-government; it too easily goes wrong, perhaps for lack of restraints on the workings of self. The most immediate signs of self-government and of government of other individuals show up in the disguised heroines, who because of their disguises undergo complicating experiences within themselves.

Although Julia in *The Two Gentlemen* foreshadows the major disguised heroines, her role in disguise stops short of actual control of others; what is emphasized is rather her self-sacrifice and self-restraint, which is a kind of self-government. Her strongest effort to move Proteus, until she leaves her disguise, is her unavailing comment that Julia must love him as much as he loves Silvia (IV.iv.79-80). When he sends her to give the ring that is rightly hers to Silvia, she points out for us in soliloquy the strength of her self-sacrifice—"How many women would do such a message?" (IV.iv.90)—and she says that in wooing Silvia for Proteus she "cannot be true servant to my master, / Unless I prove false traitor to myself" (IV.iv.104-105). The notion of treachery to self is the reverse of Proteus' when he rationalizes that if he kept faith with Julia and Valentine "I needs must lose myself" (II.vi.20); Julia wants to be true to her original and valid selfhood, not find excuses for a new false one; and, more important, she still goes ahead with the "treacherous" mission even though she hopes it will fail. In the course of her errand she gives us her more complex image of herself while she is in disguise: here she describes to Silvia the fiction of Sebastian the page, dressed in Julia's gown, playing the role of forsaken Ariadne and moving Julia's tears (IV.iv.158-172). The picture confirms Silvia's sympathy; if Julia had used the same verbal skills on Proteus as on Silvia, she might sooner have governed, and taught him to govern, his mutable loyalties.

Rosalind, in *As You Like It*, uses images of herself, and the relation between herself and her disguise to greater purpose (in, to be sure, an

easier situation). In her disguise she gives Orlando her well-known self-mocking advice that "Love is merely a madness, and I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punish'd and cur'd is, that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too" (III.ii.400-404). Yet though she herself is in love, she will act as a whipper and mock the excesses of his love to teach him the same self-ridicule in love that she uses; they will be another Benedick and Beatrice in love, though for them (Orlando, certainly) the love preceded the mockery and the mockery is most firmly of self. She is describing two sides of her own character and self-awareness in roles: as the whipper Ganymede, she is the witty, somewhat cynical boy she professes to be; but as she is in love, she is the obscured Rosalind who has already committed herself to Orlando. As is obvious to us, her statement that the whippers are in love alludes quietly to the truth of her own identity. Yet these roles are clearly not separate; her character is both to love and to mock her own love, both to encourage Orlando's professions of love and to make game of them.

The mingling of roles is the more complete in that Rosalind/Ganymede's method as whipper is to pretend to be Rosalind and answer scornfully to Orlando's pleas and promises. Like the distant Petrarchan lady she belittles his woes and tells him that "men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love" (IV.i.106-108); but she can also speak against women's faith, can say that a woman's wit will out at casement, key-hole, or chimney, and that when caught in misdeeds a woman will always have an answer that will "make her fault her husband's occasion" (IV.i.174-175). Yet even as she talks this way—again the merging of roles—she brings him to formal statement of his love-vows. She (as Ganymede) impersonates Rosalind, and Celia is the priest; they join hands; he says "I take thee, Rosalind, for wife," and she replies, with some elaborations, "I do take thee, Orlando, for my husband" (IV.i.125-139). If Orlando were aware that this is really Rosalind whose hand he holds, the little ceremony would be a valid handfasting: a legally-binding betrothal at least, and perhaps (if followed by consummation) a marriage. Rosalind's careful "do" puts her oath firmly in the present tense of a *de praesenti* contract.<sup>51</sup> But Rosalind will not spring that kind of trap nor settle for that kind of marriage. Her next comment, "There's a girl goes before the priest, and certainly a woman's thought runs before her actions" (IV.i.139-141), sends

out barbs in two directions: against the excessive ease of such commitments (which could be licentious, girls not waiting for priests), and, more tellingly, against her own enactment of her thoughts, a more guarded version of not waiting for the priest. For she has carried out her hopes with Orlando except for her defensive reservation that he does not know who she is; at the same time she puts him to a double test of seeing whether he really has in mind and faces up to an actual marriage vow, and after that whether he can still endure mockery of love and fidelity. His reactions suggest that he can indeed govern himself well in both vows and mockery.

There is another image of "government," as valid here as in the alteration (with political overtones) between Prince Hal and Falstaff in Act I, Scene ii of *1 Henry IV* over the time of day: can Orlando govern himself well enough to keep his appointments on time?<sup>52</sup> He does ill in being an hour late for the meeting that leads to the betrothal; but since the betrothal ensues it is obvious that he is forgiven. He promises to return two hours thereafter. He does not keep that pledge, but the message he sends through Oliver makes it clear that he has been well occupied in saving his brother's life and reforming him. So he has governed himself well in the different sense of making the most of opportunities and putting time to good use. And indirectly he helps himself, for the sudden love of Celia and Oliver makes him impatient with mere pretenses and roles—he can "live no longer by thinking" (V.ii.50), even the kind of thinking that goes before the priest—and his mere expression of impatience, now that he has been tested, leads Rosalind to disclose herself (with due pageantry) and conclude their love.

The mocker too is mocked. The fact that Rosalind comes to Arden without knowledge that Orlando is also there makes her prospects in love look bad to her, and she is sympathetic to Silvius' lament that Phebe does not return his love: "Alas, poor shepherd, searching of thy wound, / I have by hard adventure found mine own" (II.iv.44-45). Touchstone at once picks up the idea for some of his best foolery:

And I mine. I remember when I was in love, I broke my sword upon a stone, and bid him take that for coming a-night to Jane Smile; and I remember the kissing of her batler and the cow's dugs that her pretty chopp'd hands had milk'd; and I remember the wooing of a peascod instead of her, from whom I took two cods, and giving her them again, said with weeping tears, "Wear these for my sake." We



that are true lovers run into strange capers; but as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in love mortal in folly. (II.iv.46-56)

Without knowing the past or consciously predicting the future Touchstone has divined the truth about and even some details of Rosalind's wooing. As she says, "Thou speak'st wiser than thou art ware of," or partly, as we see, than she herself is aware of. The words of his gift, "Wear these for my sake," would recall to her the words with which she gave her own token to Orlando: "Wear this for me: one out of suits with Fortune" (I.ii.246). The joking about cods and codpieces (implied in "peascod")<sup>53</sup> has a present application to her, since she is equipped with a codpiece as disguise. Possibly she has been banished and is in disguise indirectly for Orlando's sake, i.e., is wearing the cods for his sake as in Touchstone's speech: that depends on whether the Duke's anger at meeting Orlando, the son of his enemy, carried over into the sudden anger with which he banished Rosalind, whose father was friend to Orlando's father. But certainly she wears the disguise for Orlando's sake in a sense yet unknown to her—that her presence in Arden will lead to the fulfillment of their love. "The wooing of a peascod instead of her" is also predictive: Rosalind will arrange for Orlando to woo the boy Ganymede (Rosalind in disguise) impersonating Rosalind. And the moral that Touchstone draws about folly in love is also basic to Rosalind's attitude in disguise: she applies it to herself and teaches it to Orlando. Touchstone has given her the meaning of her disguise, a way of looking at herself with detachment and self-ridicule that will help her govern herself in love and teach Orlando self-government.

Rosalind's sympathy for unrequited lovers continues, and it, along with other factors, involves her in a further governing role. When she tries to cure Phebe of her scorn for Silvius, Phebe falls in love with her (as Ganymede). Eventually she is beset from all sides (what better sign of her governing position?) by an impatient Orlando, a plaintive Silvius, and an importunate Phebe. She professes magical ability to solve the problems to everyone's satisfaction, and she does so by extracting a set of vows that will match her with Orlando, and Phebe with Silvius (V.iv.6-25). If this effort really changes Phebe beyond merely catching her in a promise, it is government through teaching concern for others: Phebe's hopeless love for Ganymede (once she knows that it is hopeless) should make her sympathetic to the love that Silvius has felt for her.

Images of misgovernment in love abound in *Twelfth Night*. Viola, with some help from events, tries to set the main ones right. She has misgivings all along about her involvement. When she hears that Olivia has been mourning in seclusion because her brother is dead (as Viola thinks her own brother dead), her first wish is to join in that way of life:

O that I serv'd that lady,  
And might not be delivered to the world  
Till I had made mine own occasion mellow  
What my estate is! (I.ii.41-44)

She wants a disguise that will keep her away from the world until she chooses to face it, a role in a surrounding that seems totally sympathetic to her mood. Perhaps this mood, though proper, is better crossed than long encouraged; in any case, Olivia's own position is not as stable as Viola is told, for Viola herself accidentally undermines it later. So even if Olivia's withdrawal from the world had not made it impossible for Viola to become her servant, that isolation is weakened as a choice in life simply because, like the men's vows in *Love's Labor's Lost*, it cannot survive challenge.

Instead Viola takes service with a Duke whose life is governed by the flickering moods of the love that obsesses him. She plans to be a singer, though she turns out instead to be a music critic (I.ii.56-59; II.iv.20-22); but either way she feeds the emotions of the Duke, for whom music is—he avers—“the food of love.” In serving him she needs self-restraint, since his impulsive will imposes itself on his servants; his will becomes a complicating principle in her life, qualifying whatever identity she might have wanted for herself. The tensions become greater, of course, when she falls in love with him yet must urge his suit to Olivia. The very lack of self-control in him demands more in her.

She has a discipline for herself, and a way of teaching him self-discipline (though the lesson does not take yet): by creating fictitious descriptions of herself for him, she hints at her identity to him and also contemplates herself as if from outside. She is more direct and pointed in her comments than Julia was in *The Two Gentlemen*. Yet disguise sets up more barriers for her than for either Julia or Rosalind, since the real identity that she hints at beneath her disguise lacks both the past claim that Julia can make on Proteus and the instant attraction that Rosalind would hold for Orlando.

Against the Duke's refusal to accept Olivia's rejection of him, Viola puts her own case hypothetically:

Say that some lady, as perhaps there is,  
Hath for your love as great a pang of heart  
As you have for Olivia. You cannot love her;  
You tell her so. Must she not then be answer'd? (II.iv.89-92)

On the same assumption of hopelessness she offers another fantasy:

My father had a daughter lov'd a man  
As it might be perhaps, were I a woman,  
I should your lordship. . . .  
                        she never told her love,  
But let concealment like a worm i' th' bud  
Feed on her damask cheek; she pin'd in thought,  
And with a green and yellow melancholy  
She sate like Patience on a monument,  
Smiling at grief.     (II.iv.107-115)

This description of pining love is in much the same tone as Julia's account of the page acting Ariadne, but it has the direct practical virtue of being addressed to the person who ought to be moved by it, the unappreciative man. These lines, and the earlier ones with the Golden Rule morality, at first seem to have no effect on Orsino; but at the end of the play, when Viola's identity is known, he shows that he can recall some of her hints and reconsider their meaning. If the speeches in this scene do work at all, they should train the Duke in sympathy for other lovers in his plight and move him to gentleness with them. For Viola her allusions to herself are a schooling in the possibility that she may never win the Duke's love; yet in stating her own love, however obliquely, she reveals a germ of hope and creates just the beginnings of optimism.

Perhaps she is already trying out such expressions of her love for the Duke in her first meeting with Olivia. But the results are unlucky. She would be thinking of the same likeness between the futility of her love for Orsino and his for Olivia:

If I did love you in my master's flame,  
With such a suff'ring, such a deadly life,  
In your denial I would find no sense,  
I would not understand it. (I.v.264-267)

She would

Write loyal cantons of contemned love,  
And sing them loud even in the dead of night;  
Hallow your name to the reverberate hills,  
And make the babbling gossip of the air  
Cry out "Olivia!" (I.v.270-274)

She is too eloquent, and she projects too much of her own dismay in love into this situation. The hypothesis that seems to carry this projection, "If I did love you in my master's flame . . .," is in its form like the deliberate hints to the Duke: "Say that some lady, as perhaps there is . . .," and more directly, "As it might be perhaps, were I a woman. . . ." Olivia might well wonder if these speeches to her contain a hint of the boy's love, and for a wild moment she even wonders if the "master's flame" might be a direct self-description (as the one about the father's daughter really is to the Duke) by Orsino dressed up as a page ("Unless the master were the man," I.v.294). Viola seems to have gone to two extremes at once, of self-sacrifice in pleading Orsino's cause and of self-indulgence in relieving her own similar grief. She should hardly have predicted nor should she be blamed for the quickness of Olivia's attachment; but her self-concern has helped against her will to produce this disorder in love.

Olivia's impulsiveness is a disruption in herself and others, and she can scarcely rationalize it: "Fate, show thy force: ourselves we do not owe; / What is decreed must be; and be this so" (I.v.310-311). At this moment and in this way, she is little better than Malvolio, who willingly reads in the planted letter, "Thy Fates open their hands, let thy blood and spirit embrace them" and exclaims, "Jove and my stars be prais'd!" (II.v.146-147, 172-173). As Olivia persists in thrusting her love on the disguised Viola, she becomes like the Duke, who will not accept her own refusal of him. The culmination of her second meeting with Viola is her assertion of her ungoverned will: "I would you were as I would have you be" (III.i.142). The Duke, Olivia, and more absurdly Malvolio (who already had fantasies of his mistress that the letter seems to confirm) are all one in asserting this will to create love in someone else according only to their own desire. Malvolio completes this adulation of willed love by carrying out the only sort of accommodation to another's feelings that he knows, the servility that puts him in cross-garters: "Jove, I thank thee. I will smile, I will do every thing that thou wilt have me" (II.v.178-179). The unruly, self-willful

passion of all these characters imposes what they call "Fate" (or the Duke's version of inevitability, the strength of his love, II.iv.93-103) on two recipients: on the beloved as a demand for acquiescence and on the lover as an excuse for his lack of control.

In contrast to all these is Viola, who hints and waits to see whether Orsino will be ready to accept and love her in her true identity, and who disciplines herself even to obey skillfully the commands that would work against her love. In her attitude to events she is far from Olivia's self-justification in a self-created "Fate": "O time, thou must untangle this, not I, / It is too hard a knot for me t' untie" (II.ii.40-41). She is willing to let events go as they will, to submit herself to whatever may emerge from them and take opportunities only as they arise. This submission that waits for opportunity in order then to make the most of it is a major quality in Shakespeare's concept of the good ruler.<sup>54</sup> Viola's own model for it is Feste the clown:

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,  
And to do that well craves a kind of wit.  
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,  
The quality of persons, and the time;  
And like the haggard, check at every feather  
That comes before his eye. This is a practice  
As full of labor as a wise man's art;  
For folly that he wisely shows is fit,  
But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit. (III.i.60-68)

The jester's care in judging his audience is much like the care that Viola uses in hinting to the Duke (but not, to her regret, to Olivia), and like the concern that a true, not self-willed, lover must show for the wishes of the person he loves. The comparison to the haggard fits Viola in that the self-disciplined lover or ruler must take up every opportunity that comes.<sup>55</sup> Viola knows and proves (and teaches others by example) that ruling the passions and loving are related arts.

Occasion carries out what Viola cannot do; but she makes the most of the chances that occasion offers her. Sebastian's arrival answers to Olivia's wish, relieves Viola of an impossible demand on her, and makes Olivia's rejection of Orsino too clear for him to ignore. His thought of revenge on Viola/Cesario, though none too pleasant a reflection on his own character, still brings forth his description of his servant as "the lamb that I do love"

(Vi.i.130), and Viola would offer up her life. Again Sebastian appears in good time and everything is resolved.

In these adjustments Olivia and the Duke are late in beginning to govern their feelings toward others, but there are signs that they have learned from experience. Their marriages may seem better than they deserve, but so do many in comedy. After she is settled with Sebastian, Olivia can look back on her obsession as "A most extracting frenzy" (V.i. 281). As soon as he has taken in Viola's true identity, Orsino begins to recognize the love in her hints—"Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand times / Thou never shouldst love woman like to me" (V.i.267-268)—and in her service to him "So much against the mettle of your sex, / So far beneath your soft and tender breeding" (V.i.322-323). Through the generosity of events they can reflect calmly on what they have learned about self-rule. Orsino especially contemplates the image and example of Viola.

An interesting and quite different role of government in love is shown in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Although Theseus tries to speak for order and rationality,<sup>56</sup> his attempts to set matters of love right by invoking Athenian law against Hermia are useless and heavy-handed. In this instance the real "rulers," the ones who have the power to make the needed changes in the lovers' actual desires, are the fairies. Like a true government, they produce disorder if they divide themselves by squabbles; hence, because of the conflict of Oberon and Titania, "The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud" and "The seasons alter" so that "the mazed world, / By their increase, now knows not which is which" (II.i.81-117). For the same reason, Oberon and Puck have at hand magic juices that can affect human love. Oberon's plan to torment or mock Titania with an unsuitable love until she comes to an agreement with him, when he will take pity on her, necessarily involves Bottom (or someone else like him); the effort to solve the young lovers' problems comes simply from a ruler's sympathetic wish, while he has magic available, to see all happy and well-ordered. It does not appear that the lovers learn much self-government, as in later plays, except that Demetrius recognizes a feeling of "home" about the return of his affections to Helena; magic is a short-cut solution. The power of the spell that is left on Demetrius and the blessings that are given to all confer a stability that unblessed mortals reach only through self-control.

In the plays considered thus far the aim of "government" has been to produce or confirm love. It is a harder task to elicit mercy, as in *The*

*Merchant of Venice* or *Measure for Measure*; someone who is in the position to give mercy must also have power, and he may use this power to resist the plea of mercy. Thus Shylock does not volunteer mercy despite Portia's eloquence; he stands on the strict wording of his bond and will let go his apparent advantage only when legal power is turned against him. When coercion is needed, government in a literal sense is involved, as when the Duke of Venice threatens Shylock with punishments. Public and private virtues work together, since Portia's skill as a magistrate is referred finally to her values as a wife.

In *Measure for Measure* the Duke gives Angelo control over "Mortality and mercy in Vienna" and the charge "So to enforce or qualify the laws / As to your soul seems good" (I.i.44, 65-66). Qualifying the laws, tempering their application by the principle of mercy, was assumed to be part of the ruler's duty;<sup>57</sup> but there is little mercy in Angelo. If mercy is an integral part of actual enforcing and administering of laws, Angelo's lack of it is a basic weakness in his ability to govern. His strictness depends, it appears, on unwillingness or inability to know human nature through himself; when Escalus urges leniency for Claudio because even the virtuous Angelo himself must have felt carnal urges and might easily have acted in the same way, Angelo replies, "'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus, / Another thing to fall" (II.i.17-18). Persons who have yielded to temptation are categorically different sorts of beings, he thinks, from ones who have not; he does not scrutinize the thin line between potential and actual. Angelo knows, of course, that those who pass judgment on others may themselves have hidden faults, that in the jury there may be "a thief or two / Guiltier than him they try," but he concludes only (with dramatic irony) that when these faults are found they should be punished with equal harshness:

You may not so extenuate his offense  
For I have had such faults; but rather tell me,  
When I, that censure him, do so offend,  
Let mine own judgment pattern out my death,  
And nothing come in partial.     (II.i.27-31)

This sounds just, but it misses Escalus' point: not that laws should be enforced selectively, or that the impossibility of enforcing them completely, even on the judges, should invalidate them, but that a judgment of human nature will attribute Claudio's fault to a common and not malicious impulse

that the law did not intend to punish severely. He thinks the way to make this judgment is through introspection; he wants Angelo to consider

That in the working of your own affections,  
Had time coher'd with place, or place with wishing,  
Or that the resolute acting of your blood  
Could have attain'd th' effect of your own purpose,  
Whether you had not sometime in your life  
Err'd in this point which now you censure him,  
And pull'd the law upon you. (II.i.10-16)

Angelo sees no need to take a look nor will he admit the principle that knowledge of human nature would explain the meaning of the law. He finds no essential relation between self-knowledge and government of others.

Isabella, the nun-to-be, urges the same self-examination as Escalus, but more eloquently and in explicitly Christian terms:

How would you be  
If He, which is the top of judgment, should  
But judge you as you are? O, think on that,  
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,  
Like man new made. (II.ii.75-79)

A greater difference is that without intending it (and the more temptingly because she is devout and does not intend it), she can arouse the very same feelings she talks of:

Go to your bosom,  
Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know  
That's like my brother's fault. If it confess  
A natural guiltiness such as is his,  
Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue  
Against my brother's life. (II.ii.136-141)

Isabella may have about her an attraction that almost frightens herself (hence her religious vows);<sup>58</sup> though she does not mean to provoke Angelo, her words almost challenge him to find lustful impulses. He does not experience mere natural guilt; on the contrary he finds an unnatural guilt, and its very unnaturalness fascinates him:



Is this her fault, or mine?

The tempter, or the tempted, who sins most, ha?

Not she; nor doth she tempt; but it is I

That, lying by the violet in the sun,

Do as the carrion does, not as the flow'r,

Corrupt with virtuous season.

O cunning enemy, that to catch a saint,

With saints dost bait thy hook! Most dangerous

Is that temptation that doth goad us on

To sin in loving virtue. Never could the strumpet,

With all her double vigor, art and nature,

Once stir my temper; but this virtuous maid

Subdues me quite. (II.ii.162-167, 179-185)

He has looked and found even worse sin than Escalus or Isabella had hinted; but he is not at all inclined to convert his new knowledge to mercy for Claudio. Instead of creating an internal basis for the better understanding of external law, he has discovered an internal lawlessness that will distort even more his external application of law.

As he seeks to entrap Isabella, he becomes more deeply tangled in the disorder of his own mind. In their second interview he makes a hypothetical comparison between murder and Claudio's crime of begetting an illegitimate child:

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. (II.iv.42-46)

He is leading up to the implication that Isabella's refusal to yield to his lust would amount to murdering her brother, which would be as bad a crime as Claudio's own.<sup>59</sup> He also proposes the inverse of this, that her consent would be a virtuous mercy toward Claudio: "Might there not be a charity in sin / To save this brother's life?" (II.iv.63-64) Ironically this verbal trap that Angelo tries to set for Isabella's seduction forecasts his own situation: he tries to gain the "sweetness" from Isabella, yet he still orders Claudio's death. The terms into which he tries to force Isabella define his own willful choice of evil, and he chooses not the lesser evil but both.

But an ironic justice cancels his lawless acts. What Isabella cannot do by pleading for mercy, the Duke, as actual ruler who has left his political role to work in the guise of a spiritual governor who can influence hearts, achieves by stratagem. If the Duke is a figure of God or of Providence embodied in the ruler, his devious methods have a tough irony.<sup>60</sup> Angelo's stealth that would filch pleasure from a woman and then make away with her brother's life (note the imagery of theft in his comparison quoted above) is matched by the Duke's "theft" of the objects Angelo sought and his substitution of another woman and another corpse. There is justice too in the Duke's stratagem near the end of the play (V.i.254-259) to slip away and come back disguised as the Friar, for he leaves Angelo to pronounce judgment on his own case, and thereby to learn to govern himself (as he should others) by searching his own conscience—as he must anyway and as Isabella had begged him to do in that first unlucky interview. Like Bertram, Angelo is denied the evil he thinks he wants and put in the care of someone who loves him; and both Mariana and Isabella forgive him and beg his life even when they think he has done the worst he intended. The right course for him is defined (in law and in audience sympathy) by his union with Mariana, and he is headed that way despite his perverseness and lack of self-government. The Duke, newly effective as ruler once he tries to work on inner human nature, will no longer allow evil in Vienna if he can expel it, and he converts Angelo's misguided will by stealthily redirecting its results.

As an object lesson to Angelo in the futility of evil he makes Angelo's achievement of evil illusory. His purpose is a moral demonstration to Angelo: he does not merely want to save Claudio by the nearest subterfuge, for to do that he could have let Isabella's refusal of Angelo stand and merely substituted a dead man's head for Claudio's. Neither could he make his point to Angelo by revealing himself and stopping events (and the play) with Act III. Unless Angelo had committed himself to lust by overt action, he could claim to have been merely testing Isabella (as the Duke observes, III.i.195-197), and he would probably remain unrepentant and little wiser in governing (except in stealth) than before. Angelo's bad intentions must be objectified so that he can be confronted with them and made to revise his notions of human nature and its governance; but he must be prevented from doing actual wrong, and Claudio must be freed. In a harmless way Angelo must be taught by actions to do what

Isabella had been able only to urge in words: see himself in Claudio's place.

For all her verbal commitment to mercy, Isabella is rigidly legalistic, and therefore ill-governed (over-governed is ill-governed here), in a sense different from Angelo's.<sup>61</sup> Her involvement in the bed-trick and in the deceits connected with it—especially the lie about her relations with Angelo that brings her temporary public shame—soften and humanize her. She loses her moral legalism and learns enough of mercy as a concrete act to beg leniency for Angelo despite his apparent killing of her brother:

Look, if it please you, on this man condemn'd  
As if my brother liv'd. I partly think  
A due sincerity governed his deeds,  
Till he did look on me. Since it is so,  
Let him not die. My brother had but justice,  
In that he did the thing for which he died;  
For Angelo,  
His act did not o'ertake his bad intent,  
And must be buried but as an intent  
That perish'd by the way. Thoughts are no subjects,  
Intents but merely thoughts. (V.i.444-454)

The more legalistic and deliberately superficial this is as logic, law, and ethics, the more it ignores intent for the technicalities of action, the better it is as a sign of Isabella's own sacrifice of selfish revenge and commitment to mercy. The result should be to scourge Angelo's conscience when he sees that such shifts are needed if something is to be said in his favor. Through restraint of her anger and admission that she may not have known after all exactly what was deserving of mercy and what was not, she achieves a victory of self-government, a victory that would have been lesser had the Duke not kept back the knowledge of Claudio's rescue. Her spiritual pride humbled, she is merciful in action as well as in theory.

The Duke's teaching of self-government turns the law inward. In effect his disguised actions replace the abstract rule of law with his own personal intercession in the moral lives of some few of his subjects. He works to create a new good, an inner law of conscience, better founded than the external codes Angelo and Isabella had followed before.<sup>62</sup> This self-discipline is the true check on that "liberty" that Claudio had abused

in the lax old days. Self-knowledge and recognition of human frailty show Angelo the true lawgiver within and Isabella the true spirit of mercy within. Finally, the order of love in marriage will be an inner law directing each (like the orders achieved by Rosalind and Viola): Angelo will have his appetites directed properly toward Mariana, and Isabella will be guided toward continued involvement in the world. The Duke purveys law most effectively in teaching his subjects, as individuals, to be rightly themselves.

Another supreme image of the ruler is Prospero in *The Tempest*. Having lost his dukedom through naive trust in his brother and through withdrawal into the seclusion of study, he now turns the very knowledge he gained in seclusion and later exile into government by power of magic; magic is the reassertion of his ability to govern and the means of regaining his dukedom. He rules over Ariel by promises of freedom and by stern reminders of the spirit's past which support Prospero's claim to obedience and the constant assertion of will by which he governs a powerful spirit.<sup>63</sup> With Caliban he needs even more severe measures.

Yet the hardest test of Prospero's governmental skill is in the management of the mortals he brings ashore; on his success depends the recovery of his dukedom. The opportunity is created for him by Fortune:

By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune  
 (Now my dear lady) hath mine enemies  
 Brought to this shore; and by my prescience  
 I find my zenith doth depend upon  
 A most auspicious star, whose influence  
 If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes  
 Will ever after droop. (I.ii.178-184)

Through his magical knowledge he knows the importance of this moment and the nature of the chance that is given him; but he owes this occasion to greater powers than his, and he must put it to best use when it is offered him.<sup>64</sup> He directs Ariel in handling the courtiers, and his methods are much like Oberon's though with a sharper edge, for the visitors are chased or led about the island, mocked, and put to discomfort. Through his magic he stages shows for them, to be contrasted with the more kindly vision devised for Ferdinand and Miranda. The moral of these shows is in Ariel's proclamation to Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio:

You are three men of sin, whom Destiny,  
 That hath to instrument this lower world  
 And what is in't, the never-surfeited sea  
 Hath caus'd to belch up you; and on this island  
 Where man doth not inhabit—you 'mongst men  
 Being most unfit to live. . . .

I and my fellows  
 Are ministers of Fate. . . .

But remember  
 (For that's my business to you) that you three  
 From Milan did supplant good Prospero,  
 Expos'd unto the sea (which hath requit it)  
 Him, and his innocent child; for which foul deed  
 The pow'rs, delaying (not forgetting), have  
 Incens'd the seas and shores—yea, all the creatures,  
 Against your peace. Thee of thy son, Alonso,  
 They have bereft; and do pronounce by me  
 Ling'ring perdition . . .

shall step by step attend  
 You and your ways. . . . (III.iii.53-79)

This makes the situation seem more grim than it really is—most clearly in the words about Alonso's son, which seem to imply his death (and so Alonso takes them), but also in the nature of the powers at work on the three. By such threats Prospero hopes to produce repentance at once, and he succeeds with Alonso. Alonso then regains his son when, on meeting Prospero, he spontaneously proposes Prospero's unexpressed terms: restoration of Milan to him and a wish that Ferdinand and Miranda (if alive) might marry and rule in Naples (V.i.118-119, 148-152). Here is the objective of Prospero's governing, and he achieves it through magical illusions.

The other two sinners are harder cases. They can be ruled only by Prospero's threat to reveal their full (and new) guilt to Alonso. Through Ariel's management this guilt first comes almost to the point of action and then is almost detected; he tests Antonio and Sebastian by charming all the others to sleep with a "solemne Musicke," as the Folio stage direction reads (II.i.184 S.D.; Through-Line Number 862).<sup>65</sup> When they plot to kill Alonso (so that Sebastian can rule Naples) and have actually drawn their swords, Ariel returns "with Musicke and Song" and "Sings in

Gonzaloes care" to wake him and avert the danger (II.i.296 S.D., 299 S.D.; TLN 999, 1003). There should be no surprise in the conspiracy, for Sebastian merely follows Antonio's precedent, though with direct intent of murder: "as thou got'st Milan, / I'll come by Naples (II.i.291-292). Prospero's governing magic brings out into the open the suspected viciousness of the villains.

This knowledge is enough to give Prospero control over the plotting courtiers—

you, my brace of lords, were I so minded,  
I here could pluck his Highness' frown upon you  
And justify you traitors (V.i.126-128)

—and force Antonio to return the dukedom. The sinners make no sign of repentance, nor is Prospero deceived into thinking they have changed, though he forgives Antonio's faults. These two lords have shown no sign of reformation, and their final situation, though precarious, is not threatening enough to force a change of heart; we would not believe in a conversion. Nor should we ask for their reformation directly through magic, for that would deny the freedom of the will. Prospero must settle for coercion through law and control by a kind of blackmail, where he cannot reform; the state will be in outer harmony even if not all souls are.

The scheme of bringing about repentance and then showing mercy implies that Prospero first gains control over the subjects of his concern and then relaxes his hold, though not too much. Both bondage and freedom are part of his strategy, and teaching the right use of freedom is the aim of bondage: he binds the visitors, sometimes almost literally, with his magic and frees them when they have repented past wrongs or at least yielded to his just demands. The method though not the purpose reverses the stratagems of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure*, where Portia and Isabella try first to induce proper behavior and then Portia and the Duke force it; but Prospero already knows the people he governs and the treatment they need. The success of his magic finally makes that magic unneeded, and it can be replaced by normal human methods of governing when the courtiers return to Italy. The extraordinary powers of Ariel can be turned loose again in their own sphere, Prospero can revert to merely human instruments of justice and mercy, and those who have learned from his rule can be free and self-governing in a better society.

In the same way Prospero tempers rigor with lenience toward Ferdinand—not as a purging of guilt but as a test of his worthiness of Miranda. The log-carrying service imposed on Ferdinand by Prospero is a symbol to Ferdinand of his love for her:

The very instant that I saw you, did  
My heart fly to your service, there resides,  
To make me slave to it, and for your sake  
Am I this patient log-man. (III.i.64-67)

He is released from his physical labors when he binds himself in promise of marriage, and in making that promise “with a heart as willing / As bondage e’er of freedom” (III.i.88-89) he finds inner freedom in love. Thus an imposed task is replaced by a willing vow, and inner desire matches social order and the need of a kingdom for an heir.

The marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda is on Prospero’s mind throughout the play; he brings them together and tells us his joy at finding that they are falling in love (I.ii.420-422, 441-443, 451). It is part of his good government, as well as fatherly care, to settle Miranda well in Milan; this arrangement will both provide for heirs and give Alonso another inducement (besides his repentance) to accept Prospero’s return to rule.

So Prospero’s governing role must not be underrated. From the beginning of the play he has planned a marriage uniting two courts and a reconciliation with his enemies.<sup>66</sup> Despite appearances, he already had intended mercy before Ariel’s attempt to soften him:

*Ari.*                             Your charm so strongly works ’em  
That if you now beheld them, your affections  
Would become tender.

*Pros.*                             Dost thou think so, spirit?

*Ari.* Mine would, sir, were I human.

*Pros.*                             And mine shall.

Hast thou, which are but air, a touch, a feeling  
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,  
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply  
Passion as they, be kindlier mov’d than thou art?  
Though with their high wrongs I am strook to th’ quick,  
Yet, with my nobler reason, ’gainst my fury  
Do I take part. The rarer action is

In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,  
 The sole drift of my purpose doth extend  
 Not a frown further. (V.i.17-30)

This exchange fits the movement of the play as a working-out of Prospero's governing plan. The sternness of his threats to his old enemies has deceived even Ariel, his chief agent, who finds a need to beg mercy for them. Ariel's plea and his display of "human" feeling amuse Prospero, for whom severity is of no more use once he has brought about repentance. Yet even if Prospero's leniency is all according to plan and enacts a moral decision he had already made,<sup>67</sup> governing himself by this decision takes an effort of self-discipline, an assertion of "reason" and "virtue" against "fury" and recollection of "high wrongs." His self-control is essential to the success of his whole scheme: without Alonso's repentance and Prospero's forgiveness of him, the marriage that Prospero has been encouraging would make no sense. As in other plays our sympathy for the lovers contributes to our wish that other matters will turn out well.

To overlook Caliban's place in the realm that Prospero governs would be to constrict the value of Prospero's achievement in ruling him. It is not that there is any serious threat in Caliban's rebellion, which is easily stopped by a clothesline hung with trumpery. Rather Caliban helps give us a sense of the scope that government must have: it must range not only above the human norm to the airy Ariel but below that norm. Caliban's nature is defined physically for us—Prospero calls him "Thou earth" (I.ii.314)—and the cramps he suffers are physical punishment for his resistance to rule. But Prospero and Miranda had once had better-than-physical hopes for him when they treated him more kindly and taught him language as if he could be a reasonable creature who might choose good. By the end of the play he promises to try again to "seek for grace" (V.i.296); until that new effort, at least, he can be controlled but not improved. He has expressed his resistance by perversion of language—"my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse" (I.ii.363-364)—and by an attempt to rape Miranda. He has freedom of will, the power to resist Prospero's plans for him; and this ability is symbolized by his physical qualities—literal earthiness and grotesqueness, lust, debasement of speech. The limits of Prospero's government are defined by the parody of the human which is Caliban.

The other main example of a wise ruler, the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, also meets the limit of his power in the recalcitrant will of a



low-born subject. This one, unlike Caliban, is recognizably human, though barely so; it is Barnardine, who (as if in parody of the Duke's preparation of Claudio for death) "apprehends death no more dreadfully but as a drunken sleep, careless, reckless, and fearless of what's past, present, or to come; insensible of mortality, and desperately mortal," who is "Drunk many times a day, if not many days entirely drunk" and who is unmoved even when the guards seem ready to take him off for execution (IV.ii.142-145, 149-152). The Friar-Duke, speaking almost in self-parody of his habit of intervention but with a doctrinally right concern for even the worst sinner, suggests that Barnardine needs spiritual counsel; but Barnardine has already rejected this. He seems in all ways convenient to the needs of the Duke's plan at this moment: justly condemned to die according to the laws of Vienna, emotionally indifferent to death, and unwilling to be argued into another state of mind, he could be executed without much injustice and his head could be substituted for Claudio's to prevent Claudio's unjust death.

But Barnardine declines to help. He simply insists, "I have been drinking hard all night, and I will have more time to prepare me, or they shall beat out my brains with billets. I will not consent to die this day, that's certain" (IV.iii.53-56). The Duke, despite renewed efforts to play Friar, must conclude that he is "A creature unprepar'd, unmeet for death, / And to transport him in the mind he is / Were damnable" (IV.iii.67-69). Barnardine asserts his free will, and the Duke feels obliged to respect it, despite the inconvenience to his own plans and despite his legal power to enforce execution. But another prisoner, the pirate Ragozine, conveniently dies a natural death, and it happens that he even looks a bit like Claudio; so his head can be the required substitute for Claudio's, and the Duke can stay within the moral limits of his office. In this action, Shakespeare's sources gave him the choice of leaving Barnardine offstage entirely;<sup>68</sup> so we must conclude that he had a special purpose in developing Barnardine as he did. As a spokesman for something basic (if base) in humanity Barnardine asserts his right not to be used for someone else's convenience.

An obvious limit on the Duke's general plan to reform Vienna, and especially on Angelo's attempt to enforce this reform strictly, is the existence of professional vice, which implies public demand for illegal services. The pander Pompey suggests that to enforce the laws one would have to "geld and splay all the youth of the city" (II.i.230-231); and the market for prostitutes is represented for us by the frivolous and corrupt Lucio.

Lucio also shows us a consequence of law as applied categorically by Angelo, that subjects will attack what they dislike about the law in the enforcer of it, and so ridicule him personally: "They say this Angelo was not made by man and woman after this downright way of creation. . . . Some report a sea-maid spawn'd him; some, that he was begot between two stock-fishes" (III.ii.104-109). But the Duke is not proof against Lucio's gossip either: Lucio slanders both the Duke's past laxity and his present active promotion (while disguised as a Friar) of virtue, and contrasts a Duke who "would eat mutton on Fridays" with a "meddling friar" (III.ii.181-182; V.i.127). Lucio follows the commands of his flesh and interprets the actions of others in a mainly physical way; and his coaching of Isabella, who knows little of the physical world at first in her crucial pleading with Angelo (II.ii), results in her working quite unknowingly on Angelo's physical desires. Such a carnal being as Lucio can hardly be controlled in his carnal acts, much less reformed internally as the Duke might reform higher characters. His forced marriage to a punk is probably a laughing dismissal of him, by Shakespeare and the Duke as well, a mock punishment for his unserious crime of "Slandering a prince" (V.i.524).

The greatest spokesman for the lowest in human nature, and for the least governable human qualities, must be Sir John Falstaff; indeed he is physically the greatest spokesman for anything at all. When he is caught out in his usual faults by Prince Hal, he gives weighty and amusing defenses of himself, and one in particular invests his very flesh with a meaning: "Thou knowest in the state of innocency Adam fell, and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villainy? Thou seest I have more flesh than another man, and therefore more frailty" (*1 Henry IV*, III.iii.164-168). He playfully appeals for all the mercy that theology allows man, or perhaps more, as a weak being assailed by the temptations of the flesh. But this mercy, and the frailty that might occasion it, is a governmental concern too, as in the second scene of *1 Henry IV*: Falstaff can scarcely rule his bulk enough even to keep good time,<sup>69</sup> and he hopes that Hal, when he is king, will be lax (that is, more than merciful) toward thieves such as Falstaff (I.ii.58-62). His thievery, besides being an example of the ungovernable, is a specific parody of Hotspur and his fellow rebels; when the rebel Worcester insists in parley that "I have not sought the day of this dislike" and King Henry asks how the revolt has come about unsought, Falstaff puts in "Rebellion lay in his way, and he found it"

(V.i.26-28). This is, typically, "The thief's excuse when discovered in possession of stolen goods";<sup>70</sup> Falstaff calls Worcester a thief of the realm. The attempt to steal a kingdom is made to seem only a bit more audacious than the exploit on Gadshill—and both times some of the thieves run away. In the most general terms, though, Falstaff's claim to sympathy and significance as a human being is his frail and abundant flesh. Thus the crucial adjective when he is defending himself against Hal's mock sentence of banishment: "banish plump Jack, and banish all the world" (II.iv.479-480). Love of humanity (for all its faults) must enjoin us to love of Falstaff (for all his faults).

Yet of course Falstaff does not fit into any commonwealth. He is parasitic, and Hal must tidy up after him by paying tavern bills and restoring booty. He is no use in battle, and his recruiting practices are a disgrace. Human weakness is also, in a limited sense, human recalcitrance and perverseness. Once Hal becomes king he feels that he must govern Falstaff through banishment—or must publicize his mastery of Falstaff (and of himself) by banishing him. He deals severely with fleshly weakness:

Make less thy body (hence) and more thy grace,

Leave gormandizing, know the grave doth gape

For thee thrice wider than for other men.

Reply not to me with a fool-born jest. . . .

(2 *Henry IV*, V.v.52-55)

His pun on "grace" ("grease," fat) and his allusion to the gaping grave are in a way the same old jokes—Falstaff is about to respond in jest—but, as always when the jolly flesh is reduced to its ultimate value by confrontation with death, the meaning is grim. Yet if the flesh insists on itself despite such killing argument, it can and does maintain its being against all the plans of rulers. Though Falstaff dies, perhaps killed by banishment, his survivors are as fleshly as he. But they are lesser and lower beings; government has only succeeded, perversely, in cropping off the best and the symbolically most representative.

Opinions on the banishment vary, and perhaps always will; but in fairness to Prince Hal we should notice that he had earlier given a more balanced and less public assessment of his friend; this, when he thought none could hear him, is surely more candid. It too makes death a time for summing-up of value, with the crucial difference that Hal at this point thinks Falstaff already dead in battle:

What, old acquaintancel could not all this flesh  
 Keep in a little life? Poor Jack, farewell!  
 I could have better spar'd a better man.  
 O, I should have a heavy miss of thee  
 If I were much in love with vanity! (1 *Henry IV*, V.iv.102-106)

Now as in the banishment speech Hal labels his friend as vanity in Ecclesiastes' sense, and he recognizes that there are better men in his service. Yet whatever measures there are of "better" for society's purposes may conflict with his personal attachments, with his love for an essential humanity in Falstaff that he cannot easily spare. Falstaff's flesh is again expressive of an essence: because it embodies human vitality, it shows the qualities that make us value human life. Hal, not yet a ruler and not yet feeling the need to limit himself to a sovereign's perspective, can love the weakness and disorder that he dares not value in theory.

"Falstaff in love," if that is the subject of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, turns out to be a weak Falstaff easily made to fall. It is hard to imagine how he could excite the passion that he hopes and thinks he arouses in the women. But his own aspiration toward both wives is in part to play a confidence trick in the guise of love: "I will be cheaters to them both, and they shall be exchequers to me" (I.iii.69-71). Falstaff in love is still Falstaff reaching for the purse.<sup>71</sup>

But there are differences of character given by the nature of the play. The political context in the history plays often gives Falstaff's character in them a special meaning and function; his misgovernment of himself is often a parody of the rebels' disorder. His thievery mocks their attempted political theft. And when he entertains Hal with the boldness and openness of his misdeeds (his figure is unmistakable in a robbery, and his lies about the ruffians that put him to flight at Gadshill "are like their father that begets them, gross as a mountain, open, palpable," 1 *Henry IV*, II.iv.225-226), he exposes the fact that the rebels, and perhaps the King, make their great quarrels out of thinly-disguised pretexts about prisoners and old wrongs. In *The Merry Wives* there is none of this, only the parody, in Falstaff's mercenary wooing, of Fenton's original fortune-hunting (which grew into real love for "the very riches of thyself," III.iv.13-18) and eventual theft of Anne Page in elopement. But our attention is all on Falstaff, and without a political background in this play the focus rests on his self-assertion, the

failure of self-government. This time his faults do reflect on himself and mock him.

The greatest absurdity about Falstaff's attempt to put himself forward is his compulsive openness about something that is often kept secret. In highway robbery he could dare to be open—indeed he could not help being known—because Prince Hal's favor and readiness to repay all thefts kept him from arrest; in adultery Falstaff is on his own, and discretion would be to his advantage. Yet with a little sly encouragement he confides all to the disguised Ford, even his designs on Ford's money (II.ii.271-275). And of course in an intrigue it would be much harder for him to employ disguise or to hide than it would be for lovers with normal proportions. Events mock his gross and unconcealable physical nature, which he has made seem grosser by professing to be enamored of the wives. This most fleshly of men vainly pursues fleshly delight (though partly pricked on by avarice) and then is forced to hide or disguise his hugely self-assertive body. His escapes from the jealous husband are all mild torments for his unruly flesh: he is put with the dirty wash as if that were a fit place for him, dumped in the river as proof of his (physical and moral) "alacrity in sinking" (III.v.12-13), forced to deny his masculinity as a fat woman, and persuaded to hide in the woods with horns on his head while "fairies" burn and pinch him. The burning is an ordeal devised as if to test whether he is innocent, and the pinching punishes and expurgates his purported lust. The horns he wears recall the myth of Actaeon, which was widely understood as the story of lust punished,<sup>72</sup> and ironically he had intended horns for Ford. Some of these "punishments," at least, quite befit the crime; and there is the special irony that Falstaff's readiness to brag brings punishments for a fault of lust that he professes but that is not a prime motive for his scheme.

There is a typically Falstaffian self-justification in the knight's words as he waits in the forest with his buck's head:

Now the hot-bloodied gods assist me! Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa, love set on thy horns. O powerful love, that in some respects makes a beast a man; in some other, a man a beast. You were also, Jupiter, a swan for the love of Leda. O omnipotent love, how near the god drew to the complexion of a goose! A fault done first in the form of a beast (O Jove, a beastly fault!) and then

another fault in the semblance of a fowl—think on't, Jove, a foul fault! When gods have hot backs, what shall poor men do? (V.v.2-12)

If lovers might often excuse their actions by citing Jove's assumption of bestial forms as precedent, Falstaff can make the point more general. His comment "When gods have hot backs, what shall poor men do?" is a paganized and erotic version of "Thou knowest in the state of innocency Adam fell, and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villainy?" Falstaff again excuses what he is by the degenerate world he lives in; or worse, if his plea for the gods' help may really be to arouse an erotic fervor he does not feel, he makes the beastly example an excuse for still worse misuse of his own flesh. Doubtless this moralizing is all in the service of good fun; there is just a hint of such meanings in the absurd posturing of Falstaff's huge bulk.

Throughout his stage life, as has been shown, Falstaff excuses himself by what he is, which he defines physically. Many other comic low-life characters in Shakespeare's comedies are essentially physical in their selfhood and, however well they may know how to thrive in the world (though not all do), they resist, often parody, the efforts of "higher" characters to govern themselves and others.<sup>73</sup> Thus the snores that prove Sly unlordly and unfit for lordly entertainments, Armado's physical gratification without regard for vows, Bottom's ass's head expressive of his nature, Sir Toby's unashamed indulgence in his cups. Shakespeare honors the claim to humanity of these and other characters, even if the claim is only a physical one. And such characters may gain more than a mere place in the world, as when Bottom recalls a vision or Dogberry unknowingly uncovers a plot. The last of men may sometimes be put first. In this the artless comic character may be like the professional fool who proclaims himself wiser than the reputed wise men of society; the jester proves himself by conscious satire that is carefully self-controlled and astute, the artless comic by unconscious parody that hits on reality in moments of chance intuition. Thus both may not only qualify and limit the plans of the dominant characters but even claim a moment's glory for deep insight. We respond to them as Lords of Misrule—especially if we know that the stupid ones will soon return to themselves. We feel and sympathize with both the earthy self-possession of the artless characters and their amazement at their brief intrusion into the world of important affairs. To banish

such persons from Shakespeare's comedies would indeed have been almost to banish all the world.

The concept of "government," as taken very broadly in this chapter, implies first of all a self-discipline in the ruler, a control of his own impulses, and at least a delay of his immediate interests for the sake of a larger purpose that by indirection will bring out the best in others and create the greatest possible harmony. Apart from the literal actions of government, the clearest example of such fruitful self-rule would be the actions of disguised heroines—especially Rosalind and Viola, the ones who most deliberately try to teach others self-control in love. Disguise promotes their own self-discipline by creating an added viewpoint for their understanding of themselves, and by involving them in roles in the outer world that may not seem at once to serve their own interests directly, indeed may run counter.

The same self-control is needed by manipulative figures proper. The really active ones either take on disguises or have other means of influencing events while keeping hidden, through magic—thus Portia as a judge, Oberon and Puck as unknown magical agents, the Duke of Vienna as a friar, and Prospero as a magician who conceals his powers until the end. The point about such secrecy is that the ruler can adjust the way that he, or his action, will appear to the subjects being governed so as to yield the best effect in them (though Oberon and especially Puck are rather more casual in their rule, which is mixed with a bit of misrule). The Duke of Vienna suits his methods to the individual and tries to produce an inner law, individually perceived and willed, in each. Prospero too varies his severity with the case. Portia has only one guise and one case, but she is as flexible as the others in trying one approach after another until she sees what is needed. The hidden action of government may draw out, as well as possible, the potential of self-rule in each subject; where this fails, harder measures must be used, often threats that can later be remitted.

Efforts at self-control and schemes to rule others for their own good are mocked or qualified by the self-assertions of those low characters who insist on choosing their own good. Though they can sometimes be wondrously transformed they are still themselves, always at home and always possessed of the same appetites and faults. Their resistance to plan makes them persistently yet erratically human (we must hope that Caliban, the most grotesque of these characters, is an exception), and we must love

this quality of humanity beyond any value we can assign it in a "rational" order. It gives warmth, urgency, and complexity to the concept of selfhood, a crucial notion in Shakespeare's comedies because of the problems created by serious self-will and mistaken self-definition. There is a radical irony in the whole process by which we judge obstinate selfhood in comedy. We must recall that self-will can exercise itself in sport too, and we must insist that comedy exerts no more control over selfhood than is needed for happy endings.



## Miracles and Fading Visions

There is another influence on external actions, though we may not know much about it, beyond the directing power of a ruler to shape events. Even Prospero, whatever his knowledge and skill, cannot overcome his enemies until the proper moment; as mentioned in the previous chapter, he must make the best of the opportunities offered to him when they are offered. Making the most of time—"redeeming time," in Prince Hal's words—was an accepted rule of personal morals,<sup>74</sup> and it would seem to apply to statecraft too; but what kind of power is it that offers the occasion for enterprising mortals to act out their wishes, and how can the chance be known when it comes? The question leads toward the theophanies of the last plays that seem to imply a supernatural pattern governing events.

Shakespeare's approach to the idea of such a pattern is crablike.<sup>75</sup> In *All's Well that Ends Well*, which seems to aim at the miraculous resolution typical of later plays and which hints that its heroine may be receiving divine aid,<sup>76</sup> our doubts of the hero's qualities and the means necessary to his reform make the result almost too much a miracle. If the Duke's intervention in *Measure for Measure* is analogous to divine rule, there are enough irregularities about his conduct as Friar to raise questions. In *Pericles*, although Gower directs our reactions through our assumption that he knows the total pattern of events and sees a higher purpose in them, the characters themselves lack confidence in what is happening—indeed Pericles withdraws from the world totally—and Diana, the deity most involved in the play, appears only at the last minute to direct a reunion. The characters in *Cymbeline* too fail to see that events are headed anywhere (though there are attempts to plan parts of the action), and Jupiter's descent and prophecy come late. Only in *The Winter's Tale*, with the arrival of the message from Apollo's oracle in the third act, and *The Tempest*, with a scarcely-divulged awareness of higher powers implicit throughout Prospero's management of his opportunities, are revelations from above known to some characters for very long.

The value of having an early and detailed statement of the divine plan in *The Winter's Tale* is that we can follow the characters' attempts to deal with it and the way that it is carried out. There is an absorbing and teasing combination of actions that consciously or unconsciously fit the plan, of

chance that works opportunely, and of minor supernatural events (like Antigonus' dream of Hermione that tells him where to leave Perdita and what to name her) that contribute to the outcome. Shakespeare is extremely careful about the agents in this play who work out apparently supernatural purposes; he misses no chance either to assert a meaning or to qualify, mock, and make ironic comparisons.<sup>77</sup>

No sooner is the judgment of the oracle of Apollo read to Leontes (III.ii.132-136) to tell him that he has wrongly accused his wife, than he learns that his son is dead of anxiety over the accusation. Leontes takes the loss as an immediate sign of Apollo's displeasure—and its timing suggests that likelihood, though a “natural” cause of death is given too. Apollo's role is shown decisively, though, in the words of the oracle: “the King shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found”; these words presuppose that Mamillius is dead and that the abandoned infant Perdita is sole heir. The ways of the god are hard, for although Leontes vows repentance at once and perseveres for sixteen years, this one major punishment inflicted by the deity is not removed; he cannot have his son back.

Human agency takes up where the oracle leaves off; it becomes a way (though we do not fully know it yet) of impressing its truth and intensifying its punishment. The oracle had spoken the truth about the jealous Leontes' mistreatment of others—his suspicion of his friend, abuse of a subject's loyalty by commanding him to poison the suspect, and unjust rejection of a child as not his own: “Hermione is chaste, Polixenes blameless, Camillo a true subject, Leontes a jealous tyrant, his innocent babe truly begotten. . . .” As a defender of Hermione, Paulina takes up all of these judgments (especially Leontes' tyranny), almost as if expounding a Biblical text phrase by phrase in a sermon; she wants each wrong to sink in, yet she minimizes all the others against the new one she reports, Hermione's death. This seems a punishment of Leontes answering directly to his main fault, unjust suspicion of his wife. But if we knew Paulina's stratagem now, we would see that she was copying the oracle, creating Hermione's feigned death in imitation of Mamillius' real one. Her art imitates Apollo's control of nature, and the aim is Leontes' repentance. She imitates the oracle in another way too by holding back a reward for repentance, the return of Hermione; nothing like this can happen with the first event forecast by the oracle, the death of Mamillius, but there is an implied hope

of Perdita's restoration in the oracle's words "if that which is lost be not found." Paulina has foreseen the movement of events as predicted and directed by the oracle, and believing in the validity of this pattern she reinforces it with her own actions. She announces Leontes' need for repentance in the proper wintry term:

A thousand knees,  
Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,  
Upon a barren mountain, and still winter  
In storm perpetual, could not move the gods  
To look that way thou wert. (III.ii.210-214)

She understands Apollo's plan for penitence followed by restoration, and she thinks of it in the seasonal imagery that soon begins to dominate the play.<sup>78</sup> She guides Leontes into the winter phase—and as we later find, she will have a role in springtime too.

Next, the supernatural and the apparently casual unite to leave Perdita isolated in the preordained place, the wilds of Bohemia. Antigonus is guided there by a dream, and then he and his companions are killed by parallel mischances with a bear and a storm. Of course we suspect some controlling purpose behind these events, and the figure of Time, introduced at the outset of Act IV, reassures us that there is. Meanwhile strictly human purposes work toward another part of the plan, as Leontes' penitence moves him to contact his estranged counselor Camillo and arouse Camillo's homesickness (IV.ii.4-9); his action has no result at first, but it will when Camillo can send the lovers to visit Leontes and can follow with Polixenes. In this way Leontes' act in penitence helps return his daughter to him and recover his wrongly-suspected friend.

Once Florizel and Perdita enter the story as lovers with wishes of their own, they also become unwitting embodiments of Apollo's will to restore most of what had been taken away. Florizel is aware that just as he, a prince, wears shepherd's garb in wooing Perdita, so "the fire-rob'd god, / Golden Apollo" had for a time lived as "a poor humble swain" (IV.iv.29-30). Meanwhile Perdita, who mentions Proserpina's flower-gathering, is unconsciously living out the seasonal myth of Proserpina, which has a providential meaning that fits well with the message in this play from the oracle of the sun-god Apollo.<sup>79</sup> The lovers, as "displacements" of mythic figures (in Northrop Frye's term—though he finds them more directly mythic than most comic characters), actually do in a sense take the place

of the mythical oracle in the later actions of the play, for they become the main forces unknowingly working out the divine will as pronounced by the oracle, the finding of "that which is lost."

It is important that this function is known to us but not to them. By means of the difference between their awareness and ours, Shakespeare both forestalls criticism of the resolving miracle by ironic commentary and suggests that the much-desired good may actually come about best without human planning, through some unknown benign force. Florizel has no purpose except to win Perdita while losing everything else if need be; when he resolves on flight he admits that

as th' unthought-on accident is guilty  
To what we wildly do, so we profess  
Ourselves to be the slaves of chance, and flies  
Of every wind that blows. (IV.iv.538-541)

Though he gives a needed push to events, he has little sense of direction. And Perdita herself resists throughout; she has misgivings about being "Most goddess-like prank'd up" as Flora at the shepherds' feast (IV.iv.10), and when she must disguise herself and flee she merely acquiesces by saying, "I see the play so lies / That I must bear a part" (IV.iv.655-656). Ignorant of her true birth and inheritance, she dislikes pushing claims of any kind for herself. Yet she must be brought round to such claims for her own sake, and Florizel's and Leontes'.

The enactment of myth and miracle is further qualified by parody. Among the Olympian gods, the natural parody of Apollo would be Hermes or Mercury, a figure who presided over much the same activity as Apollo but in a comic, low-life manner.<sup>80</sup> As Apollo was god of poetry, so Mercury had his own arts of lying, thieving, and oratory; and he was a lowly cowherd rather than a shepherd (as the Nomian Apollo was). His embodiment in the play is Autolycus, who was "litter'd under Mercury" (IV.iii.25) and professes the arts of balladry (a parody of poetry, in Renaissance eyes) and thievery. Indeed he unwittingly mocks the serious claims of art in the play (to be discussed later) by using his ballads to distract attention from his purse-cutting (IV.iv.604-618). His actions parody the uncanny movement toward good through fulfillment of Apollo's prophecy, for despite his intention they have good results and are needed for fulfillment of the oracle's words. When he is forced to change clothing to provide Florizel with a

disguise, he learns the lovers' plan of flight. But for his own perverse reasons (related to his notion of fortune's absurdities) he does not reveal it to someone who could prevent them:

Sure the gods do this year connive at us, and we may do any thing extempore. The Prince himself is about a piece of iniquity: stealing away from his father with his clog at his heels. If I thought it were a piece of honesty to acquaint the King withal, I would not do't. I hold it the more knavery to conceal it; and therein am I constant to my profession. (IV.iv.676-683)

Then, overhearing the Shepherd's news that Perdita is a foundling and feeling a new loyalty to his "master" Florizel, he intercepts the message (IV.iv.831-842), with the result that the proofs of Perdita's birth go with the lovers to Leontes. He justifies his act through an absurdist concept of self-interest: "If I had a mind to be honest, I see Fortune would not suffer me: she drops booties in my mouth" (IV.iv.831-832). But this mocker of providence is himself mocked by his mercurial fortunes: through chance mishaps he goes unrewarded for this valuable information.

In the events of the play this Mercury-figure cooperates with the ordering purposes announced by Apollo, even while he ridicules the notion of a supernatural will working toward good. If one may find earnest in this jest there is a tradition that Mercury may function in just this controlling way. In one of Andrea Alciati's emblems, Fortune, blindfolded, stands unsteadily on a globe; Mercury is solidly planted on a cube. The meaning is given thus by Francis Thynne:

On rolling ball doth fickle fortune stande;  
on firme and setled square sitts *Mercurie*,  
The god of Arts, with wisdomes rodd in hande:  
which covertlie to vs doth signifie,  
that fortunes power, vnconstant and still frayle,  
against wisdom and art cannot prevaile.<sup>81</sup>

Without making any solemn claims for himself, Autolycus, the artist of confidence tricks, ballads, and purse-picking, does his part against blind misfortune. It may be more than coincidence too that Mercury was sometimes called Camillus;<sup>82</sup> Shakespeare's Camillo works more directly than Autolycus to promote good fortune, and the two characters are related also in dividing between them the functions of one character in Shakespeare's

source.<sup>83</sup> Camillo is responsible for Polixenes' safety from the jealous plot of Leontes, and later for the return of Perdita (with Florizel) and Polixenes to Leontes' kingdom. The artful, even sly, plans of the two characters contribute to the workings of Apollo's oracle.

The truth of Perdita's origin (which is revealed to Leontes through these characters' unwitting help, though we had known it all along) relates ironically to her own resistance to events. She distrusts the artifice in which she is involved; but this "artifice" is, without anyone's intending it, leading toward a "natural" situation in which Perdita will have the place due her by birth, Leontes will have his daughter back, and Florizel and Perdita will be evenly matched as heirs to thrones. In this outcome the famous discussion of art and nature (IV.iv.84-103) is both validated and superseded. When Polixenes, perhaps being ironic (as some readers believe) or else testing Perdita, proposes the idea that

we marry  
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,  
And make conceive a bark of baser kind  
By bud of nobler race (IV.iv.92-95)

he thinks he is using the art of grafting trees in ostensible support of a union between his son and this shepherdess Perdita. He continues with the assertion that "This is an art / Which does mend Nature—change it rather; but / The art itself is Nature." If he had known that Perdita was a princess, he could have said without irony that her marriage to Florizel would be perfectly natural and that the "art" that brought them together was nature. Art and nature are reconciled in everyone's knowledge when the oracle is miraculously fulfilled and Perdita is restored to Leontes.<sup>84</sup>

The achievement of this prophesied reunion is a sign to Paulina, who as self-appointed ruler of Leontes' spiritual state had been keeping Hermione hidden for sixteen years until Leontes had done sufficient penance. She responds with her own "art" that turns to "nature," a supposed statue of Hermione that becomes the living woman.<sup>85</sup> She evokes the strongest aura she can of magic and miracle; she is confident that her artifice in managing events follows a divine will as expressed in the natural (yet miraculous) quality of external occurrences. Again nature and art become one, in human purposes as in the events that are controlled by forces beyond human ken.

The equation of art with nature is both an assertion by Shakespeare and

a retreat. His most direct allusions to the artful quality of the whole play and the events in it are self-mocking: a "winter's tale," like an old wives' tale, is to be taken none too seriously,<sup>86</sup> and the story of Perdita's restoration meets with the comments that "Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it," and "This news, which is call'd true, is so like an old tale, that the verity of it is in strong suspicion" (V.ii.23-25, 27-29). Autolycus, as a practitioner of balladry, has been before hand to make game of the wondrous recoveries that are the goal of the action in the play. To say that "The art itself is Nature" is in one way to limit what the play as art can do to what its audience will accept as natural.<sup>87</sup> Shakespeare does not match a princely Florizel to a really lowborn Perdita (even a gracious one), nor does he have Paulina perform her miracle before she receives a natural sign from outside events that Leontes has prepared himself naturally by long repentance. The apparent wonder in the fulfillment of the oracle must be qualified by relegation to the humblest forms of art; even divine purposes may be only the fictions of the storyteller or playwright. And there is equivocation between the supernatural and the natural: the power of Apollo to shape events to his will becomes in the synthesis of art and nature only a contrivance to achieve no more than what seems right and natural to us. Thus a control over external events that seems to transcend human power and to serve as a model for humankind (notably Paulina) in such government of affairs as they can manage, suddenly dissolves into the fiction of the artificer, too pat to be trusted.

There is the same final ambiguity in *The Tempest*, where the supernatural power (or "art," as it is called) by which Prospero governs humans and even spirits consists often of creating illusions to affect humans' behavior. The greatest and most significant of these is the masque of spirits that he presents for Ferdinand and Miranda (IV.i.60-138). It is meaningful in itself, and the reason that Prospero gives for interrupting it (apart from his need, kept secret from the lovers, to deal with Caliban's plot) is also meaningful, both as a statement in itself and as a lesson in the context of the lovers' needs. The vision presents an ideal harmony of divine blessing in marriage and divinely-fostered plenty on earth; and before it disappears it seems to be working toward an embodiment of bounty in specifically earthly terms with the dance of nymphs and reapers. Obviously there is a message for chaste lovers who intend marriage, and obviously Prospero has

motives for this lesson in a desire for Miranda's happiness in love and for stability in political position. But there would be counsel for rulers as well in the ideal of a land blessed with plenteous harvest. The gods in this masque may show Prince Ferdinand the aim of a good sovereign to imitate divine rule (again art imitates a "nature" which is supernatural), and they may imply that he can achieve this ideal of government only if he succeeds in self-government through chaste love. Though it is hard to fix these implications, they would be consistent with what appears in other comedies and with the concern that Prospero shows by the end of the play (as discussed in the previous chapter) for the eventual accession of Ferdinand and Miranda to joint rule.

Ferdinand almost mars the harmony of the masque and of Prospero's plan. Entranced by the vision, he exclaims, "Let me live here ever; / So rare a wond' red father and a wise / Makes this place Paradise" (IV.i.122-124). Prospero must quiet him to preserve the spell that makes the vision, and we may wonder if Ferdinand is absorbing the lessons that are being set before him. Certainly a life as perpetual spectator at masques is very different from what Prospero intends for Ferdinand. Rather, Ferdinand must prepare himself for a return to Naples with Miranda and eventually for a kingly role; this is the object of all of Prospero's teachings, which culminate in the masque.<sup>88</sup> Ferdinand, like Prospero himself in a more complex way and like Rosalind's father, must quit this delightful sojourn and resume the duties of public life. Here is the hardest but finally most essential lesson of self-government for any ruler who is sensitive to the ideal: that the vision of the ideal, delightful as it is, exists not for the ruler's private delectation but for his use as a model of government. It is the lesson Plato teaches when he says that the philosopher must return from the sunlight of truth into the cave to lead his fellow men out (*Republic* 519D-520E). If Ferdinand were to live in visions forever, he would be repeating Prospero's old mistake when Prospero cast the government of his dukedom on his brother, "And to my state grew stranger, being transported / And rapt in secret studies" (I.ii.76-77). The result was that the brother, Antonio, became a usurper; and if Ferdinand were now lost in strange visions on this island without a Prospero to guard him, it is not hard to imagine that Sebastian might have killed Alonso (at Antonio's suggestion) and then, meeting with Ferdinand, dispatched him too and become usurping King of Naples. The interruption of this masque now actually has a like



practical concern, preservation of Prospero's rule against Caliban's minor threat. The art that Prospero shows to Ferdinand must become a preparation for practical reality, not a distraction from it.

In a broader sense, Prospero too can learn from his own show. The moral for himself, and in a long view for Ferdinand too, is the one he propounds as he dissolves the masque:

These our actors  
(As I foretold you) were all spirits, and  
Are melted into air, into thin air,  
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capp'd tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And like this insubstantial pageant faded  
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff  
As dreams are made on; and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep. (IV.i.148-158)

There will be no more visions, not only because practical needs intervene, and not only because Prospero will soon break his staff and drown his book, but because human life has an ending, and with it the visions that are our experience. These last two, at least, are parallel ideas, as Prospero shows in his preparations for Milan: he will return without his magic, and when he gets there, "Every third thought shall be my grave" (V.i.312). He is acknowledging human limits; renouncing magic is a return to the normal human condition, and making ready for death is an ultimate recognition of that condition.

In several ways art shows human limits here as in *The Winter's Tale*. As discussed in the previous chapter, Prospero's magic is limited by the freedom of its subjects' wills, and his relinquishing of magic shows its limitation to temporary use. The very claim of its success perhaps limits it too; Gonzalo exclaims joyfully that

in one voyage  
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,  
And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife  
Where he himself was lost; Prospero, his dukedom

In a poor isle; and all of us, ourselves,  
When no man was his own. (V.i.208-213)

Art achieves its great triumph in realizing and perfecting nature, in allowing the characters to find themselves. More narrowly the aim of Prospero's masque is to show rulers and rulers-to-be their own need to hold themselves within divine precept, and the fading of the masque shows limitations that apply to rulers as to other mortals. There is obviously a theatricality about the situation: we are dealing with a masque-within-a-play,<sup>89</sup> and Prospero refers to "our actors" and the "pageant" of all human life. In the Epilogue, Prospero fittingly steps out of his part as actor by announcing that his "charms are all o'erthrown"; his magic was not only the power to control characters in the play and show them illusions, but to control us too and lead us into the illusion of the play. This magic gone, he is at the mercy of our reaction, our approval of the vision. The lesson of art is that it is a show and must end, that we must part with it yet carry it with us as a guide and not a replacement for nature. The self-government of the ruler in accord with his vision returns to the self-government of the visionary poet and the theatrical audience.

The fading of this vision recalls the dissolution and yet the permanence of magic at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>90</sup> In that play the fairies' magic, whether or not it is technically an "art," surpasses the power of any mortals and achieves the governmental aim of harmony where the Duke had failed. Yet to the mortals who have felt the power of this magic without knowing what it was, its status is equivocal: it may seem "a dream and fruitless vision" or "the fierce vexation of a dream" (III.ii.371; IV.i.69)—or better, but still vaguely, "a most rare vision . . . a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was" (IV.i.204-206). Though Hippolyta, reflecting on the lovers' accounts of their experience, thinks that the whole pattern "More witnesseth than fancy's images," Theseus minimizes it by grouping together "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet" (V.i.7, 25); for him, "imagination," poetic or not, has a low status. He is as patronizing, though kindly, toward the lovers as he is toward the mechanicals in their acting; and of actors too he has a tolerantly low opinion, that "The best in this kind are but shadows" (V.i.211). By making comparisons with poetic and dramatic arts, Theseus tries to dismiss what has happened to the lovers; the magical results that were above human ability to produce would then become actually less real than normal human experience. Of course,

since we know the secret of the magic, we resist this movement and are ready to interpret the experience of the lovers, and poets, actors, and maybe lunatics as well, as being above the normal level. Yet at the end Puck dissolves the whole play as a "weak and idle theme, / No more yielding but a dream" and reduces its actors (as Theseus had, but including him too) to "shadows" (V.i.423, 427-428). The art of magic yields happy results that fit human desire but exceed human power; the art of the theatre, as broad in scope but humbler in claim of results, makes images of such results, and if we are wise we will not forget these images though they dissolve before our eyes.

## Development and Integrity in Shakespeare's Comedies

The ideas of selfhood and of outer ruling powers in Shakespeare's comedies are of course only the barest scheme of some forces that operate in the plays. We must return to the plays themselves, to their integrity as dramas, and we must heed the complications and countercurrents that bring ideas to life. We should be learning anew the richness of these plays.

The intricacies of *The Comedy of Errors* are built on a simple concept, that events thwart attempts by the characters either to seek out new identities or to remain comfortable with old ones. The will of chance (as it seems) favors mistakes that undo human purposes and therefore human concepts of selfhood, and it encourages self-detachment and acquiescence in the illusory and capricious quality of the external world. The father, Egeon, is threatened with death for being frankly himself, a Syracusan merchant in hostile Ephesus; his Syracusan son hides his origin and is laden with gifts and courtesies that he had best not scrutinize. The Ephesian twin, in trying to learn why he is losing the comforts and prerogatives he thinks due himself, brings himself only trouble. When selfhood is uncertain, so are social connections (marriage, business) that depend on its constancy. The characters are thrown into turmoil in the experience of being treated always as persons different from what they had been just a few minutes ago. And although our knowledge of the true cause of events puts us at an advantage over them, we are always being asked to forgo that awareness and enter into the bewilderment of this world where selfhood is insecure. There is a temptation here for the characters and for us: wouldn't it be easiest just to be irresponsible and accept what other people think we are? To our delight the characters play the roles that are thrust on them, until truth summons them to the more settled joys of a family reunion.

In *The Taming of the Shrew* Petruchio deliberately conducts the same kind of assault on assumed notions of character and assumed social judgments; he proves to Kate that she is better than she has been judged to be, and he invites her to join him in upsetting the social wisdom of Padua. But this creation of character simply by assuming its existence is parodied to its limit in the Induction: Sly is not a lord and will not behave like one,

no matter how well he is treated. In another way Sly travesties Petruchio's self-will; but Sly's will changes nothing, Petruchio's everything (and to good purpose). In this parody we see the precariousness of our acceptance of Petruchio: what presumption it is to determine by oneself what another person's nature should be, and to enforce that decision with a cudgel! We allow Petruchio's methods because they disconcert and mock all Padua, impose themselves only on what is a real uncertainty in Katherine herself, and show a concern for her deeper nature. We conspire with Shakespeare and his characters in a revelry of paradox. And the characters define themselves in paradox: they will not or cannot be what they seem.

In these two plays Shakespeare stayed close to two sources, Plautus' *Menaechmi* for *The Comedy of Errors* and Gascoigne's *Supposes* (adapted from Ariosto) for the subplot of *The Taming of the Shrew*.<sup>91</sup> Both are fairly complex and mechanical plots, and both involve people's changing places with each other, either deliberately or by accident. The exchanges confuse, deceive, and mock characters: in *Menaechmi* the persons who are unwittingly exchanged, in *Supposes* others who are to be duped by the deliberate trading of identity. Yet although Shakespeare puts deliberate trickery into *The Taming of the Shrew*, he controls and subordinates it; Lucentio's deceptive assumption of a role is inferior to Petruchio's instructive evocation of a role for Kate. Thus Shakespeare was early attracted to the comic potential of a contrast between the role a character assumes toward others or is thrust into by the acts of others, and his nature and purposes as he himself perceives them. There is a dichotomy between the character considered in isolation (his image of himself) and his involvements with others in the events of the play.

The open and external prevails. The odd actions in *The Comedy of Errors* turn out to have a rational basis, Petruchio's brash claims and acts win out over Katherine's first notions of herself, and even the tricky Lucentio and Tranio must feel less clever when Bianca is proved to be no prize. The triumph of the external must mislead critics who think of these two plays as farcical and out of touch with Shakespeare's later work. But the vows in later plays are simply a more complex external involvement (more sharply opposed to private wishes), and they develop straight from these two plays.

A more extreme exchange between persons would be the bed-trick; this device figures in Plautus' *Amphitruo*, which in other ways influences *The*

*Comedy of Errors*, and in Sir Thomas Elyot's tale of Titus and Gisippus, which seems to have affected the conclusion of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Shakespeare does not put this trick into these plays, or into any plays except *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*, where he is concerned with making the claim of vows as strong as possible in the consummation of betrothals; but he has in reserve this complication, which extends (almost beyond recognition) something that he finds basic in comedy.

The power of love to transform a person is the basis of an impressive moment in *The Comedy of Errors* when Antipholus of Syracuse met Luciana, and of Kate's whole character change; it is likewise a main force in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. It competes with prior commitments to other characters as a basis for the individual's self-definition. Though the play singles out Proteus' changes as destructive of love and friendship, it invites us to notice and compare the less disruptive instabilities of others. Valentine falls in love after having resisted; so does Julia. And Julia transforms herself again in disguise to follow love and alters yet again in accepting a task in disguise that conflicts with her self-interest as a lover. Our sympathies give the first vows of love precedence, and we support friendship as it agrees with them; and when other attempts at self-definition through love conflict with first commitments, we think of the disruptions as self-will. Yet we cannot be easy with the suggestion that love is an amoral force that almost compels reckless self-definition beyond one's own control; Proteus is not more vulnerable to change than others (until the end of the play); he is just more fully committed before his change. Others find Proteus' instability no more manageable than he does. Julia, like later heroines, can only let Proteus' infatuation with her rival run its course; that is, she lets the worst in him come out and be exorcized by his shame. And Valentine can only test Proteus by offering him what he had thought he wanted. The practical demands of a happy ending require that we and the characters make moral distinctions and enforce them in action; these judgments are not capricious, but they are facile abstractions from a complex reality, and it is mainly through Shakespeare's artful invention of lucky resolutions that they succeed in their object.

The men's vows of study in *Love's Labor's Lost* obviously conflict with their specious attempts at redefinition of themselves through love. The low-comic characters of that play parody them in several ways, with behavior

that is no better, indeed more absurd, and language that is more pretentious and often sillier. The satire of language is apt, for the courtiers spend much of their time searching for verbal forms that will disguise the basic problem, their instability of purpose. In the ending of the play there is a new kind of "reality" unlike the stubborn self-assertions in early plays (Sly, Crab, the two Dromios): the news of death is an objective fact brought literally from outside, and it seems hostile to love because it interrupts the wooing. Yet it actually resolves the lovers' difficulty in making their faith convincing; through the tasks of penance that they undertake, they acquire a means of acting out their love externally which at the same time fulfills, with a more serious intent, their original vows. This new function of external reality is important for later plays, though it never again takes such a simple form. As a test of love too it is like tests in other plays to come: the ladies, and the audience too, must gamble that the lovers will confront a new reality more steadily than they had faced the more limited and manageable realities embodied in the play. We are at the mercy of the wishes and hopes that comedy elicits from us: we want the play's title proved wrong, though we cannot be sure that it will be.

The fairies' intervention in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* produces the same kind of mockery of its mortal objects through unexplained change as chance had done in *The Comedy of Errors*. Again the characters would be wise not to try to guess why things happen as they do or to define themselves through decisions the deepest motivations of which they themselves do not know; but they work even harder at finding such explanations than in the earlier play, and fret themselves and each other a great deal. Like the courtiers in *Love's Labor's Lost*, the men pretentiously try to rationalize and justify their change of feelings (though the kind of change they undergo differs). The very pattern of continual change in the men suggests that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a light parody of serious male faithlessness as it appears in such a play as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: would that we could believe that changes in love were caused by nothing worse than magic and bumbling! Except for one or two moments when the lovers' strife could become spiteful or dangerous, we do not take their disorders seriously: we watch the play from the fairies' vantage point. We detach ourselves from the lovers' confusions of the moment and look for a return to old vows, which gave Demetrius to Helena and Lysander to Hermia. Other absurdities and inversions put us at a distance from

this capricious world: the most ludicrous of the characters, Bottom, is the only one given direct experience of the fairy realm; and the passions that should most claim our engagement, the nominally extreme sufferings of Pyramus and Thisbe, are of course the most laughable of all. The mechanicals' play almost dares us to take art seriously—yet the accomplishment of the fairies' greater art, however little it sometimes claims, does not let itself be overlooked. The theatricalism that dissolves into unreality the fairies' art, and finally the whole play, implies a complementary and genuine reality somewhere else in our experience.

Shylock defines himself in resolute Jewishness (with strong, if discordant, claims to sympathy) and in absolute hatred of Antonio; and there is a stubborn reality about his character for all its extremes. Yet despite the compelling quality of his own viewpoint, he is extrinsic to the concerns of the lovers in *The Merchant of Venice*, a menace whose involvement in their lives was willed not by them and only reluctantly by Antonio. The bond expresses the hatred in his nature, and even after his power over others is broken he is subject to punishment for his inmost intent. In contrast to this is the bond of love that is confirmed when Bassanio chooses the leaden casket; in secret fulfillment of her vows of love, Portia brings skills that can overcome the peril of Shylock. As this play presents matters, love cannot avoid danger; that is the message on the leaden casket, and it is enacted in the conditions that bring Bassanio to Belmont. Yet once that danger is confronted, it cannot be more than held in uneasy control as long as it retains the power of self-definition. The social forces represented in vows and in legal and political authority may, for better or worse, choose to restrict or even threaten obstinate selfhood, and we may not be happy with the choice. Yet in seeking to act out his hatreds, Shylock has indeed abused the fact that he is needed by Venetian society, and he pays for his malice and abuse of power.

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* bears interesting relations to *The Taming of the Shrew* in its use of strongly self-defined characters for parody. Both plays have subplots in which lovers trick parents who want to arrange undesirable marriages, though the runaway lovers of *The Merry Wives* are more direct and ingenuous by far than the schemers in *The Shrew*. The subplots are also very differently related to the main plot in the two plays. Petruchio's doings might seem to parody in their frankness and boldness the intricacies of Lucentio's approach—except that Petruchio gains



a better wife thereby. But Falstaff really is a parody of the idealistic lovers who naively assume that love should prevail over parental approval; his intentions as would-be adulterer should, though they don't, make him circumspect, and the pleasures he looks for in his escapade are no less monetary than amatory. In intellectual status though not in comic interest, the true vows of the lovers rank ahead of Falstaff's thorough self-dedication. True to his function as parody figure, Falstaff is unchanging: unmistakable in whatever guise, and never transformed (save perhaps in momentary humiliation) by love or by pinching.

The villain of *Much Ado about Nothing*, Don John the Bastard, is as intransigent in self-definition as Shylock—"I cannot hide what I am" (I.iii.13)—yet, without being quite trusted, he manages to intrude into others' plans. He is able to present his schemes as unwelcome yet unavoidable fact, fact that is so clear as to overcome the hearers' distrust of its source. He inverts Claudio's sense of reality: Claudio distrusts what he ought to trust and would be happy trusting, Hero's vow to him (and her loyal nature expressed in the vow), and he is taken in by the treacherous appearances arranged by Don John. All this, to Claudio, is in the name of penetrating to the reality beneath appearance. Worse, Claudio dismisses Hero's blush, the true sign of her innocence, as dissembling. Everything that harmonizes with the vow is true and would return the lovers to happiness if Claudio would believe; the threatening yet seductive appearances that Claudio accepts as reality originate in Don John's will to corrupt. The inversion is parodied by another, the overhearing by the stupid Watch of the truth that wiser men had missed; and this inversion in turn is parodied by a further one, the dismissal of Dogberry's attempt to report the truth as nothingness because his pompous language seems to make much ado about nothing. Dogberry is in some ways a benevolent version of Don John, as if Don John's methods were being turned against him: like Don John he is self-willed and generates falsity, but he does it through obtuseness and through stubborn (if unconscious) misuse of language.

The plays from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* through *Much Ado about Nothing* seem the most diverse grouping that could be made among Shakespeare's comedies; yet in their varied ways they mock or correct absurd or otherwise mistaken self-definitions, often by contrast or outright opposition to vows (which should involve concern for other persons). What happens depends first on the location of self-will. Proteus and Claudio are

both erring heroes, but they differ in that Proteus' wrong intents begin in his own willfulness whereas Claudio is misled by Don John. Proteus (like the hard cases in the bed-trick plays, *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure*) is allowed to show the worst he would do but is prevented from doing it, and then is brought to repentance when he sees the strength of Valentine's avowed friendship (shown first in disillusionment) and of Julia's avowed love. Claudio, more simply, can be disabused of error and set a task of penance; he ends by unknowingly confirming an old vow and being rewarded. In more difficult situations than either of these, self-will is found in blocking characters, Shylock and Don John, who intrude from outside the lovers' circle; they must be punished and neutralized—perhaps, in Shylock's case, grudgingly reformed.

Errors of self-definition and justification are less grave in *Love's Labor's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; our impression is more of group chaos and delusion than of individual wrong. The men who have broken vows of study to redefine themselves in vows of love have no way of making the new vows plausible for all their constant effort, and they are mocked again and again; they need outside help to resolve the impasse. No more can the lovers in the woods outside Athens cope with their own or each other's changes, which they cannot understand, and explain wrongly. Events mock them, and they mock each other. They always respond unconsciously to external influence, which finally helps them to an end of their problems.

Some willful characters are parodies, and they too are lightly treated. Falstaff is the chief one, and he is simply mocked out of his foolish attempt. Bottom and Dogberry are just as absurd, but they are finally superior to the wiser men they parody. All the parody figures, by better suggesting the truth of human frailty than the idealized characters do, help to put high comedy, despite its artifices, in touch with reality.

As usual Shakespeare gains the best of both sides in an equivocation. In one way the comedies define "reality" in their own terms, whether through the characters' public commitments to vows or through external forces or events that seem to menace, or through both; and both seem realistic (though in different fashions) by contrast with characters' private wishes. When the reluctance toward vows is overcome, the vows prove a basis for happiness; and when the threatening quality of exterior forces or events is softened, they become no obstacle to desire. Thus reality in this sense can harmonize with a fortunate outcome. But our own sense of

the real world, where happy results are more often wished than provided, creates resistance. The parody characters respond to this second meaning of "reality" by letting us follow out (though in more laughable form) human nature as we suspect it really is. And as characters who are basically parody figures do not endanger the outcome of events in the play, they can usually find a place in the final comic harmony.

The major sources of these plays often emphasize disguise, deceptions, or some other kind of strong contrast between appearance and reality. The *Diana* of Montemayor, chief source for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, has disguise in its story, and the didactic Fourth Book talks about true and false love. The casket tale behind part of *The Merchant of Venice* shows a difference between true and apparent values in the proper choice of casket. Falstaff's mishaps begin as medieval stories of tricks to conceal adulterers (though such tricks might often be approved by their readers and might be successful without mocking the lover), and the runaway lovers in the subplot re-enact the typical dodges of New Comedy. The sources of the Claudio-Hero plot in *Much Ado* of course involve deception. In differing ways these sources may help Shakespeare to develop varying degrees of reality within the terms of individual plays. He might thus achieve a sense of depth which some critics miss in *A Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew* (and for that matter in *The Merry Wives*). In the plays for which we lack major sources, *Love's Labor's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he seems to have deepened the action of repetitive group confusion in *Errors*: in *Love's Labor's Lost* by the contrasting reality at the end, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by a subtle dialectic of art, dream, and magic against reality.

The contrary opinions about Arden in *As You Like It* describe a commonplace irony about the status of ideals: they may exist somehow as guides for rule (and self-rule), yet no actual embodiment of them is itself ideal. The satirizing figures in the play remind us of pragmatic shortcomings—and finally the extremist among them, Jaques, must withdraw from all actual worlds to a hermit's life, where perhaps he will learn idealism for the first time. The ambiguity of Arden is matched by the ambiguity toward love that Rosalind shows in her disguise: what she seeks as Rosalind she mocks as Ganymede. In the pose of Ganymede-playing-Rosalind she unites her mockery with an expression of her love; she tests Orlando and teaches him the self-government which balances contrary attitudes, and when she

thinks him ready she contrives to enact a betrothal. Her indirect self-impersonation in the enactment responds to his wishes in love; but since she performs on her own terms and teaches him her own attitudes toward love, she is able at the same time to act out her own wishes. She resolves the tangle of affections in the play by vows, and before that, all her treatment of Orlando establishes that he has the right attitudes behind those vows. Just as vows express a public commitment in love, so the Duke, it seems, has a public obligation to leave his parasitic (though to him idyllic) existence in Arden and resume his destined career as ruler.

*Twelfth Night* gives examples of a rigorous self-centeredness that tries to impose love against another's wishes: Orsino, Olivia, and in parody Malvolio. Malvolio indeed knows so little of Olivia, the object of his impassioned ambition, that he does not suspect her aversion to yellow and to cross-gartering, both commanded in his garb by the forged letter; and when he comes before her, he fails to observe that his smiling, also on command, ill fits her mood. His lack of perception is aptly mocked by his confinement in a dark room with, as Feste tells him, "clerestories toward the south north . . . as lustrous as ebony" to represent the darkness of his ignorance (IV.ii.36-44). Even more than his mistress and the Duke he encloses himself in false self-definition; yet in another sense he has no selfhood at all, for he abandons his character, including his supposed moral principles, in hope of advancement. In a somewhat less absurd way, Olivia's mourning seclusion yields to infatuation.

In contrast to these self-assertions are Sebastian's openness to Olivia's affections and Viola's readiness to promote the Duke's wishes in her disguise, despite her own hidden and conflicting desires. Without any plan of action but with some telling comments on his self-will, she indulges and dutifully aids his obsession for Olivia. Even when events make him spiteful and she has no sure hope of a good outcome (just a possibility that her brother may be alive), she offers her life to Orsino's caprice. Her subordination to the Duke's wishes, qualified by hints to him of her own desires glimpsed through the disguise, and her willingness to let time work matters out, are a kind of self-government; it is rewarded by her brother's lucky arrival.

We do not always remind ourselves of the artifice in these events and the potential for evil in Orsino that is narrowly averted. Viola governs herself admirably, but she cannot control Orsino, for he gives himself without limit or reason (and so without openness to Viola's suggestions)

to his passion for Olivia. (In contrast, any lapse of government in Orlando could have been controlled by the mere name of Rosalind.) She can do no more than rule herself, observe Orsino and cater to his wishes, and hope that time will awaken his love. Time gives her more occasions to serve Orsino's whims, but no chance to plan her advancement. Malvolio's only-too-calculated sacrifice of character for advancement is a parody by opposites, and Sir Andrew's sacrifice of cash (in the absence of character or wit) is another kind of parody. For quite different reasons the objects of their devotion and Viola's are oblivious to what is offered. So it is extreme good fortune that Viola's indulgence of the Duke's wishes leads to fulfillment of her own. From the luck of this comedy we return toward the real world in Feste's song of knaves and thieves, swaggering and drinking.

The risks are only too evident in *All's Well that Ends Well*. Helena's acceptance of Bertram's stray desires for Diana in order to redirect them to herself is a long gamble; it can work only if she really convinces him, with an edge of cynicism, that his contrary wishes that she had indulged might really settle on her just as well. There is a hazard too in the actual means that she uses to win Bertram; her yearnings seem to run ahead of his wishes, contracted marriage or no. In undertaking to heal the King, she had promised to risk, among other things, the name of "A strumpet's boldness" (II.i.171);<sup>32</sup> she risks the same charge, in our reactions though not in law, in her healing of Bertram. If, as Parolles tells her in a foreshadowing dialogue, "virginity murders itself" (I.i.139), sexual love risks itself; and if we grant the risk we must honor the rewarding of it provided it is truly won.

The play treats Bertram's attitude as an obstinate self-definition (he professes concern for his family name) to be reformed by enforcement of his vows. These vows are both his marital debt to Helena and his unintended promise to accept her if she fulfills what he thinks impossible tasks. Her success requires the self-discipline of risk, and in another sense she governs him by meeting his self-indulgence with a carefully-directed and licensed "self-indulgence" of her own that brings him under control. Later her actions shade into the literally governmental as she gains the King's help and the threat of law to reclaim Bertram. There is a parody of self-definition in Parolles, the self-proclaimed warrior and fomenter of Bertram's defection, who hopes even in disgrace that "Simply the thing I am / Shall make me live" (IV.iii.333-334). Bertram is a little

more nearly parodied by Touchstone, who has desires of the flesh (I.iii.28-30—though they lead to marriage) and later finds his impulses straying from marriage (III.ii.12-16).

In comparison to *Twelfth Night* this play seems like a deliberate testing of a more cynical hypothesis, a reckoning with the "real" world of Feste's song. Just how much *can* one impose love against another's wishes? Bertram's defense of his reluctance as family pride is weak; but as even in a better world Viola cannot reason the Duke out of misplaced desire, in this one the King cannot reason Bertram into proper love for Helena. Ultimately the hope behind Helena's determination is that Bertram cannot tell just where his wishes will lead him. His carelessness about commitments, in his letter to Helena and his bargaining with Diana, does indeed send him where he had not intended; and Helena guides him to her destination with a legal and political power that Viola had lacked. Against the cynical strain in the play Helena also asserts the power of miraculous healing—though as always a miraculous result removes us from the real world and thus in a sense asserts less about reality rather than more.

In *Measure for Measure* the Duke's undertaking is to purge all Vienna of lechery. We may doubt that he can do it, and the project, as carried out by Angelo, meets realistic criticism from professional traders in vice and their friends: "Does your worship mean to geld and splay all the youth of the city?" (II.i.230-231, Pompey to Escalus) and "the vice is of a great kindred; it is well allied; but it is impossible to extirp it quite, friar, till eating and drinking be put down" (III.ii.101-103, Lucio to the disguised Duke). In trying to force reform by mass arrests, Angelo makes his own temperament into law; he corrupts it into self-assertion of an impossible austerity. This is not government; extremes of severity and laxity simply battle. When Angelo himself succumbs to lust, his fall bears out a realistic notion of the futility of all-out struggles and absolute judgments.

The Duke shows more skill. He works case by case, with care for the potential good in each individual (Juliet, Claudio, even in some degree the stolid Barnardine); his guise as friar suggests this inner concern. His government also controls and directs the forces that should be working for good: moral fervor as embodied in Isabella and law as first represented by Angelo. Isabella bungles until the Duke takes her firmly in hand: she inadvertently wakes perverse desire in Angelo through a perhaps equally sick intensity, and in the tactless way she tells Claudio of Angelo's offer

(III.i.48-150), she undoes the Duke's preparation of Claudio for death. With the Duke's guidance she learns the complexity of moral judgments: to achieve good and escape the dilemma of lust or death posed by Angelo, she must involve herself in trickery and exploitation of the latter's sexual desire.

The Duke's treatment of Angelo is like Helena's of Bertram, except that Angelo's hypocrisy in his governing role raises further issues, and Angelo's wickedness exceeds the Duke's suspicion. Like Helena with Bertram, the Duke lets Angelo act out his impulses to their fullest (while preventing the bad results), and then exposes and shames him. The Duke reminds Angelo of the ideals and purposes of government that he has violated by making him investigate part of the case himself. In the Duke's teaching, the rule of law becomes a principle of self-government.

These four plays (*As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*) show disguise or trickery used (whether in testing and awaiting love, or in actively reforming error) as a way of submitting to someone else's self-will in order to retrieve his better potential.<sup>93</sup> Through disguise or a bed-trick one character seems to bend to another's wishes, but with his own purposes in mind he develops, redirects, or censures and reforms what the other person wants. The process (which inverts Petruchio's method but figures directly in the reform of Proteus) requires self-government in the disguiser or controller; he must at least appear to subordinate or defer his own interests, he must keep order in his own conflicting roles and feelings. And he must observe closely anyone he wants to influence and must manipulate events, as well as he can and as occasion offers, to produce the right effect.

As in earlier plays, there is a contrast between the self and its dealings with others. For the disguiser the self consists of his hidden nature and ultimate purposes, and the external element is his role toward other persons while in disguise, his apparent yielding to someone else's wishes; in a sense the outer does not dominate as in the other plays, but acts as means to the disguiser's hidden end. The aim of course is to unite the two, to bring events and other characters around to the disguiser's own purpose so that disguise is no longer needed.<sup>94</sup> To that end he tries to create, or at least prepare for, a double awareness in someone else to match his own: Rosalind teaches Orlando self-mockery like her own, yet allows him his vicarious wooing; Viola hints her loyalty and love so that Orsino will recall them

once he knows she is a woman, while she follows his orders loyally in disguise; Helena arranges Bertram's actions according to her own hopes while letting him think he follows his will; and the Duke, acting through others, imposes his own plans on Angelo's intended acts. In effect, the disguiser creates an unconscious "purpose" or "self" in the other person through trickery in overt actions, so that when the deceit is known this new selfhood will redefine the person in harmony with the disguiser's wishes. Sometimes the overt acts involve vows or other commitments, and these help in the redefinition, as in earlier plays (*The Two Gentlemen*, *Much Ado*). Such commitments are the betrothal of Orlando and Rosalind when Orlando thinks a boy is merely playing Rosalind's part, Bertram's unintended setting of tasks for Helena in his letter, Angelo's old vows to Mariana that are confirmed by his unknowing consummation of their marriage, and perhaps even Orsino's admission of love for Viola-Cesario at the moment he intends mischief against his servant (V.i.130). In all of these there is an unintended implication because of the disguise or trick; it is thus that the character is led into his new selfhood. The play may show a sequence moving from the disguiser's inner intention through his deceptive interactions with another person, which may be formalized in an equivocal vow, to the creation of a new self and revised intentions in the other person.

Obviously the disguiser acts out a role when he plays the part his disguise calls for. Creating, as he does, a sort of play-within-the-play inside this role, he enjoys a situation in which he may act out his wishes; these are known as reality only to him, and are presented as fiction when he acts them; but eventually he will make them public and achieve them in his relations with others. Thus Rosalind plays out her desires, under cover of being a boy impersonating Rosalina, in the betrothal; Viola, who has less freedom and little hope, throws paradoxical hints about herself and her love to Orsino; and Helena and again Mariana (with the Duke's contrivance as chief disguiser) act out their wishes in bed, with the fiction of illicitness. But the disguiser also manages a second kind of enactment if he is dealing with someone who needs reform. This time it is the erring character who is the actor, and his scenario is the wrong he wants to do. But while he acts out his perverse wishes, the fact itself differs: it is controlled by the disguiser and is harmless. When the erring one feels shame and fears punishment for what he had acted out, the disguiser



shows him the gentler truth of what he really did and offers forgiveness. The purpose of this playing is indeed to hold the mirror up to nature, with an obvious moral emphasis that will correct any flaws in nature. But of these alternative deeds—the one intended by the erring character but merely acted out and the unintended one he was tricked into really doing—, which is nature and which art? The enacted version reflects the evil that was “really” intended, but it is not what “really” happened. Finally we may settle on a benevolent interpretation, that the worse intention is somehow unreal even in its author’s mind and he will hereafter follow his better self. But we are aware of artifice, which in its result may be called a miracle but which removes us from the world of natural purposes and consequences. Or in another way the miracle is simply the art of government, which Shakespeare would think the center of the natural world. Whatever art this may be, its methods, even when dubious, yield results that may be founded in nature and certainly trace out our wishes.

In *Pericles* the wandering hero must be on guard against hidden evil (since there may be corners of the world where moral retribution, if it exists, has not yet done its work) and receptive to good. Evil sets alluring traps that only the quick judgment can avoid; virtue presents tests (as Pericles finds in wooing Thaisa) that make its winning not easy. Yet the hard-earned good is quickly lost in bad chance, if that is the cause of Pericles’ separation from his family; it seems a harsh world. Pericles withdraws into himself, but not too far to be reclaimed by Marina. As she proves, appearances may really be better than they seem; she has had the self-government to endure misfortune patiently, and she brings Pericles healing power from an unlikely place. Though he has little self-government left, he recognizes and responds to her virtue and to the music that symbolizes it. As he regains his faculties and is united with his family, he learns about the hidden moral order in life and sees a vision of deity.

In *Cymbeline* there is known evil poisoning the court; personal vices and weaknesses show a failure of self-knowledge and self-government that has chaotic political results. The Queen’s ambition leads Cymbeline to misjudge and banish unfairly, so that false values prevail at court and the good must live elsewhere. Cloten, lacking in perception and judgment of good, cannot see why he is unfit to be heir to the throne or mate to Imogen, and he seeks revenge on her and Posthumus. And those who leave court meet other evils and dangers: the hidden wiles of Italy are too much for

Posthumus to deal with, and his failing almost overcomes Imogen too. Government must be restored in both the person and the nation.

In coping with their personal griefs, Posthumus and Imogen help to set right the ills of the state and to unite Cymbeline's family—just as the personal dissatisfaction of the two princes themselves drives them to achieve military glory and a return to court. The way to a resolution is not clear to the spouses, each of whom thinks the other dead. Indeed they do not hope for happiness: each one, disguised, is in effect alienated from his recent loyalties (Imogen as, almost accidentally, page to the Roman general; Posthumus as a British peasant after having landed with the Romans, and later as a Roman soldier). But Posthumus' disillusioned search for death in battle helps instead toward British victory. Imogen stays closer to personal concerns, but her questioning of Iachimo brings about Posthumus' self-disclosure and gives reason for hers; thus is the royal family augmented again while a marriage is restored. Without much notion of what they were doing, they have acquiesced in events and served well, and events have brought them together to do good to themselves and others. Their involvement in battle and return to court help piece together their lives and restore political order, with divine and imperial sanction. Their self-government has spread much further than they could expect in a chaotic and corrupt land.

These two plays try out a harder assumption, as far as the good characters themselves know, than earlier comedies: not only is the moral order so far deteriorated that public means of reform (invocation of vows and laws, arousal of shame for wrong acts, and appeals to rulers for justice) are futile, but events themselves, through mistaken reports of death and separations that seem to be death, have apparently put happiness out of reach. Though Pericles breaks under the strain, Marina, Posthumus, and Imogen continue to order their own lives and to bear up even if they have no hope of anything meaningful in their lives. They persist in self-government even in what seems a moral void around them. But through them and around them moral control asserts itself: all losses are restored and divinities come down in visions.

In the remaining two plays, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, a moral pattern is clearer to at least some characters much earlier, even if Hermione's survival is kept from us and Mamillius is not restored, and even if Prospero's rule has limits. This ordering, and the supernatural claims that

might be made for it, are well known; it seems useful as well to consider the natural basis for the stable pattern.

In *The Winter's Tale* there are parallel orderings of the seasons (the natural substratum for myths of Apollo and Proserpina) and the generations.<sup>95</sup> Winter belongs with old age, and the dominant idea of old age is repentance. Leontes is of this generation, and once he repents (and continues to do penance) he must await renewal from outside by other agents. Polixenes, in opposing his son's marriage, joins Leontes in that he needs to learn better judgment; the marriage itself will bring renewal. Other aged, wintry characters—Camillo, Antigonus, the Shepherd, Paulina—help in varying ways with the repentance or with the continuity from the old generation to the new. Renewal comes with springtime, and the springtime generation is young. This season is announced by Autolycus, embodied in Florizel and Perdita, and given freshness and life in the great pastoral feast. Yet the finest restoration after all else is the return of Hermione—and whether this be miracle or not, she bears on her face the tokens of realism, the wrinkles of sixteen wintry years.

Prospero's art of governing magic gives order in *The Tempest*; but as Apollo's order in *The Winter's Tale* has a natural basis in the seasons and their human agents, the results that Prospero can achieve also have a natural quality in that they help characters to find themselves and to place (that is, govern) themselves in the world. Ferdinand and Miranda find themselves in their commitment to love (while individually Miranda is beginning to learn about human nature and Ferdinand about the duties of rulers). Alonso finds his proper role in repentance and learns that marriage is a better way than political intervention to make connections with other states. Gonzalo perhaps finds nothing new, but his sententious heart is gladdened when Prospero's rule works to confirm his optimism. Caliban is reminded of the moral authority above him and sees the foolishness of his fellow rebels; with better judgment he may begin to improve himself. Antonio and Sebastian recognize a moral power (in Prospero) stronger than they had expected, though they consider it only as a threat from which they must hide; they are forced to accept their subordinate position, to be ruled when they will not reform and rule themselves. Like the Duke of Vienna Prospero teaches self-government and largely succeeds. Finally, Prospero governs himself too and finds himself: he knows mortal limitations in his art, his dukedom, and himself.

Some of the means of control and reform in these last two plays are repeated from earlier comedies: vows and other loyalties are invoked, and controlling characters must both discipline themselves and teach others the same self-limitation. Another method, the trick of making misdeeds and their consequences appear worse than they really are, continues too; its most striking uses are perhaps in the bed-trick plays, but the closest parallel with these last two plays is the feigned death of Hero in *Much Ado*. Ironically the deceit had not worked by itself in that play, since Claudio did not repent until he also heard of Hero's innocence. In these final plays it does work, and there is another new element: the cooperation of supernatural powers in playing the trick. Leontes repents when he learns of the death of Mamillius, which is actual and will not be remitted; it seems to be a punishment from Apollo. Apollo too must be in charge of the apparent loss of Perdita and of her recovery years later. The one purely human contrivance of appearances for the sake of punishment and reward is Paulina's hiding and restoration of Hermione; but its merely natural character is heightened by the surprise to us and by the magical aura that Paulina evokes. In *The Tempest* also the trick of apparent death succeeds: Alonso repents when told that the fates have caused Ferdinand's death. The cooperation of natural and supernatural exists in Prospero, who has a human future and shows human concerns for Milan and his daughter as he arranges a repentance and a marriage, but who also has supernatural powers that he wields through Ariel to keep Ferdinand separate and to announce the apparent doom of the fates. So the changes wrought in mistaken characters in these two plays by reports of death surpass the results in earlier plays and suggest higher powers at work—unless we follow equivocal hints in the plays, and refer the arts they portray back to nature, and Shakespeare's own art back to dreams or old tales.

In a rough way the whole sequence of Shakespeare's comedies follows the course of the previous chapters from the individual and his immediate circumstances outward. If the standard chronology is right, it appears that he really did start by filling out comic situations where characters are treated differently from the way which they expect and think proper for themselves. Then after some studied concern with characters' conscious self-definition, he seems to have moved out toward ever more powerful and more complex ways of changing characters through mockery, vows, disguises (including bed-tricks), and staging of events so that they are other

than they seem. There is a complementary movement inward (since management of these changes requires self-control in the character who directs them). As the controller becomes subtler in his self-knowledge, the effects he tries to produce in others take on finer shadings. Control of others also involves legal and governmental power, so here is another developing concern (though present early too) in the outward progression. Events beyond human control, perhaps described through concepts of chance or fortune, may either threaten or cooperate with any means of control; they enter variously in many plays and are especially vivid when symbolized by places of exile, but they become full adversaries to human purpose in the first two romances. And finally, even events that mortals cannot control may yield to a pattern imposed by a supernatural power; and with this possibility, tempered by the playwright's humility, we reach the outer limit. Of course the scheme as stated here is much too regular to fit all the concrete facts or to be fully demonstrable, however plausible, in Shakespeare's development; any brief summary would be. But it displays Shakespeare's habit of varying and complicating as he reworks elements from comedy to comedy, and it can connect the development of elaborate plans by characters for the control of others with an increasing concern for law and government and for powers beyond human government.

Finally, all of Shakespeare's comedies, and our attempts to respond to them and theorize about them, should be taken with the saving ambiguity that pervades *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*: comedy can be both a vision of how life might or should be and an absurdity. Absurd or no, the comic vision may be a guide in life, which has its absurdities and may seem as brief and insubstantial as a play. It cannot be substituted for life.

## NOTES

### Introduction

1. Ralph Berry, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Princeton, 1972); Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (London, 1974). In *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (Cambridge, 1974), Leo Salingar attributes Shakespeare's variety to the joining in his work of different comic traditions (p. 19).

2. A. D. Nuttall, in *Shakespearean Comedy* (Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 14: London, 1972), 238.

3. There would seem to be interesting questions here about the nature of literary form, though I do not attempt a full discussion of the subject or a review of recent theories. Shakespeare himself seems to have been making deliberate experiments in comic form, starting from fairly strict and mechanical notions: *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew* complicate and add to source plays that themselves have rather involved and mechanical plots; *Love's Labor's Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are equally schematic (though we have not found major sources for them) in their movement of groups of characters according to symmetrical plans; and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* uses a schematic contrast between the characters of Valentine and Proteus. Shakespeare relaxed his ideas about comic plots, so that anything that is systematic in his mature comedies is also fluid and complex; but many basic comic elements in these mature plays develop from the early schematic plays.

4. The god of arts is Mercury, who is known also for lying. His deity is invoked, along with Apollo's, in *The Winter's Tale*; its use there may typify Shakespeare's double-edged attitude in other plays.

5. As another help toward continuity I have often carried over discussion of a play from one chapter to the next, from a related yet distinct viewpoint. Some other matters of general plan should be explained: I have excluded *Troilus and Cressida*, which does not seem like a comedy in form despite its ironic dialogue and its use of ironic commentators; and I discuss Falstaff in the history plays briefly for comparison with Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and with other comic characters.

6. Salingar contrasts Shakespeare's realistic characters with his artificial plots, and finds a meaning in the discrepancy: "a subjection to something which is outside [the characters'] separate and conscious wills, . . . the experience of losing in order to find, of relinquishing something of their previous or habitual selves before achieving a social or a psychological recovery" (p. 25). Thus too Leggatt: "At crucial moments—such as birth, marriage and death—we surrender our individuality and become part of a pattern, and one of the functions of conventionalized stories is to remind us of that" (p. 166). In discussing Benedick's challenge to Claudio in *Much Ado*, he refers to "that crucial factor in Shakespearean comedy—the larger world of experience outside the private world of love" and compares the lovers' risks in the external world at the end of *Love's Labor's Lost* (p. 179); and on the next page he suggests that the artifice that Claudio meant to control gets out of hand: though they had brought Benedick and Beatrice to admit love "by a comic trick," unplanned events and the characters' improvised decisions give this love unexpected consequences. All these are good reasons for inquiring what may be in various senses external to the individual characters' wills.

### Chapter 1. Proteus

7. Quotations are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, textual editor G. Blakemore Evans (Boston, 1974). My comments on the two quoted passages owe much to R. A. Foakes, editor of the New Arden edition of *The Comedy of Errors* (London, 1962), in his notes on the passages and in his general remarks (p. xliii).

8. This is argued by John Vyvyan, *Shakespeare and the Rose of Love* (London, 1960), 105-107, and John Arthos, *Shakespeare: The Early Writings* (London, 1972), 135-141.

9. Salingar finds this transforming power of love, with its implication of an inner life in the characters that can be changed by events, to be basic in Shakespeare's comedies (pp. 221-222).

10. William O. Scott, "Proteus in Spenser and Shakespeare: the Lover's Identity," *Shakespeare Studies* I (1965), 283-285. In *The Landscape of the Mind* (Oxford, 1969), Richard Cody mentions other interpretations of the myth, including a "virtue of mutability and self-transcendence" (pp. 91-93); we may hope that by the end of the play, or after, Proteus achieves such transcendence.

11. Julia calls herself a shadow too (IV.ii.127), in another sense to be considered in the next chapter.

12. Leggatt rightly emphasizes the importance of her physical presence, even before she faints (pp. 37-38); in staging the scene a director would likely focus our attention on her.

13. The prominence that Leggatt gives to Julia seems itself a partial answer to his complaint that in the play "the experience of love is distanced and exposed" and that no other values fill the void (p. 40). The play engages our hopes that Julia's love will be returned, even if we have some doubts that it actually will be; in other words, we commit ourselves to love as a value though with an ironic awareness of its precariousness.

14. Valentine's offer, if interpreted as a gift, would be modelled on Elyot's story of Titus and Gisippus. See Ralph M. Sargent, "Sir Thomas Elyot and the Integrity of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*," *PMLA*, LXV (December 1950), 1166-1180. An example of generous refusal of an opportunity generously offered—the kind of refusal that Valentine expects of Proteus in the interpretation I'm suggesting—is found in Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, at least on the surface of its action. Otherwise the narratives are unlike.

15. I believe her faint is genuine. In the staging I suggest, she need not see Silvia's expression; the fact that Proteus needs to call attention to her fall implies that some of the principals might have their backs to her (as they might, to the servant that she appears to be). Her importance and her hold on our sympathy (as if we might watch events through her eyes) could place her downstage.

16. In different ways this point is made by John Russell Brown in *Shakespeare and his Comedies* (2nd ed., London, 1962), 97-98; by Cecil C. Seronsy in "'Supposes' as the Unifying Theme in *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XIV (Winter 1963), 15-30; and by Margaret Loftus Ranald in "The Manning of the Haggard; or *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Essays in Literature*, I (Fall 1974), 149-163.

17. This is not quite true: he is only too eager to marry her off. But he cares little to whom, and he is ready to overlook any signs of her unwillingness, especially when Petruchio gives him an excuse.

18. Seronsy, 23-24; E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Early Comedies* (London, 1965), 82-83. Berry entitles his chapter on the play "The Rules of the Game."

## Chapter 2. A Disguise of Love

19. Scott, "Proteus in Spenser and Shakespeare"; John Vyvyan, *Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty* (London, 1961), 72 (though, as mentioned before, I have reservations about the allegory he finds).

20. Northrop Frye relates a lady's supposed death to the Proserpine myth in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957), 138, 183. In Frye's *A Natural Perspective* (New York and London, 1965) the myth seems related structurally to the "phase of temporarily lost identity" and later recovery that he describes on the mimetic level (pp. 76, 90, 116, 137).

21. I agree with Leggatt (p. 155n.) that Claudio's attachment to Hero is mainly romantic and that his inquiry about her inheritance (I.i.294) is a "tactful way of introducing the subject of love"; I would add that it seems a bashful way.

22. T. W. Craik, "Much Ado about Nothing," *Scrutiny*, XIX (October 1953), 315; Paul A. Jorgensen, *Redeeming Shakespeare's Words* (Berkeley, 1962), 22-42; A. P. Rossiter, *Angel with Horns*, ed. Graham Storey (London, 1961), 65-81.

23. These are described by Davis P. Harding, "Elizabethan Betrothals and *Measure for Measure*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XLIX (1950), 139-158.

24. Is Bertram's desertion of Helena a "change" in him like those of Proteus and Claudio? Yes, in a sense, even though he had never really committed himself to Helena: he had made a vow of marriage, though unwillingly, and afterward he decides not to carry through the implications of that vow. Of this, more in the next chapter.

25. Margaret Loftus Ranald, "The Betrothals of *All's Well That Ends Well*," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, XXVI (February 1963), 190.

26. Trans. Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1958), II, 119, 131. The resemblance is noted by Ernest Schanzer in the New Penguin edition of *The Winter's Tale* (1969), 12-13.

### Chapter 3. Paying the Debt

27. Frye, *Anatomy*, 163; Salingar, 105, 124-126.
28. The confusions and trickery possible in these vows, and the casualness with which they might be made, are described by Harding, 145-148.
29. Ranald, 191-192.
30. In *Measure for Measure*, the Duke justifies himself to Mariana (as quoted above) and to Isabella (III.i.251-258); in *All's Well*, Helena reassures the Widow of the propriety of her scheme (III.vii.30-47).
31. *The New Testament* (Rheims, 1582)—STC 2884. This doctrine, despite the resistance that is discussed next, has had a vigorous life. Chaucer's Wife of Bath, as might be expected, defends it stoutly in her Prologue (lines 158-168); and in Ibsen's *Ghosts* Pastor Manders invokes it to send Mrs. Alving back to her husband.
32. Coverdale: Southwark, James Nicolson, 1538 (STC 2816). Great Bible: London, Edward Whitchurch, 1549 (STC 2079). Bishops' Bible: London, R. Jugge, 1568 (STC 2099). Geneva Bible: Geneva, R. Hall, 1560 (STC 2093). Geneva-Tomson Bible: London, Christopher Barker, 1583 (STC 2138). The quotations of verse 3 and its note are from Geneva-Tomson; Geneva is verbally identical, and Great and Bishops' differ verbally only in lacking the note and the word "and" before "likewise." In choosing Bibles I have been guided by Richmond Noble, *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge* (London, 1935).
33. *The Christian state of Matrimony*, trans. Miles Coverdale (London, 1575), fol. 26<sup>v</sup>-27. In a work dedicated to Edward VI, Peter Martyr said that the obligation is from divine law, as implied by the statement that two shall be as one flesh—*In . . . Priorem . . . ad Corinthios Epistolam . . . Commentarii* (2nd ed., Zürich, 1572), fol. 80<sup>v</sup>. John Fisher considered "Debitum benevolentiam" to be metonymy for "debitum conjugale"—*Analysis Logica Epistolarum Pauli* (London, 1591), p. 195.
34. *The Commendation of Matrimony*, trans. David Clapham (London, 1545), B5<sup>r-v</sup>.
35. J. R. Brown, in *Shakespeare and his Comedies* (London, 1962), 67, comments on this quality in the passage.
36. Brown, ch. III, esp. pp. 67-70. It is worth greater emphasis, though, that Portia's own value actually appreciates through her helping others. Brown's discussion of "use" in these pages and in the New Arden edition (pp. liv-lv) should be supplemented by the sexual meanings of the word (OED, substantive 3b, verb 10b)—as suggested by Leslie Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York, 1972), 89. Shakespeare's general associations of bawdry with usury are discussed by E. Pearlman, "Shakespeare, Freud, and the Two Usuries, or, Money's a Meddler," *English Literary Renaissance*, II (Spring 1972), 217-236.
37. The meaning is open in *Timon* I.i.132-134: "She is young and apt. / Our own precedent passions do instruct us / What levity's in youth." In *Shrew* II.i.165 Bianca, ambiguously, is "apt to learn, and thankful for good turns."

### Chapter 4. Things that Befall Preposterously

38. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Early Comedies* (London, 1965), 99; Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (New York, 1972), 220-221.
39. J. R. Brown, in his note on the lines in the New Arden edition (1959), calls attention to this difference, and its importance to usurers.
40. Leggatt discusses the bond as an expression of hatred (p. 123). And there is at least moral cannibalism in Shylock's insistence that if Antonio's flesh "will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge" (III.i.53-54) and his purpose to "feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him" (I.iii.47). There is another view of these matters in Fiedler, 110-111.
41. Tillyard, *Essays Literary and Educational* (London, 1962), 34-37. On love's dependency, see Leggatt, 131-132, 136.
42. See the critics mentioned in chapter 2, note 22.
43. The hostile appearance of events is summarized as imagery of tempests by G. Wilson Knight in *The Shakespearean Tempest* (Oxford, 1932); in the last plays he finds that tempest imagery has taken over the plot (p. 218). The topic is studied anew by Douglas L. Peterson in *Time, Tide, and Tempest* (San Marino, 1973).



Chapter 5. *The Uses of Adversity*

44. These originate of course with Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 182-183.

45. Claus Uhlig, "The Sobbing Deer: *As You Like It*, II.i.21-66 and the Historical Context," *Renaissance Drama*, New Series III (1970), 89-105.

46. *Décades de la description . . . des animaux* (Lyon, 1549), C5: "C'est double mort quand l'aimé, l'Amy tue." The idea sharpens the edge of Hamlet's song "Why, let the strooken deer go weep" (III.ii.271f.); the stricken Claudius had professed great friendship for Hamlet.

47. G. Wilson Knight, *The Crown of Life* (London, 1947), 39. I do not hope to settle the question of *Pericles'* authorship; but in some ways the play as a whole fits in with Shakespeare's undoubted work, and I shall make comparisons without scruple.

48. The corruption of this court, with its squabbling over rank (which is an accident of "occasion"), is described by Rosalie L. Colie in *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton, 1974), 292-293.

49. Robert G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness* (New York, 1965), 150, 152.

50. Fiedler suggests (p. 244) that this incident travesties situations of supposed death between runaway lovers as in the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe (which has connections, of course, with the Romeo-and-Juliet story). Without sharing Fiedler's other conclusions, I agree that this situation, used for straight parody in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, now becomes ironic parody through its grotesque distortions.

Chapter 6. *Self-rule, Sovereign Rule, Misrule*

51. That is, she makes a vow of marriage now, not merely a promise to marry in the indefinite future. The distinction between *de praesenti* and *de futuro* contracts, and their relation to church marriage rites, is explained clearly by Harding (chapter 2 above, note 23).

52. E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London, 1959), 287-289; John Dover Wilson, *The Fortunes of Falstaff* (Cambridge, 1961), 37. A different view of time in Arden, as freeing the characters from urgent concerns, is offered by Jay L. Halio in "No Clock in the Forest: Time in *As You Like It*," *Studies in English Literature*, II (Spring 1962), 197-207. This freedom is real and important—as a chance for the characters to get control of themselves.

53. John Dover Wilson, New Cambridge edition of *As You Like It* (1926), 126.

54. It is applied to Prince Hal by Jorgensen, 54-69; Peterson gives varied examples, 36-40.

55. Or if "And" in line 64 is emended to "Not" (an easier reading for these purposes, but not necessary), the idea would be that one uses discretion.

56. Paul A. Olson, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Meaning of Court Marriage," *ELH*, XXIV (June 1957), 101-102. Yet ironically Theseus himself has a history of inconstancy and romantic scrapes, alluded to in II.i.74-80, not much different from the young lovers' behavior—Peter G. Phialas, *Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies* (Chapel Hill, 1966), 108; D'Orsay W. Pearson, "'Vnkinde' Theseus: A Study in Renaissance Mythography," *English Literary Renaissance*, IV (Spring 1974), 276-280. And in general the claims of rationality in the play are moderated by R. W. Dent, "Imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XV (Spring 1964), 115-129.

57. Elizabeth Marie Pope, "The Renaissance Background of *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare Survey* 2 (1949), 70-72.

58. This may be a personal fear quite apart from principle; though her abstract tolerance when Claudio's predicament is mentioned ("O, let him marry her") is naturally cooler than her reaction when she learns that he expects her to give her chastity to save him, her denunciation of her brother is almost frenzied.

59. Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare* (London, 1963), 89.

60. Well-known theological interpretations are given by G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (New York, 1966), 73-96, and Roy Battenhouse, "Measure for Measure and Christian Doctrine of the Atonement," *PMLA*, LXI (December 1946), 1029-1059. But such a "God" as the Duke seems to be the invention of Graham Greene.

61. David Lloyd Stevenson, *The Achievement of Shakespeare's Measure for Measure* (Ithaca, 1966), 25-29.

62. In another way this is implied by Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 127-128.

63. The magician's use of will power as a governing force is mentioned by Kermode (following Morton Luce) in his note to I.ii.244 in the New Arden edition (1962).

64. Peterson, pp. 220-221.
65. Stage directions and Through-Line Numbers are cited from the Norton Facsimile, prepared by Charlton Hinman (New York, 1968).
66. F. D. Hoeniger, "Prospero's Storm and Miracle," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, VII (Winter 1956), 35; E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (London, 1951), 53-54.
67. The paradoxical stasis-in-motion of Prospero's character is well described by Norman Rabkin in *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* (New York, 1967), 224. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* too, magical influence (Oberon's on Titania) is relaxed by "pity" once its aim is achieved (IV.i.47). Advance planning was needed, since an antidote must be applied to dispel the first magic. The antidote is also required to correct Puck's mistaken use of the charmed juice on Lysander (as described in III.ii.366-369).
68. Bullough, II, 407 (in Cinthio's dramatic version of *Epitia*, a confirmed criminal is executed without further ado; in Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra*, the head is removed from a man already handily dead, with no need before that to plan an execution).
69. See note 52 of this chapter.
70. Dover Wilson, New Cambridge edition (1946), p. 180. There is more about Falstaff's thievery in Robert Hapgood, "Falstaff's Vocation," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XVI (Winter 1965), 91-98.
71. In contrast, the subplot shows Fenton deflected from Anne's purse to her person, so that love wins out over fortune-hunting (Salinger, p. 234).
72. John M. Steadman, "Falstaff as Actaeon: A Dramatic Emblem," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XIV (Summer 1963), 234-237; he finds less definite precedents (pp. 237-243) for the basket and the female disguise as emblems of lust. Madeleine Doran compares Falstaff to the "amorous old man of Plautine and Italian comedy"—*Endeavors of Art* (Madison, 1963), p. 159. How far from "They hate us youth"!
73. In a somewhat different way Willard Farnham relates Falstaff's qualities as animal and as natural man to some low-comic characters—*The Shakespearean Grotesque* (Oxford, 1971), 69-80.

## Chapter 7. Miracles and Fading Visions

74. Jorgensen, *Redeeming Shakespeare's Words*, 52-69.
75. Important and well-known discussions are by Wilson Knight in *The Crown of Life* and by E. M. W. Tillyard in *Shakespeare's Last Plays*; there is a major critique of the search for supernatural pattern by Philip Edwards, "Shakespeare's Romances: 1900-1957," in *Shakespeare Survey* 11 (1958), 1-18, and further criticism by Hallett Smith in *Shakespeare's Romances* (San Marino, 1972), 197-209.
76. G. K. Hunter, Arden edition of *All's Well* (1959), xxxii, xxxvi, xxxviii, lv-lvi. The general question is studied by R. A. Foakes in *Shakespeare: The Dark Comedies to the Last Plays* (London, 1971).
77. Except, of course, that he withholds the crucial fact that Hermione lives.
78. F. David Hoeniger, "The Meaning of *The Winter's Tale*," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XX (October 1950), 19-22; William O. Scott, "Seasons and Flowers in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XIV (Autumn 1963), 411-417.
79. The myth of Proserpina is discussed by Hoeniger and by Frye (*Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 138; *A Natural Perspective*, p. 121); sun imagery, by Hoeniger. The outcome of the myth is that Proserpina's division of seasons between the upper and lower worlds shows that "the Divine Providence . . . disposeth better of things for vs, then we our selues can wish" (quoted from Leonard Digges, 1617, on Claudianus' *Rape of Proserpine* in my article, preceding footnote, p. 415).
80. Norman O. Brown, *Hermes the Thief* (Madison, 1947), esp. pp. 83-101.
81. "Art, the antidote against fortune," in *Emblemes and Epigrammes* (1600), ed. F. J. Furnivall (Early English Text Society, original series 64), p. 8; Alciati, *Emblemata*, with comm. Claudius Minoes (Lyons, 1591), pp. 357-359 (XCVIII, "Ars naturam adiuuans"). The ultimate source is in Galen—*Ad Bonas Artes Exhortatio*, trans. Erasmus (Paris, 1541), pp. 5-6. There are other treatments of Mercury and Fortune in Thomas Salter, *The Mirrhor of Modestie* (London, 1579), D7-8, and Giulio Cesare Capaccio, *Delle Imprese* (Naples, 1592), fol. 58<sup>v</sup>.
82. Servius on *Aeneid* XI.543. Shakespeare's probable direct source for the name, with several other names in the play, is Plutarch—J. H. P. Pafford, New Arden edition (1963), pp. 163-164.

83. Capnio, in Robert Greene's *Pandosto*—Pafford, xxviii-xxx.
84. Edward William Tayler, *Nature and Art in Renaissance Literature* (New York, 1964), 121-141; Anne Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (Baltimore, 1967), 177-180.
85. Tayler, 139-140; Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton, 1972), 240-245; Colie, 280-283. In discussing this transformation (pp. 219-220) Rabkin finds that the parallel miracles in nature and art involve "the deepest elements in the soul's life: emotional purgation, the accepting awareness of one's history, trusting faith, a love in which the ego surrenders its claims." The turning outward that these words imply is perhaps a trusting acceptance of ambiguity: the external power that arranges events may be at once theatrical artifice and a divinity.
86. Pafford, introduction to New Arden edition, p. liii.
87. The general topic of such limitations is discussed well by Philip Edwards in *Shakespeare and the Confines of Art* (London, 1968)—though in his treatment of this play (pp. 143-150) I think he gives less than is due to nature. Rabkin's comments are a good supplement.
88. This idea is glanced at, in part, by Fiedler, 227.
89. Righter, 180-182; Stanley Wells, "Shakespeare and Romance," in *Later Shakespeare* (Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 8: London, 1966), 77; more generally, David P. Young, *The Heart's Forest* (New Haven, 1972), 156-159, 165-167, and Marjorie B. Garber, *Dream in Shakespeare* (New Haven, 1974), 148, 210-214.
90. This and other paradoxes are discussed by David P. Young, *Something of Great Constancy* (New Haven, 1966), 111-166, and (with comparisons to *The Taming of the Shrew*) by Garber, 59-87.

## Chapter 8. Development and Integrity in Shakespeare's Comedies

91. Salinger emphasizes the likeness of these sources and finds the methods of plot development in *Supposes* to be basic not only to *Errors* but to much else in Shakespeare's comedies (pp. 189-190, 225). In *The Evolution of Shakespeare's Comedy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970) Larry S. Champion argues that Shakespeare began with plot in his earliest comedies and moved toward progressively deeper characterization (p. 9). But there may be more continuity than he describes: the earliest plays are concerned in part with self-definition (as discussed above in chapters 1 and 2), and the action in later plays often presents increasingly forceful challenges to self-definition.
92. This detail was added to the source by Shakespeare.
93. This is too harsh a statement to apply to Orlando, but in a milder degree it fits.
94. Of course Viola, for one, does not have this much control.
95. On the generations, see my article mentioned in chapter 7, note 78.

# Index

Names of Shakespeare's characters (except Falstaff, a special case) are omitted. References to concepts (and to Mercury and Proteus, mythological figures related to concepts), and to a few theatrical devices, are in boldface. Principal among these are: art; betrothal; chance; complexity and development; death, supposed; debt, marital; disguise; exile; externality; government; heroine, active; illusion; infidelity; irony and paradox; Mercury; misrule; parody; Proteus; repentance; rings; rulers; self-definition; self-government; supernatural; vows; will.

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