

Jesters or Truth-tellers

- a Study in Three Shakespearean Wise Fools:
Touchstone from *As You Like It*, Feste from
Twelfth Night, and *King Lear*'s Unnamed Fool.

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Shakespearen viisaat narrit ovat ainutlaatuisia hahmoja kirjallisuuden historiassa.

Narrien rooli on tärkeä koko näytelmän tulkitsemiselle.

Shakespearen näytelmät ovat täynnä hahmoja, jotka jossakin vaiheessa toimivat narrin roolissa, joko keventäen tunnelmaa tai lausuen viisaita huomautuksia. Viisaisiin narreihin voidaan kuitenkin lukea vain neljä: Touchstone, Feste, kuningas Learin narri ja Lavatche näytelmästä *Loppu hyvin, kaikki hyvin*. Nämä neljä ovat narreja ammatiltaan, eikä heidän viisauttaan voi kiistää. Shakespearen näytelmissä esiintyy myös muita viisaalta narrilta vaikuttavia hahmoja, kuten Apemantus *Timon Ateenalaisessa*, mutta nämä eivät, kuten sanottu, ole narreja ammatiltaan. Pro Gradu -työssäni analysoin näistä kolmea, kaikkein selvimmin viisasta narria, Touchstonea *Kuten Haluatte* -näytelmästä, Festeä *Loppiaisaatosta* ja Kuningas Learin narria.

Narrin hahmo perustuu jo antiikin ajalta periytyvään karnevaalin ja hovinarrien perinteeseen. Viisaat narrit käyttävät perinnettä hyväkseen piloissaan. Esimerkiksi *Loppiaisaaton* Feste protestoi, ettei hänen mielensä ole yhtä kirjava sekoitus kuin narrinkaapu, tarkoittaen ettei hän ole älyllisesti kehitysvammainen. Kuningas Learin narri taas tarjoaa narrinhiippaansa Kentille, vihjaten että tämä on hölmö tullessaan takaisin, ja että tämä tulee vielä tarvitsemaan narrin koskemattomuutta. Narrit matkivat näytelmän muita henkilöitä heijastaen heidän virheitään. Narrit käyttävät myös latinaa ja antiikin myyttejä piloissaan, sekä laulavat näytelmän tilannetta ja henkilöitä kuvastavia lauluja.

Narrit eivät tahdo horjuttaa vallitsevaa järjestystä, vaikka narrin vapaus ilmaista mielipiteensä ja pilailta toisten kustannuksella siihen mahdollisuuden antaisikin, vaan pitävät ennemminkin kiinni vanhasta. Narrien puheissa esiintyy kuitenkin karnevalismiin kuuluvia groteskeja piirteitä, kuten viittauksia ruumiin tarpeisiin ja herjaamista. Nämä ovat kuitenkin verrattain hienovaraisia. Narrit ovat aina enemmän tai vähemmän ulkopuolisia. Heidän roolinsa ei ole aktiivinen: he eivät osallistu näytelmän juonen eteenpäin viemiseen.

Shakespearen viisaiden narrien tärkein tehtävä on näytelmän sävyyn vaikuttaminen. Touchstone vaikuttaa jopa näytelmän tyyllilajiin, tehden pilaa *Kuten Haluatte* -näytelmän pastoraalisesta idyllistä. Feste tuo *Loppiaisaattoon* tummia sävyjä ja filosofista pohdiskelua. Learin narri osoittaa kuninkaan erehdyksen traagisuuden.

Viisaat narrit tuovat näytelmiin perspektiiviä. Heidän tulkintansa näytelmän juonenkäänteistä ja roolihahmojen luonteenpiirteistä eroaa näytelmän muiden roolihahmojen tulkinnasta. Narrit toimivat usein ikäänkuin kertojina. Vaikka heidän kommenttinsa onkin osoitettu muille roolihahmoille, eivät nämä useinkaan tunnu ymmärtävän, että kommentit kuvaavat heitä. Yleisö taas saa narrin kommentteista lisätietoa näytelmän juonen kehityksestä ja henkilöihahmojen luonteesta ja sisimmästä. Näin yleisön ymmärrys ja kuva näytelmästä syvenee.

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1 Introduction

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool;
 And to do that well craves a kind of wit:
 He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
 The quality of persons, and the time;
 Not, like the haggard, check at every feather
 That comes before his eye. This is a practise
 As full of labour as a wise man's art:
 For folly, that he wisely shows, is fit;
 But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit.¹

The Shakespearean wise fool is unique in literary history. He is a very interesting character who seems to be wiser and to know more about the world than the other characters in the play. He points out the follies of the other characters, and is an important key to understanding the play, especially in relation to the world outside it. The magical world of bliss cannot last forever: the characters of *As You Like It* have to leave the forest of Arden and return to court, the carnivalistic feast of *Twelfth Night* is bound to end, and the greatness of *King Lear* is to shatter, which the fool sees beforehand. The character of the fool truly gives depth to the play. Even those lines of the fool that at first seem mere jests or to be irrelevant make perfect sense after a close reading.

Unfortunately, many readers have not seen the full importance of the wise fool and his role has been abridged in productions throughout the centuries.² It is only in comparatively recent productions that the fool has regained his importance. We, however, are not always familiar with the traditional role of fools, which may lead to

¹ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*. Viola in act III, scene I, lines 62-70. Subsequent references to plays will be embedded in the text. All references to plays are to: *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Second Edition, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005).

² Karen Greif, "A Star is Born: Feste on the Modern Stage" Originally published in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988) 61-78. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46. (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1999, pp. 310-324.) 310f. Greif refers to Bell's Shakespeare, an acting edition of *Twelfth Night* published in London in 1773, and to the influential John Philip Kemble acting edition published in 1810, as versions that cut many of the fool's lines and songs.

Glena D. Wood, "The Tragi-Comic Dimensions of Lear's Fool" Originally published in *Costerus: Essays in English and American Literature* 5 (1972) 197-226. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, pp. 191-205. 191. Wood refers to Nahum Tate's version of *King Lear* that prevailed on stage between 1681-1838 as omitting the role of the fool altogether.

misunderstandings.

Research on fools has been done, and there are a few good, although relatively old, books, and many interesting articles. However, information is scattered in various sources and we still lack a work of literary criticism that would give us a complete picture of the Shakespearean wise fool, concentrating on the similarities between the wise fools and their function in the play, as well as their importance for the interpretation of the play. The wise fool has not been researched as much as many other Shakespearean characters and topics. His role is, however, important to understanding the whole play in those plays such a figure appears.

Most of the books on fools concentrate on the tradition. These divide into two types: books that concentrate on describing actual fools and the tradition of festival and house fools, and books that concentrate on Shakespeare and the stage fool. However, most of the studies on Shakespearean wise fools that I have come across tend to read the characters through the original actor of the role, Robert Armin. Welsford and Willeford³ concentrate on the tradition of actual fools, as does Korhonen in her historical account. Weimann and Vickers do not concentrate on fools. Hotson concentrates on the fool's apparel, though he does give a possible explanation for some of the fool's more obscure lines. Warde's book gives the view of an actor. The essays published in *Shakespearean Criticism 46* give insights into certain aspects of the plays and the roles of the fool, but do not construct a whole picture of the wise fool. Goldsmith's *Wise Fools in Shakespeare* comes closest to what I am looking for. Bakhtin's writings on the popular culture fit the theme, but he has not analysed Shakespeare. None of my sources penetrate deep into the role of the wise fools in their respective plays or analyse their importance to the tone and meaning of the play. Most of my sources do acknowledge the wise fool's importance for the meaning of the play, but none proceed to analyse this in depth.

Of the plays of Shakespeare, I have used the Oxford University Press edition

³ I shall refer to all of the works I present here later in my thesis, which is where I give the bibliographic details to them.

with Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor as general editors. However, as this includes two versions of *King Lear*, one based on the folio and one on the quarto, I have decided to include both. Generally, I shall refer to the folio version, but I shall mention things found in the quarto, but not the folio, when these are relevant.

To support my interpretation of the wise fools, I shall also briefly analyse a few filmatized versions of *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*. Unfortunately I was unable to get hold of a filmatization of *As You Like It*.⁴ Thus I will not be able to say anything on how Touchstone is portrayed on stage, which is a shame, for I think it would have enriched my thesis. However, as the analysis of filmatized versions does not constitute a major part of my thesis, but is merely of secondary interest, I have not felt it necessary to go to great lengths to acquire a version of it. With the filmatized versions of *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear* I shall proceed so that after each relevant section of my thesis I shall have a look at how different productions have dealt with the issue at hand. My main sources in this will be the BBC versions of both plays, as well as the Trevor Nunn version of *Twelfth Night* and the Laurence Olivier version of *King Lear*. I have also seen two other versions of *Twelfth Night*, the Kenneth Branagh one with Anton Lesser as the fool, and a W.H.Smith version with Tommy Steele as Feste. However, these do not bring that much more to the interpretation of the fool, and thus I have decided not to consider them at length in my thesis. Tommy Steele interprets Feste as a merry fool, ignoring altogether the more philosophical, melancholy side. Watching his version of Feste I kept wondering whether the actor had even read the text he was performing - he certainly had not understood it. Even his costume, with its red and white striped tight hose was wrong, though this is the fault of the director or costume designer. The Kenneth Branagh version presents the fool as a drunkard, with fuzzy hair, an earring and clothing that best resembles how homeless people are portrayed in modern movies. Though this comes closer to what I see Feste as like, but there is still much wrong in the character. Though Feste may be prone to depression

⁴ There is one at the Helsinki city library at Rikhard street, but it was missing and could not be found.

and drinking, this is by no means the most prominent feature in his character - it is not even said in the play that he drinks, though it is tempting to interpret his absence at the beginning of the play thus.

In this thesis I therefore intend to analyse the character and role of the Shakespearean wise fool. I wish to reveal ambiguities and possible meanings, and try to interpret the fool. Through this I aspire to an understanding of the wise fool and his importance to the interpretation of the whole play. I shall concentrate on three fools, Touchstone from *As You Like It*, Feste from *Twelfth Night*, and *King Lear*'s unnamed fool. As the focus of this thesis is going to be on the primary source, the Shakespearean fools, I shall incorporate theory into analysis as the work proceeds. My main methodological approach will be Carnivalism, a concept within literary theory that sprang from the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, but I shall also touch on new historicism.

Defining which Shakespearean characters are fools is not easy, for there is no clear-cut line. Even such characters as Falstaff from *Henry IV* and Hamlet have been considered as fools by some critics.⁵ However, their status in the play is not that of fools, and they can only be said to resemble the fool, not be one. Unintelligent peasants are often called clowns in the stage directions, but they do not have the fool's liberties. There are many characters that are half regular servants and half fools, or perform the function of a fool in a particular scene, such as the porter in *Macbeth* or the gravediggers in *Hamlet*. A widely accepted determination is that only professional fools attached to a court or house should be considered as proper fools, and that these include only four fools: Touchstone, Feste, *King Lear*'s fool and Lavache from *All's Well That Ends Well*.⁶ Lavache is a border-case: some critics include him in the wise fools, others do not. I have decided to go by the strict determination and analyse the

⁵ Walter Kaiser, "Falstaff the Fool" Originally published in *Praisers of Folly: Erasmus, Rabelais, and Shakespeare*. (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press, 1963) 267-75. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, pp. 48-52. William Willeford, *The Fool and His Sceptre: A Study in Clowns and Jesters and Their Audience*. (London: Edward Arnold, 1969) 192-200.

⁶ A.C. Bradley, "Feste the Jester" (1916). In D.J. Palmer, ed., *Shakespeare: Twelfth Night*, Casebook Series (London: Macmillan, 1972) 63-71.

three fools. In addition to the three or four professional fools that can be called wise, Shakespearean plays include many natural fools and clowns that may often unwittingly say something profound and truthful, much like the wise fools. The distinction here is, that these natural fools do not seem to do this on purpose or realise the deep meaning of what they have said. There are also characters that would be determined as philosophers, but function similarly to the wise fools. These include Apemantus in *Timon of Athens* and Jaques in *As You Like It*, though Jaques almost makes an unwitting fool of himself in aspiring to become a fool like Touchstone.

In order to understand Shakespearean fools it is important to be familiar with the tradition and its origins. Therefore I begin by explaining these briefly. I shall try to link the tradition with the Shakespearean fool. After having constructed a rough picture of the Shakespearean fool by explaining the tradition, as well as some other things that are likely to have had an influence on the development of the character, I move on to analysing the fool's lines. I wish to show how much his lines make sense, even on several levels of interpretation, and how he changes the tone of the play. I intend to give a possible interpretation of the fool's role in the play, and give reasons for my argument of the fool's importance to the interpretation of the whole play. The wise fool is one of Shakespeare's most ingenious creations, as well as an excellent dramatic device, which I intend to establish.

2 Historical Background

As the tradition of fools was important in shaping the Shakespearean wise fool, I shall offer a brief summary of it here. The roots of the tradition of allowed fools lie deep in history. Fools were found already in Rome, and the earliest Court fools in England date from the twelfth century. The tradition of fools was linked closely with such feasts as the Roman Saturnalia and the Christian Carnival, celebrated before Lent, and these are likely to be the source of the allowed fool's licence to mock his superiors in jest. The fool was also seen on stage long before Shakespeare, and there were even studies written about fools and the tradition.⁷ The custom of keeping fools was popular in the 16th century, and I shall introduce some of these fools briefly. In this chapter I shall also introduce my main methodological approach, Mikhail Bakhtin's Carnivalism. Bakhtin himself has written that his approach would suit the analysis of the works of Shakespeare as well as Rabelais.⁸ I begin the chapter by explaining the difference between a natural and an artificial fool, as this is important for our conception of Shakespearean fools. The three fools I intend to analyse in this thesis are all artificials, as I shall try to establish in the first part of the analysis.

2.1 Natural and Artificial Fools

In Elizabethan England, there were two kinds of allowed fools: natural fools, who were mentally, and often also physically disabled people, and artificial fools, who were perfectly sane, but had taken on the role of a fool.⁹ The tradition of court and house fools began with natural fools. Natural fools, people lacking normal mental capacity, were taken in by the wealthy, who wished to be amused by the simplicity of

⁷ E.g. Robert Armin's *Quips upon Questions and Foole upon Foole; or six Sortes of Sottes*, Sebastian Brandt's *Narrenschiff* and Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*. Cf. Paragraph 2.7.

⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 275.

⁹ Anu Korhonen, *Fellows of Infinite Jest: The Fool in Renaissance England*. PhD diss. U of Turku. (Turku, Finland: Painosalama, 1999) 30.

the fool. The fool was provided with food and lodgings, and the head of the house was responsible for him (Korhonen, 31). He was allowed to say things no one else could say without being severely punished, for, being mentally disabled, he could not be held accountable for the things he said.¹⁰ The fool became a licensed critic of his master. If the master was displeased with him, he might get whipped, but that was nothing in comparison to the punishment anyone else would have suffered for a similar offence. The fool was treated as a pet or a child. The worst threat for a fool seemed to be that he would be turned away from his master's house, but this was rare. With time, the fool's licence became a recognised tradition. The artificial fools, who emerged later on, were perfectly sane and not disabled. They were people who had taken on the role of a fool as a way to earn a living. The distinction between natural and artificial fools goes back at least to the twelfth century, although it is possible that such a distinction was drawn already in Rome.¹¹

The distinction between natural and artificial fools was important in Shakespeare, and the issue is even brought up in several of his plays. At the beginning of this thesis I quoted Viola, who defines the role of an artificial fool inside the reality of the play very well. Duke Senior in *As You Like It* has also understood the wisdom of the fool. In V, IV, 108-109 he says of Touchstone: "He uses his folly like a stalking-horse, and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit."

Shakespeare's plays often entail both types of natural fool and characters that function as a kind of an artificial, wise fool. This is interesting, and provides material for fruitful comparisons, even though these are not usually juxtaposed. In *As You Like It* there is Jaques, who aspires to become a fool. In his fixation with this idea and admiration of Touchstone as a wise fool he does not realise the parody made of himself in Touchstone's contemplation on time and the rules of courtierly argument. Thus he nearly makes a natural fool of himself. In *Twelfth Night* there is Sir Andrew,

¹⁰ Robert Hillis Goldsmith, *Wise Fools in Shakespeare*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1958) 7.

¹¹ Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1968) 119 & 59.

who admires Feste's jests and singing, and does not realise his perhaps condescending attitude towards him. Andrew is also deceived by Sir Toby, who is only with him for his money. Unwittingly, Andrew even professes to be a natural fool: in II, III, 78-81 he says of Sir Toby's fooling, in answer to Feste's "Beshrew me, the knight's in admirable fooling," that "he (referring to Sir Toby) does it well enough if he be disposed, and so do I too: he does it with a better grace, but I do it more natural." In *King Lear* there is Edgar, who pretends to be a madman called Tom. King Lear himself is on the brink of madness, as is the Earl of Gloster in the subplot. Madness is an important theme in the play, and thus it is interesting that madmen were often considered to be natural fools. The ambivalence between wisdom and madness is also a part of the carnevalistic images (Bakhtin, 360f). Carnival frequently shows the wise behaving like madmen, and fools may often prove to be wise. In addition to the wise men that almost become fools in Shakespeare, there are several minor characters in the plays that could be seen as natural fools, such as some of the peasants in *As You Like It* (e.g. William, and even Audrey, as she is uneducated), and the servant Fabian in *Twelfth Night*, for he takes Feste's part in a part of the plot of gulling Malvolio.

2.2 Early Fools

The earliest recorded fools in England include King Edmund Ironside's 'joculator' Hitard and Henry I's 'minstrel' Rahere from the twelfth century.¹² The tradition, however, reaches back in time to antiquity. There are records of physically and perhaps also mentally disabled people, especially dwarfs, being kept as house 'fools' or 'pets' in the Roman Empire (Welsford, 58). The custom was retained even after the fall of the Empire, and dwarf fools seem to have been popular in Italy. Fools were also popular in France throughout the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, especially in connection to festivals (Welsford, 113ff). Later on, the custom became popular in Russia (Welsford, 182ff). However, the tradition of fools is not restricted to

¹² Sandra Billington, *A Social History of the Fool*. (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984) 1.

the western civilisation. Fools were found also in the Egypt of the Pharaohs, as well as in the region of India (Welsford, 56ff). The Indian custom of fools is a close relative of the Roman Saturnalia, which I shall explain in the next chapter.

2.3 Saturnalia and Kindred Festivals

The roots of the tradition of individual fools lie most likely in carnivalistic feasts, such as Saturnalia and its kindred festivals. Saturnalia was a festival celebrated in the Roman Empire in honour of the god Saturn. During the festival, people's roles were turned upside down.¹³ Slaves became free, and their masters might actually serve them. Almost everything was allowed, and the feast often turned into a mad pursuit of pleasure. A mock king was elected by casting lot, and he was to order the others to do ridiculous things. However, there was a time when the festival ended gruesomely in the sacrifice or encouraged suicide of the mock king. Similar festivals were celebrated around the world.

Later on, Saturnalia developed into various Christian festivals, such as carnival and the feast of fools. The feast of fools was celebrated in the Middle Ages around Europe, especially in France. It started as a semi-ecclesiastical festival, approved by the church and celebrated by the lower clergy (Welsford, 197ff). In the feast, people parodied the church rites. They went into the church and behaved improperly or even indecently, held mock-sermons and parodied gospels, liturgies, prayers and hymns (Bakhtin, 74f & 85f). Later on, people started parodying other forms of official culture, such as wills, grammars, and legal texts (Bakhtin, 85f). A Lord of Misrule was chosen to lead the festivities (Welsford, 197ff). However, the leaders of the church disapproved of the feast of fools, as it originated in pagan festivals such as Saturnalia, and in the end it was expelled from churches and moved to towns and other institutions (Welsford, 202f).

The feast and its leaders were called by different names at different times and

¹³ The description of Saturnalia is based on Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion. Part IV, The Scapegoat*. (London: Macmillan, 1920) 306ff.

places, but the essential characteristics stay the same. Therefore I have decided to ignore the small differences and concentrate on the characteristics that were important for the development of the fool. Even though these festivals and individual fools existed partly at the same time, I believe the festivals to have been important in shaping and sustaining the tradition of fools, which in its turn made possible the birth of the Shakespearean witty fool.

Towards the end of the Renaissance, these feasts and fools lost significance and popularity, but the tradition never died. Examples of Carnival and the licence of fools can be found in the modern time. The German carnival features open mocking criticism of politicians. Many entertainers mock politicians and other important people and events in their sketches and jokes.

2.4 Carnivalism

My main methodological approach, Carnivalism, was a product of the 20th century. It was developed from the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, brought forward in his dissertation *Rabelais and his World*. The dissertation was written in the late 1930's, defended and approved after the Second World War, and published in the 60's.¹⁴ It was translated into English as late as 1984. As the name implies, Carnivalism draws on the ideas of carnival and its kindred feasts. Bakhtin theorises on the meaning and significance of laughter, especially the carnivalistic laughter of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. He analyses François Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* in the light of its popular-festive images. Through this he wishes to show how the carnivalistic inversion reveals truths. Bakhtin explains that carnival forms an "exceptionally rich and original idiom," which was used both by Rabelais and Shakespeare, among others (11). Therefore it is important that we understand this half-forgotten idiom. It was the Renaissance conception that laughter had a deep philosophical meaning (Bakhtin, 66). It provided a way of getting to the truth and seeing the world as it truly is. Bakhtin

¹⁴ Michael Holquist, "Prologue" in Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) xxi.

notes that the laughter and language of folk culture played an important role in the creation of many of the masterpieces of world literature, such as the works of Bocaccio, Cervantes, Rabelais, and Shakespeare (72). This happened during the Renaissance, but at different times in different countries. Bakhtin also writes that there are certain works in world literature where the two aspects of seriousness and laughter coexist and reflect each other, and gives Shakespeare's tragedies as the best examples of these kinds of works (122). I would argue that some of Shakespeare's comedies could easily be added to these works. Even if laughter prevails in quantity in the comedies, the peaks of seriousness and the tragic moments sting the more when seen through the gay comedy. Bakhtin's carnivalistic laughter does not deny seriousness, but rather purifies and completes it (122f). I think that the wise fools of Shakespeare are perfect examples of the coexistence of seriousness and laughter. Bakhtin also argues that festive folly allowed the writer to treat an unofficial subject and express unofficial views (262). Popular-festive images should not, however, be understood as merely an exterior mechanical method used against censorship (269). These images have been used by the common people for thousands of years to express criticism and distrust of official truths. Freedom is innate in them. Bakhtin sees carnival as a direct descendant of Saturnalia, and fools as representative of medieval laughter (8). In opposition to official feasts, carnival allowed a temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and order. Carnival gives people a new outlook on the world, and allows them to realise that everything is relative (34). The grotesque was an important part of the carnival imagery, as Bakhtin stresses. Paraphrasing Victor Hugo, Bakhtin concludes that the grotesque and the sublime form a complementary relationship, and that "their unity, most fully achieved in Shakespeare, produces the truly beautiful, which classicism could not attain" (43).

2.5 The Stage Fool

The history of the stage fool can also be traced to antiquity. Fools appear in classical plays, as well as in Indian theatre (Welsford 62f). Since Aristophanes, the stage buffoon had been popular in Italy (Goldsmith, 73). Fools could also be found in the French sotties and in the Tudor moral plays (Goldsmith, 15). One of the earliest stage fools in England was Hardy Dardy from *Godly Queen Hester* (?1525-1529), who was also close to the character of the wise fool (Goldsmith, 21). The tradition of stage fools was at the height of its popularity in England in the latter part of the 16th century.

2.5.1 The Vice

The figure of Vice in the Moralities and the fool in medieval mystery plays were also influential in the birth of the stage fool. Both existed prior to the stage fool, but also at the same time with him. The line from the Vice and the fool in mystery plays to the stage fool is not direct, but the stage fool was influenced by both. The Vice was a kind of a devil, and embodied sin (Goldsmith, 18). However, he was not a serious figure one should be afraid of, but a jesting, comical figure that mocks the other characters. He was witty and ironical, as was the later stage fool (Goldsmith, 19).

There was a time when the character of the fool was merged with the character of the Vice (Goldsmith, 17). The Vice was a devilish figure that embodied the seven deadly sins. At some point of his career on stage, the figure of the Vice became the Devil's antagonist. He was a jesting, ironical character that belaboured Satan. However, at the end of the play the Vice rode pickaback to Hell on the Devil's shoulders (Goldsmith, 17). Feste, at least, seems to be aware of his roots in the character of the Vice, as he refers to them in one of his songs (12th Night, IV, II, 130). Feste the fool takes leave of the imprisoned Malvolio by singing:

I am gone, sir;
And anon, sir,
I'll be with you again,
In a trice,

Like the old Vice,
 Your need to sustain;
 Who, with dagger of lath,
 In his rage and his wrath,
 Cries 'aha!' to the devil.
 Like a mad lad,
 'Pare thy nails, dad.'
 Adieu, goodman devil.

In addition to acknowledging his roots, Feste might also be saying that he is the Vice sent to torment Malvolio, who is the devil in this metaphor. Later on the character developed into a type of the stage fool, retaining the irony, but losing the devilish implications. However, in Shakespeare's time one still had to be careful with these implications.

Another place where Feste might be referring to his roots in the Vice is in I, V, 77-79 when he says "Sir Toby will be sworn that I am no fox; but he will not pass his word for twopence that you are no fool." Apparently it was a Twelfth Night custom to release a fox in the Court and then to hunt it down and kill it.¹⁵ The fox represented the devil, and Feste is here denying the implication of any evil in him. However, Feste might also be warning Malvolio that he will not submit to being hunted out of the house.

King Lear's fool also uses the word 'fox' in a context where it might have implications of devil. Sent away by Goneril, the fool runs after Lear and rhymes:

A fox, when one has caught her,
 And such a daughter,
 Should sure to the slaughter,
 If my cap would buy a halter.
 So the fool follows after.
 (I, IV, 297-301.)

The fool does not embellish his opinion of Goneril, and later Regan. He is comparing them to the fox, a representation of evil and the devil, and proposes that they should be hanged – if only he had enough influence!

¹⁵ Leslie Hotson, *The First Night of Twelfth Night*. (New York, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954) 162.

2.5.2 Elizabethan Stage

On the early Elizabethan stage actors specialised in certain kinds of roles and formed companies, where the same actor would always play the same kinds of roles. The company's playwright often wrote or adapted the roles for certain actors, keeping in mind their style of acting. The traditional stage fool in the Elizabethan theatre was an independent entertainer, whose role was not directly a part of the play. He would at times step in to comment on the play (Korhonen, 75). Most of his lines were improvised, and he often conversed with the public (Korhonen, 81). The other actors might go on playing as if they could not see or hear the fool. At the end of the play, the fool would remain on stage, rambling on, or singing a song. The playwrights would naturally not like this, as the improvisation of the fool could destroy the unity of the play.¹⁶ In Shakespeare's time, the role of the fool in plays was changing. It had started to develop from an outsider into a part of the play. The fool was given lines and a role in the action of the play (Bradbrook, 50).

2.5.3 Robert Armin

The greatest Shakespearean fool-actor was Robert Armin. Armin joined the company in 1599, after the previous fool, Will Kempe, had left it. According to M. C. Bradbrook, the four proper fools, Feste, Lear's Fool, Touchstone, and Lavache were all created for Armin (50). What was new about these parts was that they were interwoven into the play (Bradbrook, 50), and expected the actor to conform to the role, which was something that the traditional stage fools had not done. The traditional fool had his own way of clowning, which he used in all plays (Bradbrook, 50). Armin, however, preferred to have pre-written lines (Korhonen, 81). He was an artificial fool, an intelligent man who wrote plays himself, as did some of his colleagues. Armin made possible the birth of the witty, tragic clown, who could point out the truth. His

¹⁶ M.C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare the Craftsman: The Clark Lectures, 1968*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969) 49.

influence on Feste, as well as on the other proper fools, cannot be denied. Armin's stage name was Pinks (Welsford, 284), and he published some of his works under the pseudonym 'Clunnico del Curtanio Snuffe,' and later under 'Clunnico del Mondo Snuffe:' that is, Snuffe, the clown of the Curtain theatre, and later of the Globe (Bradbrook, 52). Besides his versatile style of acting, Robert Armin had also other characteristics that distinguished him from previous fools (Bradbrook, 57). He attended upon ladies instead of lords, as do Feste, Touchstone and Lavache. He liked to prove others either fools or knaves by means of catechism and other tools employed by the wise fools, as does for example Feste in *Twelfth Night*. His humour was bitter, as is Feste and King Lear's fool's, and deflationary, and he liked music and singing.

2.6 Other English Stage and House Fools

Famous fools from the Tudor reign include Henry VIII's Will Somers, who was passed on to Elizabeth I, cardinal Wolsey's Patch, and the actors Richard Tarlton and Will Kempe. Somers is best known from *A Pleasant History of the Life and Death of Will Summers*, a book that mixes truth and anecdotes, as well as some of his jigs, notably those where he made a fool of cardinal Wolsey (Welsford, 165). Somers is reputed to have been an artificial fool, whereas cardinal Wolsey's Patch, whom the cardinal later gave to king Henry VIII, was a natural (Welsford, 159). Richard Tarlton, sometimes said to have been one of Queen Elisabeth I's fools, was an actor and playwright. There is an anecdote about Tarlton making Robert Armin his protégé (Bradbrook, 51). Armin was apprenticed to a goldsmith, and was collecting a debt for him. As the debtor was not home, Armin wrote a verse on his wall. Seeing the verse, Tarlton added some lines of his own. The story goes that when he saw this, Armin fell in love with Tarlton's humour. When his master then died, Armin left the trade of goldsmith and became a professional fool. Will Kempe was a traditional stage fool. He preceded Armin as the fool in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare's company

of actors. In addition to his jigs, Kempe is known for having danced morris from London to Norwich (Welsford, 284). He is also known to have travelled abroad and spent some time in Denmark, for example.¹⁷ Archy Armstrong from the Stuart reign was also famous. His position in court was solid: James VI is reported to have participated in undignified revelry with his courtiers and fool (Welsford, 171). There are more records existing concerning Armstrong than perhaps any other fool. Queen Mary's innocent Jane (Southworth, 100ff), and Elisabeth's proportionate dwarf Thomasina¹⁸ are examples of the rarer female fools.

2.7 Early Studies

Early studies of fools include many interesting works; there seems to have been a whole philosophy of the meanings and functions of folly. Probably the most famous of these is Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, but there are also other works that may have had an influence on the people's conception of folly.

2.7.1 Sebastian Brandt

Sebastian Brandt's *Narrenschiff*, *Ship of Fools*, was a long verse satire that rebuked the vices of the time (Welsford, 235). Brandt's fools represented different human characteristics and social classes, claiming that the only thing common to all was folly (Korhonen, 102f). Published in 1494, it became popular and was translated into other languages (Welsford, 235). However, the *Ship of Fools* was moralistic, and did not appreciate the possible virtues of folly (Korhonen, 103).

2.7.2 Erasmus

One of the first people who wrote about the wisdom that could lie behind folly is Erasmus.¹⁹ In his *Praise of Folly* he concludes that folly has the privilege to speak

¹⁷ John Southworth, *Fools and Jesters at the English Court*. (Phoenix Mill : Sutton, 1998) 130.

¹⁸ Janet Arnold, *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd*. (Leeds : Maney, cop. 1988) 107.

¹⁹ Erasmus Rotterdamlainen, *Tyhmyyden Ylistys*. (1509). (Karisto, 1990), 72-73.

freely and truthfully. He quotes Euripides, who said that only a fool can express himself openly, and continues by explaining that a fool expresses his heart in his speech, but a wise man has two tongues: one tells the truth but the other can turn black into white. Truth uttered by a fool will only rouse pleasure and hearty laughter, whereas a wise man could get hanged for it. Erasmus also describes how kings were so dependent on their fools that the two could hardly spend an hour apart. However, *The Praise of Folly* was considered near blasphemous in Elizabethan England, as it used the bible and the teachings of the church in satire, and equated fools and innocents (Billington, 31). The Bible does, I believe, mention fools or innocents in a good context, but equating them to the actual fools at the time must have been too much. Erasmus created the term ‘foolosopher,’ which was picked up by Armin, as it describes the wise, artificial fool quite accurately (Bradbrook, 57). The wise artificial fool contemplates on his world and has insight into it. He expresses his philosophy in his fooling.

2.7.3 Robert Armin

Robert Armin was also important in defining the wise, artificial fool, not only as a fool and actor, but also as writer. With his way of acting and fooling, Armin practically created the wise fool of the stage. His influence on Shakespeare was crucial in the birth of characters such as Feste or King Lear’s Fool. Armin’s writings, such as *Quips upon Questions* (a defence of fools, semi-biographical), *Foole upon Foole, or six Sortes of Sottes* (biographies of fools), *A Nest of Ninnies* (second, enlarged version of *Foole upon Foole*), and *Two Maids of Moreclacke* (a play) naturally included fools (Billington, 30 & 49; Korhonen, 107).

However, it was Shakespeare who created the ingenious fools such as Feste. As Bradbrook writes: “Shakespeare gave to Armin the form which Armin was not capable of giving himself; what can be seen in his works is the shadow of it. There was some fragile timidity, or some deep-seated melancholy in Armin which meant that

he could not sustain his own writing or his acting for long” (67f). Armin seems to have had a tendency to depression, as he writes about wandering around and sleeping outdoors in his *Quips upon Questions*. However, Armin was not the only literate fool. There were also other fools who wrote and inspired others to write about them and their jests.

2.7.4 Tomaso Garzoni

The Italian Tomaso Garzoni’s *The Hospital of Incurable Fools* was published in 1600. In it Garzoni playfully reproaches folly (Korhonen, 115ff). He is of the opinion that madness was caused by Dame Folly entering the victim’s brain. Fools were like children. They did not understand such things as physical laws, natural conditions, or behavioural codes, which resulted in extraordinary follies.

Garzoni listed thirty types of fools in *The Hospital of Incurable Fools* (Bradbrook, 62). Interestingly, Feste is of the type that “should not be enclosed in the hospital at all, but among the wise and under the special protection of God Mercury,” whereas almost all other characters of *Twelfth Night* would be admitted into this hospital, at least according to Bradbrook’s interpretation (63). Mercury is indeed mentioned in the play: Olivia has just pardoned Feste with “there is no slander in an allow’d fool,” and Feste replies: “Now Mercury endue thee with leasing, for thou speak’st well of fools!”(I,V,97). Feste seems to be aware of his special position, or perhaps Shakespeare is giving us a hint to interpreting Feste as the most rational character in the play.

3 Characteristics of the Shakespearean Wise Fools

The Elizabethan audience was familiar with the tradition of fools, its roots and its connection to festivals. The Shakespearean wise fools make clever use of this tradition by using suitable parts of it in their jests. By alluding to the meanings of various aspects of the tradition the Shakespearean wise fools communicate things in an indirect, though easily interpretable way.

In the following I analyse how the Shakespearean wise fools use the tradition and conventions of fooling. I begin with the most concrete thing, the apparel of the fools, and move on to mirror images or doubles, learnedness, music, and other modes of fooling. Through this analysis I intend to reveal not only the wit but also the wisdom of these fools.

3.1 Motley and Cockscomb

One popular source of jests and allusions that were intended to communicate something was the fool's clothing. There were various different kinds of apparel. The natural fools, aka the mentally disabled, wore motley. A simplified description of motley is a long colourful dress. However, the term 'motley' could be used very loosely. It was the name of a type of fabric. The term was also used to describe colour, either as a fabric of many colours or a patched fabric – even a painted one.²⁰ The typical colours included green, yellow, and blue, but other colours could also be seen. Some fools have been described as wearing a russet garb, which could also be made of motley, although this is not said. Though usually of at least two colours, motley could apparently also be of one colour. It has even been argued that instead of having distinct areas of different colours, motley could be woven of threads of different colours, mixing them arbitrarily (Hotson, *First Night*, 10). The length of the traditional motley dress has also been questioned: It could be anything from thighs to ankles. According to Wiles, a motley dress had bagged sleeves (187). As the 'original' dress

²⁰ David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and text in the Elizabethan playhouse*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 182f.

of fools, motley was associated with being mentally disabled, and was frequently used to refer to a fool. The artificial fools could wear a parti-coloured suit, which was a vestige from the middle ages, but everything from ill-fitting countryman's clothes to the servant's livery and even courtierly clothes could be seen on a fool.²¹ However, according to Southworth most fools were dressed like courtiers, only some details or an unfashionable cut differentiating them from non-fools (105ff). Fools also often wore a head-piece resembling a cock's comb and an asses ears, and carried a bauble, although this tradition was not so popular in England as on the continent (Korhonen, 180). The fool's cockscomb is seen to parody the king's crown, and the bauble his sceptre. Bells were also an important part of a fool's apparel (Korhonen, 182f). Southworth mentions sloppes and feathers, which could stand for a cockscomb, as the characteristic wear of an Elizabethan fool (108f). He also states that Shakespeare's fools are authentically dressed, and that the use of the words cockscomb and bauble is often figurative (173). Thus, the Shakespearean wise fools would have been dressed like fools at the time were, and when they refer to motley, cockscomb or bauble in their jests they are alluding to a tradition well known, but do not actually wear these items. The fool's liberty to speak freely was often associated with aspects of his dress, especially with motley or cockscomb. In the following I shall analyse how the Shakespearean wise fools use the connection of dress to the tradition to communicate various things.

3.1.1 Lear's fool

In his first scene, King Lear's fool offers his cockscomb to the Earl of Kent (I, IV, 94ff). Kent was banished earlier in the play, and has come back in disguise. Lear's fool seems to recognise him. When asked why Kent should take the cockscomb, the fool gives two reasons. First he says that Kent has taken the part of one out of favour,

²¹ Guy Butler, "Shakespeare and Two Jesters" Originally published in *Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts* 11, (Spring 1983) 161-179. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, pp. 117-122. 118.

which can be interpreted in several ways. Kent is out of favour with the King, and the fool is telling him that the disguise does not fool him. In addition to this, Kent is taking sides with the king, who is out of favour with those who have the real power in the country, Goneril and Regan. A different, though much less likely interpretation would be that the fool is simply stating that the newcomer is taking the place of the banished. After this the fool says that Kent should take the cockscomb because he will need it if he follows the King. This could be interpreted as the fool offering Kent the fool's freedom of speech and immunity from punishment, represented by the cockscomb. Kent has come back to try and guide the king in the right direction, to point out the truth to him, which is exactly what the wise fools do.

The fool offering his cockscomb to Kent could be interpreted as implying that Kent is a fool. In the normal world, serving the king would be to be in favour, but the fool has already seen that the world has turned upside down. In this inverted world the king has gone mad, and everyone near him is in danger. Therefore Kent is a fool for coming back - anyone wishing to serve such a king is a fool in that sense.

When Kent does not take the cockscomb, the fool offers it to the King. Here the most obvious message would be that the king is a fool. He has banished Cordelia, the only good daughter, as the fool knows, and is going mad, as I think the fool already knows. However, if the cockscomb was to parody the crown, the fool could be mirroring the king giving his crown away, or trying to give the poor king something to wear on his head, if not a crown symbolising his authority, then a cockscomb giving him the freedom of fools.

Lear's fool apparently wears motley, as he refers to it in the quarto version (I, IV, 139-142). The fool is jesting about two fools, himself and the king, and says:

The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear,
The one in motley here,
The other found out there.

Even if he wears motley, Lear's fool is not a natural. His keen observations prove he must have some wit. However, as so many things in Shakespeare, the fool's apparel can be called into question. His reference to a codpiece in III, II, 40, could be interpreted to reveal that he is wearing gaskins.²² On the other hand, it is not sure that the fool is referring to himself and not the king: "Marry, here's grace and a cod-piece - that's a wise man and a fool."

3.1.2 Feste

Another example of the use of the fool's dress to communicate something can be found in *Twelfth Night*. Also in his first scene in the play, Feste exclaims to Lady Olivia: "I wear not motley in my brain" (I, V, 55.). Here the message is clear. Motley was the traditional wear of natural fools, the mentally deficient or insane people. Feste is not one of them, and with this allusion he is saying that he is in full possession of his wits. What Feste actually wears is not said in the play, but that is irrelevant to my point. The Elizabethan audience would have been able to interpret Feste's "I wear not motley in my brain" instantly as "I am not an idiot, I am not mentally disabled."

However, I would hesitate to base assumptions about Feste's costume on this metaphor. It is likely that Feste wears his mistress's livery and some kind of wide sloppes. Feste's apparel seems not to be distinctive, as characters such as Sebastian (IV, I) and Orsino (V, I) do not identify him as a fool at first, although Orsino identifies him as belonging to lady Olivia before he recognises him. The assumption of wide slops is based in a conversation between Feste and Maria, where she says that if his two points break, his gaskins will fall (I, V, 23) (Felver, 50).

Feste also uses the connection of someone's wear to denote something about this person elsewhere in the play. In II, IV, 72-74 he says to Orsino:

²² Charles S. Felver, *Robert Armin, Shakespeare's Fool: A Biographical Essay*. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Bulletin, 1961) 60.

Now, the melancholy god protect thee;
and the tailor make thy doublet of changeable
taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal!

Taffeta is a shiny fabric that reflects light so that it seems to darken or even change colour as it moves and is hit with light and shadows. Thus it describes Orsino's state of mind well. Orsino is in love with being in love, and his mind changes from the peaks of love to the depths of depression.

3.1.3 Touchstone

Touchstone apparently wears motley in Arden, as he is referred to as a motley by Jaques (III, III, 73). Jaques also refers to Touchstone as a motley fool and a motley-minded gentleman (II, VII, 13&17; V, IV, 40). However, Touchstone is not a natural fool, for, as Duke Senior says of him, "he uses his folly like a stalking-horse, and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit" (V, IV, 108). Therefore it is logical that Jaques is indeed referring to his dress and perhaps assumes that his mental abilities correspond with it.

However, it is by no means certain that Touchstone normally wears motley. It has been suggested that Touchstone wears it only as a disguise, as Rosalind and Celia are also disguised (Butler, *SC 46*, 119²³). In his first scene he would have worn the household livery (Felver, 43). The theory of a disguise is also backed up by the fact that Duke senior does not recognise Touchstone, at least not at first.

Jaques wishes to be allowed to wear motley and become a fool (II, VII, 42-). What he is after is the liberty of an allowed fool. He wants to be able to shoot his wit without having to fear the consequences. As such this is very interesting, and it clearly shows how motley was associated with the fool's licence. The idea of an artificial fool in motley is also inherent in this scene, and it could be interpreted as a hint to the audience to consider whether Touchstone is also one, as well as to consider whether there is also a natural fool in the play and who this might be.

²³ In the future, I shall refer to all articles taken from *Shakespearean Criticism 46* with the name of the author, the abbreviation *SC 46* and the relevant page number embedded in the text, when the article has already been mentioned once and I have given the full data for it in a footnote.

Filmatizations of the plays show the wise fools in reasonably ordinary clothes. The BBC filmatization²⁴ of *King Lear* with Frank Middlemass as the fool shows him in a long dark-coloured coat with a big hat. A few red feathers in the hat represent the coxcomb. The fool's face is painted white, and he is old. The Laurence Olivier version,²⁵ with John Hurt as the fool, has him dressed in a shirt sown of big patches of coloured, though not brightly, pieces of fabric that looks a little like suede. This resembles the traditional conception of motley. His hat is a small cap with feathers, and he wears it only in the first scene. The BBC filmatization²⁶ of *Twelfth Night* with Trevor Peacock as the fool shows Feste in an embroidered short coat with subtle colours. This suits him well, for he is a more jesting fool than the melancholy Feste in Trevor Nunn's version.²⁷ Nunn's version with Ben Kingsley as Feste shows him in an old and worn long grey coat. This suits the melancholy character well.

3.2 Reflections

The Shakespearean wise fools function as a mirror to the folly of others. They parody the other characters in jests, either by emulating their actions or inverting them. Through emulation the fool can reduce the action to the level of folly and point out what he thinks was foolish in it. Parodying the main characters' actions and sayings is one of the favourite jests of the fool, as well as one of his major functions in Shakespeare. This parody functions to show the truth the main characters do not realise. The image of a double is important in these scenes. The fools can function as shadows or mirrors to the person parodied, or they can have a comic double with whom to re-enact scenes or parody someone in conversation. Inversion was an important part of mirror images: a mirror does, after all, show an inverted picture.

²⁴ *King Lear*, a BBC filmatization directed by Jonathan Miller, 1975.

²⁵ *King Lear*, directed by Michael Elliot, 1983.

²⁶ *Twelfth Night*, a BBC filmatization directed by John Gorrie, 1980.

²⁷ *Twelfth Night*, directed by Trevor Nunn, 1996.

3.2.1 Shadow

The fool was sometimes thought to be the shadow of his master (Korhonen, 182). In his outward appearance a court fool doubled the king with his cockscomb and bauble. The fool also reflected the king's actions in his jests. In I, IV, 212, King Lear asks, "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" His fool answers "Lear's shadow." This could be interpreted so that Lear is only a shadow of his former self. However, the wording of the question leads to the interpretation that the fool, Lear's faithful companion and shadow, is the one who can tell Lear who he is (Willeford, 200). This is what the fool is trying to do in the play. He is trying to get Lear to see the truth and become his former self. Both Lear's fool and Touchstone follow their master or mistress on a journey like a shadow.

The Shakespearean fools also imitate other persons in the play, thus functioning as doubles to them. Feste imitates many characters in the play. However, his imitation of Malvolio is perhaps the most memorable one. Explaining his part in the plot of gulling Malvolio, Feste quotes him: "But do you remember: 'Madam, why laugh you at such a barren rascal? An you smile not, he's gagg't'." King Lear's fool imitates the king in offering his cockscomb to Kent, and, at least in the Laurence Olivier version, Goneril in "Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue; so your face bids me, though you say nothing." Touchstone is likely to have imitated Jacques in order to parody him in the speech on time, and perhaps also in relating the rules of courtly quarrel. He also imitates Orlando's letter to Rosalind. All in all the extent of the imitation in the play depends a lot on the actor, and the director's interpretation. The actor can use his voice, facial expressions and behaviour to imitate an another character in the play, or he can choose not to. Imitation presents the fools as doubles of the characters they are imitating. The concept of doubles is very important in Bakhtin's *Carnevalism*, as I shall explain later in the section on counterpart.

3.2.2 Bauble

It has also been suggested that the fools of the time carried a bauble, although this tradition was not as popular in England as it was elsewhere. The bauble featured a fool's face, and could therefore be used as a double in jests. A fool could carry on a conversation with his bauble, or use the bauble to talk about other people, much like ventriloquists use their puppets (Willeford, 33ff). In these kinds of jests, the bauble would often start an argument with the fool. It would bad-mouth the king, and the fool would defend him (Willeford, 34). The bauble is often seen as the fool's alter ego (Wiles, 139).

On stage, the bauble seems to have been popular. Many famous plays of the time featured one (Korhonen, 180). Although it does not play a prominent part in his plays, Shakespeare was clearly familiar with the tradition. Lavatche from *All's Well That Ends Well* apparently has a bauble (IV, V, 30), and Robert Armin had one - he had even named it Sir Timothy Trunchion alias Bastinado (Korhonen, 180).

Leslie Hotson has suggested that Feste carries a bauble or a marotte (*First Night*, 157). Hotson bases his argument on Feste's invocation of wit in I, V, 30.

Wit, an't be thy will, put me into good fooling!
Those wits, that think they have thee, do very oft prove fools; and I,
that am sure I lack thee, may pass for a wise man: for what says
Quinapalus? 'Better a witty fool than a foolish wit.'

As an argument for Feste having a bauble this seems shallow to me. However, apparently there is no such person as Quinapalus,²⁸ which is why it could be thought that this is Feste's bauble's name. On the other hand, Shakespearean witty fools like to parody learnedness with mock-Latin and invented legends, and this false quotation could be an example of such parody. The wise fools' parody of learnedness is a wide topic, and I shall discuss it later on in this thesis.

Even though it is very unlikely that Feste would have a bauble, as the tradition was not popular in England, there is also other evidence that would suggest it.

²⁸ <http://www.chiasmus.com/mastersofchiasmus/shakespeare.shtml> (24.4.2004).

In his song to Malvolio at the end of IV, II Feste mentions a dagger of lath.

Apparently, the Vice replaced the bauble with a dagger of lath,²⁹ and his mentioning this could suggest that Feste has a bauble. Feste could use one to replace his partner in the scene where he doubles as Sir Topas and himself (IV, II, 103).

It has also been argued that King Lear's fool has a bauble. David Wiles suggests that the fool could use his bauble in the passage about a sweet and a bitter fool (I, IV, 135f) (191). The fool's question "Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet one?" would be addressed to his bauble. During this question Lear's fool could turn the bauble first to gaze at himself, i.e. the sweet fool, and then King Lear, the bitter one. Hotson has noticed the word 'departure' at the end of act one. He argues that it is a false correction of the French word 'deporter,' which would rhyme in the context (*First Night*, 169). 'Deporter' is another word for bauble.

Touchstone does not have a bauble, or at least there is no hint of him having one in *As You Like It*, although this does not rule out the possibility. However, Touchstone is different from the two other fools. He is more actively involved in conversations and does not tend to speak to himself.

The bauble, both as an object and as a name, gives potential to grotesque interpretations. The grotesque had an important part in carnivalesque images. It functioned as an opposite to the sublimity of the official culture. Though Shakespeare uses few grotesque images compared to Rabelais, we can still find some. The fool's bauble is an obvious phallic symbol, though it need not always to be interpreted in this context. Lavatche's reference to his bauble, "And I would give his wife my bauble, sir, to do her service," (IV, V, 31) has an obvious grotesque phallic interpretation. Moreover, Wiles has suggested that King Lear's fool could use his bauble to make obscene gestures when rhyming "the cod-piece that will a house" (190f). Wiles has also found another possibly phallic reference in the fool's:

²⁹ Walter Kaiser, "Wisdom of the Fool." In: <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/dhi.cgi?id=dv4-70> (5.5.2004).

She that's a maid now, and laughs at my departure,
 Shall not be a maid long, unless things be cut shorter.
 (I, V, 48-49).

If you believe Hotson in that 'departure' is a misspelling on 'deporter,' which is French for bauble, and the bauble has also a phallic interpretation, the lines certainly have a grotesque interpretation. However, even if we leave this interpretation aside, I cannot come up with any other plausible interpretation to "Shall not be a maid long" than referring to losing one's innocence, one's virginity. In context this must be interpreted metaphorically, for Goneril is a married woman, but she does lose her innocence later on in the play in the sense of committing adultery.

There are a number of places in the plays where the fool could easily carry a bauble, and use it in his jests. There is, however, no indication of the fools actually having baubles, and no scenes demand one. In addition to this, Feste apparently carries a tabor (Viola's "Dost thou live by thy tabour?" III, I, 1) and it has been suggested that King Lear's fool carries a mirror.³⁰ Therefore it is not likely that they would carry a bauble. Nevertheless, anything is possible. The fools might have carried different things in different scenes, or even have several objects tied around their waist.

3.2.3 Mirrors

In a metaphorical sense, the fool was a mirror, and he is often featured holding one in medieval and Renaissance art (Shickman, 77). The Shakespearean wise fools function as mirrors to the other characters in the play.

3.2.3.1 King Lear's Fool

King Lear's fool functions as an opposite to the king. There is only one line (III, II, 35-36) in the play where the fool explicitly refers to mirrors, but the image of

³⁰ Allan R. Shickman: "The Fool's Mirror in *King Lear*," *English Literary Renaissance* 21 (Winter 1991) 75ff.

the fool as a mirror is very fruitful and widely accepted, especially when discussing *King Lear*. In his sanity, the fool provides a mirror to King Lear's folly, or perhaps even insanity. He is the contrast, the opposite against which King Lear is mirrored, and which shows the foolishness of Lear's actions and temperament more clearly than we would see it without an opposite.

Shickman suggests that Lear's fool might actually carry a mirror (78). This he argues with some scenes, where it would be logical that the fool has a mirror. In the quarto version, the fool jests about a sweet and bitter fool. He says to the king:

That lord that counsell'd thee
 To give away thy land,
 Come place him here by me,-
 Do thou for him stand:
 The sweet and bitter fool
 Will presently appear;
 The one in motley here,
 The other found out there.
 (I, IV, 135)

Shickman believes that the fool could be holding a mirror, and pointing to it during the last line. King Lear would peer into the mirror to see the bitter fool, and see his own reflection.

Indeed, there are some lines of the fool that may seem perhaps abrupt and nonsensical in context, but would make perfect sense if the fool were looking at himself in a mirror. These include "For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a glass" (III, II, 35-36) and "Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i'th'middle on's face?" (I, V, 20). However, there are other ways to explain these lines and they do not need a mirror. The fool's answer to the latter reveals that this is about the senses and being able to discover betrayal - either by seeing or smelling it.

The image of a mirror brings with it a connotation to the origins of the fool. In addition to those roots explained at the beginning of this thesis, the tradition has also been influenced by the clairvoyant tradition. According to Enid Welsford the Irish tradition of prophet-fools, lunatics that were able to tell the future, is a part of the

tradition of fools (76ff). She also links Merlin to this tradition (103).

Merlin's enchanted mirror in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, which is a known source for *King Lear*, was supposed to be able to show the whole world and foretell the future (Shickman, 84). Shakespeare's wise fools seem to know more than the other characters. Even if they might not have an enchanted mirror, they function as one themselves, frequently pointing out the folly of others. They often seem to know what is going to happen later on. King Lear's Fool mentions Merlin in the folio version of the play: he makes a prophecy, after which he concludes: "this prophecy Merlin shall make; for I live before his time" (III, II, 95).

3.2.3.2 Feste

Interpreting Feste as an opposite of Olivia is perhaps not as fruitful as King Lear and his fool, but we can find some mirror images in *Twelfth Night*. Feste is a mirror to the folly of the other characters. He points out Olivia's folly in grieving over her brother so desperately, and indeed, it does not take long for Olivia to fall in love and forget all about her brother. At the end of the play Olivia dismisses the injustice done to Malvolio: she admits that he has been wronged, but takes no measures to punish the people responsible for it. Feste, however, remarks that "the whirligig of time brings in his revenges." This could refer to the revenge Feste, Sir Toby and the others had on Malvolio, but it could also be that Feste is aware that Malvolio will be revenged. Feste's songs can also be interpreted as reflecting the psychological state of the other characters. Feste seems to be the only character in the play that reflects on life and thinks ahead.

3.2.3.3 Touchstone

Touchstone mirrors various scenes and characters in his jests. Already his jest on honour in I, II parodies and mirrors the previous conversation between Celia and

Rosalind.³¹ Touchstone's love affair with Audrey functions as a funhouse mirror to the other love affairs in the play, especially that of Rosalind and Orlando. Touchstone reveals the more grotesque side of love, the underlying lust (Frail, *SC 46*, 113).

Touchstone's parody of Orlando's letter mirrors its style in a grotesque manner. It takes the mode of the letter, but replaces the words. I shall refer to this letter later on, in the sections on praise-abuse and the tone of the play. Touchstone's contemplation on time is also apparently meant as a parody of Jaques (Goldsmith, 92).

3.2.4 Counterpart

The Shakespearean proper fools often function as a counterpart to the protagonists of the story. They may also function as a counterforce to certain aspects in it. Folklore coupled serious myths to comic ones and heroes with their parodies or doublets, as Bakhtin writes (6).

The dual tone was an important part of carnivalistic tradition (Bakhtin 433). Carnival provided a counterpart to the official, and together they formed a pair. However, carnivalistic images were rarely unambiguous. They often included a pair of opposites. A classic example of these pairs is top and bottom, examples being master and servant or a king and his fool (Bakhtin 434). Shakespearean proper fools have such a relationship with most of the important characters in the play at one point or another. However, it is not at all fixed who is the top and who the bottom in the pair. Traditionally one would expect the fool to be the bottom. However, more often than not it seems that the Shakespearean wise fool is taking the role of the top. The dynamics of this pair is important especially in *King Lear*, but can be seen in scenes also in the other two plays.

The melancholy Feste is a fitting counterpart to the other characters in the play. As the plot of the play progresses more and more towards carnivalism and the

³¹ David Frail, "To the Point of Folly: Touchstone's Function in *As You Like It*" Originally published in *The Massachusetts Review*, XXII, (Winter 1981) 695-717. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, pp. 105-117. 112.

characters become carnivalistic, the fool becomes more and more philosophical and melancholic. At the beginning of the play, when Lady Olivia is in deep mourning, we find the fool coming home from being absent without permission. His first jests are witty chop logic and twisting words - typical, widely used types of jests, even though they do contain accurate observations of character and situation. However, as the play progresses we see a more philosophical side of the fool. He reveals the more melancholic side of his character especially in his songs. When the other important characters in the play fall in love and find each other, the fool remains alone and untouched by such passions. Feste provides a balancing effect in the play. Without him *Twelfth Night* would be a merry comedy, perhaps too light-hearted to touch the reader, for even though Malvolio's fate is sad, the reader does not feel too sorry for him, as his character makes it is hard to relate to him.

Touchstone acts as a counterpart to the pastoral idyll of *As You Like It*, something that no other character in the play does. Even Jaques, the philosopher who steals the thunder from Touchstone in criticising many other aspects in the play, is oblivious to the possible downsides of living in a forest. There is no clear counterpart relationship in the play, though Touchstone's romance with Audrey is a clear parody of the romance between Rosalind and Orlando. However, as Touchstone often uses parody in his jests and likes to mimic the other characters in the play, he does act as a kind of mirror in the play.

King Lear's fool is a clear counterpart to the king. Throughout his appearance in the play the fool and King travel together. They seem similar in many ways, and the presence of one comforts the other. It has even been suggested that Cordelia and the fool both act as Lear's conscience on turn.³² The fool certainly banters the King like the voice of conscience. He points out the king's lack of judgement of character, in contrast to his own excellent one. The king's mistakes push him to the edge of madness, whereas the fool stays sane and tries to bring the king back to his right mind.

³² Victor L. Cahn: *The Plays of Shakespeare: A Thematic Guide*. (Westport, Conn. Greenwood Press, 2001.) 94.

The audience is at times unable to relate to the king. The fool helps the audience not to despair over the king's fate by pointing out the mistakes he makes, but at the same time, with his loyalty, prevents the audience from distancing itself from or laughing at the king. By his very presence the fool humanizes Lear (Cahn, 94).

Glena D. Wood has also noticed that the fool's comments become more ludicrous when the situation becomes intense (*SC 46*, 201). According to Wood the fool is trying to divert Lear from his misery and stay his passion (*SC 46*, 197ff). Thus he reflects the situation by functioning as a counterpart to it, perhaps trying to alleviate the intensity. This would explain certain scenes or comments, such as the fool's:

Ha, ha! He wears cruel garters. Horses are tied by the heads,
dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the loins, and
men by the legs: when a man's over-lusty at legs,
then he wears wooden nether-stocks (II, II, 190-193)

on seeing Kent in the stocks, or his "Cry you mercy, I took you for a join-stool" (III, VI, 47) in the imaginary trial of Goneril in the quarto version. The situation in II, II, where they find Kent in the stocks is intense: the reader or viewer expects Lear to break down in rage, but the fool's ludicrous comments alleviate the rage and pain, although they also facilitate Lear's oblivion to the true state of things. This can also be seen in II, II, 293-297 where Lear is in pain of heart, and close, I should think, to realising that Regan is going to betray him too. The fool interrupts Lear with the ludicrous and perhaps at first seemingly incomprehensible:

Cry to it, nuncle, as the cocney did to the eels
when she put 'em i'the paste alive; she knapt 'em
o'the coxcombs with a stick, and cried, 'Down,
wantons, down!' 'twas her brother that, in pure
kindness to his horse, butter'd his hay.

The fool picks up on the word down in Lear's "O me, my heart! My rising heart! But down." This speech represents Lear's trying to suppress his emotions. Emotions are not that easily suppressed, they are like eels that still move when they are being cooked. And like the brother in the latter part of this jest, Lear has spoiled his children

to death. However, hearing this Lear seems to forget his doubts and greets Regan and Cornwall as if everything was fine, or at least as if he had hope this could be so.

Though it may be going a bit far to interpret the fool's ludicrous comments as something meant to alleviate the king's pain of heart, there is something to support this in the play. At the beginning of the third act, where Lear roams in the storm on the heath, Kent meets a gentleman at another part of the heath. To his question "But who is with him?", referring to Lear, the gentleman answers:

None but the fool; who labours to out-jest
His heart-struck injuries.

(III, I, 8-9)

It is interesting that the gentleman should characterize the fool thus in this context. On one hand you could say that it is the fool's role to jest at all times, but why did not the gentleman then simply say "None but the fool," emphasizing Lear's lack of supporters on the heath – he has only a fool as his comfort. Suddenly this trivial comment starts to gain importance: is the author trying to direct us to a certain interpretation of the fool's role? It seems certainly plausible to interpret the fool as Lear's closest and truest friend: he stays beside Lear through the worst parts of the play. All the while the fool is trying to point out the true state of things to Lear and mitigate his ups and downs – prevent him from falling into desperation and warn him from having high hopes.

The fool's absence in the latter part of the play I would account for as him being captured and killed by Goneril and Regan's men, his losing his wits after all the stress or his presence without any lines. Lear's ambiguous line at the end of the play "And my poor fool is hang'd" certainly suggests towards the first explanation, especially as the fool's silence would be uncharacteristic if he were present, and as the old world dies at the end of the play, it would be unlikely that he should survive. To me the words "And my poor fool is hanged" refer to the fool because of the word 'and' at the beginning of the line. Cordelia's state has already become clear, and Lear is holding her in his arms, which would make the word 'and' superfluous if he were referring to Cordelia. I must admit, however, that as Cordelia was also hanged, and

Lear talks about her at the rest of his speech, it is also possible that he is referring to Cordelia. In any case, the fool and Cordelia perform a similar function in the play, and critics have identified the two (Wood, *SC 46*, 192). They are also never present on stage at the same time. Wood points out that the character of the fool is so illusive that he has not only been identified with Cordelia, but also with Lear, and even with every character in the play, as all are called fool at one point or another (192).

3.2.5 Lacan's Mirror Stage

The idea of the fool as a mirror to the other characters of the play comes close to the ideas of Jacques Lacan and his mirror stage.³³ Lacan talks about the importance of seeing another member of the species to the development of certain species of animal (3). This could also be applied to the wise fools. The fool's emulation of the follies of the other characters could be seen to produce such a double to them. Seeing one's own follies in another person might help them to realise those and facilitate their growth to be better persons. Lacan also explains that the mirror-stage helps to make a division between the world inside oneself and the reality (4). The way we see ourselves is not the way others see us, even though we usually do not remember this. However, the knowledge of both these sides is important in terms of power.

King Lear seems to have gotten lost in his inner world, forgetting about the existence of the outer. He believes that others see him the way he sees himself, and does not realise that Goneril and Regan do not genuinely love and honour him, but will stop seeing him as someone to be honoured and respected the minute he gives away his power. Thus, one could say that Lear's lacking self-knowledge (on the part of realising how others see him, and seeing the reality as it is outside of him) results in his losing his power. Touchstone in *As You Like It* draws attention to the self-absorbed behaviour of the other characters in the play, and frequently points out how none of them seem to care about the reality of power (they are in a kind of exile in the forest,

³³ Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," *Écrits: A Selection*. (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1977) 1-7.

and under threat). All in all the behaviour of the other characters in the play is at odds with the reality in the play. Even Feste needs to point out the difference between the internal self-identity and the external reality to many of the other characters in the play. Count Orsino sees himself as a man desperately in love with Olivia, whereas Feste sees how inconstant his mind is – he is in love with being in love. Olivia needs to see that her grief is exaggerated, Maria that Sir Toby will keep on drinking, and so on.

The mirror stage and the knowledge of oneself is also related to language. We use language to describe and structure our world, and it has even been suggested that if there is no concept, no word for something, it is difficult for us to even understand it, as if it could not exist. We simply need words to be able to conceive things, even though we do not usually realise this, as we are so accustomed to it. However, words can never accurately and exhaustively describe a thing – they are always inadequate to some extent. If we name something a stone, we have a rough idea of what it is, but every stone is different. Words can also mean very different things, as a mouse can be an animal or something you use when you work with the computer. Thus, it is fitting that Feste should characterise himself as Olivia's "corrupter of words," and state "words are very rascals" and that "a sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit: how quickly the wrong side may be turn'd outward," as he does at the beginning of act III, scene I. All three wise fools show in their jests how language is often ambiguous.

The wise fools often function as a Lacanian mirror. They are constantly trying to make the other characters see the reality outside their internal self-identity and their internal conception of the world. Touchstone parodies the pastoral setting of *As You Like It* as he realises that the reality of life in the country is harsh. Feste sees that the bliss of Illyria is only temporary, and King Lear's fool is constantly pointing out the folly of his master and trying to guide him into retrieving his sanity.

3.3 Learnedness

Showing off their intelligence and parodying the wise was a favourite jest of fools. Oral and written parodies in Latin and in the vernacular were one of the three forms of manifestations of the folk culture of carnival humour (Bakhtin, 5). Parodies of official and sacred writings were popular in the Middle Ages, as was the use of Latin in parody (Bakhtin 13f). Fools could use mock Latin, parody official documents, refer to ancient philosophers and writers, and prove the wise fools. By showing such capacities they established themselves as artificial fools.

Frederick Warde writes that Feste “quotes Latin aptly and accurately,” “shows familiarity with Grecian history and legend,” and “is not unacquainted with the philosophy of Pythagoras.”³⁴ He also points out Touchstone’s knowledge of Ovid (68). The actor Robert Armin’s learnedness has also been brought forward in this context. He was intelligent and knew Latin and Italian. Bradbrook states that he was also “pathetically proud of his learning” (54).

3.3.1 Feste

Feste seems to know some Latin, as he uses some Latin phrases in the play. His most famous line in Latin is “Cucullus non facit monachum,” (I, V, 54) and means, according to Feste, that he wears not motley in his brains. A word for word translation of this would be: The cowl does not make the monk. Through this metaphor Feste is saying that although he wears a fool’s apparel, he is not a fool: there is nothing wrong with his mental capacities – he is a fool only by profession.

Other Latinate phrases of Feste’s include “one of thy kin has a most weak *pia mater*,” (I, V, 115) which he says of Sir Toby; *Bonos dies* (IV, II, 14) to Toby; *Primo, secundo, tertio* (V, I, 34) and *triplex* (V, I, 35) of some money he receives from the Duke; and *vox* (V, I, 294) of the manner how Malvolio’s letter should be read. These seem fairly simple and function to exhibit Feste’s knowledge of Latin. They fit the

³⁴ Frederick Warde, *The Fools of Shakespeare: An Interpretation of Their Wit, Wisdom and Personalities*. (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Press, 1923) 94.

context: Sir Toby is not a religious man, so his faith in the holy mother is weak; in using the Latin greeting *Feste* may already be assuming his role as Sir Topas; in counting in Latin he might try to induce the Duke to give more money; and in “you must allow *vox*” Feste is saying that he thinks the letter should not be just read, but acted out. He is reading the letter in a voice that he thinks a madman would sound like. T.W. Baldwin has analysed Feste’s *Bonos dies* in his *Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*. According to him, the greeting resembles more Spanish than Latin in form, but it is clear that Shakespeare intended it as Latin.³⁵ Whether it was supposed to be correct Latin, or the fool’s deliberate or inadvertent mistake is another matter.

With the influence of Robert Armin, the fools started using long and difficult words, as Korhonen argues (221). This can be seen for example in the scene with Feste as Sir Topas (IV, II), where he uses words such as ‘hyperbolical fiend’ and ‘lustrous as ebony.’ Feste also appears to be aware of some grammatical rules, as he says that four negatives make two affirmatives (V, I, 19-20).

Feste seems to know some mythical stories, as he refers to Troilus and Cressida (III, I, 53-57), and King Gorboduc (IV, II, 16). Apparently, Gorboduc was a legendary British king that divided his kingdom between his two sons Ferrex and Porrex. This resulted in a war, and at the end all were killed. The story was performed as a play in 1561.³⁶ King Gorboduc’s fate resembles closely that of King Lear, which Shakespeare was to write into a play a few years later. The story of Troilus and Cressida originates in antiquity, and was retold as a poem by Geoffrey Chaucer. Shakespeare wrote his version of *Troilus and Cressida* a couple of years after *Twelfth Night*. Therefore one could think that in addition to exhibiting his knowledge of myth and English culture, Feste is in a sense predicting the future. If Shakespeare had already decided to write these two plays, he might be giving the audience a hint of what is to come. It has, after all, been argued that the fool could be a channel for the

³⁵ T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakspeare’s Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*. vol.1. (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1944) 724.

³⁶ <http://www.factmonster.com/ce6/people/A0821291.html>

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voice of the author.

Feste also seems to be familiar with Pythagorean' philosophy (IV, II, 52). He is aware that Mercury is the patron of fools (I, V, 97), and uses Saturn to characterise Duke Orsino: "Now the melancholy God protect thee, for thy mind is a very Opall" (II, IV, 73) Saturn was a wise and melancholy God, and opal was the stone of Venus.³⁷ Feste's reference to Quinapalus in I, V, 33, is curious. As stated earlier, there is no such person (at least there are no historical records of him), and it is possible that this is Feste's bauble's name. Baldwin notes that the name consists of two Latin words: quina palus, five marsh (720). He also explains that Shakespeare's grammar school education enabled him to construct mock Latin and "etymologies for his pretenders and pedants." Hotson has found another possible origin for Quinapalus. This is the Italianate word quinapalo, which can be translated as 'there on the stick' (*First Night*, 157). So Feste is asking the opinion of 'there on the stick' – his bauble.

In II, III, 22-26 Sir Andrew Aguecheek relates something that Feste has talked about the previous night. This is a strange passage about a Pigrogromitus and Vapians passing the equinoctical of Queubus. To a modern day reader it sounds gibberish, and may well be designed as mock learnedness. Perhaps it was even meant as a jest to mock those members of the audience that did not realise that it was gibberish. It certainly sounds plausible enough, and brings to mind the modern science fiction. However, we cannot rule out that it actually did mean something, and that the meaning has become lost. Hotson emphasises that the Elizabethans were keen on having a clear meaning to everything, comparing and equating Shakespeare to Rabelais, whose strangest locutions had a meaning (*First Night*, 156f). He even tries to construct a meaning for this based on Italian. In his response to Sir Andrew, Feste mentions the Myrmidons. The Myrmidons were Achilles' soldiers in the Trojan War, and Feste's mentioning them would suggest that he is familiar also with this legend.

³⁷ Leslie Hotson: *Shakespeare's Motley*. (London, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1952) 120.

3.3.2 Touchstone

Even Touchstone seems to be familiar with some mythology, as he compares himself in the woods with Audrey to Ovid among the Goths in III, III, 5-7. He shows his learnedness in V, I, 52ff, where he is lecturing William. Here he uses a technique of linguistic construction in a way that “any grammarian was supposed to be able to do” (Baldwin, 715ff). Thus he seems to have knowledge equivalent to a grammar school education, and cannot be considered a natural fool.

Touchstone’s parody of the cynical wit Jaques also shows knowledge and skill. He is able to imitate Jaques’ style of contemplating so that Jaques gets excited and hurries to tell Duke Senior about the noble and worthy fool he met in the forest, never realising the comedy on himself in Touchstone’s moralizing on time. As a result of the enthusiasm caused by Touchstone’s speech Jaques wishes to become a fool: “O, that I were a fool! I am ambitious for a motley coat.” To me it can be seen as a proof of the wise fools’ intelligence that a character like Jaques wishes to become a fool.

3.3.3 Lear’s Fool

King Lear's fool uses few Latinate words, allusions to mythology, or parodies of official forms in the play. His wisdom lies clearly in the understanding of human nature, as well as the nature of the world. He understands the phenomena of nature, and uses them to describe the situation. He is rational and emphatic, and seems to know some psychology.

Lear’s fool’s reference to Merlin suggests that he is familiar with the legend. He does parody the official culture by proposing to hire Kent (I, IV, 97), comparing the breath of an unfee’d lawyer to nothing (I, IV, 132), asking how much the rent of the king’s lands is (I, IV, 137), in “if I had a monopoly out” (I, IV, 156), and in asking the king to hire a schoolmaster to teach his fool to lie (I, IV, 182).

His metaphors from the phenomena of nature are used skilfully. They fit the situation perfectly; they are innocent enough to escape punishment, but hard enough to express strong critique. Although we cannot exactly say that knowledge of natural

phenomena is a sign of learnedness, as any countryman would be able to know these things, knowing these things and being able to use them so skilfully in his jests is worth noting in a fool. Besides, Lear's fool does not really need to try and seem intelligent. His abilities of empathy, rational thinking, and seeing what will happen more than make up for it.

However, although the apparent learnedness of Touchstone, Feste, and King Lear's fool certainly contributes to their character as wise fools, it is not this that makes them 'wise.' Indeed, it has been said that they are more witty than wise. Their jests certainly are witty, but I believe their wisdom lies in their ability to understand human nature.

3.3.4 Audience

So far I have moved inside the play in my analysis and treated the fools almost as if they were real people. Touchstone, Feste, and King Lear's Fool are, however, the creation of an artist. They have a certain function in the play. They do draw on the historical tradition, but they do not follow it in everything. In the following I shall consider the relation of the fool's learnedness to the audience. The audience in the Globe consisted of all social classes, from the poor groundlings to the aristocracy in the upper galleries.

The wise fools could use Latin for many purposes. Firstly, it established them as artificials in the eyes of the audience, as a natural fool could hardly learn Latin. To appear learned, the fool had to use some Latin. However, the Latin was not to overwhelm the uneducated groundlings. In the instances of mock Latin it was desirable that as many members of the audience as possible would understand the joke. Even the mock Latin had to be well constructed, for otherwise the learned in the galleries might have thought it vulgar. It could even be that a certain amount of learnedness was required to justify theatregoing to the higher social classes. Balancing between the needs of such a varied audience, as well as the capacities of his actors,

shows Shakespeare's genius.

It was also popular for the fool to deliberately translate his Latin phrases wrongly (Korhonen, 219f). This could result in hilarious jests. Different parts of the audience might laugh at different things in the fool's use of Latin. The educated upper classes might laugh at the fool's mistakes, and would certainly be able to understand the comedy in his mistranslations. The lower classes would laugh at the learned, as even a fool can speak Latin. Most members of the audience would be delighted to have a chance to laugh at the language, which had dominated at the level of official culture for centuries, especially as it was the language of the Catholic church and the Law. The mistranslations also reveal some of the complexity of the fool's character: In translating wrongly, the fool seems ignorant, but in knowing Latin he seems wise. But is the fool stupid or is he translating wrongly to create a jest? Or perhaps to not to seem too wise? In any case, parodying the language and habits of the learned was popular.

The fools' professions of learnedness do not play a prominent part in the filmatizations I have seen. They are not omitted, but not emphasized either. However, the time is different, and filmatizations emphasize the fools role as an emphatical wise fool. Besides, the modern viewer would not be able understand them unless he or she was literate in Latin and mythology, or had studied Shakespeare.

3.4 Songs

Songs were an important part of entertainment also in Shakespeare's time, and the tradition of minstrels, aka travelling musicians, was closely related with the tradition of fools. Many fools also played an instrument. Robert Armin liked music and singing, and there are many songs in *Twelfth Night*, as well as in some other Shakespearean plays. Even the songs have a message, although at least part of them are existing songs and not Shakespeare's own inventions. It has been said that both

Feste and King Lear's fool "sing to express their deepest selves" (Cahn, 95). However, Feste's songs are meant to be a part of his repertoire: they are old songs, and he merely chooses one to fit the occasion, whereas King Lear's fool's songs are supposedly improvised short lyrics to comment on the situation, merely words on simple tunes. In addition, it is not always easy to determine which speeches are meant as songs and which not. Thus productions have treated some of the fool's lines differently, some seeing them as songs and some not.

3.4.1 Feste

Feste's first song (II, III, 39-44) is addressed to his mistress, although she is not present in the scene, and tells of a coming true love that can sing both high and low, which of course refers to Viola, who is pretending to be a man. It also tells of a journey that will end in lovers' meeting, like the play will, and could be seen as a prediction into the future.

Feste continues with a song that says that we should live in the present and think not too much about the future:

"What is love? 'tis not hereafter;
Present mirth hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure:
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come and kiss me, sweet-and-twenty,
Youth's a stuff will not endure. (II, III, 47-52)

These lines can be interpreted as an advice to enjoy the present, but they could also be interpreted as a kind of warning. The characters in the play seem to live in the moment and not think too far ahead. Feste's song describes the momentarity of Illyria.

Feste's next song is a deeply anti-comic song about death. (II, IV, 51-66.) The duke has asked for this song, which describes his current melancholy state of mind well. At the end of the song the duke offers Feste money for his 'pains.' As Feste happens to like singing, he is offended by this, and replies: "No pains, sir; I take

pleasure in singing, sir.” It is interesting that he should say this after such a sad song. However, as the wise fools like to reflect the mood of the person whom they are with, and thus make this person aware of it, it is fitting that Feste should take no pains in singing this song. Besides, Feste is himself feeling melancholy and is not on the mood for fooling, which is why he welcomes the chance to sing an old song, as singing is one of his favourite types of entertaining.

His next song he sings to Malvolio (IV, II, 24-35). In this song he compares himself to Vice, a predecessor of fools in medieval plays. Vice is an evil character close to the devil, and this song seems to be saying that fun is somehow wrong. Indeed, the fun Maria and Sir Toby have at Malvolio’s expense is wrong, even if he might deserve to be taught a lesson.

Feste’s last song ends the play. It is the famous song with the wind and the rain that raineth every day. The first four stanzas were an existing song, but the fifth is Shakespeare’s. The four stanzas tell of the different ‘ages’ in a man’s life, but the fifth begins with Adam and ends in the conclusion “But that’s all one, our play is done, / and we’ll strive to please you every day.” In these two lines the fool breaks out of his part as a character in the play and becomes an actor. The play is done for that day, but the work of an actor goes on the next day. These lines also show the new fool, who will not ramble on after the play. He begins with Adam, which could lead to a whole new story, but cuts off and basically tells us to forget it. In his last line he counts himself in as one of the actors, who strive to please the audience every day. Thus he brings the audience back to the real world.

The play ends happily in three marriages, and the couples leave the stage, but Feste stays to sing this unhappy song. This might be interpreted to point out the fact that both Olivia and Orsino have married people they barely know, and it is possible that their marriages will not always be happy, even if they do not realise it yet. Sir Toby’s drinking and the class distinction between him and Maria may cause their marriage trouble. And for Malvolio and Sir Andrew the world is not looking bright.

For Malvolio the world will always be struggle, as he is unable to loosen his strict ideals. Sir Andrew has just heard how little Sir Toby thinks of him, and has lost his hopes of marrying Olivia, so things are not looking bright for him, either. The society in Olivia's house seems to break up, as do the actors. At the end of his song the actor playing Feste thanks the audience on behalf of the whole group. The other actors are off stage.

The different stanzas of Feste's song can also be seen to describe certain characters in the play, as in the BBC production, where the appropriate characters appear during the stanzas that describe them. The Trevor Nunn production shows various characters leaving Olivia's household at the end of the play. These are not that markedly those that the stanzas describe, but there is correlation.

3.4.2 King Lear's Fool

King Lear's Fool also sings many songs. His first song (I, IV, 117ff) advises on humble behavior, which, besides being virtuous, is also a way to save money. As King Lear has given his kingdom to two of his daughters, he is not that wealthy any more. He is at the mercy of his daughters, a bitter fact, which he is going to find out soon. The fool's second song, which is found only in the quarto text, calls the person who counselled King Lear to give away his lands a fool. In reaction to this the king asks whether the fool is calling him a fool, to which the fool replies that that was the title the king was born with, and that he has given away all other titles. This might refer to the Bible, where people are often called fools, although in a different sense than we understand the word. When the fool has pointed out that King Lear had little wit in his bald crown, i.e. head, when he gave out his golden one, and sung yet another song, the king wants to know since when has the fool been singing so much. The fool's answer is since Lear made his daughters his mothers, or as we would say, guardians. This he accompanies with a song describing the situation: "Then they for sudden joy did weep, / And I for sorrow sung" (I, IV, 156-157). A little later he sings that "he that

keeps nor crust nor crum, / weary of all, shall want some,” (I, IV, 180-181) referring to King Lear. This happens right before Lear's first daughter starts demanding that King Lear should limit the number of his servants and other people who follow him because of the cost. In his next song the fool says: “The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long / That its had it head bit off by it young,” (I, IV, 198-199) describing the situation between Lear and Goneril aptly. Leaving the scene after Lear, the fool suggests that such a daughter as this should be killed (I, IV, 295-301). The next song is about children who are kind to their fathers if the fathers are rich, but do not care for them if they are poor (II, II, 223-228). After this the fool sings that when things go bad, those who seek their own gain in serving someone leave, but the fool will always stay by his master (II, II, 251-258). Lear's Fool's songs also include an allusion to *Twelfth Night* (Bradley, 69). He sings:

He that has and a little tiny wit, -
 With hey, ho, the wind and the rain, -
 Must make content with his fortunes fit,
 Though the rain it raineth every day. (III, II, 74-77.)

The second and the last line of this song are those of Feste's song at the end of *Twelfth Night*. However, here they fit the occasion, and do not stand out as such, but as an allusion to *Twelfth Night*. Lear's world truly is a rain that rains every day. Standing on the heath, soaking wet from the rain, Lear has finally exhausted his anger and starts to listen to the voice of reason. For the only time in the play, Lear truly sees his fools needs. This is also one of the few places in the play that Lear actually considers the feelings of someone else: usually he is too enwrapped in himself. In this the situation is the opposite of that in *Twelfth Night*, for there the fool is left alone to sing the song, whereas in here he is finally receiving attention. Victor L. Cahn writes that through the influence of the fool Lear has finally acquired the ability to feel compassion that he needs in order to become a great king (95). This is also the fool's last song, and after the prophecy following the song his role begins to diminish, anticipating his

disappearance in the middle of the play.

Different productions of *King Lear* and *Twelfth Night* have treated the songs rather similarly as comes to the melody they are sang to. All fools, except perhaps the BBC *Lear*'s fool have a mellow singing-voice. In the BBC version of *King Lear* the fool is old and angry at Lear, which is heard in his coarse voice that is not that melodic and is close to speaking even in song. In the Laurence Olivier version the fool is younger and has a melodic and rather high singing-voice. The BBC *Twelfth Night* shows Feste as a rich-voiced singer. However, at times he does come to such agility of voice that words lose importance, as the viewer is caught up listening to the tune instead of the lyrics. In the Trevor Nunn version, with Ben Kingsley as Feste, the fool has a soft voice that has a melancholy undertone. The songs in the Trevor Nunn production are sang to a rather merry tune, and Ben Kingsley's acting reveals peaks of gaiety, but all in all his voice and countenance have a sad undertone, which creates a curious combination, fitting Feste's character well. At times the fools emphasise something by reverting from song to speaking voice.

3.4.3 Touchstone and the Minstrel Amiens

Apart from a sing-along (V, III, 15-), in which it is uncertain whether he participates, Touchstone does not sing in the play. However, there is another character that sings, and his songs are much like those of the later wise fools. This is a minstrel called Amiens, and it has been argued that Armin could have doubled these parts (Felver, 45). Doubling parts was actually very common at the time, as the companies were small (Southworth, 130). Even though Amiens is not a wise fool, I have decided to analyse his songs here, as I feel there is an aspect missing in the character of Touchstone. Comparing Touchstone to the other wise fools, especially the musical Feste that follows him in Shakespeare's works, I felt that there was this whole aspect of apposite songs missing. As I was able to find such songs in the play, and as they were sung by a minstrel, a trade close to that of fools, I decided I should have a look at

them.

Amiens's songs are fitting commentary similar to that of Feste and Lear's fool. His songs describe life in Arden quite accurately. "Under the greenwood tree," ends in the lines "Here shall he see/No enemy/But wind and rough weather." The forest of Arden is indeed a safe haven: the enemies of those in the woods enter it only at the end of the play, and then they do it to make peace. However, the people in the forest are at the mercy of the weather. In the summer this might be fine, but winter is coming, and without a proper shelter life in the woods cannot be nice. It is not said how long Duke Senior and his men have been in the woods, but judging from their carefree conduct this cannot be long, for otherwise the reality would have hit them. No one but Touchstone and Amiens seem to see anything to dislike in the life in the woods. In his next song Amiens repeats these lines. His juxtaposition of descriptions of the carefree life in Arden to winter and rough weather describes the situation well. Hardships are yet to come.

Amiens returns to the theme of winter in his next song. This time he begins with the hard weather and ends on a more careless note. There is, however, a line that might have significance in this song. The second line of the chorus is "Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly." This could be interpreted to refer to the situation at the beginning of the play, where Duke Frederick has exiled his brother and Oliver would have Orlando killed. However, it could also refer to the end of the play, where both brothers make peace and the couples are married. The resolution of the play seems weak: The peace made is not really based on any heavy reason, and it happens almost too quickly and easily. The couples married have not known each other long. Oliver and Celia barely know each other; Rosalind has pretended to be a boy to Orlando, who never realised the deceit or recognised his beloved, and Touchstone has already implied that his marriage to Audrey is based on lust and is not made to last (e.g. III, III, 85-89).

It may seem getting sidetracked to analyse Amien's songs in such depth, as

he is not one of the wise fools, but I see in him the development towards Feste and Lear's fool, and their apposite songs. One question remains to be answered: Why did Shakespeare write a separate character to sing the songs? Could he not have used Touchstone? Using a separate character makes sense. Touchstone has only recently arrived in the woods, and he is involved in the action of the play. Amiens, on the other hand, has as far as we know been with the Duke's men as long as they have been in Arden, if not longer. In addition, he is an outsider, and not a part of the action, which allows him to have the perspective to comment on the folly of the others. The traditional stage fools, as well as the fool actors, tended to specialise in a certain aspect of the art of fooling, such as songs, physical comedy, jests, or other. Before the Shakespearean wise fools it was rare to have a fool that was both witty and skilled. As Armin was new in the company, Shakespeare might have hesitated to make Touchstone too different from his predecessors. He was the first of the wise fools, and Shakespeare was probably worried about how the audience would react. Therefore it was natural to divide the functions of the fool to several characters.

4 The Wise Fools' Importance for the Meaning of the Whole Play

The Shakespearean wise fools are also important for our interpretation of the whole play. They are only partly involved in the action of the play, and function often as a kind of a narrator. Though the fool's traditional role can be seen as subversive and grotesque, the Shakespearean wise fools seem to uphold the importance of the traditional order of the world. The wise fools modify the tone of the play, and point out facts about the other characters. They are an important source of alternative opinion on the characters and development of the play.

4.1 Subversiveness

At first sight many of the things the fools say and do might seem highly subversive. The fool's licence and the traditional type of jest, where the fool is allowed to mock his superiors, and even temporarily adopt a position higher than theirs, furnish the fool with a subversive potential. Indeed, the fool's utterances could easily be applied to use in subversive contexts. However, the tradition is that the fool's words can never actually harm anyone.

The Shakespearean wise fools prove faithful companions. They may point out the follies of their masters or mistresses, prove them fools in jest, and even propose a different order of the world, but at the end they stay loyal to their masters or mistresses. Most of the things the fools say mean well and are meant to give their 'betters' a chance to realise and mend their folly. The fools' affection for their masters is deep, and at the end their actions prove not at all subversive. In the following I shall give some examples of this.

4.1.1 Touchstone

As the first of Shakespeare's wise fools, Touchstone is perhaps more subversive towards his master and mistresses than the others. However, his

subversiveness, or what can be interpreted as such, is not designed to change anything. Many of his jests and utterances can be interpreted as subversive, but his actions and opinions speak differently.

In his first scene Touchstone riddles with swearing by one's honour. (I, II, 57) His pun is that if you swear by something that you do not have you are not forsworn. However, he uses a knight as an example of someone who swore by his honour, and according to him this knight had no honour. When asked, Touchstone reveals this knight to be one that Celia's father Frederick loves. Implying that Frederick, who is the current Duke, has dishonourable friends could be seen as subversive. There are, however, mitigating circumstances. The Duke himself is not such an honourable man—he did, after all, banish his elder brother, to whom the Dukedom rightfully belongs, and took his position. Besides, the swearing was over pancakes and mustard, which makes the whole thing ridiculous. David Frail has noticed that Touchstone also mirrors the preceding scene in his argument: by making Celia and Rosalind swear by something that is not, i.e. their beards, he points out that Celia's protestations of love in an inverted situation (If my uncle, thy banisht father, had banisht thy uncle, the duke my father... [I, II, 8-10]) are also based on something that is not (*SC 46*, 112). According to Bakhtin, oaths were an important part of the manifestations of folk culture and carnival humour (5). When oaths became excluded from the official speech and transferred to popular culture and carnival, they “acquired the nature of laughter and became ambivalent” (Bakhtin, 17). This is seen also in the jests of Touchstone: Swearing that certain pancakes are good and certain mustard is naught brings the concept of oaths to the sphere of popular culture and carnival. And when he has Rosalind and Celia swear by their beards he reveals the ambiguity of oaths. For how can we know if the thing someone swears by is correct – it may be easy for an atheist to swear to God and lie. Consistently to his role, as I shall prove later, Touchstone functions to bring realism into the ideals of Celia and Rosalind.

Touchstone also ridicules Rosalind's love for Orlando, both by mocking his

letters (III, II, 102) and with his relationship to Audrey. Orlando's verses do not measure up to Touchstone's standards, and he decides to mock them by improvising some lines of his own. Touchstone's lines do not praise Rosalind, but rather abuse her. This is, however, done jestingly, and is not intended to hurt Rosalind. Touchstone's relationship to Audrey is designed to show the more wretched side of love. It functions as a contrast to the love affairs of the play, and suggests that it might also be lust, not only love, that makes these people want to marry. This derides the meaning of love, and suggesting that the noble Rosalind and Celia, as well as the pastoral Phebe, marry at least in part for something as base as lust, could be seen as subversive. However, Touchstone stays with Rosalind and Celia, and even gets married himself, which take the edge off of any possible subversiveness of his mockery.

The third point where Touchstone could be conceived as being subversive is when he tries to have Corin defend life in the country. In their argument it comes up that courtiers perfume their hand with civet. Touchstone points out that civet is of a very base origin: it is the flux of a cat. (III, II, 67) This fact does make the courtiers seem foolish, and could be seen as subversive. However, Touchstone yearns to be back in court: he is constantly thinking about it, whereas the others seem quite satisfied in their pastoral idyll. Therefore I cannot take his mockery of the court seriously.

Touchstone can even be seen as functioning against subversiveness. With his contemplations on time and rejection of Arden, as well as his holding on to the importance of rank and standing, which can be seen in his persistence of having been a courtier and his somewhat condescending attitude towards the peasants, Touchstone tries to maintain the traditional order of the world.³⁸

The question of Touchstone's loyalty is trickier. Touchstone is the court fool, but whose fool is he originally? Celia's comments suggest that he is Fredrick's fool.

³⁸ John A. Hart, "Foolery Shines Everywhere: The Fool's Function in the Romantic Comedies" Originally published in *Starre of Poets: Discussions of Shakespeare*. Carnegie Institute of Technology, 1966, pp. 31-48. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, pp. 60-68. 66.

If he has been a court fool for long, he must have been Duke Senior's fool. If he was made the court fool only recently, he could be Frederick's fool. One thing is certain: his affection for Rosalind and Celia suggests that he has been in the family for a long time. In any case they are all family, and Touchstone knows all four well.

Touchstone's leaving with Celia and Rosalind, and not exposing their plan to Duke Frederick could be seen as subversive, but is Frederick Touchstone's original master? If his original master was Duke Senior, this action is not subversive.

Touchstone could also be seen as being subversive towards the literary genre of pastoral. *As You Like It* is often considered a pastoral play, but many critics have noticed that Touchstone makes it a mock pastoral. He parodies both the style and substance of pastoral (Goldsmith, 85). This reveals the pastoral genre as an artificial mode invented by the upper classes and cut off from the reality of the countryside. The parody is strong as the genre of pastoral was in fashion at the time. It is interesting that a writer should so attack a literary genre in his play. However, Shakespeare's style is very different from pastoral. Shakespeare relies on drama, on action and dialogue, whereas pastoral is better suited for descriptive style and poems. Shakespeare's characters and plots have various levels of meaning and ambiguity, whereas pastoral tends to give a unified vision. The parody shows that Shakespeare is familiar with the style and can use it, but rejects it as inadequate to express all he wishes to.

4.1.2 Feste

Shakespeare's most ingenious wise fool in comedy, Feste, could be interpreted as being subversive towards religion. His impersonation of Sir Topas, a priest, shows mistrust in the church. What is striking about Sir Topas is his lack of sensitivity. Sir Topas immediately deems Malvolio to be mad and possessed by the devil. After this he actually moves on to preach for paganism.

However, it is possible that Feste's subversion is not directed against religion, but against the kind of religiousness Malvolio embodies. Malvolio is said to be a kind

of a puritan, and as such he would be antagonistic towards Feste, even if there were no personal dislike. Puritans were against actors and theatre, and disapproved of jesters and fools. Were the situation between puritans and entertainers in Illyria anything like that in Shakespeare's England, it would be a complete different thing for Feste to be subversive towards Puritanism than to be subversive towards religion. It could also be thought that Shakespeare uses Feste to express his own views about puritans here. There is also a strong personal dislike between Feste and Malvolio. Feste seeks revenge, and religion is Malvolio's achilles' heel. Besides, it was Maria's idea that Feste should impersonate a priest to Malvolio.

Feste seems to be using religion as a tool in his jesting. Descending from the Feast of Fools, parodying religious rites and texts was a popular form of foolery. Deriding religion to the level of jesting was widely accepted, and can as such not really be seen as subversive. In his first scene Feste jestingly proves Lady Olivia a fool. In Feste's opinion Olivia is a fool to mourn her brother if he is in heaven. This scene, as so many others, can be interpreted on several levels. On one level Feste is only doing his job, but he is also trying to get out of trouble by pleasing Olivia. A third interpretation would be that he is comforting Olivia by saying that her brother is in a better place. In this scene religion functions as a source of comfort, not just a means of jesting. Although the idea is not widely accepted, I can see Feste's point. Why should we grieve for those whom we believe to be in heaven? I can understand why some people would see this scene as subversive towards religion, but I do not share their view. To me religion is portrayed in a good light in here.

The melancholy Feste could also be thought to be subversive towards comedy. However, even if his character breaks the line between comic and tragic, I do not believe that it is meant to question the genre. Feste's realism provides a contrast to the comedy. Without the possibly tragic elements in the play we would not be able to fully understand the gay comedy.

Feste was Lady Olivia's father's fool, and is still attached to the house, but he

also visits duke Orsino's court quite frequently, and is also seen on the streets of Illyria. He does not exhibit such loyalty as Touchstone and King Lear's fool, but this could depend on the situation.

Feste does not seem to like Cesario. This may depend on various reasons. In III, I, 59-60, he says that "who you are and what you would is out of my welkin." This reveals two possible reasons. Feste may resent Cesario as he does not know and cannot get the hang of him, or that he suspects something false in him. Cesario has also taken Feste's place in entertaining Olivia.

The BBC filmatization shows Feste as a friendly jester that does not behave subversively towards anyone, save perhaps in what is already inherent in his lines. However, the Trevor Nunn version, with Ben Kingsley as the fool, shows a very different Feste. This Feste loves Olivia dearly as a friend, if there is not even a hint of more. He resents Cesario for taking his place. Thus, his somewhat possessive attitude towards Olivia could be seen as subversive, as can his condescending attitude towards the other characters in the play. However, there is also another explanation for Feste's antipathy towards Cesario in the Nunn film. The director has taken liberties and shows Viola/Cesario almost kissing Orsino during Feste's song (come away death), which Feste sees. This naturally troubles him.

4.1.3 King Lear's fool

King Lear's fool advises others to leave the king, which would be the wise thing to do, but he does not follow his own advice (Goldsmith, 64). Already in his first scene the fool is hinting that Kent is a fool to come back, and says that Cordelia is better off banished. However, even if he says so, the fool does not think so. He has no intention of leaving the king. The fool jests on Kent being a fool, but I sense an undertone of respect and fondness in him. Most importantly, there is a scene where he explicitly says that the wise thing to do is to let go of someone going down so he won't drag you down with him, and let those going up take you with them. (II, IV, 71)

However, he annuls this in his next sentence by saying that he would have none but knaves follow his advice, since it was given by a fool (Goldsmith, 66). And he continues with a song where he says that opportunists leave in the face of hardships, but promises that he will stay.

He also systematically aspires to sustain the order of his world by pointing out the truth to Lear. Some instances of this may sound as if the fool is mocking the king, but in fact he is trying to make the king see his mistakes and try to correct them. The fool also predicts Goneril and Regan's unkindness to Lear. One could understand those instances as malicious, but he is only trying to prepare the king for this disappointment, and through that help him maintain his mental health.

In the quarto version of the play, the fool even calls Lear a fool. When the King asks: "Dost thou call me fool, boy?" (I, IV, 143), the fool answers that that is the only title Lear has left. This kind of mutual mockery and the use of abusive words affectionately is common among friends, as Bakhtin writes (16). To an outsider it may seem subversive, but when the characters are such close friends as the King and the fool, it is merely affectionate. This kind of use of language is characteristic to Carnival and the popular culture, as Bakhtin points out (16). Similar affectionate mockery can also be seen in the other wise fools. Touchstone mocks Audrey, as I shall explain later in the sub-chapter on praise-abuse, and parodies Rosalind, and Feste calls Olivia a fool.

The BBC filmatization shows the fool shouting at Lear. The fool seems to resent Lear for making the mistake of giving his kingdom to Goneril and Regan. He shouts his opinions to Lear bitterly, standing face to face with him. It is Lear who first begins to realise his mistake in brief moments rather early on in the play, only after that does the fool begin to soften in some of his jests. However, though the fool's aggressive behaviour towards the King can be seen as subversive, he tones it down by staying with him. The fool only has the King's best interest in mind, as can be seen when he mellows down and gives the king emphatic counsel: "Thou shouldst not have

been old before thy time.” The Laurence Olivier version of *King Lear* shows the fool as a desperate character. You can hear the desperation in his voice when he says the same things to Lear that the BBC fool shouted at him. The Laurence Olivier fool directs the most important parts of his jests to Lear, as if to make sure he pays attention to them. In this he lowers his voice and looks Lear straight into the eyes. The desperate fool cannot really be seen as subversive towards Lear, though his desperation shows that he believes that Lear has made the wrong decision.

4.1.4 Conclusions on subversiveness

In the light of these examples I conclude that despite the potential the wise fools are not really subversive. I see no true wish to change the order of the world in them, but rather an aspiration to preserve the traditional order. Fools were actually very conservative (Korhonen, 214), and for a good reason. A fool’s living depended on his master, and a revolution might have left him with no means of living. Armin himself enforced and highlighted social order, at least according to Bradbrook (57). It may seem that I have emphasised the fool’s lack of subversiveness too much, but I strongly feel that this is the case, and the subversive potential in the fools stays that - merely a potential.

Though often seen as a perhaps subversive feast of the common people, carnival was able to exist as long as it did because the leaders of society allowed it to. Carnival, and later on the fools were seen as a vent that released pressures and diminished the danger of an actual revolution (Welsford 317). Folly was “a form of ritualised rebellion that demonstrates the strength of the established order” (Willeford, 227). The fools’ inversions “always presupposed a return to the normal order” (Korhonen, 214). Every inversion strengthened the normal order by assuming it as starting-point (Korhonen, 214). This brings to my mind the Derridan thought that using the concepts of something to criticise it ultimately leads to acceptance, and that

this way it is impossible to truly change things.³⁹ There is something very Foucauldian in the idea that power should allow itself to be subverted a little, for it is reinforced in the restoration of the normal order.⁴⁰

Bakhtin's Carnivalism has often been interpreted as subversive, leading to a revolutionary change, and it has that potential, but it does not necessarily lead there. Carnivalism can be used to parody a text or the characters inside it, for subversive readings, but it can also be used to interpret the carnivalistic symbols in a text without undermining it or reading it as subversive. The concept of subversiveness and the ways the popular-festive symbols make a text carnivalesque can also be used to uncover their opposite

I do not believe that Bakhtin saw carnival as equal to a revolution, or if he did, he has hidden it well. Carnival had durational and spatial borders, after which everything turned back to normal. However subversively people behaved during carnival, at the end nothing had really changed in society. Like in the ancient Saturnalia, people behaved after carnival as if nothing had happened.

The trouble in using Carnivalism is that *Rabelais and his World* was written in Stalinist Soviet Union. It is possible that Bakhtin had to hide his thoughts at least in part. This gives us a whole range of possible interpretations: Bakhtin could have tried to criticise the system and incite to a revolution, his writings may have been influenced by politics or then not, or he can have been misunderstood by the later western scholars because of the political surroundings. It is possible that people have read too much revolution to Carnivalism in their attempts to separate Bakhtin from the resented Stalinism. Personally, I would hesitate to read Bakhtin's work in the context of communist Russia. Besides, Carnivalism is more than Bakhtin, it is a theory, and as such it can be modified to suit different purposes.

³⁹ Jaques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" In: *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. Robert Con Davis. (Longman: New York & London, 1986) 483.

⁴⁰ http://www.lycidas.net/251_summer03/lectures/archives/000223.html (Professor Zach Davis, 21.4.2004).

4.2 Popular festive images

The popular-festive grotesque images that are such an important part of *Rabelais*, and thus also Bakhtin's work, are not so important in Shakespeare, and are manifested rather subtly. However, it is possible to find such images in Shakespeare, and the knowledge of them may prove important in interpreting lines and even scenes. Therefore I shall have a look at the possibly popular-festive grotesque images used by the wise fools.

One of the popular-festive grotesque images is praise-abuse. In carnivalesque images things are turned into their opposites or counterparts. Thus praise becomes abuse and abuse is changed into praise (Bakhtin 203). There is no pure abstract negation in the carnivalesque images, they embrace both poles in contradiction and unity (Bakhtin 203). Paraphrasing Victor Hugo, Bakhtin (43) writes that the grotesque is used in contrasting the sublime. It is this complementary relationship that produces the truly beautiful, which is seen most clearly in Shakespeare (Bakhtin 43). Indeed, by acting as a contrast to things in the play, the wise fools bring depth to the drama, thus ultimately making the play more beautiful. Bakhtin also paraphrases Jean Paul as referring to Rabelais and Shakespeare as literary manifestations of grotesque in the Renaissance (42). According to Bakhtin, Jean Paul mentions in particular the "deriding of the entire world," meaning the "melancholy clowns" in Shakespeare.

In *As You Like It* there is a fairly typical praise-abuse -scene. This is in act III scene III, where Touchstone abuses poetry, love, and, most importantly, Audrey. He begins by wishing that Audrey was poetical. When Audrey asks what poetical means and whether it is honest in deed and word, Touchstone replies that it certainly is not.

No, truly; for the truest poetry is the most feigning;
and lovers are given to poetry; and what they swear in poetry
may be said as lovers they do feign.

III, III, 17-19.

Comparing love to feigning is characteristic of the whole sub-plot of Touchstone's wooing Audrey, as it is essentially an elaborate jest or a parody of Rosalind and Orlando's love affair. From this Touchstone goes on to abusing Audrey. Touchstone's logic is that if Audrey were poetical, she might be feigning when she swears that she is honest, which is desirable as "honesty coupled to beauty is to have honey a sauce to sugar." To this Audrey replies that she is not fair, which Touchstone turns round to mean that she is a foul slut. Audrey protests that she is not a slut, to which Touchstone concludes that "praised be the gods for thy foulness! sluttishness may come hereafter." The extensive abuse in this scene actually turns round to its opposite. As Bakhtin (415) writes: "The popular-festive language of the marketplace abuses while praising and praises while abusing. ... Either praise or abuse may prevail, but the one is always on the brink of passing into the other." Thus, Touchstone's abuse is turned into praise, especially as Audrey takes it with such calm. Though someone might think that Audrey is merely too ignorant to understand the abuse, I believe this cannot be the case, as the abuse is so blatant. Audrey is actually a quiet and adaptable character whose only folly is her desire to experience something new, to get out of the country and into the town. She is perhaps the only character in the play besides Touchstone that expresses that she prefers town. At the end of the play they all decide to return to town, but before this everyone seems content with the forest.

Traces of praise-abuse can also be seen in *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*. Feste's jest where he proves Olivia a fool for mourning her brother has such characteristics. Olivia is not in the mood for jesting, and bids the fool to be taken away. Feste replies that they should take the lady away and persists in this until Olivia asks for the reason. When given the chance to explain why he thinks her a fool, Feste states that she should only mourn for her brother if she thinks his soul is in hell, not if it is in heaven. These are comforting words. Though Feste is implying that Olivia is a fool, this is not done to abuse her. Feste's treatment of Malvolio as Sir Topas the curate also has features of this type of inversion. Feste is preaching for paganist beliefs that existed

before Christianity, such as Pythagoras' "That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird" (IV, II, 54-55) and treats Malvolio as someone possessed by the devil. He begins with exorcism and goes on to claim that everything Malvolio thinks and perceives in his prison is wrong. In the respected position of a priest, Feste is abusing Malvolio. Though Malvolio may deserve some of this, it goes a little too far, and can therefore be seen to turn round at the light of praise-abuse. This scene establishes Malvolio back as the serious-minded sane servant after the episode where he makes a fool of himself in falling in love with Olivia.

King Lear's fool is often harsh with his master. He implies that Kent is a fool for staying with the king, but stays with him himself. He also inverts things, such as saying that the king banished two of his daughters and did the third a favour. However, the fool's remarks carry a seed of truth, and cannot be seen as pure inversions of the praise-abuse type, and when he abuses Goneril and Regan in his speeches, he is not inverting. The fool abuses almost everyone except Cordelia, but his abuse of the King is meant to point things out to the king and keep him sane, and his abuse of Kent can easily be turned round as praise for his loyalty, whereas his abuses of Goneril and Regan mean what they say. These abuses are often cloaked in proverbs and such, and there is even a place where one might think the fool is saying something good about Regan. On their way to Regan after Goneril has revealed her true nature, the fool tells Lear that he thinks Regan will "use thee kindly." However, he does not mean this, as he follows with saying that the two sisters will "taste" as like as crab does to a crab. It has even been suggested that the fool means the word kin instead of kind in his kindly.⁴¹

Also other grotesque images can be found in the fool's remarks. The grotesque image of the body was an important part of the popular-festive images. The attitude to the corporal and genital was liberal. Though Shakespeare's use of these images was

⁴¹ Alan Hager, "Lear's Fool" in Vicki Janik, ed., *Fools and jesters in literature, art, and history : a bio-bibliographical sourcebook*, (Westport, Conn. : Greenwood Press, 1998), paraphrasing Stephen Booth's *King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition, and Tragedy*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983). 293.

much more subtle than Rabelais', they can be found in his plays. The wise fools seem restricted and subtle in their bodily images, at least in comparison to what they could be in the light of the tradition. However, they do employ some bodily images: King Lear's fool jests on a codpiece and complains about the cold, Touchstone reveals a grotesque side of court life by confessing that the civet courtiers use to perfume their hands is actually the flux of a cat (II, II, 67-69), and Feste is obsessed with money, the material means of living, and satisfying his body with food and drink. The grotesque images associated with the bauble I have already discussed earlier.

Touchstone takes the most sexual role of the three wise fools, though this may be to jest on Rosalind and to reveal the lust underneath love. He uses his sexuality to "teach the audience about the world of the play," to "create understanding of and distance from" the mix of love-affairs in the play, and to mirror Rosalind and Orlando (Videbaek, *SC 46*, 124). Lear's fool and Feste only use the sexual imagery in a few jests or remarks. Feste seems the most asexual of them all, though this may be emphasized by the conduct of the other characters in the play. The only place where Feste can be seen to imply to sexuality is in the final song:

When that I was a little and a tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came, alas! to wive,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
With toss-pots still had drunken heads,
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,
 With hey, ho, the wind and the rain:-
 But that's all one, our play is done,
 And we'll strive to please you every day.

Shakespeare's plays abound in double meaning, ambiguity and several possible interpretations to words and lines. Thus the "foolish thing" in the first stanza can be interpreted as the boy's genital organs. The "coming to wive" in the third stanza refers to marriage and marital duties. The beds in the fourth stanza I would interpret as old age, as I think most readers would, though it can also be interpreted to mean living in a marriage. The beginning of the world in the last stanza seems an abstract idea, and it does differ from the four other stanzas, but at the same time it refers to Adam and Eve, and how the world began through them.

However, the song is also thoroughly sad. It gives us a picture of the life of a lower class person in those days. Feste embodies the need of the lower classes in his obsession with money. Though fools were supposed to be provided for by the house they were attached to, Feste is constantly begging for money for his jests. The security of means of living seems important to him – unless of course he is planning to use the money in drinking, as in the Kenneth Branagh⁴² filmatization. However, he may also be thinking of retiring or leaving for somewhere or something else, as the Trevor Nunn filmatization suggests.

The physical comfort of food and warmth provided by a house is very important to the wise fools. Touchstone is of the opinion that he would be better off at home in town, and complains about this several times. He hangs on to the ways of court even in the forest. As already mentioned, Feste is nearly obsessed with money. King Lear's fool complains about the cold and rain on their journey, longing for

⁴² William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. A renaissance theatre production, directed by Kenneth Branagh. Thames Television Ltd, 1988.

shelter and security, and hoping that the good old times could return. Some of this is done in the best interest of the king, to keep him from falling into madness, but we can also hear the discomfiture of the fool. Lear's fool also employs images that hint to sexuality in his jests. He refers twice to the codpiece, the covering of male genital organs in Renaissance clothes (Willeford 216): "The cod-piece that will a house / Before the head has any..." (III, II, 27-28) "Marry, here's grace and a cod-piece; that's a wise man and a fool" (III, II, 40-41). The latter is ambiguous in terms of who is who of the king and his fool.

Carnival celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world (Bakhtin, 410). This kind of grotesque carnivalistic relationship between death and birth can also be found in Shakespeare, though it is not as manifest as in Rabelais. The accelerated pace of carnivalistic birth and death images, ripening and rotting at the same time, can be seen in Touchstone wooing Audrey. In contrast to Rosalind and Orlando, who prolong their wooing, Touchstone attempts to step right through wooing, winning, wedding and even cheating in one brief scene (V, I), parodying the two protagonists (Frail, *SC46*, 113). Feste works as an instrument of rebirth. First he cheers Olivia out of her mourning and helps her forget the dead brother. Then he points out how "opall" Orsino's mind is. At the end of the play he brings the audience back to reality with his song, at the end of which he steps out of role and reveals the actor behind the character: "But that's all one, our play is done, / And we'll strive to please you every day." King Lear's fool does not try to mitigate his comments even when he sees the king is at the verge of a breakdown. It is as if he might be trying to get the king to break so that he could be reborn. The whole play describes a time before death, where everything rots and is ready for a change. At the end of the play all the important characters belonging to the old world die.

Indeed, as Bakhtin writes (127), the writers that become geniuses reflect an uncompleted, changing world. The past is disintegrating and the future is yet to be formed. This is why the works of these writers have so many different meanings and interpretations, and may seem obscure. The three plays I have considered here in my thesis certainly describe such a changing world, as do Shakespeare's plays in general. *As You Like It* is a phase in the lives of the characters, a turning point that turns everything for the better – though the ending is left that much open that we cannot be absolutely sure of this. *Twelfth Night* describes the birth of something new, a new world for the main characters. And *King Lear* literally destroys the old world, leaving the future open for anything. The fools seem to function as a kind of guides in this, at times hanging on to the old, as Touchstone at the beginning of the play and Lear's fool throughout the play. At the same time the Fools look into the future, predicting what will happen. Both Lear's fool and Touchstone seem to reject the present at least on some level, and Feste is not that happy with it either.

4.3 The Tone of the Play

The wise fools play a role in setting the tone of the play. Touchstone makes *As You Like It* a mock-pastoral, Feste brings dark tones into the comedy of *Twelfth Night*, and King Lear's fool functions as a sane contrast to the insane King, highlighting his madness.

4.3.1 Touchstone

Touchstone has an important role in changing or modifying the genre of *As You Like It*. *As You Like It* has been considered a pastoral play. Touchstone, however, makes it a mock pastoral. Pastoral tends to depict life in the country as a golden age, completely forgetting realism. While the other characters treat their life in the country

as an adventure, Touchstone refuses to delude himself.

Welsford and Goldsmith have noticed Touchstone's role in criticizing the pastoral convention. Welsford (249) considers Touchstone as the mouthpiece of Shakespeare's criticism of a prevailing literary fashion and Goldsmith (93) describes Touchstone as an agent of literary satire in the pastoral tradition. However, this criticism does not undermine the play as it comes from inside. Welsford (249) writes that the critique can actually preserve the play from the insipidity which often marring pastoral literature. Goldsmith (50) points out that Touchstone acts as a comic catalyst in the golden world of Arden. However, instead of marring the setting, his presence in Arden makes it more desirable than the gilded world of conventional pastoral (Goldsmith, 50). According to Goldsmith (85), self-mockery and light, ironical humour are well suited to satirize literary forms. This can be seen in *As You Like It*. In general, it is more difficult to resist critique that is given in this way.

Touchstone proves himself a clever parodist of the pastoral style in his mockery of Orlando's love lyrics in III, II, 107 (Goldsmith, 85). In the narration of his wooing of Jane Smile Touchstone reveals the absurdity of pastoral "...and I remember the wooing of a peascod instead of her..." II, IV, 50 (Goldsmith). He also evaluates pastoral and romantic conventions with real rural images⁴³ in II, IV, 46: "I remember the kissing of her batlet, and the cow's dugs that her pretty chopt hands had milked." Brian Vickers⁴⁴ points out that the pastoral setting in Arden creates a rather static dramatic situation. Touchstone's love affair with Audrey is also important in setting the tone of the play. It reveals the more grotesque side of love.

Touchstone's taking the lofty conventions of verse lament and putting them to lowly use in II, IV, 45-55 makes them ridiculous, adding to the picture of *As You Like It* as a parody of literary conventions:⁴⁵

⁴³ Robert Weimann: *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*. (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1978.) 46.

⁴⁴ Brian Vickers: *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose*. (Methuen & Co Ltd, London, 1968.) 200.

⁴⁵ Bente A. Videbaek, "Touchstone in *As You Like It*," Originally published in: *The Stage Clown in Shakespeare Theatre*, Greenwood Press, 1996, pp. 85-94. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, pp.

I remember when I was in love I
 broke my sword upon a stone, and bid him take
 that for coming a-night to Jane Smile: and I
 remember the kissing of her batlet, and the cow's
 dugs that her pretty chopt hands had milkt: and I
 remember the wooing of a peascod instead of her;
 from whom I took two cods, and, giving her them
 again, said with weeping tears, 'wear these for my sake.'
 We that are true lovers run into strange capers;
 but as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature
 in love mortal in folly.

Touchstone reveals the state of things in the reality of the play also in his superficially condescending attitude towards the peasants. The other characters in the play do not really come in touch with the native inhabitants of the countryside.⁴⁶ This is also usual in pastoral in general, which is why Touchstone's pointing this out can be seen as criticism towards the mode.

As You Like It portrays the countryside as a place free of worries. The forest of Arden and its outskirts are a place of love and reconciliation. The town, on the other hand, is a place of scheming and power-struggles as well as empty courtesy and rules of conduct. Somehow the country brings out the good in everyone, which is the traditional defence of pastoral writing. However, there are a few discordant notes to the division between the country and the town: Touchstone refuses to give in to the charm of the forest. Rosalind does still scheme in the forest, although this is more harmless: she does not reveal her true identity to Orlando, but portrays a young man. And at the end of the play everyone decides to go back to the town.

122-127. 122.

⁴⁶ Theodore B. Leinwand: "Conservative Fools in James's Court and Shakespeare's Plays." Published in *Shakespeare Studies* 1987, vol. 19, pp.219ff. 227.

4.3.2 Feste

Although *Twelfth Night* begins rather melancholically, it is essentially a light-hearted comedy. In addition to Malvolio, who behaves quite foolishly and is himself partly responsible for his misery, there is only one truly sad character in the play. This is Feste. The supposedly merry jester is melancholy at heart. Feste's melancholy, brought forth in some of his jests, brings the kind of seriousness and sadness into the play that it would lack completely if it were not for the fool. His view of the world is ironical and he has a tendency to philosophise. At the beginning of the play Feste has to make a conscious effort to put himself into the right mood for fooling. In III, I, 33-40 he reveals his opinion that husbands are fools and that foolery is everywhere. In the confusion of identity caused by Sebastian's appearance in IV, I, Feste philosophises that "nothing that is so, is so." To the Duke he reveals that he thinks a person is better for his foes and worse for his friends (V, I, 15-22). And although he does also sing two happy songs, two of his songs are melancholy, and one of these ends the play, thus staying on the mind of the audience. Feste does not, however, make the whole play sad, but gives it a dark lining, accentuating the colours of the play and giving them depth, thus bringing the play closer to reality.

4.3.3 Lear's fool

King Lear's fool highlights the king's tragic mistake and blindness to the reality, making what could be a sad play of an incomprehensible twist of fate into a play about the repercussions of self-love and susceptibility to flattery. Without the fool we would not be able to see things nearly as clearly as now. He sees the true nature of people around him, something that Lear is unable to do, as well as Lear's shortcomings. However, as the tragic flaw of the protagonist is a convention in the

genre, the fool's pointing out this flaw and its repercussions does not affect the genre of the play.

The fool also contributes to giving the play a tone of irony (Wood, *SC* 46, 201). From the beginning to the end of his role, the fool keeps pointing out the irony in the situations. His inversions, such as "why, this fellow hath banished two on's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will" (I, IV, 104-106), and "thou madest thy daughters thy mothers" (I, IV, 174-175), reveal the irony in the outcome of Lear's actions. In giving his power to the two elder daughters and banishing the third Lear has them reveal their true nature, and at the end of the play Lear has banished the two from his heart and seen the value of the third. In addition to this, Cordelia has learned that one of his suitors is true, and the other is only after money. Thus Lear has actually done Cordelia a favour against his will at that moment.

There is one thing that separates King Lear's fool from all the other wise fools: he disappears in the middle of the play. His last words are the enigmatic "and I'll go to bed at noon" III, VI, 85. This is said as a jesting reply to the king's "we'll go to supper in the morning." However, according to Southworth the fool's words could be seen as a reference to Will Somers, who is said to have suffered from an illness that caused him to fall asleep at unusual times and in unusual places, perhaps the illness we call narcolepsy (79). This is an interesting thought, for if you substitute Lear's fool with Will Somers, that would make Lear Henry VIII. Certainly the disputes about the succession after Edward resemble the chaos in *King Lear*, but as there are clear sources for the play and the topic would have been futile, the thought is far-fetched. In addition, I have not found anything to support this thought in the source literature. The three wise fools' position in the family does, however, resemble that of Will Somers, as Glenys McMullen suggests.⁴⁷ They were all originally the fathers fools, but feel

⁴⁷ Glenys McMullen: "The Fool as Entertainer and Satirist, On Stage and in the World." Originally published in: *The Dalhousie Review*, Vol. 50, no 1, Spring 1970, pp.10-22. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, pp. 18-23. 21.

close to the daughter. Touchstone is Duke Frederick's fool, but leaves the court with Celia and Rosalind, Feste was Olivia's father's fool, but belongs now to her, and Lear's fool is so close to Cordelia that he pines away after Lear has banished her, and even opposes the king on this matter.

Different filmed versions of the plays reveal how much the role of the fool and how it is perceived has influence on the tone of the play. Making Feste a contended fool, as in the BBC production, results in a harmless comedy, whereas making him a more discontented, enigmatic figure, as in the Trevor Nunn version, brings in ambiguity and emphasizes the elements in the plot that might threaten the happy ending. The BBC Lear's fool emphasizes the king's tragic flaw by shouting at him, whereas the Laurence Olivier fool brings forth the tragic elements in his desperation. The BBC fool seems to think things can still be turned right, if only Lear would listen to him, whereas the Laurence Olivier fool surrenders to stronger powers and the current situation. The Laurence Olivier fool remains to some extent in his traditional role as a jester, whereas the BBC fool becomes Lear's bitter teacher, showing only a peek of his role as a jester in the "She that's a maid now..." and in his prophecy. To me the Trevor Nunn Feste and the BBC Lear's fool come closer to the fools' character and role in *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*. However, there are certain aspects where the other version comes closer to my view on these fools.

4.4 Voice

Readers have often looked for the author's voice in Shakespeare's plays. One place to look for this is the character of the wise fool. The wise fool provides insights into the play and balances it by acting as a counterpart to the other characters, or the theme and even the genre of the play. Welsford finds the author's voice in Touchstone criticizing the pastoral conventions (249). However, I would not interpret the fool as the author's voice as it is. I believe the author's voice is seen in all the characters in the play in one way or another, but it is seen more clearly in the fool than elsewhere. At

times Shakespeare speaks and expresses his opinion through the character of the fool.⁴⁸ Even if the fool's opinions do not necessarily always represent the author's, he brings out an alternate view on things, which, I believe, was important for Shakespeare. The fool's view on things is often in contrast to that of the other characters. Touchstone resents the pastoral idyll, Feste remains partly an outsider, and Lear's fool keeps pointing out the king's lack of judgement. Arriving at the forest of Arden Touchstone says:

Ay, now am I in Arden; the more fool I;
when I was at home, I was in a better place:
but travellers must be content.

(II, IV, 15-17)

In the forest he hangs on to courtly manners, such as the seven stages of quarrel (V, IV, 69-105), contemplating on such things as time (II, VII, 22-28), and conducting an argument for and against life in the city and in the country (III, II, 13-86). This is in contrast to the other characters in play. The fool is often the most clear source of polyphony in the play.

Shakespeare's plays are polyphonic.⁴⁹ There is no single voice, no single way of interpreting the play and describing it. Each character has his or her own voice in the play. There are usually two conflicting sides in the main plot and often also a sub-plot. All these contribute to the multiplicity of the tales told and the views expressed in the play. The variety of discourses – vernacular and literary, vulgar and polite – in Shakespeare's plays makes them heteroglossic. This variety resists dominance by any single discourse (Lodge, 22f), and through that, any single view. More than any other single character, the wise fools bring this kind of variety into the plays. They are able to use different kind of accents, such as social and regional accents, literary language, the vernacular, and even some Latin. They use this ability often in jests, signifying things even with a change of accent.

⁴⁸ Shyam M. Asnani: "An Apology for Fools (-A Study in Shakespearean Fools)." Originally published in: *The Modern Review* vol CXXIX No. 5, May, 1969, pp. 335-340. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, pp. 14-18. 15.

⁴⁹ David Lodge: *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism*. Routledge, London, 1990, 96.

Touchstone, for example, parodies Silvius and Rosalind's verse lament in prose in II, IV, 45-55. With this ridiculous story, he not only reveals the empty ring of conventional phrasing, but also makes the audience aware that Rosalind's love needs maturing (Videbaek, *SC 46*, 122), especially as Rosalind's reaction to Touchstone's parody is "Thou speak'st wiser than thou art ware of." Touchstone also parodies Orlando in verse, following the form closely but changing the words to the partly grotesque:

If a hart do lack a hind,
 Let him seek out Rosalind.
 If the cat will after kind,
 So be sure will Rosalind.
 Winter garments must be lined,
 So must slender Rosalind
 They that reap must sheaf and bind;
 Then to cart with Rosalind.
 Sweetest nut hath sourest rind,
 Such a nut is Rosalind.
 He that sweetest rose will find,
 Must find love's prick and Rosalind.
 (III, II, 102-113)

After this he states that he believes there was also something wrong in the form of Orlando's poem: "This is the very false gallop of verses" (III, II, 114). By his improvised parodying of Orlando's verse, Touchstone has reduced it in worth and depth.

King Lear's fool is full of proverbs and folk wisdom. He is the voice of reason in the chaos of the play. King Lear and his fool represent the old world, Lear's daughters the new. This can be seen also in the way the fool addresses both Lear and Goneril. With Lear the fool uses the old forms 'thee' and 'thou,' with Goneril the new form 'you.' This is interesting in another sense, too. 'You' was first used as a sign of higher status: a son would call his father 'you,' but the father would call the son 'thee' or 'thou.' Thus, it can be seen as a sign of lessened value or high familiarity in the

fool's eyes that he calls the king 'thee' and 'thou.' Familiarity can also be seen in the fact that both Lear and his fool call each other 'boy,' though neither of them is hardly young. Lear's fool's proverbs are also in deep contrast to the language in the play, except perhaps Edgar's railings when he is pretending to be a natural fool.

Feste, as the most clearly intelligent fool, philosophises on the nature of language, and wittily reveals the different meanings of words and expressions in his jests. In the scene with Viola he concludes on the nature of language: "A sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit: how quickly the wrong side may be turn'd outward!" (III, I, 11-13). Himself he defines not as lady Olivia's fool, but her "corrupter of words" (III, I, 37). In the confusion of identity in the scene with Sebastian Feste philosophises that "nothing that is so, is so" (IV, I, 8-9). Not knowing about the confusion, Sebastian gets tired with the fool and sends him away: "I prithee, foolish Greek, depart from me: There's money for thee" (IV, I, 18). He knows that Feste is a fool, as he gives him money, but he also recognises the philosopher in him, as he calls him a Greek. In the next scene Feste quotes a very likely fictional character as saying: "that that is, is" (IV, II, 16-17). This is in contrast to what he said in the previous scene, and, as he continues by asking "for, what is that but that, and is but is?" (IV, II, 18), he is building up a fairly philosophical, though seemingly simple view on language and the essence of reality. Feste is also aware of at least one aspect of logic and the structure of language, as he says "your four negatives make your two affirmatives" (V, I, 19-20). This is inventive and stretching the boundaries of language, but it does make sense in the case of negating a negative: 'I am not unintelligent,' though here there are only two negatives that make one affirmative. However, a more plausible explanation is that Feste is simply pointing out that usually if people are too eager to deny something, such as saying 'no' many times, the thing

they are denying is actually true, or they actually mean yes. At the end of the play Feste sings a song where one line stands out linguistically. In “with toss-pots still had drunken heads” he looses syntax, probably deliberately to suit the lyrics of the line. The relationship of the song and the line also fits the play as whole, for there has been a discordant note throughout the play, whether in the character of the wise, melancholy fool, or somewhere else in the play.

According to Lodge, Bakhtin’s thinking about literature worked on binary categories: monologic/dialogic, poetry/prose, canonical/carnavalesque (89). Shakespeare, however, refuses to adjust to categories. He breaks these boundaries even before they were invented. The wise fool is sufficient to show these boundaries broken, though it is seen also elsewhere. The fool changes from poetry to prose and back when it suits him and his message. He brings a carnivalesque element in the play but his views are ultimately of containment.

4.5 Narrator

Traditionally the fool often functioned as a link between the audience and the play. He was not so much a part of the play, but an individual entertainer, who stayed on the stage after the play to perform jests. Traces of this can be seen also in the Shakespearean wise fools, for example in Feste, who stays on stage after the play to sing a song. According to Welsford the court-fool’s traditional position in drama as a link between the stage and the audience and role as a licensed critic of action provided a medium to offer insights into and interpretations of the play to the audience (248ff). In this they resemble a narrator. The wise fools’ insights into the character and flaws of the other characters in the play, as well as some prophetic predictions on what is going to happen are important clues for the audience in understanding the play, as Welsford (254) points out of *King Lear*. Admittedly the jests containing these insights

are usually addressed to the character in question and not to the audience, but as the characters very rarely if ever take heed of this disguised advice, and do not even seem to understand them, I cannot help but wonder why they were put in the play if not to convey a message to the audience. Feste gives advice to Maria on her plans to marry Sir Toby: “Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage” (I, V, 19) and “If Sir Toby would leave drinking, thou wert as witty a piece of Eve’s flesh as any in Illyria” (I, V, 25-26). He seems to see how exaggerated Olivia’s mourning is, for otherwise he would not have the audacity to answer Olivia’s “Take the fool away” with the jest beginning with “Do you not hear, fellows? Take away the lady” (I, V, 37). Feste also sees how inconstant Duke Orsino’s mind is.

Touchstone reveals the corruptness of Frederick’s court in his jest on the knight that had no honour (I, II, 60-79). He also points out that he thinks it is not appropriate for ladies to watch the wrestling, as he knows it is going to be bloody.

King Lear’s fool seems to know the outcome of the play from the beginning. The fool’s absence at the beginning of the play and the fact that he “hath much pined away” since Lear banished Cordelia (I, IV, 71-72) signify the reader that this was the wrong decision. The fool’s inversion that Lear has banished two of his daughters and done the third a blessing reflects the situation at the end of the play: the two elder daughters have revealed their true nature, and Lear has banished them from his heart.

The wise fools’ unique position places them in a way into the role of a narrator. Their knowledge of the world of the play and the true nature of the characters in it seems at times omniscient. The fool’s comments deepen our understanding of the characters and play.

Welsford, among other critics, has also found the Shakespearean wise fools to resemble the Greek chorus (248). The wise fools can certainly be seen to take some of the functions of the chorus in ancient Greek drama. The chorus was a group of people

in Greek drama that commented on the action as a kind of a narrator.⁵⁰ It was also used to divide the play into acts, as was the Elizabethan fool, who was often used to begin a new scene.

The wise fools, especially King Lear's fool, display foresight and are almost like the voice of a disembodied wisdom, thus resembling the chorus (Asnani, *SC 46*, 16). There is, however, a difference: the fool's knowledge does not come from a mystical inspiration, but is the product of experience and insight, as Asnani points out. Hotson argues that the gnomic wisdom of the sharp truths uttered by King Lear's fool resembles that of a Greek chorus (*Shakespeare's Motley*, 96). In any case, Carnival had a deep philosophical character (Bakhtin, 252).

Many of the fool's comments are ignored by the other characters in the play. It is as if they could not hear him or were unable to understand them. The fool's comments rarely, if ever, lead into a change in the course of action, however small. This, I believe, reinforces the idea of the fool as a kind of a narrator. Though his comments are not directed at the audience, and are inconsistent in their function as narration, we are inclined to listen to the fool. Even if the characters do not take heed of the fool's advice, which takes place more often than not, we see their importance in offering insights into the play. Especially Feste and King Lear's fool constantly offer the other characters advice that are not heard, or at least do not produce any response. One can not help but wonder what the point of this advice is if it does not change anything in the play. One way to explain this is that they function as a kind of narration, deepening our picture of the characters and developments of plot in the play. Their insights modify our interpretation of the play.

Though the fool usually only shows his wit in a jesting dialogue, performing to an audience of one or more inside the play, we can find places where he speaks without an audience. These reveal things that may not be revealed to the other characters. Touchstone has a long sentence spoken aside. Here he reveals that he

⁵⁰ <http://reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/C/chorusGr.html> The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia Copyright © 2003, Columbia University Press. 6.7.2005.

wished to be married by Sir Oliver Martext in the woods, because he was not likely to marry him well, which would give Touchstone a good excuse when he wished to leave his wife. Feste exhorts his wit to put him in the right mood for fooling:

Wit, an't be thy will, put me into good fooling!
 Those wits, that think they have thee, do very oft
 prove fools; and I, that am sure I lack thee, may
 pass for a wise man: for what says Quinapalus?
 'Better a witty fool than a foolish wit.'
 (I, V, 30-34)

It is not self-evident that the fool is always ready to jest. During this little speech there is no-one else present in the scene. King Lear's fool does not seem to have any such moments of solitary reflections, but on the other hand it seems that he is rarely, if ever, heard. Some of the things he says could also be seen as asides, as he may be saying them to himself, while the other characters are too far to hear or engaged in something else.

Talking about asides in general, Robert Weimann writes that the asides, as well as related verbal conventions, can not only pass on information to the audience, but also create irony, especially in building up character (233). Indeed, the asides discussed above do create an irony, not inside the character of the fool but between how the other characters see the fool and the reality, which is what the audience sees. Even the cynical Jaques does not seem to realise that Touchstone is not serious in his wish to marry Audrey. Touchstone's confession in the aside strengthens the sub-plot as a parody of love. Feste's exhortation of wit reveals to the audience that the fool has to labour to be in the mood for jesting, whereas the other characters in the play do not see this.

The role of the fool as a narrator is not shown emphatically in the filmatizations. In fact, the BBC filmatization of *Twelfth Night* does not even show Feste singing the last stanza of his epilogue song directly to the audience, even though it is clearly addressed to it. The Trevor Nunn version does, at least, show him addressing "we'll strive to please you every day" to the audience, and even repeating

it. Ben Kingsley also talks with his eyes to the audience. The BBC Lear's fool concentrates on talking to Lear, which is fitting. However, in this he often nearly turns his back on the audience, evading the character's possible function as a narrator. Only the relatively unimportant parts, such as the fool's prophecy and his jest on "She that's a maid long..." are spoken to the audience. These are addressed to the audience very markedly, the camera zooming in the actor's face on the prophecy, and the jest said in a corridor with a jocular gesture with the hand and a clownish expression in the face at the end, as if they had tried to fit everything jester-like in the character in this brief scene. The Laurence Olivier fool is more open to the audience, emphasizing important points with a change of tone.

4.6 Outsider

Though the wise fools are an important part of the plays, their involvement in the action is peripheral.⁵¹ They do nothing to further the plot in any direction. If they have a more active part in initiating action, it is in the sub-plot and has no consequences for the play. Touchstone does woo and finally marry Audrey, but this has no influence on anyone, save the country fellow William, who was in love with her, but he has only a minor role in the play. Maria suggested Feste's impersonation of a priest to Malvolio. King Lear's Fool does nothing active in the play. His frequent jests implying that the King has made a mistake might be seen as trying to initiate something, but as the king takes no heed of it, the fool's role remains that of an outsider inside the play. Thus, the wise fools have no influence on the outcome of the play. Their influence is limited to our interpretation of it. Here they have a major influence, and this is an important part of the play as a whole, but they have no influence on the plot and outcome, which is why I deem their involvement in the action peripheral. As Goldsmith writes: "The fool is usually detached from the main

⁵¹ Gareth Lloyd Evans: "Shakespeare's Fools: The Shadow and the Substance of Drama" Originally published in *Shakespearean Comedy* Edward Arnold, 1972, pp.142-159. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, pp. 52-60. 55.

action, but he is not irrelevant to the theme of the play. That Shakespeare could add Touchstone, Feste, Lavache and Lear's Fool to the old plays or stories upon which his dramas were based is proof of the fool's relative detachment. That he did add them immeasurably enhances the meaning and the beauty of these plays" (41).

At times the wise fools disappear somewhere. This is seen most clearly in *King Lear*, where the fool is absent both at the beginning of the play and all through the latter part of the play, where he disappears with the words "and I'll go to bed at noon," to be mentioned only once after that – if you take Lear's "and my poor fool is hanged" to mean the fool and not Cordelia. Feste is also absent – at least he has been, for at the beginning of the play he returns from being away without permission, and he is also missed at the duke's palace at one point of the play. Though the sub-plot of fooling Malvolio would suit the traditional fool well, Feste is not actively involved in it, except in the scene of Malvolio's exorcism, which can be seen as a play within a play.⁵² He only comes in at times. Touchstone is not physically absent, but refuses to take part in the pastoral dream, and frequently complains about things the others do not see. It has even been suggested that everything else in the forest is a play or a game for Touchstone, and he only finds himself again when he meets Duke Senior (Hart, *SC* 46, 66). A kind of mental absence can be seen in the three fools. They are at one remove from the other characters in the play. Touchstone refuses to be happy with the pastoral Arden and does not believe in romantic love, Feste is melancholy and unable to join the revelry of *Twelfth Night* in his heart. He also has no romantic interest in the play. King Lear's fool refuses to fall into madness and despair even though he sees from the beginning what is going to happen.

The wise fools stand at one remove from their world. Their position in society is not as fixed as the other characters' and they are able to move from upstairs to downstairs on the social ladder and vice versa, coming into contact with nearly every

⁵² Roberta Mullini, "Playing the Fool: The Pragmatic Status of Shakespeare's Clowns" Originally published in *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 1 no. 1, February, 1985, pp. 98-104. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, 24-29. 26.

character in the play. They are able to comment on the play and function often as a kind of punctum indifference.

The wise fool does not usually identify with the characters or situations in the play, but sits back and sees behind the illusion (Evans, *SC 46, 57*). He takes the part of an uncommitted viewer. In this the wise fool encourages the viewers to look at the play objectively. It has also been suggested that this setting is trying to get us to look at our own world from such an uncommitted viewpoint (Evans, *SC 46, 57*).

However, not even the wise fools are able to separate themselves completely from the moving forces of the plays. Touchstone does marry Audrey, Feste does take part in the revelry of the sub-plot and masquerades as a priest, and the forces of chaos in *King Lear* catch up with the fool and destroy him. Thus they are influenced by the forces building the theme of the play – love, carnivalism, and chaos respectively.

The Trevor Nunn production shows Feste emphatically as a wise observer. Silently, he seems to know what is in everyone else's mind. Looks and subtle expressions of the face show his compassion for Olivia, as in the scene where Sir Toby enters drunk. He sees Viola/Cesario almost kiss Orsino, and turns his head away. He spies both Olivia and Sebastian and Toby and Maria marrying, but says nothing, not unless you take his song on vice to refer to them, which would be a completely new interpretation. In any case, it seems that more is said with silence and subtle expressions of the face, especially the eyes, than in words. An outsider, never revealing his true self to anyone in the play, observing and expressing his knowledge of the quality of persons in subtle jests and comments. However, this interpretation of Feste is fully in accordance with the text, except perhaps for the scene of Viola/Cesario and Orsino almost kissing and the link between Feste's song on Vice and the couples in the play. Of the film versions I saw, Ben Kingsley's interpretation comes closest to how I perceived Feste having read the text of the play. However, it is also possible to interpret Feste as a merrier character, as the BBC version has done. The BBC Feste is an outsider as the filmatization follows the text, but he is not shown

to suffer from this, and if you do not pay attention to his words you do not see this. His countenance shows him on friendly terms with almost anyone in Illyria, and, unlike in the other filmatizations he is not left markedly alone at the end - it is more Antonio that is shown alone.

4.7 Touchstones

The wise fools are important in determining the other characters. In addition to pointing out their shortcomings to the audience, they often try to point these out to the characters themselves. Feste, as Joan Hartwig writes, engages characters in the play in dialogues of self-determination.⁵³ First Maria, suggesting that she has designs to marry Sir Toby, then Olivia, proving that her grief is superfluous (Vickers, 223), after that Orsino, stating that his mind is changeable, and many more. King Lear's fool, as already stated, is constantly trying to make the king arrive into a some kind of self-knowledge, as well as an understanding of the changes in process.

Touchstone uses parody to promote self-knowledge and self-understanding in the characters around him. His parody of the love-affairs in the play, of Jacques in his contemplation on time, and Orlando's verses are trying to tell the other characters something about them.

King Lear's fool is constantly trying to make the king see his flaws and mistakes by jesting about them. The fool begins by jesting about the king giving his crown away to the two daughters. The carnevalistic logic of crownings and uncrownings in this passage bring to mind the writings of Bakhtin (275). First the fool offers his coxcomb, the symbolic crown of a fool, to Kent. In this jest the coxcomb symbolises many things, but the fool's willingness to give it away reflects Lear giving away his crown. Next he toys with the idea that if he had two coxcombs and two daughters, and would give them all his living, he would still keep his coxcombs to

⁵³ Joan Hartwig, "Feste's 'Whirligig' and the Comic Providence of *Twelfth Night*" Originally published in *ELH*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Winter, 1973, pp. 501-13. Reprinted in *Shakespearean Criticism* 46, pp. 297-303. 301.

himself – keeping the best part, his means of living and the sign of his power, i.e. his liberty as fool, to himself. It is also interesting that the fool supposes to have two coxcombs in the jest, not dividing one between his daughters, as the King did. Last he offers his coxcomb straight to the King. A little later he returns to the idea of the crown by asking the king to give him an egg and promising him two crowns for it. These two crowns will be the empty shell of the egg after the fool has eaten the meat inside, thus keeping the best part to himself. If this jesting about the crown does not make the king see his mistake, what will?

At the same time the fool also starts pointing out to the king how much he has left – or actually how much he has not any more. King Lear has, apparently, thought that after he has given his kingdom to his daughters, he can go on living like he used to, only without the worries. The fool points out that this is not the case. In I, IV, 137-138 he bids Kent to tell the king that the rent of his lands will amount to nothing, as he has none. Then he points out that the king has given away all his titles, except for that of a fool, which everyone is born with (I, IV, 152-153). After Goneril enters frowning and Lear asks why, the fool tells Lear that now that he has to care about her frowning he is nothing, not even in comparison to him. “I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou art nothing” (I, IV, 198-199). He continues with rhyming:

Mum, mum:
He that keeps nor crust nor crum,
Weary of all, shall want some. –
That’s a sheal’d peascod. [pointing to Lear]
(I, IV, 122-125)

The fool also tries to correct Lear’s view of his three daughters. His view of Cordelia becomes clear at the beginning: “Since my young lady’s going into France, sir, the fool hath much pined away” (I, IV, 74-75). His opinion on the two elder daughters is first implied in his inversion that Lear has banished two of his daughters, as well as in the manner he thinks it was a mistake to give away the crown. Later, he expresses his opinion quite straightforwardly in proverbs, comparisons and songs. The

fool's comparison:

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long,
That it had its head bit off by its young.
(I, IV, 220-221)

is harsh, but describes the situation well. Lear has given the two elder daughters everything, but these are not grateful. In fact, they try to take everything away from him, and even plan on murdering him later on in the play.

The fools also intensify the thematic issues in the play, as Vickers suggests (331). Karen Greif, who has analysed modern productions of *Twelfth Night*, has noticed Feste's involvement with the deep concerns in the play (SC 46, 319). *Twelfth Night* is a play of mistaken identities and concealed inner thoughts, as well as changing emotions. The limits of friendship, problems of love, the fine line separating wisdom and folly or imagination and madness, the inconstancy of words and people, and the confounding of identity are deep concerns in *Twelfth Night* (Greif, SC 46, 319). Feste exhibits these in his character and his jests. A fool by profession, he is still a melancholy and serious person. However, though his basic nature is melancholy, he does take part in the revelry of gulling Malvolio, and is also willing to sing both happy and sad songs regardless of what he is feeling at the moment.

There is something very unnatural in King Lear. A king giving away his power and dividing his kingdom in parts was not common at the time, and isn't that common even nowadays, not without a good reason – seldomly old age, - and usually not voluntarily, but under pressure. Kingdoms are rarely divided – if such happens the parts are usually formerly independent countries or regions that can be seen as such and differ from the main part of the kingdom in many ways. The daughters that so eagerly flatter the father, and treat him so cruelly after they have received the money and power can also be seen as unnatural, even though this does happen. In contrast to all the unnaturalness in the play the fool seems very natural. He even uses proverbs from the realm of nature to make his point.

As You Like It is a kind of 'back to nature' –play. It presents the forest of

Arden as a golden age. In the forest everyone is carefree. It is a pastoral idyll.

Touchstone does not exactly intensify the pastoral theme, as he speaks against it and brings out the reality of life. Everyone else tends to see life through spectacles that show only the good and noble in everyone and everything. Despite the situation in the plot at the beginning of the play, the whole play is like a golden age, with only one discordant note – Touchstone. Touchstone points out the more grotesque and real side of life, both in the city and on the countryside.

The fools also function to reveal the folly of the other characters. As Touchstone says in *As You Like It* “The fool doth think he is wise; but the wise man knows himself to be a fool” (V, I, 30-31). Or: “The more pity, that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly” (*AYLI* I, II, 83-84), which Touchstone says after he has been forbidden to speak such things about Duke Frederick’s court after he had revealed the dishonour of a knight.

The plays include several kinds of folly. First there is the folly that defines the whole play. In *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* this folly is emotions and love, in *King Lear* self-love. *Twelfth Night* begins with Olivia and Orsino pining for something they cannot have: Olivia mourning for her dead brother and Orsino courting Olivia, whom he cannot have. Viola falls in love with Orsino, but cannot have him, for she is pretending to be a man and cannot thus express her feelings. At the end of the play Orsino marries Viola, and Olivia Viola’s brother, Sebastian. The newlyweds do not, however, know each other at all well. The whole play is full of folly. In *As You Like It* the first folly is the escape to the forest. Duke Senior seems content in the forest, and Celia and Rosalind leave for the forest with only the fool as their protection. None of them experience any of the hardships of travel and life in a forest. In the forest life is games and courtship. *King Lear*’s folly is his self-love, which results in his asking his daughters to express their love for him in words and not understanding Cordelia. His rash decision, the result of folly, leads into tragedy. Then there is also the folly of individual characters, such as Malvolio in believing the letter, Jacques in aspiring to

become a fool and not noticing Touchstone's parody, and Cordelia in refusing to express her love for her father in words.

5. Conclusion

In this thesis I have analysed three Shakespearean wise fools, Touchstone, Feste and King Lear's fool. In my analysis I have proceeded from the character to the role of the fool. Through the analysis of individual aspects of the character, such as dress, learnedness, and images of reflection I have aspired to build a picture of the fool. In the latter part of my thesis I have concentrated on the fool's role in the play, especially his importance for our interpretation of the play. The character of the wise fool is important for our interpretation of the play. His keen observations and sharp truths make us look at the play from a different, often more disinterested angle, revealing the folly of the characters in the play.

I began my thesis by a brief history of carnival and the tradition of fools, both on stage and in the real world. This, I believe, is important for our interpretation of the character of the wise fools, as the roots of the tradition play an important part in his jests. An understanding of the carnival imagery is essential for the full understanding of Renaissance literature, including Shakespeare, as Mikhail Bakhtin writes (11).

The wise fools use the conventions of the tradition ingeniously to convey a message. Their lines may at first seem incomprehensible, but a closer study often reveals possible meanings that fit the context. The fools apparel entails connotations to the tradition: motley to the tradition natural fools, and coxcomb to the liberty to speak the truth. Feste uses motley to profess his intelligence: "I wear not motley in my brain," and King Lear's fool offers his coxcomb, and thus his immunity from punishments to Kent. All three wise fools function as mirrors or counterparts to the other characters in the play. They also exhibit learnedness in their jests, though often they are also making fun of it. The wise fools' songs function as apposite commentary.

The fools' licence gives them the potential for subversiveness, but the wise fools tend to aspire to contain things rather than subvert. They use the carnivalistic imagery of praise-abuse. The wise fools' greatest contribution to the play is in

modifying the tone. Touchstone makes *As You Like It* a mock-pastoral, Feste brings darker, reflective tones to *Twelfth Night* and Lear's fool points out the King's tragic flaw. The fools are also very important in bringing different viewpoints to the play. They function as a kind of narrators, pointing out things to the audience, revealing the true nature of the other characters, and interpreting the developments of the plot. The wise fools are always to some extent outsiders: they do nothing active to further the main plot. This allows them to have perspective on the events of the plot.

The wise fools function as a kind of a touchstone in their plays. All the other characters in the play can be measured against the fool. The fool's comments that invite us to look at the other characters and the plot from his point of view are revealing. Though the fool's view may be cynical, his comments come closer to the truth than the other characters. Very often he is the only one to express an alternate point of view, the other side of things. Touchstone sees the reality of life in the countryside, Feste is unable to participate in the folly of *Twelfth Night*, and Lear's fool refuses to fall into the madness around him. In this the wise fools bring balance into the plays. Touchstone's criticism of the pastoral ideals is important in the play, but he does also reveal the fraud of court-life. His seven stages of quarrel (V, IV, 69-105) reveal the shallowness of court-life, and his story of the knight that swore by his honour (I, II, 61-79) reveals what kind of people Duke Frederick's court consists of.

In this thesis I have combined information from various different sources. However, there are also aspects that none of my sources have discussed, and many that have only been mentioned. Thus I believe to have found also something new, or at least to have elaborated on topics elsewhere only mentioned. Applying Bakhtin's theories to Shakespeare's works seems also to be new, as I have not found substantial sources for this. Some of my sources do mention his theories and apply them to a certain aspect, but only for a paragraph. I hope I have succeeded in making consistent use of his theories throughout this thesis, though Bakhtin is not applicable to every aspect I have discussed. It is interesting that no-one has applied Bakhtin's theories to

Shakespeare extensively, at least not to my knowledge, for the idea is old - Bakhtin himself suggests it in *Rabelais and his World*. He was familiar with Shakespeare and lectured on him, but nothing written has survived, at least no detailed, large-scale study.

And yet I have not exhausted my topic, for the more I have thought about individual lines and the deeper I have examined sources, the more possible interpretations I have found. To get a full picture of the fool's role in the play, in any of the three plays, is to consider many things in both the main and the sub-plot, in his relation to the other characters in the play, in his relation to the audience and function in revealing things about the characters and plot and modifying the meaning of various aspects of the play.

The wise fools can be interpreted in many ways, as can be seen in the various productions of the plays. Especially on the continuum of melancholy to merry there is much room for interpretation, as is on the question of how wise the fools actually are.

The text is all we have to base on in interpreting the characters. It would be interesting to examine other sources, such as contemporary records, to try to find out what Shakespeare intended the characters to be like. However, the text is all we need, for I believe Shakespeare wrote his characters so that they would be as close to his vision as possible – in all their complexity. There are things that do not come across in the plays and that we have no indisputable record of, if we have any record at all, such as the fool's clothing and the melodies his songs were sang to. These are important, and can make a difference in interpreting the play, but the most important things are to be found in the text itself, and the versions we have existing are reasonably indisputable, though none were published while Shakespeare was living.

I could also have said more about how the other characters in the play see the fool, and considered more filmatisations of the play to see how many different ways there are to interpret the fool. However, to me the fool has always been a combination of all these interpretations, a complex character who cannot be explained in any single

way, as Feste cannot be explained merely as a merry, contented jester (BBC), a melancholy character that sees disaster (Trevor Nunn), or a drunkard (Kenneth Branagh).

It would be interesting to widen the scope with other Shakespearean characters that are similar to the wise fool. However, there is so much to say about the wise fools that I have had to limit my thesis to the three I have analysed in it. Through the close analysis of the wise fool's lines and role in the play I believe to have revealed ambiguity and possible interpretations.

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