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Twelfth Night and the Comedy of Festive Abuse

Albert C. Labriola

Twelfth Night is traditionally viewed as Shakespeare's culminating achievement in romantic comedy.¹ The play begins with Orsino's displaying the symptoms of lover's melancholy; and his languor, frustration, and lack of fulfillment reflect the studied posture of a pining lover complaining of unrequited love. Whenever he instructs Feste to sing, he wishes only to hear a song of sorrow. His rhetoric suggests that he is a votary in the religion of love and that, after the manner of the traditional Petrarchan lover, he views Olivia as a saint or a divinity. Likewise, Viola languishes because her disguise as Cesario prohibits an explicit profession of love for Orsino; and Olivia is suffering because Cesario rebuffs her overtures of love. She complains about his "tyrannous heart," "scorn," "contempt," "anger," and "pride" (III.i.131-158).² The treatment that she accords Orsino, Olivia receives from Cesario. In this variation of the lovers' triangle, melancholy characterizes each of the relationships, and the lovers are satirized for dotage, romantic idealism, and ludicrous posturing. When Sebastian is revealed to be Viola's identical twin, misunderstanding is resolved, and the lovers pair off for a joyous ending.

But C. L. Barber recognizes that Shakespeare's emphasis in certain comedies (*Love's Labor's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*) is more on intensifying the atmosphere of revelry and holiday than on adapting source material to an underlying romantic paradigm. He explains how "the social form of Elizabethan holidays contributed to the dramatic form of festive comedy. To relate this drama to holiday has proved to be the most effective way to describe its character."³ But also its satire. Just as some of Shakespeare's comedies may be viewed as less importantly "romantic" and more significantly "festive," so also his satire of romantic idealism is displaced by an emphasis on festive abuse, which is nowhere better exemplified than in *Twelfth Night*. The underplot of this play is a series of holiday revels presided over by the two principal festive celebrants, Sir Toby as the Lord of Misrule and Feste as the clown and fool.⁴ Indeed, the characters in the underplot divide nicely into these two groups: the festive celebrants, including also Maria and Fabian, and their victims, Malvolio and Sir Andrew. The festive celebrants indulge in bawdy wit, enjoy hearty sex, participate in boisterous revelry, and function as tricksters. Their victims, on the other hand, are twitted, gulled, and abused not only for their pretensions but also for their festive inadequacies: either an antagonism toward revelry or an inability to participate in it. Malvolio, for instance, disparages Feste and attempts to stifle the revels of *Twelfth Night*. His hostile attitude piques the celebrants, who abuse him by capitalizing on his ambitions to be a nobleman and to be Olivia's husband. Similarly, Sir Andrew is ridiculed not only because he is a would-be knight and wishful suitor to Olivia but also because he fails at being a festive cele-

brant. Thus the underplot contrasts in tone and in satiric technique with the so-called main action; but the play's title indicates that revelry is in the foreground, and the shift of emphasis from romance to holiday is a measure of Shakespeare's transition from romantic comedy to festive comedy and, especially important in *Twelfth Night*, to the comedy of festive abuse.

The term "festive abuse" may thus be used to explain the satire of the pretensions and of the festive inadequacies of Sir Andrew and Malvolio. As a satiric technique, festive abuse is derived from, and adds to, the atmosphere of revelry and holiday in the underplot of the play. In particular, this atmosphere is characterized by extremely witty dialogue, bawdry, wine-drinking, and dancing. These were also characteristics of *Twelfth Night* festivities, so that the customs and conduct of traditional social pastimes are embodied in the underplot of Shakespeare's play. The extent to which these festive characteristics and this festive abuse are reflected in *Twelfth Night* can be demonstrated only by close analysis of the text, by line-by-line explication. I have selected for intensive analysis a single scene, I.iii, in which Sir Andrew is satirized, because a precise understanding of festive abuse can emerge only through a study of the connotative richness of words, the intricacies of verbal nuance, and the complex interrelationships among words.

Before Sir Andrew first appears onstage, Sir Toby and Maria are engaged in a series of witty exchanges, and the dialogue, though brief, establishes the rapport between them. They are intellectually cross-fertilized because each continues the punning initiated by the other. Toby begins the dialogue by voicing displeasure over Olivia's period of mourning for her dead brother: "I am sure care's an enemy to life" (I.iii.23); and Maria expresses Olivia's dissatisfaction with Toby's carousing: "Your cousin, my lady, takes great exceptions to your ill hours" (I.iii.5-6). *Exceptions* means objections, but Toby caps Maria's speech with a legal phrase: "Why, let her except, before excepted" (I.iii.7). This phrase, which was used in Elizabethan leases, suggests that what was previously considered an exception to restrictions should again be considered exceptional. Toby is arguing contrary to Maria's intended meaning because he interprets *exceptions* to mean exemptions. On the other hand, to interpret *exceptions* as objections means that Toby is indifferent to Olivia's displeasure. He is saying, then, that Olivia may object to what she has been objecting to all along, but no change will take place in him. Toby is also punning on *accept* by suggesting that Olivia should continue to accept in him the conduct that she had accepted in the past. Maria's reply—"Aye, but you must confine yourself within the modest limits of order" (I.iii.8-9)—urges Toby to restrain his carousing. But he interprets *confine* as clothe and asserts that his attire shows moderate, if not modest, taste: "Confine! I'll confine myself no finer than I am. These clothes are good enough to drink in, and so be these boots too" (I.iii.10-12). He is also suggesting ("confine . . . no finer") that he will neither restrict his activities nor curtail his appetites (see *confine*, OED) any more than they are limited by his clothes. Maria continues the clothing metaphor: "That quaffing and drinking will undo you" (I.iii.14). Figuratively *undo* means to bring into disfavor, but Maria implies that Toby may become undressed as he carouses. By loosening and removing some of his clothing, he may relax

the limits on his conduct imposed by his own clothing. She is alluding to bawdry. In the midst of these witty exchanges, Maria mentions Sir Andrew as a would-be suitor to Olivia: “a foolish knight . . . brought in one night here to be her wooer” (I.iii.15-17). At this point with Sir Andrew still off-stage, the verbal humor has prepared the audience for upcoming festive abuse because Andrew’s chief inadequacies as a reveller will be contrasted with Toby’s manifest attributes. For instance, the verbal humor of Maria and Sir Toby, which is derived from comprehensive awareness of the literal and figurative meanings of words, will contrast with Andrew’s failure to be witty, to understand verbal humor, and to communicate with women. In addition, Toby’s potential for bawdry will contrast with Andrew’s impotence: “As in Restoration comedy the fop confirms the values of the rake, Aguecheek serves as foil to Sir Toby.”⁵

The witty conversation between Toby and Maria continues, and Andrew’s pretensions to knighthood are ridiculed by the mock-serious tone of Toby, who poses as his defender: “He’s as tall a man as any’s in Illyria” (I.iii.20). In this context *tall* should refer to valor, an essential characteristic of knightly conduct; but Andrew, who becomes fearful during a confrontation with Cesario (III.iv), is a coward as Maria already knows (I.iii.30-35). Andrew, of course, is tall, but his height does not signify strength of stature; it only calls attention to his gaunt physique and to a condition of debility, suggested by the name Aguecheek and confirmed by his conduct: he is intellectually deprived, sexually impotent, and uncourageous. Toby continues his tongue-in-cheek ecomium, and his description of Andrew’s knighthood appears to echo the typical enumeration of a Renaissance gentleman’s attributes in courtesy books and in certain plays in which fools are gulled while they ape the conduct of gentlemen.⁶ His pension, for example, is three thousand ducats a year (I.iii.22); but this money, which should be used to display knightly bounty, is squandered on carousing with Toby (I.iii.23-24).

Toby mentions that Andrew “plays o’the viol de gamboys” (I.iii.26-27). No doubt, he is inept and disharmonious because playing the viol de gamboys, in particular, was an attempt at making oneself attractive as a wooer. It suggested an invitation to courtship and an effort to arouse women’s desires. In *Every Man Out of His Humor* (III.ix) Fastidious Brisk is a would-be wooer who plays the viol de gamboys, wears long and noticeable stockings, and dances the galliard.⁷ Similarly, Andrew is concerned about the shape and appearance of his legs, the color of his stockings, and his skill at dancing; and like Fastidious Brisk he is exposed as an incapable wooer. Toby also praises Andrew’s linguistic proficiency: he speaks “three or four languages word for word without book” (I.iii.27-28). A Renaissance gentleman was well-traveled and proficient in foreign languages, but Andrew’s reported linguistic ability is disproved by his bewilderment at *pourquoi* (I.iii.95-96). That he later manages to use one handbook “greeting” phrase in French (III.i.79) suggests the mindless level of his knowledge. Moreover, his bewilderment at Toby’s use of *accost*—a fashionable word that urges him to court Maria in a familiar manner (*OED*)—further emphasizes his lack of social graces. Finally, Toby calls attention to Andrew’s natural endowments, “all the good gifts of nature” (I.iii.28-29). Ideally a gentleman was born with

a stalwart physique and admirable stature, and he acquired poise, grace of carriage, and nimbleness afoot to complement his natural attributes. Andrew's gaunt physique, his spindly stature, skinny legs, and sallow complexion manifest his shortcomings. Maria caps Toby's mock-serious praise with the assertion that Andrew is indeed a child of nature, a naturally born fool (I.iii.30).

When Andrew finally appears onstage, he is the object of festive abuse. Though his festive inadequacies, as well as his knightly deficiencies, are ridiculed, he is oblivious of the insults because Toby cautions Maria to keep a straight face ("*Castiliano vulgo*") and to adopt, like him, a mock-serious rapport with Andrew.⁸ To laugh openly at Andrew would alert him to their contempt and would deprive Toby of a comic butt and also of Andrew's money. After Andrew has entered, he greets Maria as a "fair shrew" (I.iii.50), although this familiar greeting does not mean that he is acquainted with her. Actually he does not know her, and the forward greeting implies that he intends to be brisk in soliciting her admiration and affection. By urging the foolish knight to "accost" Maria, Toby is applauding his initiative while promoting a display of his ineptitude as a lover. Maria cooperates with Toby's scheme by posing as the lady to be won and by addressing Andrew as "sir." Andrew is befuddled by *accost* until Toby explains that it means to "front her, board her, woo her, assail her" (I.iii.59-60). Andrew then interprets *accost* literally: "I would not undertake her in this company" (I.iii.61-62). Taking a woman under oneself implies coitus.⁹ Both meanings of *accost* (courtship and coitus) highlight Andrew's twofold failure with Maria: he is neither a witty suitor on the one hand nor a sexually capable lover on the other. Both meanings of *accost* are implicit in its etymological derivation from the Latin *accostare* (*ad* and *costa*, rib). *Accost*, often written *a-coast* in Elizabethan English, means to draw alongside. Toby accentuates the nautical implications of *accost* when he explains that it means to *front*, *board*, and *assail*. In Shakespeare's plays these words almost always connote wooing and courtship, an attempted seduction, or actual coitus.¹⁰ *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (II.i.90-96) most graphically illustrates the bawdy innuendo of this nautical metaphor. In the conversation between Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, the word *deck* signifies the exterior of a woman's body, and covered hatches refer to a woman's clothed and thus protected body. Uncovering a hatch is to undress a woman in order to gain access, and to travel below deck is to enter her.¹¹ The same nautical metaphor that describes Andrew's failure with Maria is used to suggest Benedick's capability not only as a witty rival to Beatrice but also as her prospective lover. In *Much Ado About Nothing* Beatrice is speaking with the masked Benedick, though she pretends to be unaware of his identity. Observing the numerous masquers, she remarks that Benedick "is in the fleet" and wishes that he had accosted or "boarded [her]" (II.i.147-148). She desires to continue their "merry war" (I.i.62), which is a flyting match resembling "the customs of Easter Smacks and Hocktide abuse between the sexes."¹² Their rapport also resembles the wit combat between Lord Gaspare and Lady Emilia Pia in *The Book of the Courtier*. When Benedick and Beatrice forego the pretense of mutual aversion, they recognize that their preoccupation with each other was based not

on scorn but on admiration, and Beatrice acknowledges submissively that she will be “taming [her] wild heart to [Benedick’s] loving hand” (III.i.112). Furthermore, Benedick’s capability as a potential lover and prospective husband is suggested in the bawdy conversation of III.iv. Beatrice, who is “stuffed” because of a headcold (III.iv.64), is urged by Margaret to get “some of this distilled Carduus Benedictus, and lay it to your heart” (III.iv.73-74). Hero pursues the sexual metaphor by commenting that Beatrice, with such a medicinal treatment, would be “prickest . . . with a thistle” (III.iv.76). Benedick’s name means blessed thistle, and its phallic connotations are emphasized by Margaret’s use of a common euphemism for sexual intercourse—laying it to the heart. Benedick’s name, like Aguecheek’s, helps to define his character but suggests that he, in contrast to Aguecheek, is capable of “accosting” a woman.

Andrew’s uncertainty at the meaning of *accost*, his inability to woo Maria, and her attempt to leave prompt Toby to remark “An thou let part so, Sir Andrew, would thou mightst never draw sword again” (I.iii.65-66). Toby is deprecating Andrew as a knight and as a lover. Since Andrew has failed to display knightly courtesy and to establish gentlemanly rapport with a lady, Toby suggests that he is unworthy to bear a sword, an emblem of knight-hood. The phallic connotations of “drawing one’s sword” recur in Shakespeare’s plays,¹³ and Andrew’s attempt to engage Maria by wooing and courtship is interpreted as a manifestation of his erotic intention. Andrew’s overture, however, is pretense because he is unable to consummate it, and his failure as a “swordsman” with Maria foreshadows his later failure in taking up the sword, in a different kind of combat, against another lady—Viola disguised as Cesario. These encounters expose and satirize him as a would-be lover and would-be knight. Andrew mindlessly iterates or mimics Toby’s remark that he “would [he] might never draw sword again” (I.iii.67-68) if Maria were permitted to disengage so unceremoniously. For Andrew, Maria’s abrupt departure would deprive him of the opportunity to display knightly courtesy and would reflect unfavorably on his manner of allowing ladies to take leave: “Fair lady, do you think you have fools in hand?” (I.iii.68-69). By “fools in hand” Andrew means “fools to deal with,” but Maria interprets the remark literally: “Sir, I have not you by the hand” (I.iii.70). Andrew clasps Maria’s hand, and her comment—“Now, sir, ‘thought is free’” (I.iii.73)—is part of an Elizabethan proverb: “No matter what I may be at liberty to say, thought is free.”¹⁴ As she agreed with Toby, Maria will not blatantly tell Andrew that he is a fool, and he is too obtuse to sense her contempt for him. Despite Maria’s efforts to leave, Andrew chooses to continue his wooing, and Maria uses the opportunity to be forward and flirtatious in order to highlight Andrew’s inability to capitalize on such a favorable opportunity. Her remark to Andrew, “I pray you, bring your hand to the buttery bar and let it drink” (I.iii.73-74), was a commonplace expression by which a woman solicited a gift in exchange for a kiss.¹⁵ In fact, this encouragement to initiate an amorous relationship is sometimes emphasized in stage productions by having Maria place Andrew’s hand near her bosom. Andrew, who is as ignorant of this figurative expression as he was of *accost*, asks “What’s your metaphor?” (I.iii.75-76); and Maria replies that “It’s dry, sir” (I.iii.77). She means that

dryness describes Andrew. His hand is dry, which indicates that he lacks sexual desire and that he cannot be aroused even by encouragement; and Andrew himself may be described as dry, which means that he is niggardly, stupid, and cowardly. These unfavorable connotations of *dry* are suggested by the name Aguecheek and confirmed by several images that relate to him in the play. Dryness traditionally indicates sexual debility and emotional passivity, which characterize Andrew; whereas wetness (*OED*) signifies sexual desire and fecundity. In Shakespeare's plays the range of connotation for liquid discharge extends from a moist hand, caused by heightened amorousness, to a seminal emission. Dryness is usually associated with old age (2 *Henry IV*, I.ii.203-204; *Much Ado About Nothing*, II.i.123); on the other hand, moisture and wetness characterize aroused, young lovers. In *Venus and Adonis* (ll. 25-26) the passionate Venus takes hold of Adonis' "sweating palm," which is "the precedent of pith and livelihood"; Othello suggests that Desdemona's "moist" hand "argues fruitfulness and liberal heart" (III.iv.36-38); and Charmion believes that "an oily palm" is "a fruitful prognostication" (*Antony and Cleopatra*, I.ii.53-54).

Dryness and barrenness also suggest intellectual deprivation (*OED*), as well as sexual inadequacy. In *The Comedy of Errors* (II.i.91) Adriana asks "Are my discourses dull? Barren my wit?" In *Troilus and Cressida* (I.iii.327-329), *barren* and *dry* indicate a general stupidity and, in particular, a lack of perception that prevents someone stupid from comprehending another person's intention. In observing that Andrew is "dry," Maria is probably alluding to his general obtuseness, his inability to understand or to generate witticisms, and his failure to perceive that she has been attempting to encourage him to be amorous. Undoubtedly, Maria is also intimating that Andrew is "dry" because he is unable to perceive that her rapport with him is mocking, that Toby is not really sponsoring him as Olivia's suitor, and that Toby has no interest in him except as a comic butt and as a source of revenue. Dryness may also suggest a lack of generosity (*OED*), and to Maria Andrew's hand is dry because it offers her no money in exchange for the amorous desire that she is trying to stimulate in him.¹⁶

To Maria's observation that his hand is dry, Andrew replies "I am not such an ass but I can keep my hand dry" (I.iii.79-80). Unable to understand Maria's humor, he inquires "But what's your jest?" (I.iii.80). Maria's comment, "A dry jest, sir" (I.iii.81), refers to "a jest or sarcasm uttered in a matter-of-fact tone and without a show of pleasantry or of humor that has the air of being unconscious or unintentional" (*dry*, #14, *OED*).¹⁷ This appropriately describes Maria's tone with Andrew. Moreover, dry jests, which are "caustically witty" and "ironical" (*dry*, #14, *OED*), rely on *double-entendre*, which Andrew cannot understand. Andrew then inquires "Are you full of them [dry jests]?" (I.iii.82), and Maria replies "I have them at my fingers' ends" (I.iii.83), which means that Andrew's fingers clasped in hers are the dry jests. But Maria is also insinuating that with Andrew as her jesting material she can spontaneously and rapidly generate dry humor at his expense. Indeed, the jests come so rapidly that they are at her "fingertips." As she releases Andrew's hand, Maria comments that she is now "barren" (I.iii.84) because in disengaging from Andrew, she has been deprived of

jesting material. But *barren* also has sexual connotation, and Maria means that her rapport with Andrew has not been productive. Her amorous overtures have gone unrequited, and the obtuse Andrew has been unable to engage in a wit combat that would have further stimulated her verbal humor. Toby, who has been amused by Andrew's ineptitude, observes "O knight, thou lackest a cup of canary. When did I see thee so put down?" (I.iii.85-86). The phrase "lackest a cup of canary" concisely reviews all the shortcomings that Andrew has manifested in his dialogue with Maria, for canary wine, often referred to as sack, was believed to warm and stimulate the blood.¹⁸ With his blood invigorated by wine, a man was a lively wit who entertained the ladies, a fiery lover who wooed them, and a courageous knight whose gallantry they admired.

The overall invigorating effect of wine on the blood and liver, which was viewed as the source of blood,¹⁹ is frequently mentioned in Renaissance drama. In *The Merchant of Venice* (I.i.81) Gratiano says "let my liver . . . heat with wine," and in the Prologue to *Every Man Out of His Humor* the enlivening effect of canary is emphasized when it is described as the elixir and spirit of wine.²⁰ In *Henry V* (III.v.20-21) "cold blood" is contrasted with "quick blood, spirited with wine." But Andrew's pallor indicates that he is bloodless; and as Toby remarks, Andrew's liver does not contain enough blood to "clog the foot of a flea" (III.ii.66). The liver was viewed as the seat of courage and of the amorous passion. Andrew's bloodless liver signifies his threefold lethargy: he is timorous, intellectually inert, and sexually unresponsive. The timidity of a man with a bloodless liver is suggested by the image "livers white as milk" in *The Merchant of Venice* (III.ii.86), and "lily-livered" in *Macbeth* (V.iii.15). Accordingly, when Fabian attempts to embolden Andrew so that Cesario will be challenged, he states that Olivia seems to favor Cesario in order to "put fire in your [Andrew's] heart and brimstone in your liver" (III.ii.21-22).²¹ How wine stimulates not only valor but also wit is explained by Falstaff in 2 *Henry IV* (IV.iii.102-114):

A good sherris sack hath a twofold operation in it. It ascends me into the brain, dries me there all the foolish and dull and crudy vapors which environ it, makes it apprehensive [lively], quick, forgetive [inventive], full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes—which, delivered o'er to the voice, the tongue, which is the birth, becomes excellent wit. The second property of your excellent sherris is the warming of the blood, which, before cold and settled, left the liver white and pale, which is the badge of pusillanimity and cowardice.

Falstaff's additional commentary (ll. 114-123) may also be used to explain Aguecheek's complexion and lack of valor:

But the sherris warms it [the blood] and makes it course from the inwards to the parts extreme. It illumineth the face, which as a beacon gives warning to all the rest of this little kingdom, man, to arm. And then the vital commoners and inland petty spirits muster me all to their captain, the heart, who, great and puffed up with this retinue, doth any deed of courage, and this valor comes of sherris.

Furthermore, in warming the blood, wine arouses the amorous passion so that both pulse and heart beat faster and the complexion becomes ruddy. For example, in *2 Henry IV* (II.iv.24-31) Mistress Quickly observes the effects of wine on Doll Tearsheet, Falstaff's mistress:

I'faith, sweetheart, methinks now you are in an excellent good temperality. Your pulside beats as extraordinarily as heart would desire, and your color, I warrant you, is as red as any rose, in good truth, la! But, i'faith, you have drunk too much canaries, and that's a marvelous searching wine, and it perfumes the blood.

Because Aguecheek has remained pale and torpid during Maria's invitation to sexual activity, Toby recognizes that "a cup of canary" (I.iii.86) is necessary to warm and to stimulate Andrew's blood, to arouse his amorous passion, and to make his hand moist with sexual passion. But Andrew's persistent dryness signifies not only a failure to be aroused but a virtual incapacity to experience a sexual climax; and the interrelation between wine-drinking and sexual climax is emphasized, for instance, in *2 Henry IV*. Falstaff says "Here, Pistol, I charge you with a cup of sack. Do you discharge upon mine hostess" (II.iv.120-122). Pistol replies that he will "discharge upon her . . . with two bullets" (II.123-124). *Discharge* implies seminal emission, which is the climax to sexual passion intensified by wine-drinking; and the image of "shooting" and the mention of "two bullets" have definite sexual implication.²² Through IV.i of *Love's Labor's Lost* the images of shooting and discharge are used to suggest aroused passion and ensuing sexual climax.²³ Andrew cannot "make water," an Elizabethan euphemism for sexual discharge, whereas Toby can indeed "make water" as he later mentions to Andrew.²⁴ A similar metaphor with the same meaning is used in *2 Henry IV* by Doll Tearsheet, who marvels "how [Falstaff] sweated!" (II.iv.234). While drinking sack, Falstaff has quarreled with Pistol and then chased him from the Boar's Head Tavern. Doll Tearsheet's admiration for Falstaff relates wine-drinking and sweating on the one hand to valor and sexual activity on the other. She exclaims that Falstaff is "as valorous as Hector of Troy, worth five of Agamemnon, and ten times better than the Nine Worthies" (II.iv.236-239). She admires his virility and yearns to "cavass [him] between a pair of sheets" (II.iv.244), which is a commonplace expression for sexual intercourse. In contrast to Toby and Falstaff, Andrew is typically phlegmatic: that is, sluggish, dull, thin, and sallow. According to Renaissance physiological theory, Andrew's veins, which emerge from a bloodless liver, are nearly clogged by cold, white phlegm or mucus. While conversing with Maria, he will thus remain pale and dry.

"When did I see thee so put down?" Toby asks of Andrew (I.iii.86). In his reply, "never . . . unless you see canary put me down" (I.iii.87-88), Andrew unwittingly alludes to his own shortcomings. The diminutive Maria, who is canary-small, has indeed "put down" the foolish Andrew in their contest of wits. Since Maria, with Toby's assistance, had encouraged Andrew to woo her with a display of knightly courtesy and admirable wit, Andrew has, in effect, undertaken a wooing dance. In Shakespeare's plays courtship is

often identified as a dance.²⁵ In *Love's Labor's Lost*, for instance, Boyet explains that the young men intend "to court and dance" (V.ii.122) with the ladies from France and "everyone his love feat will advance / Unto his several mistress" (V.ii.123-124). The identification of courtship with dancing is clearcut, and the pun on advancing the feat (feet as well as fate) of love stresses the correlation. Shortly afterwards, the King of Navarre uses an image of dancing, "to tread a measure" (V.ii.185), to express his desire "to make time" (in today's parlance) with the Princess. Because the canary was a very lively Spanish dance, it usually reflected a brisk and intense effort to win a lady (*Love's Labor's Lost*, III.i.13; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, III.ii.88-91; *All's Well That Ends Well*, II.i.77). Andrew's observation that "canary put [him] down" ironically implies that he has been fatigued by wooing. Furthermore, *canary*, as in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (II.ii.61-64), may be interpreted as quandary; and unwittingly Andrew is saying that wooing has "put" him into a quandary because he is befuddled by the witty dialogue of courtship. In addition, canary sack is a light sweet wine that could invigorate the blood, stimulate the amorous passion, promote a show of wit, and encourage a display of valor. Though it normally arouses other men, canary seems to "put [Andrew] down" and thus to render senseless his already dull nature.

Andrew, who recognizes that his wit does not befit a knight, complains that he has "no more wit than a Christian [i.e., christened] or an ordinary man has" (I.iii.89-90). Because he is "a great eater of beef" (I.iii.90), Andrew attributes the lack of wit to his diet. The effects of diet on wit and temperament were often discussed, and beef, for instance, was believed to impair wit. In *Troilus and Cressida* "beef-witted" (II.i.14) connotes stupidity.

For the remainder of the scene, Toby's discourse, like Maria's previous conversation with Andrew, satirizes the foolish knight's deprivations. Much as Maria had encouraged the would-be suitor to assert his manhood, so also Toby encourages Andrew to manifest his virility through a strenuous effort at dancing. First, however, he perplexes Andrew with "*pourquoi*" (I.iii.95). By exposing this linguistic deficiency, Toby revives the humor of his previous assertion that Andrew had mastered "three or four languages word for word without book" (I.iii.27-28). Andrew's desires are to have "bestowed that time in the *tongues*" (italics mine) that he has "in fencing, dancing and bearbaiting" and to have "followed the arts" (I.iii.97-100). Since the conversation deals with the accomplishments of a gentleman and knight, Andrew's unwitting pun on *tongues* (i.e., tongs) is appropriate self-satire. Tongs and bones (see *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV.i.31) were the instruments of rustics,²⁶ and Andrew's wish to have spent "time in the tongs" identifies him as a boorish lout whose alleged skill with the viol de gamboys becomes more laughable. Toby, who interprets "in the tongs" to mean "in the curlers," notes that such treatment would provide Andrew with "an excellent head of hair" (I.iii.100). The texture and color of Andrew's hair, which normally "hangs like flax on a distaff" (I.iii.108), suggested eunuchry, as well as foolishness.²⁷ Toby elaborates the "distaff" metaphor when he mentions that a housewife might take Andrew "between her legs and spin it [his hair] off" (I.iii.109-110). To "spin off" was an Eliza-

bethan euphemism for sexual climax, which a man experienced because of the vigorous action of a woman; and Andrew's loss of hair, which the housewife would "spin off" as from a distaff, might be viewed as a consequence of venereal disease (see *The Comedy of Errors*, II.ii.85-90). Toby is saying that a woman would have to be dominant and unusually vigorous to elicit a sexual response from the lethargic Andrew, who would no doubt contract venereal disease from the encounter. The reputed promiscuity of Frenchmen prompted Elizabethans to call syphilis the French disease²⁸ and to note that "some . . . French crowns have no hair at all" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I.ii.99-100). The onset of syphilis often caused impotence, which was viewed as fit retribution for overusing one's virility. To characterize the impotent Andrew as a sufferer of Frenchman's disease is another example of Toby's wry humor.

Because Olivia has been unattentive to him, Andrew wishes to leave her manor. He also suspects that she prefers Orsino before him, and he recognizes that Orsino "himself here hard by woos her" (I.iii.113-114). Unknowingly, Andrew employs a common Renaissance euphemism ("hard") for a phallic erection (see *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I.i.141; *Much Ado About Nothing*, V.ii.38);²⁹ but its application to Orsino is laughable because the Duke sees Olivia as a quasi-divinity, not at all as a fleshly woman. The implication that the impotent Andrew, as Orsino's rival, has also been wooing "hard by" is likewise funny. Toby urges Andrew to stay, and Andrew agrees to continue his wooing because he is "a fellow o'the strangest mind i'the world" and he enjoys "masques and revels sometimes altogether" (I.iii.119-121). Andrew here alludes to the atmosphere of revelry that infused Elizabethan love games, an atmosphere that characterizes the lords' courtship of the ladies in *Love's Labor's Lost*. Berowne, for example, seems to reflect Andrew's view when he enjoins the men to plan "some strange pastime" (IV.iii.377) since "revels, dances, masques, and merry hours / Forerun fair Love, strewing her way with flowers" (IV.iii.379-380). Like Andrew, Berowne recognizes that women are attracted by an extraordinary (i.e., "strange") display of talent; and the young lords of *Love's Labor's Lost* on the one hand and Andrew on the other choose dancing as the means of courtship. Boyet, for example, explains to the ladies the intention of the young lords, who have come to entertain them:

Their purpose is to parle, to court and dance;
 And everyone his love feat will advance
 Unto his several mistress, which they'll know
 By favors several which they did bestow (V.ii.122-125).

The pun on advancing the *feat* of love stresses that dancing was an important gesture of courtship, and Andrew's willingness to participate in "masques and revels" indicates a desire to display his skill at dancing. Much as he had guided Andrew into courtship of Maria, Toby now maneuvers the foolish knight into a laughable display of dancing: "Art thou good at these kickshawses, knight?" (I.iii.122). Toby is alluding to dancing movements that characterized the "masques and revels" that were the love games of

wooning and courtship. Variant spelling of *kickshawses* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries included *-shose* and *-shoes*,³⁰ and kicking up the hose and shoes in a frolicsome leap was an attempt to engage a lady's attention and to win her admiration by a dextrous act of virile self-assertion. The dances and dancing steps mentioned by Toby—galliard, coranto, jig, sinkapace, caper, and backtrick—were rapid in tempo and vigorous in execution. To the Puritans these movements (“in their mimicke venerean action”)³¹ were ribald, obscene, and suggestive of copulation. Baskervill cites several Puritan diatribes against the wantonness of dancing at social pastimes and seasonal festivals. For instance, John Northbrooke, in his *Treatise wherein Dicing, Dancing, Vain Plays or Interludes, with Other Idle Pastimes . . . Are Reproved* (ca. 1577), describes Elizabethans who dance “with disordinate gestures, and with monstrous thumping of the feete, to pleasant soundes, to wanton songs, to dishonest verses.”³² Moreover, Elizabethans customarily expressed the passion of love through the medium of dancing, so that a couple would often pantomime their affectionate relationship to the accompaniment of music and song.³³

These love games, which flourished as social pastimes during seasonal festivals, often were enacted in the churchyard, which “was certainly a center for merrymaking, partly because the church had taken the place of the pagan fane which dances once honoured, partly because the churchyard was in any case the parish meeting place, partly perhaps because to go there was excitingly impudent.”³⁴ In 1576 Archbishop Grindal instructed the bishops to determine “whether the ministers and churchwardens have suffered any lord of misrule or summer lords and ladies, or any disguised persons, or others, in Christmas or at May games, or any morris-dancers, or at any other times, to come unreverently into the church or churchyard, and there to dance, or play any unseemly parts, with scoffs, jests, wanton gestures, or ribald talk.”³⁵ The festive occasion of dancing in the churchyard and the social custom that makes dancing a gesture of courtship, as well as an expression of the passion of love, provide a frame of reference against which Toby's satire of Andrew can be interpreted. Toby asks of Andrew “why dost thou not *go to church* [italics mine] in a galliard and come home in a coranto?” (I.iii.136-137). Going to the churchyard, Andrew would travel rapidly because he expects to display his love passion and to assert his virility by dancing the galliard.³⁶ In *Orchestra* (1594) Sir John Davies describes the galliard as “A gallant dance, that lively doth bewray / A spirit and a virtue masculine.” Also, the dance was performed with “lofty turns and capriols [i.e., capers] in the air, / Which with the lusty tunes accordeth fair.”³⁷ The coranto, a variation of the galliard, was performed by young men as they pantomimed their wooing of young ladies. From the churchyard Andrew will return home in a coranto, for the dance of wooing will begin after the display of virility, through the medium of the galliard, has been approved by women.

Describing his proficiency at the galliard, Andrew remarks that he “can cut a caper” (I.iii.129), and Toby adds that he “can cut the mutton to't” (I.iii.130). A “cut caper” was accomplished by a vigorous upright leap with the legs beating together, and it was, of course, an assertion of one's virility

and an invitation to lovemaking.³⁸ But Toby, by mentioning mutton, humorously interprets *caper* as sauce. Mutton, meat, and flesh were all commonplace euphemisms for a prostitute, who was consumed in the act of intercourse.³⁹ Mutton spiced with caper sauce was a popular dish, and in *The Sun's Darling* by Ford and Dekker a French dancer is described as "one that loves mutton so well, he alwaies carries capers about him."⁴⁰ By suggesting "that the only kind of 'capers' Sir Andrew could cut were those served up with a leg of mutton,"^{40a} Toby expresses disfavor with Andrew's dancing. But caper sauce applied to mutton, a favorite dish for the notoriously lecherous Frenchmen, was a euphemism for a seminal emission. When Toby asserts that he can "cut the mutton," he is praising his own virility that allows him to consummate a sexual relationship, and at the same time he is wittily chiding Andrew's inability to "cut below the surface." Nevertheless, Toby pretends to admire Andrew's virility in order to cajole his dupe into a foolish display of dancing. He asks why Andrew has been concealing his "things," "gifts," "virtues," and "leg" (I.iii.133-141); and he remarks that if he were as well-endowed physically as Andrew his "very walk should be a jig, I would not so much as make water but in a sinkapace" (I.iii.137-139). The jig and the "cinque pace" were lively dances;⁴¹ thus Toby would be displaying, not concealing, his admirable physical endowment in order to win the acclaim of women. Making water in a cinque pace refers to the perspiration caused by the swift and strenuous movements of the galliard.⁴² With some variations of the galliard, man and woman would indeed "mimicke venerean action" (as the Puritans protested). They would embrace and dance entwined, and the rapidity and intensity of movement would cause them to "make water." This reaction, however, suggested a sexual climax that was achieved at the crescendo of their cooperative exercise.

Toby's seeming admiration for Andrew's "leg," which he says "was formed under the star of a galliard" (I.iii.141-142), prompts the foolish knight to observe that his leg is "strong, and it does indifferent well in a flame-colored stock" (I.iii.143-144). A well-formed leg signified virility and stimulated desire in lecherous women. The Wife of Bath, for instance, is aroused by seeing the "legges" of her husband-to-be, Jankyn;⁴³ but Andrew's leg is noticeably thin, which is a sign of debility (*Hamlet*, II.ii.202; *2 Henry IV*, I.ii.204-205). "To put such a leg as his into 'a flame-coloured stock' only shows how meager it is."⁴⁴ Andrew's festive inadequacies are also emphasized by the color of his stockings. Flaming red, the color of intense passion (*OED*) and lechery (*1 Henry IV*, I.ii.11-12), displays the erotic motive that Andrew cannot consummate. The scene concludes with another astrological reference by Toby: "Were we not born under Taurus?" (I.iii.146-147). Andrew mistakenly remarks that Taurus influences "sides and heart" (I.iii.148), which were believed to be governed by Leo (as an Elizabethan audience would have recognized). Toby exclaims that Taurus influences "legs and thighs" (I.iii.149), and "in the authoritative astrological treatise *Liber Novem Iudicum*, Taurus is stated to govern 'crura et pedes', almost the very words Sir Toby uses."⁴⁵ Toby then urges Andrew into a vigorous dancing exercise: "Let me see thee caper. Ha! higher. Ha, ha! excellent!" (I.iii.149-150). Such mock-serious admiration for Andrew continues throughout the

play and encourages the gull into ridiculous displays of knighthood, virility, and merry-making. The satire that he incurs emphasizes the contrast between his eager desire but manifest inability to be a festive celebrant. The celebrants thereby collaborate in gulling their victims and in using festive abuse to intensify the atmosphere of revelry in the underplot of *Twelfth Night*.

If the present essay explains how and why Sir Andrew is satirized for his festive inadequacies, it has succeeded in its attempt to begin to describe the comedy of festive abuse. The perspective that emerges from this analysis of one scene of *Twelfth Night* can be applied throughout the play and can be employed in analyzing other Shakespearean comedies. As importantly, however, this perspective clarifies the significance of an acute awareness of, and heightened sensitivity toward, the richness of Shakespeare's language. Through a close, almost microscopic, analysis of Shakespeare's language, certain aspects of characterization, tone, and satiric technique are more clearly seen and more accurately described.

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FOOTNOTES

1. See, for example, Peter G. Phialas, *Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies* (Chapel Hill, N. C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 279: "In form *Twelfth Night* represents the ultimate plane to which Shakespeare could raise the structure of his romantic comedy."
2. Shakespeare is quoted from *Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. G. B. Harrison (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952).
3. C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (1959; rpt. New York: World Publishing Co., 1963), p. 4.
4. For a discussion of the Lord of Misrule, see Barber, pp. 24-30.
5. Barber, p. 250.
6. In *Every Man in His Humor* Stephen, Matthew, and Bobadill are satirized while trying to behave like gentlemen; and in *Every Man Out of His Humor* would-be gentlemen are likewise satirized. In these plays a gentleman is described as well-travelled, knowledgeable of French and Italian, magnanimous, bountiful, courteous, melancholic in disposition, expert in fencing, proficient as a musician, and accomplished in dancing.
7. *Every Man in His Humor* (folio of 1616) and *Every Man Out of His Humor* are cited from *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), vol. III.
8. Warburton and Hanmer emend *vulgo* to *volto* so that facial appearance or countenance is emphasized. Castilians allegedly were sober-faced, and Toby is enjoining Maria to pretend to be serious so that their jesting about Andrew may be continued even in his presence. To be laughed at openly was an egregious insult. See, for example, Stephen's reaction in *Every Man in His Humor* (I.iii) to Edward Knowell's laughter. *Vulgo* may also refer to Maria's language. That is, Toby is suggesting that she should not be openly abusive toward Andrew but that she should maintain a seeming decorous tone.
9. Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, Revised edition (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1969), pp. 55 ("accost"), 197 ("take"), 208 ("undertake").
10. See *Troilus and Cressida*, IV.v.59; *All's Well That Ends Well*, I.i.127-129;

- V.iii.210-211; *Romeo and Juliet*, I.i.219; *The Taming of the Shrew*, I.ii.95. See also Partridge, pp. 26-27 (siege and assault images), 36 (sea-fighting images), 55 ("above deck"), 59 ("assail"), 68 ("board"), 119 ("hatches").
11. Water entering a ship, through uncovered hatches, is a metaphor for a man's sexual emission: See Partridge, p. 144 ("make water").
 12. Barber, pp. 6-7.
 13. Partridge, pp. 96-97, 196.
 14. See *Sixteen Plays of Shakespeare*, ed. George Lyman Kittredge (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1946), pp. 59, 388; and Morris P. Tilley, *Elizabethan Proverb Lore* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1926), p. 303.
 15. See *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Twelfth Night, or, What You Will*, ed. H. H. Furness (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1901), XIII, 42; and *Twelfth Night or What You Will*, ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch and J. Dover Wilson, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Eng.: At the University Press, 1949), VII, 112. Both editions quote Kenrick's observation that Maria's buttery-bar comment was "a proverbial phrase among forward Abigail, to ask at once for a kiss and a present."
 16. Dr. Johnson, among others, observes that a dry hand "may possibly mean, a hand with no money in it." Quoted by Furness, p. 42.
 17. Quiller-Couch and J. D. Wilson, p. 112, quote the *Art of English Poesie* on "the figure Ironia" or "the drye mock" to explain Maria's tone with Andrew.
 18. "Sack was the generic name for Spanish and Canary wines, and was popular with all classes" (*Shakespeare's England*, ed. Sidney Lee and E. T. Onions [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916], II, 136).
 19. *Shakespeare's England*, I, 421-422, 426.
 20. Herford and Simpson, p. 440.
 21. Fabian has also remarked (III.ii.15) that Olivia's seeming neglect of Andrew is intended "to awake [his] dormouse valor" (III.ii.20-21). *Dormouse* is sometimes associated with the French *dormir*, which means sleeping or dormant. Fabian is trying to vitalize Andrew.
 22. See Partridge, pp. 73 ("bullets"), 192 ("stone").
 23. *Love's Labor's Lost*, IV.i.109-140.
 24. See Partridge, pp. 144 ("make water"), 195 ("sweating"). The *OED* mentions impregnate as a meaning for the phrase "make water." Toby says that he would "make water . . . in a sinkapace" (I.iii.138-139). Toward the end of this scene, dancing suggests the rhythm of sexual intercourse; and as the rhythm is accelerated, climax is induced.
 25. In *Much Ado About Nothing* (II.i.72-83) various dances are used to describe developing stages in a man's loving relationship with a woman. See also *Shakespeare's England*, II, 449.
 26. *Shakespeare's England*, II, 48.
 27. W. C. Curry, "The Secret of Chaucer's Pardoner," *JEGP*, 18 (1919), 596, observes that "long, stringy yellow hair . . . indicates impotence and lack of manhood." Curry cites medieval and Renaissance studies of physiognomy to support his view. Leslie Hotson, *The First Night of "Twelfth Night"* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1954), p. 163, observes that "Sir Andrew's thin and flat-lying hair . . . betrays his foolishness." In *Bacchus Bountie* (1593), which Hotson cites to support his observation, hair like Andrew's "represents a woodcock's wit." The woodcock was believed to be a stupid bird, easily deceived, and it represented foolishness and gullibility.
 28. Partridge, p. 144 ("malady of France"), cites *Henry V*, V.i.86-87.
 29. See also Partridge, p. 118 ("hard").

30. Helge Kökeritz, *Shakespeare's Pronunciation* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953), p. 181 and n. 7. *Kickshaws*, an Anglicization of the French *que'que chose*, also suggested dainty dishes of French cookery (see *2 Henry IV*, V.i.30). The double connotation of *kickshaws*, which refers to dancing and eating, contributes to the bawdy innuendo of the "capers and mutton" dialogue between Andrew and Toby.
31. C. R. Baskervill, *The Elizabethan Jig and Related Song Drama* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1929), p. 112, n. 1.
32. Edited by J. P. Collier for the Shakespeare Society (1843), p. 171, as quoted by Baskervill, pp. 9-10. For other Puritan diatribes against dancing, see Baskervill, p. 112, n. 1.
33. Baskervill, pp. 18-19.
34. Barber, pp. 29-30.
35. E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), I, 181, n. 1, as quoted by Barber, p. 7.
36. Baskervill, pp. 341-343. Baskervill, whose discussion of the galliard is partly derived from Arbeau's *Orchesographie* (wr. ca. 1588), emphasizes the rapidity, physical exertion, and leaping that characterize the dance.
37. *Orchestra* is quoted from Harrison, pp. 1645-1647. Capering typifies the sportive lechery of the holiday atmosphere (see *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, III.ii.68; *As You Like It*, II.iv.55; *2 Henry VI*, III.i.365). The association of caper with lechery is further reinforced because caper is Latin for goat, which the Elizabethans viewed as an exceedingly lustful animal. Furthermore, *capricious*, which the Elizabethans believed was derived from caper, meant playfully amorous (see *As You Like It*, III.iii.7-8).
38. Baskervill, p. 342 and n. 3. In Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (IV.i) Sir Fopling Flutter tries to caper but fails. He is encouraged to dance by the ladies, who praise him publicly. Among themselves, however, they ridicule his pretensions to virility. The galliard and coranto are described as ribald dances in Wycherley's *The Gentleman-Dancing Master* (II.i.).
39. See the *OED*. See also Partridge, pp. 98 ("eat"), 107 ("flesh"), 147 ("meat"), 151 ("mutton").
40. Pearson edition, IV, 308, as quoted by Kittredge, p. 389.
- 40a. Quiller-Couch and J. D. Wilson, p. 113.
41. The *OED*, in contrasting the passamezzo with the galliard, quotes Sir J. Hawkins' *Hist. Music*, IV, 386: "As a galliard consists of five paces or bars in the first strain, and is therefore called a Cinque Pace; the Passamezzo, which is a diminutive of the Galliard, has just half that number, and from that peculiarity takes its name." In *Shakespeare's England* (II,443) the cinquepace, "the name by which the original galliard was known," is described as "the most joyous part of the galliard." The jig, too, was a very rapid dance that was noted for its ribaldry; and as Baskervill observes (p. 359), the jig and the galliard were sometimes combined. To illustrate the ribaldry of the jig, Baskervill (p. 111) cites Jonson's *The Alchemist* (the epistle accompanying the quarto of 1612) and the *Induction to Bartholomew Fair*, both of which mention the "concupiscence" of the jig and of other dances.
42. Baskervill, p. 344.
43. Cited from "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" to her tale, l. 598 (*The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957], p. 81).
44. Barber, p. 249. Gentlemen displayed their legs in fashionable and expensive stockings, usually silken. In *Every Man in His Humor* (I.iii.46-47) the gull

Stephen observes "I thinke my legge would shew in a silke-hose." Harlots traditionally wore bright red. In *1 Henry IV* (I.ii.11-12) Hal likens the sun to "a fair hot wench in flame-colored taffeta." In the "General Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales*, l. 456, the Wife of Bath's stockings are described as "fyn scarlet reed" (Robinson, p. 21); and in "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" to her tale, l. 559, the Wife mentions her "gaye scarlet gytes" (Robinson, p. 81).

45. *Shakespeare's England*, I, 460.

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