

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBPLOT

AS A CONVENTION

IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE DRAMA

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A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Arts
of the
University of Birmingham
for the degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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June 1994

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S Y N O P S I S

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBPLOT AS A CONVENTION IN ENGLISH RENAISSANCE DRAMA

This study aims at exploring the subplot from its origins, its history up to and including its full maturity in the plays of Shakespeare and some of his contemporaries and successors. From episodic incidents it developed into a fully-fledged secondary plot which contributed to the outstanding qualities of many of these plays.

Since the subplot can be traced to the native and the classical drama, it displays traits of both these dramatic traditions. The native inheritance comprises the mystery play, the morality, the interlude and the play-within-the-play. The earliest example dates back to the first half of the fifteenth century. The classical inheritance consists of a direct and an indirect branch.

Whereas in the first occurrences of a subplot it served to alleviate the seriousness of the actions of the main plot, the subplot gradually adopted a variety of other functions. But the mingling of the comic and the serious was not altogether abandoned. The application of a subplot often led to the introduction of a different class of the social hierarchy buttressed by the characteristics relevant to the respective classes. The existence of unifying themes between the main plot and the subplot offers a starting-point in the discussions on the various functions of the subplot. These functions pointing to analogy and/or contrast resulted in a cross-fertilization of the respective levels.

(40,405 words).

TO MY CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

The thesis will be devoted to the subplot as a dramatic convention in Renaissance England. Until recently the subplot has prompted diverse criticism. I will examine the origins and history of the subplot, its imitation and adaptation, its functional aspects resulting in analogy and/or contrast of unifying themes in various plays, and the matter of class-differences. Such a study cannot hope to be exhaustive and therefore a limited number of plays with definite characteristics and for the greater part written by William Shakespeare have been chosen and analysed.

To write about the subplot as a dramatic convention - an entity in itself, yet subordinated to the main plot to which it belongs - boils down to a blending of the opinions of the scholars whose works I have studied and my own ideas as regards the characteristics and functions of the subplot in the respective plays. At times I find myself at one with their opinions, at other times I do not agree with the interpretations given. This only underpins the supposition that - within certain boundaries - the evaluation of literature is open to several views. Even an unequivocal definition of what constitutes a subplot proves elusive.

The origins of the subplot and its history, its imitations and adaptations are the subject-matter of the first chapter. The precursors of the subplot are to be found both in the Middle Ages, as the native inheritance, and in the imported drama imitated and adapted, as the classical inheritance. The mystery play, the morality, the interlude and the play-within-the play belong to the former category.

The first occurrence of a fully-developed subplot appears in *Secunda Pastorum* of the Towneley Cycle (c. 1435) - a farcical secondary level

which was meant as 'comic relief' -, a serious play about the birth of Christ in a stable in Bethlehem. These funny, sometimes farcical, minor plots appealing to the popular taste proved to be resilient. Even in some of Shakespeare's last plays, notably in *The Winter's Tale*, Autolycus and the Satyrs perform their antics in the pastoral subplot which features a merry sheep-shearing festivity. Autolycus, pickpocketing, cheating, with his ballads and his insight into the credulity of the country people contributes to the atmosphere of relaxation after a period of hard work and so do the twelve Satyrs, disguised herdsmen, with their dance. Thus Autolycus and the Satyrs constitute a sharp contrast to the serious matters in the main plot of false accusations, banishment and deaths. And likewise in the subplot of *The Tempest* Caliban, intoxicated with liquor, persuades a drunken butler, Stephano, and a jester, Trinculo, to find and murder the "tyrant", Prospero (II.ii.162). In their attempt to kill the magician this trio establish themselves as farcical counterparts of the serious conspirators in the main plot, Antonio and Sebastian, who want to murder the King of Naples.

Also the miracle play showed in due course the adoption of a subplot. It was towards the second half of the fifteenth century that the miracle play, the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* (1461-1500), featured a secondary level. This bears upon the episode of Colle the servant of the quack-doctor, which is not as elaborate as the Mak-plot in *Secunda Pastorum*. It is, however, a kind of subplot, and its intrusion into the main plot could be justified by the fact that it alleviates the harrowing story in the main plot.

The interlude followed the mystery play, the miracle play and the morality. It is defined by T.W. Craik as follows:

For practical purposes, then, the interlude may be considered a Tudor dramatic form; and it was a dramatic form capable of handling the various matter which the sixteenth century thrust upon it.¹

The interlude was either a play performed in the break between two courses of a banquet - or between two parts of a play - or a play featuring allegorical connotations.² Nevertheless comic plays, by Thomas Heywood for instance, tend to fall within the category of interlude as well. As a source for the subplot only the interlude performed in the break between two parts of a play is of importance. In this capacity it seems to display some connection with the play to which it belongs, because it serves as a further specification or an example of a theme treated in the play. The interlude, at least the one that is considered to belong to the best, displays a close interchange between the actors and the spectators, they address each other during the action, and as regards their clothes they cannot be distinguished from one another.³ A nice illustration of the latter feature appears in the first part of *Fulgens and Lucrece*, when A says to B:

I trow your own self be one
Of them that shall play.
(I.4-5).⁴

This is denied by B to which A replies:

Nay, I mock not, wot ye well,
For I thought verily by your apparel
That ye had been a player.
(I.47-9).

¹ "The Tudor Interlude and Later Elizabethan Drama," *Elizabethan Theatre*, eds. John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 9 (London, 1966): 37-57, 37.

² According to T.W. Craik its allegorical feature is a prominent characteristic of the interlude. *The Tudor Interlude, Stage, Costume and Acting* (Leicester, 1958), 1.

³ T.W. Craik, "The Tudor Interlude and Later Elizabethan Drama", 39; *The Tudor Interlude, Stage, Costume and Acting*, 49.

⁴ Henry Medwall, *Fulgens and Lucrece, Five Pre-Shakespearean Comedies* 1934, ed. Frederick S. Boas (Oxford, 1970): 1-72.

And he goes on to apologize for his remark - which has not been taken as a compliment by B - asserting that it appears to be very difficult to distinguish between players and gallants, because they wear almost the same dresses.

The play-within-the-play, the last precursor on the list of the native heritage, is important. It is, however, necessary with a view to the following discussion to formulate carefully what is understood by a play-within-the-play. Any micro-spectacle of role-playing⁵ which occurs at the same level as, or another level than, the main plot is regarded by some as a play (drama), but it is not a play-within-the-play, a theatrical convention, in the strictest sense of the word.⁶ A play-within-a-play is generally considered to be a playlet performed either by actors who feature at another level of the play as well, or by professional actors, and is watched by spectators from the first level. This formulation is much narrower than "any micro-spectacle of role-playing" mentioned above. Be this as it may a play-within-the-play as a dramatic device shows functional similarities with the subplot. It provides for example a means to take revenge as Hieronimo does in the play-within-the-play of *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd or a means to prove the claim of the ghost that he had been murdered by the present king in *Hamlet*. In other words in many cases it fulfils a purpose in the structure of the play as a whole.

⁵ Louise George Clubb uses this terminology for among other things the betrothal masque in *The Tempest*, the appearance of Hymen towards the end of *As You Like It*, and the harvest festival of *The Winter's Tale*. So in her view micro-spectacle covers the whole range from episode (masque) to subplot.

Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time (New Haven, London, 1989), 176.

⁶ There are writers who refer to a little drama within a play as a 'play within play', or do not make a clear distinction between a play-within-the-play, a convention in Renaissance drama, and a dramatic episode in a subplot or main plot. These writers are for example Cherrell Guilfoyle in her interesting book *Shakespeare's Play within Play* (Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1990), *passim* and Dieter Mehl in "Zur Entwicklung des 'Play within a Play' im Elisabethanischen Drama," *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 97 (1961), *passim*.

The classical origins of the subplot display a two-way course, viz.: a direct and an indirect connection. Since in the Renaissance classical learning stood high on the curriculum of the universities, Roman plays, for instance, were performed at the respective colleges of these universities; this is regarded as a direct connection. An indirect connection can be argued in the case of the works of Italian humanist playwrights, who wrote - in Latin and in the vernacular - plays imitated and adapted from their Roman predecessors. These plays are referred to as the *commedia erudita*. English playwrights became acquainted with the classical heritage through travelling and the printing of the original works or translations of them.

The acquaintance with the works of Roman dramatists brought into currency Terence's dramatic technique of doubling the types in his plays, which Richard Levin calls the "duality-method".⁷ Terence's types, such as lovers, fathers, or servants, came from the same social stratum. This was developed by Shakespeare who introduced the same type, of lovers, for instance, by taking them from different social backgrounds. In connection with the ideas of decorum attached to rank current in Renaissance England these different social backgrounds constituted a mingling of tones. Consequently the introduction of a secondary level, namely the subplot as a dramatic convention, was a fact and became well-established.

⁷ *The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago and London, 1971), 226-7. In a note Richard Levin acknowledges that for this terminology he is indebted to Gilbert Norwood, *The Art of Terence* (Oxford, 1923). Many times the latter draws attention to Terence's dramatic concepts, such as:

The second feature is the exquisite artistry shown in demonstrating the "duality" or double-sidedness of the plot, beyond comparison the poet's greatest achievement in construction.
(127).

It is the "method" of employing two problems or complications to solve each other.
(146).

Gilbert Norwood uses the terminology "duality-method" only in the index of his book.

Arising from the imitations and adaptations which will be discussed in Chapter 1, it appears that the original purpose of adding a subplot to a main plot in order to alleviate its seriousness, in other words to mix the serious with the comic, has changed considerably. Apart from the initial aim for the introduction of a secondary level constituting a comic element⁸, there are more purposes for it notably in the plays by Shakespeare. In this connection Francis Fergusson remarks:

It has been established by now that the Elizabethan "double plot", at its best, is more than a device for resting the audience. The comic sequences which are woven through the tragedies are not to be dismissed as mere "comic relief", or punctuation for the main story like the music of Corneille used between the acts. In Shakespeare, and in the best of his contemporaries, the minor plots are essential parts of the whole composition.⁹

The purposes for the introduction of a subplot - which could be translated into functions of the subplot - cover such items as parody, simplification, or the achievement of a fuller understanding of a theme treated in the main plot. The function of 'a fuller understanding of a theme' points to a crucial assumption in the present discussion, namely that it is the theme that constitutes a common point of departure in achieving analogy and/or contrast. This will be illustrated in the analysis of the functional aspects of the subplot in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 respectively.

In Chapter 2 attention is drawn to the fact that in many cases the introduction of a subplot, as previously stated, also meant the introduction of a different class which becomes evident from decorum, various characteristics reflecting these classes. In this way the play depicts the mingling of high and low. There are exceptions, but in the plays of Shake-

⁸ Susan Snyder, *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Princeton, NJ, 1979), 140.

⁹ *The Idea of a Theater* (Gardencity, NJ, 1949), 115.

speare class features prominently as a means to differentiate between the main plot and the subplot. Nonetheless it has to be acknowledged that class is not restricted to the introduction of a secondary level, a subplot. The occurrence of characters from different social classes may happen at one and the same level, as it happens for example: in the main plots of *The Tragedy of King Lear*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Twelfth Night* in which the Fool mixes with the nobility; in the main plot of *Much Ado About Nothing*, where the episode of Verges and Dogberry takes place in the environment of the nobility; and in the main plot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, in which the servants play their parts in the domestic surroundings of the landed gentry.

Jonathan Powis gives a clear description of what rank is. He asserts:

rank was bequeathed by birth, or imparted by education and social osmosis; and the association between rank and power received general (if not unquestioned) acceptance in the community at large.¹⁰

Rank manifested itself in several areas. The first area covers one's financial means, in other words the question whether one happened to be in a position to live idly - on inherited or acquired estate, real or personal - without having to take on manual or mechanical tasks, in other words without having to labour for a living.

The second area bears upon education. Only middle- and upper class boys were sent to a grammar school and possibly further on to the university or the Inns of Court. In particular heirs to a family estate were enrolled at the university to prepare them for their future tasks. Behaviour and dress were closely interwoven with inherited wealth and educa-

¹⁰ *Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1984), 2.

tion. Also the virtue of honour arose from this privileged position, but it was not exclusively reserved to the upper classes.

The third area, that of language, is dependent on whether one has received a proper education or not. Besides, language reflects dialect and register as well, or to put it differently betrays one's environment. The lower in the social hierarchy the more vulgar the language spoken.

The fourth area in which a clear barrier could be distinguished between especially the upper classes and the lower ones is that of leisure occupations. Some sports, such as tennis, hunting or hawking, were reserved for the nobility, whereas the lower classes satisfied themselves with country fairs and festivals for instance.

These four areas are taken into consideration in the discussion of class-differentiating instances in the various subplots. In most plays which will be discussed class tends to be lower in the subplot than in the main plot, but there are exceptions which will be pointed out in the course of the analysis.

It is not exceptional for a subplot to have more than one function. For example the functional aspect of the subplot of *Much Ado About Nothing* is twofold. In the first instance its function is a structural one in that it bridges the time between the betrothal and the wedding of Hero and Claudio, and in the second instance its function is complementary. The theme of love depicted in the two plots shows contrasting features. The structural function in this play is, however, of minor importance.

Another play of which the subplot gives evidence of two purposes for its application is *The Tragedy of King Lear*. Firstly the two aspects of the theme of suffering, i.e. mental and physical suffering are brought together in this play; the two plots are complementary. As regards such a

presentation of the theme of suffering, its universal implications are explained by Robert Weimann who states:

The emerging unity of the main and the sublevels of meaning and dramaturgy was closely associated with the traditional unity of the serious and the comic. This association, which was in the nature of an interaction, may well be viewed as the continued attempt, in the sixteenth century, "to expand the framework of the main action limited by the subject matter so as to provide a more comprehensive image, a generally valid image of the world, not conceived exclusively against the background of the central [serious] problem actually dealt with."¹¹

Secondly the subplot at the same time serves as a means of simplification. Lear's suffering, a mental break-down, is difficult to grasp. By giving, however, an example of Gloucester's physical suffering - through relatively corresponding stories - it becomes less difficult to understand.

Again a different combination of two functional characteristics of a subplot is the Belmont plot in *The Merchant of Venice*. Here the complementary function points to both analogy and contrast. Analogy for instance evolves around the 'freeing of a personage from bondage' which is exemplified both in the main plot and in the subplot.

In Chapter 3 the functional aspects of the subplot reflecting analogy of the underlying unifying themes are closely explored. These aspects are to be divided into a complementary function and a means to achieve a certain purpose. The complementary function is concerned with such themes as love, suffering, blindness. Several aspects of love are illustrated by the introduction of subplots in *As You Like It*, viz.: conventional love, Petrarchan love and eroticism. This play is exemplary in many ways since it will be discussed as an application of Terence's 'duality-method' in

¹¹ *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function* (Baltimore and London, 1978), 158. Quotation: Günter Reichert, *Die Entwicklung und die Funktion der Nebenhandlung in der Tragödie vor Shakespeare*, PhD thesis (Tübingen, 1966), 9.

Chapter 1, and as an illustration, in connection with the language spoken, of the different layers of the social hierarchy in Chapter 2.

The functional aspect comprising a means to achieve a certain purpose can be divided into - among other things - a means to establish guilt or a means to smooth away the harshness of the main plot. As stated before the analogy is concerned with the underlying unifying themes.

It is Hamlet who suggests the performance of *The Murder of Gonzago*, the play-within-the-play in *Hamlet*. Since it shows similarities with the accusations of the ghost, Hamlet is eager to verify them by the staging of this playlet before the court. By closely observing the King during the performance Hamlet and Horatio hope that they might detect his agitation, which, it is felt, will be an indication that he is guilty of the murder of his brother. It indeed happens, for the King shouts for light (III.ii. 263)¹², although the play has not yet come to an end. Therefore the function of this playlet has proved to come up to its expectation, i.e. of exposure.

Another function of the subplot in this connection is the means to smooth away the harshness of the activities in the main plot. This is achieved by the introduction of folly, inanity and broad fun in the respective subplots. It is an indication that the initial purpose of mingling the serious with the comic is still resorted to from time to time. In such plays as *Volpone* and *The Dutch Courtesan* we see the application of a subplot with the functional aspect of smoothing away the harshness of the main plot. In the main plot of *Volpone* the serious implications resulting from satisfying the greed of the main character Volpone (and his servant

¹² Harold Jenkins, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1982).

Mosca) and of his daily visitors, the legacy hunters, border on the abnormal and the monstrous. The legacy hunters do not hesitate to degrade themselves if this should earn them Volpone's inheritance.

In the subplot these practices of degrading oneself ~~does~~ happen as well, but in quite a different tone than in the main plot. Sir Politic Would-Be and Lady Would-Be try to imitate the manners of the Venetians; their behaviour is devoid of any dignity. In this way the seriousness of the main plot - of the pretended illness of Volpone, his greed and that of the others, and the cruel punishments Corvino has in mind for his wife if she should disobey his commands - is somewhat diminished by the introduction of this secondary level.

The subplot of *The Dutch Courtesan* has a similar function. In the main plot and the subplot the main characters want to teach Malheureux and Mulligrub respectively a lesson. Matters take a serious course in the main plot. Malheureux is brought on the brink of execution and the courtesan Franceschina is to be punished severely, because she has plotted to have Freevill, her former lover, killed by his friend Malheureux.

To severest prison with her
(V.iii.57)¹³

and:

To the extremest whip and goal!
(V.iii.62).

says Sir Lionel.

In the subplot it is the vintner Mulligrub who is taught a lesson. He always tries to cheat his customers and therefore Cocledemoy invents all kinds of fun-raising deceits to discredit Mulligrub. In the end he is

¹³ *The Selected Plays of John Marston*, eds. Macdonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill (Cambridge, 1986): 289-393.

led to the gallows supposedly for stealing a cloak. The down-to-earth language and the gulling of the vintner smooth away the severity of the main plot.

The functional aspects of unifying themes or topics pointing to contrast will be explored in Chapter 4. Here too a classification is being carried out, viz.: complementary functions, functions underscoring a foil, and structural functions.

The complementary function of the Belmont plot in *The Merchant of Venice* which reflects analogy has been mentioned above. In the same play contrast is displayed in the first instance by the different ways of securing one's financial means and consequently by the different environments of inherited wealth and business/usury. In the second instance contrast is depicted by the theme of love. In the third instance the contrasting attitudes as regards 'obeying a father's stipulations/commands' are pointed out. And in the last instance 'notions attached to a betrothal ring' are contrasted to one another, notions as regards both its emotional value and its exchange value. This play is rich indeed in characteristics providing analogy in one respect only and contrast in many respects.

Apart from analogy the theme of love also provides complementary aspects of contrast. The subplot of *Love's Labour's Lost* may serve among others as an illustration of contrast, even parody of this theme in the main plot.

A character or a group of characters in a subplot may be regarded as a foil to a character or group in the main plot. At times it serves to enhance the noble traits of the characters, at other times to increase the seriousness of ignoble ones by the discrepancies, or contrasts constituted between the main plot and the subplot. An example of the former aspect of

a foil are the subplots in the *Henry* plays. Through the depiction of the low-life environment in the subplots - in which personages, such as Hal, Falstaff and others, function as a foil - Prince Henry's courage, honourable deeds on the battlefield, his law-abiding and justice-upholding attitude as the Prince of Wales and later as King Henry V are made the more illustrious.

The latter aspect of a foil is exploited to the full in *The Changingling*. Isabella of the subplot is depicted as a foil to Beatrice-Joanna in the main plot. They both have to face ignoble propositions which would endanger their future. Her future marriage in the case of Beatrice-Joanna and her marriage to an older man in the case of Isabella. The girl of the main plot lets herself be guided by her fickleness, by falling in love with a complete stranger a few days before her marriage. This proves to be disastrous, for she decides to have her lover killed in order to marry this stranger. As a consequence of having chosen one of her father's servants to execute the murder she has to pay with her virginity. She ends up in a pool of pretences and lies.

Isabella on the other hand is being harassed by three men, two gallants from the castle who disguise themselves as a madman and a fool respectively and consequently are admitted into the madhouse, and the servant of her husband. She withstands them, though not so easily, for at a certain moment she is on the brink of giving in, but fear comes in between her and Antonio. Isabella preserves her virtue contrary to Beatrice-Joanna who loses hers before her marriage.

In *Hamlet* the household of Polonius functions as a foil to the court

and Laertes as a foil to Hamlet.¹⁴ These two young men are confronted with the murder of their fathers. Hamlet who initially thought that his father had died a natural death learns from the ghost that he had been murdered by the present king. Laertes is informed by the King that Hamlet is the killer of his father. Both want to avenge the deaths of their fathers. Laertes in particular is adamant to kill Hamlet, but the King advises him to proceed with caution, because the Queen is very fond of her son and Hamlet is much loved by the people. Therefore he suggests to have a fencing match which will give Laertes the opportunity to take revenge. This will be achieved by not using a foil, but an unbated sword (IV.vii.137). Laertes, moreover intends to "anoint" his sword (IV.vii.139). Struck by his own poisoned sword - the weapons had changed hands during the fight - and facing death Laertes confesses his dishonest practices, thereby pointing to the King as the author of the plan to kill Hamlet under cover of a fencing match. The introduction of Laertes as a foil to Hamlet may have been a device to enhance the noble traits of the latter.¹⁵

In the section on the structural function of the subplot two plays will be analysed, namely *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*. The structural function of the subplot of *The Comedy of Errors* may be defined

¹⁴ It is true that Hamlet calls himself a foil to Laertes (V.ii.252), but I think that it is an expression of courtesy, or flattery perhaps. Hamlet wants to indicate that he considers Laertes to be his superior as regards the skill of fencing, but he actually means the opposite, for he has said to Horatio that he is not going to lose the fencing match, since he has become a skilled fencer during Laertes's absence (V.ii. 205-6).

¹⁵ In my view Hamlet is not such a noble prince as the play seems to suggest by the introduction of Laertes as Hamlet's foil. His rejection of Ophelia, his killing of Polonius in cold blood sensing it was his uncle, and his letter to the Danish ambassador in England in which he commands - in the King's name - to have Rozencrantz and Guildenstern killed on their arrival in England do not give evidence of a noble mind. It is true, however, that Hamlet seems to doubt whether it would be wise to marry Ophelia and therefore abandons her from his thoughts. And it is also to be justified that Hamlet had to avenge the murder of his father, but in doing so he kills the wrong person. That, however, he should have ordered the deaths of his former schoolfellows ("not shriving-time allow'd" [V.ii.47]) is beyond understanding. They were certainly not acquainted with the contents of the letter to the ambassador sent by the King.

as a means to increase the incidents of mistaken identity and consequently erroneous assumptions. For example in the main plot Adriana having dinner with her sister and her husband, as she assumes, in fact harbours her brother-in-law in her house, for it is the unknown twin of her husband, Antipholus of Syracuse, who has been invited to dinner. He as a matter of fact falls in love with Luciana, sister to Adriana, the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus. Since the girl assumes - incorrectly as the audience knows - that her wooer is the husband of her sister, she does not want to hear about it. In the subplot the kitchenmaid who is betrothed to Dromio of Ephesus mistakenly thinks that his, as yet unknown twin, Dromio of Syracuse, is her husband-to-be. Indeed the function of this subplot can be described as a means to increase the complexity of the play.

It could be argued that the subplot of *Twelfth Night* has been introduced to create an opportunity for Sir Toby to marry Maria. In reality it is Maria who conceives the idea of gulling Malvolio with a letter seemingly written by the Lady Olivia. She wants to teach him a lesson, which she calls "my revenge" (II.iii.152-3)¹⁶, for in her view Malvolio has too high an opinion of himself. As has been stated earlier a similar 'teaching a lesson' appears in both the main plot and the subplot of *The Dutch Courtesan*. Maria has acquitted herself of the whole procedure in an excellent way, which - together with the affection she feels for the knight - induced Sir Toby to wed her. That is why the functional aspect of the subplot, the gulling of Malvolio, may be described as a structural one.

The great diversity of associations between the main plot and its subplot

¹⁶ J.M. Lothian and T.W. Craik, eds., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1975).

and of the functional aspects of the subplot displayed in the works of various Renaissance playwrights is an indication of the richness - on account of elucidating intricate situations or constituting a thematic completeness, for instance - which the subplot added to the drama of the period. This will be summarized in the Conclusion.

C H A P T E R O N E

ORIGINS AND HISTORY OF THE SUBPLOT IMITATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

1.1 ORIGINS AND HISTORY

Before embarking on a study on the origins and history of the subplot, a convention in English Renaissance drama, it would be sensible to define what is understood by subplot. Not all the authoritative dictionaries consulted, however, have glossed the word 'subplot'. Taking into account the various discussions on this convention, one would expect a definition which covers its main characteristics. The result is unsatisfactory, but nevertheless two definitions will be given to provide at least a stepping stone for the study in hand:

SUBPLOT n. a secondary or subordinate plot, as in a play, novel or other literary work; underplot. Cf. counterplot def. 2.¹

(COUNTERPLOT 2. Literature, a secondary theme in a play or other literary work, used as a contrast to or variation in the main theme.)²

SUBPLOT n. a plot (set of events) that is of less importance³ than and separate from the main plot of a play, story, etc.

One could object to 'a secondary theme' as a characteristic of the subplot/counterplot. This objection could be justified, for it is not the theme that gives rise to the subordination of a plot, but - as will be argued in what follows - often the different social rank of the second set

¹ *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed., unabr. (USA, 1987), 1895.

² *The Random House*, 462.

³ *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. new ed. (Harlow, 1987), 1054.

of characters and the more superficial way these characters are dealt with compared to those of the main plot. Further it is difficult to delineate a "secondary theme", in other words a theme of supposedly less importance than the main one. The theme in both the main plot and the subplot is in various plays the same, in so far that it highlights different aspects of it. *As You Like It* (1599)⁴ is as a matter of fact a neat example of a play in which love is the theme in both the main plot and the subplots. Because of the introduction of subplots several aspects of love are being exemplified and discussed, but it would be nonsense to speak of a secondary love theme. Another objection as regards the above-mentioned definitions could be "set of events" as a description of plot, which indeed lacks the emphasis on causality. Be this as it may, in the course of the present discussion a more accurate definition will in all probability present itself.

Although students of Renaissance drama are aware of the fact that the origins of the subplot must be sought in the mystery play, the morality, the interlude, the play-within-the-play, classical drama, and *commedia erudita*, they do not hold the same views as regards the relevance or the importance of the various suppositions. This could be attributed to the research studies of several scholars on the origins of English Renaissance drama. In these studies the roots and the subsequent development of the subplot as a convention are, however, often dealt with in passing. When these bits of 'evidence', referring to the various characteristics of the subplot, are put together, they constitute a complex picture. That is why the suppositions as regards the origins of the subplot will have

⁴ Agnes Latham, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1987). For the dates of the respective plays I have consulted Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama 875-1700*, rev. Samuel Schoenbaum (London, 1964).

to be discussed one by one to achieve a clear insight in the sources and development of the subplot. To this effect it is necessary to make a distinction between the medieval origins - or the native heritage - and the classical origins which were directly imitated and adapted or filtered through the works of Italian playwrights of the Renaissance.

1.1.1 MEDIEVAL ORIGINS AND THE NATIVE INHERITANCE

It is a well-established theory that in the Middle Ages - in the third quarter of the tenth century to be precise - ritual drama, which was initiated by the antiphonal singing of the trope *Quem Quaeritis in sepulchro, O Christicolae* of the church liturgy on Easter Monday, developed into religious drama. This further grew into mystery plays - performed on the feast of *Corpus Christi* -, complete cycles of them, in which stories from the Old and the New Testament were dramatized. Meanwhile the organization and the performances of the cycles eventually changed hands, from the clergy to the laity, and so it came to pass that humorous incidents found their way into the mystery plays, incidents for which there was no evidence in the Bible. An example of such a practice is the comic controversy between Noah and his wife in *Noah* of The Wakefield Mystery Plays (1340-1410) and *Noah's Flood* of The Chester Plays (c. 1377-c. 1555). Another example is the much discussed story of Mak stealing a sheep and hiding it in a cradle - pretending it to be the newborn baby of his wife Gill - in *Secunda Pastorum* of the Towneley Cycle (c. 1435). The *Secunda Pastorum* is a play about Christmas, about the shepherds who are asleep in the fields and are woken up by the song of the angels who announce the coming of Jesus, born as a baby in Bethlehem. Before this happens, however, the subplot intrudes upon the main plot, since Mak plays a trick on

the sleeping shepherds. He and his wife are found out in the end. Incidentally, the punishment Mak has to undergo for his theft bears no relation to the seriousness of his crime. Soon the shepherds hear the angels sing and they hasten to the stable to adore the little child, their Redeemer, lying there in a manger. According to Millicent Carey the Mak story is an example of

the first real attempt in the medieval drama at a comic episode with a real plot.⁵

She asserts that the insertion of the Mak episode - also referred to as an interlude -, which comprises more than half of the play, is derived from folklore. William Empson describes it as a

detailed parallel to the Paschal Lamb, hidden in the appearance of a newborn child.⁶

And: Mac's wife tries to quiet them [the shepherds] by a powerful joke on the eating of Christ in the Sacrament:

If ever I you beguiled
May I eat this child,
That lies in this cradle,
(536-9).⁷

A.P. Rossiter in this connection remarks:

A travesty is effected by nearly-exact parallelism, of lines in what Euclid called 'opposite senses'. Clowning and adoration are laid together.⁸

Empson uses parody, whereas Rossiter has travesty. In my view travesty describes the issue in question more precisely, because the Wakefield Master used his pen to bring out the opposition between holy/sacred and pede-

⁵ *The Wakefield Group in the Towneley Cycle*, PhD thesis (Göttingen, 1930), 175. Referred to by Victor Armbrister in the Summary of his PhD thesis, "The Origins and Functions of Subplots in Elizabethan Drama" (Nashville, TN, 1938), 1.

⁶ *Some Versions of Pastoral: A Study of the Pastoral Form in Literature 1935* (New York, 1974), 28.

⁷ *Some Versions*, 28; *The Wakefield Second Shepherd's Play, Medieval English Literature*, ed. J.B. Trapp (New York, London, etc., 1973), 368-388.

⁸ *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans* (London, 1950), 72.

strian/profane. Empson elaborates on his supposition as follows:

The effect is hard to tape down; it seems a sort of test of the belief in the incarnation strong enough to prove it to be massive and to make the humorous thieves into fundamental symbols of humanity,⁹

which neatly fits Rossiter's explanation:

The drama of the church set out to christianize humanity: the miracle-plays humanize Christianity.¹⁰

This is apparently one of the functions of this first subplot in medieval drama. Another function might be that it serves as a kind of relief, the seriousness of the main story is interrupted and for a while the audience enjoys the funny episode of the sheep-stealing Mak.

Since mystery and miracle plays existed side by side, it is not surprising that comic episodes, and eventually subplots, should also have been included in the latter ones. A notable example is the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament* (1461-1500). The legend on which this play is built is based on the medieval hatred of Jews and is about the sacrilege of a consecrated host by some of them.¹¹ A couple of Jews try to torture Christ, who, according to the Christian belief in transubstantiation, is supposed to be present in this piece of unleavened bread. The sacrilege results in the ~~withering~~^{loss} of one of Jonathas's hands. The harrowing story is intruded upon by the episode of Colle, the servant of the quack doctor Brundyche, who complains about his master. On entering the scene the latter overhears his servant's complaints and the boy receives a couple of blows. Colle is then forced to advertise his master's medical accomplishments, for Brundyche

⁹ *Some Versions*, 28-9.

¹⁰ *English Drama from Early Times*, 53.

¹¹ Alfred W. Pollard, *English Miracle Plays, Moralities and Interludes* (Oxford, 1909), xliv.

hopes that Jonathas will seek his advice for the cure of his maimed hand. This, however, does not happen, on the contrary, both Brundyche and Colle are beaten off the stage. The connection between the subplot and the main plot is established by the servant of the physician, just as Mak in *Secunda Pastorum* features in both the main plot and the subplot.

Referring to Mak's subplot, Colle's episode and other fun-raising subplots Ola E. Winslow states in her PhD thesis:

the appetite of *Corpus Christi* [italics are mine] audiences for rural humour, and their willingness that it should interrupt the most solemn representations helped to determine the whole course of English dramatic technique. Not all the weight of classic precept could ever eradicate this expectation of crude fun interwoven with serious matter.¹²

I think that Ola Winslow is right, for, as stated in the Introduction, in seventeenth-century plays like *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* these funny episodes were still an essential part of the respective subplots.

Although miracle plays and moralities developed side by side, the first use of the comic subplot - at least as far as can be deduced from extant plays - appeared in the morality play much later than in the miracle play. It was in 1540 that Sir David Lindsay (c. 1486-1555), a Scotsman, wrote the allegory, *Ane Satyre of Thrie Estaitis*.¹³ The play, interrelating political problems with moral principles, consists of an introduction, the Cupar Banns, two parts, which are separated by a break for refreshments, and an interlude which is performed during this break. In the first part the king, Rex Humanitas, is seen eventually succumbing to the services of the court vices who attend on him; in the second part a satiric attack is

¹² *Low Comedy as a Structural Element in English Drama: From the Beginnings to 1642* (Chicago, 1926), 43.

¹³ Sir David Lindsay, *Ane Satyre of Thrie Estaitis, Four Morality Plays*, ed. Peter Happé (Harmondsworth, 1979): 435-615.

carried out on the three estates: church, court, and commonality by exposing the evil practices of the time. The interlude portrays:

the Pauper's grievance over the greed of the clergy¹⁴

and also:

the Pardoner's crude divorce of the Sowtar and his wife.¹⁵

Apart from the interlude just mentioned, there are some low comedy episodes, one of which is the introduction. Another is the one in which the craftsmen are approached by Chastitie (I.1290). A fight ensues between the craftsmen, the Taylor and the Sowtar, and their wives on the initiative of the latter, who dislike their husbands' acquaintance with Chastitie. The wives get the upperhand and to celebrate their victory the Sowtar's wife wades through the stream to fetch some wine in the town and the Taylor's wife provides for some pastry (I.1383; I.1388). This episode, which seems quite unrelated to the stream of events in the main play, depicts, just like the interlude, low life and its parallels with the higher strata of society. I think that in this capacity it shows links with the play in general, displays causal links within itself, and therefore deserves to be referred to as a 'kind of subplot'.¹⁶ Ola E. Winslow, however, maintains:

There has not been the slightest plot warrant for either one of these two farcical interruptions.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Four Morality Plays*, 63.

¹⁵ *Four Morality Plays*, 63.

¹⁶ This had also been designated as an interlude by David Laing, notably as "The First Interlude" and the original interlude, the one performed in the break between the two parts, was called "An Interlude of the Puir Man and the Pardoner". Referred to by Ola E. Winslow in *Low Comedy as a Structural Element*, 58. She adds in footnote 3 on that same page:

In the 1870 edition the first interlude had the specific title, *An Interlude of Chastitie, The Sowtar and Taylor*.

David Laing, ed. *Poetical Works* 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1879), Vol. 2, 69-76 and 99-117.

¹⁷ *Low Comedy as A Structural Element*, 59.

Victor Armbrister holds quite the opposite view, for he even adds a third 'subplot episode' to the list, namely the concluding incident of the play in which Folly delivers a

wisely-foolish sermon on the prevalence of fools, especially among churchmen.¹⁸

He further elaborates on the introduction of the two subplots and the interlude, by stating:

these extraneous episodes serve to give comic relief to the main plot allegory, to give realistic examples of the vices typified in the main plot, to fill in "between acts", to furnish satire upon the evils of the Catholic Church, and to give a touch of light comedy at the end of a long and tedious play.¹⁹

Later on Richard Levin is to comment on comic relief. He asserts:

In this sense, therefore, the old-fashioned term "comic relief" might be said to describe one of the clown's magical effects, although I prefer to call it "comic release".²⁰

Both Ola Winslow and Victor Armbrister put the emphasis on the supposition that the subplot in mystery and morality plays serves as a distraction from the serious matters which are treated in the main plot, be it religious, didactic, moral or otherwise. This discussion shows that the subplot originated in early drama and became a 'means' for the playwright to mingle the serious with the comic or farcical.

The interlude is suggested as another source for the subplot. Before giving an exposition, however, it is necessary to state what is meant by interlude. There are two meanings of the word in relation with drama, and

¹⁸ In the Summary of his PhD thesis "The Origins and Functions of Subplots in Elizabethan Drama" (Nashville, TN, 1938), 4.

¹⁹ "The Summary", 4-5.

²⁰ *The Multiple Plot*, 139.

these seem not to be complete if we notice T.W. Craik's comments in this connection. First the definition will be given as it appears in *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

INTERLUDE: 1. a dramatic or mimic representation, usually of a light or humorous character, such as was commonly introduced between the acts of the long mystery-plays or moralities, or exhibited as part of an elaborate entertainment; hence (in ordinary 17-18th c. use) a stage-play, esp. of a popular nature, a comedy, a farce. Now (after Collier; see quot. 1831) applied as a specific name of the earliest form of the modern drama, as represented by the plays of J. Heywood.²¹

1831. J.P. Collier *Hist. Dram. Poetry*. John Heywood's dramatic productions....are neither Miracle-plays nor Moral-plays, but what may be properly and strictly called Interludes.²²

In his book, *The Tudor Interlude, Stage, Costume and Acting*, T.W. Craik opens with:

"interlude" in the elastic sense which it was given in the Tudor period. Definitions which restrict the term to farces or amusing disputations like Heywood's do not take account of the fact that Tudor plays called interludes by their authors and publishers normally employ allegorical methods to a didactic purpose; and yet to call such plays moralities creates an artificial distinction between them and the comic plays.²³

One of the examples of the interlude of the first class, introduced between the parts or acts of miracle and morality plays, has already been discussed. It is the one that appears in the break of the two parts of *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, and although I have called it a "kind of subplot", it is generally not accepted as such. The interlude of the second class (a Tudor dramatic form²⁴), the one that varies from a comic

²¹ Vol. 7 (Oxford, 1989), 1114.

²² *The Oxford English Dictionary* Vol. 2, 384.

²³ (Leicester, 1958), 1.

²⁴ T.W. Craik, "The Tudor Interlude and Later Elizabethan Drama," *Elizabethan Theatre*, ed. Neville Denny, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 9 (London, 1966): 37-58, 37.

episode to a fully-fledged stage-play, was rather popular, judging from the extant collection of this kind of interlude. Examples of it are, John Skelton's moral interlude *Magnificence* (1515) and Francis Merbury's moral interlude *A Marriage of Wit and Wisdom* (1570 or 1579).

A notable example of a romantic interlude, including a subplot, is Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrece* (1497).²⁵ Since it is based on a Latin tract *De Vera Nobilitate* (1428) by the Italian humanist Giovane Buonaccorso da Montemagno the Younger²⁶, it will also be discussed in the section classical origins. Henry Medwall introduced into this play, set in a purely secular framework,

'a comic under-plot' of his own invention²⁷ about the servants Cornelius and Flaminius. *Fulgens and Lucrece* contains a wealth of conventions and theatrical techniques. Apart from the fact that the play as a whole belongs to the second class of interludes, that is a Tudor dramatic form, it also belongs, at least part one, to the first class of interludes, those that were performed between elaborate entertainments or banquets. For, in the induction A says:

Have not ye eaten and your fill, (I.3)²⁸

²⁵ A.P. Rossiter remarks:

Medwall has a certain distinction as the first importer of an Italian comedy in his *Fulgens and Lucrece*.
English Drama from Early Times, 102.

²⁶ Referred to by David Bevington in "Popular and Courtly Traditions on the Early Tudor Stage," *Medieval Drama*, ed. Neville Denny, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 16 (London, 1973): 91-108, 101. Also Frederick S. Boas refers to *De Vera Nobilitate*, a Latin treatise in *Five Pre-Shakespearean Comedies* (Oxford, 1970), VIII. According to Manfred Lentzen, however, Buonaccorso da Montemagno the Younger wrote the tract called *De Nobilitate* (1428) and not *De Vera Nobilitate*. A tract of this name was published in 1440 by Christoforo Landino). *Christoforo Landino De Vera Nobilitate*, ed. Manfred Lentzen (Genève, 1970), 4. Also in the *Dizionario Enciclopedico della Letteratura Italiana* (Bari, 1966) Buonaccorso da Montemagno, il Giovane is mentioned as the writer of *De Nobilitate*, Vol. 1, 499.

²⁷ Frederick S. Boas, ed., *Five Pre-Shakespearean Comedies*, viii.

²⁸ *Fulgens and Lucrece*, *Five Pre-Shakespearean Comedies*, ed. Frederick S. Boas (London, 1970): 1-72.

and: We may not with our long play
Let them from their dinner all day,
They have not fully dined;
(I.1415-17).²⁹

As regards the induction just mentioned, in it a play is being announced by B with the words:

Peace, no more words, for now they come,
The players been even here at hand.
(I.188-9).

That is why one could also speak of a play-within-a-play, which will be commented upon later in the section discussing this phenomenon.

Fulgens and Lucrece is referred to as belonging to the best of Tudor interludes. In this connection it displays "intimacy and spontaneity", special dramatic features of the interlude.³⁰ The spectators are drawn into the play, because they are addressed by the players; in the play A and B behave as members of the audience until they step forward to speak their parts in the induction. They watch the play (again as spectators), set in ancient Rome, in which Lucrece, the daughter of the noble senator Fulgens, has to decide herself whom she wants to marry. There are two contenders, Publius Cornelius, a man of noble birth and Gaius Flaminius, whose humble birth is only mentioned in passing, since his virtuous life is more important and is much commented upon. When Cornelius addresses the audience to inquire:

So many good fellows as been in this hall,
And is there none, sirs, among you all
That will enterprise this gear?
(I.354-6).

(meaning someone who could help him in this business [gear], that is his endeavour to win Lucrece), it is B who steps forward and joins the players

²⁹ The play consists of two parts; the 'induction' is included in part I, and so is the 'chorus' in part II.

³⁰ T.W. Craik, "The Tudor Interlude and Later Elizabethan Drama", 39.

as a servant to Cornelius. In the same fashion A is accepted as Flaminius' servant. The servants then have also their own plot, a parallel plot or subplot, in which they try to imitate their betters and act as rivals for the hand of Lucrece's maid, Joan. A and B for that matter move from one level to another, and thus play their parts in four spheres, viz.: among the spectators, in the induction (and the chorus in the concluding scene), in the play, and in the subplot. Theirs is a comic plot, unlike the main plot of the play, which, although it features a romance, is serious indeed on account of the underlying new political order. Lucrece's eventual choice of the low-born, but virtuous Caius Flaminius,

must have been so potentially offensive to the older aristocracy, in fact, that Medwall needed to introduce the antics of 'A' and 'B' to mollify his patrician spectators. The comic spectators ape the contentiousness of their masters and thereby reduce strife to laughable absurdity. They 'distance' the action by their comic indifference to the rivalry of their social superiors and by their witty observation that their patrician auditors ought to be similarly indifferent.³¹

David M. Bevington^{dis} claims that Medwall's use of comedy has anything to do with the foregoing argument, in other words that,

Medwall's use of comedy [read the subplot], then, is motivated chiefly by the need for disclaimer [sic] of his serious political intention.³²

From these examples we see that an interlude itself may function as a 'kind of subplot' (the one that appears in the break between the two parts of *Ane Satyre of Thrie Estaitis*), and also that a subplot was introduced into an interlude for certain purposes (the subplot of A and B in *Fulgens and Lucrece*). Finally it is apt to refer to a suggestion put forward by William Empson which is quoted several times by various scholars. It

³¹ David M. Bevington, "Popular and Courtly Tradition on the Early Tudor Stage.", 101.

³² "Popular and Courtly Tradition", 101.

reads:

Probably the earliest form of double plot is the comic interlude, often in prose between serious verse scenes.³³

Indeed it is this kind of interlude, the one belonging to the first category, mentioned above, which is to be considered as one of the sources of the subplot.

The different modifications or "processes of action"³⁴, such as the induction - especially the more sophisticated one - the dumb show, the masque, and the play-within-the-play enhance the flexibility of the main story, and,

the play-within-the-play was the most useful of all these modifications of action. It allowed for shadow work and ironic byplay in a more complex way than the induction.³⁵

Robert J. Nelson defines the play-within-a-play as follows:

It is a formal imitation of an event through the dialogue and action of impersonated characters occurring within and not suspending the action of just such another imitation.³⁶

Muriel Bradbrook thinks that the play-within-the-play and the subplot have similar functions, for she claims:

The transition from the play-within-the-play to the subplot is easy, for their functions were similar.³⁷

In his article, "Forms and Functions of the Play within a Play", Dieter Mehl puts forward one of these similar functions, notably that the inserted play-within-a-play, for example a dumb show, a little tragedy, is not restricted to comedy, but can be found in any play. Dieter Mehl's assert-

³³ *Some Versions of Pastoral*, 29.

³⁴ Sander M. Goldberg, *Understanding Terence* (Princeton, NJ, 1966), 147.

³⁵ Muriel C. Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1952), 44.

³⁶ *Play within a Play: The Dramatist's Conception of his Art, Shakespeare to Anouilh* (New Haven, 1958), 7.

³⁷ *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy*, 45.

ion also points to his view of grouping indiscriminately together "processes of action", such as dumb show, masque and play-within-a-play, indeed a "wide range of this convention".³⁸ And so does Arthur Brown, for he maintains that the device of a second play could also comprise a masque or a dumb show.³⁹ This view is contradictory to Robert J. Nelson's definition above, for according to him the play-within-the-play presents an event through dialogue and action, but the dumb-show lacks the characteristic of dialogue, and so does the masque sometimes. Be this as it may, in this study I will restrict myself to those plays-within-the-play which are "immediately recognizable as plays"⁴⁰ in other words to the play which is staged by a troupe of itinerant actors (*Hamlet*) or characters from the main plot (*The Spanish Tragedy*). Therefore this kind of play-within-a-play, the one with a real plot - not the episodic one - will be given the status of a subplot. It is, however, only one-way traffic, for a subplot is usually not indicated as a play-with-in-a-play. In connection with Shakespeare Robert J. Nelson, however, claims:

Seven of his plays contain a play within a play or an approximation of the form. However, these inner plays only make explicit the preoccupation with stage illusion which mark all the plays. The Shakespearean subplot often serves as a kind of play within a play, an ironic mirror of the main plot.⁴¹

³⁸ *RenD* 8 (1965): 41-61, 42. See also "Zur Entwicklung des 'Play within a Play' im Elisabethanischen Drama," *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 98 (1961): 134-152 by the same author. Although the article of 1965 is partly based on the one of 1961 (42, footnote 2), the subject of these two articles is different.

³⁹ "The Play within a Play: An Elizabethan Dramatic Device," *Essays and Studies* 13 (1960): 36-48, 36.

⁴⁰ Although Arthur Brown is well aware of the fact that a clear distinction between all these varieties of 'drama within drama' is not always possible, he also restricts himself in his article to these "secondary plays which are immediately recognizable as plays".

"The Play within a Play", 36.

⁴¹ *Play within a Play: The Dramatist's Conception*, 11. The crucial word here is 'serve', for a subplot is not a play in the strictest sense of the word. To phrase it differently: it is not an intentional performance, a staging of a play, watched by characters from the main plot.

These various points of view are an indication that there is no agreement about what is understood by a play-within-a-play.

1.1.2 CLASSICAL ORIGINS

It is common knowledge that the introduction of the Renaissance - the great flowering of art, politics, and the study of Roman and Greek literature and antiquities - originated in Italy in the fourteenth century. This

general revival of classical studies and the fifteenth century manuscript discoveries contributed to the dramatic revival of the Italian Renaissance. Italian drama influenced by Plautus and Terence falls into three categories:

comedies in Latin modeled at least in part on ancient plays;
performances of Plautus and Terence onstage;
and most important,
vernacular Italian comedies or *commedia erudita* based on Latin models.⁴²

The introduction of the revival of classical studies took place in England when the House of Tudor came to power. The foundation of the 'schoole of humanitie' or the 'schoole of the Gentils', which was to become the grammar school later on, may be seen in the light of this revival. And it is on account of the Latin (and Greek) taught at the sixteenth-century grammar schools, that

the English playwrights derived their dramatic models in part directly from Roman drama, but also in part from continental European drama, especially the Italian.⁴³

The dramatic models referred to by Karen Newman comprise plays by Plautus and Terence, which were performed at colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, and the *commedia erudita*. Richard Hosley formulates the same distinction

⁴² Karen Newman, *Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Comic Character: Dramatic Convention in Classical and Renaissance Comedy* (New York and London, 1985), 56.

⁴³ Karen Newman, *Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Comic Character*, 56.

slightly differently. According to him the formal influence of Plautus and Terence on Elizabethan comedy

reveals itself chiefly in two areas: implicitly, in recorded productions of the plays of Plautus and Terence; and explicitly, in accepted uses of their plays by Elizabethan dramatists.⁴⁴

As already explained, these accepted uses then consist of two branches, first, adaptation of the plays of Plautus and Terence and secondly, imitation or adaptation of the plays of Italian Renaissance playwrights. In his *Amphitryon*, for instance, Plautus mixed tragedy with bits of comedy, which he called 'tragicomoedia'⁴⁵ and Terence tried to insert specific elements of one Greek play into the structure of another play; it was not appreciated by his rival dramatists, though.⁴⁶ The dramatic technique employed by the latter - which proved to be successful - was the application of the 'double plot'. And it is on this point that many scholars agree, namely that the double plot as it was employed in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama may also be traced back to Terence's use of the 'double plot', or in the words of Richard Levin/Gilbert Norwood, to the Terentian "duality-method".⁴⁷ Sander Goldberg, however, carefully warns his readers as regards the use of the term 'double plot'. He states:

to call the resulting pattern of action a 'double plot' can mislead us. (As with the notion of the well-made play there is danger in applying a modern term uncritically to an ancient phenomenon).⁴⁸

Be this as it may, in his comedies Terence used a combination of two young

⁴⁴ "The Formal Influence of Plautus and Terence," *Elizabethan Theatre*, ed. Neville Denny, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 9 (London, 1966): 131-146, 131.

⁴⁵ Anne Barton, *The Names of Comedy* (Oxford, 1990), 159.

⁴⁶ Sander M. Goldberg, *Understanding Terence* (Princeton, NJ, 1957), 44.

⁴⁷ *The Multiple Plot in English*, 226-7.

⁴⁸ *Understanding Terence*, 146.

lovers, two old men, or two slaves, in other words characters of the same type. So the duality-method has more to do with a better depiction and understanding of the range of the characteristics and views of a certain type - by exploring it in different situations, under different circumstances or against a different background - than the depiction of two different types, which

Terence shares with the entire tradition of New Comedy, a tendency to represent the interests of only a single social class.⁴⁹

Especially "a single social class" is an important premise, which, I think, may be linked with the phenomenon subplot. For as soon as English playwrights began to employ people from different social classes, be it lovers, old men, or servants in plays featuring a double plot, the plot that treated persons of a lower social class tended to be referred to in many instances as a subplot. There are, of course, exceptions, such as Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603) in which the subplot features persons from the same social stratum, but whose occupations refer to a higher social level than that of the characters of the main plot.

Whereas Shakespeare initially used characters of the same type - though from different social levels - in the lovers of *As You Like It*, he eventually resorted to subplots of quite a different setting or mood reflecting different social backgrounds in, for instance, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595). The distinction between the Terentian double-plot play and the Elizabethan double-action play is aptly drawn by Richard Hosley in the following quotation.

But the two plots (if they may be so spoken of) of a Terentian double-plot play are generally more tightly unified than

⁴⁹ Sander M. Goldberg, *Understanding Terence*, 45.

the two actions of an Elizabethan double-action play. The two plots of a Terentian double-plot play are like the two sides of a coin; the two actions of an Elizabethan double-action play are like two separate coins lying together. This is not to say that the separate actions are more distinct in respect of atmosphere, characterization, theme and conduct of the action than the two plots of a Terentian double-plot play; and we sometimes acknowledge their loose integration by calling them *parallel* actions.⁵⁰

Since in the *commedia erudita* - in such plays as Ludovico Ariosto's *Studenti*⁵¹ or *Gl'Ingannati* written and presented by the Academy of the Intronati (1531) - Terentian double plots were applied, and these again proved to have been the source of some English Renaissance plays, it is justified to state that the origins of the double plot must be sought both in classical drama and in the *commedia erudita*. It could be argued that the same holds good for the subplot as well, which will become apparent in the course of this discussion.

It is interesting to note that, in spite of the fact that many scholars agree that the Terentian duality-method and the *commedia erudita* could be regarded as the precursors of the double plot, or main plot-subplot convention, there is no general agreement. Victor Armbrister for that matter does not even mention classical drama and the *commedia erudita* as possible roots for the subplot in the "Summary of his PhD thesis". Richard Levin suggests in passing (between brackets) the idea of the *commedia erudita* as a possible dramatic form for the subplot to have been imitated.⁵² Sander Goldberg asserts that the Elizabethan double plot is

⁵⁰ "The Formal Influence of Plautus and Terence ", 133.

⁵¹ Ludovico Ariosto, who lived from 1474-1533, left this play unfinished and his son Virginio and his brother Gabrieli each wrote separate conclusions. In Peter Bondella, Julia Conaway Bondella, co-eds., *The MacMillan Dictionary of Italian Literature* (London and Basingstoke, 1979): 22-25.

⁵² *The Multiple Plot*, 226.

rooted in medieval rather than ancient stagecraft⁵³,

whereas Karen Newman asserts:

Baldwin and others have argued persuasively for the influence of Terentian double plots on Shakespeare's dramatic structure; though Terence does not attempt to create an inner life for his characters through soliloquy and the rhetoric of consciousness [as Menander (c. 342-292 BC) does⁵⁴] his plays and their commentaries demonstrate to the Renaissance playwright how he might individualize his *personae* within the confines of their types by juxtaposing two examples⁵⁵ of the same type endowed with distinctive characteristics.

In spite of the various divergent ideas as regards the roots of the subplot as it was applied by English playwrights in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we may assume that the origins of the subplot must be sought in the miracle play, the morality, the interlude, the play-within-the-play, classical drama, and the *commedia erudita*.

1.2 IMITATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

The morality play often conveys a homily, a lesson holding up a mirror of the personified struggle between good and evil in the soul of man, called Psychomachia. Evil is sometimes - personified by Vice - a comic character in opposition to Virtue. His satiric target is mostly covetyse, but - and here the ambidextrous nature of the Vice comes to the fore:

he is both object and spokesman for the attack on covetyse. Being an object of satire he can best satirize himself, and hold up his own attitudes for scorn and laughter.⁵⁶

And: this duality quality is the source of considerable dramatic

⁵³ *Understanding Terence*, 46.

⁵⁴ I have drawn attention to Menander, because this is exactly what the English Renaissance playwright does later on, namely the creation of an inner life for his characters through soliloquy and the rhetoric of consciousness.

⁵⁵ *Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Comic Character*, 56.

⁵⁶ Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form*, trans. and ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore and London, 1978), 154.

vitality. The Vice, in coping with the inherent tensions between terror and laughter, completely offset [sic] the structural balance of the original homiletic allegory of the Psychomachia.⁵⁷

In the second half of the sixteenth century the morality declined and so did the allegorical figures, but the descendants of the Vice remained on the stage as comic figures, emphasizing the duality, the two-level structure of the plays. This structure of Renaissance drama aimed at a kind of unity of the main level and the sublevels and was buttressed by the idea that the comic and the sometimes farcical actions of the sublevels constituted an accomplishment of the mostly serious action of the main level. By completing or even sometimes by inverting the main action Robert Weimann sees this two-level structure as,

a deliberate poetic principle of composition, an overriding perspective that informs both dramatic speech and dramatic action.⁵⁸

It is necessary to make clear that the sublevels could be distinguished in comic episodes and fully-fledged subplots, of which only the latter are relevant in this discussion.⁵⁹

It is also important to emphasize that the Vice afterwards adopted

⁵⁷ Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition*, 154-5.

⁵⁸ *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition*, 158.

⁵⁹ In this connection it is noteworthy to quote David Bradley, who states:

Although full-blown sub-plots are rare, there is nevertheless, introduced into every Elizabethan play some subsidiary strand of interest or characterization that diverges from the main issue etc.

From Text to Performance in the Elizabethan Theatre: Preparing the Play for the Stage (Cambridge, New York, 1992), 34.

This is contradicted by Armbrister's assertion in the "Summary", 25:

Over a fourth of the approximate three hundred plays which were read in connection with this study do not have subplots.

In other words approximately 220 plays do have a subplot! However narrow Bradley's definition of subplot or however broad Armbrister's may be, the fact that, apart from Victor Armbrister, Leslie G. Smith, Norman C. Rabkin and Günter Reichert have written a Master's thesis and PhD theses on the 'subplot' respectively. Besides, many well-known scholars, such as William Empson, Madeleine Doran, Muriel Bradbrook and Richard Levin, last but not least, refer to the subplot as an important convention in English Renaissance Drama. This proves that Bradley's claim mentioned above does not seem quite correct.

a persona for his role in farcical actions, in other words the descendant of the Vice could adopt the role of an evil person, or a clown, or a fool for instance⁶⁰. These personae share one objective, notably that they are

"countervoices" - voices from outside the representative ideology - ushering a contrapuntal theme, some counter-vision, which, even in a comic context, cannot be easily dismissed in its thematic implication for the main plot.⁶¹

Shakespeare as one of the most accomplished playwrights in this connection imitated and adapted the comic subplot and interlude which came down to him through the Mak episode in *Secunda Pastorum*, the *Play of the Sacrament*, *Fulgens and Lucrece*, *The Castle of Perseverance* (1405-225) and *King Cambises* (1561) to mention a few. He not only applied the convention of the subplot in histories, comedies and romances, but also in a tragedy, notably in *The Tragedy of King Lear* (1605).⁶² In this connection Richard Levin remarks,

The multiple plot is apparently more effective in comedy than in tragedy, as some of the better playwrights recognized: Shakespeare used a subplot in only one of his major tragedies,⁶³ and Jonson, Chapman, and Webster avoided it in theirs.

A historical explanation can be found for this in the classical models that exercised such a profound influence upon the Renaissance stage, since the subplot is never used in the tragedies of Seneca (or of the Greeks),⁶⁴ but is an important element in most of Terence's comedies.

Levin's assertion, that most of Shakespeare's contemporaries, notably Jon-

⁶⁰ Robert Weimann asserts in this connection:

The fact that up to a certain period the comic persona was usually drawn from the lowest social class was a social phenomenon of some consequence.
Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition, 239.

⁶¹ Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition*, 159.

⁶² William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, gen. eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford, 1991), 943-74.

⁶³ *The Multiple Plot*, 221.

⁶⁴ *The Multiple Plot*, 221.

son, Chapman, and Webster avoided using a subplot in their tragedies, proves to be incorrect. Still his point of view is shared by Leo Salingar who, in connection with Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622), asserts:

It is a tragedy in form, of course, but not in the full possible effect. And its limitations, together with its special kind of intensity, appear to spring from its concentration upon domestic life as its subject.⁶⁵

Yet this play and a few others - for instance, Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* and Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (1621) - are regarded as tragedies by those critics, who attach a less rigid definition to the genre 'tragedy'.⁶⁶ These plays yield fruit when discussed as nice examples of the application of a subplot in tragedies in particular and in drama in general.

In the subplot of the two *Henry IV* plays (1597), of which one of the protagonists is Falstaff, Shakespeare created the turbulent life of society at the lower levels of the hierarchy, namely the society of the tavern, the army, and the brothel. And we see Hal, the future king, quite at home with Falstaff and his cronies, stepping nimbly from one sphere into the other, adapting himself ever so easily to the different milieus. The subplot in these plays indeed widens the perspectives of the main plot, for it provides the audience with a more comprehensive picture of the history of Prince Hal sowing his wild oats in the company of a degenerate knight to become the victorious, heroic King in *Henry V* (1599).

⁶⁵ *Dramatic Form in Shakespeare and the Jacobean* (Cambridge, London, 1986), 22.

⁶⁶ In these lines Leo Salingar claims that tragedy and domestic life as subject do not constitute a happy coalescence. But already Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights and writers connected tragedy with the downfall of the protagonist. (*The Oxford English Dictionary* Vol. 18, 360).

In *Annals of English Drama 975-1700* *The Changeling*, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, and *Women Beware Women* among others are referred to as tragedies (passim).

The Cade-rebellion in *Henry VI Part 2* (1591) constitutes another subplot, not as fully integrated and developed as the Falstaff one, but it does make sense. It shows that rebellion, a topsy-turvy world, anarchy, must eventually break down. On account of the fact that Jack Cade, the self-proclaimed Lord Mortimer, objects to all the achievements of the fifteenth and sixteenth-century English society, such as the grammar school, reading and writing, printing, justices of the peace, and so on (IV.vii.30-45)⁶⁷ - which, according to him, are used against poor men - he is supported by the rabble. But not by the citizens, for they flee and forsake their houses (IV.iv.49-50). The promises of pardon given to Cade's followers by Buckingham and Old Clifford as ambassadors of the King prove to be fatal to the enterprise and the rebellion dies down; Cade is slain in a fight by a Kentish gentleman. It is conceivable to see in this kind of subplot also a moral exemplum, a feature of the medieval morality play.

Another play in which the contrast of different social levels is crucial is the so-called problem play *Measure for Measure* (1604). The subplot deals with those who people brothel and prison, such as gallants, bawds, tapsters, and prisoners. For most of these people the only interest lies in whoring and breaking the law. What could be the effect of such a subplot? As a matter of fact it reflects to a great extent what is going on in the main plot, for, since it deals with persons of the higher ranks of the social hierarchy, their trespasses are not called whoring or breaking the law. Angelo's proposition to Isabella, however, allows him to enjoy her body in exchange for the life of her brother Claudio; this could just as well be regarded as a kind of whoring, which means paying for sex-

⁶⁷ Andrew S. Cairncross, ed., *Henry VI Part 2*, The Arden Shakespeare (London and New York, 1984).

ual favours. Here again the subplot adds "complementary perspectives" to the main plot, for it draws the audience's attention to the sordid reality in the main plot.

The following example will serve to show what Shakespeare did with the inheritance of the subplot which had developed in moralities and interludes. It concerns the incorporation of a subplot in *The Tragedy of King Lear*. To underscore the fact that the subplot, the Gloucester plot, falls within the category of 'comic', the pronouncements of a few scholars will be quoted. Northrop Frye remarks that this subplot is a version of

the regular comedy theme of the gullible "senex" swindled by a clever and unprincipled son.⁶⁸

And Susan Snyder writes:

King Lear is full of the structures, motifs, and devices of comedy. It has a double plot and a developed Fool; it is concerned, like many comedies, with the passing of power from old to young; two of its characters are disguised through most of the play, one of them in a series of *personae* that allow him to manipulate other characters.⁶⁹

And further on she argues:

Nevertheless, the shape of both actions [of the main plot and the subplot] suggests comedy, and the repetition of one by the other makes us more aware of a comic movement toward re-generation.⁷⁰

Both plots deal with fathers duped or manipulated by their offspring. In the main plot it is the King himself who sets the cruelty exerted by his daughters Goneril and Regan going, by dividing the country among his daughters and demanding that they express their love for him verbally. Love which eventually turns out to be insincere as far as the two elder

⁶⁸ *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ, 1957), 175.

⁶⁹ *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Princeton, NJ, 1979), 140.

⁷⁰ *The Comic Matrix*, 141.

daughters are concerned. Lear's suffering, caused apparently without any reason, is a mental suffering, whereas Gloucester's is a physical one. The latter's blinding is brought about on account of the fact that he went out in the storm to seek and relieve his old master the King, although he had been threatened by Lear's two elder daughters and the Duke of Cornwall with death if he were to do that (3.3.17).⁷¹ Since there is more than one father who suffers at the hands of his children, the application of this subplot, which shows a repetition of what happens in the main plot, brings the theme of suffering on to a more general level. It is treated in one and the same play by the introduction of a second process, one depicting another dramatic aspect of this suffering undergone by another father. Thus it is the ingratitude of children which is emphasized by the repetition in the subplot. It is, however, not only fathers who suffer, it also concerns loving children thrown out by their fathers, because, in both cases they are misjudged. The latter's gullibility lies at the bottom of the wrong decisions they take.

As has been discussed previously the play-within-the-play has a similar function to that of the subplot. It came into fashion during the Elizabethan period and was introduced in every dramatic genre. Dieter Mehl

⁷¹ Another cause for Gloucester's blinding is given by Edgar's assumption that his father's blinding is to be regarded as a retribution for the latter's begetting a bastard son:

The dark and vicious place where thee he got
Cost him his eyes,

(5.3.163-4)

This is in agreement with the then current concepts. In this connection Robert Egan remarks: Yet any assumption of just cause and effect, no matter how far-fetched, which encompasses events with a sense of cosmic meaning and order, is humanly preferable to recognizing the obvious haphazardness of those events.

Drama within Drama: Shakespeare's Sense of his Art in King Lear, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest (New York and London, 1945), 51.

claims:

It is hardly surprising to see that the convention of the play within a play is to be found mainly in periods when not only dramatic literature, but also theatrical practice was flourishing, when dramatists experimented with established forms, and - perhaps most important of all - when the purpose and function of drama and its illusionary character were subjects for searching discussions. All this is particularly true of the Elizabethan period.⁷²

This convention comprises three subdivisions: first, the ones in which the 'inner' play is performed by actors who feature as principal characters in the 'outer' play; secondly the ones in which the 'inner' play is performed by a company of players whose spectators consist of the characters of the 'outer' play; and thirdly the ones in which a combination of professional players and a character of the main play, for instance, is employed. An example of the first kind is Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587). In this connection Dieter Mehl asserts:

it is one of the earliest examples, if not the earliest.⁷³

This play-within-the-play comes almost towards the end of the tragedy and is regarded as the means exerted by the master of the revels Hieronimo - who is both the writer and initiator of this inserted play - to reveal and avenge the murder of his son Horatio. It is a most unusual play, because the actors are in the first instance Horatio's murderers, Balthazar and Lorenzo, in the second instance Bel-Imperia, the beloved of Horatio, and in the third instance Hieronimo himself. In the end all the four 'actors' are killed or have committed suicide. The inclusion of this play-within-the-play is a very ominous one, because in it revenge for the

⁷² "Forms and Functions of the Play within a Play", 42.

⁷³ "Forms and Functions of the Play within a Play", 46. In this connection it is interesting to learn what Robert J. Nelson has to say in his discussion of *Fulgens and Lucrece*. He claims in *Play within a Play*, 8:

The play within a play is the invention of the modern world. Though Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrece* is probably the first use of the play within a play (Boas), the formula is not peculiar English.

killing of Horatio is carried out in a realistic way, although at first the spectators do not surmise that real killing is taking place under their very noses.

An example of the second kind (a play staged by a company of actors from outside the level under consideration) is the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play-within-the-play - taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* - in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is not performed by professional actors, but by Athenian craftsmen on the Duke's wedding night. On the list of the Lord of the Revels, Philostrate, this play is announced as:

A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe, very tragical Mirth.
(V.i.56-7).⁷⁴

The play is tragic indeed since it ends with the deaths of the lovers, but it also provides merriment. Soon, however, this merriment wears off, because the spectators, the Duke and his company do not appreciate the melodramatic performance and try to outdo one another in witty remarks ~~at~~^{to} the detriment of the artisans. Incidentally this play-within-the-play may serve as a parody on the main plot, especially on the theme of love. Still the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play is so integrated in the main plot that it could not have been discarded. Because an opportunity had to be created for Bottom to be transformed into an ass - as it happens in the woods of Athens when the mechanicals are rehearsing (which, as has been stated earlier, constitutes a fully-fledged subplot) - to give Titania "some vile thing" to fall in love with (II.ii.33). Thus there are at least two reasons for the insertion of this play-within-the-play.

Another noteworthy example of this kind - also by Shakespeare - is

⁷⁴ Harold F. Brooks ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1990).

The Murder of Gonzago in *Hamlet* (1601). It is performed by itinerant players. Hamlet conceived the idea to stage the aforementioned playlet in order to expose Claudius, the King, and at the same time to gain certainty whether the ghost of his deceased father had spoken the truth. Therefore Hamlet inquires if the actors happen to know the play and on their affirmative answer "The Mousetrap" (III.ii.232) is set. However, critics claim that the performance of the play-within-the-play does not come up to the expectations of the audience. When Claudius orders:

Give me some light. Away,
(III.ii.263)⁷⁵

the audience in the theatre expect that Hamlet will act immediately. They have seen the ghost, have heard his accusations, now have watched the uneasiness of the King - so he must be guilty they think -, and Hamlet does not react. He cannot force himself then and there to avenge his father's death by slaying his stepfather. Thus for the moment it seems that the staging of the playlet comes to nought. With the evidence gained by it, however, in the end Hamlet is to destroy the cancer that has caused the rottenness of the Danish State, albeit he pays for it with his own life. Also here the play-within-the-play proves to be indispensable in bringing about a solution to the dramatic problems of the main plot.

The third category of the convention under discussion (where the actors of the play-within-the-play come from a combination of persons from the audience and a group of professional players) is the play-within-the-play in *Sir Thomas More* (1595) by Anthony Munday and others. This play is a depiction of the rise and fall of Sir Thomas More and consists of five parts, the central part of which is the play-within-the-play, called *The*

⁷⁵ Harold Jenkins ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1982).

Marriage of Wit and Wisdom. This playlet, also called interlude, echoes from several plays and prologues, and the main text is adapted from Richard Wever's *Lusty Juventus* (1550)⁷⁶, which caused Dieter Mehl to make the following comment: it

seems to bear no obvious relation to the main action. The device is employed chiefly to provide some comic relief after some more serious scenes of state and to give an illustration of More's buoyant sense of fun and his love of the theater.⁷⁷

The contents of the last line of this quotation is the reason why I have chosen to comment on this point of view. It is because of the fact that Sir Thomas More acts in the play-within-the-play *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*.⁷⁸ This acting of Sir Thomas More comes about when the Lord Mayor of London and his Lady are paying a visit to Sir Thomas More and his Lady at their residence in Chelsea. Then a group of players beg to stage a play; but when it is his turn to speak his lines, one of the actors is still away on an errand (to find a beard) and Sir Thomas More steps in. This proves to be the crux of this play-within-the-play, because contrary to Dieter Mehl's argument, it bears a definite relation to the main action, for it mirrors the end of the play when Sir Thomas More is about to be executed. His lines on the scaffold, containing a stage metaphor, have been foreshadowed by his acting, extempore, in *The Marriage of Wit and Wisdom*. The memorable lines were spoken at the urgent request of Lord Shrewsbury to pronounce in public his great offence to the King. They run as follows:

my offence to his highness
makes me of a state pleader a stage player (though I am

⁷⁶ Vittorio Gabrieli and Georgio Melchioni, eds., *The Revels Plays edition* (Manchester and New York, 1990), 10.

⁷⁷ "Forms and Functions", 43.

⁷⁸ Arthur Brown, "The Play within a Play", 38.

old, and have a bad voice) to act this last scene of my
tragedy. (V.iv.72-5).⁷⁸

This acting of this last scene of Sir Thomas More's tragedy bears evidence of a great dignity, especially in the lines following this stage metaphor, in contrast to the fun which accompanied his acting in a scene of *Lusty Juventus*.

Another example is *Fulgens and Lucrece*, which has already been discussed. In fact it is somewhat blurred as regards the kinds of theatrical devices, by which I mean to say that what is indicated in the induction by B as a play is actually a play-within-a-play to describe it more precisely.

The players been even here at hand (Part One, 189), proves, however, to be the real play or the main plot in which also A and B are included as actors. It is very apt to indicate that this effect of 'blurring', in my opinion, is hinted at in the text, when A mistakes B for a player, which, as stated before, is not appreciated by B. A apologizes for having made this mistaken supposition by stating:

Then I cry you mercy,
I was to blame, lo therefore I say.
There is so much nice array
Amongst these gallants nowadays,
That a man shall not lightly
Know a player from another man.
(Part One, 51-6).

But in spite of the fact that players and spectators could not be distinguished from one another because of their similar dresses, which has been stated in the Introduction, I still think that the foregrounding of 'blurring' in this connection cannot easily be dismissed.

Another exceptional play-within-the-play is *The Taming of the Shrew*

⁷⁸ The Revels Play edition, 29.

(1594). In the induction, which covers two scenes and consists of 275 lines, Christopher Sly, the tinker, is made to believe that he is a nobleman and he is induced to watch a play performed by professional actors. This play, a 'play-within-the-play', proves, however, to be the essential play consisting of a main plot and a subplot. After the induction nothing more is heard of Sly; his story peters out. Dieter Mehl in this connection uses 'frame' for the induction and 'framed play' for the original play-within-the-play.⁷⁹ Whereas usually the 'inner' play is of less or equal importance, in *The Taming of the Shrew* the Katherine play and the Bianca one appear to have moved up to the most prominent places leaving the Induction, or 'frame' far behind. As a matter of fact the subplot, the Bianca plot, is also an example of an adaptation of a Roman play, notably through George Cascoigne's *Supposes* (1566), Ludovico Ariosto's *I Suppositi* (1509) to Plautus's *Captivi* and the *Trinummus*.⁸⁰ These examples of the three subdivisions of the dramatic form the play-within-a-play, introduced by playwrights in their plays, show inventiveness and dexterity.

In relation to the fact that also classical drama and the *commedia erudita* are regarded as the sources of the subplot it is important to add to the discussion that, as has already been mentioned, in the sixteenth century plays by Plautus and Terence were performed at the colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, which is an indication that these Roman dramatists were still popular. Further, the English Renaissance playwright was also conversant

⁷⁹ 'Forms and Functions of the Play within a Play', 52. In the anonymous *The Taming of a Shrew* (1589) the play ends with Sly in his usual clothes, lying asleep in the same spot where the Lord and his attendants had found him the previous night. Sly awakes and comes to the conclusion that he has dreamt everything, his life as a lord and his watching a play. I would call this version a frame comparable to the frame of Egeon the merchant in search of his two sons in *The Comedy of Errors*.

⁸⁰ Richard Hosley, "The Formal Influence", 132.

with the works - in Latin and the vernacular - of Italian Renaissance playwrights, such as Ariosto, Giraldi and Secchi, who modelled their plays on Seneca, Plautus and Terence, on novellas and tales. These plays came also to the attention of English readers by means of direct translations from the Italian into English or via French translations.⁸¹ The interlude *Fulgens and Lucrece*, however, is not modelled on the Terentian duality-method. It is praised by Frederick Boas as follows:

But where he proves himself a born playwright is in the addition of a comic underplot of his own invention, in which the servants of Cornelius and Flaminius are rivals for the affections of Lucrece's handmaid.⁸²

The Comedy of Errors (1592), which at first sight seems to have been grounded on the Terentian duality-method, turns out to be an adaptation of a one-level play, Plautus's *Menaechmi* - Terence's drama with double roles is initially also a one-level structure -, and Shakespeare turned it into a play with a double plot. He used the story of the Roman twins to set up, among other things, a frame play in which Egeon, a Syracusan merchant in search of his son Antipholus, who has sailed away to find his twin brother, becomes a captive when he lands in Ephesus, and a double plot. The main plot comprises the story of the two Antipholuses; one of them has lived in Ephesus for many years, not knowing that his father and twin brother are still alive, the other has just arrived at Ephesus when the story begins. The original story has only one servant, a slave; Shakespeare, however, doubled this role; so that there are two servants, the Dromios. The second doubling added to the original one causes errors and

⁸¹ According to Frederick S. Boas the Latin tract *De (Vera) Nobilitate*, (by Giovane Buonaccorso the Younger), for instance, had been translated into French by Jean Mielot, and afterwards into English by a Yorkist nobleman, John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester. This version was used by Henry Medwall for his *Fulgens and Lucrece*. *Five Pre-Shakespearean Comedies*, viii.

⁸² *Five Pre-Shakespearean Comedies*, viii.

confusions. With its introduction a second social sphere has been created, and consequently a subplot has come into being. The curious thing is that this subplot is built up through reported speeches (between one Antipholus and one Dromio, or between Adriana or Luciana and one Dromio) and incidents, and not through direct conversation between the servants, like A and B in *Fulgens and Lucrece*. (There is, however, a precedent when they speak to each other through a closed door, which causes each of them to think that the other is a counterfeit). As a matter of fact the two Dromios are only to meet each other in the concluding scenes. The two doublings induced Sander Goldberg to make the following remark:

because each confused Antipholus has an equally confused Dromio, the schizophrenia latent in *The Comedy of Errors* embraces the whole world of Ephesus, not simply one merchant and his twin. Shakespeare's multiple plots add a richness to the significance of action that is unmatched in ancient drama.⁸²

This play clearly shows, that with the introduction of another set of types from a different sphere or the addition of a member to one of the types in question, the play, in its doubling, features a main plot and a subplot. And as mentioned earlier, this has also been the technique in *Fulgens and Lucrece*.

A nice example of the application of the Terentian duality-method is *As You Like It*, for it features more than one set of lovers, even four, if we include Celia's romance, which can be described as a falling in love at first sight, immediately followed by a marriage. Since Shakespeare draws his characters from different social backgrounds, he creates a circumstance for a main plot and a subplot, or subplots rather, to develop.

The main plot depicts the courtly environment in which Rosalind,

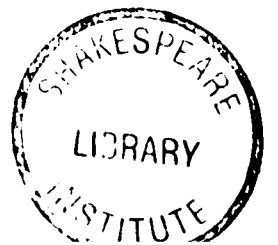
⁸² *Understanding Terence*, 148.

Orlando and Celia are the protagonists and its theme is the romantic love of Ganymede/Rosalind and Orlando. In the first subplot the shepherd Silvius and his disdainful mistress Phebe are representing the pastoral milieu; their love has the features of Petrarchan love. And in the second subplot it is Touchstone the Fool and Audrey the goat-herd who give a picture of peasantry; their love is the down to earth sexual love. (It could also be regarded as a parody of the romantic love of Rosalind and Orlando.) With the adaptation of three pairs of lovers Shakespeare created the means to point to the different aspects of the love theme - constituting an overall picture of what love could or should mean - just as in *The Tragedy of King Lear* where the theme of suffering gains a complementary perspective by the introduction of the Gloucester subplot.

In *Love's Labour's Lost* (1595) Shakespeare multiplied the set of lovers with this distinction that the lovers of the courtly environment, that is the King of Navarre and his attendant lords and the Princess of France and her attendant ladies, feature in the main plot, and the lovers exemplified by the Clown Costard and the fantastical Spaniard Don Adriano de Armado are relegated to the subplot. It is the contrast between conventional love/a kind of Platonic love and erotic love. Whereas in *As You Like It* the play ends in one great wedding celebration, attended by Hymen, the ending of *Love's Labour's Lost*st is the beginning of a trial period of twelve months and a day in which the king and his courtiers have to prove the seriousness of their love for the respective ladies. This again shows the playwright's skill in imitating a classical convention, namely the duality-method, and adapting it according to his own purpose.

The discussion of the imitations and adaptations of several dramatic

devices have shown that the origins of the subplot suggested in the beginning of this chapter, from its first appearance in the Mak episode in the *Secunda Pastorum*, up and to the revival of classical drama - in particular the Terentian duality-method and the *commedia erudita* - could indeed be regarded as the roots of the subplot.



C H A P T E R T W O

CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS AS A MEANS TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN MAIN PLOT AND SUBPLOT

Although drama is said to present fiction, it is taken for granted that it is often a depiction of aspects of life, seen from different angles and situated in various environments. Therefore, with a view to the audience, the element of recognition in this connection lies at the basis of the practice in drama to represent everyday life in its various manifestations. The element of fiction may be the coincidence, viz.: the unexpected ordering of the plot, by the application, for instance, of a subplot with different characters, or the introduction of fairy-tale elements, or an apparently inconceivable denouement.

Social order, a cornerstone of English society in the Tudor and early Stuart periods, provided the playwright with the opportunity of bringing out the characteristics representative of class in his personages. This phenomenon has been convincingly and excellently dealt with by Ralph Berry in his book *Shakespeare and Social Class*.¹

The introduction of a subplot, often a comic one, as it appears in various plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, can be related to the introduction of a different social class. In most instances class in the subplot tends to be lower in the social hierarchy compared to that in the main plot. Exceptions will be pointed out in the course of the analysis. But it is also necessary to emphasize that not all the plays discussed

¹ (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1988).

feature a subplot which depicts characters from another social class than those of the main plot. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, for instance, there is no difference in class between the main plot and the subplot for it concerns the stories of two sisters who marry men from the same social background.

The relation between subplot and social class will be examined according to the characteristic features that present themselves in the fields in which class-differences are manifested. These fields will be pointed out and discussed in what follows.

THE FIELD OF MONEY AND CLASS-CONSCIOUS BEHAVIOUR

The way in which one's income to make a living was earned or acquired is of crucial importance to the sake of class-categorization. It makes all the difference whether one had to do manual work to earn a living, or had acquired wealth and property through hereditary or other means, such as royal gifts, advantageous marriages, royal service, a profession - the Church or the law - and trade, sometimes referred to as business. Those who belong to the former category constitute the lower classes and those who belong to the latter one constitute the upper classes. In Tudor times the upper class or the nobility consisted of peers and untitled gentlemen.² According to Lawrence Stone the untitled gentry, or

plain gentlemen were mostly small landed proprietors, but also in part professional men, civil servants, lawyers, higher clergy and university dons.³

And the nobility is described as follows:

an essential prerequisite of membership of the *élite* was fi-

² Jonathan Powis, *Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1984), 7.

³ *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (Oxford, 1965), 51.

nancial independence, the capacity to live idly without the necessity of undertaking manual, mechanic, or even professional tasks.⁴

Younger sons of the nobility, who were devoid of legal privileges and a hereditary title, had to make their own way and find a position as a clergyman or lawyer, which, together with trade, offered a good opportunity to amass capital. With this money they bought themselves property and then moved into the class of the landed gentry. Thus property and wealth were used as a standard according to which social classes were ranked, each with its own life-style, which is

reflected in education, housing, taxation, political power and office-holding.⁵

The upper classes cherished such values as honour, and they were proud of their ancestral homes. Honour, a matter of proper conduct, was, of course, a code adhered to not only by the nobility, but by people of all classes. Since it entailed visible ramifications in the upper-class circles, however, it seemed, as if honour mattered more to them than to persons from the lower-class circles.

An offence could sometimes lead to a duel between two members of the nobility. Claudio's false accusation of Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598) is an example of such an offence. Because of Benedick's challenge to Claudio it would eventually have led to a duel if the watchmen had not overheard the conversation between Conrade and Borachio, followers of Don John. For this disclosed the latter's machinations in procuring an impediment to the marriage and consequently revealed Hero's innocence.

Both in middle- and upper-class circles courting and marriage were

⁴ *The Crisis of Aristocracy*, 50.

⁵ Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1680* (Oxford, 1984), 7.

conducted along conventional lines, which meant that marriage was a matter of prearrangement. When it concerned an heir of a family estate, the pater familias tried through relatives and friends to find a rich girl of his own social circle. The girl's dowry was to be used among other things for the upkeep of the estate. Should she be widowed, however, provisions for her would have been settled in the jointure, provided by the father-in-law. That is why the amount of money one had at one's disposal was also a standard in obtaining an eligible bride or bridegroom. This may be judged from the dowries fathers were prepared to give their daughters and the jointures father-in-laws or bridegrooms could offer the brides in question.

Awareness of people from a different social class was always present. In this connection Jonathan Powis claims:

Lowly origins might condemn some men (perhaps a majority) to the permanent disdain of their more honourable superiors.⁶

Property and wealth of the "more honourable superiors" were directly connected with political power. So property, wealth and power constituted a triad closely interrelated.

THE FIELD OF LANGUAGE

Although it has been generally assumed that in drama blank verse was spoken by the nobility and prose by the common people, there are so many exceptions as far as this 'exclusive' use of verse and prose is concerned, that other outspoken class-dividing phenomena have to be taken into consideration, if indeed one wishes to come to a conclusion. In what register or form of language dialogue is presented is of importance as well. This

⁶ *Aristocracy*, 11.

will immediately reveal one's background as far as schooling and environment is concerned.

Since drama is also a medium to bring to the attention subtle discrepancies, contempt, or even enmity - in exaggerated form -, language as a medium to differentiate between social classes is an apt one. Lower-class characters are made the butt of invective jokes, like Dull in *Love's Labour's Lost*, for instance, only because of the fact, that in his ignorance, he misinterprets the Latinized language of Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel who belong to the higher classes. It also occurs the other way round when persons of the lower classes try to imitate their betters by using difficult words originated in Latin or French, as Costard does in *Love's Labour's Lost*, correctly sometimes. And the artisans do in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but then in a faulty way, notably grammatically incorrect, in, for example, "I will aggravate my voice" (I.ii.76).⁷

THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Education was restricted to the peers, the gentry, and the middle class.

Lawrence Stone asserts:

The Elizabethan grammar school was a place where the middle- and upper-class boy acquired a technical proficiency, namely low-grade Latin,⁸

and he goes on to state that even in the late sixteenth century many noblemen and leading squires had their sons privately educated by a tutor and did not send them to either school or university.⁹ After about 1550, however, more gentlemen and noblemen had their sons enrolled at the uni-

⁷ Harold F. Brooks, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1990).

⁸ *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 680.

⁹ *The Crisis of Aristocracy*, 684.

versity or the Inns of Court. Then it became "fashionable" to do so.¹⁰ Not only heirs of the nobility but also the younger sons enrolled at the university. In the case of the former, they were given higher education to prepare them for their task as inheritors to the estate of their fathers. In the case of the latter, they needed higher education for, as stated previously, they would have to earn their living themselves. There is evidence that many of these students, however, did not matriculate and very few took degrees. The evidence that the number of younger sons with a higher education did not exceed the number of heirs who were given a similar education is remarkable. Lawrence Stone gives an explanation for this phenomenon by suggesting that younger sons also made a career in the army or the navy, or in trade, or found a position as secretary to a high-placed person. These posts did not need an academic education as a prerequisite.

Whereas middle-class representatives were allowed to enrol at the university, they were actually forbidden to enter the Inns of Court. To this effect Lawrence Stone claims that, in connection with

the 'third university of the Kingdom', the Inns of Court, persistent suggestions were made by distinguished education-
alists throughout the late sixteenth century to forbid entry
to the lower classes, efforts which culminated in an order by
King James in 1604 that 'none henceforth admitted into the
Society of ^{any} ~~my~~ House of Court that is not a gentleman by de-
scent'.¹¹

THE FIELD OF LEISURE OCCUPATIONS

Leisure occupations, such as fencing, hawking, hunting, etc. belong exclusively to the higher classes, and fairs or festivities celebrating season-

¹⁰ *The Crisis of Aristocracy*, 687.

¹¹ *Aristocracy*, 11.

al country activities, for instance, attracted crowds of people from the lower classes. There were, of course, no hard and strict rules, for servants, huntsmen, falconers and foresters, and others were involved in hunting and hawking as well, because without their assistance the nobility could not have indulged in the aforesaid pastimes.

As regards the theatre-goers, there were, according to Lawrence Stone, special playhouses for noblemen and gentlemen, e.g. Blackfriars and the Globe, and the Fortune and the Red Bull were reserved for the citizens and apprentices.¹² Ann Jenallie Cook, however, does not make such a rigid differentiation. She claims:

Thanks to wealth or birth, to education or achievement, privileged Englishmen followed a life considerably different from the rest of their countrymen. Always regarded as the chief clientele of the small private theaters, the privileged probably dominated the huge public theater audiences as well. Others also came, but only when they had money and leisure - rare luxuries for most Londoners, but commonplace commodities for the privileged.¹³

There existed a wide range of places to see the various plays performed, from the court, to the homes of the nobility, the Inns of Court, yards of public places, open-air theatres and the smaller private ones. The professional actors consisted of boys' troupes and adult companies; the latter were far in the majority. But the boys' companies, after having catered for a more sophisticated audience in the private theatres, ceased to exist early in the seventeenth century. From then on the private theatres were patronized by the men's companies as well. In point of fact practically all the plays performed at court could be seen at one or other theatre in London. Whether a play was taken on by a theatre company mainly de-

¹² *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, 389.

¹³ *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642* (Princeton NJ, 1981), 9.

pended on the number of players available, and also on the popularity of the play.

These four fields will prove to be an appropriate 'measure' in deciding whether class-conscious differentiation on the whole can be regarded as an attendant characteristic of the subplot.

2.1 THE FIELD OF MONEY AND CLASS-CONSCIOUS BEHAVIOUR

There are quite a few subplots in which money and class-conscious behaviour are an important ingredient. The subplots of the two parts of *Henry IV* (1597) and *Henry V* (159⁹) are peopled by those who do not earn money on a regular basis. Their income is based on exploitation, i.e. on cheating, thieving and looting. It is to be regretted that Sir John Falstaff should have lorded this gang of pickpockets and thieves, and have felt so much at home in their environment. He is always in debt, gulls the tradesmen, the host^{ess} of the Boar's Head Tavern and eventually Justice Shallow. He even collects money through the buying out of young men enrolled on the list for military service to fill his own pockets. A reason for this duality in his character, which is certainly not in accordance with his knighthood, may have been his complete lack of finance, and of course his love of food, sack and women. In connection with Falstaff's behaviour William Empson's remark is worth quoting. He remarks:

Falstaff is the first major joke by the English against their class system; he is a picture of how badly you can behave, and still get away with it, if you are a gentleman - a mere common rogue would not have been nearly so funny.¹⁴

However this may be, judging from the way an income was secured, the sub-

¹⁴ William Empson, "Falstaff and Mr Dover Wilson," *Shakespeare Henry IV Parts I and II: A Casebook*, ed. G.K. Hunter (London, 1970): 133-154, 145. Referred to by Leo Salingar, *Dramatic Form in Shakespeare and the Jacobean*, 36.

plots in the plays under discussion prove to have introduced in general a lower social class than in their respective main plots.

One of the main themes in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), both in the main plot and the subplots is money. In the main plot money is derived from business and usury, whereas in one subplot it is the wealth of Belmont inherited by Portia. Since this subplot deals with property, wealth and inheritance as opposed to the main plot, where commerce provides the merchants, and usury the Jew with fluid capital, it pictures characters from a higher social class and thus constitutes the reverse of the usual practice of introducing a lower social class in subplots. This is one of the exceptions referred to earlier in this chapter. It is appropriate to point out that the play is situated in Venice, Italy, where perhaps different standards as regards social classes were adopted¹⁵, but - and I think this is of decisive importance - the playwright was an Englishman. That is why the same rules as regards class will be applied to plays set in foreign countries as were applied in Renaissance England.

In the second subplot, the Jessica subplot, money is obtained in a dishonest way, it is stolen by Jessica from her father. The girl knows that she would not have been provided with a dowry by her father, if he had known that she was to marry a Christian. That is why she appropriates ducats and jewellery. Incidentally the couple squanders the money in Genoa and Lorenzo becomes a steward in the service of Portia, which is perhaps a kind of social displacement. It is, however, not clear from the text what position Lorenzo held when he lived in Venice (he might have been a clerk in the service of a merchant, or a follower of a nobleman). Anyway

¹⁵ See Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1984), 6.

they have to be content and will have to wait until Jessica's father dies for the inheritance to come their way. Money in this subplot is indirectly gained through usury.

In *The Merchant of Venice* the Jessica subplot places itself as far as class is concerned on the same level, or almost on the same level, as the main plot, whereas the Belmont subplot compared to the main plot, as stated above, offers distinction in class.

Plays where the acquisition of money in the main plot and subplot respectively is also an indication of class-distinction are *The Dutch Courtesan* (1604) and *The Changeling*. Money is spent liberally by the citizens and the gentry of the relevant main plots. Freevill for that matter keeps a courtesan and Beatrice-Joanna has large sums of money at her disposal. This becomes apparent when she offers to pay off the services of De Flores - who, for killing ^{Alonzo}/~~Lomazo~~ de Piraquo, however, wants to be paid with sexual favours -, and Diaphanta - for standing in for her on her wedding night.

In contrast the characters of the subplots have to earn money to make a living. The lower middle-class in *The Dutch Courtesan* is represented among others by a vintner, his wife, and a man-about-town Cocledemoy. The innkeeper and his wife are always busy increasing their income through deceit at selling wine, for instance. And Cocledemoy occasionally enjoys a free meal and does not have to pay for sexual favours, unlike Freevill in the main plot. In the subplot of *The Changeling* the physician Alibius earns his living by keeping and curing madmen and fools in his house. He also earns good money for the performance of a dance - commissioned by the Captain of the Castle, Vermandero - with his fools and madmen on the wedding celebrations of Beatrice-Joanna and Alsemero. As a result of the way

money to make a living is acquired the subplots of these two plays clearly depict a different social class from that in the respective main plots.

Certain class-conscious features in connection with the way an income is being secured (and the environment in which the plots are set) also occur in the subplot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. The main plot and the subplot depict persons from approximately the same social background, as happens in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Sir Charles Mountford and Sir Francis Acton in the subplot belong to the titled class. The former is proud of his ancestral home and has inherited wealth. When hardly any money is left from his father's inheritance, because of the sums Sir Charles Mountford has had to pay to be exempted from the accusation of the killing of two of Sir Francis Acton's servants, he and his sister have to till the lands. In other words to do manual work, which is, of course, not in accordance with the rank of noble persons; it is a real disgrace and it is scoffed at by Sir Charles's peers. Circumstances have forced them to live this 'mean' way of life - seen from the point of view of their own social rank at least -, but it has been initiated by Sir Charles Mountford himself, because he could not curb his anger when Sir Francis Acton impudently refused to acknowledge the loss of the two wagers.

In the main plot John Frankford is a gentleman with a country house and capital described in a soliloquy as "many fine revenues" (iv.5)¹⁶ and which is also referred to by him as "business" in:

How I neglect my business.
(xi.52).

He is a wealthy man otherwise he could not have married the sister of Sir Francis Acton. Nevertheless, the Frankfords represent the domestic en-

¹⁶ R.W. van Fossen, ed., *A Woman Killed With Kindness, The Revels Plays* (London, 1961).

vironment, where money is spent generously on, for instance, the gift of a lute from John Frankford to his wife Anne, on admitting Wendoll, a gentleman of small means, as a member into the household, and on the upkeep of many servants. Money seems to be in good supply owing to the "revenues" and "business" referred to earlier in this chapter, which is in sharp contrast to the lack of money in the subplot once Sir Charles Mountford's inheritance has been exhausted. On the basis of these considerations it is justified to claim that in the subplot a distinct social class is depicted compared to the one in the main plot. Or to put it differently, that the class of peers is compared to the class of gentlemen in a domestic environment. The subplot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, however, belongs to the exceptions as well, since it features a higher social class than the main plot.

Another instance where this subplot displays distinct contrast as regards class with its main plot is the great emphasis Sir Charles Mountford attaches to honour. As has been stated in the upper circles honour was considered of paramount importance. When Sir Charles discovers that it was his enemy Sir Francis Acton who paid his debts and thus caused his second release from prison, he tries to persuade his sister Susan to give herself to Sir Francis in order to save his honour. This is, of course, a narrow point of view, which is rightly opposed by his sister, who argues that in that case she would lose her honour. This would be just as despicable as if he should lose his.

In the subplot of *King Henry IV Part 1* Sir John Falstaff regards honour as "a mere scutcheon" (V.i.140-1)¹⁷, which is indeed an example of

¹⁷ A.R. Humphreys, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1989).

a divergent interpretation of the value of 'honour'. It is contrary to what a knight usually thinks of honour. And there are numerous examples of Falstaff's neglect of honour or dishonourable behaviour; these examples may be captured by Prince Hal's remark, directed at Falstaff:

Content, and the argument shall be thy running
away.

(*Henry IV Part 1*, II.iv.277-8).

So in fact the 'values' to which Sir John Falstaff adheres betray his class. Honour in the subplot is a parody of the honour as it is extolled in the main plot. The ideas about honour of Hotspur and Lord John of Lancaster in the main plot, however, are also not in accordance with what may be expected from the nobility. As far as Hotspur is concerned he does not want to share honour with others - by delivering his prisoners of war, for instance, into the hands of the King -, he claims them all for himself (*King Henry IV Part 1*, I.iii.199-212). Lord John of Lancaster acts dishonourably in his negotiations with the Archbishop of York and other prominent persons of the opposite camp. He promises to have their griefs redressed and urges them to discharge their powers, which, as it turns out, gives him the opportunity to have the rebels - as he calls them - arrested and executed. To the Archbishop's question:

Will you thus break your faith?
(*King Henry IV Part 2*, IV.ii.112),¹⁸

Lord John of Lancaster defends himself, saying:

I pawn'd thee none.
(IV.ii.113).

He had not, it is true.¹⁹ Yet the Archbishop and his political friends

¹⁸ A.R. Humphreys, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1987).

¹⁹ He for that matter never imparted to the King how the arrest and killing of the Archbishop and his political friends came to pass.

should have been aware of the trap set for them by the young prince. This example is an unexpected, incidental one, for Lord John of Lancaster earns for himself great honour on the battlefield, and is praised by his father the King and the Prince of Wales.

Since Falstaff's idea of honour may be equated with the dishonourable practices of most of the *dramatis personae* in the subplot, it is justified to state that also the theme of honour constitutes a distinction as regards class between main plot and subplot.

A mistaken supposition as regards class in *Twelfth Night* (1600) is, I think, the premise for the setting up of the subplot, i.e. the gulling of Malvolio. Sir Toby, Fabian and Maria are evidently of the opinion that Malvolio belongs to a lower class than theirs. This may be derived from Sir Toby's contemptuous remark:

Art any more than a steward?
(II.iii.113-4),²⁰

and from Maria's words "the fellow of servants" (II.v.156) in the letter concocted by her. Malvolio, however, calls himself a gentleman (IV.ii.85) and also Viola (V. i.275) and the Lady Olivia (V.i.277) refer to him as gentleman. An interesting remark by M. St Clare Byrne as regards the social status of a steward in an Elizabethan household is another argument to buttress the supposition that Malvolio is a gentleman. She asserts:

From such facts as these it is easy to see that an Elizabethan household steward was a gentleman of considerable importance, occupying a very responsible position, which gave him the exercise of a very considerable power, and must probably have called for much discretion and tact.²¹

²⁰ J.M. Lothian and T.W. Craik, eds., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1987).

²¹ "The Social Background," *A Companion to Shakespeare's Studies 1934*, eds. Harley Granville-Barker and G.B. Harrison (Cambridge, 1949): 187-218, 204. As an afterthought it is interesting to note that M. St Clare Byrne applies the English Renaissance standards to this play set somewhere in the Mediterranean, which is in accordance with my suggestion earlier in this thesis.

Although Sir Toby and Fabian ought to have known better as regards Malvolio's social rank, it is this mistaken assumption and, apart from Maria's idea of teaching Malvolio a lesson, of course also the resentment aroused in them by Malvolio's "uncompromising incivility" (V.i.360-1n) which induced them to treat Malvolio as they did. Otherwise, I think, they would not have gone so far as to lock him up in a dark room and treat him like one mad. Be this as it may, the subplot indeed depicts a protagonist, who, in spite of being a gentleman, has to work for a living as a steward, and consequently belongs to a lower social class than the leading personages in the main plot.

It sometimes occurs that a *dramatis persona* in subplots aspires to a higher social class. A nice example is the clothier Jack Cade in *King Henry VI Part 2*, who dubs himself knight - which is a farce indeed. But his argument is, that being a knight will put him on an equal footing with Sir Humphrey Stafford in their negotiations (IV.ii.113).²²

Another character who pretends to be a courtier and whose detection is brought to light in the subplot of *All's Well That Ends Well* (1602) is Monsieur Parolles or Captain Parolles, a companion to Bertram, Count of Rossillion. He is always referring to his many travels - only reserved to those who belong to the privileged classes -, which seems quite tolerable in Lafew's eyes, but the fact that he dresses so gaudily makes him suspect, and Lafew remarks:

You are a vagabond
and no true traveller. You are more saucy with Lords
and honourable personages than the commission of
your birth and virtue gives you heraldry.
(II.iii.255-8).²³

²² Andrew S. Cairncross, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1987).

²³ G.K. Hunter, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1989).

So Parolles is put in his proper place for he is reminded of his humble origins. His final exposure, instigated by two French lords, comes to pass in a contrived interrogation by the supposed enemy. Monsieur Parolles ends up as a factotum in Lafew's household. The subplot aptly underscores the differences in class.

Also Pistol in the subplot of *Henry V* pretends to belong to a higher social class than he actually belongs to. When King Henry in disguise inquires after his rank, Pistol answers:

As good a gentleman as the emperor.
King Henry: Then you are^a better than the king,
(IV.i.42-3).²⁴

Marriages between persons of a different social stratum were neither appreciated nor encouraged. In the subplot of *Love's Labour's Lost* Don Armado's infatuation for Jaquenetta and his vow:

to hold the
plough for her sweet love three year.
(V.ii.875-6)²⁵,

is out of place. He is a foreigner, so he need not have to conform to English or French standards for that matter, but he represents the class of noblemen and it would be unsuitable for him to marry a countrywench. As a matter of fact Don Armado's acknowledgement of this unsuitability is stated in:

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.
(I.ii.53-5).

In one of the subplots of *As You Like It* Touchstone's wish to marry Audrey, a country girl, is in negligence of the code of marrying within

²⁴ J.H. Walter, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1991).

²⁵ R.W. David, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1985).

his own class. Touchstone for that matter is reminded by Jacques of the social surroundings in which he has lived so far,

being a man of your breeding
(III.iii.74).²⁶

It is true that the fool Touchstone spent part of his life at the court of the Old Duke and then, until he followed his mistresses Celia and Rosalind into the Forest of Arden, at the court of the usurping Duke Frederick. Besides, his arguments against countrymen, put forward in a conversation between Corin, a shepherd, and himself are very strong (III.ii.11ff). Jacques's reminder is, however, not to prevent the marriage, but to have it established properly, in church, and not under a bush, as Touchstone initially planned. But he still seems to have his qualms about this inappropriate marriage. His comment addressed to Touchstone and Audrey in his farewell lines:

And you to wrangling, for thy loving voyage
Is but for two months victuall'd
(V.iv.190-1),

speak for themselves.

Another example of keeping one's social class pure is the intervention of Polixenes at the sheep-shearing festivity in the subplot of *The Winter's Tale* (1610). At first he has discussed with Perdita, a supposed shepherdess - who does not like gillyvors, which are called "nature's bastards" by some (IV.iv.83) - the practice of grafting in horticulture, stating:

we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race. This is an art
Which does mend nature - change it rather - but

²⁶ Agnes Latham, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1989).

The art itself is nature.

(IV.iv.92-7).²⁷

But when the shepherd Doricles, his son Florizel in disguise, and Perdita are about to establish their betrothal, i.e. when his son of noble stock is going to be contracted to a bark of a baser kind ("the prettiest low-born lass" [IV. iv.156]), Polixenes, putting off his disguise, prevents this and warns his son that he will be disinherited if he indeed marries the girl. Thus this episode shows initially conformity to one of the codes as regards marriage in the upper class, namely that the crown prince cannot marry a girl of humble descent. And in view of the subplot it means that a country girl is not to marry a young man so far above her. In this connection Polixenes' intervention in preventing the betrothal between his son and a shepherdess clearly shows the existence of a barrier between royalty and country folk.

Florizel, however, does not wish to break his promise and to give up the girl, although he is well aware of the fact that apparently she is far below him as far as class is concerned. His lines in this connection run as follows:

She is as forward of her breeding as
She is i'th'rear'our birth.

(IV.iv.580-1).

Later on, at Leontes's court to which - on the advice of Camillo - Florizel and Perdita have fled, the old shepherd, the girl's supposed father, and his son reveal that Perdita is in fact a changeling. On account of the box found lying by her side which contained the babe's "character" (III. iii.47), gold and jewels, it is established that she is the long-lost daughter of Leontes and Hermione. Polixenes then, of course, does not ob-

²⁷ J.H.P. Pafford, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1991).

ject to the marriage. Incidentally by this time the scene has moved into the main plot.

Although, keeping one's class pure seems to matter more to Polixenes of the main plot than to the supposed father of the girl in the subplot. The latter's consent to the betrothal of Perdita and Doricles can perhaps be explained in this way. The shepherd surmises that Perdita is of noble birth because of the character he has seen lying in the box, and the fair swain also belongs to the higher classes, for, according to the shepherd, Doricles

boasts himself
To have a worthy feeding: but I have it
Upon his own report and I believe it
(IV.iv.170-2).

So in the shepherd's view there is no class barrier at all.

2.2 THE FIELD OF LANGUAGE

Language fulfils many purposes, it is used to reflect a person's feelings and emotions, so to express one's gratitude, declare one's love, to reveal one's anger and so on. Therefore it is sad indeed that Caliban says:

You taught me language; and my profit on 't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!
(I.ii.365-7).

Language as a means to detect a person's background is aptly exploited through the presentation of Fabian - a socially ambivalent character in Ralph Berry's view²⁸ - in the subplot of *Twelfth Night*. At first one gets the impression that he is another servant in the household of the Lady Olivia. In the list of *dramatis personae* he is referred to as "a mem-

²⁸ *Shakespeare and Social Class*, 70.

ber of Olivia's household", although Ralph Berry reminds his readers of the fact that for many of Shakespeare's plays these lists were reconstructed by later editors.²⁹ It remains difficult to classify him, for he says to Sir Toby:

I would exult, man,
(II.v.6)

which indicates that he is on an equal footing with him, and further in the text, referring to Sir Andrew:

This is a dear manikin to you, Sir Toby
(III.ii.51),

which could be explained both ways: he is on an equal footing with Sir Toby or he is not within the same social range as the knight. The justification comes, however, towards the end, where subplot and main plot merge into one another and Fabian delivers a speech in blank verse to explain his and Sir Toby's motives for treating Malvolio in the way they did. One of his lines runs as follows:

Most freely I confess, myself and Toby
(V.i.358),

where he omits the title 'Sir'. Combined with his speech in blank verse it is an indication that he is a gentleman.³⁰ Although Fabian's part is not so important, he is another representative of the class of gentlemen who both in the main plot and the subplot play a role underscored by the characteristics inherent in their class.

Lucio who features in the subplot as well as in the main plot of *Measure for Measure* shows ambivalence in the use of appropriate kinds of language. In the subplot closely connected to brothel and prison he dis-

²⁹ *Shakespeare and Social Class*, xv.

³⁰ I am indebted to Ralph Berry for this point of view discussed in *Shakespeare and Social Class*, 70.

plays his true nature as a member of the class of gentlemen-about-town whose main discourse revolves around extramarital congress. And when he addresses Pompey or Mrs Overdone he proves to be on a par with them. When, however, he finds himself in the company of persons from another or the upper classes, he uses elevated language. This happens when he addresses, for instance, Isabella or the Duke. As regards the latter this only happens in the final episode, for in disguise the Duke meets with invective remarks and slander from Lucio.³¹ In connection with the former he even uses verse, reverently and flatteringly. It is indeed remarkable that Lucio should treat the novice and the friar so differently although they both are representatives of religious societies.³² A personage whose knowledge of appropriate language is well adapted to more than one social sphere is not uncommon in Shakespeare's plays, but in general such a character cannot deny his origins and will eventually revert to the language in which he was born. That is why on account of the language spoken by the gentlemen-about-town and, last but not least, by Pompey and his circle, the subplot of *Measure for Measure* displays a different class compared to

³¹ In connection with one of Lucio's slanderous remarks:

But yesternight, my lord, she [Isabella] and that friar,
I saw them at the prison: a saucy friar,
A very scurvy fellow.

(V.i.137-9)

Hugo Schwaller argues in his PhD thesis that:

Lucio alludes to some intimacies between the Duke and Isabella. We cannot decide whether or not Lucio tells the truth. Nevertheless, it is strange that the dramatist should allow Lucio to spread this rumour. The Duke's eventual proposal may not come so unexpected after all.

This Sceptered Sway: Sovereignty in Shakespeare (Bern, 1988), 13.

In my opinion Lucio just invents stories, as he himself admits on the Duke's reproof, that he had spoken "but according to the trick" (V.i.502-3). Besides, critics generally hold the view that the Duke's proposal comes out of the blue.

³² Sandra Billington's remark could possibly give an answer to this discrepancy. She claims:

Yet by 1604 the friar was a discredited role, usually comic and a symbol of misrule. In this imperfect disguise the Duke has no choice but to exert his power to save Claudio through the immoral bedtrick, appropriate to the character of a friar.

Mock Kings in Medieval Society and Renaissance Drama (Oxford, 1991), 246.

that of the main plot.

As already referred to in Chapter 1 Prince Hal is eager to learn the language of the lower classes of the Commonwealth, the language of the tradesmen for instance. He is indeed a good example of what I stated previously, namely that Shakespeare sometimes resorted to personages whose use of language is adapted to more than one social sphere. So in the subplots of the Henry plays, prose is interspersed in the first instance with thieves' cant; it is used for example in "Saint Nicolas' ~~clergyman~~^{clerks}" (a euphemism for highway robbers [*Henry IV Part 1*, II.i.60]). In the second instance Prince Hal becomes acquainted with drawers' expressions, such as "dyeing scarlet" which means drinking deep (*Henry IV Part 1*, II.iv.15-7). And in the third instance the subplot displays bits of the language of the brothel, which Prince Hal and Poins use to define Falstaff's whore. The following lines may serve as an example:

Hal : This Doll Tearsheet ~~must~~^{should} be some road.
Poins: I warrant you as common as the way between
Saint Albans and London.
(*Henry IV Part 2*, II.ii.159-61).

These are indeed class-differentiating examples which clearly mark the language of the lower classes in the subplot of the Henry plays.

The two subplots in *As You Like It*, the one which depicts Touchstone and Audrey, and the other which deals with the shepherds Silvius and Phebe, are also different in class compared to the main plot. I have argued earlier in this thesis that Touchstone and Audrey's marriage is not in accordance with the code of marrying within their own classes. But also language offers a criterion for the decision of existing class-differentiation between these subplots and the main plot. Especially in the way love is expressed by the couples in question. Touchstone's pronouncements

highlight the sensual aspect of love. This comes explicitly to the fore in:

Jacques: Will you be married, Motley?
Touchstone: As the ox hath his bow sir, the horse his curb, and stone: the falcon her bells, so man has his desires, and as pigeons' bill, so wedlock would be nibbling.
(III.iii.70-3).

In this connection Maurice Charney remarks:

The outlandish examples parody the euphemistic style, but Touchstone is creating a moral framework in order to ridicule moral pretence.³³

In my view Touchstone apparently ridicules the moral pretence upheld by Rosalind in the main plot, who says:

And his kissing is as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread.
(IV.i.12-3).

Touchstone's "outlandish examples" induced C.L. Barber to remark that love is reduced:

to its lowest common denominator, without any sentiment at all.³⁴

This remark is too severe, for Touchstone does express sentiment in:

Come apace good Audrey. I will fetch up your goats Audrey. And how Audrey, am I the man yet? Doth my simple feature content you?
(III.iii.1-3).

The tone of these lines ~~are~~^{is}, it must be admitted, contradictory to those "outlandish examples" quoted earlier. The latter ones reflect a gentle disposition towards Audrey.

The second subplot, referred to as a "courting eclogue"³⁵ conveys the lovelorn complaints of the shepherd Silvius. His mistress, the dis-

³³ *How to Read Shakespeare* (New York, 1971), 128.

³⁴ *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton, NJ, 1959), 20.

³⁵ C.L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, 20.

dainful Phebe - as Corin refers to her (III.v.46) - puts him off, but he cannot stop loving her. His lines are set in highly conventional language, interspersed with Petrarchan images, such as 'scorn' and 'to die'. It reflects unfulfilled, unrequited love.

So holy and so perfect is my love,
And in such a poverty of grace,
That I shall think it a most plenteous crop
To glean the broken ears after the man
That the main harvest reaps. Loose now and then
A scatter'd smile, and that I'll live upon.
(III.v.99-104).

As You Like It is a neat example of the introduction of two subplots featuring different social strata with their respective characteristics, reflected also in the field of language. It is, of course, not the depiction of different social classes which is so important, but, with the introduction of a subplot, the additional occurrence of class and its usefulness in consequently providing relationships and associations between the subplot and the main plot.

Characters from the lower classes delineated in subplots are sometimes eager to imitate their betters. This is also the case in connection with language. To this effect these specific instances in *Measure for Measure*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be discussed.

In the subplot of *Measure for Measure* Pompey imitates Claudio who out of shame describes his having a sexual relationship with his betrothed by using of euphemisms, such as:

From too much liberty, my Lucio. Liberty,
As surfeit, is the father of much fast;
So every scope by the immoderate use
Turns to restraint.
(I.ii.117-20).

And: The stealth of our most mutual entertainment

That honour which shall bate his scythe's keen edge,
And make us heirs of all eternity.
(I.i.4-7).³⁷

Costard's evasive language:

The matter is to me sir, as concerning Jaquenetta.
The manner of it is, I was taken with the manner.
(I.i.199-200),

which is an account of the fact that he has "sorted and consorted" with Jaquenetta in the park (I.i.252), resembles that of Pompey. His words:

Such is the simplicity of man to hearken after the
flesh.
(I.i.214-5),

are an echo of those of Touchstone quoted previously.

As already mentioned, Costard also uses difficult words derived from French and Latin correctly and incorrectly. These words are among others, "enigma" (III.i.68) and "guerdon" (III.ii.163), which he 'pronounces' "egma", and "gardon" respectively, and "remuneration" (III.i. 128), which is correctly 'pronounced'.

The second character is Don Adriano de Armado who tries to imitate the courtiers, but his lines sound archaic, pedantic and bombastic. I think that this is also due to his being a foreigner. For in this connection the King of Navarre refers to him in the following way:

A man in all the world's new fashion planted,
That hath a mint of phrases in his brain;
One who the music of his own vain tongue
Doth ravish like enchanting harmony;
(I.i.163-6).

Armado is a most illustrious wight,
A man of fire-new words, fashion's own knight,
(I.i.176-7)

37

The rhythm and imagery of the sonneteers dance in and out of the verse as if constantly to remind the audience that the mood of the whole is one of pseudo-seriousness.
The Language of Shakespeare's Plays (London, 1966), 4.

are Berowne's telling lines in this connection.

The third occurrence of a different level in the language of this subplot is represented by the conversations of the schoolmaster Holofernes and the curate Sir Nathaniel. The language is swollen and the schoolmaster shows off his knowledge of Latin. To this effect Ralph Berry remarks caustically:

Holofernes, the group leader, is the eternal prep-school master, whose existence owes everything to his scraps of Latin and his entries in literary magazine competitions.³⁸

This subplot is among other things rich in the use of different levels/registers of language to bring out the respective layers of the social hierarchy.

Malapropisms possibly came into use through the faulty imitation by persons of the lower classes of sayings and difficult words used by the higher social classes. The language of the artisans in the subplot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for instance, is interspersed with these malapropisms.³⁹ They are possibly used to impress other characters or sometimes even appear to give a subtle turn to the gist of an expression by the use of a 'misplaced' word. Language as it has been applied in the various subplots has revealed the differences in class between the main plot and the subplot.

2.3 THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Although education represents one of the backbones of the titled classes, it is only occasionally referred to to highlight class-differences in the

³⁸ *Shakespeare and Social Class*, 30.

³⁹ This use of faulty language is prominent in the Dogberry/Verges episode in *Much Ado About Nothing*. It borders on the tedious, for the audience has to undergo a constant flow of misplaced words. Since these malapropisms occur in an episode of the main plot and not in a subplot it is commented upon in this footnote and not in the text.

subplots under study. The reason for these scanty references could be attributed to the fact that education manifests itself in language in the first instance and in the mere mention of one's rank in the second instance.

It was not uncommon that education lay at the basis of strife between the higher and lower classes. This occurs in *Henry VI Part 2* where in the subplot the handicraftsmen under the leadership of Jack Cade stir up a rebellion. They are opposed against those who can read, write, know the practice of accounting, or speak French, for instance. In other words these people do not appreciate the achievements of England during the centuries. These achievements enabled the privileged to maintain their ruling position. The lower classes accuse the gentlemen of having spoilt everything for the common man since they have come into fashion (IV.ii. 8-9).⁴⁰ The disadvantage of not having had part in these achievements is heavily felt by them and they blame society for it. That is why they try to destroy records and kill those who have benefited from education and learning. The lack of these accomplishments is delineated by the introduction of this subplot, for in it the lower classes of the social hierarchy are allowed to express their grievances.

An example of the opposite, in which the educated show contempt for those who are uneducated, appears in *Love's Labour's Lost*. After having heard Dull's interpretation in the subplot of the scraps of Latin uttered by the curate Sir Nathaniel and the schoolmaster Holofernes, these two

⁴⁰ Richard of York planned to instigate Cade to stir up a rebellion and when he would have succeeded, Richard would come back with his troops from Ireland and take over the leadership of England (III.i.356-83). The text also makes clear, however, that the grievances of the common people - not unfounded though - induced the uproar and eventually resulted in killing those who have profited from education. These two views underlying different actions to serve the same purpose are incompatible, but they appear in the text.

'sages' vent their contempt in the following lines:

Holofernes: O! Thou monster Ignorance, how deform'd dost thou
look.

Nathaniel : Sir, he has never fed of the dainties that are
bred in a book.
He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not
drunk ink: his intellect is not replenished; he
is only an animal, only sensible in the duller
parts;

(IV.ii.22-6).

Their criticism, especially in the last line is crude, to say the least of it. But their indignation and pomposity at Dull's stupidity, ignorance and imperturbability on the other hand are also comic.

These two examples have shown that in their contempt - be it against or in favour of education - the characters' behaviour or language have grown out of proportion. But as I already stated in this chapter, exaggeration is characteristic of drama, in particular of comedy.

In connection with education in the subplot of *Volpone* (1606) the behaviour of the Would-Bes reflects a betrayal of the class to which they belong. Sir Politic Would-Be tries to show off his 'education' and wit in his conversation with Peregrine, an English traveller, newly-arrived in Venice. But his thoughts, ideas and analyses point to a shallowness which is astonishing indeed, if one takes into consideration the fact that an English nobleman, especially one who lives abroad, must have had adequate schooling. Peregrine is appalled at the display of so much interest in the sensational and trivial and in an aside he says:

O, this knight,
Were he well known, would be a precious thing
To fit our English stage; he that should write
But such a fellow, should be thought to feign
Extremely, if not maliciously.

(II.i.56-9).⁴¹

⁴¹ John W. Creaser, ed., *Ben Jonson: Volpone or the Fox* (London, Sidney, 1978).

Lady Would-Be is a great imitator of the manners and behaviour of the Italian Courtesans of all people; she tries to impress the magnifico Volpone of the main plot with her faulty knowledge of Italian writers and her pretentious studies of medicine, which she displays by reciting lists of herbs and minerals. She does not realize that her pretence to seem an educated lady is ridiculous in this way and thus betrays her upbringing in a noble household.

Besides, Lady Would-Be belongs to those who pay respect to the sick Volpone in the hope to become his heir. In this capacity she aligns herself with characters who represent the lower classes of the social hierarchy, so she actually degrades herself. By not conforming to the standard of their noble upbringing, in other words falling below the expectation as far as the education of the upper class in Renaissance England is concerned, the Would-Bes present a picture of uncalled-for characteristics of their class. Still it holds good that in his *Volpone* Jonson introduced a subplot with characters from a different class compared to those of the main plot.

2.4 THE FIELD OF LEISURE OCCUPATIONS

It suffices to mention one or two instances in a subplot which reflect leisure occupations. Although possibly of minor importance I cannot resist mentioning the consort of music as characteristic of a noble household in the Belmont subplot of *The Merchant of Venice*. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries musical establishments were employed by the Tudor and pre-Restoration courts. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth well-known composers, like Thomas Tallis and William Byrd, played the organ for the Chapel Royal. Therefore it is not surprising that Shakespeare should have

introduced the musicians at Belmont Castle in one of the subplots of *The Merchant of Venice*. It is interesting to note that Henry Raynor refers to the consort which played on the moonlit night at Belmont Castle as follows:

From the functional use of music as an adjunct of the stately life to the acceptance of the art as a necessary activity of civilised man was a step which took a good deal of time; in the intellectual excitement of the Renaissance music came into its own as one of the accomplishments of civilised man; in the 1590s, Shakespeare's Lorenzo lectures the Jewish Jessica on the spiritual and moral value of music, taking it for granted that a heterogeneous Elizabethan audience will accept the point while taking it for granted that a wealthy heiress like Portia will employ the consort of viol players whose music inspires Lorenzo's discourse.⁴²

References to leisure occupations in a subplot occur in *A Woman Killed With Kindness*. In the main plot of this play one notices the reference to a music instrument, a lute. Playing a music instrument belonged to the accomplishments of a gentleman, and also girls of noble families were given music lessons. In this connection it is not extraordinary that Anne Frankford should have been given a lute by her husband.

On the wedding celebrations of the Frankfords three parties are to be distinguished. The guests, in all probability people of the same class as the bride and bridegroom, divide themselves into two parties, those who dance to the music of the town-musicians in the hall, and those, the party of peers, who initially keep themselves to themselves. The third party consists of the servants who amuse themselves with country dances in the yard. In fact the peers do not know whether to take part in the dancing or not, so that Sir Charles Mountford, referring to the two other parties says:

⁴² *A Social History of Music: from the Middle Ages to Beethoven* (New York, 1978), 75.

Well, leave them to their sports. Sir Francis Acton
I'll make a match with you: meet me tomorrow
At Chevy chase, I'll fly my hawk with yours.
(I.92-4).

Sir Charles Mountford's challenge refers to the pastime of hawking to which Sir Francis Acton adds another contest, that of running their dogs. These two matches are to take place early the next morning, agreed to on their word as a gentleman.

If there you miss me, say
I am no gentleman: I hold my day.
(I.112-3).

The subplot of *A Woman Killed with Kindness* displays pastimes characteristic of the nobility. As previously stated in this chapter in connection with class, the main plot and the subplot are very close to one another because of family ties. This is reflected in the following remark by Wendoll:

We that have been ahunting all the day
Come with prepared stomachs, Master Frankford,
(IV.iii.p.47)

which is a reference to the pastime of hunting of the leisured classes as well.

Another example of leisure occupations occurs in *Hamlet*, in which class-differentiation is depicted between the main plot and the subplot, between royalty and the gentry respectively. Since these two classes are very close to each other, their leisure occupations are the same, and as a consequence no distinction in pastime occupations has been established with the introduction of the subplot. That, however, the noble art of swordplay should have been employed to kill an opponent is one of the unexpected courses inherent in drama, which must be ascribed to the playwright's inventiveness.

The subplot of *The Winter's Tale* is actually the depiction of a sheep-shearing festivity, a seasonal celebration at which shepherds amuse themselves with dancing, eating, buying all kinds of trifles and ballads from the pedlar, Autolycus, a cunning pickpocket, and a performance of the dance of twelve satyrs. It is the informal pastime of country people who work hard throughout the year to earn a living.

The discussion of examples of class-differences which occur in the subplots of plays in the fields discussed has shown that decorum was a means for playwrights to make it clear for audiences that another class of the society had been introduced. It is perhaps superfluous, but I want to emphasize that certain subplots display class-differentiating instances in more than one field. To this effect the Touchstone-Audrey subplot reflects characteristics of class in the field of behaviour and also in the field of language. The subplots of the Henry plays for that matter reflect class-differences in the field of the way money is earned, in the field of language, and also in the field of behaviour. Thus the application of a subplot on the part of the playwright was among other things a means to introduce into the existing plot personages of another social stratum with all their particularities recognizable to the audience. In this way the play as a whole offers a true reflection of the English Renaissance society, of the mixing of high and low.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

THE ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN SUBPLOT AND MAIN PLOT: VARIOUS FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS ESTABLISHING ANALOGY

The discussion in the first two chapters of the origins, adaptations and imitations of the subplot and its class-differences compared to those of the main plot has yielded two aspects which are closely related to one another. In the first instance the functional aspect of the subplot has been commented upon, from its beginnings of comic relief - or comic release in Levin's terminology - in *Secunda Pastorum* to such ones as a complementary functional aspect in *As You Like It*, or a structural functional device in *The Merchant of Venice*. In the second instance the thematic aspects of the subplot in relation to those of the main plot have been the subject of research, of numerous articles and books.

In Chapter 1 attention has been drawn to Robert Weimann's view in this connection. He states that the subplot by ushering "countervoices" into the play shows its thematic implication for the main plot. None of the plays that have been read in connection with this study could indeed be exempted from this claim. That is why the various functions of the subplot will be analysed with the thematic and topical correlations between main plot and subplot as a point of departure and at the same time an analogical and/or contrasting relationship between main plot and subplot will be highlighted. It is, however, necessary to emphasize first, that a subplot, or a play-within-the-play, may have more than one function. In this respect the subplot of *Much Ado About Nothing* is a good example. It serves both as a structural device (to fill a time gap) and a complementary one

of contrast. Secondly, one and the same function may have two objectives at the same time, namely analogy and contrast. The Belmont subplot of *The Merchant of Venice* in this respect could be regarded as exemplary for its complementary functional features resulting both in analogy and contrast.

The functional differences between subplots are manifold. Therefore a broad division has been made, viz.: subplots having a complementary function, a structural function, a purely contrasting function by the introduction of a foil, or a function serving as a means to achieve a certain purpose. The last function could be further subdivided into simplification, exposure, establishing guilt, etc.

In the remainder of this chapter I am going to discuss the functional aspects of the subplot resulting in analogy and in Chapter 4 those bringing about contrast.

3.1 THE COMPLEMENTARY FUNCTION OF THE SUBPLOT

The plays that belong to this category feature a subplot or a play-within-the-play in which aspects of the same theme or topic as in the main plot are depicted. A simple analogy may be obtained by a description of repetitive episodes in the subplot evolving around a certain theme. This may also constitute an additional aspect of the theme treated in the main plot, so that, on account of the introduction of a subplot, to a certain extent an all-encompassing notion of it is achieved.

The subplot of *The Tragedy of King Lear* has two functions, one of which belongs in this category. The two plots are complementary as regards the theme of suffering. The second function that of simplification will be dealt with further on in part 3.2. In the main plot the train of events is set going by King Lear who wants to divide his kingdom among his three

Lear, disillusioned by the outcome of the love test, moves from ~~Re-~~
~~gan to~~ ^{to Regan} Goneril taking with him his whole retinue. This, of course, causes much friction in the households of the respective daughters, especially since Lear behaves as if he were the *primus inter pares* and expects to be attended at his beck and call. Goneril thinks it not necessary for her father to keep his retinue of a hundred rowdy followers and suggests to have the number cut down to half. Later on he learns from Regan that he is too old to take decisions himself and that his behaviour displays indiscretion and dotage - for which, it must be admitted, there is some ground. Lear cannot understand why he is abused by his daughters. This causes his mental disturbance from which he never recovers, be it that there are the odd lucid moments, when he recognizes Cordelia in Dover, for instance.

In the subplot the Earl of Gloucester is likewise disillusioned by his son Edgar. His natural son Edmond, who suffers from the - in his eyes unjustified - attitude towards bastard sons, decides to deprive his brother Edgar, the first-born, of his inheritance.⁵ This is not easy because of the law of primogeniture, so that he has to resort to deceit. Through a forged letter Gloucester learns that his son Edgar regards him as a tyrant under whose rule his two sons suffer. Informed by Edmond that Gloucester seeks his life, the elder son flees his father's castle and disguises himself as Tom of Bedlam. Edgar's falling into disgrace paves the way for Edmond to become Gloucester's heir.

It is taken for granted that by the introduction of a subplot with

⁵ Ralph Berry gives a kind of justification for Edmond's behaviour by his sketch of Gloucester, which reads:
the aristocrat who will neither acknowledge properly nor cut
off his bastard, and thereby breeds a malcontent.
Shakespeare and Social Class, 103.

parallel events the 'universality' of suffering is enhanced.⁶ Robert Egan's explanation of 'universality', based on the text, is worthwhile to consider. He states that when King Lear, accompanied by his Fool, meets the bedlam beggar he realizes for the first time that the world is peopled by many more victims. Thus he realizes that he is not the only one who suffers, and that suffering has a common currency.⁷

Contrary to the commands of Lear's daughters and the Duke of Cornwall not to leave the castle Gloucester goes out in the storm to seek the King. On coming home the next morning he is interrogated, his eyes are put out by Cornwall himself, and he is thrust out of the gates of his own castle, but not before he learns that his son Edmond has betrayed him.

The analogy is established by the theme of suffering: Lear's mental suffering (caused by spiritual blindness) and Gloucester's physical suffering (literal blindness). The fact that both in the main plot and the subplot loving children are thrown out by their respective fathers - for reasons of misjudgement and lack of moral perception respectively - provides another point of analogy. In conclusion it can be argued that in respect of the close parallels the subplot functions as a mirror to the main plot.

In Chapter 1 the three different strata in *As You Like It* have been

⁶ A.C. Bradley's idea as regards 'universality' in this play has been adopted by some scholars and students of Shakespeare. His view is expressed in:

Hence, too, as well as from other sources, comes the feeling which haunts us in *King Lear*, as though we were witnessing something universal, - a conflict not so much of particular persons as of the powers of good and evil in the world.

Shakespearean Tragedy (New York, 1905), 262-3.

Barbara Everett, however, objects to this claim. According to her:

The sub-plot of Gloucester and his sons, always said to be added to increase 'universality', is more likely to be brought in to drive the plot forward.

Young Hamlet: Essays on Shakespeare's Tragedies (Oxford, 1990), 66.

⁷ *Drama within Drama: Shakespeare's Sense of his Art in King Lear, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest* (New York and London, 1945), 36-9.

discussed. In the main plot romantic love develops in a courtly milieu between Rosalind and Orlando. In the pastoral subplot Silvius is in love with Phebe, but she does not want to be courted by him. His love is representative of Petrarchan love. And in the second subplot depicting peasantry Touchstone feels attracted towards Audrey; their love is based on eroticism. These three aspects of the theme of love form a unity, which underlines the complementary functional aspects of the two subplots constituting analogy.

In spite of the fact that the complementary characteristics of the Belmont subplot and the main plot in *The Merchant of Venice* result for the greater part in contrast - some of which have been discussed previously in the chapter on class and others will be explored later on - there is one topic that points to analogous treatment. By choosing rightly in the Belmont plot Bassanio frees Portia from bondage to her father's will, laid down in the casket trial. And in the main plot Portia frees Antonio from bondage to Shylock's stipulations for borrowing three thousand ducats through her legal arguments in the person of a barrister.

The function of the subplot in *The Taming of the Shrew* is also complementary as regards the theme of love. In the subplot, featuring the second daughter of Baptista Minola, the courtship of Bianca initially begins as a conventional procedure. There are a couple of suitors, which only adds to the prospect - for the father, of course - of having the choice of the highest 'bidder'. Baptista, however, is adamant to have his elder daughter married before he gives his consent for the marriage of Bianca.

In the main plot the elder daughter Katherina - for whom until recently no suitor has turned up because of her shrewishness - is courted by a newcomer to Padua, Petruchio. On the death of his father this young

man has inherited money and goods and is in search of a rich wife. Notwithstanding the fact that Hortensio has informed him that Katherina is a shrew, the premise that she is wealthy is enough for Petruchio to ask her father's consent to marry her. His

courtship follows a highly conventional procedure, exaggerating^{ed} enough to make it amusing, but perilously close to actual experience.

It is indeed a harsh and persistent fight, which bears upon the love Petruchio begins to feel for Katherina. After having been married to her, he tries to overcome her shrewishness. This procedure has, according to some scholars, all the features of the taming of a bird of prey and I think that they are right for it reminds me indeed of *The Goshawk*⁹, which describes how the owner of a hawk step by step wins the submission of the bird. In the same way by give and take Petruchio succeeds in subduing and winning his wife by imposing starvation, withholding sleep, and not allowing her to contradict him. Katherina has learnt by manoeuvring lovingly and skilfully around the obstacles to make the most of her marriage.¹⁰

⁸ Ann Jennalie Cook, *Making a Match*, 139.

⁹ T.H. White, *The Goshawk* 1951(Harmondsworth, England, 1973), passim.

¹⁰ 1. There are those who think that her spirit is unbroken and that she doesn't mean a word of what she says; what Petruchio has taught her is prudence and dissimulation; she will exercise her power through other means than tantrums.
Philip Edwards, *Shakespeare: a Writer's Progress* (Oxford, New York, 1986), 195.

2. In goading Katherina's mind into action he is paying her the compliment of asserting that she has one. The taming plot has the outline of a conventional rather brutal shrew comedy; but there is surprising psychological richness in its development.
Alexander Leggatt, *English Drama: Shakespeare to the Restoration, 1590-1660* (London and New York, 1988), 23.

3. The major plot is a refined treatment of the old farcical theme or the taming of a curst wife, but it is a mistake to conceive of the play in purely farcical terms. Petruchio is no wife-beater like the hero of the popular ballad on which the plot rests. He is a gentle, clever man of the world, a profound humorist and the best of actors.
Hardin Craig, *An Interpretation of Shakespeare* (New York, 1948), 90.

4. The view that is sometimes heard in this connection, namely that the play has sexist connotations is not shared by me. It is a comedy, so it is exaggerating the treatment imposed upon Katherina by her husband. The homily she preaches, however, is, according to our twentieth-century ideas despicable.

Meanwhile in the subplot Bianca and the disguised Lucentio are so in love, that with the help of Tranio, Lucentio's servant, they marry secretly. Thus no consent is given by the respective parents, and consequently no dowry is agreed on, only passion rules this decision. Thus in this subplot conventional love turns into passionate love. Here again two aspects of love, conventional love in the main plot and passionate love in the secondary level, are combined through the introduction of the latter resulting in two analogous plots.

The subplot of *All's Well That Ends Well* shows both analogous and contrasting features. The Parolles' subplot displays analogical episodes with the main plot around the theme of blindness. Parolles, a follower of Bertram Count of Rossillion, has made himself notorious in the eyes of two French Lords who have also gone to the wars in Italy. According to them Parolles is not of noble descent, although he claims to be a gentleman. Besides, he is a coward, a liar and more of these 'epithets' (III.vi.7-12).¹¹ Bertram disagrees with his fellow officers, and wishes to get to the truth by testing Parolles. The Lords then devise a scheme to capture Parolles, bind, hoodwink and interrogate him, pretending to be the enemy.

In the subplot it is about literal blindness (Parolles being blindfolded) and in the main plot one could speak about Bertram's mental blindness for firstly not recognizing Helena's qualities, secondly not seeing through Parolles - although he has been warned by Lafew previously - and thirdly not suspecting that he actually holds his wife Helena in his arms when he makes love to Diana. Comparable with *As You Like It* and *The Tragedy of King Lear* these two aspects of a theme, that of blindness in this

¹¹ G.K. Hunter, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1989).

case, complement one another pointing towards analogy.

The following play to be discussed is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. According to some critics this comedy consists of four stories, viz.: the framing plot of Theseus and Hippolita, the main plot of the Athenian lovers, the subplot concerning the fairy court, and the one of the artisans.¹² This classification leaves no independent room for the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play. In my view it could be treated as a device in itself - and consequently seen as a 'kind' of subplot - or it could be regarded as an appendage to the main plot, "having a celebratory function"¹³. It is also feasible to regard it as an appendage to the subplot of the artisans, for it provides the culmination of the rehearsals depicted in their subplot.

A parallel can be discerned between the several plots, namely the theme of strife which comes to the fore in the main plot, the fairy plot and also in the 'framing plot'. Since contention is not depicted in this plot, but only referred to as battle, which took place in the past, I restrict myself to the other two plots.

In the main plot the courtiers Lysander and Demetrius are having a dispute about a girl whom they both love. Hermia the girl in question is in love with Lysander, but her father Egeus wants to marry her to Demetrius, although the two young men are of the same social background and are equally wealthy. Egeus insists on having his way (I.i.41-4). His ap-

¹² Among those who see the Theseus-Hippolita plot as a framing device are Hardin Craig in *An Interpretation of Shakespeare* (New York, 1948), 35; Thomas Marc Parrott in *Shakespearean Comedy* (New York and Oxford, 1949), 128; Enid Welsford in *The Court Masque: A Study in the Relationship between Poetry and The Revels* (Cambridge, 1927), 326.

I myself, however, think that the Theseus-Hippolita plot is not a framing plot, but together with the lovers' plot of the Athenians it constitutes the main plot.

¹³ I am indebted to Stanley Wells for the term 'appendage'. Referring to the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play he claims: whereas in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* it is rather an appendage to the action, having a celebratory function.

"Shakespeare Without Sources," *Shakespearean Comedy*, eds. David Palmer and Malcolm Bradbury, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 14 (1972): 58-74, 61.

peal to the Duke is not in vain, for Theseus admonishes Hermia to do as her father bids her, otherwise she is to die or to be sent to a convent. Theseus is not happy with this incident, because he is aware of the fact that Hermia is in love with Lysander, and moreover Lysander claims:

Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul:

(I.i.106-8).

Theseus gives Hermia time until the new moon to think and asks Demetrius and Egeus to go with him, saying:

I have some private schooling for you both.
(I.i.116).¹⁴

Hermia and Lysander decide to elope to a widow aunt of his, a dowager, who lives at a little distance from Athens, and are going to get married there. This aunt regards Lysander as her only son, so that he will inherit money and property at her death, be it that he should have to dispense with Hermia's dowry. Out of friendship Hermia tells Helena of their plans and the latter, to win back Demetrius, betrays Hermia and Lysander's intentions. It turns out differently, however, for Demetrius still in love with Hermia pursues the couple in the woods.

Meanwhile in one of the subplots, in the fairy court -

¹⁴ Sometimes a secret wooing leads to a secret betrothal. However, without proof of witnesses, for instance, this kind of pledge can always be broken. For example in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Lysander charges Demetrius of having been secretly betrothed to Helena (I.i.106-8), which is acknowledged by her, for she claims:

For, ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
(I.ii.242-3).

This is confessed by Demetrius later on:

To her my Lord,
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia.
(IV.i.170-1).

In this connection Ann Jennalie Cook states:

After a night in the woods this lover confesses. His acknowledgement along with Theseus' early negligence and the fact that the pair have spent a night together unchaperoned, helps to explain why the Duke overrules the wishes of Hermia's father. *Making a Match*, 203-4.

a shadowy court-in-exile, one which, like the moon, reflects
its counterpart -¹⁵,

strife between Oberon the fairy King and Titania his Queen is threatening the peace of marital love. The bone of contention is a little changeling boy, son of a friend of Titania's, a votaress, who died in child-birth and left the boy in the care of Titania. Oberon wants to have the boy as a henchman, a request which is refused by Titania. Therefore he is determined to torment his queen, because he thinks it an injury to withhold the boy from him. So he sends Puck, his page, on an errand to find him the purple flower, called 'love-in-idleness'. A few drops of its liquor applied on the eyelids of Titania while she is asleep will make her dote on the first thing she sees when she awakes, and Oberon hopes it will be a "vile thing" (II.ii.3). He carries out his plan and orders Puck to do the same to the Athenian gentleman in the woods, Demetrius pursued by Helena.

As regards Titania it turns out that, when she awakes she sets eyes on Bottom the weaver, who has come to the woods to rehearse the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play with his fellow artisans, and falls in love with him. Preceding this encounter, however, Bottom has been transformed, for Puck has clapped an asshead on him. When Lysander who is mistaken for Demetrius by Puck awakes, he sees Helena and immediately falls in love with her. Helena is not amused, for she thinks that Lysander is doing it on purpose to make her miserable.

On meeting Titania and her lover in the woods Oberon pities her. When she, on his begging, relinquishes the changeling to him, he decides to undo the enchantment. He also orders Puck to restore the young Athenians to their true lovers by administering the aforementioned juice.

¹⁵ Ralph Berry, *Shakespeare and Social Class*, 34.

Parallels can be drawn between these two plots. Parallels of discord in relationships, which ends in reconciliation: in the main plot strife among the girls and young men of the Athenian court and in the fairy subplot strife between the King and Queen of fairy-land.

3.2 A MEANS TO ACHIEVE A CERTAIN PURPOSE: A FUNCTION OF THE SUBPLOT SIMPLIFICATION

One of these means is simplification¹⁶, which - as stated above - is another function of the Gloucester subplot in *The Tragedy of King Lear*. The thematic implication of the two plots is, according to Susan Snyder, concerned

with the passing of power from old to young.¹⁷

This has been elaborately dealt with in part 3.1.

The analogy established by the theme of suffering, Lear's mental suffering and Gloucester's physical suffering is commented upon by Bridget Gellert Lyons as follows:

Lear's sufferings are heroic because they cannot be accommodated by traditional formulas, moral or literary, and the subplot partly to establish that fact.¹⁸

exists

In the case of Lear his sufferings stand in no proportion to the cause, whereas, according to Bridget Gellert Lyons, in the Earl's case his are regarded as a kind of ~~justification~~ ^{retribution} for adultery in his younger years.¹⁹

¹⁶ I am indebted for this terminology to Bridget Gellert Lyons, "The Subplot as Simplification in *King Lear*," *Some Facets of King Lear: Essays in Prismatic Criticism*, eds. Rosalie L. Colie and F.T. Flahiff (London, 1974): 23-38.

¹⁷ *The Comic Matrix*, 140.

¹⁸ "The Subplot as Simplification", 25.

¹⁹ In the early Middle Ages, biblical notions of justice and redemption, that an eye should be exacted for an eye, or that an offending eye or limb should be removed if it was an obstacle to salvation, were physically acted out.
Bridget Gellert Lyons, "The Subplot as Simplification", 28.

And she continues her argument by stating:

Gloucester's blindness pictorializes his sin and his folly because the significance of the eyeless man's presence on the stage is clarified for us, by himself and Edgar, in moralized language.²⁰

In a conversation with Kent early in the play Gloucester introduces his bastard son Edmond with the following lines:

Though this knave came something saucily to the world before
he was sent for, yet was his mother fair, there was good
sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged.
(1.1.20-3).

As a matter of fact Ralph Berry argues that this remark has been made within hearing distance of his son, for Kent has asked:

"Is not *this* your son?" and not "*that*".²¹

And Edgar says to Edmond:

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us.
The dark and vicious place where thee he got
Cost him his eyes.
(5.3.161-3).

These two examples are possibly the ones Bridget Gellert Lyons has in mind. The analysis of this play as regards the functional aspects of its subplot is complete by this additional comment on the purpose of simplification.

EXPLANATION

Quite a different function is that of the subplot of *Measure for Measure*. It is, as stated previously, a means to explain the sordid, secret manipulations which take place in the main plot. In the subplot extramarital congress and venereal diseases are openly discussed. In Chapter 2 the

²⁰ "The Subplot as Simplification", 29.

²¹ *Shakespeare and Social Class*, 102.

analogy as regards the use of euphemisms between the main plot and the subplot has been discussed. Lucio's adaptability in using appropriate language in the respective environments has also been explored.

In the subplot the innuendos and jokes of the three men-about-town, and the business of the bawd Mrs Overdone and her servant Pompey reflect the loose morals that have affected the whole city. Although Claudio, a friend of Lucio's, and his betrothed Juliet had to postpone their wedding ceremony, because of the fact that her relatives had not forwarded her dowry, they had consummated their marriage. This has become common knowledge, for Juliet is big with child. After quite some years of neglect on the part of the Duke, the deputy has imposed the law on offenders of fornication anew. That is why Claudio is being arrested and is soon to be executed. This decision is, of course, received with great alarm. On his way to prison Claudio meets Lucio and asks him to tell his sister Isabella, who has just entered a convent, the particulars of his arrest, and entreat her to plead with Angelo for him. She is prepared to do it, although she condemns her brother for having acted in the way he did.

The Duke has meanwhile, in the disguise of a friar, gained access to the prison to assist those who are sentenced to death. In this capacity he has talks with Claudio, and also with Juliet. Later he overhears a conversation between Isabella and her brother and learns that Angelo on the urgent supplication of the novice has given her the assurance of reprieve of her brother's death sentence on the condition that she should give up her virginity. Isabella is highly indignant about Angelo's proposal and when Claudio beseeches her to sacrifice herself, her harshness is almost hysterical. She has, of course, every right to feel hurt about Angelo's infamous proposition, but she should not have taken it out on her brother.

In this connection Kenneth Muir remarks:

By making his heroine a novice, Shakespeare ensured that the conflict in her mind should be as violent as possible. Shakespeare made Isabella a novice with a passionate hatred of sexual vice.²²

This is the analogy between the subplot and the main plot, for Angelo's proposal is actually the same as whoring, because he is willing, so he says, to reprieve Claudio of his death sentence in exchange for having his own sexual pleasure. It is true that the secrecy surrounding the meeting between Angelo and Isabella/Mariana - the place conveniently hidden - which is to take place in the middle of the night, is the opposite of what happens in the underworld in this respect, but this is exactly the function of the subplot, namely to give an explanation. Language and whoring constitute the thematic unities in this play.

EXPOSURE

Another functional aspect of a subplot which complies with 'a means to achieve a certain purpose' is the one of exposure. This happens in the play-withⁱⁿ-the-play in *Hamlet*, which has been dealt with in Chapter 1. Suffice it to say that *The Murder of Gonzago* enacts a murder committed a long time ago in Vienna in which a king called Gonzago was poisoned by his nephew Lucianus. This nephew became the lover of the queen. The play-with-in-the-play is a clever device. For, with a nephew as the murderer of the King - and not a brother - firstly no one would have suspected a connection between the death of King Hamlet and *The Murder of Gonzago*. But Claudius is now aware that Hamlet knows that he has killed his brother by pouring poison in his ears while he was asleep. Secondly the King is quite

²² *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays* (London, 1977), 179.

aware of the fact that the murderer in the quality of nephew to the player king is a hint that Hamlet, his nephew, will act as revenger. The play-within-the-play serves by its parallels as a means to expose Claudius's guilt and simultaneously to verify the credibility of the ghost. But it also serves as a means to disclose that Hamlet has given himself away.

TO FIND OUT

The functional relationship between the subplot and the main plot in *Henry VI Part 2* is constituted by the rebellion depicted in the subplot. It provides a means for Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, to find out - after having secured the support of the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick for his claim to the title of King of England - whether the time is ripe, as far as the commons' mind is concerned, for the House of York to come to power. For Jack Cade this revolt means his opposition against those in power.²³ Richard's claim to the title of King of England runs parallel with the claim of Jack Cade to be the twin brother (IV.ii.132) of the deceased John Mortimer - a pretender to the throne at the time - and in this capacity to have stirred up this rebellion to become King of England eventually.

Another analogy is that the two protagonists meet with their deaths, now that the insurrection has died down and the Lord of Misrule's short reign has come to an end. Richard is treacherously to be killed later on in *Henry VI Part 3* (I.iv.15ff). And as regards Jack Cade after his followers have left him because of the fact that the King has pardoned them, he has fled to the woods - a fugitive then - and is killed in a fight with a gentleman.

²³ Still some inconsistencies remain, for Richard acknowledges to himself that he has induced Jack Cade to stir up a rebellion (III.i.356-9), which is denied by Cade (IV.ii.148).

RESTORATION AND RECONCILIATION

To achieve restoration and reconciliation is a function of the subplot both in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. Nature versus art, reality versus imagination, and love broken off - in one case destroyed by jealousy and in the other case unaccepted by class prejudice - and eventually restored are the parallels between the main plot of *The Winter's Tale* and its pastoral subplot. In depicting the passage from wrong to healing, recognition and restoration, the play moves from Sicilia to Bohemia and back to Sicilia. The 'healing' process which takes place after a lapse of sixteen years is initiated by the love of a young shepherd - a prince in disguise - for a supposed shepherdess.

In the main plot it is Leontes' jealousy which is the cause of the unfolding tragedy. This sudden and inexplicable jealousy has intrigued many scholars and it is commented upon by many critics. Most of them regard it as inherent in the pastoral romance tradition and only one or two of them are of the opinion that the ambiguity of the text²⁴, the rashness with which Leontes jumps to the conclusion that Hermione carries Polixenes' child, has tragic consequences. In particular Hermione's remarks -

²⁴ It is true that the latter idea is a modern one and has developed through the application of deconstruction, in this case of language and rhetoric. There may be some foundation in the argument that, judging from the text, Hermione and Polixenes are on more intimate terms than has been assumed. Still the pronouncement of the oracle indicates that Leontes' jealousy has no foundation at all. Cf. Howard Felperin, "'Tongue-tied our Queen?': the Deconstruction of Presence in *The Winter's Tale*," *The Uses of the Canon: Elizabethan Literature and Contemporary Theory* (Oxford, 1990): 3-18. The ambiguities in the text, however, still remain.

As an afterthought the following suggestion could be worthwhile to contemplate. When the play opens Polixenes wants to leave, because he has been a guest at the Sicilian court for already nine months (I.ii.1). "This period of time is a minimum to make it possible that Polixenes could be the father of Hermione's child." (I.ii.1-2n). But it could also point to what has taken place in Bohemia. Polixenes' wife may have conceived just before her husband's departure, so to Polixenes it is time to worry

of what may chance

Or breed upon our absence. (I.ii.11-2).

In other words that also Polixenes' wife is near her time. There is, however, no further evidence. A second interpretation of these two lines is a malicious one, because then Polixenes should have expressed his lack of confidence in his wife.

spoken jestingly to camouflage perhaps the underlying resentments (I.ii. 80-108)²⁵ - may have been the cause of Leontes' ungovernable behaviour. In other words they may serve as a kind of justification for his passionate jealousy. Marital love has collapsed, Hermione gives birth prematurely to a baby daughter, who is soon after banished by Leontes, Mamillius the prince dies of an illness, and Hermione supposedly dies of grief.

In the subplot which is introduced when a sheep-shearing festivity is taking place we hear, as stated above, of romantic love blossoming between Florizel, the crown prince of Bohemia, and Perdita, a supposed shepherdess. The conversation between Polixenes in disguise and Perdita has already been mentioned in Chapter 2. Polixenes tries to convince Perdita that grafting in horticulture, the means, or art, which improves nature is itself nature. So there is, he argues, an interrelation between nature and art. Also the intended betrothal of Perdita and Florizel and the intervention of Polixenes have been discussed. In the subplot the theme of love shows a parallel with that of the main plot, for the betrothal is broken off, because it is unacceptable in the eyes of Polixenes. The impediment, however, will be taken away in the main plot, when the supposed father of Perdita and his son have revealed particulars about the changeling Perdita.

The analogy in the main plot in this connection is the restoration of marital love when Hermione 'has come to life'. But before this happens Paulina, one of the ladies-in-waiting to the deceased queen, tells Leontes and his guests that a statue of Hermione has just been finished by Julio

²⁵ Ruth Nevo, *Shakespeare's Other Language* 1987 (London and New York, 1992), 104.

Romano. Since especially Perdita is eager to see it, the company is on its way to a removed house where the statue is being kept. Paulina insistently stresses the fact that it is a work of art which comes very close to nature. Here again the theme of art versus nature is emphasized, for when the curtain which reveals the statue is drawn aside, the company is amazed at the likeness, they see

the life as lively mock'd as ever
Still sleep mock'd death.
(V.iii.19-20).

In the subplot the discussion of the theme of art versus nature is set going by the pure mention of gillyvors, nature's bastards, and is taken over in the main plot by the discovery of nature in art, notably in the statue representing Hermione alive. In this connection Rosalie L. Colie says:

Within the thematics of pastoral such an examination of the relative values of nature and art is one of the mode's dictates: the relationship between the two is reversed and at the same time reaffirmed in *The Winter's Tale*, which owes its particular being to the permissiveness of the pastoral dramatic conventions, by which a woman can pretend to be a work of art, and can be one as well.²⁶

The functional aspect of the subplot and the analogical themes interwoven between the two plots are also here an indication of the importance of the convention of the subplot in Renaissance drama.

As indicated above also the function of the subplot of *The Tempest* is to accomplish restoration and reconciliation, again set in motion by the love between two young persons. But the subplot is, apart from the story of Miranda and Ferdinand, also the one of Caliban and the sailors.²⁷

²⁶ *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton, NJ, 1974), 282-3.

²⁷ I am indebted for this classification to Richard Moulton, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1901), 265. He is the only critic - of the books I have read in this connection at least - who made his view known as regards the characters who feature in the subplot of *The Tempest*.

The unifying themes of the main plot and the subplot are analogies of conspiracy, usurpation or rebellion (contrast is established by the topic of magic²⁸). Conspiracy, usurpation or rebellion can be detected in three spheres. Unlike strife/battle between Theseus and Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the usurpation described in *The Tempest* which took place in the past is of great importance to the course of the plots. Then Prospero's dukedom had been usurped by his brother, and the rightful Duke of Milan and his three-year-old daughter Miranda were placed in a boat - secretly provided with a few books, food and clothes by the noble Neapolitan Gonzalo - and put to sea. Their ship eventually came ashore on an island where they have lived ever since. Only two creatures inhabited it: Ariel, a spirit trapped in a cloven pine, and Caliban, the son of the witch Sycorax and a devil. Prospero took possession of the island and rescued Ariel with the promise to set him at liberty after some time. Caliban, an uncivilized being, was taught by Prospero and Miranda to speak and improve his poor general knowledge. They made an effort to nurture nature, but this came to an abrupt end, when Caliban tried to violate the honour of Miranda. From then on Caliban had been degraded to a slave.

Through his art Prospero 'knows' that the King of Naples Alonso, his son Ferdinand, and the usurping Duke of Milan among others are on their way home from the wedding of Alonso's daughter and the King of Tunis. Through his magic, and with the help of Ariel Prospero unleashes a tempestuous storm and the ships with the noble guests on board wreck near 'his' island. Before it happens, however, one after the other plunges into the foaming brine and washes ashore on different places of the island, thus

²⁸ The contrast between Prospero's white magic and Sycorax' black magic is of minor importance so that it will not be given further attention.

plot' is the last one on this list of functions that have been introduced to achieve a certain goal. There are two plays of which the subplots have these functional implications, namely Ben Jonson's *Volpone* and John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan*.

One of the analogies between the subplot and the main plot of *Volpone* is the topic abnormalities/monstrosities. In the main plot it reflects the greed of the legacy-hunters some of whom show their ugliest sides to achieve their goal. The ingenuity they display to satisfy their greed bears evidence of an abnormality which borders on the improbable. Corbaccio, a decrepit gentleman, for instance, disinherits his son in favour of Volpone in expectation of a gesture in turn, namely that

out of conscience, and mere gratitude
(I.iv.108),

he will become Volpone's heir. Corvino, a ~~an elderly~~ merchant, willingly and even eagerly intends to prostitute his young wife to Volpone, because he is made to believe that on the advice of the physicians a young woman is to be sought to sleep by Volpone to restore his health. (Actually it is Volpone himself who in the disguise of a mountebank has seen Celia and impressed by her beauty wishes to make love to her). Corvino tries to persuade his reluctant wife, asserting:

An old decrepit wretch,
That has no sense, no sinew;
(III.vii.42-3)

a voice; a shadow;
And what can this man hurt you?
(III.vii.45-6).

And further on he argues:

I grant you: if I thought it were a sin
I should not urge you.
(III.vii.57-8).

Celia thinks that it is a matter of ethics, not a matter of "charity" (III.vii.65) to offer one's wife to a man, be it that he is old and supposedly too weak to make love. In my view she is right. This monstrous proposal comes from a man who has threatened his wife - after he has seen her speaking to the mountebank and throwing a handkerchief with money to him - with all kinds of nasty, cruel 'treatments', if she were to look through the window once again. These abnormalities, monstrosities, namely the disinheritance of a son and the intended prostitution of a wife, are foregrounded early in the play by the introduction of Volpone's three 'mascots': Nano, a dwarf, Castrone, a eunuch, and Androgyno, a hermaphrodite, appalling caricatures of a family.²⁹

In the subplot Sir Politic is intrigued by state matters, spying, silly enterprises, and also by the 'events' at home, unheard-of phenomena, such as three porpoises on London bridge, the fires at Berwick, which is a spillover of the abnormalities mentioned in the main plot. They are, compared to those in the main plot, however, mere folly. Just as Lady Would-Be's present to Volpone is compared to the valuable presents of the other legacy-hunters. The enterprises of Sir Politic prove to be failures, and they are a foreboding of the eventual collapse of Volpone's highly ingenious plans to enrich himself.

²⁹ John W. Creaser, ed., *Ben Jonson: Volpone, or the Fox* (London, Sydney, 1978), 44.

Speaking to Corvino Mosca refers to the bastards of Volpone:

Know you not that, Sir? 'Tis the common fable,
The dwarf, the fool, the eunuch are all his;
He's the true father of his family.

(I.v.46-8).

Especially because of the fact that Mosca uses the word "fable", which means: 'not based on fact', a 'story', 'rumour', I am inclined to think that this trio had not been sired by Volpone. Everything - from illness to death - is invented to deceive the legacy-hunters, and this tale about the three members of Volpone's household, and all the other bastards, serves the same purpose. Besides, it was common practice to have these fools, dwarfs and eunuchs at court, to provide entertainment. See, for instance, the interlude in Act I, Scene ii, which shows the distance between master and servants, and not the relationship between father and bastards.

In the subplot Sir Politick's pride and fall is a foreboding of the pride and fall of Volpone in the main plot.³⁰

In fact Sir Politic's humiliation in seeking to hide himself in the shell of a tortoise - for fear of being arrested - can be seen as his downfall. As regards Volpone's downfall it has set in when he tries to seduce Celia and is interrupted by Bonario. Whereas self-justification coupled with inanity causes Sir Politic's humiliation, it is self-justification coupled with greed and deceit which causes Volpone's eventual arrest.

The folly displayed by the Would-Bes is a travesty of the abnormalities and monstrosities of the main plot; it indeed takes away the harshness.³¹ It is worth mentioning that the analogies of the two plots are grounded on contrast. The 'beast fable' applied to the characters of the main plot can be extended to the characters of the subplot, to the Would-Bes and to a certain extent to Peregrine.³² Contrast is displayed between the predatory animals and birds (and an insect) of the main plot and the 'harmless' birds of the subplot. Because the latter group, the parrots, with their constant chatter constitute an atmosphere of noise and mere folly compared to that of the beasts of prey.

As indicated above the subplot of *The Dutch Courtesan* (1604) also functions as a means to smooth away the harshness of the main plot. The harshness as it is exemplified by a gallant's moralizing lines in which he depicts prostitution, Franceschina's revenge on her former lover, and

³⁰ John Creaser, *Ben Jonson: Volpone or the Fox*, 47.

³¹ Incidentally the Would-Bes could also be regarded as a foil to Volpone in the main plot. I prefer, however, the idea of 'smoothing away the harshness of the main plot' to 'increasing the serious actions of the mainplot' as the function of the subplot of *Volpone* (as is well-known the latter idea is inherent to the notion of 'foil').

³² According to Jonas Barish it was John D. Rea in his edition of *Volpone* (1919) who was the first to recognize that the 'beast fable' of the main plot extended to the characters of the subplot.

Jonas A Barish, ed., *Jonson Volpone: A Casebook* (London and Basingstoke, 1972): 100-17, 110.

the severe punishment she has to undergo.

The subplot shows close parallels with the main plot, in particular because of the fact that in the two plots the parallel scenes alternate to a great extent. Both the plots have as their ultimate goal:

the exposure and correction of ill humours in a gallant, Malheureux, and a Puritan tradesman, Mulligrub the vintner.³³

This is also one of the thematic links, together with extra-marital congress and deceit. In the main plot Freevill's intention to abandon extra-marital love in favour of conventional, wedded love is the premise which underscores the plot. For that matter the *FABULAE ARGUMENTUM* phrases it thus:

The difference betwixt the love of a courtesan and a wife is the full scope of the play, which, intermixed with the deceits of a witty city jester, fills up the comedy.³⁴

Malheureux, a professed Stoic and friend of Freevill's is opposed to the latter's acquaintance with a courtesan and, after having been together to Mulligrub's tavern, he insists on seeing him home, for fear that Freevill should be drawn to

some common house of lascivious entertainment.
(I.i.77-8).

Not only are the themes of lust and love elaborated upon in the main plot, also the different principles of the friends are set one against the other. Freevill is the exponent of the young men from the well-to-do classes, who after a period of sexual licence, settle down, marry a modest, chaste girl from their own circles and raise a family. His views in connection with prostitution are condemnable, for he sees it as mere mer-

³³ Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy* (London and New York, 1980), 90.

³⁴ Macdonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill, eds., *The Dutch Courtesan, The Selected Plays of John Marston* (Cambridge, New York, 1986): 289-393, 294.

chandise and those who are "buyers" as performing a deed of "charity" (I.i.133).³⁵

Malheureux, on the other hand, expresses forcefully his abhorrence of extramarital congress. He is, according to Freevill, "one of professed abstinence" (I.ii.144), and one, who "gainst nature would seem wise" (I.ii.204). Hardly, however, has he set eyes on Freevill's courtesan Franceschina, when he puts aside his prejudices, because he thinks that someone with such a sweet face cannot be vicious. He does not realize that from the viewpoint of the playwright her linguistic deformity, which is emphasized by her Dutch accent and the constant use of profanity, seems to have been a depiction of evil on stage.³⁶ Malheureux is bent on enjoying her, which, of course, is acknowledged with glee by Freevill. Besides, the latter already intends to give up his illicit affair and gladly hands his 'cast garment' to his friend. This 'cast garment' seems to be a puppet without feelings at all in the eyes of the former owner (he argues, for instance, that courtesans are not capable of affection [I.i.151]). But Beatrice's engagement ring and Freevill's intended marriage arouse Franceschina's anger and jealousy; she is determined to have her revenge. Therefore she promises Malheureux that he may enjoy her on the condition that he kills his friend and gives her the engagement ring. He accepts this offer, but at the same time he is going to inform Freevill of this agreement.

Both Freevill and Franceschina are determined to have their own way as regards the fulfilment of the stipulations. The former for that matter

³⁵ It is interesting to observe that the word "charity" is used both in *Volpone* and in this play at the playwrights' own discretion.

³⁶ I am indebted for this viewpoint on Franceschina's linguistic deformity to Michael Scott, *John Marston's Plays: Theme, Structure and Performance* (London, 1978), 41.

is going to deceive the courtesan by pretending to have been killed in a duel with Malheureux. The latter then in the possession of Beatrice's ring will be granted his pleasure, while the former is going to keep a low profile. On Franceschina's part Malheureux will not be granted any favours, on the contrary he will be arrested for having killed his friend. As Freevill remains in hiding, Malheureux cannot prove that the death of his friend is a sham, so that he will eventually be sent to the gallows.

In the subplot the witty jester Cocledemoy displays the same attitude towards extramarital congress as Freevill does, be it that his remarks about the trade of prostitution is couched in coarse language, full of *double entendres*. Like Freevill he has his affairs. One learns that the host of the tavern, Mulligrub, is a swindler. Cocledemoy who aims at the exposure of the host's ill practices sets the procedure of gulling in motion by stealing a nest of goblets, after having enjoyed a 'snatched' meal together with his companion Mary Faugh, the bawd. He finally manages to have the vintner arrested for 'stealing' his cloak. Mulligrub swears revenge, but later on, when he contemplates the serious implications of having to face death, he even forgives his tormentor. This is for Cocledemoy the moment to rescue him and restore the stolen property. Like Freevill in the main plot Cocledemoy only wanted to teach him a lesson.

As stated above the analogy between the main plot and the subplot lies in Freevill and Cocledemoy's attitude towards prostitution and the manipulations to bring Malheureux and Mulligrub respectively on the brink of execution. But these seem not to be the only parallels between the two plots, for Anthony Caputi asserts:

But these details are probably not as important as the fact that Cocledemoy's corrective gulling of Mulligrub is a counterpart to Freevill's plan to teach Malheureux a lesson, just

as Mulligrub's comic fury is a counterpart to Franceschina's rage.³⁷

Also here the comic fury of the vintner smooths away the harshness of Franceschina's rage on discovering that her lover after all abandons her.

The foregoing analysis of the various functional aspects of the subplot, closely dependent on thematic links between main plot and subplot, have^S~~ve~~ displayed analogical associations between them.

³⁷ *John Marston, Satirist* (Ithaca, New York, 1961), 233.

C H A P T E R F O U R

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SUBPLOT AND MAIN PLOT: VARIOUS FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS ESTABLISHING CONTRAST

It is sometimes not easy to make a clear distinction between analogy and contrast. Earlier in this study the various aspects of love, for instance, in *As You Like It* and the two sides of suffering in *The Tragedy of King Lear* have been designated to constitute analogy. As regards the matter of 'in what way money is obtained to make a living' or the various levels of usage, or registers, of the English language, these themes, of money and language, have been classed under the heading of 'pointing to contrast'. The theme of love in the main plot and the subplot of *The Taming of the Shrew* has been indicated as analogy in Chapter 3, but this same theme displays contrast in the two plots of *Much Ado About Nothing* and will be discussed in this chapter. Incidentally these two plays are also similar concerning the depiction of the same class in the main plot and the subplot. Yet subtle distinctions made me place the former play under the heading of 'functional aspects resulting in analogy' and the latter one under the heading of 'functional aspects pointing to contrast'.

In the case of contrast a broad division of the functional aspects of the subplot has been made as well. This division, which is, of course, a subjective one, constitutes: functional complementary aspects, the functional aspects of foil and functional structural aspects.

4.1 THE COMPLEMENTARY FUNCTION OF THE SUBPLOT

In Chapter 3 attention has been drawn to the twofold function of the sub-

plot in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Firstly it has a structural function, i.e. to bridge the time between the betrothal and the marriage, and secondly it has a complementary function around the theme of love and the topic of eavesdropping. Since the first function has no serious implications, only the second one will be analysed.

The main plot deals with Claudio, a young Florentine count, who, just returned from the wars, arrives at the house of the Governor of Messina in the company of Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon, the latter's bastard brother, Don John, Benedick and others. Now that the war is over there is time to indulge in the desires of the heart. Hero, the attractive daughter of the governor, becomes the focus of his longings and he decides to woo her, not, however, before having inquired whether she is Leonato's sole heir; his courting in this respect is a conventional one (I.i.274).¹ Don Pedro offers to woo Hero in Claudio's name, not as a proxy like Cesario in *Twelfth Night*, but disguised as Claudio, and afterwards to break the news of Claudio's wish to marry the girl to Leonato and ask his consent. The former procedure is rather unusual, and in the latter one Don Pedro is going to act *in loco parentis*.

The wooing of Hero by the Prince during a masked dance is on purpose misinterpreted by Don John who tells Benedick - pretending not to know that it is Claudio in disguise - that Don Pedro woos Hero for himself. The gullible Claudio believes Don John's tale unconditionally. Also Benedick is under the impression that Don Pedro has courted Hero for himself, which he let Claudio know by advising him to wear the willow garland, the emblem of the forsaken lover (II.i.175-6n). Later on he mentions the subject to

¹ A.R. Humphreys, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1991).

Don Pedro himself - for nobody else was present when the Prince made his offer to Claudio to woo Hero in his name. Don Pedro, however, defends himself asserting that the girl will be restored to her lover. Hero's father meanwhile has given his consent for the marriage, which will be celebrated in a week's time.

In the subplot an unconventional 'courting' is taking place. Don Pedro who is accused by Benedick of having stolen Hero from Claudio taunts² him by telling him that the Lady Beatrice, Hero's cousin, has complained about him. Then Benedick reveals what the lady in question has said to him - as her partner in disguise during the masked dance - about himself. It is far from flattering, for she calls him the "Prince's jester" (II.i.227), a position certainly not aspired to by a gentleman. But, judging from his boisterous, sometimes crude, repartee, she has a point there.

Although they seem to feel attracted towards one another, their 'love' story is actually the denial of, or rather scorn for, their love in high-strung satire. Their continual bickering, which reveals that they individually are afraid of being overruled by each other, is noticed by everyone. That is why - to while away the time - the match-maker Don Pedro devises a strategy to trick both Beatrice and Benedick into believing that each of them is beloved by the other. This will be effected by discussions held on purpose within hearing distance of Benedick and Beatrice, discussions on the topic of the blemishes of the person within earshot and accomplishments of the other person. In the case of Benedick it will be

² It is, of course, an injury to accuse the Prince of having stolen Hero from Claudio. So it is feasible that Don Pedro partly out of spite for having been undeservedly taken to task - the more injurious so, because he is accused by one lower in rank - immediately broaches the subject of 'Beatrice' to make Benedick miserable.

the men, and in the case of Beatrice it will be the girls, who are going to carry out the aforementioned strategy in the expectation that thus Beatrice and Benedick will eventually reveal their affection for one another.

Love in the main plot is threatened by the revelation of an impediment, for Hero's chastity is much doubted on the evidence of a staged meeting between a gentlewoman, disguised as Hero, and a man on the night before the wedding. Hearing this false accusation Hero swoons and supposedly dies. After much ado Claudio all the same marries the girl whom he at first suspected of being unchaste on account of Don John's machinations; thus conventional love results in a marriage.

Love in the subplot takes more time to be recognized and declared. If Hero's wedding had not been averted it would possibly have taken much longer. The fact that Hero has been exposed before the full congregation by the Prince and Claudio, the conviction that Beatrice's cousin has been falsely accused, and on top of it the several conversations they have overheard in the past week about their supposed love is too much. Beatrice and Benedick confess that they love each other, but this acknowledgement is not couched in romantic language. On the contrary they continue to avail themselves of the witty repartee they are so familiar with. It is noticeable, however, that it has lost its cutting edges. Besides, no mention is made about a dowry (but Benedick does ask Leonato's consent to marry his niece), so that their love is clearly contrasted to the one in the main plot, i.e. not based on conventional love and without prearrangement as regards their marriage.

Another contrast exists in connection with the act of eavesdropping. As stated above Beatrice and Benedick are informed about their supposed reciprocal love through eavesdropping, overhearing, made possible because

it was meant to be. In other words it was done on purpose judging from the side of those acting out the Prince's strategy.

In an episode of the main plot, namely the one concerning Dogberry and Verges, we also hear of eavesdropping, be it of a different nature. It is about a conversation between Borachio and Conrade, followers of Don John, by chance overheard by two watchmen. But in this case Borachio, who confides the particulars of the counterfeit meeting between Hero and her supposed lover to Conrade, has no inkling of being overheard. From these considerations it appears that the function of the subplot turns around the theme of love and the topic of eavesdropping, whereby the two plots complement each other and at the same time establish contrast.

The theme of love constituting analogy between the main plot and the two subplots of *As You Like It* has been discussed, but apart from the analogy it is also possible to point at the same time to a contrast. This comes to pass because the theme of love in the two subplots could also be regarded as opposites, or rather extremes of each other, and in this capacity they form the extremes of the "romantic spectrum".³

The theme of beauty dealt with in the subplots is contrasted to the one in the main plot. In the main plot in this respect beauty is the initial mover of the romantic love between Orlando and Rosalind/Ganymede. The 'appraisal' of Audrey by Touchstone in the peasants' subplot, however, is actually a burlesque of beauty, and consequently of romantic love, for the fool says:

Truly, and to cast away honesty upon a foul slut
were to put good meat into an unclean dish,
(III.iii.31-2)

³ Richard Levin, *The Multiple Plot*, 102.

and,

Well, praised be the gods for thy foulness; slut-
tishness may come hereafter.

(III.iii.34-5).

Also in the pastoral subplot where the haughty Phebe holds her pining admirer at a distance, foulness is referred to. Rosalind, who, together with Celia and Corin the shepherd, is present when Silvius complains about the wounds he has incurred on account of the harsh words and the scornful looks of his disdainful mistress, calls Phebe's scorn 'foul'. She says to the shepherdess:

He's fallen in love with your foulness (III.v.66),

by which Rosalind possibly wants to emphasize that Phebe has no inward beauty. So in the two subplots the lack of especially inward beauty points to a lack of romantic love, which is the yeast of any love relation.

Another play where the complementary functional nature of the subplot points to contrast is *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. This play has been commented above in the chapter on class. The main plot set in the "bourgeois domesticity"⁴ is the story of the Frankfords, including the servants downstairs. The subplot defines the environment of the country gentry, of the Mountfords and Sir Francis Acton. According to Henry Hitch Adams this tragedy

has as its intellectual basis the popular understanding of theology. At every critical point in the play, religious didacticisms and not Elizabethan psychology directs the action of the characters,⁵

which is in agreement with Hallett D. Smith's suggestion that Heywood's natural tendency was to instruct and improve his audience

⁴ Richard Levin, *The Multiple Plot*, 93.

⁵ *English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy 1575-1642* 2nd ed. (Chicago and London, 1971), 93.

whenever he could.⁶

The two quotations provide useful reference material in the following discussion of the themes lying at the basis of the functional associations between the main plot and the subplot. These themes occurring in the two plots are honour and gratitude, gratitude in exchange for kindness bestowed on the person in question. To begin with the latter theme, in the main plot it is John Frankford's kindness towards Wendoll, a gentleman of meagre means. This gentleman is invited by John Frankford to become a member of the family. It is not long before he falls in love with Anne, but in this initial stage he is quite aware of the fact that firstly he betrays his friend by coveting his wife and secondly he disgraces Anne by the mere thought of making love to her the more so because he knows that she loves her husband very much and is known to be a chaste woman.

O God, I have divorc'd the truest turtles
That ever liv'd together,
(xvi.47-8)

he says later on. In his soliloquies (vi.1-25; 35-52) it becomes clear that religious motives should have withheld him from "the deed" (vi.2) as he calls it, for otherwise he would be "damned without redemption" (vi.3). But his immoral longings get the upper-hand and as soon as he sees Anne in private he tells her that he loves her. At first Anne considers Wendoll's love to be an injury to her husband's love and generosity and an injury to his honour as well. She then does not reflect what it means to herself, which is strange indeed. Wendoll, however, goes on to batter down Anne's resistance, although she makes clear that she loves her husband dearly. Therefore it is the more surprising that all of a sudden Anne

⁶ "A Woman Killed with Kindness," *PMLA* 53 (1938): 138-147, 145.

should succumb to Wendoll's entreaties. In an aside she contemplates the fatal consequences of her yielding; at that critical point she does neither fully realize the injury it will cause her husband, nor the forfeiture of her "soul's health" (vi.142), but she is foremost occupied with the possible revelation of her sin by her guilty looks. Anne has lost her honour, Frankford's honour has been damaged, and kindness and hospitality have been rewarded with ingratitude.

The theme of honour in the subplot has been dealt with previously. Susan, as stated, refuses to put her honour at stake. Her brother, Sir Charles Mountford, wants to repay the generosity exerted by Sir Francis for the fact that he paid the sum of 500 pounds for Sir Charles's deliverance from prison.

Scorning to stand in debt to one you hate
Nay, rather would engage your unstain'd honour
Than to be held ingrate -

(xiv.79-81)

says Susan, eventually willing to comply with her brother's wishes to present Sir Francis with a rich gift, herself. But before she is to lose her honour she will take her own life. This solution of suicide, however, is unacceptable according to religious dogma. Susan would have killed herself with one stab and Anne starves to death by refusing food and drink, in other words she deliberately puts an end to her life. As regards the suicidal intentions the thematic unity of the main plot and the subplot is exemplary. Anne's attempt materializes and Susan's does not, because of the intervention of Sir Francis' moral perception. Also the theme of suicide constitutes a contrast between the main plot and the subplot. As an afterthought the suddenness of Sir Francis' insight could be compared with the suddenness of Anne's yielding to Wendoll's entreaties. The

treatment in this subplot of the themes of honour and gratitude is quite the opposite of those in the main plot. Here honour is preserved and gratitude expressed in deeds or actions.

The Belmont subplot of *The Merchant of Venice* has actually two functions, a structural function to bridge the time for the bond to expire and a complementary one serving, as mentioned above, both analogy and contrast. In the discussions of this play in Chapter 3 analogy appears to be revolving around the topic of 'deliverance from bondage'.

The theme of money which is of great importance in this play has been commented upon in Chapter 2 in connection with class-differences between main plot and subplot. Since the way an income was secured is inherent to class, different environments have been devised by the playwright and consequently different plots have come into being. These plots are opposed to one another in the depiction of the theme of money, i.e. inheritance, the wealth of Belmont, contrasting the moneys derived from business and usury in the main plot/Jessica plot.

Other themes and topics interrelating the three plots are the theme of love, the topics of 'obeying one's father' and 'a love token changing hands'. In connection with the theme of love, the love of Portia and Bassanio in the fairy tale world of Belmont is made possible by the choice of the right casket: it is a romantic one. The love in the other subplot of Jessica and Lorenzo, which could also be considered as an appendage to the main plot, is flawed love. At least Jessica and Lorenzo themselves resort to mention in turn examples of those couples that went before them. These couples, however, are among other things connected with betrayal (Troilus and Cressida), with tragic death (Pyramus and Thisbe), in fact with damaged love, as their own love appears to be. And when Lorenzo even-

tually says:

In such a night
Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew,
And with an unthrift love did run from Venice,
As far as Belmont,

(V.i.15-7)

Jessica answers:

In such a night
Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well.
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
And ne'er a true one.

(V.i.18-9).

These lines play on the word 'steal': Jessica steals from her father's house, goes away secretly, steals her father's gold and jewels, and Lorenzo steals her soul. So the act of stealing moves from the stealing of tangible objects to a non-material object, the soul. These reflections reveal a feeling of regret; their love has lost its freshness, its excitement, in other words it is the opposite of the romantic love of Portia and Bassanio. Their love is established on wealth, whereas Jessica and Lorenzo's love is founded on money derived from usury, and taken possession of without the permission of the owner. Indirectly it is again the wealth of Belmont opposed to the business and usury of Venice.

As regards the topic of 'obeying one's father' a contrast between the two subplots is clearly discernible. Portia subjects herself to the casket trial, devised by her deceased father, although every time a new suitor presents himself, she undergoes a feeling of misgiving. Jessica's attitude is quite the opposite for she defies her father's will. When he leaves the house for a meal at Bassanio's and commands her to stay indoors and close the doors and windows, she steals away taking with her gold and jewels. Also Launcelot Gobbo, Shylock's servant, treats old Gobbo, his father, disrespectfully. In this way a contrast is displayed.

When Bassanio chooses the right casket, Portia gives him a ring as a love token with the warning that if he should part with it, or lose it, it would mean the ruin of their love (III.ii.171-3). And on their wedding day Portia links love with money, for she says:

Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear.
(III.ii.312).

As a matter of fact Bassanio does part with the ring, which comes to pass as follows. The learned doctor of laws who defended Antonio in court refuses to accept a fee for his endeavours, but he begs for the ring - the one given by Portia - on Bassanio's finger. At first it is refused, but on Antonio's urgent request:

Let his deservings and my love withal
Be valued 'gainst your wife's commendement,
(IV.i.446-7)

Bassanio eventually gives the ring.

Among the jewels taken away by Jessica was a ring which was given by her deceased mother to her father as a love token on their betrothal. This ring becomes a commodity, for it is sold in Genoa for a monkey quite the contrary of what happened with Bassanio's ring in connection with love and money.⁷ From these examples the functional complementary relationships comprising unifying themes of contrast between the Belmont subplot and the Jessica plot as an appendage to the main plot have been pointed out.

The complementary function of the subplot of *The Taming of the Shrew* is for the greater part to be derived from analogy. There is, however, a minor feature, shrewishness, which forms a contrast between the main plot and the subplot. Where the shrew initially appears in the main plot and through Petruchio's 'taming' changes into a partner in a harmonious mar-

⁷ I am indebted for this train of thought to Leo Salinger, *Dramatic Form in Shakespeare*, 28-9.

riage, in the subplot Bianca, with whom Lucentio falls in love, appears to be a shrew after their marriage. This is, however, already foregrounded in one of her early remarks:

I'll not be tied to hours nor 'pointed times,
But learn my lessons as I please myself.
(III.i.19-20).

It is more or less acknowledged by her husband when he says:

The wisdom of your duty, fair Bianca,
Has cost me a hundred crowns since supper-time.
Bianca: The more fool you for laying on my duty.
(V.ii.128-30).

The subplot of *Love's Labour's Lost* has a twofold function, a complementary one around the themes of love and language/affectation and a structural one. The latter function is, according to Hardin Craig, of main importance. He asserts:

The betrayal of Biron [sic] is the main service of the minor plot to the major plot. The clown Costard has been entrusted with love letters from Armado to Jaquenetta and from Biron to Rosaline, and by a characteristic blunder transposes them in delivery.⁸

Commenting on this service, in other words on this function, in my view it constitutes a subordinate element in the discussion of thematic unity. Therefore it will not be elaborated upon. The subplot and the pageant of The Nine Worthies depict contrasts between them and the main plot as far as their contents and the language is concerned.

The theme of love in the main plot turns from the solemn rejection of love by the King of Navarre and his lords at the opening of the play to its romantic idealization as soon as the Princess of France and her ladies have arrived. But the ensuing conversation between the ladies and the courtiers is nothing more than witty, high-strung repartee, which is

⁸ *An Interpretation of Shakespeare*, 33.

ERRATUM:

p. 125 note 11: Robert Kiernan should read Kiernan Ryan

indicated by Peter Phialas as:

the satire of the extreme Petrarchanism of the lovers,
particularly as it is expressed in their language.⁹

Their language, aimed at the theme of love, prevents love from flourishing. In this connection Alexander Leggatt claims:

Love and language are dislocated by mockery; yet mockery itself is also examined from a detached and critical point of view.¹⁰

As a matter of fact due to this mockery, romantic love overreaches itself to such an extent, that when Monsieur Marcade arrives from France with the message of the King's death¹¹, there is no time to prove the seriousness of their protestations of love. Besides, a period of mourning, which had to be observed, would also have prevented eventual wedding celebrations. Thus the King and his courtiers will have to wait a year and a day before they may renew their offer of marriage.

In the subplot and the pageant of The Nine Worthies, this love is parodied by the 'experiments' of Costard and Jaquenetta and by the love of Don Armado for that same Jaquenetta. The culmination of this parody appears in the pageant when Costard accuses Don Armado of having made the

⁹ *Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies: Development of their Form and Meaning* (Chapel Hill, 1966), 86.

¹⁰ *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (London, 1974), 79.

¹¹ In this connection Robert Kiernan states:

The most drastic disruption among the earlier comedies occurs, of course, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, where the conventional marital conclusion is frustrated by a chilling announcement of unforeseen death. *Shakespeare* (New York, London, 1989), 69.

I wonder about this "unforeseen", for already early in the play it reads:

About surrender up of Aquitaine
To her decrepit, sick, and bed-rid father.
(I.i.136-7).

Another comment on Robert Kiernan's lines is the one on "announcement", for the King's death is not announced by Monsieur Marcade. In fact he says:

The King your father- (V.ii.711).

interrupted by the Princess, who cries:

Dead, for my life! (V.ii.712).

I am indebted to Stanley Wells, Director of the Shakespeare Institute, for this comment.

girl pregnant (V.ii.664-74). Richard Levin in this respect remarks:

Costard, similarly, escapes the consequences of his violation of the romantic ideal in *Love's Labour's Lost* by successfully foisting off his bastard (*in utero*) upon Don Armado.¹²

And Peter Phialas is even more outspoken, for he states:

Is not this the most shocking revelation to be made in the presence of the romantic lovers? How bluntly Costard thrusts upon the spiritualities of romantic love the irresistible force of the claim of the flesh.¹³

Yes it is, but it is also shocking that Don Armado should talk about Jaquenetta's "sweet love", while she supposedly carries Costard's child. And his vow:

to hold the plough for her sweet love three year
(V.ii.875-6),

is a parody of the vows of the King and the Lords made when they established their little academy vowing not to see, or speak to, a lady for three years.

In the chapter on class the theme of language which plays such a weighty part in *Love's Labour's Lost* has been discussed, so it suffices to recapitulate this discussion in a few sentences. In the main plot we hear the language of the sonneteers and satiric Petrarchanism which is contrasted with the colloquial English of the country people, the bombastic utterances of Don Armado and the Latinized, pedantic language of Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel. The complementary function of the subplot and

¹² *The Multiple Plot*, 138.

In this connection Ann Jennalie Cook claims:

Jaquenetta who has "sorted and consorted" (I.i.251) with him [Don Armado] too. "She's quick", though which man has gotten the girl pregnant remains in doubt.

Making a Match, 201.

I cannot find, however, an indication in the text to underscore her claim. It would be inconceivable, for instance, that Don Armado should have had a more intimate relationship with her at the time when he wrote the letter to the King, for later on Jaquenetta indicates where she lives, although he knows where she dwells (I.ii.126-8). On the other hand Moth says in an aside that Don Armado's love [Jaquenetta] is perhaps a prostitute (III.i.30).

¹³ *Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies*, 98.

the pageant of The Nine Worthies - underscored by contrast and parody - points to the thematic unity underlying all the plots.

Also the love theme in the fairy plot and the play-within-the-play of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* provides contrast or even parody. Romantic love in the main plot between Theseus and Hippolita and the four Athenian nobles is contrasted with the love of the fairy Queen for Bottom with his ass-head. An audience would initially watch Titania's love for an ass with disbelief, laughter perhaps, but soon this turns into pity.

Because of its clumsiness and pretentious language the *Pyramus and Thisbe* play is ridiculed by Theseus and his company. In fact the performance is itself a parody of romantic love. But the tragical outcome of this love affair will not affect the love bonds of the couples who celebrate their wedding. As a matter of fact the play-within-the-play has also structural connotations with the main plot, for it has been introduced to bridge the time between the festivities and bedtime and, as stated previously, in this capacity it functions as an appendage to the main action and at the same time it constitutes the culmination of the rehearsals depicted in the subplot of the mechanicals.

4.2 A CHARACTER OR GROUP FUNCTIONS AS A FOIL TO ANOTHER CHARACTER OR GROUP

The word foil has both positive and negative connotations, which means that on account of contrast the person or thing either enhances certain (noble) qualities of a character of the main plot or emphasizes the seriousness of the (bad) qualities. An example of the former category are the subplots in the Henry plays, and an example of the latter is the subplot in *The Changeling*.

Various characters of subplots have been referred to by critics as a foil to a protagonist of the main plot. Not in all the cases, however, does such a qualification seem to be the only important function of the subplot in question. *Volpone* may serve as an example. Some critics think that Sir Politic Would-Be functions as a foil to Volpone. Again others see in the function of the subplot a means to smooth away the harshness of the abnormal behaviour of characters of the main plot. Both points of view could be defended, so that one has to make a choice. As the discussion of this play above indicates, in this study the analogies between the subplot and the main plot have been given a greater priority than the aspect of foil, of contrast.

Laertes in the subplot of *Hamlet* functions as a foil to Hamlet in the main plot. Indeed Francis Fergusson points to a comic variation on the main theme of the father-son relation (Act 1, scene 3) in Polonius's household.¹⁴ This comic strain may be detected in the person of Polonius. His advice to his son, daughter, and the King are not based on weighty considerations, far from it. He instructs the King, for instance, to conceal himself behind the arras in order to overhear the conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia. Such conduct does, of course, not comply with the dignity of a king. Polonius is indeed a worthy member of Elsinore, which is described by Michael Long as:

a culture, like that in *Measure for Measure*, whose keynote is philistinism, though here we have only the dismal, 'despoiled' side of Vienna's philistinism and none of its idealistic zealotry.¹⁵

¹⁴ *The Idea of Theater* (Garden City, NJ, 1949), 118-9.

¹⁵ *The Unnatural Scene: A Study in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London, 1976), 129. Referred to by Ralph Berry in *Shakespeare and Social Class*, who states:

Michael Long is right, I think, to detect the Philistinism of (among others) the Polonius household.

96.

Mythili Kaul's remarks in connection with Polonius are interesting, because they reflect the opposite of Michael Long's comment.

As Rebecca West has remarked in commenting on Polonius's speech to Laertes: "Shakespeare would never have held up the action in order that Polonius should give his son advice as to ~~how~~ how to conduct himself abroad, unless the scene helped him to develop his theme." This theme Rebecca West sees as the depiction of a corrupt society, to which corruption Polonius and his family actively contribute. From this she argues that Polonius like an iceberg shows only one-eighth of himself above the surface, and "it is a mistake to regard him as a simple platitudinarian".¹⁶

In the subplot Laertes begs the Dane to give him leave to go to Paris, not to study there, but to acquire the accomplishments of a gentleman. In his petition he addresses the King courteously, contrary to Hamlet who behaves rather rudely towards his uncle. Laertes explicitly tells the King that he has come home to attend his coronation; he does not mention the funeral of the late king.

When in the main plot Hamlet wishes to return to school in Wittenberg - having returned to Elsinore to attend the funeral of his father, and of necessity to witness the coronation of his uncle, and the marriage between his mother and uncle - Claudius does not give his consent. Does the shrewd King want to have his nephew close at hand to make sure that he would not stir up a rebellion? This could well be, for there is a precedent of a nephew, namely young Fortinbras of Norway, who, without the knowledge of his uncle, the present King, has raised an army to repossess the lands that his father at the time had lost to the late King Hamlet. In other words Claudius wants to have his nephew/son under control.

Polonius keeps an eye on his son by remote control, by sending his

¹⁶ "Hamlet and Polonius," *Hamlet Studies* 2 (1980): 13-24, 18.
Rebecca West, "The Nature of Will", *The Court and the Castle* (London, 1958): 14-26, 16.

servant Reynaldo to bring letters and money, but also to spy on him. These examples have shown that the father/stepfather-son relation is quite the opposite in the two plots.

Another important theme underlying the two plots is revenge. In the main plot Hamlet learns from the ghost of his father that Claudius has murdered him with malice aforethought. The ghost commands Hamlet to avenge this, but the latter is not sure whether the ghost has spoken the truth. After the performance of *The Murder of Gonzago* Hamlet is convinced that his uncle is guilty of the murder of his father. Still it takes some time before Hamlet complies with the command of the ghost.

In the subplot Polonius is killed by transferred malice¹⁷, for Hamlet thinks that it is his uncle who conceals himself behind the arras. Here again there is a touch of the comic if one imagines Polonius eavesdropping behind the arras in the Queen's closet, of all places, to overhear the conversation between mother and son. On learning about the death of his father, Laertes has come post haste from France. He is bent on revenge, but, apart from a small circle of intimates, it is unknown who has murdered his father. Besides, Laertes is highly indignant when he hears about the obscure funeral of his father (IV.v.210-2). The King, afraid that Laertes should be appointed head of the State of Denmark, reveals that Hamlet is the killer. He advises Laertes to keep quiet. Meanwhile a courtier will praise Laertes's fencing skill and tell Hamlet that the King has laid a wager on a fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet. This match will give Laertes the opportunity to take revenge, for Claudius advises him to use an unbated sword, instead of a foil. Laertes adds to this sug-

¹⁷ I am indebted for this terminology to Martin Wiggins, author of *Journeyman in Murder: The Assassin in English Renaissance Drama*.

gestion that he will poison his rapier.¹⁸ It is ungentlemanly to resort to such practices to say the least, and Laertes initially lets himself be persuaded by the King. But in the end, when he sees that the Queen drinks from the poisoned cup of wine, prepared by Claudius, and he himself is wounded by his own poisoned rapier, he discloses everything to Hamlet and asks forgiveness. From the foregoing analysis it is clear that the functional aspect of foil has effected as a consequence contrast between main plot and subplot based on thematic unity.

Apart from analogy between the main plot and the subplot of *All's Well that Ends Well*, contrast is also apparent. In connection with Parolles Joseph G. Price comments:

Thus, in the virginity duologue Helena is merely a foil for his ribald bantering.¹⁹

It is certainly odd that Parolles should embark on a conversation about virginity, but Ralph Berry gives the following explanation for it:

The subtextual suggestion comes from a perceived social parity: two outsiders together in the great house.²⁰

This social parity is disrupted, for, as stated earlier in this study Parolles is unmasked in the subplot, and consequently he has to move down the social scale. The would-be gentleman

¹⁸ Rosalie L. Colie's remark in this connection is worthwhile to quote:

Hamlet's duel with Laertes is a mock battle of sorts in another sense, for it is a single combat in which one of the adversaries is a surrogate for someone else. Laertes stands in for Claudius, as his father too had substituted for the King at his death;
Shakespeare's Living Art, 239.

Although fencing is a kind of sport -

He [the King] sends to know if your
pleasure hold to play with Laertes,
(V.iv.194-5)

says a Lord, a messenger, to Hamlet -, Rosalie Colie calls it a duel. Possibly because of the intention underlying this fencing match to kill Hamlet.

¹⁹ *The Unfortunate Comedy: A Study of "All's Well that Ends Well"* (Canada, 1968), 133.

²⁰ *Shakespeare and Social Class*, 126.

Parolles finishes up as a private jester to Lafeu, holding much the same position as Lavache does with the Countess. It is a wry final comment on social order.²¹

Helena on the other hand moves upwards into aristocracy through her marriage to Bertram. *All's Well that Ends Well* is again an example of a play of which the subplot has more than one function: a complementary one related to analogy and the function of foil grounded on contrast.

Characters of the subplots of the two parts of *Henry IV* function as a foil to characters in the main plots. The device of a foil in these two subplots is a rather uncommon one, for it is Prince Hal in lower-class circles as opposed to himself, in the person of the crown prince, in the courtly environment of King Henry IV. It is Hal who draws attention to his role as a foil in this subplot where he mixes freely with Falstaff and his company of offenders of the law. In a soliloquy (I.ii.190-212) he unfolds his objectives. He intends to continue for a while his involvement with this low-life environment which would only underpin the idea that he is a misfit, one who gives the lie to his princely upbringing and shuns his task as the Prince of Wales. He compares himself to the sun - a well-known traditional symbol for royalty - concealed from the gaping crowds by those "base contagious clouds" (I.ii.193). But Hal announces that all of a sudden he will throw off this disguise and everyone, including the King his father, will discover the true Prince of Wales: a paragon of an heir, untainted by the seamy way of life he has led, except that he is proficient now in the language of the lowest people of the Commonwealth.

In the chapter on class the themes of behaviour, honour and language have been dealt with *in extenso*. So there is no need to repeat the parti-

²¹ Ralph Berry, *Shakespeare and Social Class*, 129.

cular instances of contrast as they exist between the classes. But, as has been argued, since class was often linked to the introduction of a subplot, it is necessary to add a few more examples in order to underscore the relationship: foil as a function related to contrasting unifying themes.

The theme of behaviour as far as Hal is concerned has been discussed. When eventually he throws away his disguise the true Prince of Wales emerges, the heir to the English throne who is to reject his low-life acquaintances, including the knight John Falstaff. He distinguishes himself on the battle-field and kills Hotspur in a fight. This is a feat, for Hotspur, a formidable opponent, has always been victorious so far. The contrast between Hal, who at a certain moment even acted as a drawer (*King Henry IV Part 2* [II.iv.277ff]), and the Prince of Wales who behaves valiantly on the battlefield is a sharp one.

In the subplot Sir John Falstaff, another Lord of Misrule²², lords it over the world of taverns and brothels. This world, as stated before, is peopled by those who can barely find a means for living. Any exploit is to be tried, if it is to yield money, commodity or preferment. Falstaff's acquaintance with the Prince seems not only to comprise the desire for preferment, but also a feeling of attachment. But time and again Falstaff refers to the wish, stronger still the expectation, to be rewarded with a high post (preferably that of Lord Chief Justice!), once Hal will be King of England. This makes one wonder whether his attachment is a sin-

²² Leo Salinger asserts in this connection:

He is not exactly a Lord of Misrule, if he can be said to preside over revels in Eastcheap, it is more in our imagination than ^{the} in view of his company as a whole.
Dramatic Form in Shakespeare, 38-9.

I think that this assertion shows a degree of casuistry.

cere emotional one. On the battlefield he establishes the impression of having killed Hotspur by throwing the dead body on his back and walking away, after having given the corpse a stab in the thigh. He expects erroneously that this deed will provide him with a dukedom or an earldom.

In Chapter 2 Hal's proficiency in speaking the appropriate language in diverse environments has been discussed. Falstaff proves to be a master in the field of language as well.²³ It is, however, different from Hal's proficiency, because Falstaff's mastery reflects the clever, witty use of language. He displays this in particular in his conversation with the Lord Chief Justice by seeming not to be listening to him and on purpose giving answers which are beside the point. As a matter of fact these answers are sometimes witty indeed (I.ii.55ff). Leo Salingar depicts the two sides of Falstaff as follows:

And it is peculiarly appropriate to Falstaff's position as a gently-bred adventurer who compensates through language for deficiencies in the more solid advantages due to his rank.²⁴

In spite of Falstaff's persistent harping on the theme of preferment, the new King Henry V makes it clear that there will be no misunderstanding in what is often called 'the rejection scene'. It actually does not come as a surprise, for it is hinted at in the conversations between Hal and Falstaff ([I.ii.59-65] and [II.iv.471-5]). Now that Hal has assumed the dignities of kingship, Sir John Falstaff does not fit in the society of order and justice and must be abandoned, even put to prison temporarily.

²³ Being proficient in language is an indication that one has had some schooling. In the case of Falstaff, who belongs to the gentry, it is all too evident, although such a remark brings other characters into the picture, those who are equally proficient in language. They comprise the small group of the court fool, who is usually not highly rated as far as his social status is concerned, but whose remarks are often witty. This characteristic is a reason for keeping a fool at court to divert the serious thoughts of his royal patron. Therefore it would be acceptable, I think, to see in Falstaff also a kind of court fool. In the rejection scene (V.v.47-51) King Henry V calls Falstaff "a fool and a jester"; 'fool' could also mean a person who acts or thinks unwisely and 'jester' seen as a fool or clown, in other words, a court fool.

²⁴ *Dramatic Form in Shakespeare*, 36.

The portrayal of the themes of behaviour, honour, and language in the lower-class and the courtly environments - including the discrepancies in the character of Sir John Falstaff, and Hotspur and Prince John of Lancaster's deviant ideas of honour - have displayed sharp contrasts due to the function of a foil in the person of the crown prince and the group of law offenders as a whole. The application of a foil/subplot indeed enhances the noble character of Prince Henry and at the same time points to Falstaff's final doom.

In the subplot of *Henry V* the group of low-life personages could be regarded as a foil to the characters in the main plot. One discovers some of the old cronies of Falstaff's, such as Pistol, Nym, and Bardolph. Their life-style has not changed at all, which may be derived from Pistol's exhortation:

Yoke-fellows in arms,
Let us to France; like horse leeches, my boys,
To suck, to suck, the very blood to suck!
(II.iv.55-8).

His gang constitutes a parody of Henry's heroic army in the battle against the French. These men shun every active encounter with the enemy, and are forced, or rather driven, on to the breach in the walls of Harfleur by the Welsh captain Fluellen. The remarks of the boy (the page who at the time had been presented by Hal to Falstaff and now without a master has attached himself to this trio) in this connection are significant (III.ii.31-43).

Another example of Pistol's infamous behaviour in which he displays his cowardice and greed is the capture of a French soldier who happens to be a greater coward than Pistol. With the boy as interpreter Pistol extracts from this soldier a ransom of two hundred ~~pounds~~^{crowns} (IV.iv.45-9).

Bardolph for that matter is apprehended for robbing a church, and, when King Henry is informed by Fluellen that the robber will be executed, the only comment from him, who as Hal had known the culprit very well, is:

We would have all such offenders so cut off.
(III.vi.110).²⁵

As stated earlier, by their infamous and cowardly behaviour the characters of the subplot provide a parody of the King's valiant fight against the French, a victory with a surprisingly small number of losses on the side of the English army compared to those suffered by the French.

Isabella, the heroine of the subplot of *The Changeling*, serves as a foil to Beatrice-Joanna of the main plot. The themes underlying the two plots are honour or virtue, madness, sexual blackmail, and reality versus appearances.

When in the main plot Beatrice-Joanna, betrothed to Alonzo de Piracquo, meets Alsemero, a Valencian soldier, a stoic, for the second consecutive day in the temple, she falls in love with him. He, not knowing that she is to marry soon, thinks this to be an omen, and considering the fact that the place of meeting is a holy one, his contemplations are on the same level, namely connected with a "holy purpose" (I.i.6)²⁶, which indicates that Alsemero wishes to marry Beatrice. Her flirtation with this 'stranger' gives evidence of her fickleness, which comes clearly to the

²⁵ In black and white this line appears to be callous. The actor who plays King Henry V may give an extra dimension to this callousness by appearing to be moved (tears in his eyes) and looking back to those happy days (flashbacks in the film *Henry V*).

²⁶ N.W. Bawcutt, ed., *The Changeling* (Cambridge, MA, 1959). David M. Holmes states: Middleton's play on the word 'holy' emphasizes the weakly self-deceptive aspect of Alsemero's hypocrisy. (*The Art of Middleton: A Critical Study* (Oxford, 1970), 175 n 32. And further: 'Twas in the Temple's soliloquy, at the beginning of the play, he was attempting to impose a veil of propriety on his mere lustful appreciation of Beatrice, until he anticipates (178).

I can find no evidence in the text for Alsemero's "mere lustful appreciation", unless the juxtaposition of Alsemero's kissing Beatrice and Jasperino's addressing Diaphanta - to which Holmes refers (183) - could be the key to this claim. Still it is a weak argument.

Branag

fore in an aside, which runs as follows:

For five days past
To be recall'd! Sure mine eyes were mistaken,
This was the man was meant me; that he should come
So near his time, and miss it!

(I.i.83-6).

She is self-willed and judging from the fact that she addresses a stranger in the temple and allows herself to be kissed there by him, shows that she is not a timid girl at all.²⁷ Her wilfulness is expressed in this aside:

I shall change my saint, I fear me, I find
A giddy turning in me;

(I.i.155-6).

The "giddy turning" in Beatrice-Joanna urges her to find "a speedy way" (II.i.23) to get rid of Alonzo de Piracquo. Alsemero, acquainted with the fact that Beatrice has a fiancé, suggests sending a challenge to Beatrice's betrothed, but this is rejected by the girl who fears that Alsemero will be killed in the ensuing duel. She decides to have Alonzo murdered and suddenly she knows whom to ask to do this service. It is De Flores, a servant of her father's, whom she detests - as she claims - and who is secretly in love with his mistress. Her rashness to have Alonzo eliminated and to a certain extent her innocence, or

rather ignorance of and unconcern for the motives and feelings of others,²⁸

do not leave time to reflect on the consequences of such a service from this servant. So when, after the deed, as a reward De Flores claims her virginity, she is so appalled, that she cannot take it in at first. She

²⁷ Lawrence Stone, however, notes:

Another indication of English attitudes is that foreign visitors from the late fifteenth to the late eighteenth centuries noted with astonishment and shock the freedom with which it was the custom in England for persons of different sexes to greet each other with a kiss on the lips.

The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (London, 1977), 520.

Although the play is set in Spain, it is taken for granted that, as already stated, English customs and attitudes prevail.

²⁸ Patricia Thomson, ed., *The Changeling* (London, 1985), x.

for that matter rates the loss of her virginity of much more importance than the life of an innocent man, killed to feed her appetite. Her objections are of no avail, because De Flores threatens to reveal the murder. This sexual blackmail will be taken up in due time.

Now Alsemero's way is paved for a marriage with Beatrice, but meanwhile she starts a liaison with De Flores and begins to like him.²⁹ In the main plot the protagonist loses her honour/virtue, even before her marriage to Alsemero has taken place.

In the subplot the head of a lunatic asylum, the physician Alibius, is married to a much younger wife. Since he is afraid that she will be seduced by the visitors of his patients, he asks his man Lollo to keep an eye on her. He does not surmise, however, that also a patient could attempt to seduce Isabella. This actually happens when two new patients are admitted, a fool Antonio, or Tony, and a madman Franciscus. They are in fact gentlemen of Vermandero's household, who, having fallen in love with the beautiful wife of the doctor, feign to be a fool and a madman respectively. In this way they hope to get the opportunity to seduce Isabella. She, however, does not fall for them, once they discover their real identity and their intentions to her. Nevertheless at one moment she almost succumbs to Antonio's entreaties. She is withheld by cries of madmen heard without. To Antonio's question:

What are these? (III.iii.198)

she answers:

Of fear enough to part us. (199).

Seen in this light Isabella functions among other things as a foil to Bea-

²⁹ It could also be argued that Beatrice-Joanna is drawn to De Flores right from the beginning and that she possibly protests too much. I am indebted for this viewpoint to Pamela Mason, Fellow of The Shakespeare Institute.

trice. In spite of the fact that her marriage is not based on romantic love to say the least, she does not wish to be unfaithful and to lose her honour.

In the main plot 'love', a mere "giddy turning", leads to madness, in other words to the murder of Alonzo and also of Diaphanta, Beatrice's waiting-woman, who stands in for her on the nuptial night, and to the contracting of an illicit relationship with an evil person. In the subplot on the contrary 'love', the infatuation for a beautiful woman, leads to counterfeit madness with the only objective the seduction of this woman. Real madness is opposed to counterfeit madness in the treatment of this theme in the two plots.

In the subplot sexual blackmail is used as a defence. When Lollo discovers what Tony is up to, he tries to kiss Isabella, to have as he calls it his share, but Isabella threatens him. If he should not keep his mouth shut about the would-be fool, she would persuade Tony to cut Lollo's throat in recompense for Tony's enjoying her. Later on Lollo, on behalf of Isabella, at least so he claims, keeps both Antonio and Franciscus in suspense by similar threats of eliminating the one to allow the other his pleasure. In this connection Matthew W. Black very aptly asserts:

Thus these repetitions (or rather, inversions) of the turning-point of the main plot bring out the basic contrast between the two actions, since Isabella is able to victimize her would-be seducers with the very weapon which Beatrice's victimizer uses to seduce her.³⁰

The last underlying theme to be discussed is the one of reality versus appearance. In the main plot Alsemero falls in love with Beatrice;

³⁰ Matthew W. Black, ed., *The Changeling* (Philadelphia, 1966), 36.

she is beautiful, but this is deceptive, for he has no idea of her corrupt character. (Compare this to Malheureux in *The Dutch Courtesan*. He cannot believe that Franceschina is a bad woman because of her beautiful face.)

In the subplot an incident takes place which clearly shows the deceptiveness of appearances. Isabella counterfeits to be a madwoman and tries to seduce Antonio; he is plainly abhorred and wards her violently off. When she reveals herself, however, he immediately changes his mind, and calls her "dearest beauty" (IV.iii.131), but Isabella tells him that her beauty lies in her garments. This is true and not true, because she has also inner beauty, which Beatrice lacks. Hers is a cesspool of iniquity.

As regards the theme of disguise, in the main plot it is the metaphorical disguise of Beatrice as a chaste girl - which comes to the fore in the virginity test and "her modest fears" (IV.ii.127) - and of which Alsemero, after having obtained evidence for his suspicions, remarks:

The black mask
That so continually was worn upon't
Condemns the face for ugly ere't be seen.
(V.iii.3-5).

And further:

there was a visor
O'er that cunning face, and that became you;
(V.iii.46-7).

In the subplot it is the literal disguise of the two gallants of the castle, who try to win the love of Isabella. The applications of these themes to bring about sharp contrasts are evidence for Isabella's function in the subplot as a foil to Beatrice-Joanna in the main plot.

As a demonstration of the various views in connection with, among other things, the function of the subplot just discussed, a few lines by

two scholars will be quoted. Alexander Leggatt claims:

the gentle end of the subplot of *The Changeling* seems to seep upwards into the main body of the play. In the total mix . . . the low-life comedy has an overall healing effect.³¹

This gentle end, which refers to Alibius' promise to change his attitude after Isabella has lectured him on his jealousy and to Alsemero's words of sympathy and consolation towards Vermandero, indeed softens the dreadful events.

And Christopher Ricks points:

to one clear function of the sub-plot: its use of innuendo, which makes possible the effects subtly gained in the main-plot. The sub-plot is full of obscene wit, etc. But the crude buffoonery of the sub-plot (the meanings are forced on us) makes possible the seriousness of the main-plot.³²

In other words Isabella in the subplot functions as a foil to Beatrice-Joanna and thus aggravates the latter's wickedness.

4.3 THE STRUCTURAL FUNCTION OF THE SUBPLOT

The analysis of plays of which the subplots could be placed under this heading will be devoted to *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*.

The subplot in *The Comedy of Errors* has, as stated above, a structural function, i.e. the function of increasing the complexity of the play by the introduction of a second pair of identical male twins. On this account one character will meet the wrong one at the wrong time, which causes mistaken identities and errors and entails scenes of criss-cross 'tales of the unexpected'. In other words frenzy reaches fever pitch. As an example of the application and adaptation of the subplot in Renaissance

³¹ *English Drama: Shakespeare to the Restoration*, 221.

³² "The Poetic Structure of *The Changeling*," *Essays in Criticism* 10 (1960): 290-306, 301.

Drama *The Comedy of Errors* has been dealt with in Chapter 1. It is true that the subplot in question mainly consists of reported dialogue, so that it could be asserted that as regards theatricality it lacks something.³³

Romantic love in the main plot is parodied by the wooing below stairs of the solid kitchen-maid Luce - or Nell as she is referred to in the following text -, at least as far as the Dromio of Ephesus is concerned. He seems engaged to be married to this fat girl; his as yet unknown twin brother, Dromio of Syracuse, ridicules the wench, because she claims him as her lover. He, however, is rather taken aback, which can be inferred from his talk with his 'real' master (III.ii.79-86).³⁴

This master, the bachelor Antipholus of Syracuse, falls in love with the beautiful Luciana, sister to Adriana, and begins to court her. His words which speak of love and marriage are met with annoyance, because, due to mistaken identities, she thinks that it is her brother-in-law who woos her. Such a courting is considered to be adulterous. When, however, it becomes apparent that - due to the intrusion of the framing plot and as a consequence the appearance of Egeon on the scene - there are two Antipholuses and two Dromios, the romance between Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana has a real chance to flourish.

As an afterthought it is interesting to note that marital love in the main plot ridicules the one in the framing plot. It is not a comparison between a main plot and a subplot, however, but one between two dif-

³³ Still there are more instances in Shakespeare's plays where certain events or incidents are only reported. Take as an example, Gloucester's death related by Edgar in *The Tragedy of King Lear*, the invasion of the French troops in the same play, the conversion of Duke Frederick by an old religious man mentioned by Jacques de Boys in *As You Like It*, the 'situation' of Elbow's wife tediously related by Pompey in *Measure for Measure*, Hamlet's visit to Ophelia's closet, which she imparts to her father to mention a few of these events or instances. It is strange, however, that such an important feature of reported dialogue in *The Comedy of Errors* which constitutes almost a whole subplot should not have been included in Georg von Greyer's PhD thesis, *The Reported Scenes in Shakespeare's Plays* (Bern, 1965), *passim*.

³⁴ R.A. Foakes, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare* (London and New York), 1991.

ferent levels. In the frame marital love has withstood all those years of separation, whereas in the main plot it is ridiculed by Antipholus' visiting a courtesan, when, on account of mistaken identity, he is locked out of his own house. Be this as it may, the theme of love is treated in the main plot and the subplot in such a way that contrast is created, with the structural function of the subplot as the point of departure.

According to Fabian the subplot of *Twelfth Night*, sometimes called the gulling plot, has been devised by Sir Toby Belch and himself. But in reality it is Maria's idea of revenge which initiated Malvolio's gulling. She claims:

and on that vice in him will my
revenge find notable cause to work.
(II.iii.152-3).

The vice she mentions is Malvolio's self-importance and by "revenge" she means to teach him a lesson. Therefore she writes a fake letter, a love letter from the Lady Olivia to Malvolio. Fabian, however, asserts - on purpose to shield Maria (V.i.362n) - that it was done on Sir Toby's pressing request.

Maria writ
The letter, at Sir Toby's great importance,
In recompense whereof he hath married her.
(V.i.361-3).

Notwithstanding the fact that the gulling plot is about Malvolio in the first place, it seems to have been devised so that Sir Toby could marry Maria. On account of this supposition the function of the subplot may be called a structural one.

The theme of love unites the two plots. In the main plot it is Count Orsino who is in love with the Lady Olivia. She, however, has sworn not to contemplate love for seven years. For that matter she happens to be in

mourning for a dead brother, which may also have been a pretext to evade Orsino's advances.

Meanwhile the twins Viola and Sebastian are supposedly drowned in a shipwreck close to the coast of Illyria. Fortunately Viola is rescued by a sea captain and in the disguise of a young man she takes up service as Cesario, a page, with Count Orsino. She is soon taken into Orsino's confidence and is sent to the Lady Olivia to woo her in his name. This is a difficult task for Viola, because she has fallen in love with her master at first sight. To make things worse the Lady Olivia, reluctant at first to admit Orsino's 'ambassador' into her presence, is immediately taken in by the grace, the youth and possibly the romantic verse of Cesario; subsequently she falls in love with him, abandons her veil and all the external signs of mourning and begins to pursue Cesario/Viola persistently.

To complicate matters also Sebastian has been rescued by a seaman, called Antonio. When sightseeing in the city he is addressed by the Fool who mistakes him for Cesario/Viola and tells him that his lady bids him to come to see her. Assuming that Sebastian is Cesario the Lady Olivia takes the initiative and they are married by a priest in the chapel. Of course in the beginning Sebastian cannot fully grasp what has happened to him. Confronted by the fact that Olivia has married Cesario/Sebastian, Orsino suddenly realizes that he loves his page. And when this page assures him that he is a girl, the Duke asks her to marry him.

Romantic love in the main plot is parodied by 'love' in the subplot. In the first instance Sir Andrew Aguecheek, an acquaintance of Sir Toby, has come to woo the Lady Olivia. He appears to be somewhat out of place, reveals a kind of stupidity and thus does not realize that he has been invited by Sir Toby with a view to exploit him. In the second instance

Malvolio daydreams about a marriage between the Lady Olivia and himself.

He makes it the more plausible by the following remark:

There is example for't. The Lady of the Strachy
married the yeoman of the wardrobe,
(II.v.39-40)

which is overheard by the conspirators. Besides, his fancies are fed by the letter written by Maria. And in the third place Maria and Sir Toby seem not to be averse from marrying one another. This can be derived from Sir Toby's lines:

She's a beagle, true-bred, and one that adores
me: what o'that?
(I.iii.179-80).

And further:

Sir Toby : I could marry this wench for this device.
Sir Andrew: So could I too.
Sir Toby : And ask no other dowry with her but such
another jest.
(II.v.182-5).

Since Maria seems to have no relatives who could provide her with a dowry if she were to marry, in retrospect Sir Toby's remark seems to have paved the way for their marriage without a dowry. Sir Toby knows that Maria is opposed to his drinking habits. The Clown's remark in this connection shows that he is a good observer. He says to Maria;

if Sir Toby would leave drinking, thou wert as
witty a piece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria.
(I.v.26-7).

Only in the case of Maria and Sir Toby a marriage is taking place; Maria moves upwards as far as class is concerned and Sir Toby will have someone to take care of him and also show affection for him. The structural function of the subplot is applied by the playwright to bring about a marriage between Maria and Sir Toby and at the same time constitutes contrasting features of the unifying theme of love.

From the aforementioned analyses the great variety in functions attached to subplots has been highlighted, in particular those that bring about contrast in the treatment of the same themes or topics. It is therefore an indication of the skill of the playwright, in particular that of Shakespeare.

C O N C L U S I O N

The foregoing study has proved that the subplot belonged to the important conventions of English Renaissance drama - at least when it was employed. It has to be acknowledged, however, that the term 'subplot' only came into currency in the twentieth century. At the turn of the century for example Richard Moulton compiled a list of Shakespeare's plays - in *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Thinker* - meticulously including details, such as main plot, comic plot, primary and secondary plots, consecutive actions, but he nowhere used the term subplot.¹ Instead the word 'underplot' appears in his list. In this connection Harry Levin calls the term subplot an etymological bastard.²

It has been argued that the subplot is founded on both the native and the classical traditions. Therefore it has traits of these two traditions in various combinations. Playwrights took notice of the works of other dramatists, of those that went before them and of their contemporaries. Shakespeare is known to have borrowed from works and plays of various writers and playwrights; he even borrowed from his own plays.

The earliest application of a subplot, a comic one, was used to alleviate the serious implications of the main plot. In other words it was a mixing of the comic and the serious. Whereas at first these secondary levels existed side by side, gradually they merged into one unity. The introduction of a subplot frequently with personages from a different social stratum was actually Shakespeare's imitation of and improvement on Terence's 'duality-method'. This method refers to the depiction of, for

¹ 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1901): 339-73.

² "The Shakespearean Overplot," *RD* 8 (1965): 63-71, 65.

example, two lovers, two fathers, or two servants, but they originated from the same social background. The difference was founded on their characteristics or principles. As soon as, however, a different stratum was introduced, decorum had to be adjusted as well. Class with its particularities was very important in Renaissance England. In this regard an example from *Twelfth Night* may serve to illustrate this:

Duke : Belong you to the Lady Olivia, friends?
Clown: Ay, sir, we are some of her trappings.
(V.i.7-8).

Feste wants to indicate ironically that he belongs to the Lady's ornamental accessories as an indication of her status. The mingling of the diverse ranks in the plays was a reflection of everyday life. Therefore it has been one of the objectives to point out class-differences between the main plot and the subplot of several plays. In particular in such areas as money, education, language and leisure occupations the distinctions are very clear. Whether these are in accordance with the 'prescribed' codes, or constitute a breach with them has been a source of thorough analysis.

On the whole the subplot depicts a lower class than its main plot, but this is no hard and strict rule, since the mingling of classes, the existence of different tones, even occur in one and the same strand, either in the main plot or in the subplot or in both. The clown, or the fool, in this respect is the character *par excellence*, because not being rated high in the social hierarchy, on account of his speech, he sometimes places himself on a par with a courtier. Jacques in *As You Like It* refers to this ability of Touchstone (II.vii.36-41), and also Hamlet expresses his 'anxiety'. As regards the gravedigger's wise pithy remarks he says:

the toe of the peasant
comes so near the heel of the courtier he

galls his kibe.

(V.i.136-8).³

The ultimate unity between main plot and subplot came about, because the playwright used a subplot which repeated or mirrored actions of the main plot, he applied analogy or contrast, or borrowed a story from a chronicle, or a novella with a similar theme. Incidentally these mirror images and repeated phenomena knew a long tradition in oral and literary narrative.⁴ That is why the theme constituted the essential connection between the main plot and the subplot. It provided the point of departure and in the course of time the playwright became proficient in the depiction of a subplot with diverse functions of analogy and/or contrast. Since this proficiency became most prominent in Shakespeare, the plays analysed in this study are mainly his. Other playwrights, however, were also clever in devising a subplot and thus contributed to the complexity and richness of Renaissance drama. The works of some of them therefore have been included in the discussions.

Summarizing it can be stated that in English Renaissance drama:

the subplot is a secondary plot of a subordinate nature whose functional relationships with its main plot - which are grounded on unifying themes - point to analogy and/or contrast, and thus constitute a unity of main plot and secondary plot.⁵

This convention of English Renaissance drama has proved to be of such importance that, partly due to its introduction, one has the privilege to watch performances of the plays discussed on the current stage.

³ In this connection Robert Weimann states:

In fact the wit of the clown comes so near the experience of the courtier that it affects his language.
Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition, 240.

⁴ Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition*, 51.

⁵ In the Introduction I stated that "even an unequivocal definition of what constitutes a subplot proves elusive (1)." After having studied the various aspects of the subplot, this definition, in my view, appears to be one that covers all its essential features.

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