TWELFTH NIGHT, AN ELIZABETHAN COMMONWEALTH—
IN—MINIATURE

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During the Renaissance the idea of cosmic order pervaded even the practical life of Elizabethan society. The medieval idea of a hierarchy where each man has his position in society with his particular responsibilities and privileges was a commonplace. A corollary to this idea was that a disturbance of this hierarchy produced chaos (1). At the apex of the Elizabethan commonwealth was, of course, the sovereign. The state of the commonwealth in general and the state of the royal court in particular were dependent upon the qualities of the royal ruler (2). To carry the idea one step further, each household could be viewed as a small commonwealth or royal court because each member was assigned a position in the hierarchy of authority. Here the master of the house was equivalent to the sovereign of the commonwealth. Furthermore, the household, like the commonwealth, was highly dependent upon this “sovereign” for its welfare.

In Twelfth Night Shakespeare presents to his audience such a situation. And it is not surprising that the household, the commonwealth—in—little, is governed by a woman, for the Renaissance Englishman was intensely aware that he was governed by a queen, not a king. An all—consuming interest for the Elizabethan Englishman was the future husband of his queen, and Elizabeth’s court was filled with suitors or their ambassadors requesting her hand in marriage. These courtships were the concern of the common man as well as the courtier for the idea of courtship or marriage was closely linked to the idea of social order (3). There was ample contemporary evidence for the Elizabethan that a bad marriage for his queen would have a bad effect upon her commonwealth. This had proven to be true for Mary, Elizabeth’s sister, and Mary, Queen of Scots, whose marriages resulted in disunity and chaos for their countries. Therefore, the plot of Twelfth Night, which revolves around an aristocratic woman, Olivia, in charge of a large household and pursued by many suitors, would have been of interest to both the courtiers and the middle class which made up Shakespeare’s audience. And one way to view the Elizabethan play Twelfth Night is as a story of an Elizabethan commonwealth—in—miniature.

The purpose of this paper will be to place Twelfth Night in its Elizabethan setting. The first part of my paper will concern the Elizabethan social hierarchy and specifically Olivia’s place in it. I will examine Olivia as she illustrates the characteristics of the Elizabethan aristocracy. In order to get a sharper understanding of her position as a
peeress, I will contrast Olivia, the countess, with the other woman in the household, Maria, her servant.

The second part of my paper will concern the disruption of the small commonwealth and more specifically, Olivia and Maria as disruptive forces. Here I will examine Olivia as a woman lacking personal control and I will show how this flaw is manifested in Olivia's suitors and her management of them. Again for a sharper view, I will use Maria and her management of her suitors as a comparison.

To completely understand Olivia we must examine her from two points of view—as a noblewoman and as an individual. First let us look at Olivia for what she is: a countess and the mistress of a large household. William Vaughan in his popular and comprehensive Elizabethan handbook The Golden Grove distinguishes the three types of gentry in his ranking of the commonwealth. The Prince or sovereign, of course, is foremost; but on the second highest plane are grouped Dukes, Earls (to which a countess would be the equivalent English female title), Barons and Knights of honor. As a member of the peerage Olivia (and Orsino, the Duke) has certain legal rights and privileges which none of the other characters in the play has (4). Shakespeare is careful to give us a distinct accounting of these privileges. When Olivia first appears on the stage, there is evidence that she is attended by a number of her household rather than just Malvolio, her steward, as it is frequently staged. Brian Nicholson gives the stage direction as such, pointing out that as a peeress in her own right Olivia would be attended by several of her women and armed retainers (5). It seems probable that Shakespeare would not miss this chance to follow the aristocratic custom. Furthermore, this would make Malvolio's position in attendance on Olivia less important and would emphasize the preposterousness of his later pretentions to her hand. The play itself seems to indicate this directly in the conversation between Olivia and her clown Feste which follows her entrance. The clown says, “Do you not heare fellows, take away the Ladie”; and Olivia replies, “Sir, I bad them take away you” (6).

From this first appearance of Olivia, surrounded by her many retainers, the audience can see that Olivia and Orsino live in an aristocratic world of wealth. We know that Olivia is wealthy because of the large household she manages and because Orsino makes a special point of swearing that he is not interested in her money. However, along with this privilege of wealth goes the responsibility of being generous (7). Orsino and Viola give money to the clown, and Olivia readily offers to assume the cost of Orsino's marriage to Viola. Olivia, also, is willing to marry the penniless Sebastian without regard for his financial condition. So, in Twelfth Night the true aristocrats are not only born to the gentry, but possess that quality so lauded in the Renaissance handbooks, generosity.

An ability which gentlemen and gentlewomen should also possess and which the middle class frantically tried to imitate was that of making witty conversation. The concern for this subject is evidenced by the many handbooks on the subject; and The Courtier a widely read book which put forth an exxemplum of the perfect courtier, includes a long discussion of this virtue (8). Olivia as a representative of the aristocracy displays this gift of fine repartee. In the wooing scene (I, v) Olivia is a match for Viola and sustains the banter—at least until she begins to be attracted to the young page.

Olivia: Now sir, what is your text?
Viola: Most sweet Ladie.
Olivia: A comfortable doctrine, and much may bee saide of it. Where lies your Text?
Viola: In Orsinoes bosome.
Olivia: In his bosome? in what chapter of his bosome?
Viola: To answer by the method, in the first of his hart.
Olivia: O, I have read it: it is heresie. Have you no more to say? (pp.84–85)
However, according to Louis B. Wright's book *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, the most important responsibility of any Elizabethan woman was management of her household. This would be just as true for a countess with a large baronial mansion to control, like Olivia, as for a middle class housewife (9). There were ample handbooks to guide the house manager, and one of the most frequently discussed topics was the relationship between master and servant. The position of a master or mistress toward his household servants seemed to be that of both employer and guardian. For example, in his handbook, Vaughan includes a chapter entitled “Of the duty of masters toward their servants”, which contains particular admonishments such as “do not allow a servant to lie a broad at night” and general axioms such as “gravely correct servants according to the quality of their faults” (10).

The first such correction which Olivia must make concerns the dissent of the clown Feste. In anger at his disobedience, she demands that he be taken away for punishment. Maria has previously warned the clown that his fate will be either service in the army or hanging. It is unlikely that the clown could actually be hanged because a mistress had only the power to have her servants whipped, as we remember from *King Lear*. Maria is probably using hyperbole to impress upon the clown the height of Olivia’s displeasure. The confrontation between Olivia and the fool demonstrates two characteristics of the countess. First, Olivia allows the clown his license as a court fool and accepts his jokes at her expense with good humor as a true aristocrat would. Her good humor is in sharp contrast to Malvolio’s petulance (he is offended by Feste’s jokes) (11). But in spite of her good humor, Olivia, the countess, does not stoop to joke with the clown; rather she engages in the dialogue “for want of other idleness” (p.68) and to distract herself from her fit of sentimental melancholy. Second, in this scene Olivia displays mercy (by forgiving the fool) and insight into the character of her steward (by reprimanding Malvolio). Both mercy and insight are qualities of a good mistress. Through Olivia’s speech to Malvolio, Shakespeare makes one of his few explicit moralizations:

> O you are sick of selfe—love Malvolio, and taste with a distemper’d appetite. To be generous, guiltlesse, and of free disposition, is to take those things for Birdbolts, that you deeme Cannon bullets: There is no slander in an allow’d foole, though he do nothing but rayle... (p. 72).

The question might follow, “Why does Olivia, knowing the faults of Malvolio, retain him as her steward? ” From a close reading of the last act one might surmise that Malvolio, while flawed in character, fulfills his job as steward well. Even after Malvolio’s unwarranted display of temper at the end of the play, both Olivia and Orsino are anxious to have him return and both try to appease him.

Olivia: This practice hath most shrewdly past upon thee: But when we know the grounds, and authors of it, Thou shalt be both the Plaintiff and the Judge Of thine owne cause....

Orsino: Pursue [ Malvolio ], and entreat him to a peace...(pp.310–311, 313).

Both Olivia and Orsino as rulers of households try to see justice done and both realize the seriousness of a disrupted household.

The most direct reference to Olivia’s responsibility for household management is
Sebastian’s soliloquy to the audience (IV, iii) which describes Olivia as she goes about her tasks as mistress of a baronial household. Sebastian says that Olivia

sway [ s ] her house, command [ s ] her followers, Take [ s ] and give [ s ] backe affayres, and their dispatch, With such a smooth, discreet, and stable bearing...

(pp.275–276).

Another situation which shows that Olivia is concerned about the governance of her household occurs when Viola first arrives as Orsino’s ambassador and Olivia’s uncle Sir Toby waylays her (I, v). Upon hearing of this breech of protocol, Olivia is much distressed and sends Malvolio to rescue the messenger, saying, “Fetch [ Sir Toby ] off I pray you, he speaks nothing but madman: Fie on him” (p.74). Olivia, as a countess, does not wish her reputation for hospitality sullied by a drunken uncle. And though she might not turn Toby from her house, she does not hesitate to reprimand him when her own or her household’s reputation is endangered, for hospitality was a quality expected in an aristocrat (12).

Olivia’s personal maid, Maria, is the one other woman in the household whom we see and as such Maria may be seen as a foil to Olivia. She serves this function in two ways: first in their employer–employee relationship; second in their roles as women. In regard to the first relationship we notice that Maria’s position as Olivia’s personal lady—in—waiting is a high position in the household. Shakespeare is careful to give many aunts of this. Maria is called a gentlewoman (p.79) and stays during the interview with the count’s ambassador. She shows no concern for Malvolio the steward, apparently being responsible only to Olivia. She is witty in discourse, an accomplishment highly commended and sought after as a display of education and cleverness; and she, too, writes the Italian script which her mistress affects (p.131). Furthermore, she is Olivia’s confidant. Olivia tells Maria about family problems (when she is displeased with her uncle’s behavior) and about household management (when she plans to dismiss the clown). Maria, however, shows a certain disloyalty toward her mistress and her confidences. Maria tries to get Sir Toby to reform—not because she wants to keep Olivia’s house peaceful— but because she and Sir Toby are having a secret courtship. In fact, she marries Sir Toby without first informing her mistress. Secondly, Maria warns the fool to think of a good alibi for his disappearance. Thirdly, Maria has noticed Olivia’s preoccupation with Cesario and thinks nothing of mentioning it to her cohorts Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and the clown (14) (p.129). Most important in the list of broken obligations is her disruption of the household in the Malvolio—plot. Although the Elizabethan audience might feel that Malvolio’s own character leads him into Maria’s trap, they would also feel that the chastisement of a too—proud steward was the duty of Olivia, the mistress, not Maria, the servant.

In regard to the second relationship, that of two contrasting female personalities, we can see differences between Olivia and Maria in Act I. Olivia is lanquid and sentimental; Maria is vigorous and clever. Olivia’s personality is illustrated in her message to Duke Orsino.

The element it selve, till seven yeares heate,
Shall not behold her face at ample view: But
like a custrosse she will vailed walke, And
water once a day her Chamber round with
eye—offending brine: all this to season
A brothers dead love, which she would keepe
fresh And lasting, in her sad remembrance (pp.18–19).
Maria’s personality is illustrated in her witty dialogue with sir Andrew Ague—cheek.

Andrew: Faire Lady, do you thinke you have fooles in hand?
Maria: Sir, I have not you by’th hand.
Andrew: Harry but you shall have, and heere my hand.
Maria: Now, sir, thought is free: I pray you bring your hand to’th Buttry barre, and let it drinke.
Andrew: Wherefore (sweet—heart?) What’s your Metaphor?
Maria: It’s dry sir.
Andrew: Why I thinke so: I am not such an asse, but I can keepe my hand dry. But what’s your jest?
Maria: A dry jest Sir.
Andrew: Are you full of them?
Maria: I have them at my fingers ends: marry now I let go your hand, I am barren (pp.41—42).

In personal relationships, Olivia is seldom in control of herself and the situation: Maria, on the contrary, is always in control of herself and the situation. These antithetical natures can best be illustrated by observing the actions of the two women in their respective courtships.

In the character of Olivia, Shakespeare has given his Elizabethan audience a representative court lady. But while Olivia may seem to be fulfilling her position as peeress and mistress of a large household she is not, like Portia, “mistress of herself”. The Elizabethan idea of order closely linked governance of self with governance of household and commonwealth. For instance, in Vaughan’s The Golden Grove, the subtitle combines all three subjects as its thesis, stating: “A work very necessary for all such as would know how to governe themselves, their houses, or their country”. So while Olivia may exemplify the outward forms of courtliness, she does not possess the highly prized quality of inner control. And since it is upon Olivia, as “sovereign”, that the welfare of her household depends, her personal disorder manifests itself in the disorder of her miniature commonwealth.

Olivia’s court is a perfect example of a small commonwealth, or at least a small replica of the royal court, for her suitors represent four different ranks. They are a duke, Orsino; a gentleman, Cesario or Sebastian; a knight, Sir Andrew Ague—cheek; and a steward, Malvolio. These characters, acting both as individuals and as representatives of their own classes, woo Olivia; and with all four the comic elements and the confusions of courtship are emphasized.

The Duke Orsino seems the ideal mate for Olivia for he seems to be Olivia’s male counterpart in title, wealth and personality. He, her only titled suitor, is known to be “of great estate, of fresh and stainesse youth; In voices well divulg’d, free, learn’d, and valiant, An in dimension, and the shape of nature, A gracious person” (p.90). One of the characteristics that speaks most highly for him is that he is not interested in Olivia’s wealth, especially since it was a common habit for nobility to reimburse sagging purses by marrying wealthy women (15). It is true that Orsino tends to be over—dramatic about his sentimentality, but this is hardly a flaw which Olivia can object to since she possesses it herself. Since both courtiers in the play possess this flaw, perhaps Shakespeare is poking light fun at his aristocratic audience’s penchant for “courtly love”.

Olivia seems unable to handle the situation of Orsino’s wooing and gives as an excuse for her refusal the death of her brother. It is not surprising that Orsino will not believe that Olivia is going to mourn for seven years. The idea of Olivia’s self—inflicted spinsterhood would appear particulary ridiculous to Shakespeare’s contemporaries in Renaissance England since the idea of virgin spinsterhood was no longer as popular as in
the Middle Ages; instead, it was the chaste married woman who was regarded as an exemplum (16). Viola expresses the popular opinion when she says to Olivia,

Lady, you are the cruell’st shee alive, If you will leade these graces to the grave, and leave the world no copie.... In you denial, I would finde no sence, I would not understand it (pp.88, 91).

However, it is with Cesario, the gentleman, that Olivia’s inability to control herself or make wise decisions is most obvious. With the other three suitors, the comedy is leveled at the suitors, in this situation it is leveled at Olivia. While falling in love at first sight is not unusual in Shakespeare’s plays, Olivia’s passion for a young boy about whom she knows nothing could not help but appear humorous and foolish to the audience. It is not difficult to find the exact point in the play where Olivia becomes interested in Cesario. Always faithful to the aristocratic concern for rank, she asks his station in life. Olivia takes both Cesario’s word and appearance as proof that he is a gentleman.

What is your Parentage? Above my fortunas, yet my state is well; I am a Gentleman. Ile be sworne thou art, Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit, Do give thee five—fold blazon.... (p. 92)

Castiglione, in his book, emphasizes the idea that to have the virtues of a gentleman is as important as having the title. But even if Cesario is a gentleman, he is still beneath Olivia in rank and is without fortune. Also, his youthfulness is emphasized. In spite of Cesario’s lower rank, lack of wealth and youthfulness—quite enough to give Olivia pause—she offers her love to him on only their second meeting; and when she is rejected she says,

Oh what a deale of scorne, lookes beautiful? In the contempt and anger of his lip, A murdrous guilt shewes not it selfe more soone, Then love that would seeme hid.... Cesario, by the Roses of the Spring, By maid—hood, honor, truth, and every thing, I love thee so, that maugre all thy pride, Nor wit, nor reason, can my passion hide...(pp.197—198).

Although Olivia damns her own feelings, she makes no real attempt to stop herself and continues to send for Cesario at every opportunity; she even stoops to “buying his love” (p.216). I think we have a clue to the reason for Olivia’s sudden longing for Cesario in her haughtiness. She proudly rejects Orsino, the ideal match for her, saying that he must accept her refusal; yet she is caught in the same situation and quickly forgets her vow of a seven—year mourning period. It seems to be Cesario’s indifference which first awakens Olivia’s desire. The more Cesario refuses, the more Olivia pursues, at times in a very uncountess—like manner.

So Olivia, stepping out of her role as countess and woman, rashly woos a page, possibly beneath her in rank, younger than she and with no fortune. All this folly is capped by the fact that Cesario is a woman. The situation is not unlike that of Phoebe and Rosalind in As You Like It. Viola’s treatment of Olivia is what we would expect from a woman of her nature—a mixture of sorrowful amusement and kindly impatience.

Sir Andrew Ague—cheek’s courtship of Olivia is perhaps the most amusing of the
four. While Sir Andrew is a knight, he is one step below Olivia in the rank of courtiers (18). Even more important is the fact that Sir Andrew does not have those qualities of knighthood which might make him an acceptable choice despite his lower position. According to Castiglione the foremost quality of a knight is his fighting ability and courage (19). Obviously the knight Sir Andrew lacks both ability and desire for combat, as he is easily beaten by Sebastian and cowers from the young page Cesario. Secondly, Sir Andrew is interested in Olivia for her money. This is in direct contrast to Orsino and highlights the difference between Sir Andrew and the true aristocrat. Thirdly, Sir Andrew’s lack of wit is notable. He is easily duped by Sir Toby, who, together with Maria and Feste, makes constant fun of him. And Sir Andrew embodies another parody of the pseudo-gentleman for he keeps his own handbook on etiquette, a popular activity for those in Elizabethan society who wanted to imitate their betters (20). He listens carefully to Viola’s witty dialogue, scrupulously copying down vocabulary to be used in courting. Sir Andrew, the foolish knight, receives justice for each of his three follies. For his cowardice, he is beaten by Sebastian; for his greed, he is cheated of his money by Sir Toby; for his pretence to wit, he learns Sir Toby’s real opinion of him when Toby says in the last act, “Will you helpe an asse—head, and a coxcombe, and a knave: a thin fac’d knave, a gull?” (pp.297–298).

The problem with Olivia’s fourth admirer, Malvolio, and with Sir Andrew is that neither one could fit into the world of the aristocracy even if they were “raised to greatness”. Malvolio, the steward, is the suitor of least rank. Ironically, it is not just Malvolio’s position which makes him the least suitable of the suitors; it is his character. If Malvolio were “raised to greatness”, he would never possess the qualities of a noble courtier so highly regarded in the Elizabethan commonwealth. He is proud, and the audience has the advantage of seeing how Malvolio would treat his new power if he were to obtain it. First, he immediately forgets his original station and is eager to chastise the knight, Sir Toby. He seems most pleased to have command of those servants with whom he is now an equal. He even has the audacity to say scornfully to Sir Toby, Maria and Fabian, “Go hang your selves all: you are idle shallowe things, I am not of your element, you shall knowe more heereafter” (21) (p.226). Secondly, Malvolio wishes to marry Olivia for her money and possesses none of that generosity which is found in the true aristocrat. Besides, Malvolio’s inability to be generous and forgiving in nature is emphasized in the last act. Olivia’s decision that Malvolio may have revenge for the wrongs done him is just. But Malvolio’s intemperance and petulant refusal of this appeasement destroys any sympathy we might have had for him up to this point.

In addition to an exalted sense of pride and lack of generosity, Malvolio is the only suitor who voices lecherous thoughts about Olivia when he says, “having come from a day bedde, where I have left Olivia sleeping” (p.162). Another trait which is obviously missing in Malvolio’s character, and which is present in all the aristocrats, is wit—a sense of humor and an ability to converse cleverly. This contrast is demonstrated early in the play during the scene of Olivia’s defense of the fool and chastisement of Malvolio. In this scene Olivia takes the criticism of Feste pleasantly; Malvoliò is unable to do so. Like Sir Andrew, Malvolio receives justice. The too—proud steward is punished by being locked in the house which he manages and tormented by the people he has scorned. Malvolio’s pretentions to Olivia’s hand are initially amusing but soon subside to the ridiculous, even the unpleasant.

After the confusion of courtship, however, Olivia’s marriage to Sebastian should be seen in a good light. While Sebastian is beneath Olivia in rank, he has all the qualities of an ideal aristocrat. He is courageous, honest, loyal and vigorous; he is, in effect, the male counterpart of Viola. Olivia’s marriage to Sebastian halts Olivia’s inability to control herself. Accordingly, the return of order to Olivia’s life is manifested in the return of order to her household at the end of the play.
Each of Olivia’s four courtships is comical—in three the comedy centers on the lovers; in one the comedy is directed at Olivia. These comic situations are paralleled and emphasized by the boisterously funny sub-plot. While it may not be noticeable at first glance, the action of the Malvolio sub-plot also revolves around a woman and her admirers on a lower level and as such amplifies the confusion and chaos found in the main plot (22). Maria, Olivia’s gentlewoman, holds court among Sir Toby, an intentional suitor; Sir Andrew, a joking suitor; and Fabian, an admirer. These three form the bawdy and boisterous court over which Maria holds sway. It is she who is the Wittiest of her court and the cleverest of this lower group.

Fabian is apparently one of the lower ranking servants in the household. This can be surmised from the fact that he always uses the respectful “you” to Sir Andrew in contrast to Sir Toby’s use of the familiar “thou”. Maria’s and Sir Toby’s inclusion of Fabian in the plot is a further example of the disruption present in the house. Fabian, as a low ranking servant, has even less right to be insubordinate to his steward than do Sir Toby and Maria.

Fabian’s relationship in the Malvolio-plot is one of delighted spectator as he watches Maria entangle Malvolio in her scheme. His grudge against Malvolio stems from Malvolio’s reporting him to Olivia for staging a bear-baiting contest within the confines of the estate (p.153). Fabian’s appreciation for Maria is particularly shown in the last act when he tries to protect her from involvement in the Malvolio-plot. Fabian tells Olivia,

Most freely I confesse my selfe, and Toby
Set this device against Malvolio heere, Upon
Some stubborne and uncouteous parts We had
conceiv’d against him. Maria writ the Letter,
at sir Tobyes great importance, In recompence
whereof, he hath married her... (p. 311).

In this second alignment of suitors, Sir Andrew reaps the benefit of Maria’s wit by being allowed to observe Malvolio’s chastisement; however, he also becomes the object of her wit when Maria easily out-quipps him after lulling him into a flirting repartee (pp.41–42). The fact that even a servant, Maria, makes fun of Sir Andrew in this mock-flirtation makes him seen an even more ridiculous figure in his courtship of Olivia.

Maria’s relationship with Sir Toby is that of half mother, half mistress. Maria mothers Sir Toby, warning him of Olivia’s wrath for his excessive drinking. (This same motherliness comes out in her attitude toward Feste when she is ready to intercede for him with Olivia after his long absence.) Then Maria charms Sir Toby with her wit and vivacity; in fact, she hatches the Malvolio plot for Sir Toby’s amusement and revenge (p.129). We get dues early in the play that Maria and Sir Toby are involved in an affair when the clown says, “if sir Toby would leave drinking, thou wert as witty a piece of Eves flesh, as any in Illyria”, (p.63) and later Sir Toby affectionately calls Maria his “youngest Wren”, (p.205) and says, “I could marry this wench for this device.... And ask no other dowry with her, but such another jest [ as the Malvolio plot ] (p.178). Although Maria does get Sir Toby to marry her—and marriage to a knight is a step up for a servant—she seems sincerely fond of him. Furthermore, if we take a close look at the education exhibited by both, we find Maria’s is far superior to Sir Toby’s. And since Sir Toby is penniless, Maria cannot be marrying him for mercenary reasons. Furthermore, by marrying Sir Toby without telling her mistress Maria takes the chance of angering Olivia, the only source of Maria’s and Sir Toby’s income. With this in mind, the critics who propose that Maria is simply a mercenary servant, trying to better herself through marriage, may not be correct. We must also take into consideration that Olivia does not comment adversely about the marriage when it is announced to her.
Even though Maria is a disruptive element in the household because of her flirtation with Sir Toby, she is warm and kindhearted. Her marriage to Sir Toby can be considered good for two reasons. First it does help to bring order to the household. Second, it parallels and reflects Olivia’s marriage to Sebastian which also must be seen in an advantageous light.

The commonplace of a social hierarchy where each level has its special duties and rights is implicit in Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night; and Shakespeare is careful to give a complete picture of his miniature commonwealth. The focus of the first part of the paper has been on Olivia as a countess because the world of Twelfth Night is the world of the aristocratic Olivia and Orsino; yet one cannot ignore the sub-plot because it completes the panorama by providing a lower group of knights and varying degrees of servants.

An examination of the disruption of this small commonwealth has been the purpose of the second part of this paper and again the focus has been on Olivia, but this time as an individual. Olivia’s inability to control herself is manifested in the people who revolve around her, her small commonwealth. Her household becomes a gathering place for over-dramatic counts, drunken knights, too—proud servants and practical jokers. The social order is disturbed while Olivia goes through the chaotic situation of courtship. The result of the marriages at the end is that Olivia gains control of herself, each person returns to his proper position in the social hierarchy and the chaos so dreaded by the Elizabethan is resolved and order established.
FOOTNOTES

(1) E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London, 1960), p.13. On p.14 Tillyard says that “Shakespeare puts the opposition to order and his desire for it in terms of chaos....” Furthermore, on p.7 the author points out that “the conception of order is so taken for granted, so much part of the collective mind of the people, that it is hardly mentioned”, although it is implicit in Elizabethan literature.

(2) J.E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I* (Garden City, New York, 1957), p.65, says, “the Sovereign—the sun round which this world revolved—was the source of the Court’s well-being”.

(3) Neale, pp.65–66, while explaining the problems involved in Elizabeth’s being a ruler and a woman, says, “the adulation which [the courtiers] would have given to a king, quite naturally became tinged with the admiration, flattery, and coquetry which they used towards an attractive young woman. Thus, by a paradox, sex, having created a problem, itself solved it, and the reign was turned into an idyll, a fine but artificial comedy of young men—and old men—in love”.

(4) William Vaughan, *The Golden Grove* (London, 1600), Book III, chapter 13. (many of the Renaissance handbooks have no pagination, therefore I will attempt to isolate the quote as closely as possible without page numbers.) Book III, chapter 14, gives a list of privileges granted only to the nobility, such as wearing clothes of gold or immunity from the challenges to combat by “inferior men”.


(10) Vaughan, Book II, chapter 15.

(11) Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (London, 1642), pp.155–156, says, “Harmlesse mirth is the best cordiall against the consumption of the spirits: wherefore Jestning is not unlawfull if it trespasseth no in Quantity, Quality, or Season”.

(12) Neale, pp.214–216, gives as an example Elizabeth I’s habit of traveling through England, staying at the houses of various nobles. Each attempted to outdo the other in lavishness and other signs of hospitality.

(13) The Italian script had become popular at the Elizabethan court just a short time before the writing of *Twelfth Night*.

(14) Vaughan, Book II, chapter 17, says servants must not reveal “to others their masters secret affayres”.


(16) This idea seems be born out by the fact that most of the Renaissance books written about or for women concern themselves with the married woman, not the spinster, as can be seen from Wright’s annotated bibliography in chapter 13 of his book.
(17) Castiglione, pp.271–272.

(18) Vaughan, Book III, chapter 13, says that knights are to be ranked with the third and lowest group of gentlemen.

(19) Castiglione, p.274.

(20) Henry Peacham, The Compleat Gentleman (London, 1622); Francis Seager, The Schoole of Vertue (London, 1557); William Fiston, The School of Good Manners (London, 1595) are all handbooks giving general advice on manners. For a more specific discussion of proper and witty discourse see such books as Thomas Twyne, The Schoolemaster (London, 1576).

(21) Brathwaite, p.63, discusses humility and points out that in the past it is very rare to find a man raised above his station in life who remembered his beginnings and had humility. Italics mine.

(22) C.S. Lewis, The Discarded Image (Cambridge, 1964), p.193, says that the plots and sub-plots or interwoven stories of the Renaissance may have been influenced by the theories of rhetoric found in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The rhetorical device of amplification may well apply here with the main plot and sub-plot concerned with similar situations of courtship.
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED


