RHETORICAL MEANS AND COMIC EFFECTS IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *TWELFTH NIGHT*

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1. SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMATIC METAPHOR

"What's your metaphor?" asks the foolish knight Sir Andrew Aguecheek of Maria, the lady's maid, when he first appears on the stage in Act one, scene three of ***Twelfth Night***, thereby trying to decipher her ambivalent allusion to his dry hand. Maria turns away his proffered hand after a quick battle of words which mixes ambiguities, misapprehensions and sexual crudities, thus underlining his sexual frigidity. Her short answer: "It's dry, sir" symbolizes not only his desire to do without alcoholic drinks and flirtatious games at that moment, but also his craftiness and cunning, which have so far prevented him from meeting with any serious misfortune. This last characteristic allows Sir Andrew, who shortly expresses to Sir Toby Belch his regret that he has spent his time fencing, dancing and bear-baiting instead of devoting himself to the study of languages, nevertheless to suspect a deeper meaning behind Maria's allusion to drinking, but which he is not, however, able to work out explicitly. This scene has an important structural function within the framework of the introduction to this comedy, in that it concludes the problematic exposition after the presentation of Duke Orsino's desire for love in the first scene and the expression in the second scene of Viola's intention to disguise herself after her miraculous escape.[1] With this rhetorical use of vocabulary, Shakespeare points out the ambiguity of language, its figurative meaning and the hermeneutic problem which the participants in the dialogue, in view of the lack of linguistic explicitness, cannot avoid. In this way, the discrepancy between appearance and reality, which links the comedies to the great tragedies, is also transferred onto the linguistic level. Shakespeare uses this method of destroying the illusion when he is concerned with the relativity of truth and personal identity. Viola's unmotivated readiness to disguise herself and to sue for the love of Olivia, who

is in mourning, in the place of the aging Duke Orsino, as well as the frivolous role-playing of the socially lower and dependent characters, Malvolio, Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Maria, show clearly the uncertainties and ambiguities of the dramatic action. That the entire reality on stage becomes in a platonic sense a metaphor for the inability to experience the world has been established often enough already.

In ***Twelfth Night***, however, Shakespeare also makes the audience aware of the discrepancy in the actors and their roles, falling back on rhetorical traditions and, through parodical exaggeration, stresses the difference between the two. In this way, Viola, dressed as Cesario, immediately suspects herself of insincerity in her hyperbolic apostrophe to Olivia, "Most radiant, exquisite, and unmatchable beauty" (I, 5: 171), and assumes that the speech which she has learned does not comply with reality. After she has to admit, in reply to the taciturn Olivia's penetrating question, "I am not what I play" (I, 5: 185), she allows Olivia, who asks "Now, sir, what is your text?" (I, 5: 223) to coax the secret of her ducal service from her in the absence of the servants. The homophony of the repeated question "Where lies your text?" (I, 5: 226) does not only reveal the falseness of Viola's role-playing for Olivia, whose feelings are aroused by this figure in masculine attire, which leads her to give Cesario/Viola a secret present of a ring. Viola's short reply "In Orsino's bosom." (I, 5: 227) establishes to a far greater extent the ambivalence of this expression as the meaning which is least desired by Olivia. Viola turns attention away from the untruth of her disguise and the false intentions behind her suit by answering the questions only in so far as her official task is concerned.[2] The fact that Olivia ends up alone in the final comic scene when the couples are paired off is probably due to her greater insight into the fictitious nature of the ability to experience the world, which does not allow her to take part in the burlesque compulsiveness of the dramatic action. She sees through the exaggerated rhetoric of Viola's vivid speeches and rejects her justification of the preference for the poetic in her speeches with the reproach of fictitiousness "It is the more like to be feigned." (I, 5: 197).

The fictitious nature of Viola's rhetorical exaggerated speeches misses the real heart of the matter and obscures not only her own existence but also the Duke's desires, which are no longer appropriate for his age. Shakespeare uses Olivia as a mouthpiece for a negative evaluation of the literature which was

popular at the time of the English Renaissance. The depiction of the literature as "feigned history" helps mankind to a superficial sense of satisfaction, according to Francis Bacon in his ***Advancement of Learning*** (1605):

> The use of this Feigned History hath been to give some shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it; the world heina in proportion inferior to the soul.[3]

So, in the platonic understanding of the Renaissance, fictionality as a quality of literature conceals reality and the nature of things, and merely allows an effective sense of satisfaction which is appropriate to the superficiality of the comedy.

2. THE RHETORICAL BASIS OF THE COMIC EFFECT

The fiction of literary expression and the play-world which is evoked by the metaphorical use of language creates the possibility of various levels of meaning which can be used for irony to varying effects. The division of the unambiguous message into different meanings is, as Shakespeare's metaphor shows, not only a linguistic but also an epistemological problem, for the boundaries of linguistic meaning become just as obscured as those of individuality, so that the question of personal identity becomes an all-encompassing motif for the dramatic action in the comedies. The uncertainty of linguistic meaning can lead to the tragic end of the protagonists if their lives are physically destroyed through their own fault, but it can also be combined with comic distortions and misapprehensions, producing various comic effects for protagonists and audience when, at the end of the play, a sense of order, sanctioned either by nature or by social conventions, is once more established. That both forms can be successfully combined is shown in modern literature by the dramas of Eugène Ionesco and Samuel Beckett in particular.

This discrepancy between two levels of meaning is, however, the essential principle of the comic effect. The intensity of the comedy is found in the distance between what is said and what is meant, between norm and deviation, between the reality of the recipient and the fictitiousness of what is

presented, between expectation and disappointment. The quality of this distance is crucial for the comic effect, which can be produced by hyperbolic exaggeration, by explicit obscenities or embarrassing situations, by degradation or unintentional naivety. Similarly, this effect can be achieved by inappropriate aggression or by the depiction of bodily functions and the circumstances which accompany death. The individual sensitivity of the addressee is also a decisive factor as far as the comic is concerned.[4] The emotional or actual participation of the recipient in the comic action considerably determines the comic effect, as does the difference between experience, norms and cultural conditions which underly the comic discrepancy on the one hand, and those of the recipient on the other. Sigmund Freud stresses the source of comic effect as "finding the familiar once more" in the "moment of actuality", without the need for a joke to be explained.[5]

In his detailed analysis of Shakespeare's comedies within the comic traditions, L. Salingar describes ***Twelfth Night*** as "a kind of summing up of his previous work" because it is a "comedy about comedy" and therefore has an exceptional place amongst the previous comedies like ***The Comedy of Errors***, ***The Taming of the Shrew***, ***Love's Labour's Lost***, ***Much Ado About Nothing*** or ***As You Like It***.[6] The metafictional plane contributes above all to this impression, evoked, as has been demonstrated, by the metaphoric and textual hints in the first act in particular. On the other side of the scale are the linguistic-rhetorical means which can be found throughout the entire drama. These contribute decisively to the comic effect, fitting together as constituents of the larger whole of the dramatic structure. Therefore we would like now to look at the question of the rhetorical tropes which Shakespeare took from the repertoire of Classical Rhetoric in order to intensify this comic effect.

Heinrich Lausberg defines the trope in his elements of literary rhetoric as a "change of the semantic marker of a word from its original meaning to a different meaning."[7] In this way, a difference develops between what is said and what is meant, and this can be used by the author for comic effect in many cases. When this difference crosses a certain boundary, comic discrepancy can result. The metaphoric, as well as the metonymic, use of language has become important for literary analysis through Roman Jakobson's essay "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances" (1956), because he sees in the basic "similarity" of the first and in the "contiguity" of the second an

essential requirement for the discursive analysis of literary texts.[8] The similarity of the meaning of words becomes a feature of alienation which has an effect on the recipient of the literary text.

J. Hillis Miller also sees in the metaphorical use of language, and therefore in the unreal meaning, the most important requirement for literariness in his acceptance of the "catachresis" as the basic rhetorical trope in literature.[9] In this way, only an analogous, but not a congruent, relationship exists between both levels of meaning of what is said and what is meant. Hillis Miller sees this essentially as the relationship between reality and the literary world, between the particular and the general as they are expressed in literature. This "as if"-relationship can also be used for comic effects.

In his analysis of metaphor in his book ***The Philosophy of Rhetoric***, I. A. Richards distinguishes between "the two ideas, that any metaphor, at its simplest, gives us." For what is meant, he suggests the term "tenor", which he defines as "the original idea", "what is really being said or thought of", "the underlying idea", "the principle subject", "the meaning", "the idea". For what is said, that is, the outward figures of speech, he chooses the term "vehicle", which he describes in contrast to the original idea as "the borrowed one", "what it is compared to", "the imagined nature", "what it resembles", "the metaphor", "the image".[10] The relationship between "these two members of a metaphor" is not bilateral, but only goes from the second to the first, that is, from the "vehicle" to the "tenor": "To use my proposed terms -we can describe or qualify the tenor by describing the vehicle." (Ibid., p. 99). The "tenor" has as its central idea the effort of analysis and interpretation, whereby the detour via the "vehicle" as the outward appearance is not easy. Both areas of the metaphor are bound to each other by a similar quality which makes them comparable. But is not this similarity, which Roman Jakobson described as constitutive for literary discourse, based not only on comparable, but also on incomparable qualities? I. A. Richards recognizes this disparity:

> Some similarity will commonly be the ostensive ground of the shift, but the peculiar modification of the tenor which the vehicle brings about is even more the work of their unlikenesses than of their likenesses.[11]

The distance between "tenor" and "vehicle" can vary in degree and is described by the discrepancy which is responsible, with the appropriate connotation, for the comic effect of a rhetorical means. With comic connotation, comic elements such as those named above (exaggeration, embarrassment, degradation, etc.) must be able to have their effect.

3. INDIVIDUAL FIGURES OF RHETORIC

Tragic and Comic Effect

What distinguishes comic and serious structures of language in Shakespeare's dramas? In both cases, the interpretation must depend on the original, basic idea, the "tenor".[12] The difference can be seen in two examples of word play. In ***Julius Caesar***, Mark Antony laments the murdered Caesar with the following metaphorical word play: "O world, thou wast the forest to this hart;/ And this indeed, O world, the heart of thee."[13]
In the homophony "hart-heart", two metaphorical statements about Caesar are combined: "hart" establishes in the figurative sense ("vehicle") similarities with a stag which lives by dexterity in the countryside and which can be hunted. In the real sense ("tenor"), this refers to Caesar, skilfull in the ways of the world, who was hunted and eventually killed in the real world. The basis for comparison (*tertium comparationis*) is Caesar's dexterity and his willingness to sacrifice himself for his concept of the state.

"Heart": as "vehicle", the life-giving centre of the body is meant. The reference of the "tenor", that is the object of comparison, is to Caesar the statesman, the influential leader of the community. The *tertium comparationis* here comprises the central, vitally important function which is brought to a halt by death.

Neither of the two metaphors show comic discrepancy: the connotations correspond to the picture which the recipient has made of Caesar, they underline his honourableness and demand sympathy. Nor is there any discrepancy between the first and the second metaphor, for "hart" and "heart" are on the same "vehicle" plane. Even the homophonous repetition, which certainly has comic potential, cannot assert itself against the tragic connotation of the metaphor.[14]

Sir Toby Belch's remarks about Sir Andrew Aguecheek in ***Twelfth Night*** have quite a different effect:

> Fabian: This is a dear manikin to you, Sir Toby.
> Sir Toby: I have been dear to him, lad, some two thousand strong, or so. (III, 2: 51-2).

With this polysemic play on words the two meanings of the word "dear" are so juxtaposed that the negative connotations follow the positive. The "tenor" can be determined as "regarded with personal feelings of high estimation and affection; held in deep and tender esteeem; beloved, loved" (OED I, 2). The image, however, aims at the "vehicle", "at a high price; at great cost" (adv., OED 1), through which the quality of the relationship between Sir Toby and Sir Andrew is shown clearly as a plane of comparison. The comic effect arises through the degradation of Sir Andrew as the gullible victim and through the surprise which is caused by Sir Toby's late "swerving" comment. The phonetic-lexical identity of "dear" moreover underlines the unexpected comic element. The semantic contrast in both sentences, which is also used for the comic effect of degradation, is greatly stressed by such common ground.

4. THE IMAGE

The poetic image is the description in words of what can be experienced through the senses, through appearance, noise, taste, smell or touch. The imagery becomes a supercategory since other rhetorical devices, such as comparison, metaphor, hyperbole, etc. contribute to it. An individual examination is, however, justifiable, since the means of comic effect can also be established by these rhetorical devices.[15] Sir Toby comments on the appearance of the hairstyle of his friend Sir Andrew with the following image: (Sir Andrew) "But it becomes me well enough, does it not?". (Sir Toby), Excellent. But it hangs like flax on a distaff; and I hope to see a housewife take thee between her legs, and spin it off." (I, 3: 98-101).

The comparison with flax and the image of spinning tells us something about the appearance of the hair ("tenor"). The common third aspect (*tertium comparationis*) is obviously the raw, yellow brittleness, and the connotation is

one of comic degradation. At the same time, the image of spinning gives rise to an obscene connotation which stands in contrast to Sir Andrew's intended statement. The positive, affirmative meaning of "excellent" is ironically turned around by the antithetical "But" and the clause which follows. An essential part of the comic effect of this character lies in his own misjudgement of himself, the "comedy derived from a figure's shortcomings".[16] The basic theme of the drama, the discrepancy between appearance and reality, is expressed here.

5. HYPERBOLE AND MEIOSIS

Hyperbole first intensifies the other rhetorical devices of the comic; but it also appears *sui generis*.[17] The clown Feste thanks Sebastian for his charity with the following words:

> By my troth, thou hast an open hand. These wise men that give fools money get themselves a good report -after fourteen years' purchase.
> (IV, 1:21-23).

Exaggeration constitutes itself as the discrepancy between what is said ("vehicle") and what is meant ("tenor"), resulting in implausibility or improbability. In this example, the statement about the reward of money is connoted by the debasement of the giver and by surprise. The merit of charity is emphasized as the *tertium comparationis*. The comedy of degradation lies in the fact that the giver must be disproportionately extravagant in order to be rewarded, with the result that he appears as the foolish one. Through the additional period of time, the expectation of the reward -that is, the norm- is in the end surprisingly disappointed.

The relationship "fool-wise man" is unexpectedly turned around, so that Feste appears superior. The term meiosis (understatement) describes a statement which is restricted by words like "little" or "rare". The comic effect comes from degradation by Fabian with the following words: "We shall have a rare letter from him" (III, 2: 54).

The real intention behind Fabian's statement ("tenor") is that the letter from the pen of the "foolish knight" Sir Andrew will be a particularly stupid

and gauche one. What is actually said ("vehicle") is that a letter is to be expected which is not frequent. In both cases (*tertium comparationis*) the letter from Sir Andrew to Cesario/Viola is referred to, thus the writer of that letter is degraded through ridicule. This announcement also has an important psychological function, as the recipient now awaits greater comic content in the letter, which will certainly be received with greater comic effect of whatever kind. Litotes, a special category of meiosis, achieves an intensification of expression through the negation of the opposite or through double negation. According to H. Lausberg, this is "a periphrastic irony of dissimilation, in which a superlative is circumscribed with the negation of the opposite." (H. Lausberg, p. 76 [My translation]). The clown Feste again gives a good example when he says to Malvolio:

> [...] Sir Toby will be sworn that I am no fox,
> but he will not pass his word for twopence
> that you are no fool.
> (I, 5: 77-9).

The subordinate clause contains on the "vehicle" level what appears to be a positive statement about Malvolio: "no fool". But on the "tenor" level, this statement is unexpectedly turned into its opposite: "Malvolio is a fool". This statement about Malvolio (*tertium comparationis*) has therefore through its connotations a degrading comic effect, which underlies the comedy of unexpectedly disappointed expectations. The restricting "but" and the negating "not" give rise to the expectation that the subordinate clause will contain an antithetical statement: "Feste is a fool, but Malvolio is not". This expectation is surprisingly, and therefore, comically, deceived by the statement: "Malvolio is a fool".

6. MALAPROPISM

Malapropisms should be mentioned as a particular type of pun, although, despite several good examples, it cannot be examined in any detail here. This is a type of verbal confusion based on the phonetic affinity of two words, often at an elevated linguistic level.[18] The comic effect rises from the

unintentional nature of the naivety. It connotes the discrepancy between what is said and what is meant. A much-quoted example is Sir Andrew's statement about Sebastian, whom he falsely believes to be Cesario/ Viola: "[...] We took him for a coward, but he's the very devil incardinate." (V, 1: 178-180).

The comic discrepancy extends between two opposing poles within the same metaphor: "incardinate", the supposed speech intention ("vehicle"), means "to institute to a cardinalship, raise to the rank of a cardinal" (OED v. b.), a positive statement. The real meaning ("tenor") seeks to express something evil: "incarnate", as an attribute to the devil, means "clothed or invested with flesh: in a human (or animal) bodily form of a person, soul, or spirit." (OED, a. 1). The moment of comparison (*tertium comparationis*) lies in the result of a process, with religion serving as the metaphor. The comic effect of this malapropism is doubtless based on the unintentional nature of the naive, which also belittles the ecclesiastical office of a cardinal in an improper manner. In addition to the connotations of the naive, we often find the obscene, as, for example, in the malapropisms of the nurse in ***Romeo and Juliet***, such as when she says to Romeo: "[...] I desire some confidence [= conference] with you." (II,: 126).

Malapropisms are frequently used in Shakespeare's dramas to characterise minor characters, such as Shipley in ***Much Ado About Nothing***, Mrs Quickly in ***Merry Wives of Windsor***, Bottom in ***A Midsummer-Night's Dream***, Costard in ***Love's Labour's Lost*** or Hostess Quickly in *Henry IV*, 2nd Part. Shakespeare's art of allusion is thus in many ways shown to its best advantage.

7. COMIC SEQUENCES

Comedy in a sequence of syntactic or semantic lexical units is a phenomenon of comic repetition and dashed expectations. The comic anticlimax consists of two or more syntactic or semantic units, the last of which follows a downward movement in contrast to the upward beginning of the sequence. The upward trend is the "vehicle", the downward is the "tenor", the discrepancy being intensified by the connotation of degradation.[19] Sir Toby, wounded in the fight by Sebastian, characterises his sense of community with his helpful companions thus:

> Sir Toby: Will you help me? An ass-head [= Feste], and a coxcomb [= Sir Toby], and a knave, a thinfaced knave, a gull? [= Sir Andrew].
> (V, 1: 204-5).

The comic effect is partly due to the debasing discrepancy between "knave" and "gull".

Such comic sequences also contain obscene connotations, as, for example, when Sir Toby clarifies the word "accost" for Sir Andrew through the means of synonyms: "Sir Toby: You mistake, knight. 'Accost' is front her, board her, woo her, assail her." (I, 3: 55-6).

As V. Schulz ascertains, new misunderstandings arise here which characterise Sir Andrew, whose riposte focuses on the obscene secondary meaning: (V. Schulz, ***op. cit.***, p. 47) "Sir Andrew: By my troth, I would not undertake her in this company." (I, 3:57).

The comic effect, which is based on the repetition of words or entire syntactic units, is emphasised by the dashed expectations of the recipient, which are always directed towards the new. At the end of the famous "box-tree scene"[20], in which Malvolio, the victim of Maria's intrigues, exposes his vanity and his misled ambition in his adoration of Olivia, the concealed eavesdroppers praise the ingenuity of the originator of the scheme:

> Fabian: I will not give my part of this sport for a pension of thousands to be paid from the Sophy.
> Sir Toby: I could marry this wench for this device. Sir Andrew: So could I too.
> Sir Toby: And ask no other dowry with her but such another jest.
> Sir Andrew: Nor I neither.
> (II, 5: 180-6).

Sir Andrew's echo of Sir Toby's praise of Maria is comic for another reason: between the "vehicle" and its nonsensical meaning lies a comic discrepancy, which is intensified more clearly the second time.[21]

8. PERIPHRASIS

In periphrasis, what is actually meant is replaced by a "compilation of statements which contain the substance and the characteristics of the original". (H. Lausberg, ***op. cit.***, p. 69 [my translation]). The comedy arises mainly through stylistic incongruity, as when, for example, a banality is expressed in a complicated manner. Malvolio's syntactically complex style, which makes use of lexical archaisms, unusual metaphors and unexpected euphemisms, stands in obvious contrast to what is meant ("tenor"). His "pompous manner of speaking, which is peppered with affected circumlocutions" is especially apparent when he tries to raise himself from the lower social ranks as a faithful *confidant* to his mistress, Olivia. (V. Schulz, ***op. cit.***, p. 51 [my translation]). He rebukes Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Feste for their boisterous singing with the strictness of a true Puritan:

> Malvolio: My masters, are you mad? Or what are you? Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty, but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? Do ye make an ale-house of my lady's house, that ye squeak out your coziers' catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice? Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?
> Sir Toby: We did keep time, sir, in our catches. Sneck up!
> Malvolio: Sir Toby, I must be round with you. My lady bade me tell you, that though she harbours you as her kinsman, she's nothing allied to your disorders. If you can separate yourself and your misdemeanours, you are welcome to the house: if not, and it would please you to take leave of her, she is very willing to bid you farewell.
> (II, 3: 87-101).

The threat of being thrown out ("tenor") is expressed in this periphrastic style ("vehicle"). A strong criticism of the behaviour of the boisterous gentlemen is intended but is reduced by the aggression of Malvolio's cultured phraseology. The stylistic mixture of contrived metaphors and synonyms with everyday elements and onomatopoetic verbs takes the audience

by surprise and leads to a comic effect. Any actual criticism of the behaviour of the singers thus takes second place.

9. PARODY

The comic effect of parody arises from the discrepancy between original and imitation, which is caused by "the incongruity of the assumed form and the substitute of the contents".[22] This incongruity degrades the subject of the original and thereby stresses the literary unity and the adequacy of content and form. The division of style and content provokes a comic reaction in the recipient. (S. Freud, ***op. cit.***, p. 187. 28).

The most obvious parody in ***Twelfth Night*** is found in Feste's intention to cure Malvolio of his errors. Here, he falls back upon Chaucer's chivalric parody ***Tale of Sir Thopas*** and, in the guise of a priest, ridicules the hero. He describes his own identity with the words: "Sir Topas the curate, who comes to visit Malvolio the lunatic" (IV, 2: 24).

A parody which hints at the various levels of action in the play is Malvolio's exaggerated sense of self-love, which refers to Orsino's Petrarchan love. Olivia aptly characterises the sickening effect of this love: "O, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distempered appetite" (I, 5: 89).

The exaggerated desire points like an echo to Orsino's words at the beginning of the play, which opens with a stylistic parody of courtly Petrarchan language as he laments his lovesickness (I, 1: 1-14).[23] Viola provides us with a further stylistic parody, proclaiming her suit to Olivia in a verbose language, rich in imagery, reminiscent of the euphemistic style of John Lyly, his linguistic lavishness, symmetry and elaborate contrasts (III, 1: 86ff). In this way, the parodic references suffuse the entire play.

10. IRONY

The classic constituent of irony is the opposition of what is meant ("tenor") and what is said ("vehicle"), which can take place on the level of both expression and content. S. Freud describes it thus: "Irony is nothing other than presentation of something by its opposite" (S. Freud, ***op. cit.***, p. 71 [my translation]).

The comedy of irony can be traced back to both this contrast and an implied negativity of the statement with the connotation of degradation. In order that the person who is the object of the irony is able to understand the ironic statement as such, he must be able to expect it, and ironic signals must convey this, although ironic signals are no necessary guarantee of understanding irony.

The clown Feste stands out particularly by his ironic arrogance, as, for example, when he turns Maria away with the vicious remark alluding to her future marriage with Sir Toby: "Well, go thy way; if Sir Toby would leave drinking, thou wert as witty a piece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria" (I, 5: 25-27).

Irony is used not only on the linguistic level, but also on the level of content, where it becomes a dramaturgic means of concealing or exposing the intention of the action. Similarly at the beginning of the fourth act, the clown greets Sebastian, whom he takes for Cesario, with the words "No, I do not know you, [...] Nothing that is so, is so" (IV, 1: 5-9).

Contrary to his intention, what he says is true. The degradation which he thus brings upon himself, because he knows less than the audience, intensifies the comic effect of his statement.

Irony on the level of content is most apparent in the figure of Malvolio. Both Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Malvolio are wooing Olivia. While this becomes a secondary *motif* as far as Sir Andrew is concerned, it becomes an elaborated basis of action in Malvolio's case, triggered off by Maria's letter, for he obviously seeks power: "To be Count Malvolio!" (II, 5: 35).

In the end, however, he is humiliated and isolated, as the scene in the dark closet shows (IV, 2), so that he finally breaks out into a helpless vow to take revenge on his opponents: "I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you!" (V, 1: 377).

The intrigue with the letter turns Malvolio's intentions into their opposite. The parodistic hyperbolic tendency of this figure prevents the audience from becoming emotionally involved, so that the connotation of debasement, provoked by dramatic irony, contributes decisively to the comic effect.

CONCLUSIONS

Further examples of linguistic comedy could, of course, be given here. It has, however, been clearly shown that they constitute a primary level on which Shakespeare achieves innumerable comic effects. These must doubtless be amplified through further structures which are given in the inner and outer plot as well as the characters and their motivations. Much comic potential lies in the parallel plots and their overlapping, the exaggerated characters, and the problematic relationship between appearance and reality, which this play shares with other comedies like ***The Comedy of Errors***, ***The Two Gentlemen of Verona***, and ***The Taming of the Shrew***. Through the use of rhetorical devices, Shakespeare uses all possible means of achieving comic effect through alienation, that is, deviation from the real meaning. Often comic licence in the dialogues of ***Twelfth Night*** is driven to the utmost limits of comprehensibility and understanding, in order to give expression to the fundamental *motif* of the play, the discrepancy of appearance and reality. Certain linguistic features are used to characterise figures -such as the potential for puns of Feste and Maria, the irony of Sir Toby towards Sir Andrew, or the very conspicuous affected hyperbolic style of Malvolio, all of which are excellent examples of Shakespeare's magnificent skill in using language.

NOTES

1.- W. Shakespeare, ***Twelfth Night***, or ***What You Will***, ed . by J. M. Lothian and T. W. Craik. The Arden Edition (London, Methuen, 1975), I, 3:70ff. All quotations are taken from this edition and will be given by reference to act, scene, line number.

2.- Stephen Greenblatt sees in this swerving between identities a basic structure of Shakespearean comedies in ***Shakespearean Negotiations. The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*** (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988, p. 68ff).

3.- F. Bacon. ***The Works***, ed. by J. Spedding, R. L. Ellis, D. D. Heath, 14 vols., London, 1858-1874 (Facsimile Reprint Stuttgart, 1963), vol. 3, p. 343. Cf. R. Ahrens, ***Die Essays von Francis Bacon. Literarische Form und Moralistische Aussage*** (Heidelberg: Winter, 1974), p. 42. K. Elam examines in detail the metadramatic character of ***Twelfth Night*** in ***Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse. Language-Games in the Comedies*** (Cambridge: UP, 1984), p. 20f.

4.- There is a vast amount of literature about this question of the comic, which cannot be listed in detail here. Cf. V. Schulz, ***Studien zum Komischen in Shakespeares Komodien***. Impulse der Forschung, 3 (Darmstadt: WB, 1971), pp. 9 ff. For the wider considerations, cf. H. Plessner, ***Lachen und Weinen***. 1941 (Bern: Francke, 31961); S. Freud, "Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewu ten" (1905), in A. Mitscherlich et al., eds. ***Freud-Studienausgabe***, vol. 4 (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1970), pp. 9-219; H. Bergson, "Le rire: Essai sur la signification du comique " (1900), in id., ***Oeuvres***, ed. A. Robinet (Paris: Presses universitaires, 1959), pp. 383485, p. 401: "Les attitudes, gestes et mouvements du corps humain sont risibles dans l'exacte mesure ou ce corps nous fait penser a une simple mécanique."; W. Preisendanz, ***Uber den Witz*** (Konstanz: Universitatsverlag, 1970); W. Preisendanz und R. Warning, eds. ***Das Komische***. Poetik und Hermeneutik, 7 (Munchen: Fink, 1976), there esp. R. Warning, "Elemente einer Pragmasemiotik der Komodie", pp. 279-333.

5.- S. Freud, ***op. cit.***, p. 116 f. Aristotle, who may have developed his lost theory of comedy in ***Tractatus Coislinianus*** as an antithesis to his theory of tragedy, defines the comic as something which does not cause pain and which, as opposed to the pathos of tragedy, has neither sorrowful nor pernicious consequences. Cf. R. Warning, ***op. cit.***, 285 und M. Fuhrmann. ***Einführung in die Antike Dichtungstheorie*** (Darmstadt: WB, 1973), p. 61.

6.- L. Salingar, ***Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy*** (Cambridge: UP, 1974), p. 173.

7.- [My translations.] Cf. H. Lausberg, ***Handbuch der Literarischen Rhetorik***, 2 vols. (Munchen: Hueber, 1960) und id., ***Elemente der Literarischen Rhetorik, 1963*** (Munchen: Hueber, 1984), p. 65; all further quotations from Lausberg are taken from this volume.

8.- Cf. R. Jakobson, "The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles", in D. Lodge, ed. ***Modern Criticism and Theory*** (London: Longman, 9988), pp. 57-61.

9.- J. H. Miller, ***The Ethics of Reading*** (New York: Columbia UP, 1987), p. 81.

10.- I. A. Richards, ***The Philosophy of Rhetoric***, 1936 (New York: OUP, 1950), p. 96.

11.- Ibid., p. 127. Cf. H. Lausberg, ***op. cit.***, p. 132: "The qualities which are common to similar things are called *tertium comparationis*. [...] Phenomena of similar things which do not belong to the *tertium comparationis* are dissimilar (*dissimile*): every similarity therefore also has dissimilarity of some variable degree." [My translation].

12.- I. A. Richards, ***op. cit.***, p. 100: "[...] the tenor is what alone really matters and is something that, 'regardless of the figures', might be gathered by the patient reader."

13.- W. Shakespeare, ***Julius Caesar***, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. T. S. Dorsch (London: Methuen, 1979), III, 1: 207-8.

14.- Cf. M. M. Mahood, ***Shakespeare 's Wordplay*** (London: Methuen, 1957), p. 9f: "When a pun is rhetorical in one of the mature plays, it is so because it is dramatically appropriate for the character to use rhetoric."

15.- Cf. C. Spurgeon, ***Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*** (Cambridge: UP, 1935), p. 5: "I use the term 'image' here as the only available word to cover every kind of simile, as well as every kind of what is really compressed simile -metaphor." In ***The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery*** (London: Methuen, 1951), p. 7. W. Clemen warns, however, of the danger of splitting up Shakespeare's world of imagery: "A separate treatment of comparison, simile,

personification, metaphor, and metonymy would only be illuminating if there were a definite and regularly recurring relationship between these formal types and the imagery."

16.- Cf. V. Schulz, ***op. cit.***, p. 194 [My translation]. K. H. Stierle, "Komik der Handlung, der Sprachhandlung, der Komodie", in Preisendanz und Warning, ***op. cit.***, pp. 237 268, p. 238 describes the same comic mechanism as "comic failure". The discrepancy between the norm of correct and false self-assessment is intended as diversion. Cf. Plessner, ***op. cit.***, 1961, p. 116 ff.

17.- Freud, ***op. cit.***, p. 61 mentions exaggeration as a means of wit. Cf. also H. Bergson, ***op. cit.***, p. 446. For H. Lausberg, ***op. cit.***, p. 76, hyperbole is characterized by "increasing amplification, with clearly intended alienation from credibility."

18.- The term is derived from the French loan-word *malapropos* meaning "inappropriate, inadequate" (OED). It found its way into the history of literature through the figure of Mrs. Malaprop in Richard Sheridan's ***The Rivals*** (1775), who defends her unusual manner of speaking with the following words (III, 3): "There, sir, an attack upon my language! What do you think of that? -an aspersion upon my parts of speech! Was ever such a brute! Sure if I reprehend anything in the world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs!" Cf. R. B. ***Sheridan, Plays***, ed. C. Price (London: OUP, 1975), p. 44.

19.- Cf. H. Lausberg, ***op. cit.***, p. 86: "In modern times, the term 'climax, gradation' is used in a wider sense, that is, not just for the (relatively rare) "climax which is new each time", but furthermore for every sequence of single words or groups of words which shows a clear intensification." [My translation].

20.- Cf. the analysis by J. Hasler, ***Shakespeare's Theatrical Notation: The Comedies*** (Bern: Francke, 1974), pp. 123-127.

21.- Cf. H. Bergson, ***op. cit.***, p. 421: "Dans une répétition comique des mots il y a généralement deux termes en présence, un sentiment comprimé qui se détend comme un ressort, et une idée qui s'amuse a comprimer de nouveau le sentiment." Freud also observed the comic effect of such nonsense (***op. cit.***, pp . 56 ff).

22.- R. Ahrens, ***Englische Parodien von Shakespeare bis T. S. Eliot***. UTB 179 (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1972), p. 19. S. Freud, ***op. cit.***, p. 187, discusses parody in connection with imitation, which results in a comic effect on the part of the recipient through contrast and mechanic automatism. He thus follows H. Bergson, who saw parody as an example of comic automatism when he writes: "Imiter quelqu'un, c'est dégager la part d'automatisme qu'il a laissée s'introduire dans sa personne." (***op. cit.***, p. 402). The present state of the discussion about literary parody is presented by A. Höfele, ***Parodie und Literarischer Wandel . Studien zur Funktion einer Schreibweise in der Englischen Literatur des Ausgehenden 19. Jahrhunderts.*** Anglistische Forschungen, 185 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1986), pp. 14-31.

23.- R. Nevo, ***Comic Transformations in Shakespeare*** (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 203 writes about Orsino: "He is conducting his amorous affairs in the style of woeful and love-lorn Petrarchanism which had been the target of the satirical mockery of Speed, Moth and Ganymede himself. He is Silvius in ***As You Like It*** writ large." Cf. also K. Muir, ***Shakespeare's Comic Sequence*** (Liverpool: UP, 1979), pp. 91-101, p. 97; H. Viebrock, "Shakespeares Komodien", in K. L. Klein, ed., ***Wege der Shakespeare-Forschung*** (Darmstadt: WB, 1971), pp. 400-416.