Glenys McMullen

THE FOOL AS ENTERTAINER AND SATIRIST, ON STAGE AND IN THE WORLD

As an entertainer, the fool has always been a prime target for laughter. But it is through the jester in man that the riddle of his nature is approached in the twentieth century; and possibly the fool may lead us to discover his true glory. Whether dancing in the *komos* of Attic comedy, leading the morris, jigging on the apron stage, conducting the singing at a children's pantomime, or just gazing vacantly into a television camera, the fool can always make his audience merry. They wait for his entrance so eagerly that sometimes they will burst out laughing before he has had time to do, say, or even look a joke. The laughter is often kindly, occasionally sympathetic, but usually tinged with derision; it goes with a delightful feeling of superiority which may well lie behind our love of the fool. Yet it is the experience of a complacent audience that suddenly its laughter turns back upon itself, forcing it to ponder for the moment just where the real fool is to be found.

The public have always liked to suppose some deeper significance to the fool, apart from his talent for making them laugh or look at themselves askance. He has been made to represent some of their basic assumptions about life. For instance, in the Middle Ages he symbolized the vanity of human pretension, whereas the lord he served represented divine perfection; it was a neat image of the antithesis within man's nature, as they conceived it, sublime and ridiculous together. The twentieth century, which refuses to see any tidy or unified order in life, has made the fool a symbol of meaninglessness, or else an enviable dropout from the pressures of a worried, over-involved and conformist society. Perhaps because of this, most modern fools have no voice; they make comments rather by what they are and through the crazy fun they have, turning the world's values on end. In fact, a cult of the crazy has swept the modern world off its feet, largely through the work of such artists as Charlie Chaplin, Harpo Marx, Jacques Tati, and Giulietta Massina, who make such magnificent global village idiots that they dominate the movies in which they have appeared. It

would not be surprising if some theatrical tycoon were to re-name *Twelfth Night* "Feste the Jester", as Charles II called it "Malvolio" for another age.

Modern scholars are taking man's absurdity very seriously. Following the "proper study of mankind" they choose to place emphasis upon the second element of Pope's definition of human nature: "The glory, jest and riddle of the world." By examining the jester in man it is possible to understand the riddle of his nature, which in turn reveals his glory. That is what Arthur Koestler, for example, sets out to do in his study, *The Act of Creation*:[1] the first section of his book is entitled "The Jester" and he begins by analyzing the intellectual, emotional, and physiological processes involved in the making of a joke. By the placing of a familiar object in a new light, where two incompatible frames of reference intersect, tension is set up in the audience and suddenly triggered off through laughter. This process, which he calls bisociation, is the basis of all creativity[2] and he draws a fascinating paradigm to demonstrate how awareness of the absurd shades into scientific discovery on one hand and into artistic presentation on the other. To the student of Shakespeare's fools, this offers an interesting explanation of the way in which these chameleon figures slip so easily from nonsense and fantasy into acute satirical commentary or exquisite songs.

Taking a different field of study altogether, Johan Huizinga has also found that the fool is basic to human nature; as he sees it, the earliest significant function of man is play.[3] From his anthropological studies of primitive festivity, he remarks how the spirit of play moves between the poles of wanton frivolity and religious ecstasy in such a way that it is sometimes difficult to tell them apart. The ridiculous and the sublime are closer together than we realize. As he develops his thesis, Huizinga demonstrates that play has many features in common with art: each creates a world of its own, an interlude in everyday life, where the participants are completely absorbed in obeying a fixed set of conventions; the experience is more satisfying than in real life, partly because the rules provide a rhythmic pattern of repetition and alternation which allows the players' tensions to gather and be released in a controlled and happy manner. As children lose themselves in games and the magic world of make-believe, so men lose themselves in equally artificial "worlds", in order to pursue noble professions in philosophy, religion, poetry, law, sport, or the making of civilization itself. It seems that the experience of artificial conventions from time to time is essential to human achievement and very far from being a frivolous waste of time. Finally, as he surveys human history, Huizinga calls the Renaissance the play period par excellence, which puts Shakes-

peare's fools right in their element; but he finds that the twentieth century fails too often to appreciate the true value of play and is even in danger of destroying it by imposing upon it such standards of daily life as commercial success and efficiency. Man may yet save the world if he can learn from the fool how to play.

A man who is doing his best to resurrect the fool, in his own way, is Joachim Foikis, the Vancouver Jester. When he attended a happening in his honour at York University in Toronto, the *Globe and Mail* published an article with many interesting comments on the fool's vocation in the modern world.[4] The humblest of all professions, it includes features of many of the noblest: those of preacher, poet, entertainer, and counsellor. He has been guide, philosopher, and friend to the aristocracy of past ages and now he must try to reach the democracies. Mr. Foikis actually graduated in theology and intended to become a minister, "but decided one Billy Graham was enough—so I became a fool." With a nod and a wink, some of Shakespeare's fools could say the same: at any rate, they demonstrated enough knowledge of theology and homilectics to parody the preacher, which is no more than many true servants of the Church achieve in earnest. Lavatch, the coarsest of them all, is always quoting the scriptures and consciously assumes the role of devil's advocate in his conversations with his mistress.[5] Touchstone cleverly burlesques the art of exhortation, as he hectors Corin on the damnation of his soul, ironically reversing the traditional values of the shepherd's vocation, either ecclesiastical-pastoral or rustical-pastoral, and ending by upholding the foppery of the court as the noblest of them all.[6] But Feste is the fool who actually dresses up as a parson, his Sir Topas displaying all the failings traditional in ecclesiastical satire, like the French *sottises*, where priest and fool were identified with each other: bumbling clericalism, blanketed by a pompous parade of false learning, and barricaded in turn with showy rhetoric: "Bonos dies, Sir Toby: for as the old hermit of Prague, that never saw pen and ink, very wittily said to a niece of King Gorboduc, 'That that is, is': so I, being Master Parson, am Master Parson; for what is 'that' but that? and 'is' but is?'[7] On the surface it is nonsense, but the mask of absurdity only just conceals a shrewd and caustic observation of human snobbery and egotism. Like all fools, Feste under cover of fun, brings down the mighty to his own level.

To show that he professes folly, a fool wears distinctive clothes which reveal his nature and serve his vocation in various ways. The parti-coloured suit with cap and bells was worn by medieval court jesters, and the long coat of flecked homespun, which Leslie Hotson argues was the "motley" of Shakes-

peare's fools, was worn by naturals or idiots.[8] Mr. Foikis wears a version of the better-known parti-coloured suit when he goes on duty, three days a week, in Vancouver's Courthouse Square. He admits frankly that "It took a lot of guts to appear publicly like this"; but, after all, exposure to ridicule is the point of being a fool. As well as being a badge of his own humiliation, motley offers several opportunities for the fool to humiliate others; by offering them his cockscomb or bauble, he makes a graphic comment upon their folly. Besides humble associations, Hotson remarks a number of honourable ones for the motley wear, which once again suggests the fool's closeness to the nobler professions. The long coat could suggest the priest's cassock, the soldier's gaberdine, the woman's petticoat, or the clothes worn by small children. All these were signs of a privileged member of society, one who goes under a great lord's protection.

The most ancient parts of the fool's dress are his cap and bauble, which parody the king's crown and sceptre. The bauble belongs to the fool in the *komos* of Attic comedy and was much flourished in the morris of the later Middle Ages; as a phallic symbol, it inspires either superstitious awe or puritanical revulsion, being one of the ways in which the fool, so to speak, separates the men from the boys. The cock's comb, a tuft of hair on a shaven head or a crest surmounting the fool's cap, goes back like the animal figures in the comedies of Aristophanes, to primitive rites. From the beginning, three elements are associated in the fool's nature: fertility, satire, and making merry; the rest of this paper will be concerned with examining some of the ways in which Shakespeare's fools combine satire and merry-making, so that they occupy a special place in both comedy and tragedy.

Because they occupy the lowest position in the social scale, and because they are self-judged, fools make excellent satirists. Their licence allows them to tell truth to the great, but since after all they are only fools, they usually manage to do this without offence. All Shakespeare's fools correspond to the Erasmian sage-fools in their satirical function: "what word coming out of a wise man's mouth were an hanging matter, the same yet spoken by a fool shall much delight even him that is touched therewith."[9] The way in which the fool's satirical comments are received is the measure of their victim's characters. Feste's sharp tongue is called a bird-bolt by Olivia, as she defends her fool to Malvolio, who most certainly is not amused by the fool's taunts. Her gracious indulgence of the fool contrasts with Orsino's lordly ignoring of the fool's bolts; he does not even hear Feste's plain criticism, so lost in his dream

is he. Viola is realistic and prevents the fool from "passing upon" her by paying him off; in any case, she has nothing to learn from him since she too is self-humiliated.[10]

Touchstone is constantly "flouting", as he says, and all the leading figures of society, both at court and in Arden, suffer him gladly. They show that they may grow by what they learn from him and they can give back as good as they get; Rosalind, Orlando, and Corin in particular enjoy parrying the thrusts of his sharp tongue, while Duke Senior and Jaques commend his skill, the Duke remaining egotistically unaware of any personal implications. At the other end of the social scale, Touchstone's satire scourges the fools Sir Oliver and William, but passes over Audrey's head; she gazes in admiration and marvels at his great powers of speech, with an innocent stupidity which makes the satirist throw down his arms.[11]

Lavatch in *All's Well* has a more "foul and calumnious" tongue than Feste and Touchstone combined, but once again the truly noble characters enjoy his satire and rebuke him if he grows tiresome. Only Parolles cannot take it: being all words, as his name implies, he is quite blown down by the clown's rude breath and has to cry quits.[12]

The tongue being his only weapon, the fool always runs off from actual violence, decrying it over his shoulder. When Sir Toby draws his sword to attack the supposed Cesario, Feste slips away to fetch Olivia. Touchstone makes clear his views on violence when he speaks to le Beau about his lurid account of the wrestling at court: "It is the first time that ever I heard breaking of ribs was sport for ladies." Lear's poor fool runs off from Goneril's wrath, taunting her over his shoulder with his version of a fool's satire, couched in pitifully inept doggerel.

While they tell the truth about individual and social evils, the fools' satire is often pleasing because it is expressed with so much wit, or with an amusing display of innocence. Snatches of song, doggerel from the morality plays, old ballads, strategic innuendo, parody, impersonation, and ironic asides are devices frequently employed by Shakespeare's fools. Only the ignoble need to fear him. As Enid Welsford points out, the truly aristocratic characters delight in him and survive his satire while shallow fops and conceited hollow men can do neither.[13] Those who are too stupid to understand the fool's satire are forgiven and accepted at the end of the comedies. That is why Touchstone marries Audrey; of all the women in Arden he chooses her for the very reason that she is a foul and silly slut. Apart from the satisfaction of his bodily desires, all he can hope for from her is a perpetual whetstone for his wit; the

first conversation between them sounds like many modern comic acts, where wit and stooge are married partners. Perhaps it is because a fool himself alternates between being a wit and the butt for others' ridicule that he has a basic sympathy for folly which makes him gentler than other satirists.

It was mainly from Roman comedy that Elizabethan fools inherited the standard objects for satirical comment: the arrogance of princes, the wantonness of women, ecclesiastical greed and hypocrisy, and any form of social affectation. As E. K. Chambers has pointed out, they followed the humanistic bias by setting up ethical rather than aesthetic standards.[14] But while pleasure and profit go together when Shakespeare's fools are being satirical, it seems doubtful that they really aspired, as Jaques did, to cure the ills of all the world. They were not social workers at heart; on the contrary, they seemed to delight in the gulls, fops, dupes, cowards, lechers, and upstarts who surrounded them. The genial, holiday spirit of acceptance is theirs; at the worst, they shrug their shoulders cynically as they invite their audience, on stage and in the auditorium, to join in the merrymaking.

As an entertainer, the fool must strike a balance, or seesaw motion, between folly and wisdom. At one moment the fool amuses by his witless remarks and zany falling about; the next, he must provide apt replies to any question put to him by the casual onlooker; furthermore, he is expected to have special talents, for singing or juggling or tumbling. Shakespeare had two brilliant men to play his fools, one famous for his jigging and the other for his music. He gave them ample opportunity to display their particular skills but in addition he made both of them resemble the Athenian sophist. These men walked in the public squares to engage in contests of wit with any challenger, which is exactly what Touchstone does in Arden, Feste in Illyria, or Lavatch in Rossillion and the French court. And as they wander about waiting to be encountered, they resemble in turn Mr. Foikis in Vancouver Courthouse Square.

The capacity of fools to be both wit and stooge is clearly demonstrated at Touchstone's first appearance. Celia and Rosalind are debating in set terms upon the rivalry between Nature and Fortune when he meets them; at once they use him to continue their debate by exercising their wit at his expense. Wisely he refuses to rise to their baiting, even when Celia puns on his name, but in turn he sets up his own comic butt, in the form of the knight who swore away his honour. It appears that he has a satirical comment to make behind the mask of fooling, concerning the court of Duke Frederick; at one point he

goes too far and draws a rebuke from Celia, who is honest enough to admit that she agrees with him: "By my troth, thou sayest true, for since the little wit that fools have was silenced, the little foolery that wise men have makes a great show."[15] It is a beautifully balanced observation on the connexions between fools and wise men. Usually, wise men conceal their own folly by encouraging the fool to show off.

As a topsy-turvy scholar, the fool gained many successes as an entertainer. In an age where everyone was thoroughly schooled in logic, he would often be applauded for turning an argument inside out. Feste gives a clever performance in this kind to win back Olivia's favour when he appears first in the play. He begins with a mock syllogism, in which he reduces a moral quality to the absurd level of the concrete: "any thing that's mended is but patched: virtue that transgresses is but patched with sin, and sin that amends is but patched with virtue . . ." and he follows it with his famous catechism of the lady, by which, in a logical trap, he proves her a fool through her own answers. Such crazy logic, associated as it often is with obsessive images, brings the fools close to the madmen of the tragedies. Both express tangential thoughts in staccato phrases, flashing truth through the sudden juxtaposition of ideas. It is exciting for an audience, and produces a restless feeling, even an uneasy sense that the table of sanity is turning. Versatility remains the major characteristic of Shakespeare's fools as entertainers.

Feste is the least coarse of all the fools, having no trace of the bucolic or bawdy about his language; he personifies the values of an older, more elegant and courtly world, especially when he is with the Duke, Cesario, and his mistress Olivia. Yet he can suit himself to other company, when he happens to fall in with Sir Toby and Sir Andrew; he sings them a love song, by request, joins in a rollicking version of the latest catch and improvises lines to egg on Sir Toby in his confrontation with Malvolio. No intriguer, he takes no part in setting the trap for his old enemy, but once the steward is in prison, Feste joins in the fun of teasing him, taking subtle pleasure in suiting his styles of speech to the characters he impersonates, all the while making an ironic commentary on Malvolio's moral plight; the fool's doggerel from the morality play makes an excellent foil for Sir Topas's puritan rhetoric-of-the-devil.

The songs of Feste have a magical quality which belongs in the comedy of high romance and which the other fools do not emulate. As he says to Orsino, he takes pleasure in singing, but even when he is performing his most plangent songs we do well to look for irony. His final song is a strange one,

being as Bradley says "at once cheerful and rueful, stoical and humorous",[16] like Feste himself. Throughout life, the wind and rain beat upon him, but just the same he goes on striving to entertain. Singing in the rain is one of the most important duties of the fool, whether in romantic comedy, high tragedy, or theatre of the absurd.

Part of the fool's ability to entertain depended upon his intimate knowledge of the household and the mood of those he was called upon to amuse. It is Viola who points this out, recognizing the delicate judgment he must show, in order to be all things to all men:

> He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
> The quality of persons, and the time;
> And like the haggard, check at every feather
> That comes before his eye. . . .

The fool's position in the household was a most peculiar one. In the plays in which they appear, all the fools are licensed by the fathers, and in each one it is pointed out that the father took much delight in the fool, which adds an antique sanction to his antic nature. Duke Frederick, we are told, used to laugh at the "roynish" Touchstone; and Curio says of Feste that he was "a fool the Lady Olivia's father took much delight in"; while the Countess explains Lavatch's position: "My Lord that's gone made himself much sport out of him; by his authority he remains here, which he thinks is a patent for his sauciness." In fact they are all like Will Sommers, the famous fool in whom Queen Elizabeth's father took much delight, and who was still celebrated towards the end of Elizabeth's reign by writers like Thomas Nashe and Samuel Rowley.

Royally protected and often beloved, the fool in a great household was something between a child and a favourite dog, indulged until he became wearisome and then bundled off, sometimes for a whipping. Like children, fools live to play; they show a flattering dependence upon adults, although they may be saucy towards them; and they are capable of making wise remarks ingenuously, which delights the adults and is often received by them as a message from the oracle. Adults enjoy participating in the games of children, or fools, in order to escape from their own world; this may be a total escape into fantasy or a partial escape through recreating it from the child's point of view. In this latter form, play involves satire in the mimicking of adult activities or the reversal of adult values, which can be a refreshing experience, provided that the adult is capable of being completely absorbed. Once the

world of play has been fully entered, however, the adult world fades far away and the mysterious world of spontaneous make-believe fills the scene. Both children and fools love to create a land of their own, filled with people with strange-sounding names, around which they march in fantastic garb, singing, shouting and dancing, or strumming any musical instrument that lies handy. It is familiar territory to poets and such humorists as Thackeray, Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, and James Thurber. It is most familiar to Shakespeare's fools, who seem to dwell much of the time in a land apart. Whether we call it escapism, wish-fulfilment or the release of tensions and anxieties, such behaviour is organically related to festivity and therefore of the essence of comedy; perhaps this is why the fool leads the way into the true enjoyment of both of these.

Like children and dogs, however much they are petted, the fool may fall into sudden disgrace. It has been noticed already how Celia rebukes Touchstone shortly after his first appearance on stage; both Feste and Lavatch make their first entrance in disgrace, the former for "truancy" and the latter for "complaints". All of them endure a scolding, as part of their introduction to the audience, and then bounce back with a cheeky, knavish charm, using their wits to win favour. It is as if Shakespeare desired to stress the fool's duty toward his mistress, which seems to have resembled his own toward the Queen, by making her discipline him and remind him of his duty to entertain her. Also, of course, it is a wonderful excuse to make the fool perform his best tricks. After all, it is the fool's work to make others play, and if he falls off in this vocation he must be brought back to it sharply.

Though they were employed by the fathers, Shakespeare's fools are more attached to the children of the family, whom they have known since infancy. Hamlet recalls the fun he used to have with Yorick, laughing at unsuitable jokes about women and death, kissing and riding on his back; in the graveyard scene he asks the fool's skull: "Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar?" It evokes the powers of Yorick to entertain in a variety of ways, suggesting the acrobatic, witty, and musical talents that all the fools combine, and Hamlet proved an apt pupil when his turn came to "put an antic disposition on". In Lear's household, the fool attached himself naturally to Cordelia, so that he pined away when she went to France. There are a few hints in the comedies that the fools and the heroines are very close, through a familiarity reaching back to childhood. Feste's names for Olivia sound like the pet names one gives a little girl: "Madonna" or "good my mouse of virtue".

And she treats him with a special intimacy; her reprimand to him for his teasing of Malvolio is a very gentle one: "Now you see, sir, how your fooling grows old and people dislike it." Touchstone's devotion to Celia is so great that she has complete confidence that he will accompany her to Arden, blithely saying:"He'll go along o'er the wide world with me." Loyalty to the romantic heroine is a special task of the fool in the comedies. He cannot defend her against violence but he can at least comfort her and attend her in her wanderings. His comments remind us of her virtue and suggest that she will overcome, in her resistance to the forces of tyranny and delusion.

To summarize what has been said so far about the fool's vocation: as satirist the fool forces society to make a critical re-appraisal of itself, but as entertainer he relieves the tension accompanying this uncomfortable experience through laughter. By his nature, he is an object of ridicule, yet he is a shrewd observer of human follies. A realist, with his eye always on the passage of time and the signs of mortality, he is a sympathetic companion to the romantic heroine, who redeems mortality. To some extent he is involved in the scene he observes from the satirist's standpoint; for instance, Lear's fool comments all the time on his master's errors of judgment, yet it is he who accompanies Lear through their consequences and on to the heath. He is the suffering side of Lear, out in the storm, complaining of the cold and the rain, while his master majestically commands them or ignores them altogether. Perhaps he may be compared to the Greek Chorus, in that he is a helpless, sympathetic observer of the protagonists, seeing their errors and watching the approach of fate but unable to help them; for all his inactivity, his fate is bound up with theirs.

All the romantic comedies react against ugly and sterile reality, the everyday world that people complain about, and the fool makes the perfect guide from the world of everyday to the magic circle, within which lies the land of romance. He too resists ugliness and sterility, yet he remains realistic; Touchstone is the only one who takes a watch with him to Arden, while Feste reminds the young that "Youth's a stuff will not endure". Both breathe reminders of winter into the sunny world of lovers, without actually freezing their rapture. Touchstone belongs in Arden, because only he can prove its gold against his stony roughness. It is in his conversations with Corin that the pastoral landscape becomes real to us, with all his talk of rams and bellwethers and butterwomen going to market. Besides making the golden world real and providing an earthy romantic element, Touchstone contributes a philosophy

of his own to the play. It is a tolerant one, appreciating that human nature will always be "mortal in folly", even in love, and that human institutions, however solemnly celebrated, are but temporary affairs; one must be ready to compromise rather than adopt a rigid attitude. Just before Hymen appears, at the climax of Act V, he is saying to Duke Senior: "Your If is the only peacemaker. Much virtue in If. . . ." And it is Hymen who points out that he and Audrey belong with each other, "As the winter to foul weather". Indeed he is the rude breath of winter, the not altogether unkind wind, celebrated in Amiens' song early in the play.

In *Twelfth Night* the romantic escape is from a barren world of vapid voluptuousness and morbid self-deceiving sentiment to a saturnalia. Feste comments shrewdly on the sentimentality and does not hesitate to join in the revelry, adding his voice to those of the rollicking knights. He does his best to cheer his mourning mistress and to pander to the melancholy of Orsino, realizing they need to be brought back to life. As C. L. Barber remarks, "His part does not darken the bright colours of the play; but it gives them a dark outline, suggesting that the whole bright revel emerges from shadow".[17] If the romantic world is to be more than merely escapist it has to cure the diseases of the real world, educating those who enter it for their inevitable return, and this is Feste's function. At the end of the play he supervises the audience's return to reality as well, striking his own philosophical note and ending with his desire to please.

All's Well That Ends Well, on the other hand, is not an escapist romance; it explores the ugly and barren world itself. The court of Rossillion, as Mark van Doren says,[18] is full of "darkness, old age, disease, sadness and death", while the old king of France suffers with a fistula and his troops fighting in Italy are decimated as much by syphilis as by battle injuries. In a play which explores the fallen nature of man, the fool must become a parody of Jeremiah, decrying the sins of the world as a form of entertainment. To the countess's accusation that he is "a foul-mouth'd and caluminous knave", Lavatch replies "A prophet I, madam, and I speak the truth the next way".

When we turn to tragedy, the ambivalence of the fool is nowhere more poignant than in *King Lear*, where his twittering truisms are disregarded until it is too late. Lear is mad when he comes to appreciate his fool's wisdom. But the paradox about folly and wisdom comes close in this play to Christian teaching about humility and blessedness, as Saint Paul told the Corinthians: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth

to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. . . ." When we consider Shakespeare's fools in this light, it is clear that they possess many of the Christian-Stoic virtues, such as loyalty, truth-telling, humility, love and fortitude under persecution, which makes them worthy of the tragic state. It has often been said that Lear's fool is very like Cordelia; both tell truth to the king, suffer humiliation and exile for doing so, follow him into the wilderness, the one as his companion and the other to effect his cure. In all these actions, they not only follow Saint Paul but resemble Christ.

But folly pervades the entire play. All the virtuous characters in turn play the fool in *King Lear,* in that they are mocked at by the worldly and assume the burden of ridicule and humiliation. Kent is laughed at in the stocks, Edgar is mocked as Poor Tom, and Albany is scorned by his wife, who underestimates his power of understanding what is going on, when she tells Edmund, "My fool usurps my body". The apotheosis of the fool occurs at Dover, where Gloucester attempts suicide, lovingly fooled by Edgar, and Lear himself becomes "the natural fool of Fortune" on "this great stage of fools", as he talks to Gloucester.[19] The fool and the blind man meet with Death in tragedy.

It is possible to find some of the noblest professions contributing part of their nature to the humble vocation of fool: doctor, teacher, poet, preacher, guru, philosopher, martyr, counsellor, and friend. How horrified Stephen Gosson would be to hear how twentieth-century people dignify those whom he labelled "the caterpillars of the commonwealth"[20] to the status of his own vocation of evangelist. But this is what the fool must be to the modern world: in his own unassuming way, he must combine the best of all vocations, their curative, recreative, and regenerative principles. The central point of his nature is the meeting-place for truth, nonsense, humour, fantasy, play, poetry, and religion. No wonder that in the medieval folk plays he triumphed over Death.

Mr. Foikis is well aware of all this, of course. In the *Globe and Mail* article already referred to he says that he became a fool after what he calls "a mystic experience" in which it was revealed to him that his role in life was to walk the stage of the world as the fool of joy, reviving in others the ability to laugh in the face of death. But rather than with Mr. Foikis, we should end with a comparison that Bradley made between the fool and Shakespeare himself,

. . . who, looking down from an immeasurable height on the mind of the public and the noble had yet to be their servant and jester, and to depend upon their favour, not wholly uncorrupted by this dependence, but yet superior to it, and also determined, like Feste, to lay by the sixpences it brought him, until at last he could say the words, "Our revels now are ended", and could break—was it a magician's staff or a Fool's bauble?[21]

NOTES

1. Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (London: Hutchinson, 1964).
2. Compare Wordsworth, "the perception of similitude in dissimilitude . . . is the great spring of the activity of our minds. . . ." (Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads*).
3. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).
4. *Globe and Mail*, Saturday, March 2, 1968, p. 22. "The motley career of an official town fool", by Paul King.
5. *All's Well That Ends Well*, I, iii, and IV, v.
6. *As You Like It*, III, ii.
7. *Twelfth Night*, IV, ii, 13-17.
8. Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare's Motley* (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1952).
9. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly*, translated by Sir Thomas Chaloner, 1549.
10. *Twelfth Night*, I, v, 94; II, iv, 73-78; III, i, 42.
11. *As You Like It*, V, iv, 63, 106-107.
12. *All's Well*, II, iv, 36-38; V, ii, 19-27.
13. Enid Welsford, *The Fool, his Social and Literary History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935), p. 254.
14. E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. I, p. 238.
15. *As You Like It*, I, ii, 43-54, 85-87.
16. A. C. Bradley, *A Miscellany* (London: Macmillan, 1929).
17. C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1963), p. 259.
18. Quoted by G. K. Hunter in the Introduction to the New Arden Edition, xxxvi n.
19. *King Lear*, IV, vi. See the article by Carolyn S. French, "Shakespeare's Folly: *King Lear*", in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. X, 1959, 523-529.
20. Stephen Gosson, *The School of Abuse*, 1579.
21. Bradley, *op. cit.*, p. 217.