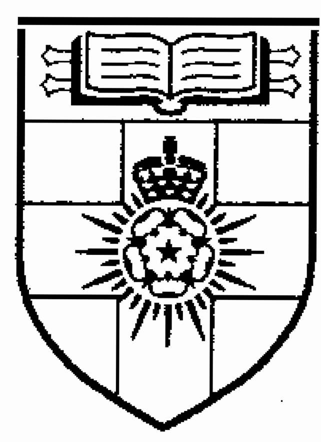

UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON
EXTERNAL PROGRAMME

Renaissance comedy: Shakespeare and Jonson

Diploma and BA English

G. Egan

Second edition 1995 E5

Reprinted without amendment 1997

This guide was prepared for the University of London by:

G. Egan, Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham.

This is one of a series of subject guides published by the University. We regret that due to pressure of work the author is unable to enter into any correspondence relating to, or arising from, the guide. Any comments on this subject guide, favourable or unfavourable, would be most welcome and should be addressed to:

External Publications
Room 35, Senate House
University of London
Malet Street
London WC1E 7HU
United Kingdom.

This subject guide has been extracted from the Foundation Unit Subject Introductions, second edition 1995.

© University of London 1997
ISBN 07187 13982

PROPERTY OF
GABRIEL EGAN

Table of contents

Introduction **3**
- Objectives 3
- Course content 3
- Method of assessment 4
- Using this subject guide 5
- Symbols used in this subject guide 5

Chapter 1: Preparatory material on the authors, the plays and the milieu **7**
- Authors 7
- Editions of the plays 9
- The milieu 10

Chapter 2: General topics for consideration **13**
- What do we mean by comedy? 13
- Satire, farce, dramatic irony and parody 14
- The Elizabethan theatrical context 16
- Patronage and censorship 18

Chapter 3: Contextualising extracts **21**
- The range of approaches 21
- Working outwards 21

Chapter 4: Single play analysis: four approaches to *Bartholomew Fair* **25**
- A formal approach: High/Low comedy 25
- A formal approach: violation of classical unities of place, action and time 26
- A thematic approach: the play-within-the-play 28
- A thematic approach: the choice of 'setting' 30
- Sample questions on *Bartholomew Fair* 31

Chapter 5: Comparative analysis **33**
- The theme of gender and class transgression in *Twelfth Night*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Epicoene* 33

Appendix 1: Bibliography **41**
- Primary texts 41
- Endnote 44

Appendix 2: Sample examination paper **45**

Notes

Introduction

Objectives

This subject guide aims to provide you with an introduction to the comedies of William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. This guide has been designed:

1. to help you become familiar with the primary texts in this group, of which the 12 texts on the syllabus form the largest part
2. to develop your understanding of the original creative context of these texts: the Elizabethan/Jacobean theatre and the world in which it functioned
3. to direct you towards the major critical works written about these plays, especially the recent critical developments
4. to help you draw on (2.) and (3.) to develop your own critical approach(es) to the plays.

Course content

The 12 plays on the syllabus are:

Shakespeare

Much Ado About Nothing
As You Like It
The Merchant of Venice
A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Taming of the Shrew
Twelfth Night

Jonson

Bartholomew Fair
Volpone
The Alchemist
Every Man in his Humour
Eastward Ho!
Epicoene; or The Silent Woman.

These are the plays to which the examination questions will refer and you are recommended to confine yourself to these texts. You may refer to other plays in your examination answers but the extracts which you will be required to contextualise in Section A of the examination will be drawn from these 12. You should attempt to divide your time approximately equally between the two authors.

You will need to spend at least as much time on secondary reading (i.e. criticism and background) as you do on these primary texts. You will not be expected to know all of the plays equally well, but rather to choose those you are most interested in and prepare to answer on these texts.

In order to focus your study you will need to develop certain topics which allow you to compare and contrast the plays, one with another. The following is a selection of topics that you might be interested in:

- violation of Classical formulation (i.e. Unities of place, action and time)
- the choice of 'setting' and how it affects an audience's response
- the distinction between High and Low Comedy
- genre problems created by these plays
- the cultural specificity of 'comedy'
- gender and class transgression
- use of disguise
- the significance of characters' names
- comic stereotypes
- marriage as a site of conflict
- comic quibbling
- bawdy
- inversions of social order
- the Fool/Clown
- the structure of plots and sub-plots
- the 'Play-within-a-play'.

Not all of these topics will be discussed in this introduction and your own study will need to go beyond the outlines given here.

Method of assessment

You will be assessed by one three-hour examination. The examination paper will be in three parts. You will have to answer **one** question from **each** section.

Section A will consist of six short extracts from the plays on the syllabus. The extracts will be anonymous; that is, you will not be told which play a passage is from. There will be three extracts from the work of each dramatist. You will be asked to comment on **one** of these extracts. In your answer you may discuss any aspect of the text that you feel is appropriate, but you must be able to place the extract in the context of the play from which it is drawn. By 'context' we mean the way in which the extract forms part of the play from which it is extracted and its relationship to the rest of that play. You may wish to extend this notion of context by relating the extract to other works by either dramatist, or to the works of its author taken collectively.

Section B will consist of a series of questions, half on Shakespeare and half on Jonson. You **must** choose **one** of these questions. Here you will be able to demonstrate detailed knowledge of a **single** play and the ability to discuss the play in terms of a particular topic or topics. See above for a list of topics which you might wish to develop.

Section C will contain questions requiring comparative analysis. You will be required to draw parallels and distinctions between **two** or **three** plays and place them in their social and creative contexts. You **must** write on **at least one** play by Shakespeare **and at least one** by Jonson.

In planning your study you should aim to develop a detailed knowledge of at least six, and no more than eight, plays spanning both dramatists. If you prepare three plays by each dramatist (i.e. six in all) there is a one in 400 chance that none of them will be among those appearing in Section A. If you prepare seven plays (three by one dramatist and four by the other) one of them is certain to appear. Attempting to cover more than eight plays will probably prevent you achieving the necessary depth of knowledge. As well as becoming familiar with the language of the plays by close reading, you should prepare at least three topics in relation to your chosen plays, and consider ways of

relating these topics to the rest of the plays. In this introduction you will be advised to perform certain activities (such as making lists and preparing tables) for the plays we are concerned with. For some of these tasks you should confine yourself only to those plays you are concentrating on, as the instructions indicate.

Please note the general stipulation concerning the presentation of substantially the same material in any two answers. In other units this might mean avoiding writing two answers on the same text(s), but in this unit you may write on the same play(s) so long as the arguments you make are substantially different.

There is a sample examination paper at the end of this subject guide.

Using this subject guide

This subject guide is intended to serve as a starting point for your own study plan. The approaches to the texts taken here should serve as models for developing your own approaches. The best start you can give yourself is to read (or reread) all the plays on the syllabus. Only then, in conjunction with this subject guide, should you begin to decide which plays and which topics you intend to examine in more detail. The topics raised in this introduction are intended to outline areas of study, and none is treated exhaustively here. You may, of course, wish to examine topics which this introduction does not mention. In all events, the reading lists given here will help you determine what is considered the most essential secondary reading. It is up to you to decide what you supplement this essential reading with, and you will find that the subject-based bibliographies at the end of certain secondary texts will help you.

Symbols used in this subject guide

When the author or title of a text is given in ***bold and italics***, full bibliographical details of the text in question will be found in Appendix 1.

Study strategies (e.g. consider this point, study this chapter) have been put in boxes throughout the text.

Notes

Chapter 1

Preparatory material on the authors, the plays and the milieu

Authors

The title of this chapter defines a set of texts by three criteria: the period (Renaissance), the genre (comedy) and the authors (Shakespeare and Jonson). You will already have some conception of the Renaissance as a distinct period in Western cultural history and you will certainly have an idea of what is meant by comedy. Of the two authors, it is highly likely that you will be more familiar with the work of Shakespeare than that of Jonson. Shakespeare occupies a unique position at the top of the hierarchy of texts in the canon of English literature and is often considered to occupy the same position within the larger category of English culture. Below Shakespeare in this hierarchy is a rank of authors which includes Jonson, Chaucer and Milton. The ranking of authors in this canon of English literature has been a matter of contention, but Shakespeare is now generally considered to be at the top. However, in the early 17th century Jonson was considered by many to occupy this position. Moreover, drama did not then have the status within English culture that it has today.

It is not necessary for this subject that you have a detailed knowledge of the lives of Shakespeare and Jonson, even if such material were readily available (which it is not). The most salient details about these two authors are summarised in the next two sections. It is, however, important that you are able to compare and contrast the two dramatists via the texts. Although they worked in the same medium and even for the same theatrical company, there were very important differences in their personalities and their experiences which can be seen in the way they write.

Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born on or around 23 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon and died there on the same day in 1616. In the late 1580s he moved to London and entered the theatrical business, first as an actor and then as a dramatist/shareholder. The first printed allusion to Shakespeare dates from 1592 in the pamphlet *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, where he is referred to as an 'upstart crow...[who] is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country'. The author of this comment, Robert Greene, seems to resent Shakespeare as a rival. There are a few other dramatic allusions to Shakespeare made during his time in London and they are all listed in the introduction of ***Wells and Taylor***. Most of the documentary evidence of this period of Shakespeare's life takes the form of official documents such as contracts and lawsuits. It is clear from these that Shakespeare made a lot of money in London. When he retired to Stratford-upon-Avon he was a very rich man, much of his wealth deriving from usury. This is a biographical fact that has largely been ignored by critics wishing to portray Shakespeare as a natural genius, it being felt that this genius was not compatible with great personal wealth. The process whereby the facts of Shakespeare's life have been 'massaged' to produce a cultural icon which supports certain political agenda has come to be known as 'bardolatry' (i.e. idolatry of the bard).

There is not the room here to present the history of 'bardolatry'. For the purposes of this subject the most important thing is that you attempt to throw off whatever preconceptions you might have about Shakespeare. In particular the notion of his 'natural born genius' will become a hindrance to proper academic study of his works. It is, of course, impossible to approach this author as though one has never heard of him, but you should at least try to be aware of the preconceptions you are bringing and to remain critical of them. One of the effects of the 'natural born genius' model of Shakespeare's creativity is that it denies the importance of the cultural context in which Shakespeare wrote. The purpose-built playhouses of the Elizabethan age were the first such constructions since the departure of the Romans more than 1,000 years earlier. We will be examining the phenomenon of the rise of the late 16th century theatre in later sections: 'The milieu' and 'The Elizabethan theatrical context'.

Jonson

Ben Jonson was born in London early in 1573 and died there on 6 August 1637. The documentary evidence shows that Jonson was involved with a theatrical company called the Lord Admiral's Men during the 1590s. In the autumn of 1598 Jonson killed one of the actors of this company, Gabriel Spencer, in a duel. Jonson was saved from execution for murder by his ability to read and write Latin, which allowed him to claim what was called the 'Benefit of Clergy'. This legal device, which rested on a distinction between the jurisdiction of state courts and ecclesiastical courts, exempted the learned from sentencing for a first conviction.

In disgrace with the Lord Admiral's Men for the murder of one of their players, Jonson offered his services to the rival Lord Chamberlain's Men and in 1598 *Every Man in his Humour* was accepted by them and performed with Shakespeare taking a part. This play made Jonson's reputation. Apart from writing for the public stage, Jonson made a career for himself in the writing of court masques in collaboration with the architect Inigo Jones.[1] These elaborate entertainments became highly developed under King James and Jonson was by far the most successful and prolific exponent of the art form.

[1] *For a contemporary account of a court masque see Gurr* ***Shakespearean Stage*** *188-191.*

Jonson gave up writing for the public stage after the failure of his play *The Devil is an Ass* in 1616 and did not resume until 1625. None of his plays between 1625 and 1633 was a great success and Jonson died something of a broken man.

Jonson has been characterised as a Classicist and certainly his scholarly abilities exceeded Shakespeare's. When called upon to write a commendatory verse for the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays in 1623, Jonson wrote of Shakespeare's possession of 'small Latin, and less Greek'. This has been taken as an accurate estimate of Shakespeare's learning, but it is important to recognise that many factors contributed to the construction of Shakespeare and Jonson as opposites. For many years the standard set of binary oppositions underlying the comparison of Shakespeare and Jonson was this:

Shakespeare	**Jonson**
untaught	learned
modest	arrogant
populist	élitist
poet of Nature	poet of Art
creating new artistic models	reviving old artistic models.

This set of oppositions is one which Jonson himself was interested in fostering. In referring to Shakespeare's lack of Classical learning in his commendatory verse he was deliberately distinguishing Shakespeare's practice from his own. There are many valuable contrasts to be made between the two writers, but it is important to recognise that the writers themselves knew each other and that their careers intersected. The competition between the two men is one of the reasons why they have been, and still

are to some extent, viewed as opposites. Other reasons for this oppositional view include the history of literary criticism since the mid-17th century and are beyond the scope of this subject introduction.

The differences between the two dramatists which are relevant to this subject can all be explored through the texts on the syllabus and no special biographical knowledge is necessary. That is not to say that you should avoid biographical criticism if that is what interests you.

> Read the brief biography of Shakespeare in *Wells and Taylor* and also read any brief biography of Jonson from any play edition you have. Using this material collect the evidence which supports Shakespeare and Jonson being polarised in the way suggested above and the evidence against such a polarisation. Do you think biographical evidence necessarily favours such a polarisation? Might other kinds of evidence work against this polarisation?

Editions of the plays

Your first concern should be to gain familiarity with the plays and in practice this means two careful readings of each text. You should be aware that *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman* is one text. You may come across a version of *Every Man in his Humour* which is set in Italy rather than London. This is the text as it appeared in the 1601 quarto (pocket-size) edition of the play, and is not the version we will be considering. We are interested in the play as it appeared in Jonson's folio *Workes* of 1616.

The best modern edition of Shakespeare's plays is the single-volume ***William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*** (ed. Wells and Taylor) published by Oxford University Press. The compact edition of this book can be bought for around £15 in the United Kingdom. This is the cheapest way to have access to everything that Shakespeare ever wrote and it will serve you throughout your English studies programme, especially if you do Shakespeare as an advanced unit. This edition does not have notes explaining difficult terms, and if you find such notes essential you might prefer ***The Riverside Shakespeare***. There are substantial differences between the texts, and also the titles, of certain plays as they appear in ***Wells and Taylor*** and in all other editions, but these are fortunately minor in the plays which we will be studying. As a supplement to ***Wells and Taylor*** you will find that Onion's ***A Shakespeare Glossary*** serves very well instead of explanatory notes.

There is no single volume edition of Jonson's works which is comparable to the Oxford Shakespeare. The four volume edition edited by G.A. Wilkes ***Ben Jonson: The Complete Plays*** is a scholarly, and expensive, collection. It would be better to try to collect a set of modern single-play editions (the ***New Mermaids*** and the ***Revels Plays*** are especially recommended), or alternatively for the sake of economy you might find the World Classics Series ***Ben Jonson: Five Plays*** plus any editions of *Epicoene* and *Eastward Ho!* a good way to cover all the plays we are looking at. The final choice may depend on the particular availability of texts where you are.

The quotations used in Section A of the examination paper, and also in this subject guide, are from ***Wells and Taylor*** for the Shakespeare plays and from the ***New Mermaid*** single-volume editions for the Jonson plays.

The history of the transmission of these texts (the way in which they have come down to us) has some bearing on our study. The section 'The Elizabethan theatrical context' of this introduction will consider the effects of the dramatic origins of these texts and the section 'The physical layout of the stage and its effect' will look at the conditions under which the plays were performed. We are treating the texts primarily as literary works but it is important to remember that they are also scripts for theatrical production. There is an important difference here between the texts of Shakespeare and the texts of Jonson. Shakespeare appears to have had no interest whatsoever in having his plays published. Many of the texts of his plays published in his lifetime are manifestly corrupt (i.e. the words printed could not be what the dramatist wrote). Even those which were printed with the consent and assistance of the theatrical company of which Shakespeare was a major shareholder have errors which Shakespeare made no effort to correct. The first 'complete works' of Shakespeare was the *First Folio* published in 1623, seven years after his death. By contrast, Jonson took great pains over the printing of his works in his lifetime. His 1616 collection called the *Workes* was overseen by the author, who had made many revisions in the texts before submitting them to the printers. For this reason Jonson's texts can be seen much more as literary works than can Shakespeare's, simply because the latter took no interest in the printed versions of the plays. It can be useful to think of Jonson as primarily a literary writer and Shakespeare as primarily a theatrical practitioner. The nature and consequences of this difference will be examined later in this introduction.

The milieu

The plays under consideration were all written for the public and private theatres (the latter also admitted members of the public) of London between 1590 and 1614. Some of them may also have been performed for an invited audience in private theatres. The theatres of this period are a unique social phenomenon of which you will need to gain some appreciation. The view that these plays are essentially poems in dramatic form is no longer considered tenable and you will need to do some background reading on the conditions of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage in order to fully understand what the texts are doing. The most useful introduction is Andrew Gurr's ***The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*** and the standard reference work is E.K. Chambers's ***The Elizabethan Stage***.

The most successful theatres of the period were The Globe, The Theatre, The Rose, The Fortune and, later, The Blackfriars. The most successful companies were The Queen's Men, The Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men) — which was Shakespeare's company — and The Lord Admiral's Men. The companies were named after leading public figures because the players were, in the eyes of the law, primarily servants of these men. This necessity to be in service to a patron was a consequence of a law against vagabonds, the class to which players had always belonged. The system of patronage was closely linked to the system of censorship and court power lay behind both. We shall be examining these issues in more detail in the section, 'Patronage and censorship'.

If you have had no previous contact with texts from this period, you might like to gain a general sense of the cultural environment from some of the following:

E.M.W. Tillyard	***The Elizabethan World Picture***
Frances Yates	***Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance***
Stephen Greenblatt	***Renaissance Self-Fashioning***.

These three books take very different positions on what might be termed the Elizabethan 'mindset' or way of thinking about the world and the degree of variance from the dominant mindset available to an individual. A classic example often used is the degree to which atheism could even be conceived by an Elizabethan as a possible opinion about God, rather than being simply a manifestation of evil. Those who stress the monolithic nature of the mindset argue that an Elizabethan could not have such a thought, while those who deny the monolithic model emphasise the individualistic, free-thinking opportunities that the period afforded. One reason why these authors differ on the subject of variance from the dominant view (sometimes called the 'dominant ideology') is that they have differing political perspectives which condition their view of the possibility of subversive thought and action.

> Attempt to define, without the aid of reference works, the term 'Renaissance'. Consider the degree to which the term itself fosters a particular view of the period in relation to the period which preceded it (think of the word's etymology).

Notes

Chapter 2

General topics for consideration

What do we mean by comedy?

Comedy is most easily distinguished from its opposite, tragedy, by the way it ends:

> All tragedies are finished by a death,
> All comedies are ended by a marriage,
>
> Byron *Don Juan*

Check that our plays accord with this definition. Consider the anomalous cases (with special attention to **when** marriages occur).

The binary opposition of comedy/tragedy dates from the drama of Ancient Greece and you will probably be familiar with the symbol consisting of two face-masks, one expressing joy and the other sorrow, which is commonly associated with drama and which denotes this opposition. One problem with Byron's distinction is that all the emphasis is placed on the plot outcome and one could imagine a tragedy being turned into a comedy by the simple expedient of changing the last few lines. (Indeed *King Lear* received this treatment in the 1681 production by Nahum Tate, in which Edgar married Cordelia and Lear lived on!) A more useful distinction would take account of the whole of the text, not just the outcome of the plot. It is certainly true that a tragedy may have extremely funny episodes in it and that a comedy may contain extremely painful moments (consider the treatment of Malvolio at the end of *Twelfth Night*). A definition of genres would need to take this mixing of modes into account.

One way to refine the distinction between comedy and tragedy is to consider the view of the world which underlies each. Comedies are generally concerned with human foibles (e.g. greed, hypocrisy, envy) which are undesirable but recognisable as everyday and not very dangerous. Tragedy, on the other hand, presents human weaknesses (often the same ones as comedy) in much stronger forms which really are dangerous. The happiness at the end of a comedy usually arises from the overcoming of foibles or at least the removal of the impediment they constitute. Tragedy represents death as the inevitable outcome of the existence of these foibles. Underlying this difference may be different visions of human existence: a pessimistic vision in tragedy and an optimistic vision in comedy. Tragedy tends to be associated with weighty matters such as Good and Evil and the human soul, while comedy deals with mirth, wit and bodily needs. That each form may have elements of the other does not interfere with the overall 'vision' of the work which is manifest in the gravity or lightness of its themes.

The most obvious location for the manifestation of comic effects in drama is in the language and actions of the protagonists. Before considering the possible thematic significance of a play, you will undoubtedly form opinions about the characters represented; these opinions will largely be determined by what characters say and what is said about them. In comedy there is a predominance of characters who are, in themselves, the objects of our laughter. As a prompt to such laughter there may be other characters who make fun of these objects of scorn and the wit with which this is done may add to the pleasurable effect. When considering comic effects you should be alert to the difference between effects created by characterisation alone and those which involve more complex effects of character interaction such as deception, betrayal, and flattery. You will certainly find that some characters appear

complex and multi-faceted while others are one-dimensional and stereotypical. It is often argued that Shakespeare's writing is distinguished by a wealth of the former characterisation while Jonson's plays are populated with characters of the latter type.

Satire, farce, dramatic irony and parody

In the prologue to *Every Man in his Humour* Jonson describes the purpose of comedy as to 'show an image of the times/And sport with human follies, not with crimes'. Such comedy is called 'satire' and it is often claimed as a kind of social commentary and restorative. Satire works by presenting characters for the audience to laugh at in a particular way. A character might be shown to be pompous, or hypocritical or highly stupid (all of which are 'follies') and the audience laughs at their lack of self-awareness. The joke is at the expense of the character who is mocked, and frequently use is made of a gap between:

- the character's conception of himself or herself
- our perception of him or her.

> Find examples of this kind of characterisation in the plays you are concentrating on. If you are not sure where to begin, look at Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. Pay particular attention to the difference between Shakespeare's use of this mode and Jonson's.

Satire is only one mode of comedy and you will need to consider others such as 'dramatic irony' and 'farce'. Dramatic irony occurs when the audience understands something that the characters do not, especially when information we have received from another part of the text gives us a perspective that the characters cannot have. An example would be our knowledge that Viola and Sebastian are being mistaken for one another towards the end of *Twelfth Night*. Satire can be a special form of dramatic irony in which our 'true' perception of the object of mockery is gained from witnessing them alone on the stage, being themselves. Farce is perhaps the simplest kind of comedy to define since it aims to cause great laughter rather than merely raise a smile. The method involves absurd situations, unexpected reversals of fortune and a high degree of exaggerated physical action of a violent kind. Generally in farce verbal wit is subordinated to visual ('slapstick') humour. ***Bartholomew Fair*** is an outstanding example of this kind of comedy. You will sometimes hear farce and slapstick referred to as 'Low comedy' and intricate punning and witty deception referred to a 'High comedy'. These terms are often accompanied by assertions that the former appealed to low-class members of the audience and the latter to the high-class, but there is no evidential basis for this view.

> Consider the depiction of Puritans in these plays, starting with Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, or Busy in *Bartholomew Fair* (you may have to determine for yourself who is a Puritan). Is there a definite pattern in the way Puritans are depicted (e.g. a stereotypical representation) or a range of representations?

An important distinction to make when considering these plays is that between verbal humour and situational humour, although most of the time both are used simultaneously. When Sly is being fooled into believing himself a lord in *The Taming of the Shrew*, much of the comic effect is produced simply by the trick being played on him: it is a funny trick. Similarly the tricking of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* is comic. In these examples we laugh at the character because of the situation they are in. We may **also** laugh at the verbal wit used to trick them, or at the funny things they are unwittingly saying. Such deception in the comedy of the period is called 'gulling', and it is one of the archetypal devices of Renaissance comedy.

> Find examples of gulling in the plays you are concentrating on. In each example try to determine the level of hilarity within the onstage scene. That is, try to establish the extent to which the joke is appreciated by those present, either performing the gulling or merely spectating. Begin with the gulling of Sly at the beginning of *The Taming of the Shrew* and the separate gulling of first Benedick and then Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. What difference does it make whether we see the joke being appreciated? Does onstage appreciation make the gulling more obviously humorous (because laughter is contagious)?

When discussing comic effects you will need to bear in mind the absence of an over-arching authorial commentary in drama. Whatever authorial 'voice' you perceive is one entirely inferred from the speech of characters and especially their comments on one another. There is no getting outside of this interplay of voices, which are presented on the stage for an audience to 'overhear'. When you think that a character is saying things for which you are expected to laugh **at** him or her (i.e. they are being mocked), pay close attention to the means by which you are lead to this inference. Look particularly for moments when the character says something that appears to come from another voice, such as using the same language as those who condemn him or her.

Consider the ways in which Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night* and Bartholomew Cokes in ***Bartholomew Fair*** are made to appear comically foolish. Are there differences between Shakespeare and Jonson in the way that they use verbal and situational comic devices to make us laugh at these two characters? Pay close attention to the 'voice' which mocks (i.e. is it an implied authorial mocking, a comment by another character or even a self-mocking comment?) and the 'eye' that witnesses the foolish action (i.e. is it just the audience or are there onstage witnesses?).

Related to this idea of 'voices' is the question of 'parody', of which there is a little in these plays. Parody is the deliberate use of a particular style or mode of writing in such a way as to mock that kind of writing; in modern cinema this kind of comedy is called 'spoof'. What is peculiar to parody is that a mode of representation (e.g. a way of writing, or acting, or telling a story) is lampooned, rather than an individual. An individual who uses the mode being mocked may also be made a figure of fun, but the style is the butt of the parody. An example would be the performance by the mechanicals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which the original audience would recognise as being an old-fashioned entertainment called an 'interlude', popular about 50 years earlier and frequently performed by travelling companies of players. This kind of entertainment, using highly compressed excerpts from tragedies (e.g. 'Pyramis and Thisbe'), played in an exaggerated way, strikes us as hilariously unsophisticated and would have seemed much more so to the original audience who knew the kind of performance being parodied. This example is a case of one kind of drama, Elizabethan comedy, parodying another, tragic interlude. You will also find parodies of styles of writing.

> Find examples of occasions where a style of writing is represented in the plays you are concentrating on and consider the possibility that the style is being parodied.

The Elizabethan theatrical context

The rise of the theatres

The most successful public theatres in London of the late 16th century were located in a part of South London, Southwark, renowned for its low-life entertainment. The theatres competed directly with neighbouring premises offering bear-baiting and other attractions including prostitution. Across the river on the north side of the Thames was the area known as the City, which was the financial district. The City authorities were very largely under Puritan control and there was immense tension between the City and the theatre district. The Puritans objected to the public theatres for several reasons, which we will consider in the section, 'Patronage and censorship'. The City authorities repeatedly attempted to close the theatres but were thwarted by the Court, which had its own reasons for keeping them open. This constant three-way struggle forms the background to the production of these plays. There are two key points you should bear in mind when reading these plays:

- theatre was not, as it is now, a 'high-brow' entertainment. The cost of admission to the public theatre was well within the means of the poorest urban worker and it appears that audiences were comprised of a very broad social spectrum
- the plays were created in the context of a severe political struggle which eventually broke into war (the English Civil War of 1642).

The Swan Theatre, London. Sketched by Johannes De Witt, as copied by Arend van Buchell.

Consider the depiction of theatre-going and dramatic practice in these plays. Look for occasions when the onstage characters allude to dramatic performance. Collect examples of the statements made by Puritan characters about drama. Try to organise this material into a table of characters, their 'dispositions' (e.g. Puritan, anti-Puritan) and their attitude towards drama.

The physical layout of the stage and its effect

This drawing shows the layout of The Swan Theatre and is probably typical of the Elizabethan public theatre. Notice how the stage is surrounded by galleries on three sides. A spectator in one of the galleries would get a perspective of the stage-action which would be very different from the perspective from another gallery. Immediately in front of the stage is a space for audience members to stand, which offers another perspective again. The kind of stage design we are now most familiar with, a 'proscenium arch' framing a set, did not appear until the late 17th century. Although not apparent in this drawing, it is generally accepted that there was a gap in the 'tiring-house' wall between the two doors, which was covered with a curtain. In this recess a actor could stand ready to be 'discovered' by the drawing of the curtain, or else hide here and peep out (as Volpone does at 5.2.84-5).

It can be argued that there is an enormous difference between the dramatic experience one has viewing the Elizabethan 'thrust' stage (as it is called) and the 'proscenium arch' stage because the latter offers a single perspective on the drama. The degree to which the multiple perspectives afforded by the stage layout shown in the De Witt drawing affects what gets written is not clear. Modern critical argument has been concerned with the amount of closure that the proscenium arch causes; that is, the extent to which the multiplicity of possible textual meanings is reduced in the act of performance. Since we are concerned with the text as literary object this question need not concern us, but we are interested in the possible effect that contemporary stage design might have had on the writings of Shakespeare and Jonson.

Some of the effects of the stage layout can be easily shown. The common occurrence of a line such as 'Here come Lord so-and-so, looking like a...' is due to the great distance between the doors at the back of the stage where a character would enter, and the position at the front of the stage where they would be about to join a group. Such lines of dialogue fill the time during which the actor must make his way towards the others. The absence of any means of showing where action takes place (i.e. the absence of designed sets) gives rise to the frequent practice of the opening lines of a scene containing dialogue which tells the audience where the scene is set.

Take a scene you are familiar with from one of the plays and reread it while imagining it being performed on the stage shown in De Witt's drawing. Do this exercise slowly and ensure that you picture the positioning of each actor. You might like to look at the first 20 minutes of Laurence Olivier's film of *Henry V* which attempts to recreate an Elizabethan theatrical performance. How much, if at all, is your reading of the scene altered by thinking of it in this way? You may have found that there was something written in the scene which only made sense when visualised in this way.
If not try this exercise with Scene Act 4 Scene 1 of *Eastward Ho!* Try to remain conscious of the choices you make in 'staging' a scene in your head, and what possible configurations you are excluding. This should help you determine how much information there actually is in the text and how much you are really supplying yourself.

Audience

It is impossible to determine the social composition of the audience of the Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses with any accuracy. The low cost of entry to the public theatres would enable any urban worker to attend plays and ***Andrew Gurr*** suggests that between 15 and 20 per cent of all the people living within reach of a theatre (either public or private) would regularly attend. This figure is, not surprisingly, very unreliable. Even the social composition of the modern theatre-going audience is extremely difficult to determine, exit polls being the only reliable method of measurement and these are seldom carried out. What is better known about the Elizabethan theatre is the arrangement of the social classes within the space allocated to the audience and the behaviour of different parts of the audience. In the public theatres the cheapest area from which to spectate was the space immediately in front of the stage, known as the Pit, in which there were no seats. Those who stood here were known as the 'groundlings'. The more expensive seats were in the galleries and the most expensive of these were the separate boxes within the galleries. Thus those who paid least to enter were the closest to the stage. This is the exact opposite of the case in the private theatres, in which the cheapest seats were furthest away from the stage (as is the case in most modern theatres). It has been argued that the plays of the period had to direct different kinds of material to different parts of the audience and that this took the form of bawdy puns to please the groundlings and elevated word-play to please the more sophisticated spectators in the gallery. We will examine this proposition in detail in the section 'A formal approach: high/low comedy'.

Patronage and censorship

The system of theatrical patronage was legally enforced and related to censorship. Behind both lay court control. The City of London authorities were extremely hostile to drama, but the court supported it because it wanted plays put on at Christmas. The City was effectively run by the Lord Major and the Aldermen, who were elected by the business interests. The control exercised by the court via patronage and censorship was a way of calming the fears of those in the City who wanted drama very strictly and directly controlled. That is, the court used indirect means in order to maintain some control over the theatres that otherwise would have been taken over directly by the City Fathers; the theatres were a pawn in the struggles between the Court and the City.

The City authorities represented business interests and were largely run by Puritans. Puritan businessmen found the theatres worrying for several reasons. One was that theatre involved many citizens gathering together at one place, which might give rise to a public order problem. Another was the 'immoral teaching' (i.e. subversive ideas) that plays might contain. The greatest fear was probably that acting itself involved gender and class transgressions (i.e. men dressing as women and commoners dressing as nobles) which were considered, when they occurred in real-life, to be dangerously subversive to social hierarchy. Indeed such transgressions were expressively forbidden by law anywhere except on the stage. One other objection frequently voiced was that the large congregations of people were aiding the spread of plague. This last objection, true as it was, also became a useful 'cover' for measures of social control that were really taken for other reasons.

Theatrical performances were on weekday afternoons, when workers (especially apprentices) were supposed to be at work. Increasingly the theatre came to be seen as a court decadence and, by the time of the Civil War, the Protestant view had won out and the theatres were closed. By this time the greatest threat was conceived to be the transgression of roles, rather than the practical consequences of such large public gatherings.

The censoring of plays was the responsibility of the Master of the Revels, who came under the authority of the Lord Chamberlain (a member of the Privy Council). A theatrical company would present the proposed script for a play (called the Book) to the Master of the Revels, who would either give an Unconditional Licence, a Conditional Licence, or else refuse a licence. The first was complete approval for the play to go ahead without alterations. The second was an approval subject to certain alterations (e.g. excision of particular lines) which the Master of the Revels would mark in the book. The last was a complete refusal, which generally meant that the project would have to be completely abandoned; this would only happen if the theatrical company had very badly misjudged the acceptability of the work they had commissioned from the dramatist.

The single most significant piece of state censorship was the Act of Parliament of 1606 entitled 'Acte to restraine Abuses of Players'. This act outlawed the use of the name of God in oaths in plays (e.g. 'By Christ I'll do it!') and affected not only new plays but revivals of old ones. This law is the reason that there is much greater use of pagan gods' names in oaths (e.g. 'By Jove', 'By Jupiter') in plays written after 1606. The effect on the printed texts we now have of plays does not simply depend on the date of composition, since some plays written before this are only known to us from printed copies based on performances made after the introduction of this restraint. If you wish to trace the influence of censorship on the plays of the period you will find Janet Clare's ***Art Made Tongue-tied by Authority*** and Richard Dutton's ***Mastering the Revels*** useful.

Personal satire against identifiable famous persons was just the kind of material which a theatrical company could expect to have censored by the Master of the Revels. In 1601 the Privy Council warned the players at the Curtain theatre not to 'represent upon the stage...gentlemen of good desert and quality that are yet alive under obscure manner' as they had been known to do. Satirising without directly naming the persons (i.e. doing it 'under obscure manner') could be alleged by anyone who took offence at a play, but of course to allege it is to admit that the parallels exist.

> A complaint was made that *Eastward Ho!* satirised King James and the dramatists were sent to jail for it. Try to find the offending material and judge how offensive it might be. If you can find the letters written by the dramatists in jail asking their patrons to secure their release (these are often printed as appendices to the play-text) they give an interesting insight to the relationship between patron and dramatist.

If the Master of the Revels missed it, the friends of the person satirised could be expected to complain about the play and have the offending production stopped until the offence was removed. Similarly, anything which appeared to engage with contemporary political issues would be potentially dangerous. One possible way to avoid the accusation of political subversion was to set the play in another country. The only plays which Shakespeare sets in England are his English history plays; all the others (with the single exception of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*) are set overseas. Jonson, by contrast, sets most of his plays in London. One of the questions which you should be able to approach by the end of this subject guide is an analysis of the degree to which setting serves to deflect accusations of subversion.

> When studying these plays try to remain alert to details that are out of their correct time and place. Examples will include mention of machines that were not invented at the time in which the play is set (e.g. guns in the Ancient Athens of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and social titles not suited to the location (e.g. Theseus is the Duke of Athens). Consider these not as oversights by the dramatist (which they might be) but as connections with the world in which the audience lives. In each case try to determine what significance there might be in tying in the world of the play with the world in which the theatre exists.

Notes

Chapter 3

Contextualising extracts

The range of approaches

In section A of the examination you are free to make whatever comment you think relevant in relation to the passage, its immediate context and the rest of the play from which it is drawn. You may, for example, wish to discuss the language of the extract, its style and structure, its functional role within the play, its thematic role within the play or its similarity to other passages. The degree to which you limit your comments to the extract itself, as opposed to other material with which you are comparing it, is a matter for you to decide but is conditioned by your choice of topics. If you enjoy analysing dialogue as poetry and paying close attention to the verbal contours of a piece of text, you will probably find that the extract itself generates sufficient things for you to comment upon without relating it to anything else. You must, however, contextualise the extract to the extent of identifying the play that it comes from and its position and function within that play. The sample paper at the end of this subject guide gives the exact rubric to be followed.

If you prefer to discuss textual issues that operate across the surface of an entire play, you will want to write about the way the extract operates within the entire play from which it is drawn. Many of the themes used in this subject guide as examples can be discussed in this way and are suitable for this section of the examination paper as well as section B and section C. The 'close-reading' technique, however, is an approach which has specialist application in context questions. There is a way of combining the two approaches, which we will call 'working outwards'.

Working outwards

Having placed the passage in the context of the play from which it is drawn, look for aspects of the passage which suggest a wider thematic point that you can make. Consider Robin Goodfellow's epilogue from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which begins:

ROBIN
If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended:
That you have but slumbered here,
While these visions did appear:
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend.
If you pardon, we will mend.
And as I am an honest puck,
If we have unearnèd luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long,
Else the puck a liar call.
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

Robin offers the audience the opportunity to think of the play they have watched as a kind of dream. When the lovers awake after their night in the forest they consider all that has happened to them to be a kind of dream and indeed Oberon instructs Robin to ensure that this is how they perceive it:

OBERON

Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye —
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
To take from thence all error with his might,
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision.

(3.2.367-372)

The antidote potion has the effect of making the events experienced under the effects of the first potion seem to have been a dream. Within the play characters experience events which later they think of as dreams and we are told at the end of the play to think of the entire experience as a dream. Bottom too describes his experience as a dream.

> Where? In what ways does Bottom's experience differ from that of the lovers?

As you can see, the extract could be used to open up a discussion of the 'dreams' in the play and the 'plays' in the play. Moreover you could relate this direct address to an audience to the mechanicals' direct addresses to the audience of their play.

> What exactly, from their point of view, is the purpose of the mechanicals' direct address to the audience?

A related question that you might want to address is what is being implied in Robin's epilogue by the term 'shadows'. Is Robin referring just to the fairy characters or to the players in general? This could lead you to an analysis of the way in which the play distinguishes between fairy characters and 'real' people, given that some of the fairies are **said** to be extremely tiny but must be played by human actors.

> Consider the line 'Think but this, and all is mended'. This line suggests that a certain attitude of mind can correct the 'offence' mentioned in the previous line. Consider the ways in which the play develops the idea that mental readjustment is all that is required to bring about reconciliation.

You could argue that the play shows, in the way that the lovers' disputes are all resolved by the spirit of reconciliation which arises out of the occasion of the marriage of Theseus and Hyppolyta, that charitable understanding is the key to human happiness. Conversely, you could argue that, since the permanent alteration of Demetrius's vision is required to make him love Helena, the play denies this sentimentalist notion and asserts that material conditions (or, human perception of material reality) are what must be changed.

> Compare Robin's epilogue to the prologue which precedes the mechanicals' play. What concerns do these direct addresses to an audience have in common? Look closely at the way the mechanicals' play ends and what is said to the onstage audience and compare this with the end of the overall play and what Robin says to the audience.

To argue in such a way from the line 'Think but this, and all is mended' towards a reading of the whole play is a particular methodological strategy. It has been argued that it is in the nature of literature that a small fragment of the text will contain a complete encapsulation of the concerns of the entire work, just as each fragment of a shattered hologram contains a copy of the original whole image. This holographic view of literature is particularly associated with early 20th century 'New Criticism' and can lead to absurd statements about the congruence of the smallest and the largest textual units, such as T.S. Eliot's 'the whole of Shakespeare's work is one poem'. You do not have to share the New Critics' concern with textual unity and holographic qualities to use the technique of relating small textual units (such as Robin Goodfellow's line quoted above) to larger themes within and across plays in the canon. It is perfectly reasonable to use the potential for such holographic congruence as an entry-point for discussing the absence or presence of parallels between textual units of different sizes (e.g. single line, stanza, scene, act, play, canon). You will notice that some of the severest critics of New Criticism (e.g. Cultural Materialists) often employ a single phrase from a play as part of the title of an essay, with the implicit suggestion that the line quoted sums up the argument being made at length. The structure of the context question may appear to be imbued with preconceptions about the nature of literature (i.e. that it **is** holographic) but you can challenge such notions by showing disjunction between the small units and the larger ones.

Consider, for example, the ways in which the sentiment of 'Think but this, and all is mended' is resisted in the play.

In the example of Robin Goodfellow's speech you could consider what the promise to 'make amends ere long' means and how this might affect our notion of the play as a self-contained artistic unity. More radically still you could argue that the sentiment of reparation is elsewhere deconstructed or perhaps shown to be irrelevant.

Notes

Chapter 4

Single play analysis: four approaches to *Bartholomew Fair*

A formal approach: High/Low comedy

In 'The physical layout of the stage and its effect' we looked at the arrangement of the audience in the Elizabethan playhouse and the potential for comic material to be directed at different parts of the audience. In 'What do we mean by comedy?' we introduced the distinction between High and Low comedy, the former being elevated wordplay and allusion and the latter bawdy punning and slapstick clowning. It is possible to construct an argument that a single comic scene can contain elements of High Comedy which is directed towards the more learned and/or wealthy spectators in the audience and at the same time provide Low Comedy for the groundlings. Such an argument has historically been very useful as a way of excusing the abundance of bawdy material in these plays, which is explained as crowd-pleasing.

We would expect from this model that Shakespeare, the populist dramatist, would have a higher percentage of bawdy in his work that Jonson, who had more literary aspirations. A cursory analysis should tell you that this in not the case.

> Consider, for example, the references to excretory functions in these plays; which dramatist makes the most references?

If there is a High/Low comedy distinction operating, it is not coterminous with an elitist/populist opposition. Consider this extract, in which Littlewit explains how he adapted Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* for the puppet theatre:

> **COKES**
> But do you play it according to the printed book? I have read that.
> **LEATHERHEAD**
> By no means, sir.
> **COKES**
> No? How then?
> **LEATHERHEAD**
> A better way, sir. That is too learned and poetical for our audience. What do they know what Hellespont is? 'Guilty of true love's blood'? Or what Abydos is? Or 'the other Sestos hight'?
> **COKES**
> Th'art i' the right, I do not know myself.
> **LEATHERHEAD**
> No, I have entreated Master Littlewit to take a little pains to reduce it to a more familiar strain for our people.
> **COKES**
> How, I pray thee, good Master Littlewit?

LITTLEWIT

It pleases him to make a matter of it, sir. But there is no such matter, I assure you. I have only made it a little easy, and modern for the times, sir, that's all. As, for the Hellespont, I imagine our Thames here; and then Leander I make a dyer's son, about Puddle Wharf; and Hero a wench o' the Bankside, who going over one morning to Old Fish Street, Leander spies her land at Trig Stairs, and falls in love with her. Now do I introduce Cupid having metamorphosed himself into a drawer, and he strikes Hero in love with a pint of sherry. And other pretty passages there are o' the friendship, that will delight you, sir, and please you of judgment.

(***Bartholomew Fair*** 5.3.93-115)

What is implied by Hero being a 'wench o' the Bankside'? Marlowe's original (the book Cokes has read) is not a comedy, but the puppet performance is comic. How has Jonson turned elevated tragedy into low comedy? Is the text as adapted by Littlewit a 'low' style or does it become low only when performed by the puppets?

The humour of the puppet-play that follows rests in part upon the transposition of the Classical original to the mundane London setting. It is only by reference to the original that the scene attains its comic effect. Without it the puppet-play would be a knockabout farce which might just entertain on its own merits but for the repeated interruptions. These come primarily from Cokes who, despite his claim of having read the original, can only make inane comments on the play. In order for Cokes's annoying spectatorship to be comic it is necessary that the audience of ***Bartholomew Fair*** recognise him as a type with which they are familiar, but if there are any Cokes-type figures watching ***Bartholomew Fair*** they presumably are excluded from this humour.

A formal approach: violation of classical unities of place, action and time

Our tragedies and comedies (not without cause cried out against), observing rules neither of honest civility nor of skilful Poetry, excepting *Gorboduc* (again, I say, of those I have seen), which notwithstanding, as it is full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca's style, and as full of notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach, and so obtain the very end of Poesy, yet in truth it is very defectious in the circumstances, which grieves me, because it might not remain as an exact model of all tragedies. For it is faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions. For where the stage should always represent but one place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day, there is both many days and places, inartificially imagined.

Sidney *The Defence of Poesy* (written c.1580, publ. 1595)

Sidney's complaint against the drama of his day rests on an objection to violation of what has come to be known as the rule of the three Unities of Action, Time and Place. This rule, which was (and commonly still is) thought to originate in Aristotle's *Poetics*, demands that dramatic works:

- portray action which is united by causality (i.e. do not include material unconnected to the main story)
- portray these events as occurring within one contiguous unit of time, preferably a single day
- portray these events within one place.

An examination of the *Poetics* will show that Aristotle formulated no such rule at all and that the neo-Classicists of the sixteenth century extrapolated a single demand (Unity of Action) and a single observation (that contemporary Greek drama tended to show the events of no more than one day) into this tripartite prescription. The importance attached to this rule by sixteenth-century neo-Classicists was reiterated by 18th century neo-Classicists who nonetheless felt the need to excuse Shakespeare's obvious violation of it.

Jonson was certainly aware of this rule (see the Prologue to *Every Man in His Humour*), but Shakespeare's knowledge of it is less certain. The violation of or compliance with the rule is a useful way to categorise the plays because the practices of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres were considered by many intellectuals of the period to be woefully 'low-brow'. Shakespeare and Jonson responded differently to this perception of contemporary drama: the latter being much more troubled than the former by the opposing pulls of literary elitism and dramatic populism.

> Make a table which records whether *Bartholomew Fair* adheres to the Unity of Time and the Unity of Place, giving a short (one sentence) explanation for each answer. Are there any problems which immediately arise in determining whether a play conforms to a Unity?

Aristotle's call for Unity of Action in *Poetics* is worth looking at in closer detail. By 'unity' Aristotle means 'organic wholeness', that is, a connectedness of parts in a whole such that no re-arrangement or removal or addition of any part can take place without damage to the whole. By 'actions' Aristotle means not only 'deeds' but also the psychical processes which give rise to deeds. The purpose of Aristotle's call for Unity of Action is to exclude the episodic mode of narrative from Tragedy and Comedy and ensure that it remains in its proper place, the Epic. The point is to ensure the organic wholeness of drama, which is a mode of representation which admits no excess detail, because the audience do not have the attention span needed to accommodate such detail. In short, the Unity of Action is a call to keep extraneous material (i.e. that not required for the Plot) out of drama.

> Add an extra two columns or rows to the table you created earlier and record your impression of whether *Bartholomew Fair* adheres to the Unity of Action (as I have defined it) and whether it is episodic. Are Unity of Action and episodic structure mutually exclusive? Are there any problems with the definition I have given?

Your table for ***Bartholomew Fair*** might look something like this:

Title of play	*Bartholomew Fair*
Unity of time?	Yes: all occurs in one day
Unity of place?	Yes: all occurs in London (and mostly in the fair)
Unity of action?	No: many of the plot elements could be transposed or deleted without damage
Episodic structure?	Yes: highly so; much happens just to 'fill in' background

Please note: it does not matter if your table entries are different from this. An alternative tabular response to the same questions could be:

Title of play	*Bartholomew Fair*
Unity of time?	No: time does not operate in a linear fashipn (so it cannot be during one day)
Unity of place?	No: the place is fragmented (people keep losing one another) and cannot therefore be one place
Unity of action?	Yes: every event is minutely connected to every other: if anybody were removed from any scene the whole edifice would alter
Episodic structure?	No: all the apparently extraneous material eventually becomes highly relevant to the plot or else relevant thematically or symbolically

This second table contains different answers to the same questions because words such as 'unity' and 'plot-element' are being taken here in a slightly different sense. In the first table unity of time was said to be preserved because all the events occur in one day but in the second table it is said to be violated because the play clearly displays non-linear time. (If you are not convinced of this, try to work out how long Win spends in the toilet, judging from the events that happen while she is in there.) In the first table unity of place was said to be preserved because all the events take place in London and most take place in the Fair. In the second table this unity is said to be broken because the Fair is not really one place at all; rather it is an almost infinitely fragmented place where people get pulled away from the group they arrive in and become isolated.

> Compare your answers concerning the unity of action and the episodic structure with those in the above tables. Consider the ways in which your answers differ from one or the other table. Is there something wrong in the question that makes for the possibility of different answers regarding the same play? Consider the possibility that Jonson might be self-consciously affirming and at the same time violating the Dramatic Unities. (Later you may wish to extend the table you made for *Bartholomew Fair* to include other plays for comparative analysis.)

A thematic approach: the play-within-the-play

Bartholomew Fair begins with an 'induction' which is scripted so as to appear to be a spontaneous conversation taking place on the stage between two theatrical workers (a prompter and a stage-hand):

BOOK-HOLDER

How now? What rare discourses are you fallen upon, ha? Ha' you found any familiars here, that you are so free? What's the business?

STAGE-KEEPER

Nothing, but the understanding gentlemen o' the ground here asked my judgement.

BOOK-HOLDER

Your judgement, rascal? For what? Sweeping the stage? Or gathering up the broken apples for the bears within? Away, rogue, it's come to a fine degree in these spectacles when such a youth as you pretend to a judgement.

[*Exit STAGE-KEEPER*]

> And yet he may, i' the most o' this matter i'faith; for the author hath writ it just to his meridian, and the scale of the grounded judgements here, his play-fellows in wit. Gentleman, not for want of a prologue, but by way of a new one, I am sent out to you here, with a scrivener and certain articles drawn out in haste between our author and you; which if you please to hear, and as they appear reasonable, to approve of, the play will follow presently. Read, scribe; gi' me the counterpane.
>
> (Induction 44-61)

> Read through this extract and consider what it tells us about Jonson's attitude to his audience. How seriously should we take Jonson's complaints about the judgement of audiences?

This opening scene is part of the play and yet it is set in the time just before the beginning of the play. The boundary which marks the moment when an audience should begin to suspend disbelief is playfully shifted and this shift brings into question the nature of the implicit contract between players and audience. The scene reifies this implicit contract into a tangible object: the contract held by the scrivener. In a sense the whole of the rest of ***Bartholomew Fair*** becomes a play-within-a-play because of this framing effect of the induction, which marks off the start of the play proper as an agreement between the audience and the players.

Within the play proper another play is performed: the puppet play at the fair. All of the main protagonists of ***Bartholomew Fair*** congregate to form the audience of this puppet play and they are a very varied group of spectators.

> In the induction the Book-Holder disparaged a section of the audience (the 'grounded judgements'). Does the puppet play audience contain an equivalent group?

The puppet play is fraught with difficulties concerning the relationship between the audience and the players. As with the opening induction, the puppet players are simultaneously in character (playing their parts) and out of character (conversing with the audience). This mixing of the 'real' and the 'show' (all occurring with the larger play, ***Bartholomew Fair***) is maintained during Cokes's interruptions of the performance, but breaks down with Busy's interruption of the puppet show:

> **BUSY**
> Yes, and my main argument against you is that you are an abomination: for the male among you putteth on the apparel of the female, and the female of the male.
> **PUPPET DIONYSIUS**
> You lie, you lie, you lie abominably.
> **COKES**
> Good, by my troth, he has given him the lie thrice.
> **PUPPET DIONYSIUS**
> It is your old stale argument against the players, but it will not hold against the puppets, for we have neither male nor female amongst us. And that thou may'st see, if thou wilt, like a malicious purblind zeal as thou art!
>
> ***[The PUPPET takes up his garment]***
>
> (5.5.87-96)

We will be considering the accusation that drama encouraged dangerously subversive cross-dressing in more detail later in this introduction.

> Why does the puppet performance survive Cokes's interruptions but not Busy's? Consider the possibility that Cokes and Busy represent different kinds of threat to the practice of play-making. Does the contract read by the Scrivener in the induction have any bearing on the relationship between audience and players in the puppet play?

A thematic approach: the choice of 'setting'

The Stage-Keeper and the Book-Holder who begin ***Bartholomew Fair*** dramatise a change in the practices of the London stage. The Stage-Keeper is an anachronism from the late 16th century who displays in his references to Richard Tarlton and John Adams a knowledge of that period's achievements and bemoans the deficiencies of modern plays and players.

> The title of the play announces the geographic setting of the play but how is the audience made aware of the temporal setting? Collect examples of dialogue, such as the Stage-Keeper's comments, that help the audience identify the time in which the play is set. The evidence will appear near the beginning of the play and will consist mostly of allusions to events and persons which the audience could be expected to recognise.

The Book-Holder who sends the Stage-Keeper off represents a new theatrical practice based on a new relationship, materialised in a contract, between producers and consumers. Moreover this Scrivener represents an authorial literary practice over a collective dramatic practice (the clowns Tarlton and Adams were renowned for their *ad lib* comments and departures from the text).

> Consider this contrast between old collective practices and new solitary practices in the light of Jonson's reputation as a literary as opposed to a theatrical writer (see the section on 'Jonson' above).

The induction makes play-making a theme of the play itself by making concrete the implicit relationships and the changes in conditions. The fair, a place of licence and excess, is represented on a stage that is, in the view of many contemporary writers, a place of licence and excess. The Scrivener makes the parallel explicit:

SCRIVENER
The play shall presently begin. And though the Fair be not kept in the same region that some here, perhaps, would have it, yet think that therein the author hath observed a special decorum, the place being as dirty as Smithfield, and as stinking every whit.
(Induction 150-154)

> The play opens in Littlewit's house and this remains the setting until the second act when the scene shifts to the fair. How is the transition represented within the dialogue?

The fair of the title of the play is an annual event held very year in the London district of Smithfield, north of the River Thames but just outside of the jurisdiction of the Puritan City authorities. These areas within easy access of the City but beyond its control were known as Liberties.[1]

[1] *See Steven Mullaney's* ***The Place of the Stage*** *especially Chapter 2 for an extended analysis of the role of this 'geopolitical domain' in the cultural practices of Renaissance London.*

The play opened at the Hope Theatre in Bankside (south of the Thames, in the 'Liberty of the Clink') which offered both plays and bear-baiting as entertainment. The audience of the play would not only know of the fair as a place of illicit leisure activity but would almost certainly identify the theatre in which they were seeing it represented as another such location.

The fair consisted of a collection of booths (tents with large openings for admitting customers) offering a variety of refreshments and entertainments. It is very likely that the commonest piece of stage-furniture employed on the public stage was also a booth of similar construction. This booth (sometimes called a pavilion) would be used whenever the stage needed to represent more than one location at the same time and could be used for 'discovery' by opening of the curtains. Jonson's representation of a fair in the play could not have avoided drawing attention to the conventions of staging because the stage booth is used, most unusually, to represent a real booth. Moreover puppet plays were especially associated with the booth as a location from which the performance is managed (the puppeteers concealed in the lower half of the booth) and as a location for the stage (the upper half in which the puppets perform). In this way the idea of a stage indirectly representing itself by representing a fair is further enhanced. Jonson's choice of setting for the play is integral to the wider theme of dramatic self-analysis.

> The story that the puppets enact was adapted by Littlewit to suit the anticipated audience. Consider the effects of the change of setting (both geographic and temporal) from Ancient Greece to contemporary London in the light of the other choices of setting discussed above.

Sample questions on *Bartholomew Fair*

1. Discuss the importance of the desire to marry in ***Bartholomew Fair***.
2. In what ways and with what consequences do people fail to recognise one another in ***Bartholomew Fair***?
3. What is the significance of the 'fool' having the same name as the fair in ***Bartholomew Fair***?

Notes

Chapter 5

Comparative analysis

The theme of gender and class transgression in *Twelfth Night, The Merchant of Venice* and *Epicoene*

The following is an extract from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night.*

1.4 *Enter Valentine, and Viola (as Cesario) in man's attire*
VALENTINE
If the Duke continue these favours towards you, Cesario, you are like to be much advanced. He hath known you but three days, and already you are no stranger.
VIOLA
You either fear his humour or my negligence, that you call in question the continuance of his love. Is he inconstant, sir, in his favours?
VALENTINE
No, believe me.
Enter the Duke, Curio, and attendants
VIOLA
I thank you. Here comes the Count.
ORSINO
Who saw Cesario, ho?
VIOLA
On your attendance, my lord, here.
ORSINO (*to Curio and attendants*)
Stand you a while aloof. (*To Viola*) Cesario,
Thou know'st no less but all. I have unclasped
To thee the book even of my secret soul.
Therefore, good youth, address thy gait unto her,
Be not denied access, stand at her doors,
And tell them there thy fixèd foot shall grow
Till thou have audience.
VIOLA
Sure, my noble lord,
If she be so abandoned to her sorrow
As it is spoke, she never will admit me.
ORSINO
Be clamorous, and leap all civil bounds,
Rather than make unprofited return.
VIOLA
Say I do speak with her, my lord, what then?
ORSINO
O then unfold the passion of my love,
Surprise her with discourse of my dear faith.
It shall become thee well to act my woes —
She will attend it better in thy youth
Than in a nuncio's of more grave aspect.
VIOLA
I think not so, my lord.
ORSINO
Dear lad, believe it;
For they shall yet belie thy happy years

That say thou art a man. Diana's lip
Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe
Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
And all is semblative a woman's part.
I know thy constellation is right apt
For this affair. (*To Curio and attendants*) Some four or five attend him.
All if you will, for I myself am best
When least in company. (*To Viola*) Prosper well in this
And thou shalt live as freely as thy lord,
To call his fortunes thine.

VIOLA

I'll do my best
To woo your lady — [*aside*] yet a barful strife —
Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife. ***Exeunt***

The importance of this scene in the plot of the play is that Viola-as-Cesario is given the task of conveying Orsino's love to Olivia and this task is made problematic by what is revealed in the last line: that Viola loves Orsino herself. But note what Valentine says in the first line about Cesario's rising status in the court of Orsino. This young woman dressed as a man has found favour with the Duke after only three days in his service and is likely to be promoted. Such promotion is only possible for a young man; a woman would not be able to serve the Duke at all. You may wonder why Viola is dressing as a man and want to determine her 'motivation' in doing so. The play does not make Viola's aims clear and indeed you may come to the conclusion that such questions are not really meaningful in this context.

What can be spoken of is the pattern of causes and effects (a 'paradigm'). Viola is able to do what she is doing only because she has disguised herself. The effect is that she is likely to be promoted and she is entrusted with conveying love to the love-object (Olivia) of her own love-object (Orsino). This paradigm is repeated in the play in the case of Malvolio. Malvolio is given the task of conveying a ring (a love token) from his mistress to Viola-as-Cesario and he too seeks promotion by marrying his employer.

> What is the significance of ring-exchange? Consider the possible symbolism here and compare the exchanging of rings here with that in *The Merchant of Venice*.

You should be aware that the parts of young women were played by boys in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre. The inversion of gender roles which occurs in these plays is doubled by this dramatic constraint and much of the humour evoked is concerned with this 'doubling'. In the above scene Orsino tells Viola-as-Cesario that 'he' has lips as 'smooth and rubious' as the Roman goddess of hunting and chastity, Diana, and has a woman's voice. On the level of the plot this is because Viola-as-Cesario is really a woman but underlying that is the audience's awareness that the actor is a boy playing a woman playing a man. This multi-layered inversion, working across the boundary between reality and drama, is a feature of many of these plays.

> Make a note of all the examples of a character dressing up as someone of the opposite sex in the plays you have chosen to study. For each write a brief description of why they do it and what the outcome is. Be sure to record whether they succeed (e.g. attain their desires) or are punished for their cross-dressing. Try starting with Portia's appearance in the court scene of *The Merchant of Venice*.

You might want to compare Viola's cross-dressing with that of Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*. In the following scene Jessica is preparing to elope with Lorenzo.

Enter Jessica above in boy's apparel

JESSICA

Who are you? Tell me for more certainty,
Albeit I'll swear that I do know your tongue.

LORENZO

Lorenzo, and thy love.

JESSICA

Lorenzo, certain, and my love indeed,
For who love I so much? And now who knows
But you, Lorenzo, whether I am yours?

LORENZO

Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou art.

JESSICA

Here, catch this casket. It is worth the pains.
I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me,
For I am much ashamed of my exchange;
But love is blind, and lovers cannot see
The pretty follies that themselves commit:
For if they could, Cupid himself would blush
To see me thus transformèd to a boy.

LORENZO

Descend, for you must be my torchbearer.

JESSICA

What, must I hold a candle to my shames?
They in themselves, good sooth, are too too light.
Why, 'tis an office of discovery, love,
And I should be obscured.

LORENZO

So are you, sweet,
Even in the lovely garnish of a boy.
But come at once,
For the close night doth play the runaway,
And we are stayed for at Bassanio's feast.

JESSICA

I will make fast the doors, and gild myself
With some more ducats, and be with you straight.

Exit above

GRAZIANO

Now, by my hood, a gentile, and no Jew.

LORENZO

Beshrew me but I love her heartily,
For she is wise, if I can judge of her;
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true;
And true she is, as she hath proved herself:
And therefore like herself, wise, fair, and true,
Shall she be placèd in my constant soul.

Enter Jessica below

What, art thou come? On, gentlemen, away.
Our masquing mates by this time for us stay.

Exit with Jessica and Salerio[1]

(2.6.26-59)

Jessica appears at the window dressed as a boy, ready to slip away disguised as a torchbearer at Bassanio's feast. She is about to forsake her Jewish upbringing for a life among the Christians and, at this moment when her identity is in question, she needs to ask the identity of the man below. More than the merely practical problem of identifying people in the dark, there is a suggestion that Jessica doubts Lorenzo's 'certainty' as her

[1] You will not be required to reproduce long passages such as this from memory, only to paraphrase the events but if you can illustrate your comparison with examples of the language of the play this will greatly strengthen any argument you make.

lover. There is a complex interworking of the themes of 'love-is-blind' and clothes as substantive of identity in the way that Shakespeare recycles ideas of lightness and darkness here. Cupid is usually portrayed as a blindfolded cherub and, in the guise of a boy, Jessica seems suddenly very uncertain of Lorenzo's love for her. Her awareness of the inherent uncertainty of one mind regarding the contents of another is greatly heightened by having put on a disguise; she sees that appearance is all we really have to go on. She has, after all, disguised the one thing she hopes to be valued for, her femininity.

Many critics have sensed a strong homoerotic sub-text in this play, citing this scene amongst the evidence. Which of the other relationships in the play have a homoerotic potential?

Jessica has a nagging suspicion that she is valued more for her potential wealth than anything else. This is why she says she will 'gild' herself with more ducats. The complex polysemy of this word is important. Firstly, she will cover (in the sense of gold-plate) herself in wealth so that her external appearance will be all the more attractive. She is here announcing her mistrust of Lorenzo's motives by making apparent her suspicion that it is her coating of wealth that attracts him. The word 'gild' also suggests 'guilt' which is appropriate because she is stealing a large sum from her father, and for a slight reason: Lorenzo's uncertain affection for her. This internal/external duality has a parallel, but distinctly different, counterpart in Lorenzo. He speaks of his two parts as 'Lorenzo, *and* thy love' as though the man were not the embodiment of the love but something apart from it. He could have said 'Lorenzo, thy love'. Moreover, Lorenzo's solution to the problem of uncertainty of perception (i.e. the gap between appearance and 'inside') is to place all his trust in his, and only his, perception. Hence she is wise 'if I can judge…', and fair 'if that mine eyes be true'. This certainty is founded on a faith in his own 'constant soul'. This notion of selfhood as an inalienable core to the human creature is a theme running through the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. In contrast to Lorenzo's certainty of his own selfhood, we have Jessica's terrible uncertainty. We may think her doubt is not due to self-awareness of any flaw she possesses, but rather is socially determined by her being literally an 'alien' in Venetian society. This legal term is used to describe her father in the court scene.

Consider the different kinds of 'alien' or 'outsider' in the play. Try organising the list of characters in the play into opposing groups. You can try: men/women, old/young, Jew/Christian, parent/sibling, master/servant. Consider also the geographic locations of the action of the play (how many locations are there?) as a way of organising the groups. For each configuration consider characters on the boundary between the groups, or who move from one group to another during the play. Now try organising the characters in *Twelfth Night* into groups. Are there any parallels with *The Merchant of Venice*?

The casket which Jessica throws to Lorenzo is an odd counterpoint to the three caskets from which Bassanio has to choose. The moral of the three caskets was to judge not by external appearance (the least attractive contained the prize) but to somehow weigh up innate worth. This moral lesson was undermined, however, by the prize being a picture, a representation of the external view of a woman. All that Bassanio can know of his wife is the external appearance since they have hardly had time to get acquainted; but also there is an unknowableness about someone else's selfhood. Bassanio refers to the reflexive and relative nature of perception when he wonders whether the eyes in the picture move by a life of their own or by being 'fix'd' upon his (i.e. the object of his gaze). This problem of the relativity of perception is never resolved in Shakespeare's work. Jessica's casket is undoubtedly full of gold and is a prerequisite for her planned escape. It is a very painful reminder to her that she does not have the luxury to be

valued upon her own merits since she cannot be taken for what she is (the daughter of a Jewish usurer) but must gain love and liberty in the same instant. Since liberty requires a measure of independent wealth, she finds that love and wealth are uncomfortably intertwined. The danger of this is the commodifying of her body that she suspects may lie at the root of Lorenzo's attention. Indeed this marketing of flesh is the evil which Shakespeare exposes as underlying much of contemporary morality. In court Shylock speaks of the necessity of freeing all slaves if flesh may not be owned, or the necessity of granting him the terms of his bond if it may. What the court attempts (and achieves) is a temporising hypocrisy: for the purposes of his bond, flesh is not marketable, yet for the slaves it is to remain so.

Can any of the groupings of characters you made earlier be considered to represent class allegiances? Consider the relationship between race, religion and class in the play, again paying particular attention to characters who exist on the boundaries between groups or who move between groups.

When Jessica speaks in the above passage of gilding herself, there is another association that you might want to explore. Jessica is appearing here in the costume of a boy, yet she is a young woman. If we take 'gild' as 'geld', we see a young person who looks like a boy but who 'lacks' (the usual Shakespearean word) what it takes to be male: a penis. Woman very often refer to their lack of a penis in Shakespeare's plays, all the more so when they are indulging in cross-dressing (e.g. Viola in *Twelfth Night* 3.4.294). When Jessica makes this remark, Graziano appears to pick it up and swear an oath by his 'hood'. This can be read as 'manhood' but may also refer to his foreskin which, because he is not a Jew, has not been removed. This notion of small, almost insignificant, pieces of flesh which substantiate self-identity is suddenly magnified to dangerously large chunks of the human body when Shylock tries to take his pound of flesh from Antonio. This is a kind of displaced circumcision of Antonio which is dramatically reversed when the Christians take their revenge upon the Jew by forcing a conversion.

Collect examples of sexual frisson generated by cross-dressing in the plays you are concentrating on and consider what is being suggested about the sexuality of the onstage characters who do not know that a disguise is being employed. Are there examples where this sexual aspect of the cross-dressing is as important as the promotional aspect we looked at earlier? Are the two ever separable? Does cross-dressing ever affect a character's own sense of their identity (e.g. make them feel like the person they are pretending to be)? (Try looking at Celia-as-Aliena and Rosalind-as-Ganymede in *As You Like It*.)

Cross-dressing of the kinds we have been looking at was considered a dangerous threat to social order. The playhouses were a place where cross-dressing was semi-legitimised, in that young male actors played the parts of female characters. Indeed this was one of the reasons why publicly performed drama was seen in some quarters as a dangerous practice.

In the example of cross-dressing discussed above the audience is always aware of the deception. In Jonson's *Epicoene*, however, the audience is not given any indication that the eponymous character is really a young man in disguise. Having accepted as a dramatic convention the obvious fact that a young man is playing the part of Epicoene, the audience is suddenly forced to readjust its perception and accept a young man playing a young man playing the part of a woman. The cross-dressing which had been a means of representation becomes, retrospectively, part of that which is represented. The revelation of Epicoene's sex occurs almost at the end of the play, but Morose had already been tricked by her/him, as we see as soon as they are married:

PARSON
Umh, umh, umh.
[*Coughs*] *again*
MOROSE
Away, away with him, stop his mouth, away, I forgive it —
EPICOENE [*Exit* CUTBEARD *with* PARSON]
Fie, Master Morose, that you will use this violence to a man of the church.
MOROSE
How!
EPICOENE
It does not become your gravity or breeding — as you pretend in court — to have offered this outrage on a water-man, or any more boist'rous creature, much less on a man of his civil coat.
MOROSE
You can speak then!
EPICOENE
Yes, sir.
MOROSE
Speak out, I mean.
EPICOENE
Ay sir. Why, did you think you had married a statue? or a motion only? one of the French puppets with the eyes turned with a wire? or some innocent out of the hospital, that would stand with her hands thus, and a plaice-mouth, and look upon you?
MOROSE
Oh immodesty! A manifest woman! What Cutbeard!
EPICOENE
Nay, never quarrel with Cutbeard, sir, it is too late now. I confess it doth bate somewhat of the modesty I had, when I writ simply maid: but I hope I shall make it a stock still competent to the estate and dignity of your wife.
MOROSE
She can talk!
EPICOENE
Yes indeed, sir.
MOROSE
What, sirrah! None of my knaves, there?
[*Enter* MUTE]
Where is this impostor, Cutbeard? [MUTE *makes signs*]
EPICOENE
Speak to him, fellow, speak to him. I will have none of this co-acted, unnatural dumbness in my house, in a family where I govern.
MOROSE
She is my regent already! I have married a Penthesilea, a Semiramis, sold my liberty to a distaff!

(*Epicoene* 3.4.22-52)

What symbolic function might Morose's mute have in this play? Consider Epicoene's scathing remarks concerning the kind of woman Morose thought she was ('a statue? or a motion only?' etc.) as models of ideal womanhood. Are such ideals mocked in the play?

Even before being revealed as a man in disguise Epicoene has performed a gender role transgression in that she leads Morose into thinking she is a soft-spoken and tractable woman and only reveals her true identity after the marriage. The analogies Morose makes between his new wife and Penthesilea and Semiramis (both women who took over male roles) are examples of dramatic irony which becomes apparent when her true sex is revealed in the final scene. The two moments of revelation (i.e. the one in the extract above and the one at the close of the play) are worth comparing for their dramatic and thematic parallels.

> What does the revelation that Epicoene is a man do to Morose's description of 'her' as an Amazonian (i.e. a woman acting like a man)? Does this kind of double inversion cancel itself out and bring about unproblematic closure?

As well as characters putting on the clothing of the opposite sex, there is another kind of cross-dressing in these plays which was also considered potentially subversive. The 'Sumptuary Laws' of Elizabeth's reign legislated for the kind of clothing which persons of each social rank were allowed to wear. In these comedies there are many examples of characters deliberately wearing clothes which are not appropriate to their rank; that is, they dress up or dress down. Sometimes this is done merely to make a statement about themselves and sometimes it is part of a wider deception (i.e. they are in disguise).

> Consider the epilogue to *As You Like It* in which the player of Rosalind refers to himself as both actor and character and both man and woman. What part does the theatrical costume play in this paradox?

One reason why a high-born character might dress down would be to spy on the lower classes. In ***Bartholomew Fair*** Justice Overdo does this and explains it to the audience in his soliloquy which forms all of Act 2 Scene 1. As a strategy for more effectively administering justice, Overdo's use of disguise is spectacularly unsuccessful: he is put in the stocks as a suspected villain. Quarlous also dresses down in this play when he disguises himself as Trouble-All.

> Compare the success of Quarlous in his use of the disguise with the failure of Overdo using the same strategy. What, if anything, do their intentions have in common? Are the differing outcomes conditioned by the different motivations they have, or are they produced 'along the way' in the events of the play?

In studying the topic of cross-dressing you will need to refer to secondary materials to get a sense of the contemporary attitudes towards dress-code. A good starting place is Lisa Jardine's ***Still Harping on Daughters***, especially Chapter Five. On the use of disguise by officers of justice, Stephen Greenblatt's essay 'Invisible Bullets' (in Dollimore and Sinfield's ***Political Shakespeare***) has some interesting material concerning a contemporary exposé of criminal behaviour called *A Caveat for Common Cursitors*. There is an ironic reference to this exposé in ***Bartholomew Fair***, which you should be able to find. For a detailed analysis of Viola's cross-dressing in *Twelfth Night* see Christina Malcolmson's essay ' "What you will": social mobility and gender in *Twelfth Night*' in Wayne's ***The Matter of Difference***. For the contemporary argument that the theatre encouraged dangerous transgression of dress-codes see Phillip Stubbes's ***The Anatomie of Abuses***.

Notes

Appendix 1

Bibliography

Primary texts

Shakespeare

Blakemore Evans, G. (ed.)*The Riverside Shakespeare.* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974) [ISBN 0-395-04402-2]. A complete works with explanatory notes.

Wells, Stanley and Taylor, Gary (eds) *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) [ISBN 0-19-811747-7]. The most recent standard work. This edition does not have explanatory notes (unlike the Riverside) and is somewhat radical in editorial policy, but is extremely good value in its Compact Edition form.

Jonson

The New Mermaid series of individual play texts is highly recommended:

Cook, Elizabeth (ed.) *The Alchemist.* (London: Ernest Benn, 1994) [ISBN 0-7136-3071-X].

Hibbard, G.R. (ed.) *Bartholmew Fair.* (London: Ernest Benn, 1977) [ISBN 0-7136-3531-2]. NB: This edition uses a slightly unconventional form of the title.

Petter, C.G. (ed.) *Eastward Ho!* (London: Ernest Benn, 1973) [ISBN 0-510-33310-9].

Holdsworth, R.V. (ed.) *Epicoene or The Silent Woman.* (London: Ernest Benn, 1979) [ISBN 0-7136-3269-0].

Seymour-Smith, Martin (ed.) *Every Man in his Humour.* (London: Ernest Benn, 1966) [ISBN 0-7136-3025-6].

Brockbank, Philip (ed.) *Volpone.* (London: Ernest Benn, 1968) [ISBN 0-7136-3044-2].

Equally good is the 'Revels Plays' series, which currently includes three of our texts:

Mares, F.H. (ed.) *The Alchemist.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979) [ISBN 0-7190-1617-7].

Horsman, E.A. (ed.) *Bartholomew Fair.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979) [ISBN 0-7190-1613-4].

Parker, R.B. (ed.) *Volpone.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983) [ISBN 0-7190-1529-4].

Alternatively, you could piece together a set from the various collections, including:

Wilkes, G.A. (ed.) *Ben Jonson: The Complete Plays.* Four volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982)

Vol. 1. ISBN 0-198-12599-2

Vol. 2. ISBN 0-198-12601-8

Vol. 3. ISBN 0-198-12602-6

Vol. 4. ISBN 0-198-12603-4.

This is based on the standard Herford and Simpson edition and you will need all four volumes to cover the plays we are considering.

Another good collection is the 'World Classics' volume:

Wilkes, G.A. (ed.) *Ben Jonson: Five Plays.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) [ISBN 0-19-281782-5].

This does not have *Epicoene* or *Eastward Ho!*.

Reference works

Onions, C.T. *A Shakespeare Glossary.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1919) [ISBN 0-19-871094-1]. Originating in the Oxford English Dictionary project, this gives a definition for every word used by Shakespeare that Onions considers needs explanation. If you do not have an annotated text of a play this glossary is essential.

Wells, Stanley *A Shakespeare Bibliography.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) [ISBN 0-19-811213-0]. Gives suggested secondary reading for each play in the canon, including the very latest critical work. A valuable tool for this course and further study of Shakespeare's work.

The cultural milieu

Greenblatt, Stephen *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) [ISBN 0-226-30654-2].

Stubbes, Phillip *The Anatomie of Abuses, 1583.* (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1972) [ISBN 90-221-0489]. A contemporary tirade against plays and playgoing.

Tillyard, E.M.W. *The Elizabethan World Picture.* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1943) [ISBN 0-701-11149-6]. Extremely influential model of the way Elizabethans perceived the world, with many examples from Shakespeare. Now much criticised for its monolithic view and failure to acknowledge deviation from the dominant view.

Weimann, Robert *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater.* (trans. and ed.) Schwartz, R. (John Hopkins University Press, 1978) [ISBN 0-801-81985-7].

Yates, Frances *Ideas and Ideals in the North European Renaissance.* (London: Routledge, 1984) [ISBN 0-710-20184-2].

Criticism

Shakespeare

Brown, John Russell (ed.) *Studying Shakespeare: A Casebook.* (London: Macmillan, 1990) [ISBN 0-333-31940-0].

Drakakis, John (ed.) *Alternative Shakespeares.* (London: Routledge, 1985) [ISBN 0-415-02528-1]. Useful as model of how cultural materialist criticism can proceed as well as particular insights about the plays.

Dollimore, Jonathan and Sinfield, Alan (eds) *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) [ISBN 0-7190-1794-7]. Valuable for the treatment of performance as well as literary issues.

Eagleton, Terry *William Shakespeare.* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) [ISBN 0-631-14554-0]. Six essays on 17 plays (including four of our six) organised around keywords like Nature, Law, Desire, etc. Very witty and daring: heavy on opinion and light on evidence.

Jardine, Lisa *Still Harping On Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare.* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1983) [ISBN 0-7450-0625-6].

Palmer, D.J. (ed.) *Shakespeare* Twelfth Night, *a Casebook.* (London: Macmillan, 1972) [ISBN 0-3331-2168-6].

Price, Antony (ed.) *Shakespeare* A Midsummer Night's Dream, *a Casebook.* (London: Macmillan, 1983) [ISBN 0-333-27012-6].

Wayne, Valerie (ed.) *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare.* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) [ISBN 0-745-00777-5].

Wilders, John Simpson (ed.) *Shakespeare* The Merchant of Venice, *a Casebook.* (London: Macmillan, 1969) [out of print].

Jonson

Barish, Jonas A. (ed.) *Ben Jonson: A Collection of Critical Essays* in the series *Twentieth Century Views.* (Englewood Cliff, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963) [out-of-print].

Barish, Jonas A. (ed.) *Jonson* Volpone, *a Casebook.* (London: Macmillan, 1972) [ISBN 0-3330-8896-4].

Barton, Anne *Ben Jonson, Dramatist.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) [ISBN 0-521-25883-9].

Bryant, Joseph Allen *The Compassionate Satirist: Ben Jonson and his Imperfect World.* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1972) [ISBN 0-8203-0316-X].

Butler, Martin *Ben Jonson* Volpone, in the series *Penguin Masterguides.* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) [ISBN 0-333-42166-3].

Holdsworth, R.V. (ed.) *Jonson* Every Man in his Humour *and* The Alchemist: *A Casebook.* (London: Macmillan, 1978) [ISBN 0-333-19205-2].

Leggatt, Alexander *Ben Jonson: His Vision and His Art.* (London: Methuen, 1981) [ISBN 0-416-74660-8].

Thayer, Calvin Graham (ed.) *Ben Jonson: Studies in the Plays.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963) [out-of-print].

Watson, Robert N. *Ben Jonson's Parodic Strategy: Literary Imperialism in the Comedies.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987) [ISBN 0-674-06601-4].

Womack, Peter *Ben Jonson*, in the series *Rereading Literature.* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) [ISBN 0-631-14376-9].

Theatre conditions

Chambers, E.K. *The Elizabethan Stage.* Four vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923) [out-of-print]. Still the definitive work on factual matters concerning the people and practices of Elizabethan theatre.

Clare, Janet *Art Made Tongue-tied By Authority.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990) [ISBN 0-719-02434-X]. Recent work on state censorship of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

Dutton, Richard *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama.* (London: Macmillan, 1991) [ISBN 0-333-45371-9].

Gurr, Andrew *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) [ISBN 0-521-25336-5]. Contains just about everything known about the contemporary theatrical audience.

Gurr, Andrew *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) [ISBN 0-521-41005-3]. The best single introduction to the material conditions of the theatre.

Mullaney, Steven *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England*. (London: University of Chicago Press, 1988) [ISBN 0-226-54760-4].

Nagler, A.M. *Shakespeare's Stage*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) [ISBN 0-300-02689-7]. Makes a very strong case for the use of curtained booths (instead of an back-wall alcove) and perspective scenery (rather than bare boards) on the public stage, and demonstrates the wide-reaching implications of this conclusion.

Endnote

By the time you arrive at this stage of the degree, you will already have had some experience of University of London examinations for the External Programme.

You will have read much advice on examination preparation and technique in the *Handbook* and Foundation Units subject guides. Here we would only add that for this subject guide you will be examined on the basis of the objectives outlined above. As in all your examinations, coherence and an ability to develop and sustain argument will be key factors in assessment. Remember that your argument will have to be illustrated by examples from your reading.

Finally, whether you have followed the author and topic studies suggested here, or used them as starting points for your own interests, it is hoped that you have enjoyed this introduction to the literature of Renaissance comedy.

Appendix 2

Sample examination paper

Time allowed: **three hours**.

Answer **one** question from **each** section.

Section A

1. Place **one** of the passages below in the context of the play from which it derives. comment on the themes, use of language, and the dramatic interaction.

a.

CLAUDIO
Stand thee by, Friar. Father, by your leave,
Will you with free and unconstrainèd soul
Give me this maid, your daughter?

LEONATO
As freely, son, as God did give her me.

CLAUDIO
And what have I to give you back whose worth
May counterpoise this rich and precious gift?

DON PEDRO
Nothing, unless you render her again.

CLAUDIO
Sweet Prince, you learn me noble thankfulness.
There, Leonato, take her back again.
Give not this rotten orange to your friend.
She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.
Behold how like a maid she blushes here!
O, what authority and show of truth
Can cunning sin cover itself withal!
Comes not that blood as modest evidence
To witness simple virtue? Would you not swear,
All you that see her, that she were a maid,
By these exterior shows? But she is none.
She knows the heat of a luxurious bed.
Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty.

b.

BARTHOLOMEW
Thrice-noble lord, let me entreat of you
To pardon me yet for a night or two,
Or if not so, until the sun be set.
For your physicians have expressly charged,
In peril to incur your former malady,
That I should yet absent me from your bed.
I hope this reason stands for my excuse.

SLY
Ay, it stands so that I may hardly tarry so long. But
I would be loath to fall into my dreams again. I will
therefore tarry in despite of the flesh and the blood.
Enter a Messenger

MESSENGER
Your honour's players, hearing your amendment,
Are come to play a pleasant comedy,
For so your doctors hold it very meet,
Seeing too much sadness hath congealed your blood,
And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy.
Therefore they thought it good you hear a play
And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life.

SLY
Marry, I will let them play it. Is not a comonty
A Christmas gambol, or a tumbling trick?

BARTHOLOMEW
No, my good lord, it is more pleasing stuff.

SLY
What, household stuff?

BARTHOLOMEW
It is a kind of history.

SLY
Well, we'll see 't. Come, madam wife, sit by my side
And let the world slip. We shall ne'er be younger.

c.

BASSANIO
Good cheer, Antonio. What, man, courage yet!
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood.

ANTONIO
I am a tainted wether of the flock
Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest to the ground; and so let me.
You cannot better be employed, Bassanio,
Than to live still and write mine epitaph.
Enter [Salerio, with Nerissa] apparelled as a judge's clerk

DUKE
Came you from Padua, from Bellario?

NERISSA
From both, my lord. Bellario greets your grace.
She gives a letter to the Duke.
Shylock whets his knife on his shoe.

BASSANIO *(to Shylock)*
Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

SHYLOCK
To cut the forfeit from that bankrupt there.

GRAZIANO
Not on thy sole but on thy soul, harsh Jew,
Thou mak'st thy knife keen. But no metal can,
No, not the hangman's axe, bear half the keenness
Of thy sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce thee?

SHYLOCK
No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.

d.

SLITGUT
Now will I descend my honourable prospect, the farthest
seeing sea-mark of the world; no marvel, then, if I could
see two miles about me. I hope the red tempest's anger be
now overblown, which sure I think heaven sent as a
punishment for profaning holy Saint Luke's memory with so
ridiculous a custom. Thou dishonest satyr, farewell to
honest married men; farewell to all sorts and degrees of
thee! Farewell, thou horn of hunger, that call'st th'Inns o'
Court to their manger! Farewell, thou horn of abundance,
that adornest the headsmen of the commonwealth! Farewell,
thou horn of direction, that is the city lanthorn! Farewell,
thou horn of pleasure, the ensign of the huntsman! Farewell,
thou horn of destiny, th'ensign of the married man!
Farewell, thou horn tree, the bearest nothing but stone-
fruit! *Exit*

e.

VOLTORE
Then know, most honour'd fathers, I must now
Discover, to your strangely abusèd ears,
The most prodigious, and most frontless piece
Of solid impudence, and treachery,
That ever vicious nature yet brought forth
To shame the state of Venice. This lewd woman
(That wants no artificial look, or tears,
To help the vizor she has now put on)
Hath long been known a close adultress,
To that lascivious youth there; not suspected,
I say, but known, and taken, in the act,
With him; and by this man, the easy husband,
Pardoned: whose timeless bounty makes him, now,
Stand here, the most unhappy, innocent person,
That ever man's own goodness made accused.
For these, not how to owe a gift
Of that dear grace, but with their shame; being placed
So above all powers of their gratitude,
Began to hate the benefit: and, in place
Of thanks, devise t'extirpe the memory
Of such an act. Wherein, I pray your fatherhoods,
To observe the malice, yea, the rage of creatures
Discovered in their evils; and what heart
Such take, even from their crimes. But that, anon
Will more appear. This gentleman, the father,

Hearing of this foul fact, with many others,
Which daily struck at his too-tender ears,
And, grieved in nothing more than that he could not
Preserve himself a parent (his son's ills
Growing to that strange flood) at last decreed
To disinherit him.

f.

BUSY
Verily, for the disease of longing, it is a disease, a
carnal disease, or appetite, incident to women; and as it is
carnal, and incident, it is natural, very natural. Now pig,
it is a meat, and a meat that is very nourishing, and may be
longed for, and so consequently eaten; it may be eaten; very
exceedingly well eaten. But in the Fair, and as a
Bartholmew-pig, it cannot be eaten, for the very calling it
a Bartholmew-pig, and to eat it so, is a spice of idolatry,
and you make the Fair no better than one of the high places.
This, I take it, is the state of the question. A high place.

LITTLEWIT
Ay, but in state of necessity, place should give place,
Master Busy. — I have a conceit left, yet.

PURECRAFT
Good Brother Zeal-of-the-land, think to make it as lawful as
you can.

LITTLEWIT
Yes sir, and as soon as you can; for it must be, sir. You
see the danger my little wife is in, sir.

PURECRAFT
Truy, I do love my child dearly, and would not have her
miscarry, or hazard her first fruits, if it might be
otherwise.

BUSY
Surely, it may be otherwise, but it is subject to
construction, subject, and hath a face of offence with the
weak, a great face, a foul face, but that face may have a
veil put over it, and be shadowed, as it were; it may be
eaten, and in the Fair, I take it, in a booth, the tents of
the wicked. The place is not much, not very much; we may be
religious in midst of the profane, so it be eaten with a
reformed mouth, with sobriety, and humbleness; not gorged in
with gluttony, or greediness; there's the fear; for, should
she go there as taking pride in the place, or delight in the
unclean dressing, to feed the vanity of the eye, or the lust
of the palate, it were not well, it were not fit, it were
abominable, and not good.

Section B

Answer **one** question.

2. 'At the end of each story the heroine abandons her disguise and dwindles into a wife.' (Catherine Belsey). To what extent is this true of *The Taming of the Shrew*?
3. Discuss the use of comic quibbling in *Much Ado About Nothing*.
4. Discuss attitudes towards death in any one of Shakespeare's comedies.
5. To what extent does Jonson use 'characterisation through language' in *Every Man in his Humour*?
6. In what ways does Jonson strive to create a sense of locality in *Bartholomew Fair*?
7. 'A Jonsonian comic plot is a group of sub-plots collected in one place' (Gabriele Bernhard Jackson). Discuss this statement and its relevance to the sense of closure at the end of one Jonson comedy.
8. Examine the use of violence of any one of Shakespeare's comedies.
9. Consider the value placed upon chastity in one of Jonson's comedies.

Section C

Answer **one** question. You answer must include detailed analysis of **at least one** play by Shakespeare **and at least one** play by Jonson.

10. Discuss the role of clown/fool figures in the comedies of Shakespeare and Jonson.
11. To what extent do the opening scenes condition what follows in the comedies of Shakespeare and Jonson?
12. Examine the use of prologues, **and/or** inductions, **and/or** epilogues in the comedies of Shakespeare and Jonson.
13. Consider the representation of, and attitudes towards, madness in the comedies of Shakespeare and Jonson.
14. Write on the significance of any **one** of the following in the comedies of Shakespeare and Jonson:
    a. patience
    b. love poetry
    c. the sea.
15. Discuss the **two** formal characteristics of the comedies of Shakespeare and Jonson.

Notes

Notes

Comment form

We welcome any comments you may have on the materials which are sent to you as part of your study pack. Such feedback from students helps us in our effort to improve the materials produced for the External Programme.

If you have any comments about this guide, either general or specific (including corrections, non-availability of essential texts, etc.), please take the time to complete and return this form.

Name ______________________________

Address ______________________________

____

____

Registration number ______________________________

For which qualification are you studying? ______________________________

Comments ______________________________

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

____

______________________________ Please continue on additional sheets if necessary.

Date: ______________________________

Please send your comments on this form (or a photocopy of it) to:
Publications Manager, Room 35, Senate House, University of London, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU UK.