Shakespeare's Heroines: Disguise in the Romantic Comedies

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IT is apparent from the frequency with which he used it that Shakespeare was particularly attracted to what has been called the "girl-page" device; the heroine disguises herself as a man in five of his plays: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* and *Cymbeline*. A number of critics have made stimulating suggestions about the disguised heroine, but the most sensitive and extensive account to date is that of Juliet Dusinberre.[1] Mrs. Dusinberre examines the intriguing question of androgyny, attempting to show that Shakespeare, in sympathy with the feminist attitudes of his time, was exploring, through his "monsters", the whole definition of masculinity and femininity. In the present discussion I wish to examine the disguised heroine from a different point of view, that of the special intimacy she shares with the audience. It is here, I think, that Shakespeare's interest lies, in the opportunity the disguised girl affords him to manipulate the audience's responses by drawing it into the action.

Before discussing this question further I wish to consider some of the problems faced by Shakespeare in putting his girls into disguises. In spite of the fact that disguised girls appear frequently in prose romances, there is ample evidence to suggest that Shakespeare's audience would have had very mixed feelings indeed about seeing such disguising on stage. First of all it should be noted that to put a virtuous character into disguise at all created difficulties for the dramatist. In classical comedy, where dramatic disguise finds its origins, the disguised trickster

had a positive function, but by the time of Shakespeare most of this was lost. Leo Salingar, who has much to say about this positive, magical function, concludes that "There was much in classical comedy that the Elizabethans could not accept. Their attitude towards trickery, for instance, is morally cautious, if not ambiguous — it is funny when applied to moral deviants, but otherwise reprehensible."[2] The reason for this is that by Shakespeare's time the comic trickster of classical comedy had merged with the evil disguiser of mediaeval drama — the kind with which the audience was familiar from Morality plays. Here, disguise is always a sign of evil: Virtues have no need to disguise themselves, but for Vices to tempt Mankind it is always necessary for them to present themselves as better than they are. So we can conclude that the first idea of the Elizabethan audience when faced with a character in disguise would be of the tradition of the evil trickster, and it would expect a character who disguised himself to be doing so in order to manipulate others or to tempt them to their destruction.

The disguised girl, of course, came from neither the classical nor the Morality tradition, but from the popular romances of the time. However, there is evidence that the Elizabethan would have considered the use of disguise by women as immoral for quite different reasons. Fynes Moryson, travelling in Italy at about the time Shakespeare was writing these plays, commented upon the disguising that he witnessed amongst Italian women:

> many times in the Cities (as at Padua) I have seen Courtesans (in plain English, whores) in the time of shroving, apparelled like men, in carnation or light coloured doublets and breeches, and so playing with the racket at Tennis with young men, at which time of shroving, the Women no less than Men (and that honourable women in honourable company), go masked and apparelled like men in the afternoon about the streets, even from Christmas holidays to the first day in Lent.[3]

There is little question about Moryson's disgust at what he considered to be the practice of whores, and of course no

Elizabethan Englishman would have been much surprised by anything that went on in Italy. But in fact Moryson need not have travelled so far to see women dressed as men, as from the later years of the sixteenth century there also was a fashion amongst certain women in England of wearing masculine dress. Philip Stubbes attacked the fashion in his *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583): "*Proteus*, that Monster, could never chaunge him self into so many fourmes & shapes as these women doo!"[4] Four years later William Harrison condemned the same fashion: "I have met with some of these trulls in London so disguised that it hath passed my skill to discern whether they were men or women . . . . Thus it is now come to pass, that women are become men, and men transformed into monsters."[5] We should not be surprised to find that what was considered an abuse in everday life was also attacked when it occurred on the stage. T. G., in 1616, condemned transvestism in both its aspects: "Player's practices can hardly be warranted in religion: for a man to put on women's apparel, and a woman a man's, is plain prohibition. . . ."[6] It was bad enough for a boy to impersonate a woman, so when the impersonated woman disguised herself as a man, the evil was compounded. Of course, we cannot assume that all members of Shakespeare's audience shared the view of the Puritans; nevertheless, bearing in mind the dramatic tradition inherited by the Elizabethans that disguise suggests evil and deceit, and the contemporary attacks on transvestite fashions, it seems reasonable to conclude that the dramatist had to contend with a certain resistance in his audience to accepting his disguised heroines.

Shakespeare was not, of course, the first English dramatist to put his heroine into male clothing. If we look at the work of some of his forerunners we will note that they frequently acknowledged the difficulties that disguising presents. The earliest extant play to employ the device is the anonymous *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes* (c. 1570).

There the disguised girl, Neronis, is made to justify her imposture, presumably for the audience's benefit:

> Ah who knoweth her, in painful Pages show?
> But no good Lady wil me blame, which of my case doth know:
> But rather when they heare the truth, wherefore I am disguised,
> Thaile say it is an honest shift, the which I have devised . . . . (ll. 1261-64)[7]

In John Lyly's *Gallathea* (?1588), Phillida, dressed as a boy by her father so as to save her from sacrificial death, complains bitterly about the immorality of the situation into which this forces her: "For then I must keepe company with boyes, and commit follies unseemlie for my sexe; or keepe company with girles, and bee thought more wanton than becommeth" (I.iii).[8]

Shakespeare, too, frequently has his disguised girls make such disclaimers. At the end of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Julia admits the immodesty of her dress, but justifies it by comparing it with the greater evil of Proteus's inconstancy:

> O Proteus, let this habit make thee blush!
> Be thou asham'd that I have took upon me
> Such an immodest raiment — if shame live
> In a disguise of love.
> It is the lesser blot, modesty finds,
> Women to change their shapes than men their minds.
> (V. iv. 104-09)[9]

In *The Merchant of Venice* Jessica escapes from her father's house in boy's clothing but is deeply ashamed of her disguise and wishes to conceal it in darkness:

> I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me,
> For I am much asham'd of my exchange;
> But love is blind, and lovers cannot see
> The pretty follies they themselves commit,
> For, if they could, Cupid himself would blush
> To see me thus transformed to a boy. (II. vi. 39-9)

Even Viola, who is under no pressure at all to take on disguise, recognises the possibilities of vicious imposture inherent in disguise:

> Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness
> Wherein the pregnant enemy does much. (II. ii. 25-6)

But Shakespeare gives his audience strong enough reason for accepting the disguised girls; despite the deception they are amongst the most modest, virtuous and appealing of all the dramatist's characters.

When he looked at extant plays that put their heroines into masculine dress Shakespeare could hardly have been very inspired. In *Sir Clyomon* the disguise-situation is hardly developed at all beyond the mechanical confusions it produces. The disguises of the two girls in *Gallathea* mainly provide pathetic ironies. Of all the plays prior to Shakespeare's, Robert Greene's *James the Fourth* (reg. 1594) makes the fullest use of disguise. Dorothea, to save her life when she learns that her husband has planned her murder, disguises herself as a man. But whereas the girls in Shakespeare's plays disguise themselves of their own will, Dorothea has to be persuaded by her friends, and consents only timorously. Ironically, the would-be murderer is not deceived, and wounds Dorothea. Only the Andersons, a couple who take in and care for the wounded girl, are deceived. Inevitably, Lady Anderson falls in love with Dorothea, but this situation is hardly of importance to the dramatist, who does not develop it and terminates it abruptly. Dorothea's situation is tragi-comic, more akin to that of Imogen than to those of Shakespeare's earlier heroines, and in contrast to Shakespeare's spirited girls, Dorothea is passive and insipid.

It is probable that there were other plays, now no longer in existence, which featured a disguised heroine, but it is unlikely that any was much superior to those discussed. Why, then, given the problems, was the disguised girl so important to Shakespeare? I want to develop here the suggestion made above that the dramatist was interested in the opportunity that the disguised girl gave him to create a particular sort of response in the audience. Anne Righter has shown how on the mediaeval stage the audience was

directly involved or was involved through its counterpart or representative (Mankind or Everyman) in the action of the play; but as the drama developed from ritual to art this involvement was lost, and dramatists had to find other methods of including the audience in the world of the play.[10] I wish to suggest that in putting his heroines into doublet and hose Shakespeare found one such method.

In a very real sense the disguised girl is the audience's representative on the stage. Shakespeare was the first dramatist to see the possibilities of a genuine distinction between the primary and the secondary persona and to manipulate this distinction so that the actor is playing two parts, one for the other characters onstage, and one for the audience. By taking on a disguise the heroine isolates herself and partially removes herself from the action, to occupy an area midway between actors and audience, while the original female persona becomes observer and commentator, and implicitly or explicitly recognising the presence of the audience, can speak truth as satirist or moralist, can interpret the action, and can speak for, and sometimes to, the audience. We only have to look at *James the Fourth*, the most sophisticated of the earlier plays, to see how important this distinction is for Shakespeare. Dorothea can at no point make use of the ambiguity of her position, and is quite unable to allow the one aspect of her self to observe the other. In the scene (V.v) where Lady Anderson attempts to woo her, Dorothea is so far from controlling the situation that she is forced to reveal her identity in order to put an end to it.[11] Compare this with the similar scenes in *Twelfth Night* (I.v; III.i), between Viola and Olivia, where Viola is allowed to be aware of herself as an actress, and in exploiting the ambiguity of the situation through references that can have no meaning to Olivia, is able to acknowledge the presence of Olivia and of the audience at the same time.

It is through this sense that the heroine and the audience share a secret that Shakespeare makes his characteristic

use of the disguise. Essentially, his method is to allow his heroine a certain awareness that she is taking part in a play, an awareness that necessarily brings her closer to the audience. He emphasises this by isolating the heroine in her special consciousness. Julia's maid Lucetta and Viola's Captain, who know about the disguises, never appear on stage again once the heroines are in disguise. Portia and Rosalind do have companions who share in the secret, but they too are in disguise (Nerissa, Touchstone and Celia). Further, the dramatist generally ensures that the heroine has full information about all that is happening onstage, a situation which she shares with the audience, and which gives her a higher level of consciousness than the other characters of the play. It must be noted that when Shakespeare gives his heroine this awareness of the artifice of the play the intention is the opposite to that of the Brechtian alienation device. The aim is not to distance the audience, but to bring it into the play.

This can be seen clearly in an examination of the role of the disguised Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. This is a tentative and, in many ways, crude approach to audience involvement through the use of disguise; nevertheless we can see in it all the important elements of the more ambitious disguisings of the later plays. First, as we have seen, Julia is isolated, her identity known only to the audience. Second, although the audience knows before Julia does that Proteus is not constant to her, Shakespeare makes sure to give her the necessary information as soon as she appears on the stage as "Sebastian". He has already taken great care to build up audience sympathy for the girl: when she decides to take on a disguise to follow her lover, so demonstrating her own constancy, it is in the scene immediately following Proteus's soliloquy concerning his betrayal of her. The audience's sympathy is consolidated when Julia arrives onstage for the first time in disguise to be presented immediately with evidence of this betrayal.

Having built up this sympathy (Julia is the only character in the play with whom the audience can sympathise at all) Shakespeare develops it into intimacy by exploitation of the opportunities disguise allows to bring the audience into Julia's confidence. It appears that Shakespeare's aim is to suggest some identity between Julia's position and consciousness and those of the audience. The whole of her dialogue during her first scene of disguising (IV.ii) is carefully used to develop this suggestion. Her conversation with the Host after she has heard Proteus singing to Silvia is to him only a conversation about music; her ironic second meaning, providing a commentary on Proteus' inconstancy, has the effect of an acknowledgement of the audience's presence. For the remainder of this scene her own function as onlooker or audience is emphasized. She watches Proteus's attempted wooing of Silvia, speaking only occasionally, and always in asides. Since the Host is asleep throughout this part of the scene, Julia's asides are actually directed to the audience, of which she is now, in effect, a member. Her words here provide a moral commentary on the action while at the same time drawing attention to her own loss. We see her next with Proteus, and then with Silvia, and by this time the audience identifies totally with Julia's point of view as she presents her case to each. It is this identification that gives significance to Julia-Sebastian's description of a supposed performance of the part of Ariadne:

> for at Pentecost,
> When all our pageants of delight were play'd,
> Our youth got me to play the woman's part. . . .
> (IV. iv. 154-6)

The girl Julia could not, of course, have played the part of Ariadne on the stage, but the boy who played her could have, and this increases the suggestion inherent in Julia's role of an awareness of the play *as a play*. There is, almost, a separation of actor from character. From this point onward, until she swoons and can reveal herself, Julia's

function is entirely that of onlooker. In V.ii, during the baiting of Thurio by Proteus, she speaks only in asides, apart from the last two lines of the scene, when she is alone on the stage. In V.iv she watches Proteus make his attempt on Silvia, speaking only once, again aside, until the moment of the swoon. The effect of all this is to intensify the feeling of her distance from the play: she exists in a middle-ground between actors and audience.

It is, I think, clear that Shakespeare's main interest in Julia's disguise lies in these possibilities that it allows for audience involvement. The dramatist is concerned hardly at all with the confusions disguise creates, and although he exploits the pathos of Julia's position this too is only a secondary aim, since he gives Julia the necessary knowledge to take control of the situation whenever she wishes, in distinct contrast to the position of Greene's Dorothea. By giving her this higher awareness, and at the same time intensifying the sense of her separateness, he moves her toward the audience, and by allowing her to share in the audience's consciousness that the play is a play, makes her in effect its representative. Of course, Julia is in disguise for only a very few scenes, and with later heroines Shakespeare moved to a situation where this partial detachment extended throughout the play.

In *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare was still at the stage of experiment, and his use of disguise here is less successful than it was in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona.* In this new play, Shakespeare put no fewer than three women into disguise, and in at least one case disguise is more or less redundant, which suggests that Shakespeare was not quite sure what he wanted to do. Jessica appears in disguise in only one scene, when she escapes from her father's house. According to Victor Freeburg in his comprehensive study of disguise conventions, "Dramatic disguise . . . means a change of personal appearance which leads to mistaken identity. There is a double test, change and confusion."[12] This is a perfectly acceptable definition, and

if we apply it to Jessica's case we find there is no dramatic necessity for her disguise, as she uses it to deceive no one. In the story which is thought to be a possible source for the Jessica-Shylock-Lorenzo line of the play, the fourteenth tale of Masuccio's *Il Novellino*, there is a similar escape, but no use of disguise.[13] So the disguise is Shakespeare's invention, and there is no justification for it, since within the terms of the play Jessica could just as well have escaped without disguise. It is possible that Shakespeare intended to develop the situation and then abandoned the idea, but as it stands it reflects the dramatist's general unsureness about his use of disguise in this play.

For we encounter some uncertainty of treatment in the main disguise of the play, which is, of course, Portia's. In III.iv, when she introduces the idea of dressing as a boy to her maid Nerissa, Portia describes at some length the performance she intends to put on. This is a speech filled with mockery, and it seems that she intends to turn her disguise into a satire on fashionable, boastful young men, or the kind of saucy youth that Rosalind plays:

> I have within my mind
> A thousand raw tricks of these bragging Jacks,
> Which I will practise. (III. iv. 76-78)

This is a mockery, indeed, of the male idea of masculinity; but it hardly coincides with the figure who actually appears in the courtroom when, as the grave, learned young doctor Balthazar, Portia triumphs over Shylock. Not, perhaps, an important inconsistency, but suggestive of a lack of certainty.

Again it seems that Shakespeare is trying to create a special intimacy between heroine and audience. Portia's true nature is known to the audience, but among the characters only Nerissa shares this knowledge, and she too is in disguise. Further, Portia is well aware of the nature of her own performance. But the audience is not drawn into an intimacy with Portia as it was with Julia; she is to be admired, of course, but she is somewhat remote. She is too

powerful, a *dea ex machina* who is not in any way vulnerable as Julia was. And if we look at the way in which her disguise is manipulated, we see that the subtlety of treatment of the relationship between the two aspects of the disguise that characterized Julia's case is notably lacking here. If we take the basic assumption that Portia's disguise is necessary to enable her to speak in the courtroom, we must then note that nothing further in the body of the trial-scene depends upon mistaken identity, or upon any ironic distance between the two aspects of the disguise. Shakespeare allows himself no room to exploit its possibilities, and it is rather wasted. Only at the end of the scene, when he uses the ring-device to lighten the tragicomic atmosphere that has developed during the trial, does Shakespeare exploit the disguise. But even here the audience is kept at a distance. It laughs with Portia at Bassanio, but it is not drawn into the play by her. There can be no doubt, of course, that as a play *The Merchant of Venice* is superior to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; nevertheless the earlier play is more daring and perhaps more successful in its recognition of the possibilities that disguise allows, and in this it is closer to *As You Like It.*

Shakespeare clearly saw that to achieve the audience involvement that he wanted he had to allow the disguised heroine to dominate the play; even so, in *As You Like It,* because he still feels the need to justify the act of disguising he does not bring Ganymede into the play until II.iv. As Ganymede, Rosalind does dominate the play, but it is significant that until she takes on her male disguise she appears to be weaker than Celia. Celia it is who suggests the idea of flight and disguise, while Rosalind can only raise somewhat fearful objections:

> Why, whither shall we go? . . .
> Alas, what danger will it be to us,
> Maids as we are, to travel forth so far! (I. iii. 102, 104-5)

It is only when she gets the idea of disguising herself as a man that Rosalind becomes the stronger and more active

of the two. So, at her first appearance as a man, Rosalind consciously takes the dominant position: "I could find it in my heart to disgrace my man's apparel, and to cry like a woman; but I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat; therefore, courage, good Aliena" (II.iv.4-7). And as doublet and hose assert themselves here, so do they throughout the play, as all confusions relate directly to Rosalind's disguise.

Rosalind's primary, female persona steps quite consciously out of the action, leaving the secondary persona Ganymede to inhabit the same plane as the other characters. The effect of this is to put Rosalind in the position, shared by the audience, of acknowledging the artifice of the play. "I'll prove a busy actor in their play" (III.iv.54), she says as she decides to interfere in the affairs of Phebe and Silvius, and her words, in their self-consciousness, could well refer to her position in the play as a whole. For much of *As You Like It* is in effect created and stage-managed by Rosalind. When she persuades Orlando to pretend that Ganymede is Rosalind she puts herself in a position to play her own part and yet keep at a distance from it; the audience, at the same distance, appreciates fully the nature of her control. She is Rosalind watching Ganymede watching Rosalind, and fully aware of her own position and its relation to that of the audience. In projecting herself out into the audience in this way, she draws them further into the play. This is important, since it is Rosalind's point of view that balances and encloses all others, both romantic and satiric, and the use made of her disguise firmly aligns the audience with this point of view.

Rosalind's special consciousness of her position in relation to the artifice of the play is emphasized in the last act. In presenting the masque which resolves all the confusions of the play she is equating herself with the playmaker, who necessarily stands outside the action; while at the same time her participation in the masque returns

her to the artifice of the action, since Ganymede disappears and Rosalind once again joins the actors within the illusion. Not for long, however, for she soon steps out of the play once again in order to speak the Epilogue, and it is worth noting that this is the only occasion in Shakespearian drama where a female character speaks the Epilogue or even, indeed, the last word. It is most appropriate that she should, for in directly addressing the audience in this way she is acknowledging the intimate nature of the relationship they have shared throughout the play.

In *Twelfth Night* the disguised heroine dominates even more completely than in *As You Like It.* Because of Shakespeare's need to motivate Rosalind's disguise, the heroine does not appear in male attire until midway through the second act. In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare dispenses with any pretense of motivation. The first time we see Viola she decides, without any given reason, to disguise herself, and the second time we see her she is Cesario. In spite of this more complete dominance, however, Viola has far less active control of her situation, since she cannot reveal her true identity until her brother appears to take the place of Cesario. With Viola, Shakespeare went back to the technique he had used in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* for like Julia she is quite isolated, since the Captain who helps with her disguise at the beginning of the play does not appear again. It is here the passive aspect of the observer-participant that Shakespeare develops: Viola is much more fully an observer and commentator, leaving the issues of her disguise to work themselves out, than was Rosalind, who was more active.

Implicit in all these disguises is a measure of self-awareness greater than that shown by other characters. Because the disguised heroine knows that she is an actor, she is aligned with the audience against the other characters, who are usually deceivers and self-deceivers. In the case of Viola this accounts for her frequent cryptic references to her imposture which can have no meaning except to the

audience. "I am not that I play" (I.v.173) and "I am not what I am" (III.i.138) she says to Olivia; there is more than irony here, for the audience is reminded of its complicity with her. Indeed, it seems that in Viola Shakespeare finally achieved what he was aiming for in his girl-pages. He wins his audience's affection for her at the beginning, and by completely isolating her in her secret he maintains this sympathy and unites Viola's consciousness with that of the audience. Viola is much more of a victim of her disguise than is Rosalind; she is not playing a game and is always closer to pathos. Rosalind's secret is known to two other characters; Portia's hardly implicates the audience at all. Julia's disguise and the way it is manipulated are, as we have seen, Shakespeare's pattern for achieving audience identification, but Julia's performance takes up only a small part of the play. In *Twelfth Night* disguise controls the entire play.

From the fact that after *Twelfth Night* he abandoned the device that had interested him for so long we may suppose that Shakespeare achieved in Viola what he wanted in his disguised heroines. Not until some ten years later, in *Cymbeline*, did he use it again, in a very different kind of play, and to different effect. Imogen's disguise necessarily shares many aspects of the disguises of the romantic comedies, but notable in it is the fact that there is no special attempt to align her with the audience; she is not used to bring the audience into the play. The audience is, no doubt, sympathetic toward her, but does not share with her a secret and superior knowledge. Her disguise does not put her in a position of special controlling power over other characters; far from it, she is kept ignorant of far too much that affects her and so is constantly vulnerable, to the very edge of pathos, and suffers a mental torment unknown to any of the earlier heroines. The audience knows, for example, that the headless Cloten is not Leonatus, and so is kept at a distance from Imogen's consciousness. Compare her situation with that of Julia,

who also suffers a certain amount of pain, but who knows all that the audience knows, and is consequently in a controlling position. In her discussion of Imogen, Juliet Dusinberre points out that Imogen never sees herself as a man.[14] This is important, because it means there is never any division in the persona, never any point where Imogen stands back to watch and comment on Fidele. To put on male attire is not Imogen's idea, but Pisanio's. Her first line when she eventually appears as a man tells us that "a man's life is a tedious one" (III.vi.1). Her femininity is constantly stressed; her brothers note it when they first see her, and when in the cave she lacks the masculine vitality of the earlier heroines to such a degree that, far from mocking any manly behaviour, she is "our huswife" (IV.ii.45). In fact, in her disguise she does very little, and it becomes important mainly in the last scene, when it is used to resolve all the complexities of the plot. A strain of pathos is built up through her suffering, through the manner in which her disguise is used to demonstrate the natural nobility of herself and her brothers, and culminates in the blow struck by Leonatus that reveals Imogen's identity. It is a strain that leads to the perhaps more cynical manipulations of Beaumont and Fletcher, and one quite alien to the earlier disguise-plays.

My concern here is with a particular use that Shakespeare makes of disguise in his romantic comedies, and by noting what he does not do in *Cymbeline* we can see more clearly what he does do in the earlier plays. There he makes use of the two distinct characters that disguise can provide, allowing the secondary, male persona to participate in the action, and leaving the primary, female persona to comment, to satirise, or to manipulate, and in doing so to involve the audience by allowing it to identify itself with her consciousness, in a way that is not to be found in comedies that employ disguise before his own, or in later ones. Without resorting to crude and illusion-shattering direct address, he is able to give the audience a special

intimacy with a central character, to bring the audience into the play in a way that is otherwise impossible. This is clearly what he is attempting to do in his comedies up to *Twelfth Night*, with varied degrees of success; it is equally clear that he is not trying to do the same thing in *Cymbeline*.

Other instances of disguise in Shakespearian drama deserve to be closely studied, but even a cursory consideration of them shows that only with his girl-pages did Shakespeare use disguise to draw the audience into the play. Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is disguised for purely farcical effect, Lucio and Tranio in *The Taming of the Shrew* largely for the sake of the plot. Kent and Edgar can speak a special kind of truth in their disguises, and demonstrate a very powerful metaphor, but there is no great separation between the two aspects of Kent's disguise, and in neither character is Shakespeare concerned to create a special intimacy with the audience. Duke Vincentio of *Measure for Measure* seems to offer some parallel to the girl-pages, but as commentator and norm of the play he is a very ambiguous figure, and certainly does not attract the affections of the audience.

Only in his romantic heroines did Shakespeare exploit disguise in the way we have discussed here. For his aims to succeed, he had to create totally trustworthy characters, for however puzzling the disguiser may be to people on the stage, she must be totally transparent to the audience. In this way Shakespeare was able to overcome the obstacles created by the audience's normal resistance to disguised characters, and to create the intimate relationship that provides a major part of the special charm of these women.

NOTES

[1]Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975), pp. 231-271. See also, for example, Victor O. Freeburg, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama: A Study in Stage Tradition* (1915; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), p. 4; M. C. Bradbrook, *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy* (1955; rpt.

Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963), pp. 96-98; G. Wilson Knight, *The Golden Labyrinth: A Study of British Drama* (London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1962), p. 68; Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1974), p. 235.

[2]Leo Salingar, *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 171.

[3]Fynes Moryson, *Itinerary* [1617] (Glasgow, 1907), part IV, p. 222.

[4]Philip Stubbes, *Philip Stubbes's Anatomy of the Abuses in England in Shakespeare's Youth A.D. 1583*, ed. F. J. Furnivall (New Shakespeare Society, 1877-9), p. 73.

[5]William Harrison, *Description of England*, in John Dover Wilson, *Life in Shakespeare's England* (1911; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 163-4.

[6]T. G., *The Rich Cabinet*, in Dover Wilson, *Life in Shakespeare's England*, p. 220.

[7]*Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*, in the Malone Society Reprints (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913).

[8]John Lyly, *Complete Works*, ed. R. Warwick Bond (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1902).

[9]All quotations from Shakespeare's plays are from *The Complete Works*, ed. Peter Alexander (London: Collins, 1951).

[10]Anne Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 25.

[11]Robert Greene, *The Scottish History of James the Fourth*, ed. J. A. Lavin (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1967).

[12]Freeburg, *Disguise Plots*, p. 2.

[13]Masuccio, *Il Novellino*, in Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), I. 497-505.

[14]Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, p. 265.