

The Concept of Shakespeare's Comedies : A Re-statement of Laughter

Yoshinori SAITO

Introduction

This study of Shakespeare's comedies grow out of the perception suggested by the deliberate analysis of laughter. In addition, I would show how Shakespeare uses the strategies to his comedies. My approach to them is obviously analytic and illustrative in emphasis, for my interest lies in how he evokes laughter.¹ To simplify things, I will take laughter as a signifier of humor, even though I realize this is somewhat reductionistic.

Shakespeare's comedies are, indeed, replete with all kinds of comic elements from the lowest² such as slapstick to the highest such as fully transformed. The usually disparate comic ingredients, comic devices or comic characters interlace into a unified composite. They provide comic catharsis, which means the liberation of pent-up energy.³

Chapter 1 focuses on comic characters. Comic figures tend to be low ones—fools, churls, country bumpkins, gluttons and so on. Comedy, then, is optimistic. But comic figures, often, get into messes and, one way or another, after various humiliations, find ways to survive them. Some of them are out of step with social norms, at the end of their adventures, either return to the fold, after having suffered various humiliations, or recognized for what they are and held up to public ridicule. I would show a list of six typical characters, and explain how they are effective in evoking laughter.

In Chapter 2 my argument is, relatively, simple ; I claim that there are twenty-six strategies that Shakespeare adopts to generate humor. I would analyze these comic elements that Shakespeare's comedies have, its strategies on laughter and give examples of each. Humor stems from the use of those strategies that, in various combinations, generate smiles, mirth, laughter—whatever you wish to call it—which signify that someone or some group of people found something humorous, ridiculous or funny. I will show how they are humorous and elaborate.

Chapter 3 suggests that laughter is psychological, in the sense that an individual laughs and that this laughter has a particular structure to it in all humans. It is also social and political. It takes place, generally speaking, in group situations and is contagious—that is, it is affected by the laughter of others. If laughter and humor are involved with dominance and submission, there is obviously a political and social dimension to it. We can use humor to attack those in authority and those in authority can use humor to coerce those under them. It can be used as a means of social control, but it also can be used as a means of resistance to this control. Laughing at authority figures ultimately leads to a lack of respect for them and that attitude

has political significance. Those in power tend to be negative and highly insulting at times, though they are often camouflaged by humor.

One effect of my reading is to restore something of their joyfulness to the comedies, and I find myself in opposition to one of the major trends of criticism of the last thirty years.⁴ That trend is, of course, the critical habit of finding in his works a darkness and a problematic quality that grows out of the need to make Shakespeare our contemporary. I do want to insist that the plays I discuss here are called comedies for a reason. And, finally, in doing that critical work, it restores their true comic life to the comedies.

Chapter I

Aristotle said that comedy involved an imitation of men worse than average, of people who are ridiculous.⁵ The humorous characters in Shakespeare's comedies are often those with dominating humor or comic passion. These comic characters are played off against relatively normal characters—frequently young lovers. They must cope with humorous characters of all sorts and find a way to use and manipulate their ruling passions in order to overcome the various obstructions.

The humorous characters incite laughter from the audience with some flaws of their speeches or eccentric behavior. They themselves do not know that their speech and behavior are humorous. By contrast, the witty characters are self-confident, and they are proud of their own dexterous verbal manipulation. Wit does not necessarily draw laughter from the audience, while humor mostly provokes laughter. Furthermore, humor often operates on a physical level; but wit, the production of an agile, inventive, and ingenious mind, offers us intellectual delight. Thus, in a literal sense, wit is a comic factor highly superior to humor in Shakespeare's comedies.

A list of some of the more common types of comic characters follows below.

1. Bombast

One of the most famous characters is Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Like Bottom or another potential show-stealers, Dogberry has a kind of genius of the inappropriate word choice that ensures not only a great rapport with the audience but also a pervasive sense of unintended or misbegotten wisdom. Dogberry attempts to arrest Borachio and Conrade on some charge or and parody the inept strategy and good luck of the other men. Whereas at the end of the church scene Beatrice and Benedick transcend melodrama and create witty romance in the following scene (IV.i), Dogberry transform melodrama downward into farce, parodying the perversions inside the church. The arraignment precedes any examination of the evidence, malefactors and benefactors are confused with each other, and judges as well as accused have charges brought against them. When, at the end of the scene, Dogberry defends himself; he becomes a comic spokesman for his betters:

Dog. I am a wise fellow, and which is more, an officier,
and which is more, a householder, and which is
more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina,
and one that knows the law, go to, and a rich
fellow enough, go to, and a fellow that hath had
losses; and one that hath two gowns, and everything
handsome about him.

(IV, ii, 77-83)⁶

Inflated language and rhetorical exuberance are the basis of bombast. The difference between what is said and how it is said is one of the reasons we find bombast amusing.

2. Gullibility

The gulls are fooled by the pretenders and are tricked out of something. They are naive, gullible, easily persuaded to do things, generally because they are both trusting and stupid.

There's a scene in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in which Falstaff thinks he has arranged a tryst with a married woman, Mrs. Ford. Falstaff has said to a friend earlier that he plans to make love to her:

Fal. . . . Briefly, I do mean to make love to
Ford's wife. I spy entertainment in her: she dis-
courses, she carves, she gives the leer of invitation. . .

(I.iii.40-42)⁷

Actually, he has been set up by Mrs. Ford and her friend, Mrs. Page, who want to teach him a lesson. Just after Falstaff declares his love for Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Page runs in and informs Mrs. Ford that her husband is returning home, unexpectedly, to search the house:

Mrs. Page. Look, here is a basket; if he be of any reasonable
statue, he may creep in here; and throw foul
linen upon him, as if were going to bucking: or—
it is whiting-time—send him by your two men to
Datchet Mead.

(III, iii.119-123)

Falstaff creeps into the basket and thus thinks he has avoided being caught by Mr. Ford. Mrs. Ford's men carry him away in the basket full of dirty line and dump him into the Thames. Actually Falstaff has been the victim of a practical joke for his continual and foolish attempts to seduce woman. In Act III, scene v, Mistress Quickly comes into the tavern as a diabolic messenger, spurring the second trick of the two merry wives. Falstaff's word play on the name of Mistress Ford is comically handled: "Mistress Ford! I have had ford enough; I was / thrown into the ford; I have my belly full of ford" (32-33). Despite Falstaff's raging anger, Mistress Quickly's conveyance to him of Mrs. Ford's profuse apology and her second invitation

for amends easily decoys him into the second appointment with Mrs. Ford. In Act IV, scene ii, Falstaff's second rendezvous is again ruined by the news that Mr. Ford is coming in search of Falstaff. The comic device of disguise makes Falstaff's gullibility all the more hilarious; in the house of Mr. Ford, he has no alternative but to disguise himself as an old woman. In Shakespeare's comedies, the device of disguise is usually an active and voluntary strategy by which a character achieves a vantage-point by concealing his real identity. This disguise is, however, a humiliating trick imposed upon the gulled Falstaff, who can rely upon no alternative for escape:

- Mrs. Page.* If you go out in your own semblance, you die,
Sir John—unless you go out disguised.
- Mrs. Ford.* How might we disguise him?
- Mrs. Page.* Alas the day, I know not: there is no woman's
gown big enough for him; otherwise he might put on
a hat, a muffler, and a kerchief, and so escape.
- Fal.* Good hearts, devise something: any extremity rather
than a mischief.
- Mrs. Ford.* My maid's aunt, the fat woman of Brainford,
has a gown above.

(IV.ii.59-68)

3. Ignorance

Plato's *Philebus* articulates a crucial theoretical tenet of the comedy of awareness, the idea that the sight of self-ignorance or self-conceit evokes mirth, especially when a man convinces himself that he is richer, more handsome, more virtuous, or wiser than he really is.⁸

Ignorant characters who are gulls, fools, or stupid are found in many comedies. We find the revelation of ignorance by characters amusing partly because we feel superior to these ignorant characters. We also find the creation of ignorance in a character who is deceived by other characters amusing. There are, I would suggest, two kinds of comic ignorance: some characters are stupid and reveal their ignorance in the course of the play, while others are made ignorant by other character's trickery and deception.

This latter kind of ignorance has been termed "discrepant awareness" and is a major element in comedies. In some cases, members of the audience know things that some characters do not know. In other cases the audience itself is made to experience discrepant awareness and does not know what the characters in the play know.

Thus in *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio does not know that a letter he finds was not written by Olivia's but her maid, Maria, and is a forgery, part of a practical joke being played on him. And he does not know, when he is prancing in Olivia's garden and talking to himself, that he is being overheard by Maria, Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek and a Fabian. They comment, to the audience, on Malvolio's statements:

- Mal.* 'Tis but fortune, all is fortune. Maria once told

me she did affect me, and I have heard herself come thus near, that should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion. Besides, she uses me with a more exalted respect than anyone else that follows her. What should I think on't?

- Sir To.* Here's an overweening rogue!
- Fabian.* O, peace! Contemplation makes a rare turkey-cock of him: how he jets under his advanced plumes!
- Sir And.* 'Slight, I could so beat the rogue!
- Sir To.* Peace, I say.
- Mal.* To be Count Malvolio!
- Sir To.* Ah, rogue!
- Sir And.* Pistol him, pistol him.
- Sir To.* Peace, peace!
- Mal.* There is an example for't. The lady of Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe.
- Sir And.* Fie on him, Jezebel!
- Fabian.* O, peace! now he's deeply in: look how imagination blows him.
- Mal.* Having been three months married to her, sitting in my state—
- Sir To.* O for a stone-bow to hit him in the eye!
- Mal.* Calling my officers about me, in my branched velvet gown, having come from a day-bed, where I have left Olivia sleeping—
- Sir To.* Fire and brimstone!
- Fabian.* O peace, peace!
- Mal.* And then to have the humour of state; and after a demure travel of regard, telling them I know my place, as I would they should do theirs, to ask for my kinsman Toby.
- Sir To.* Bolts and shackles!
- Fabian.* O peace, peace, peace! Now, now!
- Mal.* Seven of my people, with an obedient start, make out for him. I frown the while, and perchance wind up my watch, or play with my [*Touching his chain*]*—*some rich jewel. Toby approaches; curtsies there to me—
- Sir To.* Shall this fellow live?
- Fabian.* Though our silence be drawn from us with cars, yet peace!
- Mal.* I extend my hand to him thus, quenching my familiar smile with an austere regard of control—
- Sir To.* And does not Toby take you a blow o' the lips then?
- Mal.* Saying. 'Cousin Toby, my fortunes having cast me on your niece, give me this prerogative of speech'—

- Sir To.* What, what?
Mal. 'You must amend your drunkenness.'
Sir To. Out, scab!
Fabian. Nay, patience, or we break the sinews of our plot.
Mal. 'Besides, you waste the treasure of your time with a foolish knight' —
Sir And. That's me, I warrant you.
Mal. 'One Sir Andrew.'

(II.v.23-80)⁹

This scene is a classic example of ignorance or discrepant awareness. It is one in which people who are being talked about are hidden and overhear what is being said about them, while the speaker is unaware that this is the case. Often, in such situations, the speaker says insulting things about those who are hidden. Thus, the speaker ridicules those who are hiding, but the speaker is also being ridiculed for not knowing his or her words are being overheard.

4. Literalness

Literalness, or more correctly, over-literalness, is the basis of moron jokes. It involves characters who are stupid and take everything literally or who lack imagination—who are not flexible and who do not take circumstances into account.

In *TN* there is a great deal of wordplay and wit as well as the use of literalness. In Act III, scene i, Viola and Feste have a conversation in which literalness is used to generate humor. Viola, in this case, is dressed as a male and is pretending to be a young man, Cesario:

- Viola.* Save thee, friend, and thy music! Dost thou live by thy tabor?
Clown. No, sir, I live by the church.
Viola. Art thou a churchman?
Clown. No such matter, sir. I do live by the church, for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church.
Viola. So thou may'st say the King lies by a beggar, if a beggar dwell near him; or the church stands by thy tabor, if thy tabor stand by the church.
Clown. You have said, sir. To see this age! A sentence is but a chev'ril glove to a good wit—how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward!
Viola. Nay, that's certain: they that dally nicely with words may quickly make them wanton.

(III.i.1-15)

At the beginning of this marvelous passage, we see Clown taking the term "live by" literally. She says "live by" but means "occupation"—which he takes literally to mean "live near."

Shortly after this conversation, Clown describes himself not as Olivia's fool "but her corrupter of words." By this he means his job is to play around with words and their meanings.

5. Pedantry

A pedant is a person who parades his or her learning or who insists unimaginatively on strict observance of formal rules and deals in the presentation of knowledge. We have typical example here in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Act III opens with Hortensio disguised as Lilio to woo Bianca :

Hor. Madam, before you touch the instrument
To learn the order of my fingering,
I must begin with rudiments of art,
To teach you gamut in a briefer sort,
More pleasant, pithy, and effectual,
Than hath been taught by any of my trade.
And there it is in writing fairly drawn.

Bian. Why, I am past my gamut long ago.

Hor. Yet read the gamut of Hortensio.

Bian. ... Call you this gamut? Tut, I like it not!
Old fashions please me best. I am not so nice
To change true rules for odd inventions.

(III.i.62-79)¹⁰

Vexed by the suspicious conduct of Lucentio, Hortensio also does not miss the opportunity to profess his love for Bianca. Hortensio pretends to have invented a more effective way to learn gamut. But Bianca does not accept what he is teaching.

6. Obstinacy

The obstinate can be positive, negative, or mixed, but generally they are negative when used by Shakespeare. They have their own typical behavior patterns or discourses of themselves. I use the term obstinacy to characterize people who are undeviating in their performance of certain kinds of behavior, who are unbending and dominated by ruling passion. They lend themselves beautifully to ridicule or insult. Most of the characters are driven by passions and have a comic dimension to them.

Shakespeare is using Malvolio to focus attention on human obstinacy, blindness, and stupidity—ridiculing the tendency people have to construe events to suit their purposes and preconceptions, regardless of what is actually occurring. Malvolio is unaware that he is victim of a practical joke, and thus misconstrues Olivia's words, by a process of selective attention, so that they will support his fantasies.

Most of Shakespeare's comic characters may diverge into two categories: clownish characters—usually servants (Feste, Launce, or Touchstone); and country or town middle class people (Bardolph, Bottom, Costard, Dull, Nym, and Pistol). Clownish characters violate

certain codes we believe to be normal and reasonable in individuals. So comedies involve, to a great degree, figures who violate social and cultural codes.

Chapter II

There are also a number of strategies Shakespeare uses in generating humor in his texts. I would argue that a typology of strategies of humor, reproduced in the list below is used in various permutations and combinations. We can, for example, analyze jokes and find a number of them at work. And we can see how Shakespeare uses these strategies, many times in combination as well, to create funny situations and amuse audiences. An insult, for example, which I list as a strategy, is not in itself humorous; it is only when the insult is combined with other humorous strategies such as exaggeration or sarcasm. It is sometimes difficult to separate the strategy, or decide which strategy is being used. Shakespeare did use them, one way or another, either consciously or intuitively or, at times, in some combination of both.

I will be using these strategies to demonstrate, as precisely as I can how he generated his humor. Let me point out as follows.

1. Absurdity

This involves playing around with logic, having fantastic characters who utter seemingly ridiculous statements, and works generally characterized by nonsense and confusion. In Shakespeare's comedies, this types are paradigms of personality distorted by the imbalanced proportion.

Here is a wonderful catalogue from *Love's Labour's Lost*. This comic effect of humorous speech proceeds out of absurdity. Of the four, Berowne is a most voluble and witty rhetorician who is convinced that love is "the end of study." His grievance over the strict application of rules is a comic sign of the forthcoming breach of their oaths: "O, these are barren tasks, too hard to keep, / Not to see ladies, study, fast, not sleep" (I.i.47-48).¹¹ Berowne reads the articles of their stipulation:

Ber. [*reads*]. Item: that no woman shall come within a mile of my court,—Hath this been proclaimed?

Long. Four days ago.

Ber. Let's see the penalty—on pain of losing her tongue. Who devised this penalty?

Long. Marry, that did I...

Ber. A dangerous law against gentility!

Item, if any man be seen to talk with a woman within the term of three years, he shall endure such public shame as the rest of the court can possibly devise.

(I.i.119-131)

The male leads offer a spectrum of opinion on the Academe project, from King's glib idealism through the desperate sophistry of Dumain and Longaville, to Berowne's seriously mocking exploration.¹² Besides their language the men use and the content of their statements on the act of singing, their delays enhance the dramatic tension: the men's loyalties to each other and to their oaths are momentarily called into question as the absurdity of their vow becomes increasingly obvious.

2. Bawdy

In *TN*, when Olivia asks, "Wilt thou go to bed, Malvolio?" (III.iv.30), he misinterprets the statement because of the forged letter and thinks that his wildest fantasies are to come true—that Olivia wants him to go to bed with her:

- Mal.* To bed? Ay, sweetheart, and I'll come to thee.
Olivia. God comfort thee! Why does thou smile so, and
 kiss thy hand so oft?
Maria. How do you, Malvolio?
Mal. At your request? Yes, nightingales answer daws!
Maria. Why appear you with this ridiculous boldness
 before my lady?
Mal. 'Be not afraid of greatness': 'twas well writ.
 (III.iv.31-38)

Malvolio's secret and erotic fantasies are being revealed to us—as Malvolio dreams of marrying his mistress and becoming a count. Olivia decides Malvolio has got a case of midsummer madness and has taken him away.

In *MWW*, Shakespeare, again, handles the bawdy use of foreign language in the duologue between Evans and Mistress Quickly. The comic effect comes from Quickly's pretentious interruption of Evans' tutoring of Latin to William, Mrs. Page's son:

- Evans.* ... What is 'fair', William?
Will. *Pulcher.*
Quick. Polecats? There are fairer things than polecats,
 sure...
Evans. I pray you have your remembrance, child: *accusa-*
tivo, hing, hang, hog.
Quick. 'Hang-Hog' is Latin for bacon, I warrant you.
Evans. Leave your prabbles, 'oman.—What is the
 focative case, William?
Will. O—*vocativo*, O.
Evans. Remember, William: forcative is *caret.*
Quick. And that's a good root...
Evans. What is your genitive case plural, William?...
Will. Genitive *horum, harum, horum.*
Quick. Vengeance of Ginny's case; fie on her! Never

name her, child, if she be a whore.

(IV.i.21-54)

Shakespeare amusingly takes advantage of phonetic similarity between Latin and English words, which confuses Mistress Quickly. Between the purity of the boy and her vulgarism, her blunder in mistaking "horum" for a "whore" provokes laughter.

The bawdy, however, often works out in a different way. In *MAdo*, a backdrop of patriarchal authority is protected by the extensive bawdy, especially the cuckoldry jokes, and contained by the ineffectuality of the men's exercise of power especially when exaggerated in the Dogberry subplot. The play's lighthearted, witty bawdy expresses and mutes sexual anxieties; it turns them into a communal joke and provides comic release and relief in specific ways. It manifests sexuality as the central component of marriage: "Give us the swords, we have bucklers of our own" (V.ii.18). Men "board" (II.i.133) woman, "put in the pikes" (V.ii.19-20), and women cheerfully resign themselves to being made "heavier soon by the weight of a man," and "stuff'd" (III.iv.25, 59). The woman counterattacks by mocking the virility that threatens them: the "blunt foils" (V.ii.13), "short horns" (II.i.21), and "fine little" wit (V.i.159) of the men. They do not, however, see their own sexuality as a weapon. They joke about female "lightness" (III.iv.34, 41, 43) to warn each other against it, not to threaten men.

3. Caprice

What is peculiarly noticeable in Shakespeare's romantic comedies is the caprice of young lovers. In that respect, Shakespeare pits comic protagonists against anti-comic characters. In *MAdo*, Don John's nature features inadaptability and unaltered stubbornness. For him, the most hateful thing is to claw men in his humor, and he only enjoys isolation like a misfit: "let me be that I am, / and seek not to alter me" (I.iii.34-35). For Don John, love is the last thing to which he can be amenable. On the contrary, Benedick, who seems to be very intractable, and inveterate, gives way to the power of love, although he feels somewhat shameful of having been against a wedded life.

There is a typical scene in *TN*. The audience is mystified by Olivia's refusal of the duke's courtship, in spite of her confession that she "know[s] him noble, / of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth" (I.v.262-263). Furthermore, their mystified confusion is heightened by the rapid tempo of Olivia's caprice:

Olivia. Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit
Do give thee five-fold blazon. Not too fast: soft! soft!
Unless the master were the man. How now?
Even so quickly may one catch the plague?
Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
With an invisible and subtle stealth
To creep in at mine eyes.

(I.v.296-302)

After she parts from Viola, Olivia's this comic monologue surprises the audience, although love-at-first-sight serves as a dramatic economy.

4. Comic duel

In Shakespeare's comedies, silly characters such as Slender are presented as suitors to woman of beauty, and the disparity between a dull suitor and a beautiful lady leads us to a comic scene. The duels are, however, caused not by the character's own will but by the instigation of others. Some duelists are aware of what is going on around them, while some are totally ignorant of it. Comic discrepancy arises from their lack of awareness of how the duel has been set up.

Likewise, Benedick is aware of how Hero is falsely accused of unfaithfulness, but he is blind to how he was set up by Don Pedro, Leonato and Claudio, and to the fact that Claudio has been duped by Don John's villainy. On the other hand, Don Pedro and Claudio are wholly unaware of how they were deceived by Don John's intrigue. This disparity of knowledge between two makes ludicrous Benedick's challenge of a duel. Asked about the outcome of the duel, Benedick says to Beatrice that they both have "only foul words," in return for which he asks her for a rewarding kiss.

In a famous scene in *TN*, Shakespeare sets up Sir Toby and Fabian's allied manipulation of the letter against Sir Andrew:

- Sir And.* Here's the challenge, read it: I warrant there's
vinegar and pepper in't.
- Fabian.* Is't so saucy?
- Sir And.* Ay, is't, I warrant him: do but read.
- Sir To.* Give me. [*Reads.*] *Youth, whatsoever thou art,
thou art but a scurvy fellow.*
- Fabian.* ... A good note; that keeps you from the blow of
the law.
- Sir To.* *Thou com'st to the Lady Olivia, and in my sight she
uses thee kindly: but thou liest in thy throat, that is not
the matter I challenge thee for.*
- Fabian.* Very brief, and to exceeding good sense [*Aside*]
-less.
- Sir To.* *I will waylay thee going home, where if it be thy
chance to kill me—*
- Fabian.* ... Still you keep o'th' windy side of the law:
good.

(III.iv.145-166)

Tricksters exaggerate each dueller's fencing skill to the others, assuming the role of puppeteers who manage the victims in order to disclose their comic flaws. The realization of comic duels themselves is not important—thus they always turn out to be abortive. The duels are not provoked by the revengeful minds or hatred of the duellers concerned. The strategies of the

comic duel is handled in *MWW* (Caius and Evans) and *MAdo* (Claudio and Benedick) as well; among these, this comic duel is the most hilariously presented. As for *MAdo*, the comic duel between Claudio and Benedick explains that Beatrice not only avenges her cousin's misfortune, but she also puts Benedick's love for her to the test.

Comic duels are, often more sophisticated and complicated by mistaken identity, which arises from the disguise of Viola as Sebastian. Since Viola models her disguise on the costume of her twin brother Sebastian, Antonio mistakes her for her brother. There is, thus, comic incongruity between what Viola is and how she is treated, because she is a feeble vessel who is never associated with the wielding of a sword.

5. Comparison

Comic comparisons usually involve insult or ridicule. Metaphors and similes are common forms of figurative language that use comparisons. Comparisons by themselves are not humorous; they must be combined with other methods of humor such as insults and exaggeration to generate laughter.

In *LLL*, there is a bit of dialogue in which their beloved beauties are compared. After the revelation of their perjured vows, a verbal eulogy is comically presented among the four. Rosaline is compared to a brilliant sun, and the princess to the moon. The fervent competition in praising their beloved runs its course to reciprocal derogation. The king stresses the physical defect of Rosaline's black skin:

King. By heaven, thy love is black as ebony.
Ber. Is ebony like her? O wood divine...
King. O paradox! Black is the badge of hell...
Dum. To look like her are chimney-sweepers black.
Long. And since her time are colliers counted bright.
King. And Ethiops of their sweet complexion crack.
Dum. Dark needs no candles now, for dark is light.
Ber. Your mistresses dare never come in rain,
 For fear their colors should be wash'd away...
Long. Look, here's thy love: my foot and her face see.

(IV.iii.243-273)

We see, here, comparisons and insults combined together, to create a humorous effect. The loquacious Berowne is pinched by the allied attack of King, Longaville, and Dumaine. Rosaline's beauty is mockingly compared to "ebony," to "chimney sweepers," and to Longaville's black "boot."

We see, also, an excellent example of comparisons in Mrs. Page's description in *MWW*. The comic effects always hinge upon the braggadocio of Falstaff. Mrs. Page plans to make fun of Falstaff who is "in the waist two yards about." She despicably transforms the egregious "greasy knight" into the "whale with so many tons of oil in his belly" (II.i.62) thrown away ashore at Windsor at the tempest. Mrs. Page's strategy for duping him is to inflate his hope

to the extent that "the wicked fire of lust may have melted him in his own grease" (65-66). Mrs. Page ties in with Mrs. Ford in revenge for the debauch of the drunkard.

6. Contrivance

The contrived overhearing is an example of a play enclosing another play, which is common in Shakespeare's comedies as a whole. It is particularly striking in *MAdo*. Don Pedro and Claudio, supported by Margaret and Ursula, take over the plot-producing trickster function assigned exclusively to Petruchio in *Shr*. Their construction of love is actually a interpretation of each of the partners which is offered, through the contrived overhearings, to the other, who accepts it as true.

At first, the comic effect is straightforward, Benedick alone has accepted the interpretation of Beatrice's hostile demeanor as a cover for love. Here the audience laughs, "knowing," for the moment, that Benedick is mistaken:

- Bene.* [*Coming forward.*] This can be no trick: the conference was sadly borne; they have the truth of this from Hero. they seem to pity the lady: it seems her affections have their full bent. Love me?
... By this day, she's a fair lady! I do spy some marks of love in her.
- Beat.* Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner.
- Bene.* Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains.
- Beat.* I took no more pains for those thanks than you take pains to thank me; if it had been painful, I would not have come.
- Bene.* You take pleasure then in the message?
- Beat.* Yea, just so much as you may take upon a knife's point and choke a daw withal.

(II.iii.212-246)

Actually, Beatrice's words are capable of being interpreted in opposing senses but, seeing the benevolent plot in action, the audience can still feel able to separate the "real" meaning from Benedick's comically mistaken interpretation that follows:

- Bene.* Ha! 'Against my will I am sent to bid you come in to dinner'—there's a double meaning in that. 'I took no more pains for those thanks than you took pains to thank me'—that's as much as to say, 'Any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks'. If I do not take pity of her, I am a villain; if I do not love her, I am a Jew. I will go get her picture.

(II.iii.248-254)

The benevolent plot of Claudio and Don Pedro is set against the malevolent plot of Don John, and Don John's machinations are reversed in their turn by the by the quasi-provincial plotting of the friar.

7. Defeated Expectations

In this method, a person's expectations are led on and often, at the moment, defined as a result of an accident, coincidence, misunderstanding, or something of that nature. Humor involving frustration is very common in any cultures according to sociologists who have studied the matter.

One of the best examples is found in *MWW*. Falstaff has written letters declaring his love to two woman he finds attractive, Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page. He tells a friend that Mrs. Ford has shown, by her actions, that she's attracted to him :

Fal. I have writ me here a letter to her ; and here another
to Page's wife, who even now gave me good eyes too,
examined my parts with most judicious œillades :
sometimes the beam of her view gilded my foot,
sometimes my porty belly.

(I.iii.54-58)

Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page are good friends and after showing one another Falstaff's, letters, which are identical, decide to teach him a lesson :

Mrs. Page. . . . Let's be revenged on him : let's
appoint him a meeting, give him a show of comfort
in his suit, and lead him on with a fine-baited delay. . .

(II.i.90-92)

The situation becomes more complicated because Falstaff has met a person in an Inn who carries on, in great detail, about how much he loves Mrs. Ford. Falstaff then says "you shall, if you will, enjoy Ford's wife." Next Falstaff boasts that he has arranged a tryst with Mrs. Ford :

Fal. I shall be with her between ten and eleven ; for at
that time the jealous rascally knave her husband
will be forth.

(II.ii.253-255)

Falstaff adds that he will use Mrs. Ford as the "key of the cuckoldry rouge's coffer" (l. 263). All of this leads to the great scene in which Falstaff goes to Mrs. Ford's house and declares his love for her. But before anything can happen he is told that Mrs. Ford is coming and thus must hide in a laundry basket to escape detection. Falstaff experiences here, defeated expectations,

one of the most important techniques used in comedies.

8. Disguise

In disguise, a person maintains his or her own identity but imitates or creates the voice, appearance and language of some individual. The comic actions are usually engineered and accelerated by disguise. The types of disguise consists of two patterns ; costumed and psychological. There is a typical example in *Shr*. The former is found in the courtship of the three suitors to Bianca, while the latter is manipulated primarily in the heated verbal war between Petruchio and Katherina.

In this comedy, Shakespeare lays out three cases of the costumed disguise : Lucentio disguised as a schoolmaster, Hortensio as a musician, and a pedant as Lucentio's father Vincentio. The gullible Gremio introduces to Baptista, Lucentio as a young scholar "who hath been long studying at Rheims ; as cunning in Greek, Latin, and other languages" (II.i.80-81). Lucentio's lecture on Latin is rather a romantic trick by which he confesses his love to Bianca in secret. In the midst of translating some Latin lines, Lucentio reveals his real identity and attempts to woo her :

Luc. *Hic ibat*, as I told you before—*Simois*, I am Lucentio
—*hic est*, son unto Vincentio of Pisa—*Sigeia tellus*,
disguised thus to get your love—*Hic steterat*, and that
Lucentio that comes a-wooing—*Priami*, is my man
Tranio—*regia*, bearing my port—*celsa senis*, that we
might beguile the old pantaloon.

(III.i.31-36)

We see, then, the psychological disguise in Act II, scene i. Katherina appears to expect that the seemingly tough suitor Petruchio would be quickly offended by her blunt blow and withdraw sneakily. Petruchio launches into a new strategy of psychological disguise :

Pet. For thou art pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous,
But slow in speech, yet sweet as spring-time flowers.
Thou canst not frown, thou canst not look askance,
Nor bite the lip, as angry wenches will,
Nor hast thou pleasure to be cross in talk.

(II.i.239-243)

Unlike costumed, the psychological disguise is effective in dissembling what one really thinks of the other. His comments on her ways of speech and deed run counter to the truth. In his sarcastic verbal manipulation, what she really is, contrasts with what she ought to be. Petruchio's psychological disguise culminates in the comparison of Diana and Katherina :

Pet. Did ever Dian so become a grove
As Kate this chamber with her princely gait ?

O be thou Dian, and let her be Kate,
 And then let Kate be chaste and Dian sportful.
 (II.i.252-255)

A first sign of the change of her attitude toward Petruchio comes about when he compares her with Dian. Katherina thought him a voluble and ignorant ruffian who plays a trick upon her in order to gain her rich dowry, and so she plans to repel him lightly, thinking him an easy mark.

Petruchio's disguise and eccentricity unite to elicit laughter. On his wedding day, Petruchio comes wearing odd and ragged clothes which are not totally becoming the special occasion. When Baptista told him he would not marry her, he replied that she's married, not unto my clothes.

In the last scene of *TN*, the strategy of disguise creates comic climax. Viola and Sebastian are of "one face" and "one voice," and they wear the same type of costume. Shakespeare has forged all the twists and turns of mistaken identities into the final denouement of the sudden caprice of young lovers. The sudden caprice of lovers is one of the comic methods most frequently found in Shakespeare's romantic comedies. The comic effect of caprice stems primarily from a surprise. Though the audience has already perceived the possibility of the wedding of Sebastian and Olivia, the duke's sudden turn toward Viola must be a surprise.

9. Discrepant awareness

I have described this matter of characters not knowing what is going on as ignorance. Some use the term discrepant awareness to suggest that certain characters are unaware of what other characters are doing or who they really are, or what is going on in the play. We find that this kind of ignorance, or discrepant awareness, plays a major role in comedies with characters who impersonate other characters, but discrepant awareness is also found in many other types of comedies. The gap between what the audience knows and what characters know, provides us with a sense of superiority, among other things. I will have more to say about discrepant awareness shortly.

Primary among those pleasures are those derived from the skillful use of comic preparation. Before nearly every major event, and preceding most of its significant comic moments, Shakespeare prepares his audience for what they are about to witness. This strategy is fundamental to his comedy.

In *TN*, Malvolio is presented as an unsympathetic figure—an unpleasant, puritanical, self-absorbed fool, with delusions of grandeur. Although he has appeared earlier in the play, it is in Act I, scene v that we really get to know him. He is to be victimized by a practical joke concocted by Maria. She has imitated Olivia's handwriting and forged a letter to Malvolio, which she leaves in a place that she knows he will find it.

The scene starts with Malvolio strutting about, speculating on fortune. He is being observed by Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Fabian and Maria, who are all hidden. Malvolio is fantasizing about Olivia being in love with him. As he speculates, the various characters who are hiding make

comments to one another :

Mal. To be Count Malvolio !
Sir To. Ah, rogue !
Sir And. Pistol him, pistol him !
Sir To. Peace, peace !
Mal. There is example for't. The lady of the Strachy
 married the yeoman of the wardrobe.

(II.v.35-40)

In this scene a person talks about and insults others who, without his being aware of it, are spying on him and listening to him speak. They, in turn, insult him, as his fantasy progresses. Here, the strategy of revelation and insult play an important role along with ignorance or discrepant awareness.

These are three levels of this discrepant awareness : the audience is observing Maria and Sir Toby and their colleagues who are, in turn, hiding from and observing Malvolio. There are other examples of discrepant awareness to be considered, besides that of Malvolio, who mistakes Maria's letter for one from Olivia. Orsino, for example, is not aware that Cesario is really a woman, Viola. And neither is Olivia, who falls in love with Cesario. Antonio, Sebastian's friend, becomes confused when he thinks he is talking to Sebastian but is really talking with Cesario, who does not know what Antonio is talking about when he asks for his money. And Olivia mistakes Sebastian for Cesario and gets married, discovering only later that she has married Viola's identical twin brother. In addition, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, thinking they were fighting the "feminine" Cesario actually picked a fight with Sebastian, and got a bloody beating for their pains. Thus, a great deal of the humor in the play stems from a lack of awareness on the part of the characters about the identity of Cesario and of Malvolio's mistake regarding the letter.

Shakespeare skilfully manipulates audience response to the characters through ironic strategies that discriminate levels of awareness among characters, and between characters and audience.¹³ The achieved effects is to put the courtiers into positions of exposure and ridicule ; they are threatened with varying degrees of the shame they have sought to evade.

10. Drunkenness

Shakespeare uses characters who are eccentric and bizarre to create humor. These eccentricities usually represent certain types—misers, misanthropes, drunkard, liars, braggarts, poseurs—who cannot control themselves and usually end up outsmarting themselves and learning painful lessons.

The induction in *Shr* begins with the description of the tipsy Sly's coming out of a tavern almost in a state of coma. The drunkenness is more theatrical than any other in producing a comic scene. The theatrical success of drunkenness as a comic strategy depends on how comically an actor rails, reels, falls down or even bumps into something in the state of unconsciousness.

In *TN*, from Act II forward, our attention should be paid to the device of revelry, which provides a great contribution to the festive mood of this comedy. In *Shr*, the power of drunkenness itself transforms a character into another; but in this comedy the festive mood of revelry is created by the team-spirit of on-going merry-makers. In Act II, scene iii, when Clown joins Sir Toby and Sir Andrew's revelry, the deep night is disturbed by their clamorous uproar:

- Sir To.* Approach, Sir Andrew; not to be abed after midnight, is to be up betimes; and *diluculo surgere*, thou know'st—
- Sir And.* Nay, by my troth, I know not: but I know, to be up late, is to be up late.
- Sir To.* A false conclusion: I hate it as an unfilled can. To be up after midnight, and to go to bed then, is early: so that to go to bed after midnight, is to go to bed betimes. Does not our life consists of the four elements?
- Sir And.* Faith, so they say, but I think it rather consists of eating and drinking.
- Sir To.* Th'art a scholar; let us therefore eat and drink. Marian, I say! a stoup of wine!
- Sir And.* Here comes the fool, i' faith.
- Clown.* How now, my hearts? Did you never see the picture of 'we three'?
- Sir To.* Welcome, ass. Now let's have a catch.

(II.iii.1-18)

11. Eavesdropping

Eavesdropping has, as I have argued, a close relation with discrepant awareness. The comic asides of the eavesdroppers are annexed to the monologues of the persons overheard. In *LLL*, Berowne's aside expressing how delightful an experience it is to be in the position of an eavesdropper sums up the whole comic situation:

- Ber.* All hid, all hid; an old infant play.
Like a demi-god here sit I in the sky,
And wretched fools' secrets heedfully o'er-eye.
More sacks to the mill! O heavens! I have wish:
Dumaine transform'd: four woodcocks in a dish!

(IV.iii.75-79)

Eavesdropping provides comic tricksters with the superior power of knowledge by which they can manipulate and dupe the other characters.

The strategy of eavesdropping is manipulated five times in this play. The following three are accidental cases: Antonio's servant mistakenly listens in the Prince's intention to woo

Hero; Borachio overhears the Prince's plan to woo Hero in place of Claudio; and Second watchman eavesdrops on Borachio's villainous intrigue. The two eavesdropping of Benedick and Beatrice, which are, of course, deliberate ones set up by tricksters, stand out as Shakespeare's best representation of this comic strategy, primarily because comic annexation of the deceived's comic monologue is well matched to tricksters' witty dialogue.

In *TN*, Maria says to the company: "If I do not gull him into / a nayword, and make him a common recreation, / do not think I have wit enough to lie straight in / my bed" (II.iii.135-138). Their revelry then becomes a springboard out of which all comic actions proceed, as Maria invents a comic strategy by which she plans to make Malvolio a comic butt by inflating his narcissism and megalomaniac fantasy to the highest intensity. In the path Malvolio frequents, she drops a letter which contains Olivia's faked confession of love for Malvolio. This comic scene is fused by both the eavesdropping of the tricksters and Malvolio's comically megalomaniac monologue:

Mal. 'Tis but fortune, all is fortune. Maria once told me she did affect me, and I have heard herself come thus near, that should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion. Besides, she uses me with a more exalted respect than any one else that follows her...

Sir To. Here's an overweening rouge!

Feb. O, peace! contemplation makes a rare turkey-cock of him: how he jets under his advanced plumes!

Sir And. 'Slight, I could so beat the rouge!

Sir To. Peace, I say!

(II.v.23-34)

This comic monologue is combined with the comic commentaries of the eavesdroppers—Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Fabian. Since their comic commentaries are only addressed to the audience, they technically function as comic asides.

12. Exaggeration

Exaggeration, at times, enhances reality or often blows things up far beyond the reality of the situation. Exaggeration can also be reserved, leading to humorous understatement. Sometimes it is direct, as in a description a person makes of some event or object; at other times, it is indirect, and we can see the character exaggerating.

There is a wonderful scene in *MAdo*. Claudio takes himself far too seriously, as a lover and as a judge of character, but an audience laughs when Benedick soars into his mock-horror at the arrival of Beatrice in Act II. We find the following dialogue:

Claud. Friendship is constant in all other things
 Save in the office and affairs of love :
 Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues ;
 Let every eye negotiate for itself,
 And trust no agent ; for beauty is a witch
 Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.
 This is an accident of hourly proof,
 Which I mistrusted not...

Bene. ...She speaks poniards, and every
 word stabs : if her breath were as terrible as her
 terminations, there were no living near her, she
 would infect to the North Star. I would not marry
 her, though she were endowed with all that Adam
 had left him before he transgressed. She would
 have made Hercules have turned spit, yea, and
 have cleft his club to make the fire too. Come, talk
 not of her...

D. Pedro. Look, here she comes.

Bene. Will your Grace command me any service to the
 world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now
 to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on ;
 I will fetch you a toothpicker now from the furthest
 inch of Asia ; bring you the length of Prester John's
 foot ; fetch you a hair off the great cham's beard ;
 do you any embassy to the Pygmies, rather than
 hold three words' conference with this harpy.

(II.i.163-254)

It is clear that they are sending themselves up each other just as surely as Petruchio does in his hyperbolizing early in *Shr.*

13. Foreign Languages

Foreign languages are primarily verbal in nature and involves characters not communicating effectively with one another. It is, of course, linguistic ; it is still part of what might be described as the comedy of errors.

In *LLL*, there is an interesting scene that offends us a good example of using foreign languages :

Hol. The deer was, as you know, *sanguis*, in blood ; ripe
 as the pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in
 the ear of *coelo*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven ; and
 anon falleth like a crab on the face of *terra*, the soil,
 the land, the earth.

Nath. Truly, Master Holofernes, the epithites are sweetly
 varied, like a scholar at the least : but, sir, I assure
 ye, it was a buck of the first head.

Hol. Sir, Nathaniel, *haud credo*.

Dull. 'Twas not a *haud credo*, 'twas a pricket.

(IV.ii.2-12)

Part of the humor arises from Holofernes' fashion of speech characterized by his artificial management of lofty figures of speech as well as his affected employment of Latin. Nathaniel admires Holofernes' scholarly marshaling of English synonyms for the Latin words "coelo" and "terra." Dull promptly jumps into Holofernes' interchange of Latin words with Nathaniel.

In *TN*, the comic use of foreign language is handled in combination with drunkenness. When Maria warns Sir Toby about his association with the ill-reputed simpleton Sir Andrew, Sir Toby preposterously exaggerates Sir Andrew's command of foreign languages :

Sir And. And I thought that, I'd forswear it. I'll ride home to-morrow, Sir, Toby.

Sir To. *Pourquoi*, my dear knight?

Sir And. What is *pourquoi*? Do, or not do? I would I had bestowed that time in the tongues that I have in fencing, dancing, and bear-baiting. O, had I but follow'd the arts!

(I.iii.87-93)

Their drunkenness also helps offer laughter to the audience who can notice Sir Toby's having lied in his teeth.

14. Impersonation

Impersonation involves a character talking on someone else's identity or profession. The impersonator often "degrades" the character being impersonated. There is always a tension created—will the impersonator be discovered? There is also the question as to what mischief the impersonator will accomplish.

In *TN*, after Malvolio has been locked up because he is thought to be mad, Clown puts on a gown and pretends to be Sir Topas, the curate :

Maria. Nay, I prithee put on this gown, and this beard; Make him believe thou art Sir Topas the curate; Do it quickly. I'll call Sir Toby the whilst.

Clown. Well, I'll put it on, and I will dissemble myself in't, and I would I were the first that ever dissembled in such a gown.

(IV.ii.1-6)

A short while later, Clown, dressed as Sir Topas, visits Malvolio, who is in a dark dungeon. This leads to a conversation between Malvolio and Clown, who is impersonating Sir Topas :

- Mal.* Who calls there?
Clown. Sir Topas the curate, who comes to visit Malvolio the lunatic.
Mal. Sir Topas, Sir Topas, good Sir Topas, go to my lady.
Clown. Out, hyperbolic fiend! How vexest thou this man! Talkest thou nothing but of ladies?
 (IV.ii.21-27)

The conversation continues, with Malvolio unaware that he's been fooled, another example of ignorance and discrepant awareness. In the end, impersonation must involve some kind of ignorance on the part of some characters who make a fool of themselves.

15. Incongruity

In Shakespeare's comedies, incongruity is usually framed by an unbalanced pair either of the learned and unlearned or of the quick-witted and the dim-witted such as Slender and Anne Page; Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in *TN*. There is a good example in *LLL*. In Act II, scene i, Armado confesses to Moth that he is in love with a base wench:

- Arm.* I will hereupon confess I am in love; and as it is base for a soldier to love, so am I in love with a base wench. If drawing my sword against the humour of affection would deliver me from the reprobate thought of it, I would take Desire prisoner, and ransom him to any French courtier for a new-devised courtesy. I think scorn to sigh: methinks I should outswear Cupid. Comfort me, boy. What great men have been in love?
Moth. Hercules, master.
Arm. Most sweet Hercules! More authority, dear boy, name more...
Moth. Sampson, master: he was a man of good carriage...
Arm. O well-knit Samson! strong-joined Samson!...
 Who was Samson's love, my Moth?
Moth. A woman, master.
Arm. Of what complexion?
Moth. Of all the four, or the three, or the two, one of the four.

(I.ii.53-76)

Here, Moth speaks without any artificial effort to embellish his words; his knowledge goes no farther than naming two famous mythical, biblical figures. The comic effects of this catalogue arises from the comic incongruity between Moth's lack of knowledge and Armando's ludicrous pretence to authority.

16. Insults

A humorous insult is the direct use of verbal aggression to degrade a person or some other object for comic effect. Insults often involve wild comparisons, allusions to embarrassing things done in the past and that kind of thing. Insults are not humorous in themselves, so they must use other strategies to create the humor and the insulter must make certain that the insults are not seen as "real," but are tied to a role in a play or as part of one's act or something like that. Insults are very dangerous ways to generate laughter, but are commonly used. Insults that are reversed and directed at oneself yield "victim" humor.

In *MWW*, Shakespeare makes good use of comic insults in a number of places. In one scene, Mrs Ford, the one of the central characters of this comedy, insults her husband, Ford:

- Ford.* Pray you come near: If I suspect without cause,
why then make sport at me; then let me be your
jest, I deserve it. . .
- Page.* Good Master Ford, be contented; you wrong
yourself too much.
- Ford.* True, Master Page.—Up, gentleman, you shall
see sport anon; follow me, gentlemen.
- Evans.* This is fery fantastical humours and jealousies. . .
- Mrs. Page.* Is there not a double excellency in this?
- Mrs. Ford.* I know not which please me better, that my
husband is deceived, or Sir John. . .
- Ford.* I cannot find him; maybe the knave bragged of
that he could not compass. . .
- Mrs. Ford.* You use me well, Master Ford, do you?
- Ford.* Ay, I do so.
- Mrs. Ford.* Heaven make you better than your thoughts!
- Ford.* Amen.

(III.iii.138-191)

Ford was sure that he caught his wife in the act of adultery, but he was outwitted and insulted. As a result, his expectation was defeated. Comic insults are found very often in Shakespeare's texts, sometimes directed at particular individuals with whom one is conversing. At other times they are directed at characters who are not on stage when the insult is made, but who may be overhearing them. At other times, insults are directed at institutions, kinds of people, occupations, nationalities, religions and so on.

Characters who find themselves in situations in which they are made to feel uncomfortable, shamed or ridiculous, are embarrassed. They inevitably seek to escape from these situations and the events that lead to their embarrassments. Comedies frequently involve characters who get into messes and then do all kinds of things to get out of them, so the strategy of embarrassment is of central importance.

17. Mistaken Identity

Disguise involves a situation in which a character pretends something to trick the other characters. When there is pretense, a tension is established.

Thus, the central "comedic" problem in *TN* involves mistaken identity. Viola cross-dresses and pretends to be a young male, who becomes a member of Orsino's household; in this transvestite role, she fools Orsino, who comments on how feminine she is and she fools Olivia, who falls in love with her. She, in turn, has fallen in love with Orsino. Readers of the play or members of the audience know what is going on, but the characters do not. Orsino, lovesick over Olivia, imagines that eventually she will respond to his overtures, or those of his messengers. He also believes Viola to be a youth, Cesario. Olivia does not realize that Cesario is really a woman, pretending to be a man. Viola describes the situation in a celebrated speech:

Viola. Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness,
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.
How easy is it for the proper false
In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!
(II.ii.26-29)

This is the central complication of the play, a knot that Viola is not able to unite. It will be united or, perhaps, cut, in time, when Sebastian arrives on the scene and ties the knot, so to speak, with Olivia, who thinks she is marrying Orsino. Everything is resolved at the end of the play when Orsino discovers that Cesario is not a boy but a woman. Technically speaking, the humor of mistaken identity—Orsino and Olivia make mistakes about the gender of Cesario, and, later, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Sir Toby, and Olivia mistake Sebastian for Cesario—is always connected with the humor of discrepant awareness.

18. Misdelivery

Mistaken identity is primarily caused by physical identicalness, artificial disguise, and supernatural powers such as Oberon and Puck. But the mistaken identity which occurs in *LLL* is triggered by misdelivery with carelessness and imbecility of Costard. Armado employs Costard as his messenger to deliver his letter to Jaquenetta, and, at the same time, Berowne hires him as a messenger to Rosaline, which causes a comic misdelivery of letters. The illiterate Costard mistakenly carries the letter of Armado to the princess and her ladies, who are hunting in the king's park. Boyet reads the letter to amuse the company. Jaquenetta and Costard come into the company of Holofernes, Nathaniel and Dull. Jaquenetta asks Nataniel to read for her a letter sent by Armando. The letter was a beautiful and sonorous sonnet written by Berowne. Of course, it was misdelivered to Jaquenetta by Costard. Here is a wonderfully concentrated scene in Act V:

Kath. Some thousand verses of a faithful lover;

A huge translation of hypocrisy,
Vilely compil'd, profound simplicity.

Mar. This, and these pearls to me sent Longaville :
The letter is too long by half a mile.

Prin. I think no less. Dost thou not wish in heart
The chain were longer and the letter short ?

Mar. Ay, or I would these hands might never part.

Prin. We are wise girls to mock our lovers so.

Ros. They are worse fools to purchase mocking so.
That same Berowne I'll torture ere I go.

O! that I knew he were but in by the week.
How I would make him fawn, and beg, and seek,
And wait the season, and observe the times,
And spend his prodigal wits in bootless rimes,
And shape his service wholly to my hests
And make him proud to make me proud that jests!
So Pair-Taunt like would I o'ersway his state
That he should be my fool, and I his fate.

(V.ii.50-68)

The strategy of misdelivery of letters used in this comedy is one of the most hilarious manipulated by Shakespeare. Their expectation of the four was, then, unmasked and defeated by the ladies.

19. Obstruction

Shakespeare's comedies involve the triumph of young lovers who have to overcome various obstacles provided by old men and social conventions. The comic form, at least in romantic comedy, involves young lovers determined on a course of behavior that they find impossible to pursue. Obstacles of fortune, parental disapproval, or social convention stand in their way.

As a rule, Shakespeare opens his comedies with the major character's vows or their breaches of legal, commercial or social contracts. The vows is, however, an anti-comic device. For Shakespeare, this anti-comic device is an indispensable strategy by which he launches his comedies, but it is fundamentally created to be broken. Then, he weaves multiple comic strategies to help clear off the somber atmosphere overshadowed by this obstruction. For example, in *The Comedy of Errors*, there is a death sentence of Egeon; in *Shr*, Baptista's declaration of Katherine's precedence in marriage; in *The Two Gentleman of Verona*, Proteus and Julia's engagement through the exchange of their rings; and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Egeus' compulsory proposal of marriage against Hermia's will. Shakespeare's establishment of an obstruction in the beginning act and consequential demolition of it is a recognized pattern used in most of his comedies. Obstructions cause a chain of the tense and release situation to evoke laughter, causing the well-balanced orchestration of the comic and the dark.

20. Quibbling

Quibbling means to make petty objection or use ambiguous words in order to conceal the truth. In *MWW*, Act IV, scene v, we are given a comic strategy of quibbling in the duologue between Falstaff and Simple. This comic scene is created by the interplay of costumed and psychological disguise. Simple sees Falstaff, who is disguised as an old woman of Brainford, rush into his chamber in the Garter Inn. He asks Falstaff if “she” is the very woman that is a fortune teller. Falstaff’s way of outwitting Simple shows his skill at quibbling:

Sim. My master, sir, my master Slender, sent to her, seeing her go thorough the streets, to know, sir, whether one Nym, sir, that beguiled him of a chin, had the chain or no. . .

Fal. Marry, she says that the very same man that beguiled Master Slender of his chain cozened him of it.

Sim. I would I could have spoken with the woman herself. . .

Fal. What are they? Let us know. . .

Sim. Why, sir, they were nothing but about Mistress Anne Page, to know if it were my master’s fortune to have her or no.

Fal. ’Tis, ’tis his fortune.

Sim. What, sir?

Fal. To have her, or no. Go; say the woman told me so.

(IV.v.28-49)

After hearing Falstaff’s quibbling, the Host praises his speech as “clerkly.” Falstaff himself is trying to lift his own preposterous casuistry up to a level of “wit.”

21. Repartee

The term repartee involves a character responding to contempt, put-downs, and veiled insults in a witty or clever manner. Repartee can make use of wordplay, odious comparison of other strategies of humor, but it must be timed perfectly, without missing a beat after the original provocation.

In *Shr*, Act III, there is a fine example of the use of repartee for comic effect. Both Lucentio and Hortensio are given access to Bianca so that they each may give lessons of Latin and music to her. The scene opens with the verbal war between the two as to which lesson should come first, Latin or music. Hortensio insists on his prerogative to have the first lesson for Bianca, against which Lucentio’s argument comes off as a witty repartee:

Hor. . . .this is
The partroness of heavenly to harmony.
Then give me leave to have prerogative,
And when in music we have spent an hour,

Your lectures shall have leisure for as much.
Luc. Preposterous ass, that never read so far
 To know the cause why music was ordain'd!
 Was it not to refresh the mind of man
 After his studies or his usual pain?
 Then give me leave to read philosophy,
 And while I pause, serve in your harmony.
 (III.i.4-14)

Lucentio actually knows that Bianca is not in the mood for music taught by Hortensio, which helps accelerate his tongue and succeed in wooing her.

22. Reversal

Reversal involves things turning out differently from the way characters expect them to turn out. In some cases, characters get even with those who have tormented them, and in other cases, characters outsmart themselves and get a bit of their own medicine. Generally reversal is a consequence of revelation, and involves irony on the level of plot and behavior—though it can also be seen in language and dialogue.

In *As You Like It*, Orlando rushes into Duke Senior's camp to snatch their dishes:

Orl. For bear, and eat no more. . .
Duke Sen. Art thou thus bolden'd man by thy distress?
 Or else a rude despair of good manners,
 That in civility thou seem'st so empty?
Orl. You touch'd my vein at first: the thorny point
 Of bare distress hath ta'en from me the show
 Of smooth civility. Yet am I inland bred,
 And know some nurture. But forbear, I say,
 He dies that touches any of this fruit,
 Till I and my affairs are answered. . .
Duke Sen. What would you have? Your gentleness shall force,
 More than your force move us to gentleness.
Orl. I almost die for food, and let me have it.
Duke Sen. Sit down and feed, and welcome to our table.
Orl. Speak you so gently? Pardon me, I pray you. . .
 Let gentleness my strong enforcement be;
 In the which hope, I blush, and hide my sword.
 (II.vii.88-119)¹⁴

It would be presumed that Orlando is violent and rude because of his rootless exile, which drives him to desperation. But, all of a sudden, he becomes gentle, so I see this as direct reversal rather than transformation. Forests in Shakespeare's comedies, generally speaking, gives a kind of remedy for a reformed character. But Orlando is good in nature, and Duke Senior just makes him realize it.

23. Revelation

In revelation, characters inadvertently reveal something about themselves — or sometimes, as the result of a mistake or coincidence, expose themselves. We are generally amused when people who try to hide their nature or who try to prevent their true mind from being seen are unsuccessful in doing so. At other times, characters are exposed as frauds, liars, cowards, impersonators, and so on.

In *LLL*, Costard and the ladies disrupt the academe and ridicule the role of ascetic scholarship. The ladies repeatedly outwit the courtiers who woo them with words, and never let the lords forget their violated oath. In Act IV, scene iii, Berowne, King, Longaville and Dumain enter one by one wishing for “sweet fellowship in shame!” (l. 46); each is exposed, in turn, by the one who has entered immediately before him. The brilliantly effective dramaturgy of this situation derives from a discrepancy between the illusory privacy and independence of action that each successive character believes he possesses and the highly formalized and predictable pattern of action they collectively present to the audience on behalf of the dramatist. From a position of superior knowledge, clearly realized on the stage in his spatial relation to the others, Berowne cultivates the quality of theatrical contrivance:

All hid, all hid; an old infant play. (l. 75)
 I'll mark how love can vary wit. (l. 97)
 O! what a scene of foolery have I seen. (l. 160)

“Are we betray'd thus to thy over-view?” (l. 172), asks King in bewildered embarrassment. The audience is structurally predisposed to identify with the seemingly omniscient Berowne —until the action culminates in Costard's exposure of his self-righteousness. Costard's unanticipated entry upsets the just-completed mirror structure of disclosures and exposures, to Berowne's sudden discomfiture and our further delight. “You were born,” Berowne tells him, “to do me shame” (l. 201). Berowne bids the King, “dismiss this audience” (l. 206); “Walk aside the true folk,” Costard answers, “and let the traitors stay” (l. 206); “Walk aside the true folk,” Costard answers, “and let the traitors stay” (l. 209). Costard has already suffered “for the truth” of his instincts in the play's first scene (l. 1.302ff.), and now—perhaps playing to the audience—he speaks from an ironically superior moral position.

As the result of chance, characters often find themselves in awkward, uncomfortable or embarrassing situations, —which audiences find amusing. Coincidence is often paired with another technique, revelation and unmasking, in which characters who are pretending to be virtuous are exposed for their true nature, or men who are pretending to be women are discovered.

24. Sarcasm

Sarcasm means “tearing the flesh” or “biting the lips in rage” and refers to the use of language that is contemptuous, mocking and wounding. Sarcastic remarks are obliquely, not directly, insulting—remarks that, by their tone, taunt and ridicule. They are bitter, cutting,

caustic remarks that are extremely hostile.

We find an excellent example of sarcasm in Shakespeare's *MAdo*. Beatrice and Benedick loathe each other and continually make nasty remarks to one another.¹⁵ Hearing that he has come back from a battle, Beatrice asks a messenger :

Beat. . . . I pray you, how many hath he
killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath
he killed? For indeed, I promised to eat all of his
killing.

(I.i.38-41)

When the messenger replies that Benedick is a good soldier, Beatrice continues with her sarcastic comments ; "And a good soldier to a lady ; but what is he to a lord?" (I.i.49-50) Leonato explains the relationship that exists between Beatrice and Benedick to the messenger :

Leon. . . . There is a
kind of merry war betwixt Signior Benedick and
her : they never meet but there's a skirmish of wit
between them.

(I.i.55-58)

When they do meet they immediately start making sarcastic comments to one another :

Beat. I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior
Benedick : nobody marks you.
Bene. What, my dear lady Disdain ! Are you yet living ?
Beat. Is it possible disdain should die, while she hath
such meet food to feed it as Signior Bendick ?
Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come
in her presence.

(I.i.107-113)

Near the end of *LLL* the Princess offers her coterie two couplets on the relationship between wisdom and folly, epigrammatically articulating a paradox vital to the action, verbal texture, and spirit of the whole play :

Prin. None are so surely caught, when they are catch'd
As wit turn'd fool : folly, in wisdom hatch'd
Hath wisdom's warrant and the help of school
And wit's own grace to grace a learned fool.

(V.ii.69-72)

Not only does she pithily describe what has been transpiring throughout the previous acts but she also provides an explanation for how characters get themselves into such laughable

positions: wits look like fools, and fools act like wits, with wise fools often the most unintentionally ludicrous. The terms she chooses evoke recurrent thematic concerns: the lords of Navarre repeatedly find themselves enmeshed in verbal and legal tangles, and in attempting to don the graceful attire of courtly lover and witty entertainer, they have come off looking even more clumsy than the pedants and lower-class clowns.

25. Transformation

In some cases an inept person is transformed into a sophisticated winner who triumphs over those who had previously made him or her a ridiculous figure or an outcast. The changes and what these changes lead to are the source of the humor. Or a winner is transformed into an inept and defeated figure.

It is difficult to show this in a short passage, but there is a decent enough example to be found in *AYL*. Orlando saved his brother, Oliver who had exiled and had hostile relations with him:

Celia. O I have heard him speak of that same brother,
And he did render him the most unnatural
That liv'd amongst men.

Oli. And well he might so do,
For well I know he was unnatural.

Ros. But to Orlando. Did he leave him there,
Food to the suck'd and hungry lioness?

Oli. Twice did he turn his back, and purpos'd so.
But kindness, nobler ever than revenge;
And nature, stronger than his just occasion,
Made him give battle to the lioness,
Who quickly fell before him; in which hurtling
From miserable slumber I awak'd.

Celia. Are you his brother?

Ros. Was't you he rescu'd?

Celia. Was't you that did so oft contrive to kill him?

Oli. 'Twas I. But 'tis not I. I do not shame
To tell you what I was, since my conversion
So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am.

(IV.iii.121-137)

There is a double transformation in this dialogue. Orlando forgives everything that Oliver had done to him. Oliver is also converted to a sensible man.

26. Wordplay

Word play involves the clever use of language to amuse and entertain. It also involves wit—clever comments relation to some situation—that are made in a timely manner. Wordplay is probably the most widely used strategies of linguistic humor. In *TN*, there is an excellent example of wordplay. When Curio, asks him whether he wants to go hunting, Orsino does not

Her suggestion that he bring his hand to “the buttry bar and let it drink” is an invitation to flirt with her, but he is too stupid to recognize the implication.

All these strategies are often used in combination. In analyzing a simple text, such as joke, it is quite common to find two or three strategies being used, with one strategy dominant and other strategy having secondary status. With this list of strategies, then, it is possible to see how Shakespeare generates humor and determines whether he tends to use certain techniques most of the time and neglect others. This use of particular strategies would give us a more specific understanding of his comedic style. He could articulate them with any degree of precision.

Chapter III

The matter of what laughter is was not investigated to any great degree of thoroughness. This lack has been rectified by the work of a psychologist, Rober Provine, who published an excellent article in *American Scientist* entitled “Laughter.” In this article Provine explains that laughter is a social vocalization of the human animal and defines it as follows :

A laugh is characterized by a series of short vowel-like notes syllables, each about 75 milliseconds long, that are repeated at regular intervals about 210 milliseconds apart. A specific vowel sound does not define laughter, but similar vowel sounds are typically used for the notes of a given laugh.¹⁶

One important thing that Province discovered in his study of laughter is that most laughter comes from banal remarks rather than structured jokes. As he explains, mutual playfulness, in-group feeling and positive emotional tone mark the social settings of most naturally occurring laughter.

He adds that laughter tends to be randomly scattered throughout our daily conversation and that there is a reason to believe that laughter is also connected to matters such as dominance and submission, acceptance and rejection.

So laughter is often far from innocent. Since laughter is epidemic with a group activity, it can also be a form of a collaboration with the powerholders. So collective laughter is actually complicit in repression. They are transformed into their opposite, while retaining something of their former identity :

Laughable laughter is cataclysmic. And even so, the angels have gained something by it. They have tricked us all with their semantic hoax. Their imitation laughter and its original (the Devil’s) have the same name. People nowadays do not even realize that one and the same external phenomenon embraces two complete contradictory internal attitudes. There are two kinds of a laughter, and we lack the words to distinguish them.¹⁷

This Kundera’s evocation of the political and psychological duplicity of laughter should remind us of the debates around the issue of the Carnival and carnivalesque literature in recent years. Against Bakhtin’s celebration of its utopian release of desire, its anti-idealism, and its inver-

sions of all social hierarchy. Laughter as social praxis is always produced within a dominant discourse, even if it is indeed the displaced expression of the rebellious "discontents" of that discourse.

Since the publication of Freud's *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*,¹⁸ it has become unsurprising to assert that laughter is a momentary release of repressed libidinal energy. So long as Freud's thesis was read in terms of his economy of a libidinal energy held in check by a countering energy, the idea of a purely physical release in laughter has a certain internal coherence, even though it is in fact a reduction of the full dimensions of Freud's investigation. The main problem in Freud's biophysical model is the relationship between the verbal form of the joke, which is culturally and historically variable, and the repressed energy of the id, which Freud theorize as presocial, primal and anarchic. This binary opposition of cultural language to physical, bodily energy is really a reformulation of the old metaphysical dualism of culture versus nature transported onto the terrain of each individual human psyche. One consequence is that since language belongs to culture and history, while the underlying energy of the drives does not, the release of energy through the verbal mechanism of the joke is a return of the primal presocial drives of the id.

In arguing that Shakespeare's comedies should be read in the light of Freud's theories of laughter as derepression, reformulated and historicized in terms of the disruption of social discourses, I am partly returning to the tradition of utopian festive interpretations of C.L. Barber and Northrop Frye, which have become a well-established part of Shakespearean criticism.¹⁹ For Barber also sees the collective festivities which contributed so much to Shakespeare's comic discourse as fundamentally similar to the joke in their structure of psychic release. For him they are momentary rebellions at the psychological and even occasionally at the sociopolitical level, but they are always followed by reintegration, which he calls "clarification."

In the hands of Barber and Frye, and many influenced by them, the notion of a final "clarification" is identified as a utopian or fantastic satisfaction of the Freudian pleasure principle. Frye, for example, writes that comic conclusions simply eliminate anxiety:

The drive toward a festive conclusion, then, is the creation of a new reality out of something impossible but desirable. The action of comedy is intensely Freudian in shape: the erotic pleasure principle explodes underneath the social anxieties sitting on top of it and blows them sky-high. But in comedy we see a victory of the pleasure principle that Freud warns us not to look for in ordinary life.²⁰

In one sense, then, the joke may well be considered to resemble the serious narratives of myth, as defined by Lévi-Strauss, that is a means of effecting imaginary and desired reconciliations of real social contradictions.²¹

If laughter is not mobilized in the service of an ideology, it will tend to turn against that ideology. That is its double nature as discursive practice and its mode of insertion into social life. It may reinforce or liberate, but it does not leave alone. Every act of laughter, like the collective organization of laughter in the Carnival traditions, is a small revolution and counter

revolution, however innocent it may seem.

M.M. Bakhtin has argued that laughter destroys hierarchical distancing and thus implicitly has an egalitarian edge to it. As he explains in *The Dialogical Imagination*:

Laughter demolishes fear and pity before an object, before a world, making of it an object familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it. Laughter is a vital factor in laying down the prerequisite for fearlessness without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically.²²

So laughter, Bakhtin argues, plays an important role in helping us look at the world realistically and is a kind of catalytic agent that generates creativity and knowledge.

Thus, in addition to its social and political dimensions, humor may help us understand ourselves and the world we live in. Comic laughter that Shakespeare evokes on stages can be seen, not only as an escape from society but as an encounter with it.

Conclusion

I have suggested that there is a limited number of strategies that Shakespeare uses to generate humor. He can not use all of them in one comedy, but the current many playwrights use a goodly number of them. These strategies have been used for thousand years. What is important, of course, is how these strategies are used. Shakespeare use them brilliantly, as the examples demonstrate.

In the course of this study, I have explored just six comic characters and twenty-six types of comic strategies in Shakespeare's comedies. This survey of comic elements provides solid evidence that Shakespeare's superb plays, which display the success between the romantic group and the comic group as well as the dominance of comic elements over dark atmospheres, contrivance, insults and so on. Though the whole process of my analysis, I have attempted to apply these requirements to his comedies and to find what Shakespeare has made in his craftsmanship as a comic playwright. It is, of course, not only Shakespeare that adopts these strategies, but he achieves the most effective strategies to evoke laughter with his impressive comic characters. The acclaimed comedies that I have chosen as examples exemplify Shakespeare's unparalleled orchestration of comic strategies, these of which never function separately one from the other: he shows his dexterous manipulation in managing comic characters in these comedies. Shakespeare's comedies, in the end, insist upon their laughable status, through which each realizes its unique and finally unanalyzable synthesis of gravity and playfulness.

Notes

1. The necessary conditions for this evocation may be supported by Sigmund Freud's idea that "the most favorable condition for the production of comic pleasure is a generally cheerful mood in which one is inclined to laugh. See Robert W. Corrigan, ed. *Comedy: Meaning and Form* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1981), p. 172.
2. To minimize the audience's engagement in the physical brutality suggested by the plot, such a conception of the play privileges action over character, conforming to what Heilman deems the

"essential procedure of farce," that is, "to deal with people as if they lack... the physical, emotional, intellectual and moral sensitivity that we think of as 'normal.'" See Robert Heilman, "The *Taming Untamed*, Or The Return of the Shrew," (*Modern Language Quarterly* 27, 1966), p. 152.

3. Dana F. Sutton, *The Catharsis of Comedy* (Rowman & Liitefield Publishers, Inc., 1994).
4. The dominant view focuses upon that dramatic tradition and resides in the notions of Festival and Carnival developed respectively by C.L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965) and Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated Helen Dwolsky, (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1968). Barber sees the roots of Shakespeare's comedies in the community observance of those feast-days and holidays that formed periodic alternatives to the pattern of everyday medieval and Elizabethan life. He proposes a kind of subculture that, at regular intervals (Candlemas, Shrove Tuesday, Hocktide, May Day, Whitsuntide, Midsummer Eve, Harvest Home, Halloween, Twelfth Night and so on) offered custom-prescribed ways of release from the constraints of 'normality.' Bakhtin similarly argues for a tradition of folk carnival existing as a structured opposition to 'the feudal culture.' This world of Carnival offered a wholly involving 'second world' and a 'second life' within it of a non-official, extra-political nature to the mass of ordinary people. 'Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people: they live in it... it is the people's second life.' The basic mode of this life involved a 'special carnivalesque market-place style of expression,' featuring a special logic of 'turnabout,' with a universal displacement from top to bottom, front to rear.
5. Lane Cooper, *An Alistotelian Theory of Comedy with an Adaptation and a Translation of the "Tractatus Coisliniansus"* (New York, 1926).
6. All quotations follow *The Arden Shakespeare edition of MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING (MAdo)*, ed. A.R. Humphreys (London and New York: Loutridge, 1994), and will be cited in the text by act, scene, and line.
7. All quotations follow *The Arden Shakespeare edition of THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR (MWW)*, ed. H.J. Oliver (London and New York: Loutridge, 1993), and will be cited in the text by act, scene, and line.
8. Paraphrased in A.P. Rossiter, "Much Ado About Nothing," in *Shakespeare: The Comedies (Twentieth Century Views)* ed. Kenneth Muir (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 53.
9. All quotations follow *The Arden Shakespeare edition of TWELFTH NIGHT (TN)*, ed. J.M. Lothian and T.W. Craik (London and New York: Loutridge, 1988), and will be cited in the text by act, scene, and line.
10. All quotations follow *The Arden Shakespeare edition of THE TAMING OF THE SHREW (Shr)*, ed. Brian Morris (London and New York: Loutridge, 1993), and will be cited in the text by act, scene, and line.
11. All quotations follow *The Arden Shakespeare edition of LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST (LLL)*, ed. Richard David (London and New York: Loutridge, 1992), and will be cited in the text by act, scene, and line.
12. The academe prohibitions degrade women and the love sonnets idealize them, but both serves to suppress desire for individual women who are banned or wooed; she stresses the unacknowledged connections between misogyny, idealization, and desire in the play, and sees the men as alike unaware of the negative consequences that accompany both ascetic and romantic alterations of perspective, and unaware of the similarities between their own obsessions and the hapless Armado's. See *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 33.
13. Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp.19-24, which gives a brief account of *LLL*, IV, iii and V, ii, in terms of Shakespeare's exploitation of discrepant awareness.
14. All quotations follow *The Arden Shakespeare edition of As You Like It (AYL)*, ed. J.M. Lothian and T.W. Craik (London and New York: Loutridge, 1988), and will be cited in the text by act, scene, and line.
15. Northrop Frye says, "Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado* are similarly mechanical comic humors, prisoners of their own wit, until a benevolent practical joke enables their real feelings to break free of their verbal straitjackets." See Northrop Fry, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean comedy and Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 81.
16. Robert R. Provine, "Laughter." *The American Scientist* 84 (January\February 1996), p. 39.
17. Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 62.
18. Sigmund Freud, "Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious," (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1960).
19. For a concern with the practices of the European carnival as millennial tradition, see C.L. Barber, note

- 4 and Northrop Fry, note 15. For a more contemporary Bakhtinian reading of the carnival as a sociopolitical practice which shapes the theatrical, see Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985).
20. Northrop Fry, *A Natural Perspective*, pp. 75-76.
 21. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).
 22. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, edited by Michael Holquist and translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 231.