McFeely, Maureen Connolly

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by

MAUREEN CONNOLLY McFEELY

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Executive Officer

Patrick Cullen

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Abstract

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SHAKESPEARE'S COMIC HEROINES
(c.1593 - c.1603)

by

Maureen Connolly McFeely

Adviser: Professor W. R. Elton

While there has been frequent critical praise for the wit, common sense and enterprise of comic heroines such as Julia of Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593) and Rosalind of As You Like It (c.1599) and some questioning of the actions of Isabella in Measure for Measure (c.1603-1604), there has been little attempt to set these characters in adequate historical perspective regarding Elizabethan views of women. This study tries to do so by examining whether there is a significant correlation between the changing depiction of Shakespeare's comic heroines and Elizabethan views of women.

The Elizabethans inherited several, often contradictory, views of women - including patristic and medieval notions of feminine inferiority

and subjection and Reformation notions of partnership and companionship in marriage (evident in proverbs, sermons and conduct books), as well as literary conventions of female idealization (evident in some sonnet sequences) and even aggressiveness (evident in Venus and Adonis and other epyllia). The coexistence of these divergent views is reflected in two playful contemporary descriptions of women, one of which defines woman as "Woo-man, for that she doth woo man with Vertues," the other, as bringers of "woe-to-man." Until c.1603, Shakespeare's comedies frequently employ the former definition - by presenting heroines who reverse traditional sexual roles to test and "woo men." After c.1603, however, this type of heroine gives way - at least in Measure for Measure - to one who proves by her conventional "feminine" behavior that she does not bring "woe-to-man."

Although this study does not claim that there is a one-to-one correlation between Elizabethan attitudes towards women and Shakespeare's dramatic practice, it suggests, by sampling a few plays and other evidence, significant parallels between such attitudes and the changing depiction of Shakespeare's comic heroines. The works examined are: Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593), the first Shakespearean comedy to include a heroine who reverses roles by assuming disguise and pursuing a lover; As You Like It (c.1599), which depicts in Rosalind a heroine who uses disguise and a reversal of roles to great advantage in testing a lover; and Measure for Measure (c.1603-04), as it indicates a change in the depiction of the heroine, from one who pursues and tests men, to one who is pursued or tested by men; from one who reverses traditional sexual roles, to one who functions, for the most part, within those roles.

In light of this sampling, the study concludes that the depiction

of such heroines (c.1593 - c.1603) may be linked to a climate of attitudes that found the idealization of women, and even their aggressiveness theatrically acceptable. From c.1603, however, as England welcomed its first male ruler in half a century, an apparent shift in the climate of attitudes may be correlated with a heroine, such as Isabella, who exemplifies more conventional "feminine" behavior. Such instances, both before and after the accession of James, suggest a significant correlation between social attitudes to women and Shakespeare's depiction of those comic heroines.

TO MY FAMILY

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Chapter I: The Problem

Shakespeare's comic heroines, such as Julia in Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593) and Rosalind in As You Like It (c.1599), have been the objects of almost universal critical praise. They have been lauded for their wit and wisdom, their constancy and clear-sightedness.[1] So engaging are they, that they have been seen as real persons, whose extra-theatrical lives have been detailed by sentimentalists, especially since the time of Mrs. Jameson.[2] In more scholarly circles, they have been described as the literary descendants of the heroines of Lyly and Greene.[3] Currently it is fashionable to see them as budding feminists, independent "sisters" who give evidence of Shakespeare's alleged belief in women's equality.[4] In few places, however, have these heroines been placed in adequate historical perspective regarding Elizabethan views of women. This study notes that, until c.1603, heroines such as Julia and Rosalind often reverse traditional sexual roles, by disregarding parents, assuming masculine disguise and pursuing lovers. After that time, however, heroines such as Isabella in Measure for Measure (c.1603-1604) function in a more dependent, more traditionally "feminine" way.[5] In view of this apparent change in female characterization, this study asks the following questions: first, whether attitudes to women during Elizabeth's last decade influenced the depiction of heroines such as Julia and Rosalind; and second, whether after James's accession to the throne in 1603, there was a concomitant change in attitudes relevant to such character portrayal.

Although this study does not suggest a one-to-one correlation between historical attitudes towards women and Shakespeare's comic heroines, it will try to demonstrate that significant parallels do exist between these attitudes and Shakespeare's portrayal of his heroines. For that

purpose, this paper will examine certain social, religious and literary views of women that may be pertinent to an understanding of Shakespeare's characters. To do so, it will consider some popular works dealing with women, such as sermons, proverbs and conduct books, as well as the literary treatment of women, both in the probable sources of the plays in question, and (more briefly) in conventions of the sonnet and the epyllion. Such an examination may suggest some of the ways in which Shakespeare's comedies reflect contemporary attitudes towards women, as her heroines, generally active and independent during the last decade of Elizabeth's reign, function in a more docile and dependent way after James ascends the throne.

Because it would be impossible in the range of this paper to discuss all of Shakespeare's comedies, I have decided to concentrate on three comedies that may be considered representative: Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593), as the first to include a heroine who reverses roles by assuming disguise and pursuing a lover; As You Like It (c.1599), as it contains in Rosalind a heroine who uses disguise and a reversal of roles to great advantage in testing a lover; and Measure for Measure (c.1603-1604), as it indicates a change in the role of the heroine from a generally "masculine," active one to a generally "feminine," passive one, from a heroine who pursues and tests men to one who is pursued and tested by men; from one who reverses traditional sexual roles to one who functions, for the most part, within those defined roles.[6]

Finally, a study involving character analysis may lead one to disregard a play's complex structure and focus on a character's extra-theatrical "life." Shakespeare's comic heroines reflect, as this study hopes to indicate, a multiple range of influences - from the literary

convention of the aggressive female to the moralistic tradition of the subservient one, from the theatrical convention of the boy-actress to the dramatic convention of disguise. But they also seem to parallel hitherto inadequately noted shifts in certain attitudes towards women. Such changes are examined in the period shortly before the death of a long-reigning Queen, as well as shortly after the accession of James. By examining three representative characters in the light of these attitudes, this study hopes to illuminate, not the extra-theatrical "lives" of characters such as Julia, Rosalind or Isabella, but the comedies in which these heroines play so large a part.

Notes, Chapter I

[1]Although critics may differ about which heroine is their favorite, they seem to agree that it is the heroine, not the hero, who succeeds in capturing our sympathy and interest. H. B. Charlton, one of the few commentators to pay special attention to the heroines, summarizes the feeling of many that the independent heroine is "a lively symbol of the new state of affairs in the domain of comedy. The hero has been dethroned, losing not only his rank, but something of his personality: he has been replaced by the heroine." (Shakespearian Comedy [London: Methuen & Co., 1938; rpt. 1966] , p.285) For praise of the heroine, also see H. D. Gray, "The Evolution of Shakespeare's Heroine's," JEGP, XII (1913), 122-37; George Gordon, "Shakespeare's Women," Shakesperian Comedy and Other Studies (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), pp.52-59. Bertrand Evans, Shakespeare's Comedies (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

[2]Anna B. Jameson, Characteristics of Women, Moral Poetical and Historical (1822; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1967). Following Mrs. Jameson's example, many commentators have discussed the heroines as if they were real persons, not characters in a drama. George Bernard Shaw, for instance, in a review of As You Like It (October 9, 1897) praises Rosalind for her practicality in choosing not to wear skirts, and for her cleverness in pursuing a lover - "a piece of natural history," he claims, "that keeps Shakespeare's heroines alive, whilst generations of properly governessed young ladies, taught to say 'No' three times at least, have miserably perished." (Shaw on Shakespeare, ed. Edwin Wilson [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1961] , p.29) Forty years later, E. E. Stoll compares Beatrice's wit as displayed in " lady's chief art and sport and crowning glory - conversation" with that of contemporary women: "Now, like men, they 'do things.' Now they swear and swap stories but cannot talk." (Shakespeare's Young Lovers [1937; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1966] , p.67)

[3]See especially, J. Tynan, "The Influence of Green on Shakespeare's Early Romances," PMLA, XXVII (1912), 246-264; D. L. Stevenson, The Love-Game Comedy (1946; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1966); Muriel C. Bradbrook, The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955); T. W. Baldwin, On the Literary Genetics of Shakespeare's Plays. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965); M. Mincoff, "Shakespeare and Lyly," Shakespeare Survey XIV (1961), 15-24; G. K. Hunter, John Lyly: Humanist as Courtier (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

[4]Juliet Dusinberre, Shakespeare and the Nature of Women (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) and Kezia Van Meter Sproat, "A Reappraisal of Shakespeare's View of Women" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1975). For a rebuttal of such feminist arguments, see Linda T. Fitz, "'What Says the Married Woman': Marriage Theory and Feminism in the English Renaissance." Mosaic, 13(1980), 1-22.

[5]Evans notes a similar change in character portrayal, though he views it in terms of the heroine's awareness and control of her dramatic world. "In assuming the role of chief practicer who maintains his own and provides our advantage by means of disguise," he says, "Duke Vincentio replaces the heroines of the preceding comedies." (Shakespeare's Comedies, p.189.)

[6]For the three plays on which this study concentrates, I have used the Arden Shakespeare editions: Two Gentlemen of Verona, ed. Clifford Leech (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969); As You Like It, ed. Agnes Latham (London: Metheun & Co. Ltd., 1975); Measure for Measure, ed. J. W. Lever (New York: Vintage Books, 1965). For the other plays and for the poems, I have used The Complete Works, gen. ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969).

Chapter II: Some Elizabethan Views of Women

(c.1593 - c.1603)

Introduction

"Woe-to-Man"

"The help or arm of man"

The "Superior" Mistress of the Sonnets

"The mirror of her time"

Reversal of Roles: Venus and Adonis (1593)

Shakespeare's Use of the Diverse Traditions

The majority of English women during the closing decade of Elizabeth's reign seem, at first glance, to have been handicapped by a lack of education and absence of legal power. Many were constrained by arranged marriages and multiple pregnancies.[1] Sermons and conduct books often urged these women to view themselves not as individual persons but as helpmates, whose goal in life was to perfect the "feminine" virtues of silence, obedience and chastity; satires at times ridiculed those who failed to do so.[2] If this were the only portrait of Elizabethan women, we would have to consider Shakespeare's strong-willed and assertive comic heroines as constructs growing out of his imaginative genius, with few correlations with reality. But, recognizing Shakespeare's habit of weaving Elizabethan traits and attitudes into dramas, we may suspect that his heroines also reflect some of the attitudes towards the women of his time. Thus, when we take a second look at the lives of Elizabethan women, we can see that other possibilities and attitudes existed. In literature, for instance, while women may have been ridiculed in satires, they were also praised in sonnets as the loveliest of creatures, exalted in complaints as the paragons of chastity, and pursued in romance at the epitome of beauty. In real life, they may have engaged in business, such as innkeeping or brewing;[3] they may have been admitted to certain guilds along with their husbands (and as widows may have retained that membership, like the Widow Orwin, a busy printer after her husband's death in 1593);[4] they may even have been educated (like Lady Jane Grey, Elizabeth Jane Weston, Mary Sidney or the daughters of Sir Anthony Coke).[5] In royal form, the woman who dominated the age was exalted as Gloriana, Diana, Astraea and the Virgin Queen.[6] Thus, though Elizabethan women may have been constrained by law or by family responsibilities, in

social reality they enjoyed such marked freedom in comparison to women of other lands that visiting foreigners, like the German Duke of Wirtemberg (in 1592), noted a popular saying of the time that called England " a paradise for women, a prison for servants, and a hell or purgatory for horses - for the females have great liberty and are almost like masters, whilst the poor horses are worked very hard."[7]

To understand how such diverse attitudes towards women existed during the sixteenth century and how they may have influenced Shakespeare's presentation of his comic heroines, we should consider several factors: first, acceptance of the notion of women's alleged inferiority, weakness and even wickedness, stemming from certain biblical passages and from the teachings of a number of medieval theologians; second, the opposing view, evident in the works of some Protestant preachers, that women, at least wives, were partners with and companions to their husbands; third, the literary convention of the "superior" lady of sonnet tradition; fourth, the existence of a powerful and highly praised female ruler. Having glanced briefly at these factors, we can consider Shakespeare's awareness of these diverse and often competing attitudes as he reverses traditional sexual roles in Venus and Adonis (c.1593) and in the early comedies. Only then can we consider the influence of some of these Elizabethan views of women on the three plays with which this paper is specifically concerned: Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593), As You Like It (c.1599) and Measure for Measure (1603-04).

"Woe-to-Man"

The first of these views of women is evident in the popular proverb of Shakespeare's time that suggested that the word woman derived from

the fact that the female was the "woe-to-man."[8] Such attitudes towards women were shaped in part by a negative view of women presented in certain biblical passages. "All wickedness is but litle to the wickedness of a women: let the porcion of the sinner fall upon her." (Ecclesiasticus 25:21) That wickedness is traced to Eve: "Of the woman came the beginning of sinne, and thorow her we all dye." (25:26) The writer of Ecclesiastes elaborates: "And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is as nettes and snares, and her hands, as bands: he that is good before God, shalbe delivered from her, but the sinner shalbe taken by her.... I have found one man of a thousand: but a woman among them all have I not founde." (7: 28-30) In addition to these outright condemnations of women, there were more subtle suggestions of female uncleanness implied by Jewish laws of isolation and purification (Lev. 15: 19-33) and of inferiority revealed by the ninth commandment (which lists a wife with her husband's possessions before his house, field and slave in Deuteronomy, 5:21, and after his house in Exodus, 20:17). Such allusions suggest a basis for misogynistic prejudice. In addition, Paul's refusal to give women the right to preach - "Let the woman learne in silence with all subjection. I permit not a woman to teache, nether to usurpe authoritie over the man, but to be in silence." (I Tim. 2: 11-12) - and his teaching that "Wives, submit yourselves unto your housbands (Ephesians, 5: 23) give impetus to future exhortations for woman's silence and obedience.[9]

Many of the biblical views of women carried over to the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. For example, Thomas Aquinas following Paul, agrees that women "must not be heard in the church," but he appends a specific reason for silence - because "the voice of a woman is an

invitation to lust..."[10] Such views became accepted in popular thought. Woman's lust came to be considered the cause of Adam's fall. In the Chester plays, for instance, Eve's acceptance of the blame for her sins of disobedience and "enticement" contrasts with Adam's failure to blame anyone other than the devil and the devil's accomplice - Eve.

Eve: Alas! in languor now I am lent!
alas, now shamefullie I am shente!
for I was inobedyente,
of wayle now I am wayved.
Now all my kind by me is kent,
to flee woman's enticement;
whose trustes them in anye intent,
truly he is decayved.

Adam: My licorous wife hath bene my foe
the devilles envye shent me also,
they twain togethere wellmay goe,
the sister and the brother!
His wrath hath done me much woe,
her gluttony greve me alsoe,
good never let man trust them twoo,
the one more than the other![11]

Such attitudes continued in Elizabethan writers: for instance, the popular preacher Henry Smith's A Preparative to Marriage (1591), visiting the sin of Eve on all her daughters, finds in the first sin the reason for woman's subservience: "The first subjection of woman began at sinne, for when God cursed her for seducing her husband, when the Serpent had seduced her, he sayd, 'He shall have authoritie over thee.'" (p.62) One nobleman's view that women are "lumps and undigested pieces, licked over to a form by our affections"[12] is not so far removed from that of the Church Father, Chrysostom, who taught that woman's beauty covered her evil nature: "Take her skin from her face and thou shall see the loathsomeness under it...within she is full of phlegm, stinking, putrid, excremental stuff."[13]

A typical sermon of the day is recorded in Manningham's Diary (1603):

> Mr. Hemmings, sometimes of Trinity College in Cambridge, in his sermon at Paul's Cross, speaking of women, said that if a man marry, it were a thousand to one but he should light upon a bad one, there were so many naught; and if he should chance to find a good one, yet he were not sure to hold her so...[14]

Although such views were evidently neither universally held nor applied, the constant repetition of such exempla of woman's innate evil and of her secondary place in nature's scheme had to make an impression - if only one for poets to entertain, as we can see in Shakespeare's reversal of some of these moralistic notions in Venus and Adonis and his comedies.

"... the help or arm of man"

Not all biblical commentators agreed with a negative assessment of women. Some, like Henry Bullinger (c.1575) took the misogynists to task for misquoting Scripture. "The wife is not in the scriptures called an impediment or necessary evil," Bullinger wrote, placing the blame for these commonplaces on "certain poets and beastly men who hated women." Instead he claimed that woman "is the help or arm of man."[15]

Although some recent commentators[16] attribute this more positive view of women to the emergence of the Puritan ideal of marital chastity over the Catholic ideal of celibacy, the concept is evident in Vives's The office and duetie of an husband (1550). According to Vives, God gave man woman "not only for generations sake, but also for the societie and fellowshippe of life." (Sig. A5) And although he recognizes the clear superiority of the husband over the wife, he nevertheless emphasizes that a wife is not chattel. Some men, he says, "choose not their wives, but

invade them, they marry them not, but ravishe them...If the woman were a certain kind of merchandise, peradventure it shuld not seme so unsembly by al maner of meanes and subteltie to obtayne her..." (Sig. C7 - C8). The New Testament itself is a basis for Vives's (and the Puritans') upgrading of the wife's role. The passage that begins "Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands" concludes with "Housbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church,...So ought men to love their wives, as their owne bodies: he that loveth his wife, loveth him selfe." (Ephesians 5: 23-28) The difference is that, where biblical commentators had at one time emphasized the need for wifely submission, later commentators emphasize the need for mutual self-surrender in marriage.

Many of these concepts reached ordinary people through marriage sermons which, like Smith's A Preparative to Marriage (1591), stressed that mutual comfort was as important to marriage as procreation. Although Smith found biblical passages to account for woman's subservience and "greater infirmitie" (p.24), he nevertheless also called for a sense of partnership and companionship in marriage, even to the point of calling the state "merriage, because a playfellow is come to make our age merrie." (pp.11-12) His advice on how to choose the right wife stresses the need for harmony of interests: "If thou be learned, chuse one that loveth knowledge; if thou be martiall, chuse one that loveth prowess: if thou live by labour, chuse one that loveth husbandrie; for unlesse her minde stand with thy vocation, thou shalt neither enjoy thy wife nor thy calling." (p.26) The fact that such companions began to think of themselves as real partners apparently led to demands for true equality among the women of the next generation. In Domesticall Duties (1622), William Gouge lays the blame for such feelings at the door of the Puritan theory of the

companionate marriage. Women began to think themselves men's equals, Gouge explained, because of "that small inequality which betwixt man and wife: for of all degrees wherein there is any difference betwixt person and person, there is the least disparity betwixt man and wife."[17]

If a wife was now to look for companionship in a husband, she did not need a father to choose that husband for her. For, if husband and wife were to view themselves as companions, the choice of mate must reflect their own wishes, not those of a father hoping to match his offspring well. To be sure, many still adhered to the traditional teachings expressed by Sir Christopher Hatton's secretary, Samuel Cox, who wrote that "children are bound by a natural bond of piety to honour and obey their parents to whom...both by the law of God and by the light nature it appertaineth most properly to have care to determine of their marriages"' supporting this view with the example of Adam who "himself did not chuse Eve to be his wife, it was God his father that brought her unto him."[18] But more young people were moved to make their own decisions in this regard. As early as 1562, Thomas Becon had argued in Boke of Matrimony, a typical conduct book, that children of parents who would force them into marriage with unsuitable partners had the right to rebel: "Neither do the children in this behalf owe such parents any obedience," because forced marriage has proved "unfortunate, unhappy, unlucky, as daily experience teacheth."[19] In 1575 Bullinger repeated the advice against forcing children into unwanted matches: "...it is easye to understande, that marriage ought to come of a free herte, and neyther to be constrayned and compelled of the parents, nor of other menne. For in as much as wedlocke requireth both the parties good consent which no man can gyve, but only God, the parents maye not compel the chylde, but have respect

to gods ordinance, and to the right ordinate consente of the parties..."[20] ("For what is wedlock forced but a hell, An age of discord and continual strife? asks Suffolk in 1 Henry VI, "Whereas the contrary bringeth bliss, And is a pattern of celestial peace." V,v,57-60)

By the end of the sixteenth century, forced marriages were becoming increasingly unpopular. Wealthy fathers,who might have sought to control a daughter's choices by controlling the girl's marriage portion, began to limit this power to the years of minority.[21] Furthermore, young women, then as now, could manage to effect their own will by the sheer force of a fait accompli. Sir Francis Willoughby of Wollaton Hall received this letter from his wife regarding their daughters: "She is so great with Mr. Candish's son that she is fully minded to have him... Whether you like it or not it must go forwards and be a match."[22] Such self-determination might have surprised Vives, who had preached that the only role for a girl in the choice of husband was prayer: "Therefore when the father and the mother be busy about their daughter's marriage, let her help the matter forward with good prayer, and desire Christ with pure affection that she may have such an husband, who shall not hinder her from virtuous living, but rather provoke, exhort and help her unto it."[23] But prayer and parental pressure were gradually giving way to romance and freedom of choice.

When moralists and sermonizers began to stress the importance of love and mutuality in marriage, they were forced to reevaluate some of the negative attitudes towards women that they had inherited from mid-ieval theologians or from the Bible. Thus, the theory of the companionate marriage may have served to counterbalance some of the more negative views of women that Elizabethans had inherited from these sources. But

a possibly greater corrective to negative views of women was an elevated view of women inherited from courtly tradition and Petrarchanism.

The "Superior" Mistress of the Sonnets

Inherited views of women as inferior to men were counter-balanced somewhat by a Petrarchan view of women as superior to men. Where one view moralistically accused women of ignorance, jealousy, lust, deception and inconstancy, the other poetically praised her for her beauty, goodness, chastity and constancy. Where the moralist found her best ornament to be silence, the poet praised "the sweetness of her voice, the tunableness of her words, the melody of her singing...."[24] Dating at least from the late twelfth century when Andreas Capellanus set down the rules of courtly love in De Amore, it became a convention of poetry to idealize the lady and make her the superior figure. The lover became her vassal, Frauendienst or "the service of ladies," his major duty.[25]

The Petrarchan convention of worship of the lady[26] found a receptive audience in the Elizabethans of the 1590's. During those years several important sonnet sequences exalting the lady were written or published. For instance, following such earlier Petrarchan poets as Wyatt and Surrey, the sonnet flourished in England in the last decade of the sixteenth century. Sir Philip Sidney's Astrophel and Stella, written about 1580, appeared in a pirated edition in 1591 (although the authorized version was not published until 1598). Samuel Daniel's Delia sonnets appeared in 1592. Edmund Spenser's Amoretti, the first sonnet sequence to deal with lawful love culminating in marriage, appeared during 1595-96. And although Shakespeare's own sonnets were not published until 1609, many could have been written during the 1590's.

Following the Petrarchan notion of the superior mistress, Sidney's first sonnet in the Astrophel & Stella sequence, for instance, sets the tone for the mistress's "sweetest soveraignty" over her suitor. The poet searches for words to make her realize the depth of his love-induced suffering:

> Loving in truth, and faire in verse my love to show,
> That the dear she might take some pleasure of my pain.
> Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
> Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,
> I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe.

The convention here is that the suitor is inferior to his mistress. She represents beauty, truth and goodness; his role is to praise her qualities in hopes that she will pity him. Thus Astrophel praises Stella as the "Princess of beauty" (Sonnet 28); her eyes become "Nature's chief work" (Sonnet 7); her face becomes the page on which one can read "what love and beauty be"(Sonnet 3). In such praise there is no hint of the misogynistic view that beneath a woman's beautiful exterior lies treachery. Instead it reflects the neo-Platonic view of those like Peter Bembo in Castigione's The Courtier (first published in Italian in 1528; in English translation by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561) which holds that "beauty is always good" and that "outward beauty [is] a true sign of inward goodness."[27]

When the mistress of the sonnets attains her goodness by denying her lover fulfillment, she becomes what Samuel Daniel calls "the cruel fair." The dark lady of Shakespeare's sonnets was equally cruel. "Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art," the poet claims, "As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel" (Sonnet 31). But she was neither fair nor, apparently, good. "Two loves I have," the poet says in Sonnet 144, "a man right fair" and "a woman colored ill." He compares the two:

> To win me soon to hell, my female evil
> Tempteth my better angel from my side,
> And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
> Wooing his purity with her foul pride.

In these lines we see two inherited notions of woman at work. The anti-feminine moralistic strain produces a "female evil" who corrupts innocent men, turning saints into devils, as Eve's sin turned Adam out of paradise. At the same time, there are hints of the chivalric convention of the dominant lady "wooing" her new lover (the young man), rebuffing the former lover (the poet), but ever controlling the love-game. That notion of her dominance recurs throughout the sonnets but is perhaps most poignantly expressed in Sonnet 143 where the poet likens himself to child who begs for his mother's kiss.

> So run'st thou after that which flies from thee,
> Whilst I, thy babe, chase thee afar behind;
> But if thou catch thy hopes, turn back to me
> And play the mother's part, kiss me, be kind.

As the lady of courtly-love tradition served as the poet's superior in the love-game, rewarding him or remaining aloof according to her whim, she was expected to be his superior in society as well. To remain in such a position of superiority the lady could not become her lover's wife, for despite its adulation of women, courtly conventions followed the Pauline tradition that wives were their husbands' subjects. In The office and duetie of an husband, (1550) Vives warns against marrying one "whom thou hast bene in amors withal, whom thou flatterdest, whom thou didst serve, whom thou calledst thy hart, thy life, thy maistress, thy light, thy eyes, with other suche wordes as foolishe love doth perswade, usinge impietie agaynst god, which is the ende of al desire and goodnes." (sig. K) The danger is that during courtship the man whom "she found more obedient unto her, even with the peril and daunger of life, then any other slave

that was bought for monie," (Sig. K^{v}) can never become her superior in marriage.[28] Thus the love affair delineated in Petrarchan poetry remained outside of marriage until Spenser's Amoretti.

Spenser alters Petrarchan literary convention by celebrating in the Amoretti not an adulterous or extra-marital relationship but a love affair that is to culminate, like Shakespeare's comedies, in a lawful union. Although the Spenserian mistress has the power to "entangle in that golden snare" men's "weaker harts" (Sonnet 37), she, like Shakespeare's comic heroines, surrenders that power of "her own good will." Spenser celebrates the lady's voluntary surrender in Sonnet 67 when he describes the deer who has successfully fled the hunter until she comes to the brook to drink -

> There she, beholding me with a milder look
> Sought not to fly, but fearless still did bide.
> Till I in hand her yet half trembling took
> And with her own good will her firmly tied.
> Strange things, me seemed, to see a beast so wild
> So goodly won, with her own will beguiled

In many ways, then, the strong heroines of Shakespeare's romantic comedies reflect a well-established literary tradition of the dominant mistress. Like the ladies celebrated in Petrarchan sonnets, Shakespeare's comic heroines are in command of the love-game, teaching their suitors how to woo, probing the depths of their gentlemen's professed love; but like the Spenserian mistress, they remain aloof only long enough to enjoy the chase, for they know full well that, their "own will beguiled," they eventually will surrender.[29]

"The mirror of her time"

In addition to the opposing views of women inherited from poets and moralists, Elizabethan attitudes towards women were probably also influenced by the existence of a highly successful Queen. By the 1590's the debate about the efficacy of a female ruler, provoked by Elizabeth's ascension to the throne in 1558, had long since been settled. Where in 1558 men had argued about her right to rule, by the 1590's, after thirty years of peace, they knew she could rule, indeed had ruled with wisdom and strength. How extreme John Knox's 1558 denouncement of all women rulers must have seemed to Englishmen of the 1590's: "To promote a woman to beare rule, superioritie, dominion or empire above any realme, nation or citie, is repugnant to nature, contumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his reveled will and approved ordinance, and finalie it is the subversion of good order, of all equitie and justice."[30] For, even if women were considered inferior to men, England had been blessed with the exception to the rule. Though she was to her fellow sovereigns, "only a woman, only mistress of half an island," Elizabeth nevertheless made "herself feared by Spain, by France, by all."[31] "This is the only miracle virginity ever wrought," John Lyly wrote, somewhat blasphemously, "for a little island environed round about with wars, to stand in peace."[32]

Instead of attempting to ignore the fact of her sex, Elizabeth had chosen the far more successful course of maximizing her "sexly weakness" in her dealings both with foreigners and Englishmen alike: "I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman," she protested time and again, "but I have the heart and stomach of a king."[33] In what was perhaps her cleverest political move, she had seized on her womanliness as the very

instrument to bind "all my husbands, my good people"[34] to her. Thus she became the bride of England, the wife to all Englishmen, the mother of all English children. Thus too she handled the problem of marriage. Knowing that she should marry to provide her kingdom with an heir but sensing immediately the dangers, both political[35] and personal,[36] that marriage might produce, she chose to solve the problem by instigating seemingly endless courtships. So for the greater part of her reign, even up to the death of the Duc d'Alencon in 1584, when any real chance of an heir of Elizabeth's body had long since died except in the hearts of true believers, courtship played an important political role in Elizabeth's life.[37]

In carrying on political courtships, the Queen used to her advantage the romantic view of women popularized in part by the sonnets, but she also used her well-educated mind. As an educated woman, Elizabeth was one of a small but prominent group. From the earliest part of the century, when Catherine of Aragon had employed the scholar Vives as teacher to her daughter Mary Tudor, the education of noble women had been fashionable, if not universal. The accomplishments of the outstanding learned ladies of the century - Margaret Roper, Lady Jane Grey, Elizabeth Jane Weston, Elizabeth Danvers and Mary Sidney - were well known.[38] Vives' treatises The Instruction of a Christen Woman, (written 1523, translated 1528; printed 1540), and De Ratione Studii (1524) went through several editions in the course of the century. Although Ralph Verney could warn against educating his goddaughter - "Let not the girl learn Latin." - the girl, Nancy Denton, did not agree. She wrote that she planned to outreach her godfather in Hebrew, Greek and Latin.[39] Others agreed with Richard Mulcaster, whose Positions (1581) argues that a girl's prospects for

marriage improved when she became learned. Many held, as Vives had in The office and duetie and an husband (1550) that ignorance or lack of learning "is the only cause, why all women for the most part, are hard to please, studious and most deligent to adorn themselves...for lack of good learning, they love and hate that only, the which they learned of their unlearned mothers." Furthermore, Vives added, learning engendered moral responsibility: "I by experience have seen and known...that all lewd evil women are unlearned and that they which be learned are most desirous of honesty, nor I cannot remember that ever I saw any women of learning or of knowledge dishonest."[40] Pierre de la Primandaye, whose Academie was so popular that it went through six editions between 1586 and 1618, holds that "Knowledge and Skill will keepe a woman from other unmeete exercises." "I like not the opinion of manie," he explains, "who saie, that women ought to knowe nothing but to spinne and sowe.... Such opinions are fit for ignorant persons, and proceede from a darke braine."[41]

By 1590, a number of women shared Elizabeth's learning and intelligence, at least if they were fortunate enough to have farsighted fathers like Sir Anthony Cooke, who believed that "sexes are well as souls are equal in capacity."[42] And although what education they received, with its emphasis on religion, medicine and needlework,[43] was geared in many ways to their roles as wives and mothers, it nevertheless provided women with the skills that they needed to run an estate in a husband's absence or in the event of his death.

Perhaps Englishmen accustomed to such women and to a strong-willed

Queen may not have been perplexed by the appearance of such heroines as Portia, Beatrice, Rosalind and Viola, who, like their Queen, are witty, crafty, husbandless and fatherless, and who, like her, maintain an upper hand in matters of courtship, educating their prospective mates in the ways of love. "Both in her life and her death," Thomas Dekker claimed of Elizabeth, "she was appointed to bee the mirror of her time."[44] Perhaps we catch a glimmer of that reflection in the heroines of Shakespeare's romantic comedies.

Reversal of Roles: "Venus & Adonis"

Shakespeare creates comedy by reversing traditional sexual roles in Venus & Adonis, "the first heir of my invention" and one his most popular works.[45] Entered in the Stationers' Register on April 18, 1593, Venus & Adonis went through sixteen separate editions before 1640. It is an Ovidian narrative poem derived from three passages in Ovid's Metamorphoses: Venus and Adonis (Book X), Salmacis and Hermaphroditus (Book IV), and Narcissus (Book III).[46] The poem reveals some of the attitudes towards women that Shakespeare uses to advantage in the comedies: 1) In Venus we see for the first time the comic reversal of roles that will become a typical plot device of the comedies. Venus takes on the role of wooer; Adonis becomes the coy evader of her advances. 2) As wooer, Venus controls what there is of the plot: She pursues; Adonis retreats. She lectures; he tries not to learn. She swoons; he responds to her swoon and is caught in her embrace. Only at the end, when he refuses to heed her fateful prophecy about the boar, does she lose control of the poem's action, and only then does the comedy come to an end. 3) Finally, Venus is a forerunner of Shakespeare's heroines who tutor their lovers in the

rules of courtship. To her, as to Portia, Rosalind and Helena of All's Well That Ends Well belongs the greatest number of lines. To her, as to Silvia, Viola and Rosalind, belongs the role of teacher of love.

In Venus, Shakespeare foreshadows the comic heroines who pursue their lovers and remain constant in love despite the young man's rebuffs. From Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593) to All's Well That Ends Well (c.1603) Shakespeare plays variations on the Venus theme. Julia is the first of his comic heroines to pursue her absent lover and teach him the true meaning of love; Helena of All's Well That Ends Well is the last. Only with Isabella in Measure for Measure does Shakespeare abandon the aggressive heroine first sketched in Venus.

The aggressiveness of the heroine and the coyness of the hero are Shakespeare's addition to Ovid's tale of Venus and Adonis.[47] In Ovid's version, Venus, loving Adonis more Than heaven," (11.614-615) attires herself like a huntress to be near him. Like Shakespeare's hero, Ovid's Adonis is "a sweete boy," (1.630) a hunter "more beawtifull than other." (1.603) But unlike Shakespeare's hero, he is not averse to Venus's affections. In Ovid's poem, Venus greets Adonis, warns him against lions and boars, and suggests they rest from the hunt together. Apparently he agrees - we do not know for certain because he says nothing throughout the poem - for the next lines are:

> They sate them downe anon,
> Any lying upward with her head uppon his lappe along,
> She thus began and in her tale shee kissed him among.
> (11.645-47)

After telling him the tale of Atalanta and Hippomenes, who were changed into lions for profaning the grove of Cybele, and repeating her warning against wild beasts, Venus takes to her chariot. "But manhood by

admonishment restreyned could not bee," (1.832) and Adonis hunts the boar and is killed. Venus returns, "tare[s] at once her garments from her brist," (1845) and "turne[s] Adonis to a flowre." (1.854) The tale is simply and seriously told. The emphasis is on the shortness of love and beauty that, like the anemone sprung from Adonis's blood, "cannot last." (1.863)

Shakespeare apparently saw the story in a lighter vein, for he added to the basic tale of Venus & Adonis two other passages from Ovid, passages in which the hero tries to flee the heroine's advances. In the stories of Hermaphroditus and Narcissus, the heroes are both young men whose beauty engages the heroine's desire, and whose refusal of love leads to an unhappy ending. Hermaphroditus "wist not what love was" (1.403) because of his youth; Narcissus "to be toucht of man or Mayde...wholy did disdaine" (1.442) because of his self-love. Hermaphroditus is embarrassed by Salmacis's proposal of marriage and her "clasping him about the Ivorie necke," (1.412) When he orders her to "Leave off...or I am gone," (1.413) she retires to the thicket from which she can watch him bathe. Stirred by the sight of "His naked beautie," (1.445) she throws off her clothes and jumps into the pool with him. There, "She held him still, and kissed him a hundred times and mo." (1.445) When he struggles to be free of her, and she begs the gods "That this same wilfull boy and I may never parted bee," (1.461) the gods answer her prayers by joining the two forever in one body. Like Hermaphroditus, Narcissus rejects the love of an aggressive woman, but his refusal of love is even more emphatic when Echo pursues him, Narcissus does not merely shoo her away with a warning, "He runnes his way and will not be imbraced." (1.486) Like Shakespeare's Adonis, he plays the chaste virgin: "I first will die," he says, "ere than

shalt Take of me thy pleasure." (1.487-88) Echo is so ashamed at this rebuff that she withers away until only her voice remains, and Narcissus goes on to covet his own reflection in the pool, where he dies.

Thus Shakespeare deliberately changes the Ovidian version of Venus and Adonis by grafting to it the characters of the aggressive woman and the unwilling man. Shakespeare's emphasis on this reversal of roles, inherently comic as it is, creates the comic counterpoint to the eroticism of the poem. And it is this comic reversal that Shakespeare uses again and again in the comedies between 1593 and 1603.

From the opening lines of Venus and Adonis, the sexual roles are reversed. Venus, "like a boldfaced suitor" (1.6) pursues Adonis, "the tender boy," (1.32) first complimenting him as "The field's chief flower, sweet above compare" (1.8), then plucking him from his horse. She kisses, she cajoles him with her tale of Mars, she cries "contending tears," (1.82) but she cannot warm his "frosty...desire" (1.35) or stanch the "maiden burning of his cheeks." (1.50) He plays the coy virgin to her undaunted suitor. When he appears "unripe" (1.128) for love, she argues carpe diem: "Make use of time, let not advantage slip." (1.129) When he does not return in kind the compliments she pays him, she praises herself (11.139-144), and when all else fails, she turns to conventional procreation cliches in an effort to move him: "By law of nature thou art bound to breed, That thine may live when thou thyself art dead." (11.171-72)

When forthright aggressiveness does not seem to work, Venus assumes the role of teacher of love. Citing the action of Adonis's horse (which has rushed away from its master in pursuit of a "breeding jennet"), Venus urges Adonis to "learn to love." (1.407) The horse, she argues,

understands the rules of nature that Adonis does not:

> He looks upon his love and neighs unto her;
> She answers him, as if she knew his mind.
> Being proud, as females are, to see him woo her,
> She puts on outward strangeness, seems unkind,
> Spurns at his love and scorns the heat he feels,
> Beating his kind embracements with her heels.
> His love, perceiving how he is enraged,
> Grew kinder, and his fury was assuaged.
> (11.307-314)

But Adonis is not won.

Having tried aggressiveness and argumentation to no avail, Venus ultimately conquers Adonis by doing a very "feminine" thing: She swoons. Adonis attempts to revive her with a kiss, "Her lips are conquerors, his lips obey." (1.549) Having succumbed at last, he "now no more resisteth, while she takes all she can..."

Thus Venus gives hints of many of the comic heroines to come. In her aggressiveness, she is like the Helenas of Midsummer Night's Dream (c.1595) and All's Well That Ends Well (c.1603), who pursue their lovers dauntlessly. In her argumentation, she is a more humorous Portia, taking every premise to its logical conclusion. In urging that Adonis learn from her the meaning of love, she is like Rosalind, who teaches a similar but more romantic lesson to Orlando in As You Like It (c.1599). In wishing "Would thou wert as I am, and I a man" (1.369), Venus is like Beatrice in Much Ado (c.1598-1600) who cries "O that I were a man!" (IV,i,299) And in swooning to bring about the desired end, Venus is like Julia of Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593)

As aggressive wooer and as tutor of love, Venus prefigures virtually all of the comic heroines of the decade between 1593 and 1603. She does not, however, share these characteristics with Isabella in Measure for Measure (c.1603-04). Because in Measure for Measure the roles are not

reversed, but follow the "natural" order (that man is the pursuer and woman the pursued), Venus's characteristic aggressiveness is seen in Angelo, while Isabella shares Adonis's reserve. Measure for Measure returns from the topsy-turvy world of female aggressiveness and superiority in love relationships to the (perhaps more realistic) world of female submissiveness and dependence. But without the comic reversal of sexual roles, without the aggressive heroine, without the naive or disdainful hero, Measure for Measure is a play quite different from the comedies that precede it. When, for instance, Venus argues that Adonis is "no man, though of a man's complexion" (1.215), it is comical, for try though she might, she can not force Adonis without some cooperation on his part. When, however, Angelo accuses Isabella of being unwomanly for the same reason (II,iv,128-134), the tone becomes more serious, for he has the power to force Isabella and is only prevented from doing so by the machinations of the Duke.

Bereft of Adonis and betrayed by love, Venus curses lovers: "I prophesy Sorrow and love hereafter shall attend." (11.1135-36) For a time, Venus's prophecy that love will be paradoxical, bringing with it sorrow, jealousy, war and death, holds true for many of Shakespeare's tragedies. Love buds and is "blasted in a breathing while" (1.1142) in Romeo and Juliet; it appears "fickle, false and full of fraud" (1.1141) in Hamlet; it "suspects where is no cause to fear" (1.1153) in Othello; it is partly "the cause of war and other dire events" (1.1159) in Anthony and Cleopatra. When Juliet cannot control the stars, when Ophelia obeys her bumbling father Polonius, when Desdemona becomes Iago's victim - tragedy is inevitable. But Venus's prophecies do not hold true for the comedies before 1603, comedies in which the heroines generally maintain control

of the love-game - as, for instance, Julia of Two Gentlemen, Rosalind of As You Like It and Helena of All's Well do. Only after Measure for Measure, a play in which the heroine Isabella defers to the Friar-Duke, does Venus's paradox take over in comedy as well as in tragedy.

Shakespeare's Use of the Diverse Traditions

From Venus and Adonis (c.1593) through All's Well That Ends Well (c.1603) Shakespeare juxtaposes for comic effect two contrary views of women. The first is the so-called "natural" order that man should rule and woman should obey, founded, as we have seen, partly on Eve's supposed seduction of Adam and on the biblical mandate that wives be subject to husbands. The second is a reversal of that order, probably founded on the literary conventions of the aggressive female of the epyllion and the "superior" mistress of the sonnets.

The "natural" order is expressed by characters like Luciana, in Comedy of Errors, one of Shakespeare's earliest plays (c.1592). Luciana, the unmarried sister of Adriana, rebukes her shrewish sister for complaining about Antipholus' liberty:

> There's nothing situate under heaven's eye
> But hath his bound, in earth, in sea, in sky.
> The beasts, the fishes, and the winged fowls,
> Are their males subjects, and at their controls.
> Men more divine, the masters of all these,
> Lords of the wide world, and wild wat'ry seas,
> Induced with intellectual sense and souls,
> Of more pre-eminence than fish or fowls,
> Are masters to their females, and their lords:
> Then let your will attend on their accords.
> (I,ii,16-25)

The same sense of "woman's place" emerges in Kate's triumphant speech before the widow and Bianca in Taming of the Shrew (c.1594). In it Kate the curst proves herself "tamed" by lecturing her sister and friend

on the duties the wife owes her husband, "thy lord, thy King, thy governor:"

> Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
> Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee
> And for thy maintenance; commits his body
> To painful labor both by sea and land,
> To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
> Whilst thou li'st warm at home, secure and safe;
> And craves no other tribute at thy hands
> But love, fair looks, and true obedience -
> Too little payment for so great a debt.
> Such duty as the subject owes the prince
> Even such a woman owes her husband...
> I am ashamed that women are so simple
> To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
> Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,
> When they are bound to serve, love and obey.
> (V,ii,151-169)

In both cases this view of woman follows the doctrine of degree stemming from biblical traditions such as those discussed above: Woman is the frailer sex; wives shall be subject to their husbands; woman stays at home while man ventures abroad; woman is, as Kate says, made to "serve, love and obey."

The traditional ideal of feminine virtue is also evident in the way Shakespeare's heroes laud their ladies. Petruchio's praise of Kate's supposed virtues is a catalogue of the qualities men would like to see in their women:

> ...she's not froward but modest as the dove.
> She is not hot but temperate as the morn.
> For patience she will prove a second Grissel.
> And Roman Lucrece for her chastity.
> (II,i,294-297)

Lorenzo in The Merchant of Venice loves Jessica for her wisdom, beauty and truth:

> Beshrow me but I love her heartily!
> For she is wise, if I can judge of her,
> And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true,
> And true she is, as she hath proved herself;
> And therefore, like herself, wise, fair and true,
> Shall she be placed in my constant soul.
> (II,v,52-57)

Benedick in Much Ado praises the ideal woman's qualities but believes he has set too many requirements for any real woman to fulfill: "One woman is fair, yet I am well; another is wise, yet I am well; another virtuous, yet I am well; but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace." (II,iii,24-27)

So much for the ideal. The comic reality is something else again.[48] In Venus and Adonis, as we have seen, the comic reality is that traditional sexual roles are reversed. In wooing Adonis, Venus describes how she reversed roles with Mars, god of war, mastering him, making him her "captive and...slave," causing him to "sport and dance...dally, smile and jest" to win her favors. In romantic comedies like Two Gentlemen of Verona, Merchant of Venice and As You Like It, the so-called "natural" qualities of women - silence, subservience, submissiveness - are disguised while the heroine displays her cleverness and superiority in the love-game. In plays where the heroine is not disguised - such as Comedy of Errors, Taming of the Shrew and Much Ado About Nothing - the heroine nevertheless often offsets the traditional (and usually male) view. Kate the curst, for instance, pinpoints the need for a woman to be on her guard against male idealization: "I see a woman may be made a fool If she had not a spirit to resist." (III,ii,216-217) Adriana, the shrewish wife of Comedy of Errors, warns her spinster sister that Luciana's attitudes about a wife's duties would be different if she herself were married. "But were you wedded," she warns, "you would bear some sway."

(I,ii,28) Benedick discovers that, although he has made difficult demands on a woman, Beatrice can meet them and turn him into a married man. (II,iii,211-213)

Frequently Shakespeare juxtaposes traditional and comedic attitudes by placing contrary qualities in two different heroines, one clever and outspoken, the other shyer and more circumspect. Thus we find such pairings as Adriana and Luciana in Comedy of Errors, Kate and Bianca in Taming of the Shrew, Julia and Silvia in Two Gentlemen of Verona, Hermia and Helena in Midsummer Night's Dream, Portia and Jessica in Merchant of Venice, Rosalind and Celia in As You Like It, Viola and Olivia in Twelfth Night and Beatrice and Hero in Much Ado About Nothing. But even in these pairings, the less lively heroine often possesses some of the untraditional qualities of her more assertive counterpart. Luciana is not so subservient that she cannot upraid her supposed brother-in-law for his ill-treatment of Adriana; Bianca is not docile that she does not prefer Lucentio as suitor over her father's choice, Hortensio; Silvia is not so demure that she does not attempt to escape from her father's scheme to marry her to Thurio, first by her thwarted elopement with Valentine, finally by her following after him to Mantua. Helena is not so much a "spaniel" that she will not pursue Demetrius into the magical forest, nor is she such a whiner that she cannot summon enough courage to upraid him for his infidelity or attack her tiny rival Helena as "vixen," "counterfeit," and (unkindest cut of all) "puppet."

Furthermore, Bianca, Silvia, Jessica and Celia share a most untraditional characteristic: Each rejects the rule of her father in some way. Bianca and Silvia refuse to marry the husbands their fathers have

chosen for them. Jessica and Celia, disapproving of their fathers' way of life, straightforwardly abandon them. Such disregard of a father's wishes was not usual Renaissance practice, but it was one that was necessary for effective comedy (as well as one that was apparently also becoming evident in real life). Shakespeare puts the traditional teachings on fathers into the mouth of Duke Theseus in the first scene of Midsummer Night's Dream. Chiding Hermia for wilfulness in wishing to marry Lysander against her father's wishes, the Duke lectures the recalcitrant girl:

> To you your father should be as god;
> One who composed your beauties, yea, and one
> To whom you are but as a form in wax
> To him imprinted and within his power
> To leave the figure or disfigure it.
> (I,i,47-51)

Hermia is not of course to be forced by her father or the Duke "to fit your fancies to your father's will." Instead she flees into the enchanted forest where the young lovers - with a liberal sprinkling of fairy dust - sort out their choices and eventually receive the blessing of parental and political authority. Tranio, Lucentio's clever servant in Taming of the Shrew, charts the untraditional attitude that the comedies are to take with regards to fathers:

> fathers commonly
> Do get their children; but in the case of wooing
> A child shall get a sire.
> (II,i,411-413)

The most independent of Shakespeare's heroines, Rosalind, Viola, and Beatrice, seem simply to be without fathers. (Of Beatrice it is said: "Truly, the lady fathers herself.") As we shall see more clearly when we examine contemporary records, as real-life children began to gain more control over their own futures, the comic device of disregarding

a father's wishes became a reflection of real events.

The depiction of the heroine who reverses traditional roles ends with the characterization of Isabella in Measure for Measure (c.1603-04). In the heroines created after c.1603, the focus shifts to the more traditional qualities of woman, qualities such as chastity, constancy and obedience. After Isabella, the heroine no longer follows Venus's example of maintaining control of the love relationship. In fact, the love relationship is not necessarily the central focus of the plot. The heroine, who had so frequently acted without regard to male authority, is now often depicted as a wife or daughter who must prove her worth to that authority.

As we shall see when we examine Two Gentlemen of Verona, As You Like It and Measure for Measure, the comedies indicate that Shakespeare was aware of the many, often contradictory contemporary attitudes towards women, for his plays incorporate a spectrum of these views. They suggest that, though as poet and dramatist, Shakespeare may have presented the power of the mistress in matters of love, he remained aware of traditional attitudes towards woman's "natural" sphere. His comedies seem to demonstrate that conventions satisfactory, perhaps even necessary, to a quick-silver courtship may not suffice for the "marble-constant" love of marriage. Nevertheless, he is no misogynist either. He puts curses against women into the mouths of villians - Iago's come most immediately to mind - and he fashions heroines who, even when they are no longer outspoken or "superior" to their lovers, demonstrate such admirable qualities as charity, chastity and constancy. At all times, the comedies show a profound understanding of the precarious balance of clever woman must maintain between societal and personal standards, not only as they

existed in the Renaissance but even as they exist today.

Notes, Chapter II

[1]Women bore from eight to 15 children, many of which were stillborn. John Donne's wife had 12 children in 16 years of marriage and died at the age of 33. Lady Danby died at 30 after bearing 16 children (including six stillbirths). Frances Clarke wrote to her father, Sir John Oglander: "This day month...I was brought abed with a son, which is my tenth child and pray God...it may be my last." (Wallace Notestein, "English Women 1580-1650" Studies in Social History, ed. J. H. Plumb (London and New York: Longmans, Green, 1955), p.90.

[2]For a fuller discussion of "the woman question" in the sixteenth century, see Louis B. Wright, Chapter 13: "The Popular Controversy over Woman" in Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935); and Charles Carroll Camden, Chapter 9, The Elizabethan Woman (Houston: Elsevier Press, 1952).

[3]Alice Clark, Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century (1919; New York: A. M. Kelley, 1968), p.35.

[4]Wright, p.24. For the number of works printed by the Widow Orwin, see A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, A Short-Title Catalogue (London: Bibliographical Society, 1969).

[5]See Myra Reynolds, The Learned Lady in England, 1650-1760 (Boston and New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1920), pp.4-37.

[6]"Some call her Pandora; some Gloriana; some Cynthia; some Belphoebe; some Astraea: all by several names to express several loves. Yet all those names make but one celestial body, as all those loves meet to create one soul. I am of her country, and we adore her by the name of Eliza." Thomas Dekker, quoted by Josephine Ross, Suitors to the Queen: The Men in the Life of Elizabeth I of England (New York: Coward, McCann and Geohegan, 1975), p.179.

[7]In W. B. Rye, England as Seen by Foreigners in the Days of Elizabeth I and James I (London: J. R. Smith, 1865), p.14.

[8]See Morris P. Tilley, A Dictionary of Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), entry W656. All biblical quotations are from The Geneva Bible, A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition (Madison, Milwaukee and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

[9]"Silence becommeth a woman," says a marginal note in Robert Cleaver, A Godly Forme of Household Government (London, 1592; Sig. $Q4^{V}$). Philip Stubbs, A Christel Glass for Christen Women (London, 1592), lists as a woman's greatest accomplishment that "She obeyed the commandement of the Apostle, who biddeth women to bee silent, and to learne of their husbands at home." (Sig. $A2^{V}$) King Lear (c.1605) says of Cordelia: "Her voice was ever soft, Gentle, and low - a good thing in a woman." (V,iii,272-73)

[10]Summa Theologica, XIV, 89.

[11]Quoted by Lu Emily Pearson, Elizabethan Love Conventions (1933; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), p.315.

[12]Quoted by Notestein, p.91.

[13]Quoted by Eudo C. Mason, "Satire on Women and Sex in Elizabethan Tragedy," Elizabethan Studies, 31(1950), 4.

[14]In G. B. Harrison, A Jacobean Journal (New York: Macmillan, 1941), p.13.

[15]Quoted by Juliet Dusinberre, Shakespeare and the Nature of Women (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p.176.

[16]See especially, Dusinberre and William and Malleville Haller, "The Puritan Art of Love," Huntington Library Quarterly, V (1942), 235-72.

[17]Quoted by Haller and Haller, p.250.

[18]Lawrence Stone, Crisis of the Aristocracy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp.596-7.

[19]Quoted by William P. Walsh, "Robert Greene: Moralist" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Riverside, 1971), p.44.

[20]Ibid., p.35.

[21]The first instances of this practice are in the wills of Lord Darcy of Chiche (1580) and the Earl of Pembroke (1595). (Stone, p.591.)

[22]Quoted by Notestein, p.75.

[23]Vives and the Renaissance Education of Women, ed. Foster Watson (New York: Longmans Greene & Co., 1912), p.110.

[24]Book IV in The Renaissance in England, ed. Hyder E. Rollins and Herschel Baker (Lexinton: D. C. Heath, 1954), p.531.

[25]C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p.9.

[26]"The most essential characteristic of Petrarchanism is adoration of the loved one, an adoration which makes her the center of all earthly beauty and relates all creation to her." (Pearson, p.252.)

[27]In Rollins and Baker, p.533.

[28]"The love which is to be the source of all that is beautiful in life and manner must be the reward freely given by the lady, and only our superiors can reward. But the wife is not a superior." (Lewis,p.41.)

[29]On the role of the courtship ritual in Shakespeare's comedies, see D. L. Stevenson, The Love-Game Comedy (1946; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1966).

[30]The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women (1558), p.9.

[31]Quoted by Alison Plowden, Tudor Women, Queens and Commoners (New York: Atheneum, 1979), p.161.

[32]Quoted by Ross, p.194.

[33]In Joseph M. Levine, ed., Elizabeth I: Great Lives Observed (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p.145.

[34]Ibid., p.67.

[35]If she married a foreign prince, England risked the likelihood of foreign intervention in her affairs; if she married an English noble, she risked civil insurrection by those lords jealous of the Queen's choice. Mary Tudor had taken the first path by marrying Philip of Spain; Mary Stuart the second when she married Bothwell after Darnley's murder. Both marriages succeeded in alienating each Queen from her people.

[36]"I should call the wedding-ring the yoke ring," said Elizabeth. In George P. Rice, Jr., ed., The Public Speaking of Queen Elizabeth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), p.31.

[37]The Scottish ambassador said to Elizabeth, "Madam, I know your stately stomach: ye think if ye were married, ye would be but Queen of England, and now ye are King and Queen both; ye may not suffer a commander." Quoted by J. E. Neale, Queen Elizabeth I (1934; London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), p.127.

[38]Margaret Roper, one of the first learned ladies, translated Erasmus' Treatise on the Lord's Prayer. Ann Cooke, Lady Bacon, translated 25 sermons from Italian, as well as Bishop Jewel's An Apology for the Church of England, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, translated Du Plessis Morray's Le Excellent Discourse de la Vie and de la Mort, and with her brother, Sir Philip Sidney, the Book of Psalms. For more information on educated women, see Reynolds, pp.4-37.

[39]Notestein, p.82.

[40]In Watson, p.200.

[41]Pierre de la Primaudaye, French Academie (London, 1594), p.477; p.523.

[42]Quoted by Violet A. Wilson, Society Women in Shakespeare's Time (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1925), p.9.

[43]"We know little about the schools for girls. Some of them were managed by French and Dutch immigrants who made a living in England by setting up schools in and around London. In such schools the girls were taught to play on musical instrument, to sing and dance, to do needlework, to read, and possibly to talk French. Here and there were women like the Countess of Huntingdon and like the grandmother of Sir John Bramston, who took in the daughters of their friends and gave them training." (Notestein, p.82.)

[44]Quoted by Elkin C. Wilson, England's Eliza (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), p.393.

[45]Dedication to Southampton in William Shakespeare, The Complete Works, gen. ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Pelican Books, 1969), p.1406.

[46]Ovid: Metamorphosis, translated by Arthur Golding (1587). In Geoffrey Bullough, ed., Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957).

[47]"In contrast to the sexual exploits of Jove, Neptune, or Mercury, where an element of comedy is usually present to offset the terror and grotesqueness of divine lust, the sexually obsessed women of the Metamorphoses are rarely, if ever, comic. In Elizabethan epyllia, on the other hand, the aggressive female wooer is often treated comically and even satirically, and this has to do...with her function as an antitype of the chaste, idealized, cruelly reluctant mistress so prominent in Renaissance lyric and pastoral poetry. But the savagery and violence of frustrated feminine libido are also present in the epyllion and indicate that Lodge, Shakespeare, and Beaumont were responsive to Ovid's tormented and desperate women." (William Keach, Elizabethan Erotic Narratives [New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1977], p.20.) comments

[48]It was somewhat different in real life as well. As Sir John Harington notes, "the shrewd wife read the book of Taming a Shrew, which... made a number of us so perfect, that now every one can tame a shrew in our country, save he that hath her." (The Letters and Epigrams of John Harington, ed. Norman McClure [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1930], p.416.)

Chapter III: Pursuit and the Reversal of Roles: Julia (c.1593)

Introduction

Some Contemporary Works (c.1593 - c.1596)

Woman as Wooer: Diana Enamorada

Two Gentlemen of Verona

The Heroine as Pursuer

The Heroine's Independence of Spirit

The Heroine as Tutor of Love

Run when you will. The story shall be changed:
Apollo flies and Daphne holds the chase,
The dove pursues the griffon, the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger.

Midsummer Night's Dream
(II, i, 230-233)

In creating his earliest comic heroines (approximately between the years 1593 and 1596), Shakespeare tends to reflect both moralistic notions of woman's inferiority and literary conventions of the aggressive female or superior mistress. Although the heroines he fashions during these years do not reach the maturity of the more fully developed Rosalind, Beatrice and Viola, they demonstrate some of the characteristics that we associate with those heroines: (1) the reversal of traditional roles, in which the heroine generally assumes the dominant role in courtship, often with the help of disguise. (2) a certain independence of spirit in which the heroine usually ignores or defies the wishes of a father and chooses her own suitor. (3) superiority in the love-game, in which the heroine, often demonstrating remarkable constancy, tutors her lover in the meaning of love and tests his worthiness. Before we look closely at Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593), a brief examination of these characteristics in other early heroines may be useful.

In a reversal of roles the comic heroine sometimes becomes an aggressor like Venus or a superior figure like the mistress of the sonnets. Shakespeare seems early on to have sensed the comic value of female aggressiveness. The aggressive heroine is evident in many of the early comedies, even in Taming of the Shrew (c.1594), where Kate displays a will to dominate others, most notably her father and her sister Bianca, and an aggressiveness that makes her Petruchio's equal and worthy adversary. ("Why, he's a devil, a devil, a very fiend," says Gremio. "Why, she's a devil, a devil, the devil's dam," [III,ii,151-152] agrees Tranio, underscoring their equality.) In the determined Helena Midsummer Night's Dream (c.1595), a heroine who pursues Demetrius through Athens and into the magical forest, Shakespeare creates a comic figure not found in the analogue, Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," and gives her more lines than any

character except Theseus.

As Shakespeare moves away from the physical comedy of Taming of The Shrew and Midsummer Night's Dream, he begins to reverse the roles in a more subtle way. The Princess of France and the ladies of the court in Love's Labour's Lost (c.1595) and Portia of Merchant of Venice (c.1596) for instance, are more like the superior lady of the sonnets than like the aggressive females of the epyllion. "We are wise girls to mock our lovers so," the Princess concludes (V,ii,58) after having read the gentlemen's sonnets. Throughout the play, the ladies maintain the position of vantage, knowing, from the start, the folly of oaths that abjure women and, later, reveling in the fun of watching Navarre and his nobles disguise themselves as a ridiculous "mess of Russians" (V,ii,362). Portia, the first of Shakespeare's heroines to have the longest role, maintains her superior position by assuming disguise and traveling to Venice. Garbed as a doctor of law, she not only saves Antonio's life but teases her new husband over his loss of her bethrothal ring. Though in each case the traditional roles are reversed, there is a very real distinction between the heroines of Shrew and Dream and those of Love's Labour's Loss and Merchant of Venice, for where the aggressiveness of Kate and Helena may have made them appear the object of any joke, the more subtle (but equally short-lived) dominance of Portia and the Princess of France makes them perpetrators of the joke.

Second, the majority of Shakespeare's comic heroines demonstrate an independence of spirit, either by choosing their own suitors or by defying a father's wishes. In Taming of the Shrew Shakespeare adds Hortensio to the plot, thereby giving Bianca a choice of suitors; yet Kate's supposedly docile sister deliberately carries on a romance with the disguised Lucentio

behind her befuddled father's back. "Have you married my daughter without asking my good will?" Baptista wonders when he learns of their conspiracy (V,i,121). In Midsummer Night's Dream Hermia defies both her own father and Duke Theseus when she runs off to the forest with Lysander. This, despite the fact that Theseus reminds her that "To you your father should be as a god." (I,i,47) In Love's Labour's Lost the Princess of of France, having come as her father's emissary, conducts her affairs independent of him until called back to France by news of his death. But before departing she hears Navarre's "confession" (V,ii,430-441) and promises him - on her own authority - that "I will be thine" when he has completed the penance she assigns. Although Portia must follow the terms of her father's will and marry a suitor who chooses the correct casket, she is willing to bend the rules a bit - for instance, by putting "a deep glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary casket...ere I will be married to a sponge." (I,ii,87-91) Jessica, of course, defies her father Shylock by escaping (with his ducats) to the happier world of Belmont.

Third, although it is not the case in Taming of the Shrew, where "Petruchio is the master" of "the taming school" (IV,ii,56,54) or in Midsummer Night's Dream, where all four lovers learn something about love from their brush with the fairy world, the comic heroine sometimes becomes the tutor of love. Assured of her sovereignty by having escaped or ignored a father's control, the comic heroine as tutor of love usually demonstrates superiority in the love-game. In the case of Love's Labour's Lost, the heroines seem to know instinctively that love is not demonstrated by foppish sonnets. It takes five acts for the men to learn that lesson. Berowne sums up best what the gentlemen have learned from the ladies of France:

> O, never will I trust to speeches penned.
> Nor to the motion of a schoolboy's tongue,
> Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
> Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affection
> Figures pedantical - these summer flies
> Have blown me full of maggot ostentation.
> I do foreswear them.
>
> (V,ii,403-411)

The King underscores the role of the mistress as teacher. "Teach us, sweet madam," Navarre begs of the Princess "for our rude transgression Some fair excuse." (V,ii,430-431) In The Merchant of Venice, Portia teaches about charity and mercy as well as about romantic love - she opens her home to Jessica and Lorenzo, offers to pay Antonio's bond thrice over, and finally argues in court to save the life of her husband's friend. In moving out of the world of the love-game, Portia stands virtually alone among Shakespeare's comic heroines, but in her role as teacher she is typical of many of them.

A final point - Shakespeare's heroines maintain their superior position only long enough to test their lovers. When the test is concluded, they embrace the traditional role of wife. The important factor is that, having chosen their suitors and judged them worthy, these heroines make an informed and deliberate decision - on their own authority - to marry. Evidence of love seems to be the deciding factor. Because Navarre proves himself capable of true love, the Princess of France promises herself to him. In Midsummer Night's Dream, only love will prompt Hermia to give up her sovereignty. Threatened early in the play with death or a "shady cloister" if she does not marry her father's choice, Hermia answers:

> So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord.
> Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
> Unto his lordship whose unwished yoke
> My sould consents not to give sovereignty.
>
> (I,ii,79-82)

But, in love with Lysander, Hermia is intent on surrendering that

sovereignty to him, despite her father's objections. Even in Taming of the Shrew Petruchio realizes that he can marry Kate only "if I get your daughter's love" (II,i,119), and Kate of the legendary tongue remains curiously silent (indicating, according to English common law, her assent) while he and Baptista seal the contract. But the most eloquent expression of the heroine's willing renunciation of sovereignty because of love is Portia's:

> 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 not,
> This house, these servants, and this same myself
> Are yours, my lord's.

In surrendering herself, Portia nevertheless emphasizes that Bassanio must continue to prove his love:

> I give them you 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 you.
> (III,ii,166-174)

When Portia confronts Bassanio with the loss of her ring, Portia's superior vantage returns, perhaps as a humorous reminder that the comic heroine, in accepting marriage, is not about to deny her wit and cleverness.

Many of these characteristics appear for the first time in the heroines of Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593). In many ways Julia and Silvia prefigure the heroines discussed here and Shakespeare's later comic heroines. For instance, Julia is the first to disguise herself and pursue a lover; Silvia is one of the first to defy a father's wishes is favor of a suitor of her own choice. By their constancy, both Julia and Silvia teach their suitors about the meaning of love, and thus they maintain a position of superiority in the love relationship. Finally, both heroines willingly renounce that superiority when they accept their

suitors as husbands, thereby allowing a return to the "natural" order from the comedic reversal of roles.

While many critics have recognized the pre-eminence of the comic heroine, few have inquired in what ways the actions of Shakespeare's aggressive or "superior" comic heroine may reflect contemporary views of women. To examine some of those views and the ways in which they may be reflected in Two Gentlemen of Verona, this chapter will consider several contemporary works dealing with women, such as sermons, proverbs and conduct books, and de Montemayor's Diana Enamorada (c.1559), the play's probable source, before going on to discuss the heroines of Two Gentlemen.

Some Contemporary Works (c.1593-1596)

As the previous chapter has suggested, attitudes towards women in the final decade of Elizabeth's reign were diverse and often contradictory. Where the Queen was mythologized as a new Judith or Deborah, or deified as Cynthia or Venus, ordinary mortal females were found to engage in more typical female pursuits and to exhibit the stereotypical female faults and weaknesses; for Elizabeth was always viewed as an exception. What these activities and faults were, can be seen by looking closely at some contemporary works either aimed at a female audience or offering to portray women's roles during the last decade of the century. In them we can see that women were defined as wives and mothers, and that to fulfill those roles they were urged to develop qualities of submissiveness and silence. But we can also see subtle modifications in viewing those roles, for wives are often seen not only as breeders but as companions of their husbands. And when the desire for companionship, friendship and love became recognized as purposes of marriage equal in importance to procreation

and avoidance of lust, attitudes about female roles were affected.

Because marriage and housewifery were the usual occupations of women[1] in the late sixteenth century, marriage sermons and conduct books are a reliable source of contemporary thinking about women. One of the most popular marriage sermons was Henry Smith's frequently reprinted A Preparative to Marriage (1591). Smith does not question the primacy of the husband, nor does he doubt woman's innate inferiority: "The husband saith, that his wife must obey him, because he is her better, therefore if he let her be better than himselfe, he seemes to free her from obedience, and bind himselfe to obey her (p.40). Men should treat their wives well but should not expect from the "weaker vessel" the same wisdom, faith, patience and strength he would demand of another man. "As wee doe not handle glasses like pots, because they are the weaker vessels, but touch them nicely and softly, for feare of crackes." Smith counsels, "so a man must entreate his wife with gentlenesse and softnesse, not expecting that wisdome, nor that faith, nor that patience, nor that strength in the weaker vessell, which should be in the strongest...."(p.43)

In addition to these traditional dicta, however, Smith's sermon propounds an equally important theory, the theory of mutuality. To the traditional purposes of marriage ("the propagation of children" and "to avoyde fornication") Smith adds a third: "to avoyde the inconvenience of solitariness signified in these wordes. It is not good for man to bee alone."[2] Thus by introducing concept of partnership in marriage, Smith enhances the role of the wife: "The man and wife are partners," he explains, "like two oares in a boate." For this reason, he says, a man must "divide office and affaires and goods with her, causing her to be feared and reverenced, and obeyed of her children, and servants like himselfe.... (p.43) In partnership, Smith goes so far to say that there is no true

marriage at all if the two partners cannot work together harmoniously, "Mariage is called Coniugium, which signifies a knitting or joyning together: shewing that unlesse there be a joyning of hearts, and a knitting of affections together, it is not mariage in deede, but in shew and name... (p.37) ("War is no strife, To the dark house and the detested wife," says Bertram in All's Well, II,ii,308.)

Smith's concept, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was not a new one. Vives in Office and duetie of an husband (1550) had written that God gave woman to man "not only for generations sake, but also for the societie and fellowshippe of life." (Sig. A5) Nor was it merely a religious one. La Primaudaye's Academie also stresses the concept of mutuality in marriage: "love and friendship," he writes, "is the fountaine of every good duty of the husband towards the wife..." (p.480). To maintain the love and foster that friendship, the husband must take care not to resort to a double standard of behavior: "He that taketh to himself those pleasures which he forbiddeth his wife, doth as much as if he commanded her to fight against enemies, to whome he had already yeelded himselfe." (p.477)

Popular proverbs[3] about women during this decade also reveal the growing sense of woman as man's equal partner. The first proverb, popular before the 1590's, declared that women were better when beaten. In 1581 Pettie construed it this way: "A woman, an asse, and a walnut tree, Bring the more fruit, the more beaten they bee." In 1591 it became: "Wives, asses, nuttes, the more they beaten bee, more good and profite they will yeeld to thee." But Tilley cites no examples of this proverb between 1591 and 1605. Instead preachers like Henry Smith remind their readers that "Her cheekes are made for they lips, and not for thy fists."

(p.44) A marginal note adds: "Husbands must hold their hands and wives their tongues." La Primaudaye warns: "Therefore let a wise husband know this, that he must never deal injuriously with his wife....and that he must abstain most of all from laying violent hands upon her." And he stresses the sense of dishonor that wife-beating entails: "He must not offer her any injury, either in deede or word, but honor and make much of her. For the Husband that honoureth his Wife, honoureth himself." (p.474)

The second proverb, "a woman is a necessary evil," is recorded in W. Baldwin's Treatise on Moral Philosophy (1547). It is repeated in Pettie's Petite Palace (1576) as "You, Gentlemen, may learn hereby.... to use them [women] as necessary evils." By 1590 in Rosalynde Lodge transforms the proverb somewhat, "So men when they have glutted themselves with the faire of womens faces, holde them necessarie evills." Thus the onus is no longer on the women for being evil (albeit necessary to procreation) but on the men for so judging them. Once again Tilley quotes no use of this proverb between 1591 and 1604. Shakespeare, who uses Lodge's story as the basis for As You Like It (c.1599), comes closest to alluding to this proverb when Berowne says in Love's Labour's Lost (c.1595) "Or women's sake, by whom we men are men Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves." (IV,iii,355-356) Here there is no sense of evil, only of necessity.

The third proverb, that woman is the weaker vessel (as Smith's sermon illustrates), remains constant in religious writings but takes on a new connotation in the context of the romances of the 1590's. In Greene's Mamillia (1593) its harshness is qualified: "They say, a woman is the weaker vessel, but sure in my judgement, it is in the strength of her body,

and not in the force of her minde." Shakespeare modified the meaning still further by employing it in a comic sense. Sampson, Capulet's servant, makes a joke of it in the opening scene of Romeo and Juliet (c.1596): "Women, being the weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall. Therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall and thrust his maids to the wall." (I,i,14) Rosalind uses it in As You Like It (c.1599) when she decides "I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought." (II,iv,5) The audience, knowing she is supposed to be a woman beneath her doublet and hose, can delight in her assuming of male characteristics. In The Rape of Lucrece (c.1594) Shakespeare reverses this concept of woman's innate weakness so that weakness becomes a virtue. Lucretia agrues that women do not cause their own downfall: "Then call them not the authors of their ill, No more than wax shall be accounted evil Wherein is stamped the semblance of a devil." (l.1244) Friar Lawrence in Romeo and Juliet ascribes to the same belief: "Women may fall when there's no strength in men." (II,iii,80) Thus even the assertion of woman's weakness becomes in these examples a factor minimizing woman's responsibility.

To conclude then, by the last decade of Elizabeth's reign, women were still defined as wives and daughters. Their virtues were still held to be obedience and silence; their vices, any deviation from those virtues. But during the 1590's there was a continuing suggestion of the efficacy of education, growing emphasis on partnership in a marriage, a strong disapproval of any practice of wife-beating. Complaints, conduct books, even sermons found women praiseworthy - indeed superior to men - in their chastity and constancy. Sonnets idealized women assigning to them supra-human beauty and virtue. Even proverbs about women current in the 1590's seem to bear less sting. Shakespeare's comic heroines derive in part from these

ideals, although as literary figures, they can perhaps go further in their actions than real women might have done. They can assume masculine disguise, travel with impunity, disregard a father, control a love relationship more readily than their real-life counterparts. At the same time, if these heroines had no basis in reality, their actions might have been either incomprehensible or (perhaps worse for a dramatist) uninteresting to their audience. Shakespeare, like most successful playwrights, seems always to have been aware of his audience's interests. Perhaps the audience of the years between 1593 and 1603, used to the "superior" lady of the Petrarchan tradition and the powerful lady who was their Queen, was particularly receptive to the strong-minded, aggressive heroines who people Shakespeare's romantic comedies.

Woman as Wooer: "Diana Enamorada"

Although Julia in Two Gentlemen of Verona, Shakespeare's first disguised heroine, shares some of the characteristics of the aggressive Venus or the "superior" lady of sonnet tradition, her immediate literary predecessor is Felismena in Jorge de Montmayor's Diana Enamorada.[4] The story, first published in Portuguese in 1559, was printed in English in 1598, but it had apparently been translated about sixteen years before that date and would have been available to Shakespeare. Shakespeare follows the source story in presenting a heroine strong enough to assume male disguise and pursue the lover who has abandoned her for life at court. He veers from his source by not making Julia the Amazonian warrior that Felismena was. Felismena, cursed by Venus to be "unfortunate in...love," is blessed by Pallas to be "most fortunate in arms."[5] Because of that blessing, she is able, at the beginning of the story, to save the nymphs from the attack of a brace of savages, and at its end, to save a besieged

and outnumbered knight (who turns out to be her lover Felix). Shakespeare's play, however, reveals no sense of the supernatural. Julia is unfortunate in love because of Proteus's lack of constancy, not because of any goddess's curse. And her own constancy in love, not a goddess's intervention, brings about the play's happy resolution.

The stories of Julia and Felismena do, however, share many characteristics. Each heroine toys with a letter from her lover, first scolding her maid for accepting the letter, then eagerly reading it. When each lover is sent to court by his father, Felismena and Julia dress as men and pursue them. Though willing to don men's clothing, each heroine worries about the unnaturalness of her act. "I have been forced by my cruel destinie to leave my natural habit and libertie and the due respect of my honour to follow him who thinkes (perhaps) that I do but leese it by loving him so extremely,"[6] explains Felismena. "O Proteus, let this habit make thee blush," Julia says when her true identity is revealed. "Be thou asham'd that I have took upon me such an immodest raiment." (V,iv,103-105) Both arrive at the inn in time to hear the heroes serenade another lady. Both hire on as pages to the unfaithful lover in which role they can praise the first love (themselves) to the new lady. And both rival ladies return the offer of love with rebukes to the unfaithful young men.

Finally both stories end with a swoon, although in Montemayor, the hero faints, and in Shakespeare, the heroine. In Diana Enamorada, Felix "like a dead man falls downe in a swoune at faire Felismenas feete,"[7] when he realizes that the shepherdess who has saved him is his abandoned mistress. In Two Gentlemen, Julia, still attired as a page, collapses when Valentine offers Silvia to Proteus. In her semi-conscious state,

she offers Silvia the wrong ring, thereby revealing herself. Both swoons lead to the denouement. But in the source story supernatural powers take over (the nymph revives Felix for Felismena), whereas in Two Gentlemen the revelatory swoon enables Julia to remind Proteus of men's inconstancy and to bring both Proetus and Valentine to their senses. "It is lesser blot, modesty finds," says the constant Julia, "women to change their shapes, than men their minds." (V,iv,109-110)

The difference between the power of the supernatural in Diana Enamorada and the power of female constancy in Two Gentlemen is a crucial change in the plot. Montemayor's tale needs Amazons and goddesses; Shakespeare's romantic comedy needs only a courageous girl in love. When Felismena's cursed by Venus, Pallas helps her overcome that curse by giving her unwomanly martial powers. These powers allow Felismena to save Felix from the attack of the three knights, but they do not enable her to awaken him from his swoon. That magical feat is performed by the grateful nymph Dona, whom Felismena had saved at the story's opening. Thus from curse to blessing to final feat of magic, the emphasis throughout the analogue is on the supernatural. In Two Gentlemen, on the other hand, there is no sense of the supernatural. The happy conclusion results from female constancy in love. Julia believes in Proteus, even when her eyes give evidence of his unfaithfulness. She hires on as his page and carries messages to his new lady love, all the while knowing that somehow she will win him back. Her counterpart, Silvia, also demonstrates such constancy, refusing to give up Valentine, despite Proteus's guilt and becoming instead an ever-present reminder of Proteus's changeability in both friendship and love.

Though Felismena is an Amazon, she does not demonstrate the strength of character that Shakespeare's heroines do. Despite his heroine's martial skills, de Montemayor turns to a dea ex machina to bring about the play's happy conclusion; Shakespeare looks no further than his heroine's constancy in love. The constancy, coupled with Julia's courage to pursue Proteus and her cleverness in assuming masculine disguise (both of which qualities she shares with Felismena), gives Shakespeare's heroine a superiority over the hero that de Montemayor's heroine simply did not possess. And it is out of this female superiority in love, first evident in Julia and Silvia, that Shakespeare fashions his comic heroines for a decade.

Two Gentlemen of Verona

Like the aggressive Venus, Shakespeare's comic heroine reverses traditional sexual roles. The heroine serves as the pursuer of the constant lover; the hero as the evader of love or naif who must be taught the meaning of love. To fill that role, the heroine is often willing to disguise herself and journey in search of her hero. Furthermore, as the heroine asserts her independent spirit, she often ignores a father and chooses her own suitors. Like the mistress of sonnet traditions, she demonstrates a superior role in courtship as she functions as teacher about love, both in word and deed. Julia and Silvia in Two Gentlemen of Verona are the first of Shakespeare's comic heroines to manifest these characteristics. Julia becomes the pursuer when she assumes masculine disguise and journeys in search of Proteus. Silvia reveals her independent spirit when she defies a father's wishes and chooses Valentine. Both heroines demonstrate superiority in courtship, as they teach the lesson of love's constancy - Silvia by her words, Julia by her actions.

The Heroine as Pursuer

Julia does not at first appear to be a pursuer. In the opening scenes Proteus is so "over boots in love" (I,i,25) that Valentine makes his friend the object of jest. But just as Proteus "cannot be a perfect man, Not being tried and tutor'd in the world" (I,iii,20-21), he cannot be a perfect lover until tried and tutored by his lady. As the callow Proteus must be sent to court to learn about the world, he must be followed there to learn the meaning of true love. Yet even before Proteus departs for court and Julia assumes disguise to follow him, Julia pursues him, by taking the lead in wooing. In the farewell scene, for instance, it is she who offers the first ring ("Keep this remembrance for thy Julia's sake.") and Proteus who reciprocates ("Why then, we'll make exchange. Here take you this.") The rings exchanged, it is she who suggests they "seal the bargain with a holy kiss," and Proteus who then offers his hand in assurance of "true constancy." (II,ii,5-8) By these acts - the exchange of rings, the nuptial kiss, and handfasting - Julia and Proteus have fulfilled three of the four requirements of the betrothal ceremony as set down by English law.[8] This exchange of rings is important not only as a symbol of their vow of betrothal, which makes Proteus guilty of perjury as well as of inconstancy, but also because it demonstrates Julia's ability to take the lead in love.

Having betrothed herself to Proteus, Julia senses the necessity of disguise if she is to follow him to court. Though naive in her complete faith in Proteus - "His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles" (II,vii,75), she says - she is not so naive as to trust all men. To prevent "The loose encounters of lascivious men," (II,vii,41), Julia determines to disguise herself as a man. Assuming such a disguise is not done easily, for Julia

is no Amazon like Venus or Felismena, but a proper gentlewoman who worries about the propriety of her action. "How will the world repute me," she asks her maid Lucetta, "for undertaking such a journey? I fear it will be scandalized." (II,vii,59-61) Despite her fears, however, she refuses to accept Lucetta's advise to "stay at home, and go not." (1.62) Julia is the first of Shakespeare's comic heroines to hit upon the benefit of disguise and to journey in pursuit of a lover. Her disguise gives her leverage (what one critic calls "discrepant awareness")[9] that Shakespeare's earlier comic heroines did not have, for the disguised character can see other characters as they truly are without revealing herself. Through her disguise, Julia can observe Proteus's inconstancy first hand, and through it she can monitor and ultimately correct him. Although she suffers to see Proteus woo Silvia, Julia is actually in a superior position. She sees Proteus, but he does not "see" her. Disguise allows her to hear Proteus perjure himself, but it also allows her to remind him of the worth of the lady he has forsaken. Disguise forces her to woo Silvia for Proteus, but it also enables her to come to know her rival as "A virtuous gentlewoman, mild and beautiful," (IV,iv,177), a woman as constant in love as Julia herself is. And when disguise gives way to the real Julia - at her swoon and hasty presentation of the wrong ring in Act V - it provides the means to the happy resolution of the play's romantic tangles.

Where Julia pursues Proteus by assuming masculine disguise, Silvia at first pursues Valentine in a more traditionally "feminine" manner. Aware of his love for her but not wanting to reveal herself, Silvia changes Valentine into a clerk of love, commissioning him to write letters "unto a secret, nameless friend" (II,i,97), who turns out to be himself.

Speed recognizes the "excellent device" (1.129) before his master does. In wooing Valentine "by a figure" (1.136), Silvia reverses traditional roles just as surely as Julia does by following Proteus to court. But when Silvia escapes from her father and literally pursues Valentine into the forest, the problems she encounters there underscore the importance of disguise in effecting a complete reversal of roles. In the forest, the undisguised Silvia is first accosted by bandits and then threatened by Proteus, who would "force thee to yield to my desire" (V,iv,58). Without the protection of disguise, Silvia can effect neither her own rescue nor a happy conclusion to the plot; without the sudden ability to reveal a hidden identity, she stands dumbfounded as Valentine offers "all that is mine in Silvia" to Proteus (1.83) and, for a moment, male friendship seems to overwhelm female constancy. (Only that is, until Julia swoons and offers the wrong ring.)

Although Silvia and Julia reverse traditional roles by their willingness to pursue love, they maintain that reversal only briefly. Disguise is an important factor in role reversal, and Julia is disguised only after Act III, Silvia not at all. In later comedies, heroines like Rosalind of As You Like It (c.1599) and Viola of Twelfth Night (c.1601) assume disguise quickly and decisively and in doing so achieve a superiority in their dramatic worlds that Julia and Silvia only hint at. Nevertheless, in their pursuit of love and in Julia's use of disguise, the heroines of Two Gentlemen of Verona serve as early sketches of the heroines to come.

The Heroine's Independence of Spirit

Julia and Silvia also prefigure later heroines by their independence of spirit. This independence is evident in their ability to make their own choices in love and in their decisions to ignore a father's wishes. Unlike the heroine of Diana Enamorada, both Silvia and Julia have been provided with a brace of suitors. Although Julia mentions in passing "fair Sir Eglamour" and "rich Mercatio," they never appear as rivals to "gentle Proteus" (I,i,9,12,14); yet the existence of these other suitors suggests that Julia has exercised her free choice in deciding on Proteus as her love. Silvia's suitors, in contrast, are featured prominently in the plot. Valentine must vie with Thurio, "My foolish rival that her father likes," (II,iv,171) as well as with his erstwhile friend Proteus. Silvia's exercise of free choice, therefore, constitutes a major part of the plot.

But more important evidence of the heroine's independence of spirit is the lessened power of the father. Three fathers figure in Two Gentlemen of Verona: Julia's, Proteus's and Silvia's. Julia's father is virtually non-existent; he does not appear in the play and is mentioned only twice - by Lucetta who calls Julia away from Proteus's letter with "Madame, dinner is ready; and your father stays." (I,ii,131), and by Proteus who wishes "that our fathers would applaud our loves to seal our happiness with their consents:" (I,ii,48-49) Yet, when Julia sets out to follow Proteus to court, she leaves "All that is mine...my goods, my lands, my reputation..." (II,vii,86-87) to her maid Lucetta as if she had no father at all. Such paternal invisibility is an important factor in the comedy's suggestion of Julia's independence, for it was written in an age when the power of the father was still great. Although, as we

have seen in the previous chapter, theologians like Becon in 1562 and Bullinger in 1575 had warned against marrying a child against her will,[10] Henry Smith's A Preparative to Marriage (1591) reminded his readers that the power of a father over a maiden had not diminished completely: "Againe, there is a lawe," Smith writes, "that if any free man, or free woman, make a vow, it must be kept. But if a virgin make a vow, it should not be kept unlesse the father approve it, because she is not free: therefore, if she did vow to marrie, yet the father hath the power by his lawe to break it." (p.43) Thus, by failing to provide Julia with a tangible stage father, Shakespeare has given his heroine the freedom to make and keep her own vows of betrothal to Proteus.

Proteus's father Antonio is not much more substantial (he appears only in I,iii), but his actions provide a better indication of an Elizabethan father's might. "I fear'd to show my father Julia's letter," Proteus says, "Lest he should take exception to my love." (I,iii,80-81) But Porteus's claim that the letter is from Valentine at court only confirms Antonio's already-made decision to send his son there as well. Furthermore, the manner of the father's announcement shows much about the relationship of Elizabethan fathers and sons. "Muse not that I suddenly proceed," Antonio warns, "for what I will, I will, and there an end." (I,iii,64-65) Antonio's disregard of his son's wishes is consistent with contemporary practice. "The head of a familie," says la Primaudaye, citing Aristotle in Academie (first published in 1586) "commandeth over wife and children, but over both as free persons, and yet not after one and the same manner of commanding, but over the wife, according to government used in a popular state, and over the children, roially or prince-like." (p.480)

The power of an Elizabethan father is even more evident in the most substantial father-figure in the play, Silvia's father, the Duke. His interference in Silvia's courtship is crucial to the plot. First of all, the Duke favors Thurio over Valentine as suitor to his daughter. To get her "To hate young Valentine, and love my friend" (III,ii,65), he employs Proteus, who uses the occassion to woo Silvia for himself. Secondly, when the deceitful Proteus reveals the lover's planned elopement to him, the Duke banishes Valentine and imprisons Silvia, thereby setting in motion her determination to escape his power and journey after Valentine.

Without the father-figure's interference, the heroine's courtship might have taken a different course. For, when Shakespeare no longer relies on fathers to impede the progress of courtship, he often sets up a different comic obstacle - the heroine's own reluctance to surrender herself until her lover proves worthy of her intelligence and virtue. Thus, many of Shakespeare's heroines engage in duels of wit designed to test the mettle of their lovers, as for instance, when the ladies of France in Love's Labour's Lost (c.1595) mock the abjured courtiers for their poetry and their play-acting; or Portia and Nerissa taunt Bassanio and Gratiano for the loss of their betrothal rings at the end of Merchant of Venice (c.1596); or Rosalind pretends to cure Orlando of love-sickness in As You Like It (c.1599). After Two Gentlemen of Verona, such teasing and testing of the hero - what D.L. Stevenson calls the "love-game"[11] - becomes a major part of the action of the comedies. But because Silvia's father presents the necessary obstacle to love's fulfillment, her romance with Valentine remains less a love-game than a game of outwitting the "uncompassionate sire." (III,i,231)

Nevertheless, in defying her father's wishes that she marry Thurio, Silvia demonstrates the independence of spirit that is often associated with Shakespeare's comic heroines. Pleading with Sir Eglamour to help her escape, she argues "the justice of my flying hence, To keep me from a most unholy match." (IV,iii,29-30) Her flight is just, because her father would marry her to a man "whom my very soul abborr'd" (1.17); the match "unholy" because she has secretly betrothed herself to Valentine.[12] Although Shakespeare's audience knew the Elizabethan father's might, they just as surely knew that Silvia's defiance of her father would have found affirmation not only in romances popular at the time but in several contemporary books of conduct. A maid "who hath made a fit choyce to her owne minde", says E. Gibbon in A Work Worth Reading (1591), has the right to oppose her parents wishes."Shal the severity of her father abridge her liberty, or deprive her of the lawfull remedy? Nay more than that, shall the maide increase in sin for want of her desire, because her father wil not yeeld his consent, unlesse it bee to her disliking?" Gibbon asks. "I say no. The Apostle teacheth us, It is better to marrie than burne, and yet she shall keepe her within the bounds of obedience, because she doth it not of purpose in contempt of her parents, but in regarde of Gods glory to avoyd the occasion of evill." (p.14) To Gibbon, making an unholy match is a greater evil than disobeying a father. To Shakespeare, disobeying a father is often simply a means by which his heroines can demonstrate their independence and control their destinies.

The Heroine as Tutor of Love

Like the mistress of sonnet tradition, Julia and Silvia function as tutors of love. Because the heroines understand from the outset the meaning of constancy,[13] they are superior to their heroes both in love

and in friendship. Just as Julia "metamorphosed" Proteus (I,i,66) into love's votary, her constancy ultimately changes him into a true lover. Just as Silvia "taught her suitor" Valentine (II,i,128) how to write love letters, she teaches Proteus and Valentine about faithfulness in love.

Much of the comedy of Two Gentlemen of Verona proceeds from the fact that many of the male characters are unaware of the heroines' superiority in love. Men like Proteus and the Duke, for instance, assume that women are inconstant. Thus the Duke advises Thurio not to worry that Silvia will languish for the banished Valentine. "A little time will melt her frozen thoughts," the Duke assures Thurio, "And worthless Valentine shall be forgot." (III,ii,9-10) Believing Proteus to be "already love's firm votary," who "cannot soon revolt," (III,ii,58-59) the Duke employs him as Thurio's surrogate suitor. For the same reason, Proteus cannot understand why "When I protest true loyalty to her," Silvia "twits me with my falsehood to my friend" or why

> When to her beauty I commend my vows,
> She bids me think how I have been forsworn
> In breaking faith with Julia, whom I lov'd.
> (IV,ii,7-11)

Annoyed by his constant pursuit, Silvia takes every occasion to berate Proteus for inconstancy and deceit:

> Thou subtle, perjur'd, false, disloyal man,
> Thinks't thou I am so shallow, so conceitless,
> To be seduced by thy flattery,
> That hast deceiv'd so many with thy vows?
> Return, return, and make thy love amends.
> For me, by this pale queen of night I swear,
> I am so far from granting thy request,
> That I despise thee for thy wrongful suit;
> And by and by intend to chile myself,
> Even for this time I spent in talking to thee.
> (IV,ii,92-101)

Even when Proteus rescues her from the outlaws, Silvia rebukes him: "Had I been seized by a hungry lion, I would have been breakfast to the beast, rather than have false Proteus rescue me." (V,iv,33-35) And when Proteus blames her refusal to accept him on "the curse of love... when women cannot love where they're beloved" (V,iv,43-44), Silvia corrects him, saying that it is he, not she, who "cannot love where he's belov'd." (V,iv,45)

Where the superior nature of Silvia's constancy is seen in her words, Julia's is seen in her actions. Though Silvia's lectures underscore Proteus's inconstancy, they do not succeed in bringing him to his senses. That kind of metamorphosis is reserved for Julia's example of faithfulness, and her final few words of derision. Out of love for Proteus, Julia dons men's clothes and journeys after him. Even when she hires on as Proteus's page and sees close-up his lack of faith, Julia's affection remains constant:

> Alas, poor fool, why do I pity him
> That with his very heart despiseth me?
> Because he loves her, he despiseth me,
> Because I love him I must pity him.
> (IV,iv,93-96)

And when, at the moment Valentine offers "All that is mine in Silvia" to Proteus (I,iv,83) and Julia's constancy is stretched to its limit, her swoon and her proffering of the wrong ring cause both Proteus and Valentine to come to their senses. Reminding them that "It is the lesser blot modesty finds, Women to change their shapes, than men their minds" (V,iv,109-110), Julia succeeds in teaching the lesson of women's steadfastness in the face of men's inconstancy. Despite all of Silvia's rebukes, Proteus is saved by a swoon.

When Shakespeare transformed Diana Enamorada into Two Gentlemen of

Verona, he emphasized not the power of the supernatural to bring about a happy conclusion, but the power of female constancy. Although his play is named for the two gentlemen of Verona and concerns what Proteus and Valentine learn about friendship, it also concerns what they learn about love. And what they learn about love is what Julia and Silvia teach them: that "were man But constant, he were perfect." (V,v,111-112) When Proteus and Valentine accept the lesson of constancy demonstrated by Julia and Silvia, they become the first of a line of Shakespearean comic heroes to be "metamorphosed with a mistress." (II,i,29)

In reversing traditional sexual roles, in defying or ignoring the will of a father and in tutoring their lovers, Julia and Silvia foreshadow most of the comic heroines Shakespeare is to create for a decade. Like Julia, heroines such as Portia (Merchant of Venice, c.1596), Rosalind (As You Like It, c.1599) and Viola (Twelfth Night, c.1601) assume a superior awareness in the love-game, along with masculine disguise. Like Julia, heroines from Helena of Midsummer Night's Dream (c.1595) to Helena of All's Well That Ends Well (c.1603) journey in pursuit of their lovers. Like Silvia, Bianca of Taming of the Shrew (c.1594) and Jessica of Merchant of Venice betrothe themselves against a father's will. And like both Julia and Silvia, virtually all of these heroines teach their suitors the meaning of true love. More important, like the heroines of Two Gentlemen, all of Shakespeare's comic heroines ultimately return to traditional roles at play's end, receiving (except for Shylock's Jessica) a father's blessing and surrendering their sovereignty to the heroes they intend to marry - in short, righting the reversal of roles on which so much of the comedy had depended.

Notes, Chapter III

[1]In these roles, they are offered cook books (such as The good huswifes handmaide for the kitchin, 1594, 1596, 1597); books on needlework (such as Giovanni Battista Ciotti's A booke of curious and strange inventions, called The first part of needleworks, 1596); and medical books (such as Christopher Hooke's The Childbirth or womans' lecture, 1590; or Thomas Raynalde's 1598 translation of Eucharius Roselin's (d. 1526) The birth of mankinde, otherwyse named the womans booke; or John Patridge's The Widdowes treasure, 1595, 1599).

[2]A Preparative to Marriage, pp.16, 17, 22.

[3]All proverbs are from Morris P. Tilley, A Dictionary of Proverbs in English in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950; 1966).

[4]In Geoffrey Bullough, ed., Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957).

[5]Ibid., pp.228-29.

[6]Ibid., p.233

[7]Ibid., p.229

[8]See Margaret Loftus Ranald, "The Betrothals of All's Well That Ends Well," HLQ, XXVI (1963), 181.

[9]The heroines of Shakespeare's comedies either hold from the outset, or very shortly gain, the highest vantage-points in their worlds." (Bertrand Evans, Shakespeare's Comedies [London: Oxford University Press, 1967], pp.15-16.)

[10]See Chapter II, pp.14-15.

[11]The Love-Game Comedy (1946; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1966).

[12]Silvia had reminded Proteus of her allegiance to Valentine, "to whom (thou art witness) I am betroth'd." (IV,ii,110)

[13]La Primaudaye considers "men...far inferior unto [women] in perfection of love." (Academie, 1594, p.493.)

Chapter IV: The Test and a Reversal of Roles: Rosalind (c.1599)

Introduction

Some Contemporary Works (c.1598 - c.1601)

Reversal of Roles: Lodge's Rosalynde

As You Like It

- Superiority through Disguise
- Romantic Limits to Superiority
- The Heroine's Renunciation of Superiority

And when a woman woos, that woman's son
Will sourly leave her till she have prevailed?

Sonnet xli

In Beatrice of Much Ado About Nothing (c.1598-1600), Rosalind of As You Like It (c.1599) and Viola of Twelfth Night (c.1601), Shakespeare develops fully the character-type of the clever heroine who reverses traditional sexual roles. In place of the ideal of the silent woman, Shakespeare offers us Beatrice who is noted to be "shrewd of tongue" (II,i,17), Rosalind who speaks like a "saucy lackey" (III,ii,290), and Viola who charms her way first into Orsino's employ, then into Olivia's heart. In place of the ideal of feminine submissiveness, he creates heroines who display independence of spirit: Beatrice, for instance, is determined to remain a merry spinster "until God make men of some other metal, than earth" (II,i,51), Viola makes her way in Illyria, on her own, without even her twin, and though Rosalind escapes to Arden in search of a father, once there she conducts her affairs without a thought of him. Each of these heroines chooses her mate without need of a father's consent and approval: Rosalind reveals herself to Duke Senior, her father, only after she has promised to marry Orlando, Viola's father does not exist as a character, and of Beatrice it is said, "The lady fathers herself." (I,i,99) And each heroine's actions influence the hero's behavior - from Beatrice's sudden order to Benedick to "kill Claudio" (IV,i,285), and Rosalind's clever manipulation of Orlando (through the device of the love-cure), to Viola's proving, through her faithful service to Orsino as he woos another woman, that all women do not love as Olivia does.

Two of these heroines, Viola and Rosalind, go on a journey during which they discover love. These same two assume masculine disguises that enable them to observe their lovers, undetected, and to tutor them in the meaning of true love. Beatrice (who, like Benedick, must be led

to love) wears a disguise of a different sort, for she uses her sharp tongue to mask her vulnerability in the "merry war" with Benedick.(I,i,54) "She speaks poinards," says Benedick "and every weapon stabs." (II,i,223) Thus her reputation as a shrew, like that of Kate in Taming of the Shrew (c.1594) protects Beatrice from "loose encounters of lascivious men" (Two Gentlemen, II,vii,41) as surely as masculine attire saved Julia.

I devote a separate chapter to these heroines, not because I perceive great changes in Elizabethan attitudes towards women or in the basic role of the comic heroine, but because an examination of the role of Shakespeare's comic heroines is incomplete without considering them. For, at the conclusion of a decade filled with sonnets praising ladies and of almost half a century devoted to the worship of the Virgin Queen, Shakespeare created three heroines whose independence of spirit and ingenuity are remarkable even among his many clever heroines. Though each of these heroines warrants a chapter, limits of time necessitate a close examination of only one of them. Therefore, this chapter will focus on Rosalind - because she both typifies Shakespeare's spirited heroines and transcends them.

In Rosalind, Shakespeare develops the reversal of traditional roles so fully that his heroine becomes the hub around which virtually all the play's lovers revolve. He heightens her superior vantage not only by disguising her as a boy (many of Shakespeare's heroines are so dis-disguised, as Lodge's Rosalynde, on whom his Rosalind is based), but in portraying her as physician to the love-sick. In this pose Rosalind accomplishes what many other comic heroines do not; she knows through the course of the play the depth of her hero's affection. For all her

wit, Beatrice does not cause Benedick to reveal himself to her. (Friends who sense their masked affection for each other do that.) For all her devotion, Viola does not learn till play's end that Orsino can love her more truly than he ever thought he loved Olivia. But Rosalind perceives Orlando's love from the moment she enters Arden. Yet as physician of love, she orchestrates an elaborate test of his devotion. In so doing, Rosalind achieves a reversal of roles and superiority in the love-game that is perhaps unequalled by any of Shakespeare's comic heroines.

Some Contemporary Works

During the final years of the sixteenth century, while Shakespeare continued to develop the character-type of the disguised heroine in Beatrice, Rosalind and Viola, popular works continue to give evidence of diversity of attitudes towards women. As in the works surveyed in the preceding chapter, these attitudes range from a misogynistic or paternalistic treatment of women to a neo-Petrarchan elevation of women. As before, Protestant writers frequently show an awareness of these opposing views, for instance, as they set forth rules for living a Christian marriage based, on the one hand, on woman's "natural" inferiority to man and, on the other, on her role as man's partner in marriage and equal before God. Despite this continued dichotomy, however, works that praise women, at the close of the century, seem to outnumber works that fault them, and those works that reveal misogynistic attitudes often prove not of English origin.

As the sixteenth century drew to a close, works with an overt anti-feminine bias published in England are more often translations of foreign

works than works of English writers. Giovanni Bruto's Education of a Young Gentlewoman, for instance, is a translation of a work originally published in Italian almost fifty years earlier (in 1555). Entitled La institutione di una fanciulla nata nobilimente, it had already been translated by Thomas Salter into English as A Mirrhor fit for all mothers, matrons, and maidens intituled the Mirrhor of modestie, no less profitable and pleasant, then necessarie to bee read and practiced in 1579. Although its views were perhaps out of date even when it was republished in 1598, its republication must mean it held some interest for readers at the close of the sixteenth century.

Bruto argues against educating young women because "the evil use of learning hath commonly been more cause of hurt and discommity to human life then the meanes of utility and profit....." (Sig.Eb^{v}) Calling on the authority of Jesus Christ, who did "wholy despise the wisdome of the world" (Sig.E8), Bruto assumes that all men adhere to his beliefs: "I think that there is not any man of good judgement, that had not rather had his daughter unlearned and shamefast, than suspected of her honestie and excellent in the study of philosophie, and of great renowne among the lerned..." (Sig. F5-F6) Apparently learning automatically led to loss of feminine honesty, while ignorance guaranteed its perpetuation. Bruto fears not only what may be learned from reading, but also the dangers inherent in the tutor who "yet may be of corrupt nature, and shew himselfe a man." (Sig. F2^{v}) (Shakespeare plays on such fears in the comical situation in Taming of the Shrew in which Baptista engages tutors for his daughters, Kate and Bianca, only to find that both tutors and daughters seek to outwit him.)

Where some liberal fathers might allow their daughters to study music, Bruto finds danger even there; for music "under the colour of vertue....hath in it a secret baite that leadeth to grievous mischiefes..." (Sig. H6), such as causing "a tenderly bred up" young gentlewoman to become "licencious, delicate and effeminate" (Sig. $H8^{V}$). Fathers should leave music to "people that are riotous and idle," Bruto urges, and have their daughters taught only "all manner of fine needleworke... and whatsoever belongeth to the distaffe, spindle and weaving" (Sig. I4). (In terms of Shakespeare's comedy, Bruto's advice may have been correct: one of the duplicitous tutors Baptista engages for Kate and Bianca is a music teacher.) Bruto bases these recommendations on his view of a woman's "natural" role, as man's helpmate but his inferior:

> for seeing that in the studie of learning then are two principal prints: the one recreation; the other profite: that can not be hoped for in a woman, who as by nature shee is given us for a companion in our labours, so she ought to be active and attentive to governe our houses, nor this manner of studie which procureth delight may not bee granted unto her, without great daunger to offend the beautie and flory of her minde.
>
> (Sig. F8-$F8^{V}$)

How Bruto's work was received is not known, but another Italian work containing a more obvious diatribe against women was one of a number of "leud and satirical" books burned in June 4, 1599, by order of His Grace of Canterbury.[1] That work is a debate between the brothers Tasso, called Of Marriage and Wiving. In it Ercole Tasso, "a learned philosopher," declaims "against Marriage or Wedding of a Wife":

> Friend, marry when thou please, yet shalt thou find
> Thy wife had always; and but use her ill
> And she is worse; but use her well and kind
> She is worser then, and so continue will.
> Yet is she good if she but once would die;
> But better if she packed before thyself;
> But best of all if she went speedily,
> Leaving behind to thee her hoarded wealth.[2]

Deference to the reigning Queen may be the reason that, although Ercole's declamation is full of misogynistic warnings such as "be at deadly hatred with all women kinde" (Sig. G3), the English edition makes a point to exempt the Queen of England from any condemnation of her sex. Though ordinary women be full of vice and should be shunned by men, Tasso manages to argue that certain noble ladies "sometimes" rise above the disability of their sex by nature of their "super humane and angelicale natures, not alone different and exempt from al such defects before rehearsed, but also of such excellent perfection and more then rare excellencie of so great bountie, and so worthy valor and vertue, as they bring far more beatitudes and blessing ...unto such men, whom they shall so much vouchsafe themselves to marry then the before mentioned others, do accumulate and heape upon their husbands, plagues and troubles." (Sig. G3^{v}) Stressing that such women are rare as "black Swans or...the peerlesse Phenix," Tasso names two, one of whom is "a Virgine and Maiden Queen,...the most excellent and vertuous Princesse Elizabeth, admirable Queene of England." (Sig. G4)

In addition to exempting certain noble ladies from criticism, the book offers a second part in which Ercole Tasso is rebutted by his brother, "that famous Poet and Orator," Torquato. The poet takes to task the philosopher's view of women in a lengthy prayer in praise of marriage. His section also concludes with effusive praise of "the

famous English Queen" whose "royall qualities, and matchlesse vertues," are "like a soundlesse Ocean that hath no bottome, like unto an intricate laborinth, wherein a man may sooner loose himselfe, then finde the end of the same any way." (Sig. L2) Apparently praise of Elizabeth was deemed necessary for the English edition. In the Italian versions each brother had seen fit to praise other ladies. Nevertheless, if the satire on women was what angered authorities, neither praise of Elizabeth, nor Torquato's defense of women saved Of Marriage and Wiving from the Archbishop's bonfire. Published in England on March 6, 1599, it was burned on June 4th. Its short life in England may suggest that diatribes against women, even when sweetened with kind words for Elizabeth, did not win favor in official circles as the sixteenth century came to a close.

Where writers such as Ercole Tasso excepted Elizabeth from their misogynistic views, Elizabeth excepted herself from the common practice of women of her day by remaining unmarried. By failing to marry, Elizabeth remained free of a husband's control, for she surely knew the traditional teaching that, once married, a woman - even a queen - was subject to her husband's will. In A godlie form of household government (1598), Robert Cleaver teaches that such a situation is God's will: "if shee bee not subject to her husband, to let him rule all the household, especially outward affaires: if shee will make heade against him, and seeke to have her owne waies, there will be doing and undoing. Things will go backward, the house will come to ruine; for God will not blesse where his ordinance is not obeyed." (Sig. G^{v}) To Cleaver as to Aristotle, a household is "a little commonwealth" (Sig. B) where some must rule and some must obey: "for as in a Citie, there is nothing more unequall, then

that every man should be like equall: so it is not convenient, that in one house every man should be like and equall together." (Sig. M7^{V}) As a subject, the wife must strive to cultivate the quality of silence, for "silence is the best ornament of a woman." (Sig. H3) The law was given to man because he is to be teacher and the woman his hearer. (In creating his comic heroines, of course, Shakespeare turns such notions of women's subservience and a call for their silence topsy-turvy. The nature of heroines like Julia, Portia, Beatrice, Viola and Rosalind is precisely to take control and to speak out.)

Amid such recapitulation of the traditional veiw, Cleaver, like Henry Smith before him, nevertheless adds another dimension. Though man may be superior to woman, he says, man must not think that his superior position entitles him to abuse his subject. Cleaver outrightly condemns those who use women "not as wives, but as their servants." (Sig. P5) Especially, he condemns wife beating. A good Christian husband, he says, must observe three rules in dealing with a wife: "Often to admonish: Seldome to reprove: and never to smite her" (Sig. 08). Furthermore, Cleaver also stresses an even newer consideration in the relationship between husband and wife - love. "Although the husband shall have power to his wife, to feare and obey him, yet he shall never have strength to force her to love him" (Sig. M3^{V}). To win a wife's love, a husband must offer love. Because he recognizes the power of love, Cleaver teaches that a husband's first duty is not to govern a wife, but to love her "as his own flesh," (Sig. I^{V}) for a wife who is prompted not by money (as are servants) or by threats and beatings (as are slaves), but by love, can become a man's "fellow and comfortor." (Sig. L4^{V})

This doctrine of companionship in marriage, of viewing the wife as a friend[3] (Sig. H5) had an important effect on the process of choosing a marriage partner. If husband and wife are to serve as partners, companions, even friends, the argument ran, the young persons contemplating marriage must be allowed to choose their own spouses. To allow young men and women to make a reasoned choice, Cleaver suggests that young people observe prospective mates engaged in diverse activities. They should, he says, "see one the other eating, and walking, woorking and playing, and talking and laughing, and chiding too: or else it may be, the one shall have with the other, lesse then he or she looked for, or more then they wished for." (Sig. H5) Aided by disguise, Shakespeare's comic heroines to just that. Julia, as the page Sebastian, observes Proteus in Two Gentlemen (c.1593), Portia, as the doctor of law, observes Bassanio in Merchant of Venice (c.1596), Rosalind, as Ganymede, observes Orlando in As You Like It (c.1599), and Viola, as Cesario, observes Orsino in Twelfth Night (c.1601). The disguised heroine is a familiar convention in Shakespeare's comedy until Measure for Measure (c.1603-1604) when the heroine is observed by the disguised Duke.

In Much Ado (c.1598-1600), Beatrice suggests how observing a suitor may cause a girl to seek to alter a father's wishes about her marriage. Advising Hero about marriage, Beatrice recognizes a daughter's duty: "It is my cousin's duty to say 'father, as it please you.'" But Beatrice adds that a girl must also follow her own desires: "But yet for all that, cousin, let him be a handsome fellow, or else make another cursy and say 'father, as it please me.'" (II,i,43-45) Even Cleaver might have agreed, for although he reiterates the traditional warning that

young people should avoid secret contracts and instead seek the "good advise and direction of their parents" about a prospective spouse, he also advises parents "to consent to allow their children to betroth themselves." (Sig. K^{v}) By emphasizing the desirability of having young persons betrothe themselves, Cleaver automatically lessens the power of the parent. This power of the young to make their own choices in love is evident in most of Shakespeare's comedies. In some comedies, where elders interfere in courtship the parent is the butt of the joke, like Baptista in Taming of the Shrew (c.1594). In other comedies, his actions can lead to comic complications, as when the Duke in Two Gentlemen of Verona banishes Valentine and attempts to aid Thurio's suit. In still others, the parent seems to disappear. In Merchant of Venice a father's presence is felt but not seen, when the will of Portia's dead father guides her choice of husband. And in the plays written during the period 1598 to 1601, the young couples pursue their love affairs with hardly any thought of a parent at all. In Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night, for instance, Beatrice and Viola have no fathers, and in As You Like It Rosalind reveals herself to her father only when she is about to marry Orlando.

The implications for the drama are evident in Shakespeare's comic heroines, for as the father's role in the plot diminishes, the heroine's role can expand. The central action of the play can shift from outwitting the senex to testing the hero. When the conflict is altered, the tone changes as well - from farcical, where a senex must be defeated (as in the Bianca plot in Taming of the Shrew) to romantic, where the hero is tested (as in As You Like It). Without an opposing father-figure to create romantic conflict, the playwright must create a new obstacle;

in the case of so many of Shakespeare's comedies, that obstacle is often the heroine's determination to test her lover, to evaluate his true worth, to gauge the depths of his devotion. That test, keenly dramatized in As You Like It, may reflect the social innovation of examining and choosing one's own mate for a marriage based on companionship, but it may also stem from the continuing tradition of the Petrarchan convention of the superior mistress.

Although by the closing years of the sixteenth century, the Petrarchan sonnet was apparently in decline and its conventions, such as the blazon, had become cliches (Shakespeare's Sonnet 130, "My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun", for instance, ridicules the Petrarchan idealization of the lady's physical attributes), praise of the lady was far from dead. Indeed, in 1599 two works which depend on certain Petrarchan clichés about women were published. One, Anthony Gibson's A Woman's Worth was "a translated Apologie of women's faire vertues."[4] The other was Nicholas Breton's The Praise of vertuous ladies, according to its title written to rebut "the discourteous discourses, of certaine malicious persons, writing against women, whom Nature, Wit and Wisedome... would us rather honour then disgrace."

In the tradition of the sonneteers, Gibson views woman's body as "the heaven or humane perfections", her soul, "the treasurie of celestiall and divine virtues" (Sig. B); her gifts and graces "infinite." (Sig. A2) Woman's beauty, "the cheefest gift of heaven," is "the excellencie of the Divine workemanship," the model of all things that are beautiful in this world. [p.60^{v}][5] Woman is so superior to man, Gibson claims, that "many diseases have beene cured, by the very beholding of women that came to visit" the sick. [p.53^{v}] Breton sees woman not as

"wo-to-man" (as a familiar commonplace had it), but as "Wooman" "for that shee doth woo man with Vertues." (Sig. 663^{v}) These virtues, both writers agree, include chastity, constancy and eloquence. Their chastity, for instance, is so great that men are to blame when women fall: "A woman can have no greater enemy than a man," Gibson claims, "who is like unto a revenous lyon, continually seeking to devour new spoyle." [p.43^{v}]. Were it not for the unbridled appetites of men, women would be able to maintain their chastity: "I never heard or knew," says Gibson, that any woman voluntarily gave her selfe to a man, without his braynes and craftie solliciting used before." (p.66) Even their eloquence is greater than men's, for female voices are "more mylde and gentle" than men's voices and as such demonstrate a natural harmony, as in music. [p.20^{v}] In short, so superior are women's achievements, says Breton, that "It were but a follie, to fill my Booke with examples, of this woman for constancie, and that for fidelitie, an other for huswiferie, and the other Woman, for worthie wit. Let this suffice in breefe, there is in sicknesse no greater comfort, in health no better companion, to a wise man, then a wittie woman." (Sig. Ccc)

In praising woman for chastity, constancy and eloquence, Breton and Gibson are in step not only with Petrarchan tradition but with Shakespeare's own pattern for his comic heroines. Like Gibson's paragons of feminine excellence, Shakespeare's heroines remain chaste despite the assaults of men; they remain constant in love despite the inconstancy of their suitors; and they teach about love through their eloquence. Like Breton's ideals of womanhood, Shakespeare's heroines delight men with their wit, and woo them not only with their virtues but in earnest. They fulfill the definition of woman as wooers of men, never as bringers of

woe-to-man.[6]

Thus as the sixteenth century drew to a close, attitudes towards women continued to be diverse - from the elevated view of women of the Petrarchan tradition, evident in the works of men like Gibson and Breton, through the moderate view of religious writers like Cleaver - who, accepting woman's "innate" inferiority nevertheless finds her man's companion and helpmate - to the misogynistic views of an Erole Tasso. Shakespeare undoubtedly was aware of all of them. His genius rests not so much in an ability to reflect these views in his drama, as in his ability to refract them, giving them, through art, a new dimension. His heroines are not simple dramatizations of attitudes towards Elizabethan women, but they are grounded in the realities of Elizabethan life. These independent heroines are maidens seeking to marry, not recalcitrant wives disobeying husbands. They control the love-game, that delightful series of encounters with which comedy concerns itself. Yet there is always the implication that the reversal of stereotypical roles and the superiority of heroine will end with the comedy. That implication resides in the fact that Shakespeare's heroines, while independent and spirited, on the one hand, reflect at the same time the more traditional "womanly" virtues of constancy and chastity. Shakespeare made his heroines aware that, although eloquence of word and independence of spirit may be necessary to win love, constancy of affection and concern for the beloved are necessary to keep it. Such behavior may have helped to make Beatrice, Viola and Rosalind comprehensible to an audience familiar with the works of such diverse writers as Tasso, Cleaver and Gibson.

Such behavior, of course, is not altogether different from that of

earlier heroines, like Julia, Portia and the Princess of France. Audiences viewing Shakespeare's comedies as the sixteenth century drew to a close would have been aware, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, not only of the literary tradition of the Petrarchan superior lady, but also of the growing sense in real life of a maiden's right to choose her marriage partner and to expect love, or at least companionship, in marriage. Shakespeare, it would seem, draws on familiar literary conventions and on the temper of the times when he peoples his comic worlds with heroines like Beatrice, Viola and Rosalind, who act on the knowledge that they can make their own choices in love, fashion the rules of the love-game and generally control the courtship. Beatrice, Viola and Rosalind are logical extensions of the heroines who precede them, not different kinds of characters. Beatrice's mature wit grows out of Kate's adolescent shrewishness. Viola's selfless service to Orsino is prefigured by Julia's service to Proteus. And the influence of Rosalind/Ganymede as doctor to the love-sick Orlando in the Forest of Arden is foreshadowed by that of Portia/Bathasar as attorney to the threatened Antonio in the courts of Venice. The difference is in degree, not in kind.

Thus, the literary, religious and social milieu in which Shakespeare worked between 1598 and 1601 when he probably created Beatrice, Viola and Rosalind was basically no different from that of 1593-1596 when he created Julia, Portia, and the ladies of France. The 1590's were a decade during which the sonnet achieved great popularity. The Petrarchan tradition of the superior lady and the obedient lover continued to be of interest (although by the end of the decade interest in the sonnet as a literary form may have been waning). And although the real-life role

of woman was certainly not so lofty as the literary one, the continued reign of Elizabeth, coupled with the Puritan stress on the companionate marriage seems to have made possible in the last years of the sixteenth century the full development of the spirited heroine, just as, earlier in the decade, these conditions had set the stage for her creation.

Reversal of Roles: Lodge's "Rosalynde"

Although Shakespeare's comic heroines may show the influence of the sonnet tradition of the superior mistress and the Protestant theories of companionship in marriage, the primary source for As You Like It is Thomas Lodge's romance Rosalynde or Euphues's Golden Legacy, first published in 1590 and reprinted in 1592, 1596 and 1598.[7] Similarities abound in the two stories. Rosalynde, the daughter of the banished King Gerismond, is herself banished to the forest by the usurping King Torismond. She is accompanied there by her friend and confidante, Alinda. To protect themselves, the girls assume disguises: Rosalynde as a page; Alinda as his mistress. Once in the forest they encounter three persons: a shephard, Corydon, through whom they purchase a cottage and sheepcote; Rosader, youngest son of Sir John of Bordeaux, who has escaped from his wicked elder brother; and Montanus and Phoebe, a love-sick shepherd and his disdainful lady. Shakespeare used Lodge's main characters and basic plot line though he changes the names of most characters and adds other characters to the plot.[8]

To find models of strong heroines Shakespeare had only to turn to Lodge, not to change his characters in any essential way. Shakespeare builds the characters of Rosalind and Celia directly from the blueprints Lodge provided. In both versions the heroines show strength and courage.

They turn from the rule of fathers, assume disguise and travel to the "green world" of Arden. In both versions they exert strong influence over the love plot and tutor the other characters in the meaning of true love. In short, the role of the heroines both in Lodge and in Shakespeare is based on the same reversal of sexual roles that Shakespeare had found comic since Venus and Adonis; the major difference in the two versions is the presentation of these heroines. Where Lodge gives his two heroines almost equal roles - both are outspoken and strong-willed, both have suitors, both control the love plot, both lecture on love - Shakespeare centers his play around the charcter of Rosalind.

He does so by making subtle but important changes in the plot, the most notable of which is the device of making his Rosalind/Ganymede a curer of love-sickness. By having Orlando return to Rosalind for "treatment" of his love-sickness throughout the play, Shakespeare not only focuses on their courtship (as the central one in a play filled with what Touchstone calls "country copulatives"), but he also transcends the literary convention of the mistress's testing of the hero's love. Through the device of the cure, Rosalind can plumb the depths of Orlando's love, gauging the sincerity of his devotion and assessing him as a future husband. But, through that device, the heroine can also create comic pleasure for the audience, whose members delight in watching her superior position as love-curer weaken each time Orlando speaks from his heart. Lodge was capable of creating the basic situation, not of stretching it to the limits of comic genius.

The difference is immediately apparent when we examine Lodge's treatment of the test. When Lodge's two lovers meet in the forest, Rosalynde-Ganimede tests the strength of Rosader's love by offering

Aliena to him: "the faire shepherdesse favours you," Ganimede teases; "one birde in the hande is worthe two in the wood; better possess the love of Aliena, than catch furiously at the shadow of Rosalynde" (II,205). Taunting him with accusation that he is not a constant lover, Ganimede gets Rosader to defend his love for Rosalynde: "If thou sawest my Rosalynde," he assures the disbelieving page, "with what beauties nature hath favoured her, with what perfection the heavens hath graced her, with what qualities the Gods have endued her; then wouldst thou say, there is none so fickle that would be fleeting with her." (II,208) Still supposedly unable to believe Rosader, Ganimede suggests that Rosader woo as if the page were Rosalynde: "let me see how thou canst wooe." There follows a brief and quite formal "wooing eclogue" in which Rosader begs Rosalynde to be "pittifull" of his love-sick state and she fears that his promises will prove untrue: "Were lovers true, maides would beleve them often." (II,211)

Where Shakespeare fashions this scene into the major action of the play, Lodge disposes of it in fewer than eighty lines. And, shortly afterward, Lodge turns his attention to the next pair of lovers. Having brought the courtship of Rosalynde and Rosader almost to completion, Lodge gives his secondary heroine as much of a courtship as he gives his titular heroine. When Aliena (Alinda in disguise) is accosted by "Rascalls" who would abduct her, she is saved by Saladyne, and promptly falls in love with him. Now it is Aliena's turn to receive sonnets written in her name and to test the sincerity of her lover's suit. Feeling love's first pangs, Aliena decides to allow herself to "become captive to Saladyne" because "women must love or they must cease to live and therefore did nature frame them faire, that they might be subject to

fancie." (II,225) But she decides it is wiser to conceal her love from him until she can assay his sincerity: "for there is nothing more precious in woman, than to conceale love, and to die modest." (II,225) Thus when Saladyne offers her his sonnet, and protests his love, she remains coy. "Sh Saladyne," she warns him, "though I seeme simple, yet I am more subtile than to swallow the hook because it hath a painted bait." And she adds, "as men are wilie, so women are warie," (II,236). She accuses him of self-serving flattery and chides him for the inconstancy of men: "so men when they have glutted themselves with the faire of womens faces, holde them for necessarie evills, and wearied with that which they seemed so much to love, cast away fancie as children doo their rattles..." By this method, she gets him to propose marriage. Saladyne, "hearing howe Aliena harpt still uppon me string," assures her "by the honour of a Gentlemen I love Aliena, and woo Aliena not to crop the blossoms and reject the tree, but to consummate my faithfull desires in the honourable ende of marriage." (II,237) And it is for that marriage that all of the inhabitants of Lodge's forest gather at the story's end.

Lodge sketches the courtship of Saladyne and Alinda with as much detail as he sketches that of Rosader and Rosalynde; Shakespeare has Celia meet Oliver and fall in love quite suddenly (V,iii). By Act V there is no time left to develop their love story, nor is it necessary. Lodge treats each courtship before moving on to the next; Shakespeare weaves the tales of Silvius and Phebe and of Audrey and Touchstone into Rosalind and Orlando's romance. Thus, though many love affairs flourish in the Forest of Arden, only Rosalind and Orlando's remains at the center of the plot.

Such a pedestrian narrative deflects interest from Lodge's Rosalynde, as does his assigning to Alinda initiative that Shakespeare reserves solely for Rosalind. In Lodge, it is Alinda, not Rosalynde, who suggests the mock-marriage of Rosader and Ganimede and it is Alinda who performs it: "Ile play the priest; from this day forth Ganimede shall call thee husband, and thou shalt call Ganimede wife, and so weele have a marriage." (II,214) It is she who proposes a feast to celebrate the nuptials, and it is she who decides when the feasting must break off. Later when Rosader returns after an absence of several days (having been reunited with his brother in the meantime), it is Alinda who chides him for his tardiness: "why how now Forrester, what winde hath kept you from hence? that beeing so newly married, you have no more care of your Rosalynde but to absent yourselfe so manie dayes? Are these the passions you pointed out so in your sonnets and roundelaies? I see well hote love is soon colde, and the fancie of men is like to a loose feather that wandreth in the aire with the blast of everie winde." (II,211) Still later it is Alinda who suggests that they toy with the love-sick shepherd Montanus: "I pray thee let us sport with this Swain." (II,241)

As a practical playwright, Shakespeare undoubtedly sensed the dramatic ineconomy and the loss of focus that equal treatment of both heroines would have caused. While never forgetting the wit and intelligence of Celia's literary predecessor, he chooses instead to concentrate his attention on Rosalind, giving her more of a central role in a play entitled As You Like It than Lodge did in a novel entitled Rosalynde. In focusing on Rosalind - assigning to her the longest role, affording her the initiative to "play the priest" and betrothe herself to Orlando,

inventing for her the excellent device of the cure - Shakespeare creates a heroine who is not only more compelling than Lodge's original character, but who also may be the most fully developed example of the strong-minded, spirited and independent heroine in his canon.

As You Like It

In Lodge's Rosalynde Shakespeare found the assertive, independent heroine, Rosalind. To touch that model with his own comic genius, he made, as we have seen, certain changes in Lodge's narrative. In the first place, he focused attention on Rosalind herself, where Lodge, despite his title, had divided attention between Rosalynde and Alinda. Not only does Shakespeare's Rosalind have the longest role in As You Like It (747 lines), twice that of any other character in the play and longer than either Macbeth's (704 lines) or Prospero's (665 lines) role,[9] she also speaks the epilogue. More important, Shakespeare assured that the focus would be on Rosalind by making her actions central to the plot. For one thing, Shakespeare's Rosalind offers herself as physician to Orlando, thereby creating both continued dramatic focus on their courtship and the vehicle by which she can test Orlando's love. For another, Shakespeare's Rosalind, not her confidante Celia, suggests the mock-marriage and orchestrates the scene, making certain that Orlando pronounces the espousal words correctly. Finally, at play's end, when all seems ready to collapse into confusion (Phebe loves Ganymede, Orlando still desires Rosalind), Shakespeare's Rosalind announces herself a magician capable of satisfying all lovers. In short, the role of Shakespeare's Rosalind, at least once the characters are safely ensconced in the Forest of Arden, is the pivotal one. It is she, not Touchstone, on whom the play hinges.

In creating his own spirited Rosalind, Shakespeare did not present merely a reversal of sexual roles. To do so would have been to create a character that is basically comic. Instead, in Rosalind he created a character who is richly romantic as well as comic. Shakespeare's Rosalind is an extraordinary character, who maintains control of the love-situation but never forgets for a moment that she is a woman, who speaks to her lover in a language one critic calls "tart and vernacular"[10] but who breaks into tears with her confidant Celia. She is a character who is at one time sensible enough to know that sonnet-crazed suitors make poor husbands, strident enough to scold love-wallowing shepherds, realistic enough to warn disdainful shepherdesses that loneliness may await, yet girlish enough to swoon at news of her lover's injury. Rosalind seems to possess all an audience could want in the heroine of a romantic comedy - common sense and cleverness as well as constancy and humility. Her character is comic because it reverses sexual roles and takes the lead in wooing; it is romantic because it reveals, beneath the disguise, a heroine who embodies traditional "feminine" virtues.

By combining elements of romance and comedy, Shakespeare creates his special brand of romantic comedy; by drawing on literary and social conventions about women, he creates a special kind of heroine. In certain ways Rosalind is the clearest example of the independent heroines that populate Shakespeare's romantic comedies. Unlike Venus, Rosalind is not so much a pursuer as a tutor and tester of love. In this quality her character is more mature than that of Venus in Venus and Adonis (c.1593). Venus merely pursues Adonis, and produces comedy. Rosalind tutors and tests Orlando, and produces romance. In knowing more about love than the comic goddess of love of the narrative poem, Rosalind is

a fuller, richer, more realized character. Her objectives are the same - to win a lover - but her tactics are different. Rosalind chooses wit over war, the cure over the chase. Thus, an examination of her role is necessary to any study of Shakespeare's comic heroines, not because her role is so different from that of Julia or Portia, Beatrice or Viola, but because it is so richly developed.

Superiority through Disguise

Rosalind's superiority in the love-game manifests itself in several ways, all of which rest on the fact that she is disguised as a boy. First, because of her disguise, like Julia in Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1594), Portia in the Merchant of Venice (c.1596), Viola in Twelfth Night (c.1601) and all of Shakespeare's disguised heroines, Rosalind enjoys the power of "discrepant awareness." She knows who she really is beneath her disguise; the other characters (except for Celia) do not.[11] This ability to see into others without revealing herself is important to Rosalind's function as a comic heroine. As a conventional literary mistress, Rosalind would have enjoyed a superior advantage in the love-game; as a disguised mistress, she is not in any way constrained by a conventional female role. As Ganymede, she can speak and act freely, not only with her lover but with others in Arden. Through her disguise, Rosalind can test Orlando's love more thoroughly (and more comically) than any conventional mistress could. Shakespeare capitalizes on Lodge's device by having Rosalind offer herself as curer of love-sickness. In so doing he sets her at center-stage, for in her role as physician to the love-sick, Rosalind can tutor not only Orlando but Silvius and Phebe in the meaning of true love. Finally, by shedding disguise, Rosalind

can bring about a happy ending, producing at play's end a husband for Phebe, as well as a wife for Orlando.

Like Julia of Two Gentlemen of Verona, Rosalind assumes disguise, disregards a father and journeys after a lover. Unlike Julia, Rosalind does not disguise herself so that she can pursue her lover. Orlando has not fled from her, only from his wicked brother Oliver and from Duke Frederick. Nor does Rosalind deliberately turn away from her father, as Silvia does in Two Gentlemen. In fact she journeys to Arden ostensibly to seek not her lover, but her father. "Why, whither shall we go?" wonders Rosalind when she has been banished from Duke Frederick's court. "To seek my uncle in the Forest of Arden," answers her cousin Celia. (I,iii,102-103) Though this quest for a father is quickly forgotten once Rosalind enters Arden, it is nevertheless her original purpose. Unconcerned with love as she escapes to the forest, Rosalind is surprised to learn that Orlando is also in Arden. That Rosalind does not recklessly pursue Orlando, as Helena pursues Gemetrius in Midsummer Night's Dream (c.1595), but instead cleverly devises to test him, makes her character more mature, though no less comic. The comedy in As You Like It is subtler, less physical than that in Dream. It arises not from the heroine's aggressive determination to pursue her lover but from her (sometimes futile) attempts to conceal a charming femininity under masculine attire while she tests him. Hearing that Orlando is in Arden, Rosalind rues her choice of disguise: "Alas the day, what shall I do with my doublet and hose?" (III-ii,215)

Her cry of "Alas" suggests that Rosalind might have thought twice about dressing as a man, had she known Orlando would be in Arden. She has not deliberately assumed disguise to follow and test him. Yet it

does not take her long to recognize and use to advantage the freedom that disguise affords her. "But doth he know that I am in this forest, and in man's attire?" she asks her cousin. (III,ii,295-292) When she learns that he does not know, she decides on her plan of action: "I will speak to him like a saucy lackey and under that habit play the knave with him." (III,ii,290-292) Then, as Ganymede, she approaches Orlando and asks the time of day. Thus, though she has not deliberately pursued Orlando into Arden, Rosalind does, by this little gambit, initiate their relationship there.

Out of this encounter grows Shakespeare's important addition to Lodge's plot - Rosalind's offer to cure love madness: "I would cure you," Ganymede says, "if you would but call me Rosalind and come every day to my cote to woo me." (III,iii,414-415) Through the technique of the cure, Rosalind can take full advantage of her disguise as Lodge's heroine could not. Because Orlando will be able to reveal his true feelings to Ganymede as he might never have been able to do to Rosalind, she will learn the quality of his love. Because he does not know her true feelings about love, she maintains the conventional superior position in the game of love. As Ganymede, physician of love, Rosalind can conduct a test of Orlando's love without revealing - except obliquely - her own feelings. Should she reveal more than she wishes, as she does when she swoons at news of his injury, Rosalind can retreat behind her mask and say she merely counterfeits. By this small stroke, Shakespeare transcends the convention of the test. In the device of the cure, the romantic test remains intact, but comic delight is superimposed. The extent of the comic delight, of course, was especially great for the Elizabethan audience who saw a boy (actor) playing a girl (Rosalind)

playing a boy (Ganymede) playing a girl (Rosalind). But it remains barely deminished in the modern theatre where actresses take the role. Regardless of who plays Rosalind, the audience is delighted as no reader can fully be by the heroine's bravado and frequent loss of it.[12]

Rosalind's offer to cure the love-sick is an important addition to Lodge's plot. In terms of drama, it assures frequent encounters between the lovers and it provides a bit of comic suspense. (When will Rosalind's mask slip?) In romantic terms, it keeps Orlando's love of Rosalind alive, for, although Ganymede is ostensibly curing Orlando, constant mention of Rosalind serves instead to keep his devotion keen. (Thus, in Act V, despite having experienced the cure, Orlando still desires the real Rosalind.) Finally, in terms of the mistress's conventional role, the cure provides Rosalind with the perfect dramatic means to test the quality of Orlando's love.

To test Orlando, Shakespeare has Rosalind - Ganymede portray Rosalind as a conventional mistress who demands proof of Orlando's ardor. At the very first, Orlando must demonstrate that he is love-sick. Ganymede, having claimed to be capable of curing love-sickness, refuses to believe that Orlando is indeed that "unfortunate he," the pitiful sonneteer, for he does not demonstrate the conventional marks of the love-sick - "A lean cheek,...a blue eye and sunken,...a beard neglected ...." When Orlando begs Ganymede to believe him ("Faith, youth, I wish I could make thee believe I love.") Rosalind-Ganymede refers to the mistress's conventional appearance of disdain: "Me believe it! You may as soon make her that you love believe it, which I warrant she is apter to do than to confess she does." (III,ii,363-379) The audience delights in being in on the secret, of knowing the

unconventional mistress (the "real" Rosalind) who exists under Ganymede's portrayal of her. Thus these words have double meaning. Orlando does have to prove his love to Rosalind herself, while she keeps her true feelings more safely hidden by a physical disguise than through a mask of disdain.

The second test of Orlando involves his view of women. By making Ganymede a bit of a misogynist, Shakespeare gives Rosalind the opportunity to weigh Orlando's responses, so her heroine can ascertain her suitor's worth as a future husband. Ganymede's first foray against women is relatively mild: "I thank God that I am not a woman," the physician of love says, "to be touched with so many giddy offenses as he hath generally toyed their whole sex withal." Orlando apparently does not share Ganymede's knowledge, for he asks the shepherd to repeat some of "the principal evils" of women. Ganymede rejoins: "There were none principal: they were all like one another as half-pence are, every one fault seeming monstrous, till his fellow-fault came to match it." Still Orlando seems not to know what these faults are, for he asks the boy again to "recount some of them." (III,ii,340-347) Orlando allows the common barbs against women, until Ganymede in a later scene includes Rosalind in the condemnation of her sex. Scolding Orlando for his tardiness, Ganymede says: "I had lief be wooed of a snail." "Of a snail?", Orlando asks.

> Ros.: Ay, of a snail. For though he comes slowly, he carries his house on his head; a better jointure I think than you make a woman. Besides, he brings his destiny with him.
>
> Orl.: What's that?

> Ros.: Why horns - which such as you are fain
> to be beholding to your wives for:
> but he comes armed in his fortune, and
> prevents the slander of his wife.

Though he may have quietly accepted dispraise of other women, Orlando leaps to the defense when Rosalind is impugned: "Virtue is no horn-maker," he declares; "and my Rosalind is virtuous." His defense is so vehement here that Rosalind almost drops her pose as Ganymede to betray her true self. "And I am your Rosalind," she answers revealing herself momentarily, until Celia's reminder: "It pleases him to call you so: but he hath a Rosalind of a better leer than you." (IV,i,50-64)

It is glimpses such as this one of the "woman" behind the mask that help create the blend of comedy and romance that is Shakespeare's own. In showing that Rosalind-is-Ganymede-playing-Rosalind, Shakespeare increases comic delight by allowing the audience to share with the heroine the power of discrepant awareness - the power by which she maintains her advantage in the love-game. This advantage is comic in that such superiority involves a reversal of traditional roles. But it is also romantic, for the frequent reminders of the heroine's "femininity" show that she is "many fathom deep...in love" herself (IV,i,196), and thus her superiority is a temporary phenomenon that will cease when the masquerade ends. Shakespeare seems to be saying that, under Ganymede's mask, Rosalind is a "real" woman, an English girl in love. (Of course, once again, we must remember the complexity of the comic response, for just as we know that Rosalind is not a real woman at all, but an actress, the Elizabethans knew that Rosalind was, underneath it all, a boy.)

In case the audience has missed the humor in Rosalind's berating of the female sex, Shakespeare has Celia remind his heroine that she

only counterfeits masculinity: "You have simply misused our sex in your love-prate. We must have your doublet and hose plucked over your head, and show the world what the bird hath done to her own nest."(IV, i,191-194) Though Shakespeare here uses the conventional accusations against women to create comedy, he also uses them romantically - as a means to test Orlando's view of women. As befits the romance from which As You Like It stems, Orlando proves by his answers that he is no misogynist and by his heartfelt defense of Rosalind that he is a constant lover. In submitting his hero to such tests, Shakespeare follows not only Lodge's tale but Petrarchan convention, in which the suitor is expected to prove himself to his lady.

In As You Like It Orlando must prove himself to others as well. For, although Rosalind may be the chief tester of Orlando, she is not the only one. In his scenes with Rosalind, Orlando attests to the quality of his love, but he is tested in other scenes. His physical strength is tested in the wrestling match with Charles (I,ii); his kindness in his concern for starving old Adam (II,vii); and his forgiveness in his encounter with Oliver and the hungry lioness (IV,iii). "Twice did he turn back," a contrite Oliver reports,

> But kindness, nobler ever than revenge,
> And nature, stronger than his just occasion,
> Made him give battle to the lioness,
> Who quickly fell before him....
> (IV,vii,127-131)

Orlando passes all the tests. Despite his lack of education and proper upbringing, Orlando proves himself, in fairy-tale fashion, a worthy gentleman and a true lover. As You Like It is a play in which the hero, not the heroine, must prove his worth. In later plays like All's Well That Ends Well (c.1603) and Measure for Measure (c.1603-04), it is the

heroine who must do so.

Just as Shakespeare improves on Lodge's conventional wooing eclogue by adding the device of the cure, he improves on the character of Rosalind by giving her the active role in the mock-marriage ceremony. Having accepted Orlando's response to the tests of love she has devised, Rosalind suggests a mock-marriage ceremony. Like her literary predecessor Lodge's Rosalynde, Rosalind turns to her friend Celia: "Come, sister, you shall be the priest and marry us. Give me your hand Orlando. What so you say sister?" Unlike Alinda, Celia demurs: "I cannot say the words." So Rosalind orchestrates the ceremony herself:

> Ros.: You must begin, "Will you Orlando - "
> Celia: Go to. Will you Orlando have to wife this Rosalind?
> Orl.: I will.
> Ros.: Ay, but when?
> Orl.: Why now, as fast as she can marry us.
> Ros.: Then you must say "I take thee Rosalind for wife.
> Orl.: I take thee Rosalind for wife.
> Ros.: I might ask you for your commission; but I do take thee Orlando for my husband.
>
> (IV,i,117-131)

By insisting that Orlando change his future-tense "I will" to the present-tense "I take thee Rosalind," Rosalind has in effect truly married Orlando. They have held hands and exchanged vows in the present-tense. Sixteenth century law recognized such a private marriage as valid. Although the Church disapproved of the practice, such unions had been recognized as valid since the twelfth century. According to Pollock and Maitland,

> Espousals were of two kinds: sponsalia per verba de futuro, which takes place if man or woman promise each other that they will hereafter become husband and wife; sponsalia per verba praesenti, which takes place if they declare that they take each other as husband and wife now, at this very moment. It is thenceforth the established doctrine, that a transaction of the latter kind creates a bond which is hardly to be dissolved.[13]

Rosalind shows that she is aware of the seriousness of their game when she tells Orlando "I might ask you for your commission," i.e. for proof that he knows what he is doing (actually marrying Rosalind). She "might ask" but she does not. Instead she offers her own vow to him: "I do take thee Orlando for my husband." So quickly has she answered that she has not even waited for Celia, the "priest," to prompt her, "There's a girl goes before the priest...," Rosalind quips when she realizes what she has done. (IV,i,132) In Lodge's version, Alinda had suggested the mock-marriage and Alinda had carried it out: "Ile play the priest; from this day forth Ganimede shall call thee husband, and thou shalt call Ganimede wife, so weele have a marriage." (II,214) By owing the idea and the execution of it to Rosalind, not to her comrade in disguise, Shakespeare has subtly strengthened the role of his heroine.

Romantic Limits to Superiority

In comic counterpoint to the true love of Rosalind and Orlando is the exaggerated love of Silvius and Phebe. These lovers, even more than Orlando, are the recipients of Rosalind's lectures on love (and a good deal of Shakespeare's satire on sentimentalism). From Rosalind each learns to temper the extremes of love - Silvius has been too ardent, Phebe too cold. Like a schoolmaster trying to keep laughter from breaking through his stern demeanor, Rosalind takes both lovers to task for their foolishness. She scolds "proud and pitiless" Phebe for exulting over her suitor's wretchedness. "Who might be your mother," she asks, "That you insult, exult, and all at once, Over the wretched?" (III,v, 34-37) In the same vein, she chides Silvius for being a "foolish shepherd" to pursue such a disdainful mistress: "Tis not her glass but you

that flatters her," she warns. "And out of you she sees herself more proper Than any of her lineaments can show her." (III,v,54-56)

In Silvius and Phebe's exaggerated poses, Shakespeare pokes fun at the convention of the disdainful mistress and her vassal-suitor. But he separates Rosalind, who also plays the superior mistress, from his gentle satire, by emphasizing her common sense pronouncements about the realistic limits to the conventions of courtship. Thus Rosalind advises Orlando to "die by attorney" rather than succumb to a broken heart. Thus she reminds Phebe that she is "not for all markets." Thus, reading aloud Phebe's love letter to Ganymede, she forces Silvius to recognize duplicity of the lady he worships.

A good deal of the fun of watching Rosalind soundly lecture Silvius, Phebe and Orlando is to see her in other scenes reveal the giddiness of her own love. Though Rosalind hides behind the mask of the "saucy lackey," she reveals to Celia, her counterpart and confidante, her true self, her traditional "feminine" nature, her fears and her tears. The audience learns much about Rosalind by watching her "play off" Celia. For this idea Shakespeare is indebted to Lodge, although once again Shakespeare's execution of a predecessor's idea is without equal. Through Celia, Shakespeare shows the audience what girlish impatience (to learn the author of the sonnets written in her honor) lurks beneath Rosalind's swagger. "Good my complexion!" Rosalind cries. "Dust thou think though I am caparisoned like a man I have a doublet and hose in my disposition? One inch of dealy more is a South Sea of discovery. I prithee tell me who is it quickly, and speak apace." (III,ii,191-195) To Celia Rosalind can show her anxiety about her lover's faithfulness because he has

missed the hour of their appointment: "Never talk to me," she tells her cousin, "I will weep." (III,iv,1)

It is at times such as this, when Rosalind's love shows itself as silly as that of any infatuated shepherd or sonneteer, that Shakespeare creates much comic pleasure, for underlying the bravado of the disguised heroine is the comic reality of the love-struck lady. By alternately exposing these sides of Rosalind, Shakespeare reveals his heroine's many facets. She is the aloof mistress of Petrarchan tradition, but she is also an English girl in love.

"What did he when thou saws't him?" she begs Celia, pummeling her with questions. "What said he? How looked he? Wherein went he? What makes he here? Did he ask for me? How parted he with thee? And when shalt thou see him again? Answer me in a word." "You must borrow me Gargantua's mouth first," Celia answers, recognizing the folly of this catalogue. "Tis a word too great for any mouth of this ape's size." (III,ii,215-224) Later, when Rosalind lapses into love reverie, it is Celia who voices common sense: "I cannot be out of the sight of Orlando; Rosalind announces, "I'll go find a shadow and sigh till he come." Celia maintains her realistic stance: "And I'll sleep." (IV,iii,205-208) Here and throughout the play, Celia alone can remind Rosalind of her pose, when the woman threatens to break through the man. When Rosalind would weep at Orlando's tardiness, Celia advises: "Do I prithee, yet have the grace to consider that tears do not become a man." (III,iv, 2-3)

Though Rosalind can be realistic about love with others, telling Phebe to sell what she has, "you are not for all markets," (III,v,60),

telling Orlando to "die by attorney" (IV,i,89), she cannot see the silliness of her own infatuation. She needs Celia to point it out to her.

Such use of Celia as confidante and corrector indicates that, in focusing on Rosalind, Shakespeare has nevertheless not forgotten Lodge's other heroine, who herself demonstrated qualities of reason and control. It also allows the audience to view the other side of Rosalind - the "traditional" side that coexists with her cleverness and dominance. Thus aware of the complex nature of her character, the audience should be prepared for Rosalind's final presentation of herself as daughter to Duke Senior and wife to Orlando. For Shakespeare does not create heroines so dominant or superior that they do not recognize the code of the world they are reflecting. They are clever, outspoken heroines but they are also English girls looking towards marriage.

The Heroine's Renunciation of Supremacy

Unlike the superior lady of sonnet tradition, who either remains aloof or engages in an adulterous love-affair, Shakespeare's comic heroines offer themselves in marriage to the suitors. In doing so of their own accord - not in deference to a father's wishes - the heroines maintain the reversal of roles. ("To you I give myself, for I am yours," Rosalind says to the Duke, her father, immediately before she addresses Orlando with the same words. (I,i,115) She does not wait for her father to offer her to her groom; she makes the offering herself.) In Rosalind's case, Shakespeare underscores this reversal of roles by making his heroine stage-manage not only her own, but all of the weddings that conclude As You Like It. He does so by giving her something that few

heroines, even the idealized ladies of Petrarchan tradition can call upon; he gives her a bit of magic.

Seeing Orlando desolate without the "real" Rosalind, Rosalind as Ganymede promises a magical solution: "Believe then, if you please, that I can do strange things. I have since I was three years old conversed with a magician, most profound in his art and yet not damnable. If you do love Rosalind so near your heart as your gesture cries it out, when your brother marries Aliena, shall you marry her." (V,ii,58-64) Knowing no other solution to Phebe's fixation on Ganymede and Silvius's devotion to Phebe, Rosalind promises them some magic too. "Tomorrow meet we all together. [To Phebe] I will marry you, if ever I marry woman and I'll be married tomorrow. [To Orlando] I will satisfy you if ever I satisfied man, and you shall be married tomorrow. [To Sil] I will content you, if what pleases you contents you, and you shall be married tomorrow." (V,ii,113-119) And in the final scene Rosalind fulfills her promises to all. In orchestrating the wedding masque, she produces not only a wife for Orlando, but a father for herself. Revealing herself, she speaks to Duke Frederick and Orlando: "I'll have no father, if you be not he. I'll have no husband, if you be not he." (V,iv,121-122) With these words, the balance of power is restored. The roles that had been comically reversed in the Forest of Arden are returned to their "natural" order. Rosalind becomes a daughter and then a wife; Duke Senior, having learned that his usurping brother Ferdinand has repented, assumes his authority as ruler. Thus, just as the mistress had issued the commands to her suitor in the fairy-tale land of Arden, Duke Senior issues the final command to his subjects before they

return to the "real" world.

Order restored, Shakespeare gives his Rosalind the final word. Because "It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue," Rosalind's unconventional appearance serves as a reminder of the notions of ideal feminine behavior that As You Like It has reversed. In comedy as in courtship, the mistress holds the advantage. Cressida puts it somewhat more cynically than Rosalind might:

> Achievement is command; unjoined beseech.
> Then, though my heart's content firm love doth bear,
> Nothing of that from mine eyes shall appear.
> (I,ii,279-281)

But there is no cynicism in Rosalind's recognition of a mistress's advantage, for she maintains it only long enough to test her suitor. Fatherless and husbandless, Rosalind enters Arden. That she controls so much of what happens there is in keeping with the literary convention of the superior mistress. That she emerges from Arden with a father and a husband is in keeping with contemporary social reality. In these ways she is like many Shakespearean comic heroines before c.1603. In her intricate disguise of Rosalind-playing-Ganymede-playing-Rosalind, and in her witty use of the love-cure to test Orlando, however, she demonstrates a fuller reversal of roles and a greater advantage in the love-game than virtually any of those comic heroines.

Notes, Chapter IV

[1]G. B. Harrison, The Elizabethan Journals, III (London: G. Routledge and Sons, 1938), p.20.

[2]Ibid., p.11.

[3]Marriages based on friendship were apparently common enough for Dr. Thomas Raynalde, author of a book on childbirth called The Woman's Book (1598), to urge women to allow their husband to read the book themselves: "for many men there be of a gentle and loving a nature towards their wifes, that they will be more diligent and careful to reade or seeke out any thyng that should do their wives good." (p.13.)

[4]Originally written in French, its English translation was dedicated to the Countess of Southampton and to Mistress Ann Russell, Mistress Margaret Ratcliffe, Mistress Mary Fitton and the rest of her majesty's Maids of Honour.

[5]A Woman's Worth sometimes shows signatures and sometimes page numbers; some pages show both.

[6]Shakespeare's villains frequently call upon the misogynistic tradition. For Iago's use of this tradition, see Carroll Camden, "Iago in Women," JEGP, 48 (1949), 57-71.

[7]In Geoffrey Bullough, ed., Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957).

[8]Rosader and his wicked brother, Saladyne, become Orlando and Oliver. The easily confused Torismond and Gerismond become Duke Frederick and Duke Senior. (Shakespeare also makes them brothers.) Alinda becomes Rosalind's cousin Celia. Montanus becomes Silvius and Corydon, Corin. Shakespeare adds the melancholy Jaques, the fool Touchstone the country folk Audrey, William and Sir Oliver Martext.

[9]The count of lines is based on the Pelican thirty-eight-volume edition. See Table II: Comparative Analysis, in William Shakespeare, The Complete Works, gen. ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Penquin Books, 1969), p.31.

[10]Mark Van Doren, Shakespeare (1939, Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1593), p.132.

[11]Discrepant awareness is the "advantage in awareness" enjoyed by the audience and by many of Shakespeare's disguised heroines. Disguise and her "extraordinary native gifts" give Rosalind "a towering advantage" over Orlando and everyone else in Arden. (Bertrand Evans, Shakespeare's Comedies [London: Oxford University Press, 1967], p.92.)

[12]The amazement of a contemporary observer, Thomas Coryat (1608), at seeing Venetian women perform as well as English boys indicates the talents of the boy-actress: Here I observed certaine things that I never saw before, For I saw women acte, a thing that I never saw before,...and they performed it with as good a grace, action, gesture, and whatsoever convenient for a Player as ever I saw any masculine Actor." (Quoted by Michael Jamieson, "Shakespeare's Celibate Stage," The Seventeenth Century Stage, ed. G. E. Bentley [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968], p.76.) For a listing of the boy-actresses employed by Shakespeare's company and the roles they probably played, see T. W. Baldwin, The Organization and Personnel cf Shakespeare's Company (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1927), pp.273-281. For further information on the boy-actresses, see W. Robertson Davies, Shakespeare's Boy Actors (1939; New York: Russell and Russell, 1964.)

[13]The History of English Law before the Time of Edward I (1898),II, pp.364ff. Quoted in As You Like It, ed. Agnes Latham (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1975), p.134.

Chapter V: Return to Decorum: Isabella (c.1603-04)

Introduction

Heroines Seeking Revenge: Epitia and Cassandra

"Instead of a lady whom time had surprised, we now have an active King."

Basilikon Doron (1603)

Measure for Measure

The Heroine's Dependence

The Theme of Lust

The Heroine's Test

These poor informal women are no more
Than instruments of some mightier member
That sets them on.

Measure for Measure, V,i,235-237

Although present day critics seem to agree that there is something different about the comedies written after 1603-04 - a certain darkness, a more real sense of danger, a graying of the distinction between right and wrong - they disagree about the causes of that difference. Some attribute it to Shakespeare's illness, others to an illness of the age, a mal du siecle evident not only in Shakespeare, but in Marston, Donne, Hall and Jonson.[1] Others, to the rise of the children's companies and a corresponding change in dramatic tastes.[2] Still others, to such influences as Guarini's theory of tragi-comedy[3] or Jonson's comedy of humours.[4] But no one has examined adequately the difference as it manifests itself in the changing role of the comic heroine, who up to this point had demonstrated a great deal of dramatic power, but who from this point on is more likely to be a reactor to, than an initiator of, the action.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, Shakespeare drew on the conventions of the aggressive heroine of Venus and Adonis, and the superior mistress of the sonnets in creating a heroine who enjoys an advantage in the love-game. To add a romantic element to this reversal of traditional roles, Shakespeare softened any harshness inherent in an aggressive or superior female by enduring his comic heroines with traditional feminine qualities, such as modesty, chastity and - ultimately - wifely submission. In revealing the "real" woman under the heroine's swaggering disguise, Shakespeare created characters who both refute and reaffirm traditional stereotypes of women. Heroines like Julia and Rosalind, for instance, who ignore fathers, pursue lovers and control, in large part, the moves of the love-game, nevertheless readily surrender their superiority once they have captured the lover they desire.

Starting with Isabella in Measure for Measure (c.1603-04), however, Shakespeare creates heroines who, though full of the feminine virtues that Julia and Rosalind had attempted to disguise, are far less likely than those earlier heroines to demonstrate aggressiveness, independence of spirit or superiority in the love-game. In heroines after Isabella - heroines like Hermione and Perdita of The Winter's Tale (c.1610) or Miranda of The Tempest (c.1611), even Imogen of Cymbeline (c.1609), who reluctantly assumes masculine disguise - there is little of the refutation of sexual stereotypes that had previously engendered a good deal of comic delight. In place of comic delight is a muted romantic pleasure, generated in most cases by the success of innocent goodness in the face of evil.

The difference, of course, may simply be one of genre. An aggressive heroine, like Venus of Venus and Adonis (c.1593) or Helena of Midsummer Night's Dream (c.1595), generates boisterous comedy, as does one like Kate the curst (c.1594), who would reverse "natural" roles and rule. A spirited heroine, like Portia or Rosalind, who reverses traditional roles only during courtship, generates the special kind of romantic comedy that is so often called Shakespearean. But a heroine who exhibits none of these qualities of role reversal, who is outspoken, perhaps, in defense of chastity, but who is ultimately unable to control her own destiny, generates comedy of a different sort. Whether that new kind of comedy had its roots in Guarini's theory of tragi-comedy, in Jonson's comedy of humours, in the rise of the rival children's companies, or simply in the temper of the times, if Shakespeare decided that this new comic form called for a heroine who observed rather than flouted traditional rules for female behavior, he would not have had to search

far for a compelling model. For although traditional female qualities, like silence and subservience, were evident in many contemporary sermons and conduct books, as we have seen in preceding chapters, they were recapitulated in one of the most popular works of 1603-04 - King James's Basilikon Doron (1599;1603). Several critics[5] have argued that Measure for Measure suggests Shakespeare's familiarity with James's theories of statecraft presented in that book, but virtually no one has inquired whether the change in the depiction of the heroine may also suggest Shakespeare's awareness of qualities that James might have considered acceptable in a female character.[6] For Isabella demonstrates qualities different from those of the comic heroines of the preceding decade, different from those of analogues characters in Cinthio's Hectomithi (1565) and Whetstone's Promos and Cassandra (1578), different even from those of Helena in All's Well That Ends Well (c.1603), a play written about the same time.

A brief glance at the portrayal of Helena in All's Well may indicate how novel is Shakespeare's portrayal of Isabella. Helena shares with Isabella and not with the earlier heroines certain important characteristics. For one thing, Helena and Isabella are more mature heroines than Julia and Rosalind. They must face real life problems - the law, sex, death. Helena must outwit Bertram's vow that he will not become her husband, in fact as well as in name, until she can prove a child of her body is his. Isabella must find a way to save her brother's life without submitting to Angelo's demands; having done so (under the Duke's aegis), she must demonstrate the quality of her mercy to the Duke. In short, both Helena and Isabella share a trial of their virtue. These heroines must prove themselves to their men; they must pass the test

instead of administering it. But where Helena passes the test through her own cleverness and determination, Isabella does so by submitting to the rule of a man (the Friar-Duke).

However, except for the test - an element basic to the tales on which All's Well is probably based[7] - the character of Helena shows little change from those enterprising heroines who preceded her. In fact, if we look back to the characteristics common to Julia and Rosalind and the other early comic heroines, we can see that Helena does indeed hew closely to the formula Shakespeare created for his comic heroines a decade earlier. First, Helena is free of a father. Like Portia, Beatrice and Viola, she is an orphan who must fend for herself. What paternal influence remains in benign. From her father she has learned the medical secrets that enable her to cure the King and ask for her reward. Second, Helena takes the lead in wooing. It is she who has loved Bertram secretly during the years she has lived with his mother, the Countess. And when her cure enables her to request a reward (marriage with Bertram), Helena does what knights in fairy tales have long done - demand a spouse of royal blood. Third, because Bertram refuses to accept her proffered love, Helena does what her comic forbears did: She journeys after the man she loves. Finally, like the earlier heroines, she reverses traditional roles. Helena cures The King and asks to marry Bertram. Rebuffed by him, she determines to pursue her husband and fulfill the impossible task he has set for her. It is she who meets with Diana and persuades Diana's mother, the widow, to co-operate with her bed-trick plan. Finally, it is she who sets up the confrontation of Bertram before the King, after which all the characters - including at last her

reluctant husband - praise the worth and cleverness of so enterprising a lady. In these respects, Helena is the last in a line of heroines that begins with Venus in Venus and Adonis (c.1593).[8]

It is not with Helena, then, but with Isabella that the depiction of the heroine changes, for Isabella is different from the heroines of the preceding decade in several ways: 1) Isabella is viewed as a spiritual daughter. As a novice, she is a daughter of the Church whose spiritual father is the Friar-Duke. 2) Isabella does not journey to a "green world," an Arden, an Illyna, a Belmont. There is no such gentle world hard by the stench and stews of lawless Vienna. 3) Isabella assumes no disguise. Without the benefit of disguise to protect her from what Julia of Two Gentlemen had called the "loose encounters of lascivious men" (II,vii,41), Isabella places her trust in the Friar-Duke, who alone assumes a disguise and enjoys the power of "discrepant awareness," a character's advantage in awareness, that had hitherto been the sole provenance of the comic heroine. 4) Isabella, unlike all of Shakespeare's other comic heroines, is not in love. Therefore, she takes no lead in wooing. In fact, Measure for Measure does not really deal with courtship and wooing at all. Before the play opens, Juliet has been wooed and won; Mariana, wooed and abandoned. Isabella, untutored in the ways of lovers, seeks only to "woo" Angelo into granting mercy for her brother. When her one attempt at wooing backfires, she finds herself unable to control the situation. This, of course, brings us to the most crucial distinction between Isabella and her dramatic predecessors. 5) She demonstrates no reversal of roles, a reversal on which Shakespeare had hitherto based his comedies. The Duke, as natural ruler and disguised spiritual father stage-manages the actions of many of the characters. He arranges the

bed-trick, he saves Claudio from the gallows, he reprimands Angelo, he punishes Lucio, and finally, he tests Isabella.

By looking at the analogues of Isabella in Cinthio's Hectomithi (1565) and Epitia (written 1573, published 1583) and in Whetstone's Promos and Cassandra (1578), we can see how different Isabella is not only from the comic heroines who precede her, but from the heroines in the probable sources. For, though both Epitia and Cassandra succumb to the "monstrous ransom," they remain at the center of their stories - bargaining with their seducers and ultimately seeking revenge from the rulers. In moving from a mere retelling of these "monstrous ransom" tales to a deeper exploration of the difficulties of ruling, Shakespeare chose to emphasize not the actions of the heroine, but those of the ruler. In doing so, he altered both the theme of the play and the portrayal of its major characters. To understand how different are Shakespeare's Duke and Isabella from their analogues, we must look closely at the characters that appear in Cinthio and Whetstone.

Heroines Seeking Vengeance: Epitia and Cassandra

The earliest analogues of the Measure for Measure story involve a wife who tries to save her husband's life by succumbing to the advances of a wicked judge. Shakespeare, following Cinthio's novella in Hechtomithi (1565) and play Epitia (written 1573, published 1583) and Whetstone's Promos and Cassandra (1578), changes the husband to a brother and his crime from murder to fornication.[9] Shakespeare makes three further important changes: 1) the heroine is made a novice, one about to dedicate her life to chastity; 2) her virginity remains inviolate by the use of a substitute; 3) the character of the ruler controls the

entire plot, not merely the concluding scenes of judgment.

There are several points in which Cinthio's Epitia (and following her, Whetstone's Cassandra) differs from Isabella. For one thing, although Epitia succumbs to the monstrous ransom (and Isabella, of course, does not), she does so only after having negotiated a promise of marriage from Juriste, the wicked deputy. Isabella, in contrast, negotiates nothing on her own. When she first approaches Angelo, she brings Lucio as mentor; later she follows the plottings of the Friar-Duke. Second, when Epitia discovers that Juriste has not kept his part of the bargain (i.e. freeing her brother), she settles for revenge, by seeking out the ruler and demanding Juriste's death. Isabella, on the other hand, presents her grievance to Duke Vincentio, not out of a sense of vengeance, but at the instigation of the Friar-Duke. And, finally, when Epitia succeeds in persuading the Emperor to condemn Juriste, Isabella succeeds (at first) only in being imprisoned for slander. Only at play's end, when she has proven that her sense of mercy outweighs her desire for justice, does Isabella persuade the Duke to pardon Angelo, as Epitia ultimately had persuaded the Emperor to pardon Juriste.

The character of the ruler is also different in Shakespeare's version. Where Cinthio's Emperor (and later, Whetstone's King) appears as deus ex machina only towards the end of the story, Shakespeare's Duke is in control from the very first scene. Where Cinthio's Duke hears Epitia's plea for vengeance, pronounces punishment on Juriste (marriage followed by death) and then, at Epitia's supplication, reprieves his deputy from death, Shakespeare's Duke sets up the very assignation, intervenes to save Claudio's head, sends Isabella to seek redress from her ruler and,

only then, sits in judgment as much on Isabella as on Angelo. Futhermore, where Cinthio's Emperor, without hidden motive, simply appoints Juriste his deputy, Shakespeare's Duke of Vienna deliberately sets out to test Angelo, and after using Isabella to do so, gratuitously tests her as well. Indeed, a major motif of Shakespeare's play is Duke Vincentio's testing of his subjects. Most obviously, he tests Angelo's fitness to rule and Isabella's spirit of forgiveness. But he also tests Escalus and Lucio, when he asks their opinion of the absent Duke. Escalus, who deems the Duke "A gentleman of all temperance" (III,ii,231), passes the test. Lucio, who calls him "A very superficial, ignorant unweighing fellow" (1.136), miserably fails.

By bringing the ruler center-stage from the first moments of the drama, Shakespeare changes the concept of the play. No longer is it a tale solely about the monstrous ransom. Now it becomes an exploration of the duties of a ruler. No longer is the heroine the focus of our attention; now all revolves around and emanates from the character of the Duke. Shakespeare may have given the character of the ruler a more powerful role, as many have suggested, in deference to James. But doing so calls for a concomitant change in the character of the heroine. Isabella must look for leadership so that the Duke may lead. To strengthen the role of the ruler, Shakespeare was perhaps forced to weaken the role of the heroine. To emphasize the conflict in Vienna between license and decorum, he needed a heroine who would not upset decorum by reversing roles. If he decided that a heroine embodying traditional "feminine" virtues would suit a thematic change, Shakespeare might have found a model for such a heroine in James's views of women, implied in Basilikon Doron, a book Shakespeare, like most Londoners of 1603-04, probably knew.

"Instead of a lady whom time had surprised,
we now have an active King."

Perhaps the most far-reaching social change to take place in England in the early years of the seventeenth century was the change of ruler. When Elizabeth Tudor died on March 24, 1603, James Stuart succeeded her. After 45 years, England no longer could worship its Virgin Queen. Although few would admit it publicly, that worship had not remained constant and universal in her waning years. As she entered the new century, Elizabeth, who through incredible political acumen and sheer force of will, had once sat, goddess-like, at the center of English life, who had been mythologized by painters and poets as Gloriana, Astraea, Virgo, et al., found herself aged and infirm and, far more devastatingly, barren. To the dismay of her counselors and her people, she refused, until she lay on her deathbed, to name an heir. Until then, although her cousin and godson, James VI of Scotland, seemed most likely to succeed her, she would go no further than her promise of 1586 not to injure his claim to the throne (unless, she had stipulated, he proved himself ungrateful).[10]

As the new century began, the official adulation of Gloriana continued. In painting Queen Elizabeth going in Procession to Blackfriars 1600, Robert Peake portrays her as a woman still young and beautiful.[11] At the conclusion of her "Golden Speech" (November 1601), she bade each member of Parliament to kiss her hand. The reality was, of course, quite different. Elizabeth was aged and infirm, as Sir Walter Raleigh called her, "A lady whom time had surprised."[12] The question of succession was on everyone's lips. "No man can be found so symple never to have thought of it," a contemporary wrote.[13] To squelch such talk, a bill was introduced into Parliament in 1601 to prohibit the publication of books on the subject. On February 8, 1601, Essex tried his

hand at forcing the question of succession. On the 25th, he lost his head for the attempt. By 1602, Elizabeth was suffering frequent illness, and her contemporaries were chafing under "the growing tyrannies of the queen" and complaining of "the sundrie causes of discontentment in the great part of the people, needful to be gratified by one means or another."[14] Such talk was not favorably received in high circles or in low. On the Queen's progress to the Earl of Derbey's house in Harefield in August 1602, a contemporary reports that "a country woman viewing her in the progress told her neighbours standing near that the Queen looked very old and ill; one of the guards, overhearing her, said she should be hanged for these words, and frighted the poor woman exceedingly."[15] Furthermore, despite all of Elizabeth's efforts, moral standards at court were deteriorating: Secret marriages were contracted without Elizabeth's approval on the assumption that the Queen would be dead before the lovers were discovered.[16]

In view of these factors, Robert Cecil began secret correspondence with the King of Scots who, despite his own anxiety about achieving the English throne, was generally accepted by Elizabeth's people as their future monarch. James, publicly Elizabeth's docile godson, claimed in private that the English, weary of the rule of an old woman, would welcome him. Apparently he was correct, for the announcement of his succession was indeed greeted with great joy: "The proclamation was heard with great expectation and silent joy, but no great shouting...the people, finding the first fear of forty years for want of a known succession to be dissolved in a minute, do so rejoice as few wish the Queen alive again.....All long to see our new King."[17] Elizabeth's final years had apparently quelled some of the ardor with which her people had celebrated

her. Englishmen did in fact look forward with joyful anticipation to the rule of James. In England's Mourning Garment (1603), Henry Chettle celebrated first the fact that their new ruler was a male: "For if God strengthened her Maiestie so, that against her being a woman, they could not prevaile, we trust his Almightinesse will be as careful of our King...." (Sig. C^{v}) Unlike Elizabeth, James enkindled hopes for the future, for not only was he male, but he had heirs. In praising the late Queen, who though a virgin, left her people an heir, Chettle nevertheless stresses the good fortune of James's fecundity: "...her Highnesse that ruled us many yeeres in peace, left us, in her death, more secure, by committing us to our lawful Prince, matcht to a royal fruitful Lady, that hath borne him such hopeful issue..." (Sig. $B2^{v}$)

During these early days of James's reign, Englishmen seemed to have nothing but praise for their new sovereign. Lord Burghley summed it up when he wrote: "The contentment of the people is unspeakable, seeing all things proceed so quietly, whereas they expected in the interim their houses should have been spoiled and sacked."[18] James had come to England, a king with a "gracious...mild and courteous" queen[19] and two sons and a daughter to succeed him, and he had done so without bloodshed or civil strife. The "bountiful beginnings raise all men's spirits and put them in great hopes," wrote Sir John Chamberlain of the King's entry in 1603. But Chamberlain sensed that James had perhaps made too many promises, had inspired too many hopes, "so that to satisfie or please all, hic labor hoc opus est, wold be more then a mans worke."[20] Despite Chamberlain's fears, James entered England to almost universal praise.

England's disillusionment with James was not to come till a few years later. His vague promises of toleration and his early remittance

of the recusancy fines had made Catholics hopeful during his first year on the throne, but their hopes were short-lived. In February 1604 he ordered the expulsion of priests; in November he restored the recusancy fines. His works of scholarship had caused England to look forward to the reign of Solomon as they looked back on the reign of Deborah and Judith. It was not until 1606 that Englishmen spoke of the "beastliness, riot and excess at Court" during a masque in honor of King Christian of Denmark.[21] His reputation for chastity had preceded him into England. It too was reexamined after his arrival. About 1606 the King and Queen ceased to live together; in 1607 the King took up with Robert Carr. Godfrey Goodman, created Bishop of Gloucester by James in 1624, notes that the people, "very generally weary of an old woman's government," had looked forward expectantly to the reign of the new King, for they had heard "what a good King he was, that he was the King of poor men, and would hear any man in a just cause." Furthermore, they had read his books, which "truly...did argue great abilities in him." Such a vigorous king seemed at first a great contrast to the Queen who "was ever hard of access, and grew to be very covetous in her old days." Only "after a few years, when we had experience of the Scottish government, then in disparagement of the Scots, and in hate and detestation of them, the Queen did seem to revive." Then, concludes Biship Goodman, "then was her memory much magnified, - such ringing of bells, such public joy and sermons in commemoration of her, the picture of her tomb painted in many churches, and in effect more solemnity and joy in memory of her coronation than was for the coming in of King James."[22]

But this was all in the future. What Englishmen knew in March 1603 about their new King was that he was a statesman and a scholar.

They eagerly snatched up copies of his works, especially Basilikon Doron. On March 28, 1603, six stationers entered Basilikon Doron in the stationers' register. It was immediately and immensely popular, and its wisdom and learning won for the new King the love and respect of the people he had just inherited. Bacon wrote in 1603 that Basilikon Doron, "falling into every man's hand, filled the whole realm as with a good perfume or incense before the King's coming in, for being excellently written and having nothing of affectation." Bishop Montagu commented: "What applause had it in the world....how it did inflame men's minds to love and admiration of his majesty beyond measure."[23]

In addition to the social changes evinced by the arrival of a new ruler, certain other changes were becoming evident in the popular writings of the time. In the late 1590's satire, for instance, became popular. And when the Bishops' Edict of 1599 outlawed satire in print, several satirists devoted their attention to the drama, where lust began to replace love as a frequent theme.[24] About the same time, Jonsonian corrective comedy flourished, and Shakespeare's romantic comedies were succeeded by his mature tragedies - like Hamlet (c.1601), Othello (c.1604), King Lear (c.1605) and Macbeth (c.1606) - and by comedies with a darker, more serious tone - like All's Well That Ends Well (c.1603) and Measure for Measure (c.1603-04). If a reaction against women is evident in any of these changes, Shakespeare does not reflect it. For, even as he abandons the character-type of the heroine who reverses roles, he continues to portray, for the most part, heroines who demonstrate idealized "feminine" qualities - the innocence of Ophelia, the constancy of Desdemona, the chastity of Isabella, the daughterliness of Miranda. Although his heroines had always demonstrated such traditionally

"feminine" qualities, the comic heroines, at least, had done so only after demonstrating as well such "masculine" characteristics as aggressiveness and independence of spirit. Heroines in the comedies and romances after 1603-04, however, are generally no longer witty, disguised, fatherless or husbandless pursuers of men; now they are more often daughters (like Isabella, a "daughter" of the Church, or Marina) or wives (like Imogen or Hermione) whose "feminine" virtues of chastity and constancy are tested and questioned. In short, these characters no longer demonstrate the reversal of roles that had given Shakespeare's comic heroines since Julia (c.1593) such advantage in their dramatic worlds.

Whether this alteration in the portrayal of the heroine was occassioned by a change in genre, by changing audience interests or by the subtle influence of a male ruler after so many years of female rule - if Shakespeare sensed the need for a heroine who embodied traditional "feminine" qualities, he could have found a contemporary model for that heroine in King James's Basilikon Doron.

Basilikon Doron

Basilikon Doron ("Kingly Gift"),[25] James's advice to his son, Prince Henry, on the duties of a King (first issued privately in seven copies in 1599), went through six separate public editions in 1603 alone, as Londoners showed themselves eager to learn as much as possible about their new king. It is generally agreed that it would have been surprising if Shakespeare had not read "the King's book," for the King was the main topic of conversation in London and his book became an immediate success. William Camden remarks that the book won great

favor for the King with his new people: "Incredible it is how mens Hearts and Affections he wone unto him by his writing of it and what an Expectation of himself he raised amongst all men, even to Admiration."[26] If all London was reading James's work, as the many editions seem to show, and if Shakespeare gleaned hints of James's political theory from Basilikon Doron, as several critics have demonstrated,[27] he may also have found there a model for the kind of heroine he needed in Measure for Measure, a play presented at Court on December 26, 1604.

The King's views of women can be inferred from the advice he gives to his son in the second book of Basilikon Doron, "Of a Kings Duetie in His office." Marriage is part of a king's duty, says James, only because marriage provides for heirs. For that reason James himself had married Anne of Denmark. On the eve of that marriage, he had made his purpose clear by announcing, "God is my witness, I could have abstained longer than the weal of my country could have permitted, [had not] my long delay bred in the breasts of many a great jealousy of my ability, as if I were a barren stock."[28] And he reiterates this statement for his son in 1599.

Although Prince Henry was only five years old when Basilikon Doron was first published, the King details how the boy is to find a "godlie and vertuous Wife" [Sig. $M3^{v}$], a woman who can serve as a helpmate and companion. The chief duty of a prince preparing for marriage, says James, is chastity. "For how can ye justlie crave to be ioyned with a pure Virgin, if your bodie be polluted? Why should the one halfe be cleane and the other defiled?" asks James [Sig. $M4^{v}$] Although aware

that fornication "is thought but a veniall sinne by the most part of the world," James, following Paul (1 Cor. 6:19) and John (Rev 22:15), considers it among the most grievous sins that bar entry into heaven. (Sig. N) James does not argue (as did the Puritans, who were beginning to condemn the double-standard)[29] that a young man should avoid fornication because he should present his wife with the same virginity that he demands of her. Instead, he claims that the prince should remain chaste because of the threat of punishment in this world and in the next; for a man who gives himself over to "lust and appetites" is damned. (Sig. N) To prove his point James cites the example of his own grandfather, James V, whose "harlotrie" led to his leaving "a double curse" on Scotland: "both a Woman of Sexe, and a new borne babe of age to reigne." (Sig. N^{v}) The "curse" was, of course, James's mother, Mary, Queen of Scots.

In setting down these warnings, James makes explicit his views on two issues with which Measure for Measure deals: 1) fornication is a grievous sin, one that leads to eternal damnation; and 2) few people hold to that view. The crime for which Claudio is condemned and of which Angelo will also prove himself guilty is fornication. The view of everyone from Escalus down to Pompey - everyone, that is, except the Duke and Isabella - is that fornication is not a serious offense. But these warnings against fornication also imply a view of women that is more in keeping with medieval moralists than with neo-Petrarchan Elizabethan poets.

Just as James's views on women are implicit in his statement that his mother, Queen Mary, had (partly by reason of her sex) proved a curse on Scotland, they are evident in his discussion of the qualities

of an ideal wife. To him a wife's most important quality is her ability to produce heirs. Above "Beauty, Riches and friendship by allie" (attention to which might cause the Prince to "finde himselfe coupled with a Devill"), Prince Henry must look for a woman who is fecund. [Sig. $N2^{V}$] "Nor Marie (for anie accessone cause or wordly respects)," warns the King "woman unable either through age, nature or accident, for procreation of children. For in a King that were a double fault aswel against his own weale as against the weale of his people." [Sig. $N2^{V}$] As if to underscore the woman's primary purpose as breeder, James likens choosing a wife to choosing a brood mare. Thus, she must be "of a whole and cleane race, not subject to hereditary sicknesses, either of the Soule or the bodie: For if a man will be carefull to breede Horses and Dogges of good Kindes; Howe much more carefull should he be for the breed of his own loynes?" (Sig. N4) However, where a man must choose a horse of good spirit, he must choose a woman who is pliable, for he never will be able to change her once they are married. Therefore, he cautions his son: "Neither pride you that yee wil bee able to frame and make her as yee please: that deceived Salomon the wisest King that ever was; the grace of Perserverance not being a floure that groweth in our Gardene." [Sig. $N3^{V}$] James's ideal woman, in short, is one "as readie to obeye as ye to commande, as willing to follow as ye to go before," one whose affections are "lovingly bent to follow your will." [Sig. O^{V}]

Thus James delineates the very qualities that Isabella manifests in Measure for Measure. As James suggests, the Duke does "commande her as her Lorde": before the Duke, she is a subject, before the Friar, she is a novice, a spiritual daughter. He does "Rule her as your

pupill" when he teaches her how to trap Angelo with the bed-trick, and how to plead for vengeance at play's end. (Sig. O) She does follow his will readily, innocently, harmoniously, even to the point of lying (when she claims she herself has kept the assignation with Angelo) at his direction.

Such a woman as James describes in Basilikon Doron was not evident in the comedies Shakespeare had written up to this time. From Julia of Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593) to Helena of All's Well That Ends Well (c.1603), Shakespeare's comic heroines were not docile or obedient; they were enterprising, outspoken, self-determining characters. It is only with the appearance of Isabella, in a play whose theme of statecraft gives evidence of Shakespeare's having read James's book, that such a character appears. By deepening the analogues from a mere re-telling of the monstrous ransom tale to a dramatic exploration of the rights and duties of kingship, Shakespeare may have revealed his familiarity with James's political teachings. By altering the depiction and function of the heroine, he may reveal as well an awareness of James's views on women. In presenting Measure for Measure, his first new play performed before the King, Shakespeare may have felt it topical to portray a ruler-hero concerned with statecraft and sin. Having decided to bring the ruler to the foreground, Shakespeare probably realized that he had to alter the role of the heroine. An Isabella who could devise the bed-trick, as Helena of All's Well does, for instance, would preclude one of the Duke's important contributions to the plot. Furthermore, an Isabella capable of reversing traditional sexual roles would surely have been indecorous in a play dealing

partly with the righting of decorum. Although there were many other contemporary works that detailed the qualities of ideal femininity, James's Basilikon Doron may have provided an immediate suggestion of the qualities proper to a decorous heroine, in the same way that it seems to have suggested the qualities of a just ruler.

Measure for Measure

Many critics have noted how different Measure for Measure is from the comedies which preceded it. Its humor is "darker," more satiric than the light-hearted humor of the romantic comedies. Its theme deals with statecraft rather than courtship, with lust rather than love. But another difference between comedies like Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593) and As You Like It (c.1599) and Measure for Measure (c.1603-04) is in the role of the heroine. Where Julia had pursued Proteus, and Rosalind had tested Orlando, Isabella is herself pursued (by Angelo) and tested (by Duke Vincentio). Unlike the actions of her comic predecessor, Isabella's actions involve no disguise, no journey, no rejection of a father, no love-game. Instead of reversing sexual roles as earlier comic heroines did, Isabella functions as the embodiment of traditional "feminine" virtues.

Unlike the clever, often disguised heroine of earlier Shakespearean comedies, Isabella is a reactor, not an initiator of the action. She does not assume disguise; Duke Vincentio does. She does not enjoy the power of discrepant awareness that disguise offers, because the Duke enjoys that advantage. She does not reject a father, because she is a daughter of the Church in need of a spiritual mentor. And she does not teach about love, because the plot centers on lust not love, on kingship,

not courtship. In short, instead of depicting a heroine who pursues a lover and tests his worth, Shakespeare depicts one who is herself pursued and tested.

That Measure for Measure presents a heroine who functions in accord with certain Elizabethan ideals of female behavior is evident in three ways: 1) Isabella does not act in an independent fashion. Without benefit of disguise to shield her innocence and naivete, Isabella seeks advice from mentors ranging from Lucio to the Friar-Duke. 2) The play deals not with courtship and love, but with state-craft and sin. Therefore, the heroine, who previously had enjoyed an advantage in the world of the love-game, is at a disadvantage in Vienna's world of politics and lust. 3) The play no longer deals with the romantic struggle between love and inconstancy, but with the more serious struggle between sin and virtue. Thus, instead of testing a lover's devotion, the heroine is herself tested - and not for the romantic virtue of constancy, but for the moral virtues of chastity and charity.[30]

Such a different role for the heroine, such downplaying of romantic elements, such emphasis on the struggle between chastity and lust may simply reflect the interests of an audience that had tired of Ovidian female aggressiveness or Petrarchan clichés, but it parallels much of King James's advice on "indifferent matters" in Basilikon Doron. The characters of the maiden and the ruler in Measure for Measure, quite different, as we have seen, from those in the analogues, are characters that might appeal to Shakespeare's new male ruler and the patron of his acting company. And, if Shakespeare was as familiar with Basilikon Doron's teachings on marriage as many critics feel he was

with its political teachings, he may have felt that the active, assertive heroine would be very much out of place in a play whose main figure seems to be a veiled portrait of the new king. The Duke, as many critics have observed, is a very Jamesian character: He dislikes crowds; he prefers the solitary life of the scholar; he condemns slanderers; he is concerned with the rights and duties of kingship. He is also like James in other ways: He views himself as the patriarch of his people; he holds fornication a deadly sin; he assesses women not for their beauty but for their virtue; and, without evidencing any interest in courtship, he eventually marries. Most pertinent to our purposes here, he displays a paternalistic view of women. To determine the parallels between James's paternalistic views of women and Shakespeare's portrayal of Isabella, let us examine each of these elements as it relates to Measure for Measure.

The Heroine's Dependence

Just as Isabella differs from heroines like Julia and Rosalind in her lack of disguise, she differs from analogous characters like Epitia and Cassandra in being portrayed as a novice, a daughter of the Church. Neither in the analogues nor in earlier comedies is the heroine depicted as a daughter. Indeed, as we have seen, a good part of the independence that Shakespeare's earlier heroines display is directly related to their being fatherless, for in an age in which many believed that the father's power was outweighed only the the King's and by God's, a maiden without a father - at least on the stage - enjoyed a freedom of choice and of movement that might never have been hers in real life. Thus, as we have seen, when the heroine's role was to lead the wooing

and control the love-game, the father's role, of necessity, had to be diminished. Either he was simply absent from the play, as in Love's Labour's Lost (c.1595), Merchant of Venus (c.1596), Much Ado About Nothing (c.1598-1600) and Twelfth Night (c.1601) or if he did figure in the plot, he became the comic dupe whose views were expressed mainly to be overcome. In Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593), for instance, Silvia chooses Valentine over her father's favorite, Thurio; in Midsummer Night's Dream (c.1595), Hermia prefers Lysander to her father's choice, Demetrius; in Merry Wives of Windsor (c.1600) Ann Page would have Master Fenton rather than Dr. Caius. Even in Taming of the Shrew (c.1594), Shakespeare alters the source to provide Bianca with two choices: Hortensio, her father's choice; and Lucentio, her own. In As You Like It (c.1599), it is as if the father was absent: Duke Senior exists but has no effect on Rosalind's actions on her choice of lover. Their reunion in the Forest of Arden is merely one of happy coincidence, not the outcome of the main action of the play. In Measure for Measure, in contrast, Shakespeare makes his protagonist a father-figure and his heroine a novice,"a fair and gracious daughter" (IV,iii,111) to whom obedience to a "ghostly father" (IV,iii,47) would come naturally. This change from Shakespeare's former practice, as well as from earlier analogues of the story, serves to emphasize the necessity that Isabella maintain her virginity. But it also suggests the heroine's need for an authority figure, "a good father" (III,i,238) who can lead an unworldly novice out of a wordly predicament.

This ruler-father is, as several critics have noted, a Jamesian character. Like King James who viewed himself as a "natural father

and kindly maister," Shakespeare's Duke Vincentio likens himself to a father who neglects to punish misbehaving children:

> Now, as fond fathers.
> Having bound up the threatening twigs of birch,
> Only to stick it in their children's sight
> For terror, not to use, in time of the rod
> Becomes more mocked than fear'd: so our decrees,
> Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead,
> And Liberty plucks justice by the nose,
> The baby beats the nurse, and quite athwart
> Goes all decorum.
>
> (I,iii,23-31)

The Duke's main purpose in assuming disguise is to return to Vienna the sense of decorum it has lost, to restore the rule of Justice that Liberty has usurped, in short, to put all roles back in their proper places in the hierarchy of nature. To do so, the father must regain control of his family, the priest of the sinner, the magistrate of the criminals, the man of the woman. From the start, then, it would be inappropriate for the heroine to be in control, for that control of itself is a reversal of roles that would be in need of righting. To emphasize this role as father-ruler, the Duke assumes the disguise of a "good father friar" (III,ii,11), who can confess and advise his subjects, who can substitute spiritual control for the temporal control he as ruler has not exerted. In this role he can counsel Claudio on the proper way to approach death (III,i); he can spar with Lucio about the wickedness of lechery (III,ii); he can advise the provest about outwitting Angelo's orders (IV,iii); he can confess Mariana and pronounce her virtuous (V,i). In his role as friar, the Duke can gain Isabella's trust and manipulate her actions.

In presenting the Duke as wise and all-seeing father and Isabella as humble and obedient daughter, Shakespeare parallels Basilikon Doron's

views that it is the man's "office to command and her to obey." [Sig. O^{v}] By changing the heroine from the outraged Epitia and Cassandra to the "enskied and sainted" Isabella (I,iv,34), Shakespeare emphasizes what the source stories did not: woman's frailty and need for leadership.

In Basilikon Doron's discussion on choosing a wife, James advises Prince Henry to "Rule her as your pupill" and "commande her as her Lorde." (Sig. O) The Duke of Vienna so rules Isabella, and she accepts his rule without question. When he steps forward in Act III to outline to her how she might "uprighteously do a poor wronged lady a merited benefit; redeem your brother from the angry law; do not stain to your own gracious person; and much please the absent Duke," she replies simply, "Show me how, good father." (III,i,199-238) Thus she offers herself as his instrument. She does not, as did Epitia and Cassandra, on her own initiative, carry through with the bargain and then demand retribution. Nor does she, like Helena of All's Well, devise the bed-trick that brings about the happy ending. Where Helena acts ingeniously and independently, Isabella acts in accord with the Friar-Duke's plan, enlisting Mariana and even lying to the returned Duke. Though Isabella "would say the truth," i.e. admit that Mariana had substituted for her in fulfilling Angelo's bargain, she follows the Friar-Duke's orders "to veil full purpose." When Mariana assures her, "Be rul'd by him," Isabella is so ruled. (IV,v,4)

Furthermore, the Friar-Duke is not the only authority to whom Isabella demurs. Before she can even approach Angelo to beg mercy for her brother, Isabella must have her courage buoyed by Lucio, a character

Shakespeare adds to the analogues. Lucio argues against her fears: "Our doubts are traitors, And makes us lose the good we oft might win By fearing to attempt." (I,iv,77-79) Having convinced her to try her arguments before Angelo, Lucio accompanies Isabella to court and prods her with sexually-charged language, that the audience, if not Isabella herself, surely understands:

> To him again, entreat him
> Kneel down before him, hang upon his gown,
> You are too cold. If you should need a pen,
> You could not with more tame a tongue desire it.
> (II,ii,43-6)

And she becomes impassioned in defense of her brother, Lucio records her success in sexual terms: "O to him, wench: He will relent; He's coming: I perceive't." (II,ii,125-6)

Where earlier comic heroines knew instinctively how to win men - most often by disguising themselves and teaching them about love through an assumed persona - Isabella must be prodded to woo Angelo to her wishes. Her brother Claudio puts great store in her eloquence: "She hath prosperous art When she will play with reason and discourse, And well she can persuade." (I,ii,173-5) But her eloquence inspires in Angelo a response Isabella hardly intends. "Never could a strumpet with all her double vigour, art and nature, Once stir my temper," he says, "but this virtuous maid subdues me quite." (II,ii, 183-6) In the play's final scenes, Isabella needs the counsel of Friar Peter before she can present her case to the Duke. "Now is your time," he urges, "speak loud and kneel before him." (V,i,20) In both cases, Isabella follows the direction of her mentor. In both cases, she is surprised to have her pleas misinterpreted: Angelo, his lust aroused by her virtue,

tries to seduce her; the Duke, accusing her of slander, imprisons her. Disguise cannot save her, for Isabella wears none. Where masculine attire and robust speech hid Julia's and Rosalind's girlish innocence (from their suitors, if not from the audience), Isabella's novice's robes proclaim her naiveté and underscore her dependence on more wordly mentors. An innocent in the way of the world, she looks in turn to those who are more knowledgeable than she - to Lucio, Angelo, Claudio, the Friar-Duke and Friar Peter.

Wearing no disguise, Isabella appears frail before wordly problems. Unable to cope (on her own) with the world's wickedness, she demonstrates the popular belief, echoed by James in Basilikon Doron that "Women are the fraylest sex." [Sig. O^{v}] When Angelo tempts her with the argument that men are weak and "women are frail too," Isabella agrees. "Nay, call us ten times frail," she says, "for we are soft as our complexions are, And credulous to false prints." (II,iv,127-9) Indeed, Angelo is duped by the bed-trick, partly because he thinks Isabella too frail to refuse him. When she threatens to blackmail him he asks, "Who will believe thee, Isabel?" and reminds her of her frailty:

> My unsoil'd name, th 'austereness of my life,
> My vouch against you, and my place in the state
> Will so your accusation overweigh,
> That you shall stifle in your own report,
> And smell of calumny.
> (II,iv,153-8)

When he is accused in public by Isabel and Mariana, Angelo cannot believe that mere women could have come up with the scheme they describe: "These poor informal women," he claims, "are no more But instruments of some mightier member That sets them on." (V,i,235-237) After the Duke steps forward to seize control of the plot in Act III, the heroines of

Measure for Measure are to a great extent just that - instruments in the hands of a patriarchal ruler.

The Theme of Lust

Also important in considering the changed role of the heroine in Measure for Measure is the play's emphasis on lust rather than love. Isabella can enjoy little advantage when the central concern of the play is not the lively game of courtship but the deadly game of sin. Measure for Measure's emphasis on the sin of fornication is entirely Shakespeare's addition. In earlier versions of the story, the severity of the sin must be minimized, for in both Cinthio and Whetstone the heroine does agree, after all, to pay the monstrous ransom. In Cinthio she does so, believing that Iuriste will marry her after the assignation and thus preserve her honor. In Whetstone she does so, having been persuaded by her brother that she does "of both evyles choose her least."[31] But in Measure for Measure the theme of the wickedness of fornication becomes a consideration second only to the play's concern with statecraft. For the effects of the sin of fornication are evident throughout Vienna: in the Duke who has allowed it to flourish; in Claudio and Juliet who are caught as its victims, in Angelo who thinks himself above it; in Isabella who must somehow escape it; in Escalus and the Provost who think it harshly punished; in Lucio who has committed it without punishment; and in Pompey and Mistress Overdone who prosper by it. In short, all the characters in Measure for Measure are affected by fornication and virtually all reveal their views of it in the course of the play.

The views of Isabella and the Duke parallel those of King James

who considers "fornication among the greevous sins that debarres the committars among dogges and swine, from entrie in the Spirituall and heavenlie Jerusalem," while other characters, from Escalus to Pompey, agree with what James calls "the most parte of the world" in considering it but a "veniall sinne." (Sigs. [M4^{v}] - N) Escalus, for instance, wonders why Claudio should be "condemned for a fault alone." (II,i,40) Claudio himself argues that "it is no sin, Or of the deadly seven it is the least." (III,i,109-110) The Provost considers it a slight offense for such heavy punishment.

> He hath but offended as in a dream;
> All sects, all ages smack of this vice, and he
> To die for't."
> (II,ii,5-6)

And Pompey, of course, has recognized from the start the foolish idealism of any law against such widespread practice: "Does your worship mean to geld and splay all the youth of the city?" (II,i,227) Isabella, in contrast, calls fornication the "vice that most I do abhor" (II,ii, 29), "the thing I hate" (II,iv,119-20), "abhorr'd pollution" (II,iv, 182) and "what I abhor to name." (III,i,101) To her, punishment of such a sin is "just but severe." (II,ii,42) Even to save a brother's life, she cannot commit such sin:

> Better it were a brother died at once,
> Then that a sister by redeeming him
> Should die forever.
> (II,iv,106-8)

Shakespeare underscores Isabella's dedication to remaining free of the sin of fornication in the couplet that closes the scene in which she refuses Angelo's bargain: "Then, Isabel live chaste, and brother die: More than our brother is our chastity." (II,iv,183-4) In both

Cinthio's and Whetstone's versions the heroine cites her "honor" rather than her "chastity." Cinthio's Epitia claims: "La vita di mio Fratello mi e molto cara, ma vie piu caro mi e l'honor mio." (My brother's life is dear to me, but not so dear as my honor.") Whetstone's Cassandra cites: "Honor farre dearer is than life."[32] In having Isabella call on chastity instead of honor, Shakespeare shifts the emphasis from a general sense of chivalric honor to a specific sense of moral virtue. In doing so, he stresses not only the common Elizabethan belief that chastity constituted female honor, but the play's singular emphasis on fornication. Furthermore, by making his heroine unable - by her own ingenuity - to preserve her chastity and outwit the bargain, he makes her dependent on other characters, especially on the Friar-Duke.

Partly to save Isabella from having to pay the monstrous ransom, Shakespeare creates the Duke, the only other character to share her abhorrence of fornication. Like her, the Duke recognizes both the universality of sin and its consequences. To Lucio, who suggest that Angelo should show "a little more lenity to lechery," the Friar-Duke retorts: "It is too general a vice, and severity must cure it." (III,ii,94-96) Assessing Pompey's crimes the Friar-Duke is far stricter than Escalus had been in an earlier scene (II,i). Where Escalus had let Pompey off with a warning, the Friar-Duke condemns his wickedness and inveighs against the "filty vice" of bawdry:

> Fie, serrah, a bawd, a wicked bawd;
> The evil that thou consent to be done,
> That is thy means to live. Do thou but think
> What 'tis to cram a maw or clothe a back
> From such a filthy vice. Say to yourself
> From their abominable and beastly touches

> I drink, I eat, array myself, and live.
> Canst thou believe thy living is a life,
> So stinking depending? Go mend, go mend.
> (III,ii,18-26)

In this condemnation of lechery, the Duke is like the new English King, who, twice within seven pages in Basilikon Doron, brings up the destructive effects on James V's pursuit of "harlotrie" and of "the filthy vice of Adulterie." (Sig. [N^{V}] and O) And as James attributes his grandfather's "harlotrie" to "evil education" [Sig. N^{V}], the Friar-Duke orders Pompey to prison, where he will receive "Correction and instruction." (III,ii,31)

The question of lechery brings the play back to the question of statecraft, lechery being more grievous when practiced by a ruler, for the royal sinner disappoints not only God but also his people to whom he must serve as a model. On this matter James writes:

> Kings being publicke persons, by reason of their office and authorite, are as it were set (as it was saide of olde) upon a publicke stage, in the sight of all the people; where all the beholders eyes are attetivelie bent, to look and pry in the least circumstances of their secretest driftes. Which should make Kings the more carefull, not to harbour the secretest thought in their minde, but suche as in the owne time they shall not be ashamed openlie to avouche."

The Friar-Duke, like James, finds seeming goodness in a ruler tyrannous. Describing Angelo to the Provost, he says: "Were he meal'd with that which he corrects, then were he tyrannous." (IV,ii,81-82) James writes: "a Tyran would enter like a Sainte while he found him-self faste underfoote, and then would suffer his un-rulie affections to burst forth." Though Isabella, at Mariana's request, argues for Angelo's life, the Duke is adamant: "An Angelo for Claudio; death for death" (V,i,407). The tyrant must be punished, for he has sinned against God and the state.

The love-game of bantering wit, of heroines wearing clever disguise, of heroes learning from them how to woo has no place alongside such serious business. Measure for Measure deals with ruling dukedomes and saving souls, concerns that would have been of interest to a new king and his anxious subjects. In such a royal/religious setting, the aggressive heroine would appear as an occasion of sin, rather than the occasion for laughter. What humor there is in Measure for Measure derives from the low life characters - the prostitutes and procurers of Vienna - who go about their trade despite the severity of laws formulated by those more idealistic than they. Such humor does not flow from the lovers' rites of courtesy but from the realities of commodity. A woman is to be bought; she does not give herself freely to the man who has proved himself worthy of her love. A man is not to be tutored in love, but he may be tutored in the way to rule or the way to learn respect for his ruler. The perils of Vienna are lechery, sin and death, not the comic bandits of Two Gentlemen of Verona or the magically reconciled brothers of As You Like It. Thus the situation in Vienna is too fraught with real dangers for a heroine to remedy by any comic reversal of roles. If decorum is to be restored to Vienna, the heroine must be returned to a "decorous" role.

The Heroine's Test

The third major change between Measure for Measure and the comedies preceding it is that the heroine no longer functions in a superior role as tutor of love. In a play whose one concern is statecraft, she is politically powerless; in a play whose other concern is the stemming of lust, she is a threat to chastity. Thus instead of examining a lover

for his ability to love, instead of teaching him the meaning of constancy, the heroine is now herself tested, her virtue held up to scrutiny, her eloquence deemed necessary to prove her own moral worth. Her virtues now are not seen to be cleverness and constancy but chastity and charity. Throughout Measure for Measure Isabella is asked to prove her worth by Angelo who tests her chastity, by Claudio who tests her familial loyalty, and by the Duke who tests her Christian charity. Having passed that final test, she is rewarded with marriage to the Duke.

Isabella undergoes a test of her chastity in her two scenes with Angelo. In the first (II,ii), she presents her case for her brother's life, but her eloquence and her innocence work against her intention. Her arguments, as she is prodded by Lucio, become increasingly passionate, as does Angelo's response to her. She begins with a simple request that Angelo "Condemn the fault, and not the actor of it." When Angelo refuses, Isabella is ready to give up: "O just but severe law!" (II, ii,37,41) But Lucio, chiding her for coldness, pushes her back. She argues that mercy becomes a king. Sensing her own weakness, she wishes that "I had your potency and you were Isabel." She finally begs, "Spare him! Spare him! He's not prepared for death." (1.84-5) But Angelo is unmoved. Only when she suggests - as Escalus had in an earlier scene - that Angelo himself might be guilty of such a sin, does Angelo reveal how her pleas are affecting him: "She speaks, and 'tis such sense that my sense breeds with it." (1.143-4) Her argument that no one is free of sin brings home to him the reality of his own sensuality. Only when she strikes this receptive chord does Angelo offer to allow her to

return the next day. Fired by her apparent success at argumentation, Isabella responds with enthusiasm. "Hark, how I'll bribe you," she cries after Angelo, meaning in her innocence, "with such gifts as heaven will share with you...with true prayers." (11,146,151) Unlike earlier, more clear-sighted heroines, Isabella has no notion of the double meaning of her words, no sense that her virtue has aroused in Angelo the very vice she cannot bring herself to name.

In Act II, scene ii, Angelo is caught by Isabella's eloquence and innocence. But it is his lust, not his love that is aroused. He perceives her not as Venus's daughter, but as Eve's, a tempter, a trap set by the devil to catch him: "O cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint, With saints dost bait the hook!" (1.180-1) When she returns the next day, asking innocently to "Know your pleasure," he offers her the choice:

> Which had you rather, that the most just law
> Now took your brother's life; or, to redeem him,
> Give up your body to such sweet uncleanness
> As she that he hath stain'd?
> (II,iv,52-5)

When she cannot perceive his meaning, Angelo argues that her sin will be minor because it is forced: "Our compell'd sins Stand more for number than for accompt." (1.57-8) She will actually be performing "charity in sin, to save a brother's life." (1.63-4) When she still refuses to understand his words, he becomes angry: "Either you are ignorant, Or seem so, crafty." (1.73-4) And he states more clearly the terms of the offer: "You must lay down the treasures of your body... or else to let him suffer." (1.96-7)

There is a certain element of humor in Isabella's persistent refusal to understand Angelo's words, just as later there is humor in Claudio's soon deflated bravado in the face of death. But is is humor

directed at the heroine for her failure to see what Angelo means; it does not grow out of the heroine's ability to see into the soul of the other characters while she maintains her own disguised persona. Discrepant awareness had given earlier heroines an advantage in their dramatic worlds. In the licentious world of Vienna, Isabella cannot at first see what Angelo means, and when she does at last understand, she senses that he is right in claiming that his "false o'erweighs [her] true." (1.169)

As a heroine who embodies traditional feminine qualities, Isabella turns to her brother for protection from Angelo.

> I'll to my brother.
> Though he has fall'n by prompture of the blood,
> Yet hath he in him such a mind of honor,
> That had he twenty heads to tender down
> On twenty blocks, he'd yield them up
> Before his sister should her body stoop
> To such abhorr'd pollution.
> (II,iv,176-182)

But instead of providing the protection Isabella seeks, Claudio also tests her. Certain that Claudio will agree that she cannot fulfill the demands of the bargain, Isabella enters his prison cell to prepare her brother for death. When he asks, "Is there no remedy?", she hesitates to tell him of "such remedy as, to save a head, To cleave a heart in twain." (III,60-63) Instead she asks if he is prepared for death. To this he answers with an outburst of bravado: "If I must die, I will encounter darkness and a bride and hug it in mine arms." (III,i,82-4) Assured by his answer that he will agree with her decision to refuse Angelo, she tells him of the proposition put forward by the "outward sainted deputy." At first Claudio is adamant: "Thou shall not do't." (1.103) Then he is angry: "Has he affections in him, That thus can

make him bite the law by th'nose when he would force it?" (11.107-109) But then he reconsiders: "Sure, it is no sin. Or of the deadly seven it is the least." (11.109-110) And then he is frightened: "Death is a fearful thing." (1.115) Finally, Claudio begs "Sweet sister, let me live." (1.132)

The bravado which turns so quickly to fear is reminiscent of Rosalind's stance before her swoon or Viola's swagger before her encounter with Sir Andrew Aguecheek. At the beginning of the scene, Claudio is the protective brother, ready to embrace death, rather than see a sister dishonored. By the scene's end, he is a quivering boy, begging his sister to protect him from the icy grave. In effect, Claudio is asking Isabella to reverse the traditional roles of brother as protector of sister. But Isabella is not a Julia or a Rosalind who has found advantage in a reversal of roles (nor does she inhabit a Verona or an Arden). Just as she is unable to see humor in Claudio's sudden reversal of spirit, Isabella is unable to function in a world turned topsy-turvy.

Claudio is, of course, saved by the Duke's intercession, just as Isabella is saved from paying the monstrous ransom. But the fact that Isabella does not know of Claudio's escape from death allows her to be tested one last time before the play ends. In Act II her chastity was tested; in Act III, her familial loyalty; in Act V it is her charity that is put to the test. The final test of Isabella's virtue takes place when she returns to the stage to face the discovered Duke, who would have her pardon Angelo "for Mariana's sake," though he assures her that Angelo must nevertheless die. The law cries out, he says:

> An Angelo for Claudio; death for death.
> Haste still pays haste, and leisure answer leisure
> Like doth quit like and Measure still for Measure.
> (V,i,407-9)

Mariana asks more than mere pardon; she asks Isabella to join her own plea for Angelo's life: "Hold up your hands, say nothing: I'll speak all." (1.436) Here Isabella proves herself truly virtuous, for not only does she join Mariana's plea, she does more than she is asked. Where Mariana asks Isabella to kneel beside her, her posture and silence to betoken her appeal, Isabella argues that Angelo is not truly guilty, because "His act did not o'ertake his bad intent." (1.449)

Remembering "another fault" (Angelo's "private order" to behead Claudio), the Duke refuses to grant Isabella's request. But he is moved by her demonstration of grace and Christian charity, a charity all the greater because Isabella thinks she herself has nothing to gain from it. She does not know that this sincere and extraordinary proof of her charity will lead to the return of her brother and to the Duke's offer of marriage. Yet, after refusing her plea the Duke calls forth Claudio, pardons him, and asks Isabella for her hand, all in one sentence:

> If he be your brother, for his sake
> Is he pardon'd, and for your lovely sake
> Give me your hand and say you will be mine.
> (V,i,488-90)

Isabella is not the tutor of love who accepts a lover after he has demonstrated that he has learned the meaning of true love; instead she is the one who is accepted after she has demonstrated the quality of her Christian virtues of chastity and charity. The Duke (though he has given no hint of any interest in her) accepts her because of the virtues she has demonstrated, virtues that Shakespeare's earlier comic

heroines had possessed but had not needed to prove.

Thus, Isabella is different from the comic heroines Shakespeare had created before 1603-04, different even from Helena who pursues and outwits Bertram in All's Well That Ends Well (c.1603). Undisguised, Isabella lacks the ability to escape societal limits, the power of discrepant awareness and the protection against "lascivious men" that disguise had afforded heroines like Julia and Rosalind. Where Julia and Rosalind's masculine attire had protected their innocence, Isabella's novice's robes proclaim both her naivete and her need for a succession of mentors. Furthermore, where the chastity and integrity of Shakespeare's earlier comic heroines had been assumed, Isabella's must be proven. In these ways, Isabella functions within Elizabethan society's notion of womanly decorum. In a play concerned with license and decorum, as Measure for Measure is, a reversal of traditional sexual roles - a reversal made possible in large part by the convention of disguise - would have been as indecorous as Angelo's abuse of authority or Lucio's slander of the Duke. To maintain decorum, Shakespeare needed a heroine who demonstrated ideal feminine qualities. Such qualities, evident in many contemporary works, were reiterated in Basilikon Doron. Isabella's dependence on the Friar-Duke, their shared abhorrence of lust, and the virtuous but unromantic manner in which she proves worthy to become his wife suggest that Measure for Measure, Shakespeare's first new play performed at Court, depicts the kind of woman generally considered to be James's ideal.

Notes, Chapter V

[1]See Eudo C. Mason, "Satire on Women and Sex in Elizabethan Tragedy," English Studies, 31 (1950), 1-10.

[2]See Alfred Harbage, Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions (New York: Macmillan, 1952).

[3]J. W. Lever, Introduction, Measure for Measure, The Arden Shakespeare (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), p.lxi.

[4]Murray Krieger, "Measure for Measure and Elizabethan Comedy," PMLA, LXVI (1951), 781-83.

[5]Notably, Louis Albrecht, Neue Untersuchungenzu Shakespeares Mass fur Mass (Berlin, 1914), pp.129-216; Elizabeth M. Pope, "The Renaissance Background of Measure for Measure, Shakespeare Survey, II (1949), 66-82; D. L. Stevenson, The Achievement of Measure for Measure" (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966) and Josephine Waters Bennett, "Measure for Measure" as Royal Entertainment (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

[6]Norman Nathan in "The Marriage of Duke Vincentio and Isabella," Shakespeare Quarterly, VII (1956), 43-45, notes that Isabella fulfills the requirements for a wife that James sets down in Basilikon Doron.

[7]For the analogues of All's Well, see Geoffrey Bullough, ed., Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957).

[8]J. W. Bennett in "New Techniques of Comedy in All's Well That Ends Well," Shakespeare Quaterly 18(1967), 337-362, suggests that the classical Venus and Adonis story of the aggressive female is more important to understanding All's Well that W. W. Lawrence's claim (Shakespeare's Problem Comedies (New York: Macmillan, 1931) that Shakespeare and his audience knew the various folk tales of the impossible task and the healing of the King.

[9]See Appendices 2 and 3 in The Arden Shakespeare edition of Measure for Measure, pp.155-200.

[10]D. H. Willson, James VI and I (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), p.139.

[11]In Roy Strong, The Cult of Elizabeth (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977).

[12]Quoted by R. W. Chambers, The Jacobean Shakespeare and "Measure for Measure" (London: H. Milford, 1937), p.21.

[13]Quoted by Edward P. Cheyney A Short History of England II (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1904), p.557.

[14]Ibid., p.570.

[15]Quoted in G. B. Harrison, The Elizabethan Journals III (London: Routledge and Sons, 1938), p.292.

[16]Lawrence Stone, Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p.665.

[17]Quoted in Harrison, A Jacobean Journal (London: Routledge and Sons, 1941), p.3

[18]Quoted by Chambers, p.21.

[19]Quoted by Willson, p.166.

[20]Sir John Chamberlain to Dudley Carlton (April 12, 1603). Letters of John Chamberlain I, ed. Norman E. McClure (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939).

[21]Quoted by Harrison, A Jacobean Journal, p.325.

[22]Court of King James, i, 96-8; reprinted in James I by His Contemporaries, ed. Robert Ashton (London: Hutchinson, 1969), pp.76-77.

[23]Quoted by Willson, p.166.

[24]In the first decade of the seventeenth century, satire against women became so popular on the stage that a character in Massenger and Fletcher's The Custom of the Country says, "I could rail now against the sex, and curse it, but the theam and way's to Common...." Quoted by Robert Brustein, "The Monstrous Regiment of Women," Renaissance and Modern Essays [in honor of] Vivian de Sola Pinto (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p.42.

[25]Basilikon Doron (Menston, England: Scholar Press Facsimile, 1969).

[26]Quoted by Stevenson, p.146.

[27]See note 5, above.

[28]Quoted by Willson, p.85.

[29]See Keith Thomas, "The Double Standard," Journal of the History of Ideas 20(1959), 195-216.

[30]Bertrand Evans discusses the difference between Isabella and the comic heroines who precede her in terms of her loss of an advantage in awareness. "Isabella's only means of advantage, her chastity, is more liability than asset in lustful Vienna, and, lacking the Duke's protection, she could only have hidden it in a convent. Vincentio, taking over a world grown too vicious for heroines to control, requires disguise, resourceful activity, and the authority of his title to keep wickedness in check." (Shakespeare's Comedies [London: Oxford University Press, 1967], p.319.)

[31] I Promos and Cassandra, III, iv.

[32] I Promos, III, ii. See Appendix 1, The Arden Measure for Measure, p.158. In The Courtier's Academie Count Romei says, "Honour feminine is preserved by not failing onely in one of their proper particular vertues, which is honestie." Quoted by C. B. Watson, Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p.437.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Elizabethan attitudes towards women in the last decade of Elizabeth's reign were diverse and often contradictory. Moralists, citing biblical passages such as Paul's "Wives submit yourselves unto your husbands" - (Ephesians V:23 ff), idealized chaste, silent, subservient women and often satirized those who deviated from that ideal. Courtiers and poets idealized a different kind of women - one whose beauty and aloofness caused her to remain a suitor's superior in the love-game. Such divergent views permeated Elizabethan life. At a time when one popular proverb defined woman as "woe-to-man," another deemed England "a paradise for women." At a time when Elizabethan women were generally held to be their husbands' subjects and inferiors, sermonizers on marriage argued that a wife was also her husband's companion and equal before God. Most of all, at a time when Elizabethan women generally enjoyed few legal rights, the country was ruled by a powerful queen. And while marriage and childbearing seemed the only proper occupation open to the majority of English women, Elizabeth herself not only remained unwed, but fostered a cult of worship of the Virgin Queen.

While this study has not suggested that there is any one-to-one correlation between Elizabethan attitudes towards women and Shakespeare's dramatic practice, it has tried to demonstrate, by examining three representative comedies - Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593), As You Like It (c.1599) and Measure for Measure (c.1603-04) - in their historical context, the parallels between the apparent popularity of these attitudes and the changing depiction of Shakespeare's comic heroines. The type of heroine who reverses traditional roles as Julia and Silvia do in Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593), and as Rosalind does in As You Like It (c.1599), appears about 1593 and becomes popular enough for Shakespeare

to continue its use for almost a decade. That decade - the last of Elizabeth's reign - was one which also saw the popularity of the epyllion with its aggressive female and of the sonnet sequence with its conventional "superior" mistress. It was a decade during which women continued to be defined as daughters or wives, but which also saw a growing emphasis on the right of daughters to choose their own suitors and of wives to expect partnership in marriage. It was, finally, a decade during which the courtly, literary and pictorial adulation of Elizabeth as Astraea or Gloriana or Virgo continued, despite her growing age and waning health.

This study has suggested that these factors have been an insufficiently noted part of the milieu that sustained Shakespeare's depiction of his comic heroines. From approximately 1593 with Julia of Two Gentlemen of Verona to approximately 1603 with Helena of All's Well That Ends Well, Shakespeare's comedies feature independent and ingenious heroines who - often with the aid of disguise - reverse traditional sexual roles. Fatherless (like Beatrice and Viola) or seeming so (like Julia and Rosalind), they travel to a fairy-tale "green world" (like Belmont, Arden or Illyria), where they pursue their lovers (as do the Helenas of Midsummer Night's Dream and All's Well) or teach them about love (as do Julia, Rosalind, Viola and the ladies of France). Having tested their suitors and judged them worthy, these heroines throw off disguise and surrender their independce to the husbands they have won.

After a decade of portraying such heroines in a reversal of traditional sexual roles in his comedies, Shakespeare abruptly abandons this practice. In Measure for Measure (c.1603-04), he depicts a heroine who by her novice's robes, proclaims her feminine innocence and girlish

naiveté instead of hiding them under masculine disguise. Where earlier heroines had acted cleverly and independently, often disregarding or defying a father-figure, Isabella, acting as "a fair and gracious daughter" (IV,iii,111) of a "ghostly father" (IV,iii,47), looks to a succession of mentors to lead her. Where earlier heroines - up to and including Helena in All's Well That Ends Well (c.1603) - had often pursued and tested men, Isabella is herself pursued by Angelo and tested by the Duke. Finally, where earlier heroines had generally enjoyed an awareness greater than that of the heroes, Isabella "sees" only as much as the Friar-Duke allows her. This change in the portrayal of the comic heroine occurs about the same time that interest in the sonnet declines, that satire against women becomes popular on the stage, and that worship of the Virgin Queen is replaced by interest in England's new male ruler. It also coincides with the reprinting in England of James's Basilikon Doron, one of the most popular books of 1603-04 and one in which the new King reveals not only his attitudes about statecraft but, less obviously, his views that men are to "command" and "rule" women. This study notes that the type of woman generally considered to be James's ideal is depicted in Shakespeare's first new play to be presented at Court (on December 26, 1604).

To conclude, this study has examined some of the factors that influenced Elizabethan attitudes towards women - including patristic and medieval notions of female inferiority and subservience and Reformation notions of partnership and companionship in marriage (eviden in many sermons, proverbs and conduct books) as well as literary conventions of female idealization (evident in some sonnet sequences), and even aggressiveness (evident, for instance, in Venus and Adonis). From a

comparison of these factors with Two Gentlemen of Verona (c.1593), As You Like It (c.1599) and Measure for Measure (c.1603-04), it would seem that the depiction of Julia, Rosalind and Isabella parallels the popularity of certain Elizabethan attitudes towards women. During the last decade of Elizabeth's reign, when the sonnet, the epyllion and the cult of Elizabeth were popular, Shakespeare's comedies tend to depict heroines like Julia or Rosalind who reverse traditional sexual roles and pursue and/or test men. After Elizabeth's death, however, when the sonnet declines in popularity and satire becomes fashionable, Shakespeare's comedies tend to depict heroines like Isabella who function, for the most part, within the limits of traditionally accepted female behavior. In light of these considerations, it appears that the depiction of such heroines (c.1593 - c.1603) was linked with a climate of attitudes that found the idealization of women and even their aggressiveness theatrically acceptable. After c.1603, however, as England welcomed the first male ruler in more than fifty years, an apparent shift in the climate of attitudes may be correlated with Shakespeare's depiction of a heroine such as Isabella, who exemplifies more traditionally "feminine" behavior. Such instances, both before and after the accession of James, suggest a significant correlation between social attitudes to women and Shakespeare's depiction of those comic heroines.

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