



Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom

Cesar Lombardi Barber

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In this classic work, acclaimed Shakespeare critic C. L. Barber argues that Elizabethan seasonal festivals such as May Day and Twelfth Night are the key to understanding Shakespeare's comedies. Brilliantly interweaving anthropology, social history, and literary criticism, Barber traces the inward journey-- psychological, bodily, spiritual--of the comedies: from confusion, raucous laughter, aching desire, and aggression, to harmony. Revealing the interplay between social custom and dramatic form, the book shows how the Elizabethan antithesis between everyday and holiday comes to life in the comedies' combination of seriousness and levity.

"I have been led into an exploration of the way the social form of Elizabethan holidays contributed to the dramatic form of festive comedy. To relate this drama to holiday has proved to be the most effective way to describe its character. And this historical interplay between social and artistic form has an interest of its own: we can see here, with more clarity of outline and detail than is usually possible, how art develops underlying configurations in the social life of a culture."--C. L. Barber, in the Introduction

This new edition includes a foreword by Stephen Greenblatt, who discusses Barber's influence on later scholars and the recent critical disagreements that Barber has inspired, showing that *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* is as vital today as when it was originally published.

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