

# SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

AN ANNUAL SURVEY OF  
SHAKESPEARIAN STUDY AND PRODUCTION

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32

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[Photo: Joe Cocks]

# SHAKESPEARE'S MIDDLE COMEDIES: A GENERATION OF CRITICISM

M. M. MAHOOD

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## I

On one point, and one alone, critics of the past twenty-five years can be said to have reached agreement about *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*: they belong to a group of plays which are Shakespeare's finest achievement in comedy. A generation ago such an assertion would have been open to challenge by those who had rediscovered the forgotten strengths of the last plays, but in 1961 Frank Kermode, contributing to *Early Shakespeare* (edited by J. R. Brown and B. Harris), dared to let it be known that he thought 'The Mature Comedies' better plays than the Romances, and his judgment has persisted and prevailed.

Mature is not the most fortunate name. Is the chestnut spire less mature than the fruit? 'Middle', though a drab term, has the advantage of neutrality over epithets such as happy, gay, golden, festive, joyous, all of which have proved counter-productive: A. P. Rossiter (*Angel with Horns*, 1961) reminds us of the 'Decameron-like hardness' of *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Ralph Berry detects much aggression in the abrasive encounters of *As You Like It*, while unnumbered critics stress the underlying sadness of *Twelfth Night*. Perhaps we have become wary of adjectives suggestive of jollity and contentment because they came rather easily to all those eminent figures invited, around the quatercentennial year, to say a few words in appreciation of Shakespeare. J. Dover Wilson's *Shakespeare's*

*Happy Comedies* (1962) is, however, far from such bumbling. Based on ideas shaped in the nineteen-twenties when the author was helping Arthur Quiller-Couch to edit the Comedies, it pays no heed to post-war critical discussion. Yet it would be an impertinence in both the Elizabethan and the modern sense to complain that the book is old-fashioned in its attribution of an independent life to dramatic characters. Over the course of half a century, the plays had indeed become 'another Nature' to Wilson, so that for him Olivia was 'real' enough to plight her troth to Sebastian 'in the very chantry that she had erected to her brother's memory'. And in such responses Wilson is always rubbing shoulders with an Elizabethan audience that he knew as well as it can be known.

'Q's rather skimpy presentation of the Comedies was virtually the only annotated edition available to English readers in the nineteen-fifties. Although the New Arden was then under way, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* did not appear until 1975 and as yet there is no *Much Ado About Nothing*. The needs of students in the greatly expanded universities of the nineteen-sixties were served at first by the Signet paperbacks and later, from 1967 and 1968, by Penguin editions of all three comedies. The want of a fully scholarly apparatus was more apparent than real, since these plays require less editorial intervention and explanation than most. Their dates, give or take a year, are agreed upon, and their texts present no massive problems. The major sources of each play, in a new translation when necessary,

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have been available since 1958 in the second volume of Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (1957-75). This enables us to read, say, an important article such as Robert C. Melzi's 'From Lelia to Viola' (*Renaissance Drama*, 9, 1966) with some relevant texts at our elbow; moreover, both Bullough and Kenneth Muir (*Shakespeare's Sources*, 1957) provide lucid critical discussions of their own. Probably the chief usefulness of annotated editions in the period under review has lain in their introductions, and here one would wish to pick out Agnes Latham's sensible and crisply-worded introduction to the New Arden *As You Like It*.

The guidance traditionally afforded by editors has been supplemented in this period from new sources. There are for example the students' guidebooks aimed largely at readers outside the U.K. and the U.S. I shall be returning to G. K. Hunter's workmanlike *Writers and their Work* booklet (*Shakespeare: the Late Comedies*, 1962; revised 1969). Gareth Lloyd Evans, in *Shakespeare III* (1971), chances his arm more freely, as when he finds all the heroines a little sad – not all readers will share his conviction that Beatrice, after telling us she was born under a dancing star, leaves the stage in tears. The general introduction I would most readily direct the student towards is not an undergraduate guidebook but the essay 'Shakespeare's Comedies' in F. P. Wilson's posthumous *Shakespearean and Other Studies* (1969) edited by Helen Gardner. Intended for the Elizabethan Drama volume of the *Oxford History of English Literature*, it is a model of what such history should be. Wilson writes in the security of a marvellously full knowledge which enables him to present the plays with a Johnson-like independence, common sense, and gusto.

The needs of the new student public have also been met by those slim monographs which would once have been dubbed Bazaar Notes but which nowadays, in the hands of critics

such as Barbara Hardy (*Twelfth Night*, 1962), J. R. Mulryne (*Much Ado About Nothing*, 1965) and Michael Jamieson (*As You Like It*, 1965) can often breathe new vigour into elderly academic reading. Another 'aid to study' is the collection of essays; it has its dangers because it may leave the reader confident he has all the evidence in the case, and at the same time reluctant to trust his own experience of the play; but it has the compensating merit that it can bring back into circulation essays from little-known or defunct periodicals. This is especially the virtue of L. D. Lerner's *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Harmondsworth, 1967). The really enterprising undergraduate now has his own bibliographical guide in Gāmini Salgādo's chapter on these plays in *Shakespeare: Select Bibliographical Guides* (edited by Stanley Wells, Oxford, 1973).

The existence of other bibliographical guides, notably the annual bibliography in *Shakespeare Quarterly* and the annual review of criticism in *Shakespeare Survey*, makes my task rather different from that undertaken in the articles which introduced earlier volumes of the *Survey*. In the safe knowledge that all the books and articles on the middle comedies subsequent to John Russell Brown's review in *Shakespeare Survey 8* can be located through these and other reference works, I have taken the risk of being idiosyncratically selective. My plan is, first, to try to define the direction of critical principle and practice in books on Shakespearean comedy, which these plays represent at its best; then to review studies of certain features common to these three plays; and finally to review interpretations of them one by one. I am only too aware that some real gold must have slipped through my sieve, but in honesty I have to add that some of the three score and upward of articles devoted to each of these plays in the last twenty-five years are not named here because my reaction to them was: 'O what men dare do! What men may do!'

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### II

Re-reading the books and articles on Shakespeare's comedies which have been published in the last twenty-five years is like turning the leaves of the family photograph album: did we really all look like that, not so very long ago? The fashion of the fifties was for the *leitmotiv*, the theme, the governing idea. It was a healthy and necessary reaction against mere gustatory relish: Shakespeare had to be shown to have something to say in these comedies. In his presidential address to the English Association in 1958, 'The Nature of Comedy and Shakespeare', E. M. W. Tillyard claimed that 'Shakespeare tells us' this in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and 'tells us' that in *As You Like It*. In *Free Shakespeare* (1974) (the title is a slogan rather than a description), J. R. Brown gazes rather ruefully at himself when young: 'The comedies, so long enjoyed without conscious moral reflection, have been presented by scholarship as treatments of "Love's Order", "Love's Wealth", "Love's Truth", each play having its implicit judgement on human relationships.' Actually *Shakespeare and His Comedies* (1957) is far from being a dated book, thanks to Brown's insistence that the meaning of each play is not an extractable element but implicit in its whole action. Other critics, however, in their search for the pattern in the carpet – and 'pattern' was the in-word of the decade – arbitrarily picked up this or that thread, and some odd distortions resulted from the process. Critics of the fifties, murmuring 'themes, themes' with the ecstasy of Kipps contemplating 'chubes, chubes', tended to take the view of a play that a medical drawing takes of the human frame. We were often presented with a diagram of veins or muscles or bones; occasionally with a skilfully complete, transparent model of the whole body; but scarcely ever with an image of the living play.

A living play is more than actors on a stage

interpreting a text: it is a communal event in time, an occasion created by actors and audience together. The recognition of this made C. L. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton, N.J., 1959) a turning-point in criticism. Barber's argument moved forward from an alternative form of pattern-making, that represented by the earlier writings of Northrop Frye. 'Model' would be a better word than 'pattern' here, since Frye did not trace the designs of individual plays but rather evolved the poetics of comedy in defining a comic structure so compelling that Shakespeare, whatever his story, had to respond to its 'comic drive'. Like Frye, Barber views Shakespearian comedy as a fruit of the union between classical comedy and the 'folk' element, but for him the all-important aspect of the Saturnalian tradition is its communal character. The audience does not merely witness the archetypal progress 'through release to clarification'. Because the play's context is traditional revelry, it experiences this archetypal progress for itself.

It was some time before this awareness of the participating audience became a critical assumption. Bertrand Evans's book, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Oxford, 1960), recognises the audience's share, in that his subject is dramatic irony, the comic exploitation of differences of awareness among characters, and between the characters and ourselves. But for him the audience's function is to judge rather than share; each play offers a hierarchy of knowingness, with ourselves as the omniscient gods and such characters as Dogberry in the lowest depths of ignorance. Even when Evans acknowledges our involvement in the great scenes of *Twelfth Night* he speaks of it as 'a sense of personal responsibility'. Surely it is not responsibility which leads people to 'jump up' in the Trinidad or Brixton Carnival.

In 1965 three works appeared which all in their different ways reflected the increasing concern with comedy as a communal experience.

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Francis Berry, in *The Shakespeare Inset*, studied one set of dramaturgical devices by which Shakespeare manipulates our involvement. His discussion of *Twelfth Night* IV, ii is particularly sensitive. R. G. Hunter's *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness* (Columbia) identifies a traditional role of the spectators of comedy: they are called upon to forgive the central character, however erring, in the way that they once concurred in forgiving *humanum genus* in the medieval miracle play. Most interesting of all was the third chapter of Northrop Frye's *A Natural Perspective* (New York, 1965). Here, our varying abilities to participate in comedy's ritual of identity lost and identity rediscovered in a new social order – that archetype which so much fascinated the structuralist sixties – is shown to be provided for by characters who embody the part of our mind which holds back from, or even rejects, the comic imbroglio: the fool and the *idiotes*, as they are paired in Dogberry and Don John, Touchstone and Jaques, Feste and Malvolio. Philip Edwards has spoken up well for such loners in *Shakespeare and the Confines of Art* (1968).

The multi-consciousness of the dramatist, matching the multifariousness of audience responses, has become a leading critical interest of the present decade. Two pointers to it were Norman Rabkin's *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* (New York, 1967) which applied the physicists' notion of 'complementariness' to the way Shakespeare's plays resist the imposition of neat critical designs, and 'Comic Structure and Tonal Manipulation in Shakespeare and Some Modern Plays' by Herbert S. Weil Jr (*Shakespeare Survey* 22, Cambridge, 1969) which represents Shakespearian comedy as having the openness of Genet and Albee:

Because affirmation in comedy has received the most intelligent and stimulating criticism – as for example in the well-known works of Frye, Barber and Gardner – I feel that possible alternative perspectives now need more of our attention. It is important that we should

be able to understand how *Much Ado About Nothing* can succeed for the spectator who does *not* believe in Claudio's transformation.

This perhaps overlooks the recognition of comedy's being a communal and hence not totally unanimous event which (I have tried to suggest) was frequently indicated by the archetypal school of critics. Writers of the present decade tend, however, to make a dialectical link between thematic and archetypal criticism. Alexander Leggatt sums up the new approach in 'Shakespeare and the Borderlines of Comedy' (*Mosaic*, 5, 1971).

After the play is over, we may want to look back and sort it out into some kind of pattern, around a theme – identity, order and disorder, or our old friend appearance and reality; or in a series of archetypes – the green world, the blocking character, the new society. But I suspect we may learn more about these plays by submitting to their very instability, watching carefully as one kind of experience or set of values is tested against another, and being prepared to find that the testing itself, more than the nature of the result, provides the common factor.

This testing has been carried out in the theatre by Brown, whose 1961 'Directions for *Twelfth Night*, or What You Will' (subsequently in *Shakespeare's Plays in Performance*, 1966) departs from his previous thematic criticism by emphasising a further variable in Shakespeare's comedy, the casting of the plays. Close textual study aimed not at an infallible interpretation but at the full range of possibilities, the 'theatrical life implicit in the printed words', is his method in *Shakespeare's Dramatic Style* (1970) which gives much attention to *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. It is a compliment to call this an unreadable book; it requires to be argued out by a congenial group with ample acting space. An interest parallel to Brown's, the directions implicit in Shakespeare's text, has been pursued with great subtlety by Jörg Hasler in *Shakespeare's Theatrical Notation: The Comedies* (Bern, 1974).

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To say that the approach to Shakespeare's plays in the fifties was thematic, taking a birdseye view, that in the sixties it was archetypal, taking a telstar view, and that in the seventies it is experimental, taking (Patrick Swinden's word) a kaleidoscopic view, would be in itself to impose an over-rigid pattern. The best of contemporary criticism avoids the categorised approach. This is true of the exploratory richness of Alexander Leggatt's *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (1974) and of Brown's wise reconciliation of Shakespeare's 'wide focus' with the underlying governing idea in 'The Presentation of Comedy: The First Ten Plays' (*Shakespearean Comedy* edited by David Palmer and Malcolm Bradbury, 1972). The book which is likely to give the most complete account of our enjoyment of a Shakespearian comedy, as we anticipate the play's archetypal form, share in its many-faceted theatrical experience and reflect on the ideas it has embodied, has yet to appear, but is on the stocks. Leo Salingar has chosen to make it the second volume of his *Shakespeare and the Tradition of Comedy* (Cambridge, 1974). His first volume is an erudite study of Shakespeare's inheritance from the comic traditions of the Middle Ages, and from the Roman and Italian stages. A little slow to ignite, the book catches fire when its author comes to deal with the historical circumstances that led Shakespeare, as a pioneer professional actor-dramatist, to reshape these multiple traditions into new forms of comedy of which our three plays are the leading examples.

### III

Salingar views these three plays as each belonging to a distinct group of comedies: those concerned with escape into the green wood, those about deceptions in an urban setting, and those more sombre ones that are about broken nuptials. Sherman Hawkins too ('The Two Worlds of Shakespearean Comedy' in *Shake-*

*peare Studies*, 3, 1967) sees only *As You Like It* as a play of Frye's green world and assigns the other two to an archetype 'in which intruders force their way into a closed world and draw its thwarted or random emotional forces to themselves'. But for most critics the three comedies with the oddly throwaway titles constitute a 'set' by virtue of the fact that they are courtly and concerned with courtship; whereas the contemporary *Merry Wives of Windsor* deals with bourgeois marriages and the nearly contemporary *The Merchant of Venice*, set in a merchant society, portrays love in terms of a fairy story rather than of *Il Corteggio*.

Few of them, however, join with John Vyvyan (*Shakespeare and the Rose of Love*, 1960; *Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty*, 1961) in finding Shakespeare's courtly comedies neo-Platonic. There is a general feeling that Shakespeare and his audience shared a more Anglo-Saxon attitude. Salingar is aware of a tension between exalted 'romantic' notions of love and the mockery inherited from the English humanists. M. A. Shaaber believes that 'Shakespeare's characters are Laodiceans in the religion of love' ('The Comic View of Life in Shakespeare's Comedies', *The Drama of the Renaissance*, edited by E. M. Blistein, Providence, R.I., 1969) and for H. M. Richmond (*Shakespeare's Sexual Comedy*, New York, 1971) Shakespeare's view of sex is 'a wise hypocrisy'. These views are most applicable to the scenes between Beatrice and Benedick, and between Orlando and Rosalind, on which there have been many illuminating commentaries.

Another common feature of the three plays is a stylistic one. They are all, even *Twelfth Night*, predominantly in prose, and hence figure large in Brian Vickers's *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* (1968). Vickers's knowledge of Elizabethan rhetoric, though it results in a brilliant exposé of Rosalind's 'pair of stairs to marriage' speech, is not the sharpest instrument for dissecting Shakespeare's style,

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and Ludwig Borinski, in a somewhat breathless article in *Shakespeare Survey* 8 (Cambridge, 1955) on 'Shakespeare's Comic Prose', could only hint at the greater cutting edge of modern stylistics. A few critics have analysed particular linguistic features of the separate plays: the outstanding articles are Francis Fergusson's analysis of the final exchange between Beatrice and Benedick (1954 and subsequently in *The Human Image in Dramatic Literature*, New York, 1957); William G. McCollom's 'The Role of Wit in *Much Ado About Nothing*' (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, 19, 1968); Jonas Barish's 'Pattern and Purpose in the Prose of *Much Ado About Nothing*' (*Rice University Studies*, 60, 1974); another syntactical study, this time of *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, 'Much Virtue in "If"' by Peter B. Murray (*University of Pennsylvania Library Chronicle*, 32, 1966); and Angus McIntosh's discussion of the use of 'thou' and 'you' between Rosalind and Celia (1963 and subsequently in *Patterns of Language*, 1966). The plays do, however, have certain stylistic qualities in common, not least their marvelously refreshing lucidity. Yet no one has yet followed the inviting clue held out by F. P. Wilson when he wrote that in these three plays 'the satisfaction of mind and sense given to us in verse and prose which it is a pleasure to speak or hear or read radiates an extraordinary happiness'.

By contrast, a great deal has been said in the last twenty-five years about another feature common to the three comedies, the importance of the 'Clown' parts. Much of it has been concerned with who acted whom. Dogberry, we know, was played by Kempe and, after he left the company in 1599, by Armin, whom John H. Long (*Shakespeare's Use of Music*, Gainesville, Florida 1955) thinks joined the Chamberlain's Men early enough to have played Balthasar. Feste was indisputably a role created for Armin. Touchstone, however, has the critics divided, and Latham fancies he had Shakespeare divided as well: 'An uncertainty on Shakespeare's part as to what actor he was

writing for may go some way towards explaining inconsistencies.' Charles Felver, in *Robert Armin* (Kent, Ohio, 1961), speculates that Armin, a good singer, could either have played Amiens to Kempe's Touchstone or used his skill as a quick-change artist to double Touchstone with Amiens. In 'Shakespeare's Fools: The Shadow and the Substance of Drama' (*Shakespearean Comedy*, 1972) G. L. Evans views Armin as virtually Shakespeare's collaborator, and Muriel Bradbrook (*Shakespeare the Craftsman*, Cambridge, 1969) attributes to his involvement the full embodiment of Shakespeare's comic vision in *Twelfth Night*.

The difference between Touchstone's 'undaunted cooperative jollity' and Feste's 'controlled, critical derision' (a neat distinction from Nevill Coghill's 'Wags, Clowns and Jesters' in *More Talking of Shakespeare* edited by John Garrett, 1959) could have offered Armin an interesting challenge; the fact that Feste, around 1601 or 1602, is a very wise fool is no argument against this gifted actor having played Touchstone as a less than wise fool in 1599. That Touchstone is not and should not be all-wise is a point made from different angles by Dean Frye ('The Question of Shakespearean Parody,' *Essays in Criticism*, 15, 1965) and Richard Levin ('Elizabethan "Clown" Subplots,' *Essays in Criticism*, 16, 1966). Both professional Fools are thoroughly discussed by R. H. Goldsmith in *Wise Fools in Shakespeare* (East Lansing, Mich., 1955) and figure in William Willeford's *The Fool and his Sceptre* (Nebraska and London, 1969).

One regrettable result of our present interest in Armin is that we tend to think of the change from a simpleton to a wise fool as all gain and no loss. F. P. Wilson is even glad to see the back of Dogberry. But in either of his two gowns, what a back it is! That magnificent exit-speech has inspired Brown to an excellent commentary ('Mr Pinter's Shakespeare', *Critical Quarterly*, 5, 1963) and Rossiter has

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also given Dogberry his due as a great comic figure. In 'Comic Constables – Fictional and Historical' (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, 20, 1969), Hugh C. Evans reminds us that Elizabethan constables really were like Dogberry: a fact that might escape us in this Z-car age.

### IV

In my review of the criticism of the three separate plays I am reversing their chronological order in the hope of avoiding an anticlimax. There have been many lively discussions of *Much Ado About Nothing* and comparatively few about *Twelfth Night*. Critics often appear to be flagging a little when they reach the last of Shakespeare's run of ten comedies. Sometimes they overwhelm it in a highly schematic attempt to relate it to all that has gone before (Brown, *Shakespeare and his Comedies*) and at other times they retreat abashed before its elusive grace. Some are left with an uneasy feeling of having strayed beyond the frontiers of comedy. For G. K. Hunter even Viola is the plaything of chance and the end is escape, not reconciliation: 'the happiness has no inevitability, and the final song sounds perilously like a tune whistled through the surrounding darkness'. Anne Barton ('*As You Like It and Twelfth Night: Shakespeare's Sense of an Ending*' in *Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. D. Palmer and M. Bradbury) reads the last scene as one in which the world of revelry seems to be fighting desperately against the cold light of day. Clifford Leech, in *Twelfth Night and Shakespearean Comedy* (1965) discovers discordant elements which suggest that Shakespeare had outgrown the 'delight' of festive comedy and was ready to seek out other forms of comedy in which to confront and explore the fragility of life. Patrick Swinden, in *An Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies* (1973) feels the play's language to have become exploratory rather than eloquent: the explanation lies through an aware-

ness of time and mortality afforded only to Feste.

The most interesting of these sombre readings is that of Leggatt. For him, the characters of *Twelfth Night* are isolated individuals adrift in a fragmented world. Malvolio in the dark house is the image of that isolation; his mirror opposite is Sebastian in the sun and air, liberating the characters of the love plot by his arrival in Illyria. Leggatt does not overlook the explosively funny effect of such a scene as the eavesdropping in the box tree (well expounded in theatrical terms by B. Evans and by Hasler) but true to his refusal to cage the living play within the archetype, or to render it down to its governing idea, he emphasises the diversity of moods in the separate plots and their respective outcomes.

Earlier critics were frequently disturbed by the cruelty of the trick played on Malvolio, and within our period the older critics have continued to express this uneasiness. J. D. Wilson thought Malvolio a man of spirit and self-respect, and found the mad scene painful, while F. P. Wilson made the excuse that Shakespeare must have felt an actor's natural hostility for any kind of gentleman usher. Leech replied to similar arguments in the critics' own terms when he pointed out that Malvolio has, for his part, had the unfortunate and presumably innocent Captain thrown into prison. Since 1957 most readers have been sufficiently persuaded by Barber's ideas about the festive exorcism of unwelcome spirits for them not to be troubled by the baiting of Malvolio. Their view is well represented by M. Seiden writing in *The University of Kansas City Review*, 28 (1961) on 'Malvolio Reconsidered'. The same journal earlier published 'The Masks of *Twelfth Night*' (no. 22, 1955), an influential essay by Joseph Summers who relates the play's visible deceptions and disguises to the self-deceptions of its characters. A recognition of the play's affinity with 'masques and revels' has led recent critics such

## SHAKESPEARE SURVEY

as Porter Williams Jnr ('Mistakes in *Twelfth Night* and their Resolution', *PMLA*, 6, 1961), F. B. Tromly ('*Twelfth Night*: Folly's Talents and the Ethics of Shakespearian Comedy', *Mosaic*, 7, 1974), and Richard Henze ('*Twelfth Night*: Free Disposition on the Sea of Love', *Sewanee Review*, 83, 1975) to underline the play's celebration of such festive virtues as generosity and the readiness to take a risk.

The festive virtue of outgoing and generous natures is the theme of Harold Jenkins's essay, 'Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*' (*Rice Institute Pamphlet*, 45, 1959) which concentrates upon Orsino and Olivia – two characters who have been rather roughly handled by critics anxious to show that they are not to be taken in by a pair of romantic poseurs. Thus, while not following W. I. D. Scott (*Shakespeare's Melancholics*, 1962), into the intricacies of Orsino's relation with his mother and Olivia's with her brother, Leech ('Shakespeare's Comic Dukes', *Review of English Literature*, 5, 1964) confidently speaks of Orsino's 'insufficiency as an adult being'. Jenkins, like Shakespeare, is gentle: he shows the process by which Olivia and Orsino, persisting in their folly, become wise, whereas the no less deceived Malvolio ends up a 'poor fool'. The development is signposted in the differing responses of Olivia and Malvolio to Feste in I, iii:

What the comedy *may* suggest is that he who in his egotism seeks to fit the world to the procrustean bed of his own reason deserves his own discomfiture. But Olivia, who self-confessedly abandons reason, and Orsino, who avidly gives his mind to all the shapes of fancy, are permitted to pass through whatever folly there may be in this to a greater illumination.

The only objection one might make to this admirable reading is that it upstages Viola. But William Bache's essay on her redemptive role ('Levels of Perception in *Twelfth Night*', *Forum*, 5, 1964) fully reinstates her at the play's centre. The relation of her role to Olivia's is defined by Nevill Coghill when he says that the effect of the juxtapositions in the first three

scenes of the play is that we take only one grief seriously, Viola's. Feste's joke about the departed soul could never have been made to Viola about her brother. Made almost in passing, in *Shakespeare's Professional Skills* (Cambridge, 1964), this is the kind of observation which outweighs many a boiled-down thesis.

### V

*As You Like It* was just the play for the fifties. Its air of liberation, its informality of style, its delight in 'happenings' and eccentricity, above all its 'image of life triumphing over chance' which Suzanne Langer dubbed the essence of comedy, all chimed in with the mood of the 1951 Festival of Britain. The decade produced some splendid essays on the play. John Shaw, in 'Fortune and Nature in *As You Like It*' (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, 6, 1955) demonstrates persuasively that Shakespeare's handling of his source reveals that this thematic contrast was uppermost in his own mind. Jenkins, in an essay on the play in *Shakespeare Survey 8* (Cambridge, 1955) shows that Shakespeare clears his stage of conventional action in order to make room for many contrasting elements in human nature to comment on one another by their juxtaposition. This creation of 'a space to work things out' is Helen Gardner's starting point (in *More Talking of Shakespeare*) for an essay in which she deftly characterises the space, Arden, and defines the nature of the 'working out' as a discovery of where true happiness is to be found.

As B. Evans points out, Arden is a very still world after the bustle of Messina. 'No Clock in the Forest' gives Jay L. Halio the title for a telling study of time in the play (*Studies in English Literature*, 2, 1962) which suggests that in this timeless world, which is yet haunted by Jaques's and Touchstone's sense of riping and rotting, it is the role of Rosalind to lead Orlando towards 'a proper