Comedies of the Green World: A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It and Twelfth Night

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The green world is the classic locus of the encounter, because it is the space where different peoples meet each other: Illyrians and Messenians in *Twelfth Night*, humans and fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, courtiers and country-dwellers in *As You Like It*. In essence these plays are all first contact narratives in which, as in the essays of Montaigne, each group sheds light on the other. I have suggested elsewhere that *As You Like It* offers echoes of the English colonial enterprise and the push to conquer Guiana,[1] and its out-of-place reference to Irish wolves evokes the Elizabethan attempt to subdue another set of 'natives', the recalcitrant Irish. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for all its holiday and celebratory feel, can be seen as evoking not one but two invasions: Ireland is evoked here too by the name of Puck, clearly derived from the Irish sprites known as Pookas, and Oberon in many versions of his legend was the son of Julius Caesar, whose invasion of Britain was the first recorded event in its history. *Twelfth Night*, written on the cusp of a new century and set on a date redolent of change and transition, may not speak of invasion but does figure an incursus, as travellers from a strange country land on the shores of Illyria and proceed to interact with the inhabitants. In this, the play stages an encounter of its own with two other plays in particular, *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Tempest*, in both of which sea-borne strangers arrive in a new community. Further, the play offers images of both a new world (in the shape of the new map with the augmentation of the Indies and the way that Viola's supposed past as fencer to the Sophy evokes the much-travelled Shirley brothers) and of a new regime in the pointed references to stewards which so obviously map onto the Stuarts. Finally, its surprisingly well-developed eschatological concerns challenge generic expectations, thus staging a

metatheatrical confrontation between the green world and the anti-pastoral of the withered heath, and as well as glancing at the next world the play also, I shall argue, nods at its own immediate neighbours in this world too, registering interest in a relatively local inn and in other nearby places of entertainment. This essay traces the dynamics of the encounters in each of these three plays, but the main focus will be on *Twelfth Night*, the comedy in which, I shall argue, comedy itself is interrogated as it is forced to confront its own limits and functions.

The first aspect of *Twelfth Night* encountered by any reader or audience member is the title. *Twelfth Night* is the last of the twelve days of Christmas: now, the date by which decorations have to be taken down; then, the time for one final assertion of the spirit of festivity and misrule. The resulting suggestion of change and liminality is underlined by the evocation of a new regime in the pointed references to stewards which so obviously map onto the Stuarts, in the culmination of a motif which has been building throughout the three plays. In the earliest of them, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the combination of the marriage and procreation motif and of references to Elizabeth contains a veiled reminder that the queen herself has borne no children and will one day need to be replaced. In *As You Like It*, she is the moon at whom the wolves howl.[2] In *Twelfth Night*, when Olivia says 'Go thou and seek the crowner, and let him sit o' my coz' (1.5.130-1) it is scarcely possible not to hear a veiled reference to James, and the discussion of King Gorboduc and Master Parson (4.2.14-15) recalls debates about the succession, in which both Sackville and Norton's play *Gorboduc* and the polemicist Robert Parsons or Persons played a part.

The liminality suggested by the setting on *Twelfth Night* is underlined by a subtle but persistent emphasis on limits and boundaries, again in ways which develop a motif found

earlier in this group of plays. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Lysander explains to Hermia that by going into the wood they will pass out of Athenian jurisdiction. In *As You Like It*, too, flight to the green world takes the characters out of the reach of the court, and Shakespeare is likely to have known that in Arthur Golding's 1565 translation of the *Gallic Wars*, Caesar's expedition to the Ardennes (which Caesar is the first to call by that name) occurs in the context of a general securing of borders. In *Twelfth Night*, there is repeated mention of gates. Olivia tells Viola 'I heard you were saucy at my gates' (1.5.192); Viola says that in contrast to Orsino her own strategy for wooing would be to 'Make me a willow cabin at your gate' (1.5.260); and Feste's closing song declares that ''Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate' (5.1.388). The comic world is thus figured as constrained by sharply defined edges, and this, I shall be suggesting, is something that Shakespeare is coming to find increasingly confining.

There is also, in all these Ovid-haunted plays, an emphasis on the border between animal and human. Each of these comedies of the green world imagines one of its characters wholly or partially transformed into one of the denizens of that world: Bottom acquires the head of an ass, and in *As You Like It* there is First Lord's observation that

> the hairy fool,
> Much marked of the melancholy Jaques,
> Stood on th'extremest verge of the swift brook,
> Augmenting it with tears.
>
> (II.ii.40-4)

These transformations suggest the extent to which the green world is figured as an environment which is not only different in itself but also has the the power to produce difference in humans, allowing them to experiment with new identities in ways that do not

entail the darker consequences so often attached to the original Ovidian metamorphoses. Unlike Bottom, Orsino is not literally translated, but he does say that when he first saw Olivia, 'That instant was I turned into a hart, / And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds, / E'er since pursue me' (1.1.20-22). The clear implication is that he is Actaeon, who spied on the goddess Diana bathing and was punished by being turned into a hart and eaten by his own dogs, who failed to recognise him. Actaeon is a particularly interesting figure for Orsino to figure himself as, for a cushion still surviving at Hardwick Hall posits Actaeon as analogous to Bottom by showing only his head transformed.[3] It is not surprising that Actaeon should feature in the iconography of Hardwick: Diana - used here as a way of complimenting Elizabeth - is a central figure, and she would naturally suggest Actaeon. It does however seem tantalisingly suggestive that Actaeon's transformation should be figured as partial and incomplete in a way which might well seem to recall Bottom, and for which there is no obvious logic: it is clear why only the head of Bottom should be changed because you cannot very well bring a whole ass onto the stage, but Bess or her embroiderers could easily have sewn a whole deer. It is therefore tempting to imagine that the decision to make the transformation on the cushion only partial could have been prompted by memories of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, given that we know that Bess attended theatre performances in London (her granddaughter Arbella Stuart saw a play at court which may have been *As You Like It*.)[4]

London was not the only place where Bess had the chance to see theatre, for in 1600, the Queen's Men seem to have visited Hardwick, probably acting Shakespeare; Bess's biographer affirms that they played 'in the great hall of Hardwick, with Bess watching from the gallery over the screen'.[5] I have suggested elsewhere that Hardwick Hall in turn fed into the imaginary of *Coriolanus*.[6] One can obviously do no more than speculate on whether

Shakespeare might have seen any of the various images of Actaeon at Hardwick, but he would have been well aware of the imporance of the Actaeon myth in Marlowe's plays - it appears in both *Edward II* and *Doctor Faustus* - and the range of resonances it has there. Patrick Cheney, who has made an extensive study of the influence of Ovid on Marlowe's *oeuvre*, notes that Ovid figures himself as Actaeon in reference to his banishment, implying that it was caused by his having seen power naked.[7] *Twelfth Night* may not show power naked, but it does have Sir Toby demand of Malvolio 'Art any more than a steward?' (II.iii.113-4), a question which must have rung very sharply in the context of the probability of a Scottish succession: the coroner may sit on Elizabeth's cousin as on Olivia's, but he will still not be any more than a Stuart. By connecting Olivia to both Elizabeth and Diana, the play reminds us that the queen is not a goddess, and that her rule is coming to an end.

Orsino, unlike Actaeon, does not really become a hart, and so unlike Actaeon does not die. In any case his name points us to a very different animal, for it means bear. Next to the Globe, bears were baited, and the link was stronger than mere propinquity: Jason Scott-Warren observes that 'When the stands in the Bear Garden on the South Bank collapsed under the weight of an unexpectedly large crowd in 1583, the venue was rebuilt on the model of the new, three-story playhouses. The men who ran professional theater in late-Elizabethan and Jacobean London also made their money from commercial blood sports';[8] indeed Edward Alleyn, who first acted Marlowe's heroes, worked hard to secure the Mastership of the Bears. The use of the name Orsino implicitly invites us to consider the nature of the entertainment we ourselves are watching and how it compares with that next door. In the little world of the Globe one was (and is) shut in; one of the tallest buildings in Elizabethan London, it offered no views of any of its neighbours. Yet as anyone whose patience has been tried by the police helicopter is only too well aware, it is a space which is very vulnerable to surrounding sound,

which could presumably have included roars from the bear-baiting. Even if no such noises were audible externally, the play makes them internally: Sir Andrew wishes that 'he had bestowed that time in the tongues that I have in fencing, dancing and bear-baiting' (1.3.90-1) and Fabian says of Malvolio 'You know he brought me out of favour with my lady about a bear-baiting here' (2.4.6-7), to which Sir Toby replies 'To anger him we'll have the bear again, and we will fool him black and blue, shall we not, Sir Andrew?' (2.4.8-9). In the quarrel scene Fabian says Cesario 'pants and looks pale as if a bear were at his heels' (3.4.287-8): Stephen Dickey's formulation is that 'Toby and Fabian, adept baiters both, … goad Cesario and Andrew into attacking each other'.[9] In *Twelfth Night* we do indeed have the bear again as Malvolio, a human victim, is taunted and baited as a bear would be (and is effectively as blind as some bears were because we are asked to understand him as being in an unlighted space); Dickey suggests that 'The chain to which we twice have our attention called is an emblem of Malvolio's middling social position and his symbolic status as a bear'.[10]

As a result, we are invited to question what exactly we are watching. Ralph Berry, noting of of Malvolio's closing line that 'At *pack*, the subliminal metaphor discloses itself. It is a bear-baiting. The audience becomes spectators, Malvolio the bear', concludes his essay on the play by declaring baldly 'I surmise that the ultimate effect of *Twelfth Night* is to make the audience ashamed of itself'. I would not go so far as this - no stewards have been harmed during the making of this play - but I do think that one effect of the play is to make the audience aware of itself.[11] There are similar moments in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It* too: *Dream*'s reference to the weather invites the audience to think of real times and places as well as fictional ones, and *As You Like It*'s epilogue, addressing the audience directly, also dissolves the illusion. Again, though, *Twelfth Night* takes things

further than the two earlier plays. Dickey argues that 'For Shakespeare's contemporaries, bearbaiting and theater were culturally isomorphic events' and calls *Twelfth Night* 'the play in which … Shakespeare uses the sport's bloody routines most intricately, both to illuminate the psychology and relationships of his characters and to explore the dramatic medium itself'.[12] Scott-Warren, building on this, suggests that 'The two forms of entertainment overlapped spatially and socially, but in the early seventeenth century they also came to share a representional mode', an idea which he discusses specifically with reference to *Twelfth Night* and *Epicoene*,[13] and he points out that Olivia too is figured as a bear when she asks Viola 'Have you not set mine honour at the stake / And baited it with all th'unmuzzled thoughts / That tyrannous heart can think?' (3.1.116-118). What exactly might those thoughts be, and is it indeed the case that only a tyrannous heart can think them? Scott-Warren argues that 'In first-hand accounts of animal-baitings, animals are regularly anthropomorphized',[14] but what happens if the mirror is turned in the other direction and the bestiality of humans is revealed?

Many modern studies of bear-baiting and other early modern interactions with animals piously note that of course humans are animals too, but this is not a perception which would have come naturally to Shakespeare's audience. However Dickey notes suggestively that 'observers' testimonies about their pleasure, amusement, and contentment suggest that, were an Elizabethan audience to specify what genre of spectacle it was seeing at the Bear Garden, the answer might well be "a comedy"'.[15] Comedy, unlike bear-baiting, does not depend primarily on the suffering of others, but it does not necessarily eschew it. In terms of their status as comedies, I think it is pertinent that each of the three plays I am discussing here can be seen as in dialogue with the work of another dramatist. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* engages with Lyly.[16] *As You Like It*, as has often been observed, harks back repeatedly to

Marlowe. *Twelfth Night* turns to Jonson. I have already notes Scott-Warren's coupling of *Twelfth Night* and *Epicoene,* and Janet Clare suggests that it engages even more directly with *Every Man Out of his Humour*:

> The relationship between these two Globe plays is one of intertextual antagonism. In response to *Every Man Out,* there is in *Twelfth Night* a pronounced reworking of Jonsonian motifs that re-affirms both the festive and romantic ethos, and an assertion of illusion over mimesis and performance over textuality.[17]

For Clare, 'in its insistence on a more intricate complexion of character than that determined by limited complexion of the humours and psychological fixation, *Twelfth Night* reveals all that is de-humanizing about comical satire'.[18] I think it can also be seen as setting itself implicitly at odds with Asper's determination that

> with an armèd and resolvèd hand
> I'll strip the ragged follies of the time
> Naked as at their birth.[19]

Malvolio's folly may indeed be stripped naked in front of us, but figuring him as a bear invites the audience to recognise the savagery of such a spectacle, and to register that this is not the way we normally consider it appropriate to treat other humans. In doing so, it also invites us to consider whether comedy itself is not an unnecessarily limiting genre - certainly comedy as Jonson conceives it, but possibly comedy more generally.

Part of the reason for the importance of the bear-baiting motif in the play derives from the sheer fact of propinquity: extradiegetically, the actors and the bears were neighbours. Some of the play's characters also have neighbours, and they too bear on the question of how far comedy can go. Feste says 'I do live by the church, for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church' (3.1.5-7). An implied relationship with the church raises a question

which lies at the heart of English Renaissance drama, whose origins are often traced back to a church ritual, the Quem Quaeritis,[20] and which frequently draws attention to the vexed question of where the border between sacred and spiritual power should lie: a year or so after *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, a play which was perhaps already in Shakespeare's mind, stages a confrontation between a priest and a nobleman beside a grave, in a particularly neat emblem of a disputed jurisdiction between state and church over who controls individual citizens and whether those citizens are to be understood primarily as bodies or as souls. Plays also often capitalise on the extent to which the bare Elizabethan stage is able to suggest a complex multiplicity of places, with its upper playing area to which connotations of moral or social elevation often accrued and an understage area which could be marked as a place of the dead (as it is for the Ghost in *Hamlet*), while stage left, the proverbial side of the devil, might be marked as sinister in more than just the literal sense, in what Tim Fitzpatrick has called 'a set of generic spatial and semiotic conventions that loosely governed the way in which the early modern performance space and its inbuilt physical resources were used to stand for places and things in the fictional world'.[21] In a number of his plays Shakespeare shows himself acutely aware of the churches and ecclestiastical property in the vicinity of the Globe: Michael Wood notes that his brother Edmund Shakespeare was buried on 31 December 1607 in the South Bank church of St Saviour and St Mary Overie (now Southwark Cathedral), and that 'After the service, on his way out of the church, Shakespeare would have passed the tomb of the fifteenth-century poet John Gower',[22] who features as a character in *Pericles*, which Shakespeare co-wrote with Wilkins the next year. The plays also contain references to 'Winchester geese', the sex workers who operated in the vicinity of the Bishop of Winchester's palace, a short walk from the Globe. Shakespeare was well aware that he, like Feste, lived by the church, and though it may be *Hamlet* which explores the implications of that most fully and resonantly, they are already beginning to surface in *Twelfth Night*.

Twelfth Night is a play which has surprisingly well-developed eschatological concerns, so much so indeed that Randall Martin declares 'The intertextual effects of *Twelfth Night*'s shipwreck and rhetorizing horizons redirects audiences' critical imaginations back to Paul's texts … I propose that we think about the play subtitled *What You Will* as Shakespeare's subversive Letter to the Illyrians'.[23] During the course of the play several possible theological positions are surveyed. When Viola says 'My brother he is in Elysium' (1.2.3), she names the classical underworld. Two lines later, the Captain says 'It is perchance that you yourself were saved' (1.2.5), returning us to a Christian and specifically a Calvinist worldview in which one may or may not be of the Elect; and shortly after that a more cheerful (and potentially Lutheran) note is struck when the Captain speaks of how 'Courage and hope' led Sebastian to tie himself to a mast (1.2.12) - that is, he did not despair, and his survival may therefore suggest that humans can influence their own spiritual destinies. Joseph Pequigney notes that 'the given name Sebastian recalls the martyr traditionally pictured as a handsome youth - a kind of Christian Adonis - with a nearly nude body pierced by arrows',[24] and the connection may work to strengthen the idea of Sebastian as one sustained by faith. However, the stories of saints and martyrs had fallen out of favour since the split with Rome, and *Twelfth Night* not only acknowledges that split but also registers the growing divisions within Protestantism itself when Maria says of Malvolio 'sometimes he is a kind of Puritan' (2.3.136) and Sir Andrew says 'I had as lief be a Brownist as a politician' (3.2.30). Feste reverts to the apparently safer territory of the classical when he asks the incarcerated Malvolio 'What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wildfowl?' (4.2.49-50), but in fact this is not just about the classical world because it would also remind the audience of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* where Faustus as he faces death and damnation wishes 'Ah, Pythagoras' *metempsychosis*, were that true',[25] and *Doctor Faustus* is a play (or plays) in

which the split between Calvinism and Lutheranism surfaces in its most terrifying form. Most suggestively, Sir Toby declares 'If all the devils of hell be drawn in little, and Legion himself possessed him, yet I'll speak to him', of which the Arden 3 note observes 'This is … the first of many possible echoes of the notorious *True Narration* by the Puritan exorcist John Darrell' (3.4.81-3), which centred on a series of events whose meaning was hotly contested by Protestants and Catholics. As Frank Brownlow among others has shown, the exorcisms at Denham are echoed in *King Lear*,[26] and the interplay between *Lear* and *Twelfth Night* (confirmed when Feste's song is reprised by Lear's Fool) stages a metatheatrical confrontation between the green world and the anti-pastoral of the withered heath which, like the imaginative overlap with *Hamlet*, helps us to see that *Twelfth Night* is pushing at the boundaries of comedy and is already beginning to edge into the territory beyond.

Twelfth Night also offers images of a different world slightly nearer at hand, a new world as opposed to a next world. I have already noted Joseph Pequigney's suggestion that Sebastian might evoke Saint Sebastian. It is also just conceivable that two of the names of *Twelfth Night* might have been suggested to Shakespeare by their collocation in R. D.'s *A true report of the generall imbarrement of all the English shippes,* in which the text proper begins:

> The day and yeare aforesaid was,
> at Saint Sebastian:
> The Violet of London staid
> both Ship and also man.[27]

The collocation, in adjacent lines, of the names Sebastian and Violet looks suggestive, especially in the context of a play which begins with shipwreck, as does the curious syntax which flirts with the possibility that the Violet is a man. Perhasps, then, Shakespeare had real as well as fictional travels in mind, especially since the name Viola might equally suggest an

encounter of another kind. The national plant of Croatia is the *viola adriatica*, or Adriatic violet. Could Shakespeare conceivably have known that, and could his use of Illyria as a setting have been prompted by more than the prettiness of the name - could it in fact have encoded memories of the actual Illyria, modern-day Croatia, and the struggle between its capital Ragusa (now Dubrovnik) and the Venetian Republic? In fact 'by the date that *Twelfth Night* was written, the Levant Company had already begun to trade at Ragusa, so it appears that *Twelfth Night* was first performed at court at just the time when the republic of Ragusa was coming into favor again',[28] and it may seem suggestive that Antonio should say 'In the south suburbs, at the Elephant, / Is best to lodge' (3.33.39-40) and that 'The "Elephant and Castle" in Bankside was a … gathering place for sailors from Mediterranean countries; Ragusans were habituated to it during their years as Spain's allies. Shakespeare may have learned about the Dalmatian coast and Ragusa from sailors and sea captains who visited London and did their drinking there'.[29] Veslin Kostic notes that 'The reign of King Henry VIII (1509-1547) saw a rapid growth of Anglo-Ragusan commercial relations, so that a fairly numerous colony of Ragusan merchants sprang up in London' and that they mostly lived round the Tower.[30] It is not impossible to imagine information supplied by such sources informing Antonio's remark that 'Once in a sea-fight 'gainst the count his galleys / I did some service' (3.3.26-7) and Orsino's own reference to 'The spinsters, and the knitters in the sun' (2.4.44). The first suggests some understanding of the power conflicts in the region; the second testifies to an understanding of what everyday life might be like in a warm country where traditional handicrafts were practised, to an extent which one might well find surprising in a denizen of London during a mini Ice Age which saw frost fairs held on the Thames, but which would be more understandable if informed by anecdotes and recollections of such a life.

Countries even further away may also be glanced at. Orsino may grandly declare 'Tell her my love, more noble than the world, / Prizes not quantity of dirty lands' (2.4.81-2), but the play clearly gestures towards the attempted land-grab in the New World. Maria says to Viola 'Will you hoist sail, sir? Here lies your way' (1.5.197) and Viola herself exclaims 'Then westward ho' (3.1.132). We also look east as well as west when Sir Toby declares 'My lady's a Cathayan' (2.3.74) and when Maria says of Malvolio 'He does smile his face into more lines than is in the new map with the augmentation of the Indies' (3.2.74-6). More specifically, Fabian vows 'I will not give my part of this sport for a pension of thousands to be paid from the Sophy' (2.5.174-5) and Sir Toby declares of the supposed Cesario 'They say he has been fencer to the Sophy' (3.4.272). The Sophy in question, Shah Abbas, was, improbably enough, the source of an artefact at Hardwick: 'The 1601 inventory of Hardwick … shows a number of Turkish carpets … and two carpets still in the Long Gallery today date from the sixteenth century: one, a Persian woven for Shah Abbas, was commonly placed beside his throne and on it a black cheetah'; it had probably been brought back by Bess's eldest son Henry Cavendish, who had travelled to Constantinople (staying en route in Ragusa with an Englishman, William Robinson, in a clear indication of the fact that Illyria was not just a remote fantasy land but a real place which English travellers could and did visit and report back from).[31] As for the Sophy's fencer, as Richard Wilson observes, this refers to Robert Sherley, one of the three brothers whose stories formed the basis for Day, Rowley and Wilkins' play *The Travels of the three English Brothers*,[32] and one of those brothers was a visitor to Ragusa, the principal city of Illyria: Elizabeth Pentland points out that 'Sir Anthony Shirley and Captain John Smith each spent time in Ragusa in 1601'.[33] Captain John Smith is of course famous principally in connection with America, and America too might conceivably be just glanced at in the play when Malvolio asserts that 'the Lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe' (2.5.36-7). The Arden 3 note suggests that this may

refer to 'one William Strachey, shareholder in the Children's company at the Blackfriars theatre in 1606, and one David Yeomans, the wardrobe master of "tireman" of the company'. This is the same William Strachey as was later to chronicle the loss of the *Sea Venture* and thus influence *The Tempest*, and though he seems not to have travelled abroad yet at the time when *Twelfth Night* was written, it is not inconceivable that possible travel plans already formed part of his conversation. It is also suggestive that *Twelfth Night* was performed in the Middle Temple, which R. M. Fisher calls 'the Inn with the strongest tradition of geographical interest was the Middle Temple … Many of the early adventurers and administrators were Middle Templars';[34] as with its expansion to include an eschatological dimension. Here again Shakespeare's stage becomes visible on several planes at once as we are prompted to think of other countries as well as of other worlds.

As the space of the stage begins to signify multiply in both geographical and symbolic terms, comedy itself is interrogated as it is forced to confront its own limits and functions. *Twelfth Night*, the play in which Shakespeare takes his leave of comedy as a genre, is also the play which shows the most acute awareness of comedy as a genre. Malvolio says 'I take these wise men that crow so at these set kind of fools no better than the fools' zanies' (1.5.84-5); Fabian declares 'If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction' (3.4.122-3); and Feste rhymes 'In a trice, like to the old Vice' (4.2.123). Comedy in these three speeches is characterised as constrained by rules, 'set' characters and the requirements of possibility. Ultimately, Shakespeare is going to break free of all those restraints by the time of the last plays; in *Twelfth Night*, he is already beginning to chafe at them. As he thinks about the genre, it is no surprise that Shakespeare casts his eyes back to what may well have been his first comedy, and also an Inns of Court play, *The Comedy of Errors*. In both *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*, we hear of private and public

houses and catch the atmosphere of a busy seaport rather than of the forest, and Elizabeth Pentland links *Twelfth Night* to *The Comedy of Errors* as both set in the Adriatic (she calls Illyria 'a "modern" Adriatic region … that English and European travelers passed through on their way eastward or southward to other destinations').[35] The title of *The Comedy of Errors* suggests that someone will commit an error or *hamartia*, and the fact that the narrative of the day's events is framed by legal proceedings and that the play was performed at one of the Inns of Court might similarly invite us to suppose that we will be required to think about how we should judge a crime or misdemeanour. Actually, though, everyone is blameless; even Antipholus of Ephesus' apparent affair with the courtesan will just about bear an innocent construction, and though the accounts given by the characters at the end appear mutually incompatible, each is telling the exact truth. In fact the play comes surprisingly close to being a statement not of Shakespeare's view of comedy but of his view of tragedy: the characters are innocent (the play was performed on Innocents' Day) but they, like the Holy Innocents themselves, might still suffer, with the result that the audience sitting in the hall of Gray's Inn are not asked to contemplate the spectacle of justice being done but to ask instead what justice is. Moreover, despite the fact of performance on innocents' Day, the play repeatedly suggests Easter,[36] which potentially raises the issue of the incompatibility of Christianity with tragedy, also touched on in *Twelfth Night* when Feste says 'The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven' (1.5.66-7). When he revisits *The Comedy of Errors* in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare echoes it formally by both reusing and subverting the Unities: the twenty-four hour timespan is shot through with memories of the Virgilian past (and has also prompted more futuristic fiction than any other Shakespeare play), and the single location simultaneously suggests Ireland, America, Bermuda and the Mediterranean, to name only the most obvious candidates. He thus shows both what he has learned and also that he knew it at the outset. When he revisits *Comedy* in *Twelfth Night*, he

focuses on content rather than form. showing that comedies about error and confusion are inevitably shot through with more serious concerns.

In *Twelfth Night*, comedy cannot hold. In the early modern theatre, comedy typically depends on two things: ultimate acceptance of normative gender roles (even if these are contested during the course of the play), and a principle of interchangeability most often manifested in the ultimate acceptance of a different sexual partner from the one initially preferred. *Twelfth Night* nominally adheres to those principles, but in fact it contests them in rather the same way as *The Tempest* contests the unities. The play shows us two people whom it asks us to accept as identical, and Tim Carroll's famous production for Shakespeare's Globe reminded us that the illusion that the twins cannot be told apart can in fact be convincingly sustained in the theatre. As Antonio puts it, 'An apple cleft in twain is not more twin / Than these two creatures'.[37] However, Antonio's image of the apple encodes difference as well as similarity, since it reminds us of the apple eaten by Eve and hence of the original sin which weighs more heavily on women than on men (not to mention the Adam's apple which ought logically to differentiate Viola's supposedly female body from Sebastian's male one). The play certainly does make it clear that men and women are *not* the same, or at least do not have the same opportunities, but it invites us to ask is what justification there is for this being so, and in this respect it is notable that the play is haunted by memories not only of Queen Elizabeth but perhaps another female ruler too: Pentland observes that 'Ancient Illyria was … associated in early modern English writing with independent women and female rule. The story of the Illyrian Queen Teuta's resistance to Rome, though it is never mentioned by critics or editors of *Twelfth Night*, turns out to have been especially interesting to Elizabethan readers and writers'; Teuta was for instance cited as a precedent for the rule of Mary, Queen of Scots by John Leslie and compared to Elizabeth by Lodowick

Lloyd.[38] If audiences remember either or both of Elizabeth and Teuta, they are surely likely to wonder why Viola and Olivia must dwindle into wives.

After *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare never wrote comedy again. He did however revisit some of *Twelfth Night*'s characters, language and tonality, and he did so in *King Lear*, a play in which has a human tied up by other humans and a character blinded as a bear would be, and invites its audience to imagine themselves on the literal edge of a cliff.[39] *Twelfth Night* also takes its audience to a metaphorical cliff-edge. It is a play in which the difference between genders, on which comedy depends, becomes very nearly insubstantial and very nearly intolerable. It is a play in which this world looks at the next, and the Old World looks at the New. It is a play in which the borders of individuality almost dissolve, as the names of Viola and Olivia bleed into each other and the bodies of Viola and Sebastian cannot be told apart. It is a play which faces a new century and a new dynasty. And it is a play in which comedy ends.

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Notes

With thanks to Dan Cadman and Matt Steggle.

[1] Lisa Hopkins, 'Orlando and the Golden World: The Old World and the New in *As You Like It*', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 8.2 (September 2002). Online: http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/08-2/hopkgold.htm

[2] William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, edited by Agnes Latham (London: Methuen, 1975), V.iii.110-11.

[3] See Susan Frye, 'Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury (Bess of Hardwick), Embroidered Panel "Diana and Actaeon" (1597)', in *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print*, edited by Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 474-5.

[4] Sara Jayne Steen, ed., *The Letters of Lady Arbella Stuart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 193.

[5] David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan dynast* [1977] (London: The Cromwell Press, 1988), p. 185.

[6] Lisa Hopkins, *Renaissance Drama on the Edge* (Ashgate, 2014), pp. 17-20.

[7] Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 164-5.

[8] Jason Scott-Warren, 'When Theaters were Bear-Gardens; or, what's at Stake in the Comedy of Humors', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 54.1 (spring 2003), pp. 63-82, p. 64.

[9] Stephen Dickey, 'Shakespeare's Mastiff Comedy', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42.3 (autumn 1991), pp. 255-75, p. 272.

[10] Dickey, 'Shakespeare's Mastiff Comedy', p. 269.

[11] Ralph Berry, '"Twelfth Night": the experience of the audience', *Shakespeare Survey* 34 (1981), pp. 111-119, pp. 118-9.

[12] Dickey, 'Shakespeare's Mastiff Comedy', p. 255.

[13] Scott-Warren, 'When Theaters were Bear-Gardens', p. 65.

[14] Scott-Warren, 'When Theaters were Bear-Gardens', p. 71.

[15] Dickey, 'Shakespeare's Mastiff Comedy', p. 263.

[16] See Annaliese Connolly, '*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Shakespeare's Retrospective on Elizabeth I and the Iconography of Marriage', in *Goddesses and Queens: The Iconography of Elizabeth* I, edited by Annaliese Connolly and Lisa Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

[17] Janet Clare, *Shakespeare's Stage Traffic: Imitation, Borrowing and Competition in Renaissance Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 141.

[18] Clare, *Shakespeare's Stage Traffic*, p. 142.

[19] Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of his Humour*, edited by Helen Ostovich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), Induction, 14-16.

[20] For a succinct summary of the history of this idea, see Michael Kobalka, 'The *Quem Quaeritis*: Theatre History Displacement', pp. 35-51, p. 38.

[21] Tim Fitzpatrick, *Playwright, Space and Place in Early Modern Performance: Shakespeare and Company* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 2.

[22] Michael Wood, *In Search of Shakespeare* (London: BBC, 2003), pp. 301 and 302.

[23] Randall Martin, 'Shipwreck and the Hermeneutics of Transience in *Twelfth Night*', in *Twelfth Night: A Critical Reader*, edited by Alison Findlay and Liz Oakley-Brown (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 123-143, p. 127.

[24] Joseph Pequigney, 'The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*', in *Shakespeare and Gender: A History*, edited by Deborah E. Barker and Ivo Kamps (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 178-195, p. 181.

[25] Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, edited by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), A text, V.vii.107.

[26] F. W. Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett, and the Devils of Denham* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993).

[27] R. D., *A true report of the generall imbarrement of all the English shippes, vnder the dominion of the kinge of Spaine and of the daungerous aduenture, and wonderfull*

deliuerance of a ship of London called the Violet, being of the burthen of 130. tunne: by the especiall prouidence of God, from the violence of Spanyardes, at a port called S. Sebastian in Biskay (London: John Wolfe for Thomas Butter, 1585), p. 1.

[28] 'Ragusa and Shakespeare'. Online: http://www.croatians.com/SHAKESPEARE-DUBROVNIK.htm

[29] 'Ragusa and Shakespeare'.

[30] Veslin Kostic, 'Sketches from the life of Ragusan Merchants in London in the Time of Henry VIII', *Dubrovnik Annals* 12 (2008), pp. 45-56.

[31] David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast* (London: The Cromwell Press, 1988), pp. 153-4.

[32] Richard Wilson, '"When Golden Time Convents": *Twelfth Night* and Shakespeare's Eastern Promise', *Shakespeare* 6.2 (June 2010), pp. 209-226, p. 215.

[33] Elizabeth Pentland, 'Beyond the "lyric" in Illyricum: some early modern backgrounds to *Twelfth Night*', in *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, edited by James Schiffer (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 149-166, p. 155.

[34] R. M. Fisher, 'William Crashawe and the Middle Temple Globes 1605-15', *The Geographical Journal* 140.1 (February 1974), pp. 105-112, p. 108.

[35] Pentland, 'Beyond the "lyric" in Illyricum', p. 150. Sara Hanna cites Thucydides as connecting Epidamnus and Illyria ('From Illyria to Elysium: Geographical Fantasy in *Twelfth Night*', *Literraria Pragensia* 12 [1991], pp. 21-45, p. 23.

[36] See Lisa Hopkins, '*The Comedy of Errors* and the Date of Easter', *Ben Jonson Journal* 7 (2000), 55-64.

[37] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, edited by Keir Elam (London: Cengage Learning, 2008), 5.1.219-20. All further quotations from the play will be taken from this edition and reference will be given in the text.

[38] Pentland, 'Beyond the "lyric" in Illyricum', pp. 160-1.

[39] On the parallels between *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*, see for instance Fitzroy Pyle, '"Twelfth Night", "King Lear" and "Arcadia"', *The Modern Language Review* 43.4 (October 1948), pp. 449-455, and Julian Markels, 'Shakespeare's Confluence of Tragedy and Comedy: *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15.2 (Spring 1964), pp. 75-88.

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