T D C Part Two Hons.-Paper 3

Paper -3

William Shakespeare's tragedy- Othello

(1) Othello as a Shakespearean Tragedy or Unity, Time, and Place in Othello

The dramatic form of classical tragedy derives from the tragic plays of ancient Athens, which depicted the downfall of a hero or famous character of Greek legend. The hero would struggle against overwhelming fate, and his defeat would be so noble that he wins the moral victory over the forces that destroy him. A tragedy evoked pity and terror in the audience; it was a catharsis, or washing clean of the soul, which left the spectator trembling but purified.

Aristotle proposed the tragic unities of Place, Time, and Action, that is, the whole tragedy would take place in a single location, for example a house or a city square (this included messengers who came in from elsewhere), it would happen during the course of one day (including speeches about events which had happened in the past), and it would be a single story, without sub-plots.

Compared with these strict rules, Shakespeare's tragedy is a more relaxed genre, but *Othello* much more than, for example, the sprawling *Hamlet,* observes the spirit of Aristotle. Othello, apart from Act I in Venice, is located entirely within the fortress at Cyprus. Although logically the play covers an unspecified time lapse of, we presume, two or three weeks, it proceeds, more or less, by major scenes through the hours of the day, starting in Venice with the elopement after midnight, the Senate meeting at dawn, then at Cyprus with the morning storm and afternoon landings and developments, the fateful drinking party in the early evening and the murder at bed time. This is not to say that everything happens in the same day; it obviously cannot, but the impression is of an abstract day unfolding.

The plot is fairly unified, focusing on Othello and his fate, and dealing with other people and events only in so far as they are relevant to this focus. Othello is about as near as Shakespeare gets to classical tragedy.

A. C. Bradley saw Shakespearean tragedy characterized by the "tragic flaw," the internal imperfection in the hero that brings him down. His downfall becomes his own doing, and he is no longer, as in classical tragedy, the helpless victim of fate. Some say that Othello's tragic flaw was jealousy which flared at suspicion and rushed into action unchecked by calm common sense. A more modern interpretation would say that Othello's tragic flaw was that he had internalized, that is taken into himself, the prejudices of those who surrounded him. In his heart he had come to believe what they believed: that a black man is an unattractive creature, not quite human, unworthy of love. Thinking this, he could not believe that Desdemona could truly love him for himself. Her love must be a pretense, or a flawed and corrupted emotion. Iago hinted at these ideas, and Othello rushed to accept them, because they echoed his deepest fears and insecurities.

Shakespearean tragedy usually works on a five-part structure, corresponding to the five acts: Part One, the exposition, outlines the situation, introduces the main characters, and begins the action. Part Two, the development, continues the action and introduces complications. Part Three, the crisis (or climax), brings everything to a head. In this part, a change of direction occurs or understanding is precipitated. Part Four includes further developments leading inevitably to Part Five, in which the final crisis of action or revelation and resolution are explained. Othello follows this pattern.

Othello as a domestic tagedy

There is practically no doubt that *Othello* was the tragedy written next after *Hamlet*. Such external evidence as we possess points to this conclusion, and it is confirmed by similarities of style, diction and versification, and also by the fact that ideas and phrases of the earlier play are echoed in the later.[1] There is, further (not to speak of one curious point, to be considered when we come to Iago), a certain resemblance in the subjects. The heroes of the two plays are doubtless extremely unlike, so unlike that each could have dealt without much difficulty with the situation which proved fatal to the other; but still each is a man exceptionally noble and trustful, and each endures the shock of a terrible disillusionment. This theme is treated by Shakespeare for the first time in *Hamlet*, for the second in *Hamlet*. It recurs with modifications in *King Lear*, and it probably formed the attraction which drew Shakespeare to refashion in

part another writer's tragedy of *Timon*. These four dramas may so far be grouped together in distinction from the remaining tragedies.

But in point of substance, and, in certain respects, in point of style, the unlikeness of *Othello* to *Hamlet* is much greater than the likeness, and the later play belongs decidedly to one group with its successors. We have seen that, like them, it is a tragedy of passion, a description inapplicable to *Julius Caesar* or *Hamlet*. And with this change goes another, an enlargement in the stature of the hero. There is in most of the later heroes something colossal, something which reminds us of Michael Angelo's figures. They are not merely exceptional men, they are huge men; as it were, survivors of the heroic age living in a later and smaller world. We do not receive this impression from Romeo or Brutus or Hamlet, nor did it lie in

Shakespeare's design to allow more than touches of this trait to Julius Caesar himself; but it is strongly marked in Lear and Coriolanus, and quite distinct in Macbeth and even in Antony. Othello is the first of these men, a being essentially large and grand, towering above his fellows, holding a volume of force which in repose ensures pre-eminence without an effort, and in commotion reminds us rather of the fury of the elements than of the tumult of common human passion.

Of all Shakespeare's tragedies, I would answer, not even excepting *King Lear*, *Othello* is the most painfully exciting and the most terrible. From the moment when the temptation of the hero begins, the reader's heart and mind are held in a vice, experiencing the extremes of pity and fear, sympathy and repulsion, sickening hope and dreadful expectation. Evil is displayed before him, not indeed with the profusion found in *King Lear*, but forming, as it were, the soul of a single character, and united with an intellectual superiority so great that he watches its advance fascinated and appalled. He sees it, in itself almost irresistible, aided at every step by fortunate accidents and the innocent mistakes of its victims. He seems to breathe an atmosphere as fateful as that of *King Lear*, but more confined and oppressive, the darkness not of night but of a close-shut murderous room. His imagination is excited to intense activity, but it is the activity of concentration rather than dilation.

But if we glance at some of its other sources, we shall find at the same time certain distinguishing characteristics of *Othello*.

One of these has been already mentioned in our discussion of Shakespeare's technique. *Othello* is not only the most masterly of the tragedies in point of construction, but its method of construction is unusual. And this method, by which the conflict begins late, and advances without appreciable pause and with accelerating speed to the catastrophe, is a main cause of the painful tension just described. To this may be added that, after the conflict has begun, there is very little relief by way of the ridiculous. Henceforward at any rate Iago's humour never raises a smile. The clown is a poor one; we hardly attend to him and quickly forget him.

In the second place, there is no subject more exciting than sexual jealousy rising to the pitch of passion; and there can hardly be any spectacle at once so engrossing and so painful as that of a great nature suffering the torment of this passion, and driven by it to a crime which is also a hideous blunder. Such a passion as ambition, however terrible its results, is not itself ignoble; if we separate it in thought from the conditions which make it guilty, it does not appear despicable; it is not a kind of suffering, its nature is active; and therefore we can watch its course without shrinking. But jealousy, and especially sexual jealousy, brings with it a sense of shame and humiliation. For this reason it is generally hidden; if we perceive it we ourselves are ashamed and turn our eyes away; and when it is not hidden it commonly stirs contempt as well as pity. Nor is this all. Such jealousy as Othello's converts human nature into chaos, and liberates the beast in man; and it does this in relation to one of the most intense and also the most ideal of human feelings. What spectacle can be more painful than that of this feeling turned into a tortured mixture of longing and loathing, the 'golden purity' of passion split by poison into fragments, the animal in man forcing itself into his consciousness in naked grossness, and he writhing before it but powerless to deny it entrance, gasping inarticulate images of pollution, and finding relief only in a bestial thirst for blood? This is what we have to witness in one who was indeed 'great of heart' and no less pure and tender than he was great. And this, with what it leads to, the blow to Desdemona, and the scene where she is treated as the inmate of a brothel, a scene far more painful than the murder scene, is another cause of the special effect of this tragedy.

The mere mention of these scenes will remind us painfully of a third cause; and perhaps it is the most potent of all. I mean the suffering of Desdemona. This is, unless I mistake, the most nearly intolerable spectacle that Shakespeare offers us. For one thing, it is *mere* suffering; and, *ceteris paribus*, that is much

worse to witness than suffering that issues in action. Desdemona is helplessly passive. She can do nothing whatever. She cannot retaliate even in speech; no, not even in silent feeling. And the chief reason of her helplessness only makes the sight of her suffering more exquisitely painful. She is helpless because her nature is infinitely sweet and her love absolute. I would not challenge Mr. Swinburne's statement that we *pity* Othello even more than Desdemona; but we watch Desdemona with more unmitigated distress. We are never wholly uninfluenced by the feeling that Othello is a man contending with another man; but Desdemona's suffering is like that of the most loving of dumb creatures tortured without cause by the being he adores.

Turning from the hero and heroine to the third principal character, we observe (what has often been pointed out) that the action and catastrophe of *Othello* depend largely on intrigue. We must not say more than this. We must not call the play a tragedy of intrigue as distinguished from a tragedy of character. Iago's plot is Iago's character in action; and it is built on his knowledge of Othello's character, and could not otherwise have succeeded. Still it remains true that an elaborate plot was necessary to elicit the catastrophe; for Othello was no Leontes, and his was the last nature to engender such jealousy from itself. Accordingly Iago's intrigue occupies a position in the drama for which no parallel can be found in the other tragedies; the only approach, and that a distant one, being the intrigue of Edmund in the secondary plot of *King Lear*. Now in any novel or play, even if the persons rouse little interest and are never in serious danger, a skilfully-worked intrigue will excite eager attention and suspense. And where, as in*Othello*, the persons inspire the keenest sympathy and antipathy, and life and death depend on the intrigue, it becomes the source of a tension in which pain almost overpowers pleasure. Nowhere else in Shakespeare do we hold our breath in such anxiety and for so long a time as in the later acts of *Othello*.

One result of the prominence of the element of intrigue is that *Othello* is less unlike a story of private life than any other of the great tragedies. And this impression is strengthened in further ways. In the other great tragedies the action is placed in a distant period, so that its general significance is perceived through a thin veil which separates the persons from us and our own world. But *Othello* is a drama of modern life; when it first appeared it was a drama almost of contemporary life, for the date of the Turkish attack on Cyprus is 1570.

Explanations from OTHELLO

1. Were I the Moor I would not be Iago.
   In following him I follow but myself;
   Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
   But seeming so for my peculiar end.
   For when my outward action doth demonstrate
   The native act and figure of my heart
   In compliment extern, 'tis not long after
   But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
   For daws to peck at. I am not what I am. (I.i.57–65)

In this early speech, Iago explains his tactics to Roderigo. He follows Othello not out of "love" or "duty," but because he feels he can exploit and dupe his master, thereby revenging himself upon the man he suspects of having slept with his wife. Iago finds that people who are what they seem are foolish. The day he decides to demonstrate outwardly what he feels inwardly, Iago explains, will be the day he makes himself most vulnerable: "I will wear my heart upon my sleeve / For daws to peck at." His implication, of course, is that such a day will never come.

This speech exemplifies Iago's cryptic and elliptical manner of speaking. Phrases such as "Were I the Moor I would not be Iago" and "I am not what I am" hide as much as, if not more than, they reveal. Iago is continually playing a game of deception, even with Roderigo and the audience. The paradox or riddle that the speech creates is emblematic of Iago's power throughout the play: his smallest sentences ("Think, my lord?" in III.iii.109) or gestures (beckoning Othello closer in Act IV, scene i) open up whole worlds of interpretation.

2.

My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty.
To you I am bound for life and education.
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you. You are the lord of my duty,
I am hitherto your daughter. But here's my husband,
And so much duty as my mother showed
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor my lord. (I.iii.179–188)

These words, which Desdemona speaks to her father before the Venetian senate, are her first of the play. Her speech shows her thoughtfulness, as she does not insist on her loyalty to Othello at the expense of respect for her father, but rather acknowledges that her duty is "divided." Because Desdemona is brave enough to stand up to her father and even partially rejects him in public, these words also establish for the audience her courage and her strength of conviction. Later, this same ability to separate different degrees and kinds of affection will make Desdemona seek, without hesitation, to help Cassio, thereby fueling Othello's jealousy. Again and again, Desdemona speaks clearly and truthfully, but, tragically, Othello is poisoned by Iago's constant manipulation of language and emotions and is therefore blind to Desdemona's honesty.

3.

Haply for I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have; or for I am declined
Into the vale of years—yet that's not much—
She's gone. I am abused, and my relief
Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,
That we can call these delicate creatures ours
And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad
And live upon the vapor of a dungeon
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses. Yet 'tis the plague of great ones;
Prerogatived are they less than the base.
'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death. (III.iii.267–279)

When, in Act I, scene iii, Othello says that he is "rude" in speech, he shows that he does not really believe his own claim by going on to deliver a lengthy and very convincing speech about how he won Desdemona over with his wonderful storytelling (I.iii.81). However, after Iago has raised Othello's suspicions about his wife's fidelity, Othello seems to have at least partly begun to believe that he is inarticulate and barbaric, lacking "those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers [those who avoid practical labor and confine their activities to the 'chambers' of ladies] have." This is also the first time that Othello himself, and not Iago, calls negative attention to either his race or his age. His conclusion that Desdemona is "gone" shows how far Iago's insinuations about Cassio and Desdemona have taken Othello: in a matter of a mere 100 lines or so, he has progressed from belief in his conjugal happiness to belief in his abandonment.

The ugly imagery that follows this declaration of abandonment—Othello finds Desdemona to be a mere "creature" of "appetite" and imagines himself as a "toad" in a "dungeon"—anticipates his later speech in Act IV, scene ii, in which he compares Desdemona to a "cistern for foul toads / To knot and gender in," and says that she is as honest "as summer flies are in the shambles [slaughterhouses], / That quicken even with blowing" (IV.ii.63–64, 68–69). Othello's comment, "'tis the plague of great ones," shows that the only potential comfort Othello finds in his moment of hopelessness is his success as a soldier, which proves that he is not "base." He attempts to consider his wife's purported infidelity as an inevitable part of his being a great man, but his comfort is halfhearted and unconvincing, and he concludes by resigning himself to cuckoldry as though it were "death."

4. I am glad I have found this napkin.
This was her first remembrance from the Moor,
My wayward husband hath a hundred times
Wooed me to steal it, but she so loves the token—
For he conjured her she should ever keep it—
That she reserves it evermore about her
To kiss and talk to. I'll ha' the work ta'en out,
And give't Iago. What he will do with it,
Heaven knows, not I.
I nothing, but to please his fantasy. (III.iii.294–303)

This speech of Emilia's announces the beginning of Othello's "handkerchief plot," a seemingly insignificant event—the dropping of a handkerchief—that becomes the means by which Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, Roderigo, Emilia, and even Iago himself are completely undone. Before Othello lets the handkerchief fall from his brow, we have neither heard of nor seen it. The primary function of Emilia's speech is to explain the prop's importance: as the first gift Othello gave Desdemona, it represents their oldest and purest feelings for one another.

While the fact that Iago "hath a hundred times / Wooed me to steal it" immediately tips off the audience to the handkerchief's imminently prominent place in the tragic sequence of events, Emilia seems entirely unsuspicious. To her, the handkerchief is literally a trifle, "light as air," and this is perhaps why she remains silent about the handkerchief's whereabouts even when Desdemona begins to suffer for its absence. It is as though Emilia cannot, or refuses to,

imagine that her husband would want the handkerchief for any devious reason. Many critics have found Emilia's silence about the handkerchief—and in fact the entire handkerchief plot—a great implausibility, and it is hard to disagree with this up to a point. At the same time, however, it serves as yet another instance in which Iago has the extraordinary power to make those around him see only what they want to see, and thereby not suspect what is obviously suspicious.

5.

Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well,
Of one not easily jealous but, being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinable gum. Set you down this,
And say besides that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by th' throat the circumcised dog
And smote him thus. (V.ii.341-354)

With these final words, Othello stabs himself in the chest. In this farewell speech, Othello reaffirms his position as a figure who is simultaneously a part of and excluded from Venetian society. The smooth eloquence of the speech and its references to "Arabian trees," "Aleppo," and a "malignant and a turbaned Turk" remind us of Othello's long speech in Act I, scene iii, lines 127–168, and of the tales of adventure and war with which he wooed Desdemona. No longer inarticulate with grief as he was when he cried, "O fool! fool! fool!," Othello seems to have calmed himself and regained his dignity and, consequently, our respect (V.ii.332). He reminds us once again of his martial prowess, the quality that made him famous in Venice. At the same time, however, by killing himself as he is describing the killing of a Turk, Othello identifies himself with those who pose a military—and, according to some, a psychological—threat to Venice, acknowledging in the most powerful and awful way the fact that he is and will remain very much an outsider. His suicide

is a kind of martyrdom, a last act of service to the state, as he kills the only foe he has left to conquer: himself.

Character of Desdemona in Othello

Desdemona is a more plausible, well-rounded figure than much criticism has given her credit for. Arguments that see Desdemona as stereotypically weak and submissive ignore the conviction and authority of her first speech ("My noble father, / I do perceive here a divided duty" [I.iii.179–180]) and her terse fury after Othello strikes her ("I have not deserved this" [IV.i.236]). Similarly, critics who argue that Desdemona's slightly bizarre bawdy jesting with Iago in Act II, scene i, is either an interpolation not written by Shakespeare or a mere vulgarity ignore the fact that Desdemona is young, sexual, and recently married. She later displays the same chiding, almost mischievous wit in Act III, scene iii, lines 61–84, when she attempts to persuade Othello to forgive Cassio.

Desdemona is at times a submissive character, most notably in her willingness to take credit for her own murder. In response to Emilia's question, "O, who hath done this deed?" Desdemona's final words are, "Nobody, I myself. Farewell. / Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell" (V.ii.133–134). The play, then, depicts Desdemona contradictorily as a self-effacing, faithful wife and as a bold, independent personality. This contradiction may be intentional, meant to portray the way Desdemona herself feels after defending her choice of marriage to her father in Act I, scene iii, and then almost immediately being put in the position of defending her fidelity to her husband. She begins the play as a supremely independent person, but midway through she must struggle against all odds to convince Othello that she is not *too* independent. The manner in which Desdemona is murdered—smothered by a pillow in a bed covered in her wedding sheets—is symbolic: she is literally suffocated beneath the demands put on her fidelity. Since her first lines, Desdemona has seemed capable of meeting or even rising above those demands. In the end, Othello stifles the speech that made Desdemona so powerful.

Tragically, Desdemona is apparently aware of her imminent death. She, not Othello, asks Emilia to put her wedding sheets on the bed, and she asks Emilia to bury her in these sheets should she die first. The last time we see Desdemona before she awakens to find Othello standing over her with murder in his eyes, she sings a song she learned from her mother's maid: "She was in love; and he proved mad / And did forsake her. She had a song of willow. / . . . / And she died singing it. That song tonight / Will not go from my mind" (IV.iii.27–30).

Like the audience, Desdemona seems able only to watch as her husband is driven insane with jealousy. Though she maintains to the end that she is "guiltless," Desdemona also forgives her husband (V.ii.133). Her forgiveness of Othello may help the audience to forgive him as well.

Character of Othello

Possibly the most heinous villain in Shakespeare, Iago is fascinating for his most terrible characteristic: his utter lack of convincing motivation for his actions. In the first scene, he claims to be angry at Othello for having passed him over for the position of lieutenant (I.i. 7–32). At the end of Act I, scene iii, Iago says he thinks Othello may have slept with his wife, Emilia: "It is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets / He has done my office" (I.iii.369–370). Iago mentions this suspicion again at the end of Act II, scene i, explaining that he lusts after Desdemona because he wants to get even with Othello "wife for wife" (II.i.286). None of these claims seems to adequately explain Iago's deep hatred of Othello, and Iago's lack of motivation—or his inability or unwillingness to express his true motivation—makes his actions all the more terrifying. He is willing to take revenge on anyone—Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, Roderigo, even Emilia—at the slightest provocation and enjoys the pain and damage he causes.

Iago is often funny, especially in his scenes with the foolish Roderigo, which serve as a showcase of Iago's manipulative -abilities. He seems almost to wink at the audience as he revels in his own skill. As entertained spectators, we find ourselves on Iago's side when he is with Roderigo, but the interactions between the two also reveal a streak of cowardice in Iago—a cowardice that becomes manifest in the final scene, when Iago kills his own wife (V.ii.231–242).

Iago's murder of Emilia could also stem from the general hatred of women that he displays. Some readers have suggested that Iago's true, underlying motive for persecuting Othello is his homosexual love for the general. He certainly seems to take great pleasure in preventing Othello from enjoying marital happiness, and he expresses his love for Othello frequently and effusively.

It is Iago's talent for understanding and manipulating the desires of those around him that makes him both a powerful and a compelling figure. Iago is able to take the handkerchief from Emilia and know that he can deflect her questions; he is able to tell Othello of the handkerchief and know that Othello

will not doubt him; he is able to tell the audience, “And what’s he then that says I play the villain,” and know that it will laugh as though he were a clown (II.iii.310). Though the most inveterate liar, Iago inspires all of the play’s characters the trait that is most lethal to Othello: trust.

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Paper-3: As You Like It : A comedy by Shakespeare

Generally believed to have been written and first performed sometime between 1598 and 1600, *As You Like It* is largely a dramatic adaptation of Thomas Lodge's pastoral romance *Rosalynde* (1590). And, while Shakespeare mined this earlier work for most of the play's plot and many of its major characters, its sources are thought to also include such texts as Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia,* the anonymous*Historie of Sir Clyomen and Clamydes,* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* The work is typically seen as a light-hearted comedy, filled with the requisite misunderstandings and farcical happenings, but scholars have nonetheless observed that the play engages several serious subjects. Its principal actors are the virtuous Orlando de Boys and his beloved Rosalind, both of whom are banished from Duke Frederick's court to the near-mythical rural setting of the Forest of Arden. In these two characters Shakespeare personifies two of the work's leading themes: Orlando represents dishonored virtue restored, while Rosalind—who is disguised as Ganymede, a young man, for the majority of the play—inaugurates the theme of illusory appearance that questions the fabric of perception and reality.

As You Like It is often seen as a grand pastoral romance, tinged with an ironic commentary on the illusion of its ideals. As a pastoral comedy, its plot follows the classic three-part pattern, featuring an exile from court, followed by a renewal of character and social standing in a rural setting, and culminating in an exultant return to court. The two settings in the play, the natural world of Arden and Duke Frederick's court, are seen as analogous to the work's contrasting tensions of romantic idealism and ironic realism, respectively. Views of these contrasting worlds and the perspectives they represent have become commonplace in criticism on the play. Rosalie L. Colie, for example, has outlined many of the major pastoral themes and motifs reflected in the work, including its emphasis on dialogue, its mixture of comedy and tragedy, and its concern with the clash between art and nature and between court and country. Eamon Grennan, like-wise, has approached the play as a pastoral comedy, but sees the work as a combining of pastoral and anti-pastoral elements. For Ralph Berry, the site of the anti-romantic rests in the character of Rosalind and in Touchstone, a professional fool from Duke Frederick's court who

presumably acts as a mouthpiece for Shakespeare, allowing him to interject an ironic voice into the play. Other pastoral elements, such as the foolish shepherdess Phebe and her jilted Petrarchan lover, Silvius, are presented as stock characters, included to elicit mirth from the audience and to parody the limitations of the romantic genre.

Shakespeare's use of folly is another topic that attracts continual interest among critics of *As You Like It.* The play's humor, which pokes fun at human limitations and foolishness, has been perhaps most closely observed by R. Chris Hassel, who sees the work as a celebration of human folly, the absurdity of life, and the wisdom that comes with the apprehension of both. Hassel, along with several earlier commentators, has given significant attention to the play's fools Jaques and Touchstone. The character of Jaques has long been a compelling figure for audiences and critics. By the nineteenth century he had become a favorite subject of many, including William Hazlitt, who essentially cast him as a melancholic malcontent and a personification of self-indulgence and superficiality. This assessment has persisted, and Jaques is very consistently seen as striving to maintain the pretense of his aristocratic breeding, while only succeeding in demonstrating his foolishness. To a great degree, Jaques is contrasted with Touchstone who, despite his occupation, displays an intelligence, wit, and occasional profundity that equals or surpasses that of any other character in the play.

The depth of Touchstone's perceptions, however, are only rivaled by those of *As You Like It's* chief protagonist, Rosalind. For many commentators, including Charles Brooks and Peter Hyland, Rosalind—in disguising herself as a man before she enters the Forest of Arden—draws attention to the work as self-conscious drama or meta theater, concerned with the consequences of acting and role-playing as part of the quest for self-knowledge. She is considered the locus of inversion in the play, and her character stirs a deeper understanding of the human condition by questioning the nature of observed reality. Rosalind is thought to forge her own identity throughout the course of the play through her adoption of a new appearance. Her disguise also draws attention to the Forest of Arden as a liminal space, where the ordinary perspectives—including commonly accepted gender and power structures both in and beyond the world of the play, such as the patriarchal status quo and the misdirected power of Duke Frederick that has banished Orlando from his rightful place as Duke—are turned upside down in order that they might be examined more closely. One of Shakespeare's most inventive and intelligent heroines, Rosalind also is the focus of the play's movement toward the reconciliation of opposites—realism and idealism, wisdom and folly, high and low, male and female. And, while many critics see Rosalind as this synthesizing figure, most concur that the underlying tensions in this play resist definite resolution, making *As You Like It* one of Shakespeare's most successful and compelling comedies.

As You Like It as a pastoral Comedy

C.L. Barber says that 'As You Like It' is one of the sweetest and sunniest comedies of Shakespeare. Cheralton observes that it is satirical and realistic, other critics have said that it is a pastoral comedy. According to Nicoll, "a comedy ends on a note of tinkling of marital bliss. A Shakespearean comedy is different from classical comedy in which society is justified and individual is held up to ridicule so that he may conform to the social standards. Let us take the example of 'As You Like It'. It is at once romantic ad realistic, critical and poetic, rational and imitative allowing individual freedom and justifying society. It is flexible and accomodating. It ends on a note of forgiveness. A note of reconciliation is affected between Oliver and Orlando, the senior Duke and his younger brother, Fredrick in the end. The comedy begins through a fissure in the courtly order but it ends on a note of resolution. The characters assume their normal routine. Orlando is united with Rosalind, Oliver with Celia, Silvius with Phebe and Touchtone with Audrey. After their adolescent love-making, it is expected that these pairs of lovers will lead a mature, balanced and suitable life.

Romantic comedy is a comedy that suggests a variety of senses and means. Jonson and other playwrights have written realistic and satirical comedies. These comedies have ugly and harsh realities of life. But a romantic comedy creates imagination. Laughter, in realistic comedy, is directed as the follies of characters designated by another term: 'comedy of manners'. In these comedies we laugh at characters and we find them in ourselves. Here the attitude is more sympathetic than criticism. We understand the characters and not judge them. Shakespeare demands greater involvement in his characters. The focus is on the individual and individual alone.

We can call it a romantic because it concerns with love, youth, happiness and marriage. Music makes us experienced, emotional and imaginative. It has sense of gaiety and spirit of joy. As a romantic comedy, it has loose structure also.

In 'As You Like It' Shakespeare takes different aspects of love between lovers and between the friends. Shakespeare has borrowed the cliché of "love at first sight" from Marlowe's 'Hero and Leander' ("whoever loved who loved not at first sight"). Rosalind is banished by her uncle. She comes to the forest of Arden. Here all lovers are united. Before this, when Orlando fights a wrestling match, Rosalind is one of the onlookers. Spontaneously she offers him a gold chain as a token of her appreciation. This is the symbol of love at first sight. In doing so, she hands over her heart to him. In the forest of Arden, their love

reaches at the climax. Rosalind points out the symptoms of a traditional lover and defines Orlando's asserting that he is truly in love with her:
"A sunken eye you have not
A pale cheek you have not."

When orlando boasts that if he does not meet her, he would die, Rosalind says: "From time to time men have died but not of love". Another realistic and satitrical note is struck by Rosalind when she says,
"Men are April when they woo,
December when they wed.
Women are May when they are maids,
But sky changes when they are wives."

Sometimes we find Orlando as a conventional lover. He writes love poems but they lack "feeling". It is bad poetry and invites the reader to laugh at the form of rhetoric. He carves Rosalind's name on the trees. All these things reveal Orlando as a conventional lover. Then their marriage takes place in the forest. Rosalind describes how Celia fell in love with Oliver at first sight: "No sooner they must but they saw/ no sooner they saw but they fell in love with each other".
Shakespeare has presented the love of the pastoral characters. Phebe is a pastoral nymph unwilling to surrender to her lover Silvius who makes obsequies. He complains to Rosalind about her harsh treatment. Phebe on the other hand, falls in love with Rosalind disguised as Genymede.
The love of Touchstone, with Audrey is a kind of satire on love and marriage. Touchstone does not seek to marry a genuine priest, for in that case it will not be easy for him to divorce his wife. Through Touchstone and Audrey, Shakespeare presents some kind of physical love. Touchstone is too much interested in physical relationship. Shakespeare avoids the games of love like seduction or physical love. Even Touchstone is interested but Shakespeare does not develop this love.
Love experience in the play is happy and good challenge because no restriction is from the outward. The story ends on a note of rational explanation. It does not injure the expectations of the reader. The atmosphere in the forest is interesting. It is something more than romantic comedy. The play reflects Shakespeare's ability, a certain attachment is there. Here romantic means highly sentimental and artificial. It is not only Orlando, who is mocked. The pastoral love and

sensual is also mocked here. Rosalind mocks at romantic love. She is very frequently suggesting that infidelity is a challenge that lovers must accept. Her cynicism can be understood when we think that she speaks for Shakespeare. The writer insists on the reality of love. Phebe is in love Genymede. But Shakespeare does not want the settlement as Jonson or other playwrights. In this sense, it is philosophical too; Silvius and Phebe are highly sentimental characters. Touchstone and Audrey present sensual love. They are cynical, physical and sentimental both in words and actions. Marriage has a strange kind of value for Touchstone when he says: "Faithless wife is better that no wife." Audrey too does not escape from the criticism of writer. She scores the good villain, Oliver and Celia present sudden love. Celia shows herself to practical, resourceful, even emotional and becomes a rash woman till this happens. Curing of Orlando by Rosalind is healthy and real relationship, which comes to existence and accepts the reality of love. The pair of Orlando and Rosalind has personified the refined love, true love and pure view of love. They also reinforce the idea that is romantic. This pair has stability and maturity of love. High romanticism is when Rosalind feels difficult to part from Orlando even for two hours. Then Silvius uses love conceits and these have been used by dramatist to expose the unnaturalness of pastoral love.

To conclude, it may be said that a Shakespearean comedy is a complex irreducible to one level of meaning and is aimed at nature and society, lower classes and upper classes, individual and society; contemplation and action; cynicism and love; satire and spontaneity. In fact, it is as wide and varied as the modern sensibility. It does not give a picture of untainted joy, which verges on the border of melancholy and resignation. It is tolerant, human, liberal and is definite experience contributing to the art of living boarding on common sense and outlook.

Explanations from As You Like It

1. Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
   Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
   Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
   More free from peril than the envious court?
   Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
   The seasons' difference, as the icy fang
   And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
   Which when it bites and blows upon my body

Even till I shrink with cold, I smile, and say
'This is no flattery. These are counsellors
That feelingly persuade me what I am.'
Sweet are the uses of adversity
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
(II.i.1–17)

These lines, spoken by Duke Senior upon his introduction in Act II, scene i, establish the pastoral mode of the play. With great economy, Shakespeare draws a dividing line between the "painted pomp" of court—with perils great enough to drive the duke and his followers into exile—and the safe and restorative Forest of Ardenne (II.i.3). The woods are romanticized, as they typically are in pastoral literature, and the mood is set for the remainder of the play. Although perils may present themselves, they remain distant, and, in the end, there truly is "good in everything" (II.i.17). This passage, more than any other in the play, presents the conceits of the pastoral mode. Here, the corruptions of life at court are left behind in order to learn the simple and valuable lessons of the country. Shakespeare highlights the educational, edifying, and enlightening nature of this foray into the woods by employing language that invokes the classroom, the library, and the church: in the trees, brooks, and stones surrounding him, the duke finds tongues, books, and sermons. As is his wont, Shakespeare goes on to complicate the literary conventions upon which he depends. His shepherds and shepherdesses, for instance, ultimately prove too lovesick or dim-witted to dole out the kind of wisdom the pastoral form demands of them, but for now Shakespeare merely sets up the opposition between city and country that provides the necessary tension to drive his story forward.

2. **As I do live by food, I met a fool,**
Who laid him down and basked him in the sun,
And railed on Lady Fortune in good terms,
In good set terms, and yet a motley fool.
'Good morrow, fool,' quoth I. 'No, sir,' quoth he,
'Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune.'
And then he drew a dial from his poke,
And looking on it with lack-lustre eye

Says very wisely ‘It is ten o’clock.’
’Thus we may see’, quoth he, ‘how the world wags.
’Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
And after one hour more ‘twill be eleven.
And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot;
And thereby hangs a tale.’
(II.vii.14–28)

In Act II, scene vii, melancholy Jaques displays an uncharacteristic burst of delight. While wandering through the forest, he relates, he met a fool, who entertained him with rather nihilistic musings on the passage of time and man’s life. According to Touchstone, time ensures nothing other than man’s own decay: “from hour to hour we rot and rot” (II.vii.27). That this speech appeals to Jaques says much about his character: he delights not only in the depressing, but also in the rancid. Practically all of Touchstone’s lines contain some bawdy innuendo, and these are no exception. Here, by punning the word “hour” with “whore,” he transforms the general notion of man’s decay into the unpleasant specifics of a man dying from venereal disease. Touchstone appropriately, if distastefully, confirms this hidden meaning by ending his speech with the words “thereby hangs a tale,” for tale was Elizabethan slang for penis (II.vii.28).

3. No, faith; die by attorney.
The poor world is almost six thousand years old,
and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet, in a love-cause.
Troilus had his brains dashed out with a Grecian club,
yet he did what he could to die before, and he is one of the patterns of love.
Leander, he would have lived many a fair year
though Hero had turned nun if it had not been for a hot midsummer night,
for, good youth, he went but forth to wash him in the Hellespont and, being taken with the cramp, was drowned;
and the foolish chroniclers of that age found
it was Hero of Sestos.
But these are all lies.
Men have died from time to time,
and worms have eaten them, but not for love.
(IV.i.81–92)

In Act IV, scene i, Rosalind rejects Orlando's claim that he would die if Rosalind should fail to return his love. Rosalind's insistence that "[m]en have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love" is one of the most recognizable lines from the play and perhaps the wisest (IV.i.91–92). Here, Rosalind takes on one of the most dominant interpretations of romantic love, an understanding that is sustained by mythology and praised in literature, and insists on its unreality. She holds to the light the stories of Troilus and Leander, both immortal lovers, in order to expose their falsity. Men are, according to Rosalind, much more likely to die by being hit with a club or drowning than in a fatal case of heartbreak. Rosalind does not mean to deny the existence of love. On the contrary, she delights in loving Orlando. Instead, her criticism comes from an unwillingness to let affection cloud or warp her sense of reality. By casting aside the conventions of the standard—and usually tragic—romance, Rosalind advocates a kind of love that belongs and can survive in the real world that she inhabits.

4.

O sir, we quarrel in print, by the book,
as you have books for good manners.
I will name you the degrees.
The first, the Retort Courteous;
the second, the Quip Modest;
the third, the Reply Churlish;
the fourth, the Reproof Valiant;
the fifth, the Countercheck Quarrelsome;
the sixth, the Lie with Circumstance;
the seventh, the Lie Direct.
All these you may avoid
but the Lie Direct;
and you may avoid that, too, with an 'if'.
I knew when seven justices could not take up a quarrel,
but when the parties were met themselves,
one of them thought but of an 'if',
as 'If you said so, then I said so',
and they shook hands and swore brothers.
Your 'if' is the only peacemaker; much virtue in 'if'.
(V.iv.81–92)

In Act V, scene iv, Touchstone delivers an account of a recent argument he has had. His anatomy of the quarrel, as this speech might be called, is a deftly comic moment that skewers all behavior that is "by the book," whether it be rules for engaging an enemy or a lover (V.iv.81). The end of the speech, in which Touchstone turns his attentions to the powers of the word "if," is particularly fine and fitting. "If" points to the potential of events in possible worlds. "If" allows slights to be forgiven, wounds to be salved, and promising opportunities to be taken. Notably, within a dozen lines of this speech, Duke Senior, Orlando, and Phoebe each usher in a new stage of life with a simple sentence that begins with that simple word.

5.

It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue; but it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue. If it be true that good wine needs no bush, 'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue. Yet to good wine they do use good bushes, and good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues. What a case am I in then, that am neither a good epilogue nor cannot insinuate with you in the behalf of a good play! I am not furnished like a beggar, therefore to beg will not become me. My way is to conjure you; and I'll begin with the women. I charge you,
O women, for the love you bear to men,
to like as much of this play as please you.
And I charge you, O men,
for the love you bear to women—
as I perceive by your simpering none of you hates them—that between you and the women the play may please.
If I were a woman
I would kiss as many of you
as had beards that pleased me,
complexions that liked me, and breaths that I defied not.
And I am sure, as many as have good beards, or good faces,
or sweet breaths will for my kind offer,
when I make curtsy, bid me farewell.
(Epilogue,14–19).

The Epilogue was a standard component of Elizabethan drama. One actor remains onstage after the play has ended to ask the audience for applause. As Rosalind herself notes, it is odd that she has been chosen to deliver the Epilogue, as that task is usually assigned to a male character. By the time she

addresses the audience directly, Rosalind has discarded her Ganymede disguise. She is again a woman and has married a man. Although we may think the play of gender has come to an end with the fall of the curtain, we must remember that women were forbidden to perform onstage in Shakespeare's England. Rosalind would have been played by a man, which further obscures the boundaries of gender. Rosalind emerges as a man who pretends to be a woman who pretends to be a man who pretends to be a woman to win the love of a man. When the actor solicits the approval of the men in the audience, he says, "If I were a woman I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me"—returning us to the dizzying intermingling of homosexual and heterosexual affections that govern life in the Forest of Arden.

Character of Touchstone

In the stage directions of the First Folio, Touchstone is designated as being a "clowne"; later, he is referred to as a "fool." Basically, the term "clowne" was more applicable to a country bumpkin, whereas the term "fool" was applied to the professional jester — that is, the fool, the king's jester, dressed in motley. In reading Elizabethan plays, it is important to keep this important distinction in mind.

In Act I, Scene 2, Celia and Rosalind refer to Touchstone as a "natural." Here, Touchstone's character changes yet a bit more; Rosalind is saying that he is a born fool or idiot, but this is wholly out of keeping with what we know of Rosalind's character. Obviously, this is most likely a pun on the words "natural" and "nature," words that occur frequently in the scene. The comic banter of the two girls here is used as a contrast to the somber opening scene, and it is also used to establish the comic device of the pun, a word play that Elizabethan audiences never tired of. The extended pun on "natural" and "nature" in this scene where Touchstone's "wisdom" is questioned culminates in Celia's remark, "the dullness of the fool is the whetstone of the wits" (I.ii.58-59).

Touchstone, more appropriately, is described by Jaques as being "a motley fool" (II.vii.13). Here, Jaques is describing the professional jester, easily recognized by his costume, which was usually a child's long coat, gathered at the waist and falling in folds below the knees. A bauble was sometimes worn on the sleeve, and a cockscomb or feather decorated the hat.

Whatever the case in this particular scene, Touchstone's motley is sober enough to entitle him to treatment as a gentleman in the Forest of Arden. As a matter of fact, Touchstone fancies himself a courtier, and Jaques reports on Touchstone's pretensions of being a courtier in Act II, Scene 7, lines 36-38, and again when he introduces the fool to Duke Senior:

Jaq. He hath been a courtier, he swears.

Touch. If any man doubt that, let him put me to my purgation. I have trod a measure; I have flatt'red a lady . . . I have undone three tailors; I have had four quarrels, and like to have fought one. (V.iv.42-49)

Touchstone has also assumed the role of a courtier in his meeting with Corin. Personally, he feels far superior to the pastoral shepherd; his criticism of pastoral life proceeds from his assumption of the superiority of sophisticated court life over country living. Later, Touchstone burlesques the artificiality of the gentlemanly code of honor (V.iv.48-108), which is in keeping, of course, with his multifaceted personality.

Another interesting aspect of Touchstone's character is the fact that he is restricted in his singing. Shakespeare usually gives some songs to his fools. Yet here, Touchstone sings only snatches of song. Several explanations have been advanced as to why Touchstone is not given more songs to sing, but all arguments remain only conjectures.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that in a fantasy such as *As You Like It,* it is not necessary that every character be fully developed. The strength of this play lies in its dialogue and in its masque-like elements. That Touchstone is not truly and fully developed as a character does not detract from the play. That he is a superb example of theatrical convention is enough, and in no way does it detract from his effectiveness as an integral part of the play. His wit is the wit of a master dramatist, even if he remains, ultimately, incomplete, an enigma of contradictions.

Characters in As You Like It

Rosalind

Rosalind dominates *As You Like It.* So fully realized is she in the complexity of her emotions, the subtlety of her thought, and the fullness of her character that no one else in the play matches up to her. Orlando is handsome, strong, and an affectionate, if unskilled, poet, yet still we feel that Rosalind settles for someone slightly less magnificent when she chooses him as her mate. Similarly, the observations of Touchstone and Jaques, who might shine more brightly in another play, seem rather dull whenever Rosalind takes the stage.

The endless appeal of watching Rosalind has much to do with her success as a knowledgeable and charming critic of herself and others. But unlike Jaques, who refuses to participate wholly in life but has much to say about the foolishness of those who surround him, Rosalind gives herself over fully to circumstance. She chastises Silvius for his irrational devotion to Phoebe, and she challenges Orlando’s thoughtless equation of Rosalind with a Platonic ideal, but still she comes undone by her lover’s inconsequential tardiness and faints at the sight of his

blood. That Rosalind can play both sides of any field makes her identifiable to nearly everyone, and so, irresistible.

Rosalind is a particular favorite among feminist critics, who admire her ability to subvert the limitations that society imposes on her as a woman. With boldness and imagination, she disguises herself as a young man for the majority of the play in order to woo the man she loves and instruct him in how to be a more accomplished, attentive lover—a tutorship that would not be welcome from a woman. There is endless comic appeal in Rosalind's lampooning of the conventions of both male and female behavior, but an Elizabethan audience might have felt a certain amount of anxiety regarding her behavior. After all, the structure of a male-dominated society depends upon both men and women acting in their assigned roles. Thus, in the end, Rosalind dispenses with the charade of her own character. Her emergence as an actor in the Epilogue assures that theatergoers, like the Ardenne foresters, are about to exit a somewhat enchanted realm and return to the familiar world they left behind. But because they leave having learned the same lessons from Rosalind, they do so with the same potential to make that world a less punishing place.

Orlando

According to his brother, Oliver, Orlando is of noble character, unschooled yet somehow learned, full of noble purposes, and loved by people of all ranks as if he had enchanted them (I.i.141–144). Although this description comes from the one character who hates Orlando and wishes him harm, it is an apt and generous picture of the hero of *As You Like It.* Orlando has a brave and generous spirit, though he does not possess Rosalind's wit and insight. As his love tutorial shows, he relies on commonplace clichés in matters of love, declaring that without the fair Rosalind, he would die. He does have a decent wit, however, as he demonstrates when he argues with Jaques, suggesting that Jaques should seek out a fool who wanders about the forest: "He is drowned in the brook. Look but in, and you shall see him," meaning that Jaques will see a fool in his own reflection (III.ii.262–263)

. But next to Rosalind, Orlando's imagination burns a bit less bright. This upstaging is no fault of Orlando's, given the fullness of Rosalind's character; Shakespeare clearly intends his audience to delight in the match. Time and again, Orlando performs tasks that reveal his nobility and demonstrate why he is so well-loved: he travels with the ancient Adam and makes a fool out of himself to secure the old man food; he risks his life to save the brother who has plotted against him; he cannot help but violate the many trees of Ardenne with testaments of his love for Rosalind. In the beginning of the play, he laments that his brother has denied him the schooling deserved by a gentleman, but by the end, he has proven himself a gentleman without the formality of that education.

Jaques

Jaques delights in being sad—a disparate role in a play that so delights in happiness. Jaques believes that his melancholy makes him the perfect candidate to be Duke Senior's fool. Such a position, he claims, will "Give me leave / To speak my mind," and the criticism that flows forth will "Cleanse the foul body of th'infected world" (II.vii.58–60). Duke Senior is rightly cautious about installing Jaques as the fool, fearing that Jaques would do little more than excoriate the sins that Jaques himself has committed. Indeed, Jaques lacks the keenness of insight of Shakespeare's most accomplished jesters: he is not as penetrating as *Twelfth Night*'s Feste or *King Lear*'s fool. In fact, he is more like an aspiring fool than a professional one. When Jaques philosophizes on the seven stages of human life, for instance, his musings strike us as banal. His "All the world's a stage" speech is famous today, but the play itself casts doubt on the ideas expressed in this speech (II.vii.138). No sooner does Jaques insist that man spends the final stages of his life in "mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" than Orlando's aged servant, Adam, enters, bearing with him his loyalty, his incomparable service, and his undiminished integrity (II.vii.164–165).

Jaques's own faculties as a critic of the goings-on around him are considerably diminished in comparison to Rosalind, who understands so much more and conveys her understanding with superior grace and charm. Rosalind criticizes in order to transform the world—to make Orlando a more reasonable husband and Phoebe a less disdainful lover—whereas Jaques is content to stew in his own melancholy. It is appropriate that Jaques decides not to return to court. While the other characters merrily revel, Jaques determines that he will follow the reformed Duke Frederick into the monastery, where he believes the converts have much to teach him. Jaques's refusal to resume life in the dukedom not only confirms our impression of his character, but also resonates with larger issues in the play. Here, the play makes good on the promise of its title: everyone gets just what he or she wants. It also betrays a small but inevitable crack in the community that dances through the forest. In a world as complex and full of so many competing forces as the one portrayed in *As You Like It,* the absolute best one can hope for is consensus, but never complete unanimity.

Edward the Second : a drama by Christopher Marlowe

Edward the Second as a chronicle tragedy

Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* is typically applauded as an aesthetic achievement, a history play that brings form and meaning to the incoherent material of its chronicle source by retelling the king's slightly dull, twenty-year

reign as the fierce and deadly struggle of a few willful personalities. Within the development of Elizabethan drama, *Edward II* is granted a crucial role in bringing to the English "chronicle play"--including Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III*--the unity and purpose of the mature "history" play, epitomized by Shakespeare's later, more aesthetically sophisticated tetralogy.

In this narrative of literary development, the episodic chronicle play fails to show the disparate events of the past contributing to a single action -- fails, like the chronicle, to comprehend the past -- while the history play successfully makes sense of those events. Considered in context of the Marlovian oeuvre, *Edward II* again demonstrates the triumph of art and order over inchoate historical material: it is Marlowe's "most perfect achievement in dramatic structure" and the "most finished and satisfactory of Marlowe's plays, evidently carefully written, with the refractory chronicle material skillfully handled."

These readings of *Edward II*, however, have relied upon too superficial an understanding of the chronicle tradition, and they have kept the play's formal success separate from the Elizabethan debates about historiography within which both play and source participated. The social and political stakes of Marlowe's historiographical practice emerge when we reread *Edward II* against a conception of the chronicle not as mere "material" but as a coherent and influential projection of national identity and historical process.

Such a comparative reading shows us not merely that Marlowe's play is more aesthetically satisfying, but also that it significantly redefines the nation and the forces of historical change. In particular, Marlowe delineates and focuses on a private realm, which he sets up in opposition to the public as a volatile source of decisions affecting the state. In addition, reading Marlowe's play with a new understanding of the chronicle foregrounds the meta discursive elements in *Edward II* that, referring back to the source accounts, help to illuminate Marlowe's sense of his own artistic refashioning. The chronicle form, as Marlowe's principal source and one with considerable cultural authority, challenged him to set up his drama as a more "true" history and to defend his very different understanding of both political process and history writing.

The assessments of *Edward II* that began this article define the play against the chronicle, which is in turn characterized as "material," an apparently amorphous grouping of value-free facts for the artist to choose or reject. For the modern

reader, accustomed to finding meaning in tales of causality, the disparate events recorded by the chroniclers -- events only related to each other by their shared chronological structure -- seem to lack meaning and purpose. But we can no longer read these important histories so carelessly.

In her recent analysis of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicle*, Annabel Patterson has shown that the chronicle's form and content actually worked to address the concerns and convey the values of the citizen and artisan Londoners who were its principal readers and producers.

Maintaining that the *Chronicle* reveals not its authors' "incompetence" but their "different set of historiographical principles," Patterson argues that the *Chronicle*'s perplexing inclusivity -- the quality that brought John Donne's scathing dismissal of chronicle content as "trivial household trash"--in effect creates a national history that will encompass not just king and court but also citizens and even the artisanal and labouring classes. Patterson also traces, in passages throughout the *Chronicle*, the authors' recurrent, approving attention to rights theory, to the "ancient constitution," and to the value of Parliament in limiting the monarch's power. She persuasively demonstrates that they make a strong case for certain liberties of the individual and the laws that protect them.

Character of Gaveston

King Edward II recalls his favorite, Pierce de Gaveston, from exile; Gaveston joyfully returns to England. While hurrying to Westminster to rejoin his monarch, he comes upon the king talking to his courtiers. Secretively, he hides from the royal assemblage and overhears the noblemen discussing his repatriation.

They discuss how Edward, an immature and weak-minded yet stubborn man, nourished for Gaveston an unwholesome and unyielding love, in spite of the fact that Edward’s father originally banished the man. The noblemen of England, sworn to uphold the decree of exile, hate the royal favorite. Most passionate in his fury is young Mortimer. Others are not far behind Mortimer in their antipathy, and they threaten the king with revolt if Gaveston remains in England. None but the king’s brother Edmund will harbor Gaveston. The fiery discussion ends; the nobles stalk off in haughty displeasure.

Gaveston, still in hiding, rejoices in his knowledge of the king’s love, for Edward reveals his pettiness by his unconcern for the welfare of his kingdom as weighed against his desire to clasp Gaveston to his bosom once more. When Gaveston reveals his presence, Edward ecstatically rewards him with a series of titles and honors, the scope of which causes even Edmund to comment wryly that Edward outdid himself. Gaveston claims with a smirk

that all he desires is to be near his monarch. To add salt to the kingdom’s wounds, Edward sentences the Bishop of Coventry, the instigator of Gaveston’s exile, to die in the Tower of London.

This action, coupled with the titles and estates lavishly bestowed upon Gaveston, so incenses the rebellious nobility that under the leadership of the two Mortimers, Warwick, and Lancaster, they plot to kill Gaveston. The Archbishop of Canterbury, protesting the damage inflicted upon the Church by the king’s folly, allies himself with the plot. Queen Isabella, who professes to love her lord dearly, complains to the noblemen that since Gaveston’s return Edward snubs her beyond endurance. She agrees that Gaveston must be done away with, but she cautions the angry noblemen not to injure Edward.

When the rebellious nobility seize Gaveston, Edward, yielding to the archbishop’s threat to enforce his papal powers against the king, can do nothing but stand by and allow his beloved friend to be carried off. A bitter exchange of words between the king and his lords is tempered by the gentle sentiments of Gaveston as he bids Edward farewell. Driven by childish anger, perhaps incensed by an intuitive knowledge, Gaveston attacks the queen and accuses her of a clandestine association with the younger Mortimer, a charge that she denies. Sensing his advantage, Edward seizes upon the accusation as a wedge to undermine his enemies, and he compels the queen to use her influence to save Gaveston. The queen, because of her love for Edward and her hopes for a reconciliation, resolves to mend the rift by abetting her husband.

Explanations from Edwardii

Base Fortune, now I see that in thy wheel

there is a point to which when men aspire;

they tumble headlong down.

That point I touch'd, and seeing there was no place

to mount up higher why should I grieve at my declining fall?

B . thank you all my lords.

Here I perceive that heading is one,

and hanging is the other, and death is all.

C. Thy worth sweet friend is far above my gifts.

And therefore to equal it, receive my heart.

The Rivals : a drama by Sheridan

The Rivals as a Comedy of Manners

The Comedy of Manners which had its seed sown in Ben Jonson's Comedy of Humors flourished in full bloom at the hands of the Restoration dramatists. They exploited this particular genre of comedy to study and imitate in a vein of humor and satire, the social mannerisms, conventions and artificiality of their particular age and society through delightful observation and witty commentaries on the prevalent temper, follies and external details of the life of certain men and women who were the stereo-types of their depicted society.

Sheridan's "The Rivals" is a perfect Comedy of Manners in the way it holds a mirror to social life, modes and manners of the artificial, fashionable community of the 18th Century English society by making Bath, a health resort in England the center of the action of the play. Through the characters of his play, Sheridan depicts in a very entertaining manner the gay and easy lives of the well to do people of his age that were full of intrigues, gossips, scandals, flirtations, frivolity and without any raging cares or serious problems of livelihood. Almost all the characters of the play are entangled in love affairs and have nothing more important to do than to pay social visits, learn fashionable dances, devour romances and fight duels.

The country landlords like Bob Acres came to Bath to ape the latest fashions and hair-styles. Lydia Languish represents all those girls at Bath who filled their idle days with cheap romances and dreams of romantic elopements. Mrs. Malaprop is an amusing representation of the provincial ladies who tried desperately to live up the smartness of the fashionable city of bath. Moreover, Rivals is also filled with references to the circulating libraries of the 18th century society that were the fond resorts and romantic haunts of sentimental girls.

The orthodox view on female education prevalent at that time also comes to the fore through the conversations of Sir Anthony Absolute and Mrs. Malaprop in Act.1Sc.2. It is true that the purview of Sheridan's social life is

very limited but this is in conformation with the tenets of a typical comedy of manners that focuses on a narrow slice of the society.

The plot of the Rivals just like that of any other Comedy of Manners is slight and built on the common stock devices of concealment, cross purposes, mistaken identity, tyrannical parents who threatened to disown upon disobedience and so on. The dramatic effect owes not so much to the plot but is based on the weaving of finely conceived highly theatrical situations into a composite whole and well sustained dramatic suspense.

To beautiful and wealthy young Lydia Languish, who has been brought up on romantic novels, the only lover worth considering is one whose position in life is in complete contrast to her own. To this end she has fallen in love with a penniless young ensign named Beverley. To this same Beverley, her aunt, Mrs. Malaprop, raises serious objections. Her antipathy to young Mr. Beverley is partly aroused by letters that the ensign has written to Lydia, letters in which he has made uncomplimentary references to her aunt's age and appearance. Mrs. Malaprop has had some moments of extreme discomfiture as she has wondered whether she does resemble the she-dragon to which Beverley has compared her.

Mrs. Malaprop herself has fallen hopelessly in love with a quixotic Irishman named Sir Lucius O'Trigger, who presumably returns her affection. Sir Lucius, who has never seen Mrs. Malaprop, has been hoodwinked by a maidservant into believing that the romantic creature with whom he has been exchanging love letters is Lydia.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that Beverley is in reality young Captain Jack Absolute, the son of Sir Anthony Absolute, and as wealthy and aristocratic as Lydia herself. Jack very early sensed that he would get nowhere if he wooed the romantic Lydia in his own person, and so he assumed a character more nearly resembling the heroes of the novels that Lydia enjoys.

Jack's friend Faulkland has not fared any better than Jack in his own romantic pursuit of Lydia's cousin, Julia Melville. In fact, it might be thought that he has fared worse, for, unlike Jack, he is forever placing imaginary obstacles between himself and his beloved. Whenever they are separated, Faulkland imagines all kinds of horrible catastrophes that might have befallen her, and when he finds that she is alive and well he torments himself with the thought that she cannot be in love and remain so happy. At last Jack loses patience with his friend's ridiculous behaviour, and even Julia becomes a little tired of her lover's unfounded jealousy.

Jack’s curious love tangle reaches a crisis when Sir Anthony Absolute informs his son that he has selected the woman for him to marry, threatening that if Jack refuses, he will cut the young man off without a penny. Not having the faintest idea as to the identity of the woman his father has picked out for him, and conjuring up pictures of some homely heir his father intends to force on him against his will, Jack rebels. He declares that, whatever the consequences, he will have nothing to do with the woman his father has.

Character of Mrs Malaprop

Young Captain Absolute, son and heir of Sir Anthony Absolute, arrives in Bath to pay court to the rich and lovely Lydia Languish. His suit is singularly complicated because he has made himself known to her as the penniless Ensign Beverley, the better to intrigue her romantic nature. Lydia, seventeen, favors the excitement of an elopement, but Captain Absolute is aware that she will lose two-thirds of her fortune if she weds without the consent of her aunt, Mrs. Malaprop. He hopes that Lydia will accept him in his true name after she has come to love him as Ensign Beverley.

Lydia also has problems: her aunt has intercepted a note from Beverley and has confined Lydia to her home; now she has no opportunity to patch up a petty quarrel with her lover, and fears that she has lost him. Her friend Julia tries to console her by saying that, after all, Beverley is penniless, but Lydia declares herself determined to marry, before she becomes of age, a man who will care nothing for her fortune.

She tells Julia that Mrs. Malaprop has not scrupled to carry on a small romance of her own: she is corresponding, under the name of Delia, with a fire-eating Irish baronet, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, who is unaware of her true identity. Mrs. Malaprop's shrewd maid, Lucy, who acts as messenger between them, is fattening her purse by telling the impoverished O'Trigger that "Delia" is the beautiful Lydia.

A new complication now arises: Sir Anthony makes a suprise visit to Bath. He arrives with Mrs. Malaprop at her home to propose a match between his son, the Captain, and Lydia. Mrs. Malaprop, who has an amazing propensity for garbling the English language, orders Lydia to "illiterate" Beverley from her thoughts. But Lydia, unaware of his true identity, refuses to marry Captain Absolute. In spite of her refusal, her aunt accepts his father's proposal, and prepares to dismiss another of Lydia's suitors, Bob Acres, a young man who is somewhat of a bumpkin.

Captain Absolute has learned of the arrival of his father and Julia, who is Sir Anthony's ward, and he summons his friend Faulkland to give him the news about them. Faulkland and Julia are betrothed, but the former is in a perpetual stew of doubts, fears, hopes and wishes, all revolving around his beloved. For amusement, the Captain calls in Bob Acres to report on Julia's health (he is a country neighbor of the Absolutes), and to hear Acres berate his rival, Beverley, not knowing that the latter is, in reality, his friend Absolute. Faulkland, who has been worrying for fear Julia might be ill, hears that she is quite merry in spite of his absence, and is thrown into a new fever of unhappiness.

The testy Sir Anthony calls in order to command his son to marry Lydia, but the Captain refuses--his father neglects to tell her name--and Sir Anthony stamps out, threatening to disinherit him. Fag, the Captain's servant, learns from Lucy that Sir Anthony's choice is Lydia, and this he tells young Absolute. The enlightened Captain hastens to his father to say that he has repented and is willing to court Lydia. Father and son set off to pay their addresses to Mrs. Malaprop.

This lady, after approving the Captain as "the very pineapple of politeness," tells them that she has intercepted another note from Beverley to Lydia--in which, unfortunately, he refers to Mrs. Malaprop as "a weather-beaten she-dragon." The letter also reveals that Beverley has a scheme to see Lydia--with "the old harridan" as an unwitting go-between.

Young Absolute suggests that Mrs. Malaprop punish the conceited puppy, Beverley, by letting him reach the point of elopement; then he, Absolute, will himself carry off Lydia. She agrees, and Lydia is summoned. "Beverley" whispers to her that he has disguised himself as Absolute, and the delighted Lydia tells her aunt again that she will wed only Beverley. Mrs. Malaprop declares Lydia to be as headstrong as "an allegory on the banks of the Nile."

Meanwhile, Acres, rebuffed by Lydia and blaming the mysterious Beverley for her coldness, is urged by O'Trigger to challenge his rival to a duel. A note is written to Beverley, naming that very evening for the duel in King's Mead-Fields. O'Trigger himself sets out in search of Captain Absolute (whom he believes to be his rival for "Delia") with the idea in mind of challenging Absolute to a duel. Acres, in preparation for his tilt with Beverley, asks young Absolute to be his second. The waggish Captain declares that he thinks this hardly proper, but he agrees to deliver Acres note to Beverley.

Sir Anthony Absolute now insists on taking his son to Lydia's home. Here he acknowledges him in her presence, and Lydia at once realizes that there has been a hoax--Beverley, of course, is really the Captain. Mrs. Malaprop agrees to forgive all, and says: "We will not anticipate the past, our retrospection will now be all to the future"; but Lydia, angry at being duped, declares that indeed she renounces "Beverley" forever, and flounces from the room.

The Captain, infuriated by Lydia's behavior, leaves at once. He meets O'Trigger who is seeking to challenge him, they quarrel and agree to cross swords that evening in the King's Mead-Fields--where Acres is scheduled to meet Beverley. Absolute informs his friend Faulkland of the coming event, giving the latter a new idea for testing Julia's love for him: he tells her that he has involved himself in a quarrel and must run away immediately. Julia is ready to accompany him, but, learning that the story is another one of Faulkland's concoctions, declares that now she will never marry him.

Lydia, Julia and Mrs. Malaprop hear from the servants a confused story of the impending duel--a duel in which Absolute, Faulkland and O'Trigger are named as the principals--and they hasten to the field to prevent what Mrs. Malaprop fears is to be "fine suicide, paracide, salvation and an antistrophe." Sir Anthony, who has met his son on his way to keep his engagement but who has been deceived as to the purpose of young Absolute's sword, now learns of the impending duel, and sets out for the King's Mead-Fields.

Here, the bloodthirsty O'Trigger is giving Acres some preliminary instructions in duelling, but so graphically does he illustrate the lesson that Acres has quite lost his appetite for combat. Young Absolute and Faulkland arrive. O'Trigger, learning that Faulkland is not Beverley (he has assumed from the beginning that he was), proposes that Faulkland fight Acres anyway, just to make a foursome. Acres hurriedly vetoes that suggestion. Absolute then identifies himself as Beverley. Acres, much to O'Trigger's disgust, now insists that he cannot possibly fight his friend Absolute. Absolute and O'Trigger are drawing their swords when Sir Anthony and the women appear.

O'Trigger greats Lydia as his "Delia," and is unpleasantly surprised to learn that his correspondent has been, in reality, the simpering Mrs. Malaprop. He promptly relinquishes "Delia" to Absolute. Lydia forgives the Captain, and he and O'Trigger are quickly reconciled. Faulkland and Julia also grant forgiveness to each other, and plan to be married at once. Bob Acres, vastly relieved, renounces all claims to any wife for whom he must fight, and invites the company to a party.