Twelfth Night

by William Shakespeare

eNotes: Table of Contents

Twelfth Night: Introduction

Twelfth Night; or What You Will was composed by William Shakespeare in either 1600 or 1601 as the last of his three "mature comedies" (the other two being *Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It*). Like his early comedies, *The Comedy of Errors* or *The Taming of the Shrew* for instance, *Twelfth Night* is essentially a celebration of romantic love and can be viewed as a traditional romantic comedy. The play has many of the elements common to Elizabethan romantic comedy, including the devices of mistaken identity, separated twins, and gender-crossing disguise, and its plot revolves around overcoming obstacles to "true" love. And, like other representatives of the genre, *Twelfth Night* also features a subplot in which a self-inflated "sour" or "blocking" character, the steward Malvolio, is brought to his knees through a trick orchestrated by a ribald if also self-inflated character in the person of Sir Toby Belch.

But unlike his early comedies, Shakespeare also strikes some discordant notes in *Twelfth Night*, including a conception of love and other themes that are not part of the conventional romantic comedy formula. Thus, for example, the subject of insanity surfaces as a salient theme and as a force within the plot. Indeed, while *Twelfth Night* concludes with tandem weddings, Shakespeare also speaks about the madness of love.

Twelfth Night: William Shakespeare Biography

The Life and Work of William Shakespeare
The details of William Shakespeare's life are sketchy, mostly mere surmise based upon court or other clerical records. His parents, John and Mary (Arden), were married about 1557; she was of the landed gentry, and he was a yeoman—a glover and commodities merchant. By 1568, John had risen through the ranks of town government and held the position of high bailiff, which was a position similar to mayor. William, the eldest son and the third of eight children, was born in 1564, probably on April 23, several days before his baptism on April 26 in Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare is also believed to have died on the same date—April 23—in 1616.

It is believed that William attended the local grammar school in Stratford where his parents lived, and that he studied primarily Latin, rhetoric, logic, and literature. Shakespeare probably left school at age 15, which was the norm, to take a job, especially since this was the period of his father's financial difficulty. At age 18 (1582), William married Anne Hathaway, a local farmer's daughter who was eight years his senior. Their first daughter (Susanna) was born six months later (1583), and twins Judith and Hamnet were born in 1585.

Shakespeare's life can be divided into three periods: the first 20 years in Stratford, which include his schooling, early marriage, and fatherhood; the next 25 years as an actor and playwright in London; and the last five in retirement in Stratford where he enjoyed moderate wealth gained from his theatrical successes. The years linking the first two periods are marked by a lack of information about Shakespeare, and are often referred to as the "dark years."

At some point during the "dark years," Shakespeare began his career with a London theatrical company, perhaps in 1589, for he was already an actor and playwright of some note by 1592. Shakespeare apparently wrote and acted for numerous theatrical companies, including Pembroke's Men, and Strange's Men, which later became the Chamberlain's Men, with whom he remained for the rest of his career.

In 1592, the Plague closed the theaters for about two years, and Shakespeare turned to writing book-length narrative poetry. Most notable were *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, both of which were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, whom scholars accept as Shakespeare's friend and benefactor despite a lack of documentation. During this same period, Shakespeare was writing his sonnets, which are more likely signs of the time's fashion rather than actual love poems detailing any particular relationship. He returned to playwriting when theaters reopened in 1594, and did not continue to write poetry. His sonnets were published without his consent in 1609, shortly before his retirement.

Amid all of his success, Shakespeare suffered the loss of his only son, Hamlet, who died in 1596 at the age of 11. But Shakespeare's career continued unabated, and in London in 1599, he became one of the partners in the new Globe Theater, which was built by the Chamberlain's Men.

Shakespeare wrote very little after 1612, which was the year he completed *Henry VIII*. It was during a performance of this play in 1613 that the Globe caught fire and burned to the ground. Sometime between 1610 and 1613, Shakespeare returned to Stratford, where he owned a large house and property, to spend his remaining years with his family.

William Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616, and was buried two days later in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church, where he had been baptized exactly 52 years earlier. His literary legacy included 37 plays, 154 sonnets, and five major poems.

Incredibly, most of Shakespeare's plays had never been published in anything except pamphlet form, and were simply extant as acting scripts stored at the Globe. Theater scripts were not regarded as literary works of art, but only the basis for the performance. Plays were simply a popular form of entertainment for all layers of society in Shakespeare's time. Only the efforts of two of Shakespeare's company, John Heminges and Henry Condell, preserved his 36 plays (minus Pericles, the thirty-seventh).

Twelfth Night: Summary

This is a play about love, placed in a festive atmosphere in which three couples are brought together happily. It opens with Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, expressing his deep love for the Countess Olivia. Meanwhile, the shipwrecked Viola disguises herself as a man and endeavors to enter the Duke's service. Although she has rejected his suit, the Duke then employs Viola, who takes the name of Cesario, to woo Olivia for him. Ironically, Cesario falls in love with the Duke, and Olivia falls in love with Cesario, who is really Viola disguised.

In the midst of this love triangle are the servants of Olivia's house and her Uncle Toby. The clown provides entertainment for the characters in both houses and speaks irreverently to them. He is the jester of the play. Maria, Olivia's woman, desires to seek revenge on Malvolio, Olivia's steward. To the delight of Sir Toby,

Olivia's uncle, and his friend Sir Andrew, Maria comes up with a plot to drop love letters supposedly written by Olivia in Malvolio's path. When she does, they observe him, along with Fabian, another servant, as Malvolio falls for the bait. Believing that Olivia loves him, he makes a fool of himself.

The love plot moves along as Cesario goes to woo Olivia for the Duke. The second time that Cesario appears at Olivia's home Olivia openly declares her love for Cesario. All along, Sir Andrew has been nursing a hope to win Olivia's love. When he plans to give up on her, Sir Toby suggests that Sir Andrew fight with Cesario to impress Olivia. Cesario, however, refuses to fight.

In the meantime, Viola's brother, who is also shipwrecked, makes his way to safe lodging in Illyria with Antonio the sea captain. After the fight between Cesario and Sir Andrew begins, Antonio intervenes to save Cesario, whom he takes for Sebastian. But the Duke's officers promptly arrest Antonio for a past offense. Olivia later comes upon Sir Andrew and Sebastian wrangling at her house. Olivia, thinking Sebastian is Cesario, leads Sebastian to marriage in a nearby chapel.

The complications of identity are unraveled in the fifth act. Cesario finally reveals that he is Viola. Sebastian recognizes her as his sister. The Duke takes Viola up on her love offerings and proposes to her. Olivia assures Malvolio that she did not write the letter that so disturbed him. Sir Toby marries Maria in appreciation for her humiliating scheme.

Estimated Reading Time
You can read through *Twelfth Night* in about three and a half hours. But, when reading Shakespeare, you should plan to re-read at least one more time. When you read more carefully, paying attention to difficult words and Shakespeare's exquisite use of language, your reading time will necessarily increase. Your more careful reading may take about six hours.

Twelfth Night: Reading Shakespeare

In this section:

Shakespeare's Language
Shakespeare's language can create a strong pang of intimidation, even fear, in a large number of modern-day readers. Fortunately, however, this need not be the case. All that is needed to master the art of reading Shakespeare is to practice the techniques of unraveling uncommonly-structured sentences and to become familiar with the poetic use of uncommon words. We must realize that during the 400-year span between Shakespeare's time and our own, both the way we live and speak has changed. Although most of his vocabulary is in use today, some of it is obsolete, and what may be most confusing is that some of his words are used today, but with slightly different or totally different meanings. On the stage, actors readily dissolve these language stumbling blocks. They study Shakespeare's dialogue and express it dramatically in word and in action so that its meaning is graphically enacted. If the reader studies Shakespeare's lines as an actor does, looking up and reflecting upon the meaning of unfamiliar words until real voice is discovered, he or she will suddenly experience the excitement, the depth and the sheer poetry of what these characters say.

Shakespeare's Sentences

In English, or any other language, the meaning of a sentence greatly depends upon where each word is placed in that sentence. "The child hurt the mother" and "The mother hurt the child" have opposite meanings, even though the words are the same, simply because the words are arranged differently. Because word position is so integral to English, the reader will find unfamiliar word arrangements confusing, even difficult to understand. Since Shakespeare's plays are poetic dramas, he often shifts from average word arrangements to the strikingly unusual so that the line will conform to the desired poetic rhythm. Often, too, Shakespeare employs unusual word order to afford a character his own specific style of speaking.

Today, English sentence structure follows a sequence of subject first, verb second, and an optional object third. Shakespeare, however, often places the verb before the subject, which reads, "Speaks he" rather than "He speaks." Solanio speaks with this inverted structure in *The Merchant of Venice* stating, "I should be still/Plucking the grass to know where sits the wind" (Bevington edition, I, i, ll.17-19), while today's standard English word order would have the clause at the end of this line read, "where the wind sits." "Wind" is the subject of this clause, and "sits" is the verb. Bassanio's words in Act Two also exemplify this inversion: "And in such eyes as ours appear not faults" (II, ii, l. 184). In our normal word order, we would say, "Faults do not appear in eyes such as ours," with "faults" as the subject in both Shakespeare's word order and ours.

Inversions like these are not troublesome, but when Shakes–peare positions the predicate adjective or the object before the subject and verb, we are sometimes surprised. For example, rather than "I saw him," Shakespeare may use a structure such as "Him I saw." Similarly, "Cold the morning is" would be used for our "The morning is cold." Lady Macbeth demonstrates this inversion as she speaks of her husband: "Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be/What thou art promised" (Macbeth, I, v, ll. 14-15). In current English word order, this quote would begin, "Thou art Glamis, and Cawdor."

In addition to inversions, Shakespeare purposefully keeps words apart that we generally keep together. To illustrate, consider Bassanio's humble admission in *The Merchant of Venice*: "I owe you much, and, like a wilful youth,/That which I owe is lost" (I, i, ll. 146-147). The phrase, "like a wilful youth," separates the regular sequence of "I owe you much" and "That which I owe is lost." To understand more clearly this type of passage, the reader could rearrange these word groups into our conventional order: I owe you much and I wasted what you gave me because I was young and impulsive. While these rearranged clauses will sound like normal English, and will be simpler to understand, they will no longer have the desired poetic rhythm, and the emphasis will now be on the wrong words.

As we read Shakespeare, we will find words that are separated by long, interruptive statements. Often subjects are separated from verbs, and verbs are separated from objects. These long interruptions can be used to give a character dimension or to add an element of suspense. For example, in *Romeo and Juliet* Benvolio describes both Romeo's moodiness and his own sensitive and thoughtful nature:

> I, measuring his affections by my own,
> Which then most sought, where most might not be found,
> Being one too many by my weary self,
> Pursu'd my humour, not pursuing his,
> And gladly shunn'd who gladly fled from me. (I, i, ll. 126-130)

In this passage, the subject "I" is distanced from its verb "Pursu'd." The long interruption serves to provide information which is integral to the plot. Another example, taken from *Hamlet*, is the ghost, Hamlet's father, who describes Hamlet's uncle, Claudius, as

…that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts—
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce—won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming virtuous queen. (I, v, ll. 43-47)

From this we learn that Prince Hamlet's mother is the victim of an evil seduction and deception. The delay between the subject, "beast," and the verb, "won," creates a moment of tension filled with the image of a cunning predator waiting for the right moment to spring into attack. This interruptive passage allows the play to unfold crucial information and thus to build the tension necessary to produce a riveting drama.

While at times these long delays are merely for decorative purposes, they are often used to narrate a particular situation or to enhance character development. As *Antony and Cleopatra* opens, an interruptive passage occurs in the first few lines. Although the delay is not lengthy, Philo's words vividly portray Antony's military prowess while they also reveal the immediate concern of the drama. Antony is distracted from his career, and is now focused on Cleopatra:

…those goodly eyes,
That o'er the files and musters of the war
Have glow'd like plated Mars, now bend, now turn
The office and devotion of their view
Upon a tawny front…. (I, i, ll. 2-6)

Whereas Shakespeare sometimes heaps detail upon detail, his sentences are often elliptical, that is, they omit words we expect in written English sentences. In fact, we often do this in our spoken conversations. For instance, we say, "You see that?" when we really mean, "Did you see that?" Reading poetry or listening to lyrics in music conditions us to supply the omitted words and it makes us more comfortable reading this type of dialogue. Consider one passage in *The Merchant of Venice* where Antonio's friends ask him why he seems so sad and Solanio tells Antonio, "Why, then you are in love" (I, i, l. 46). When Antonio denies this, Solanio responds, "Not in love neither?" (I, i, l. 47). The word "you" is omitted but understood despite the confusing double negative.

In addition to leaving out words, Shakespeare often uses intentionally vague language, a strategy which taxes the reader's attentiveness. In Antony and Cleopatra, Cleopatra, upset that Antony is leaving for Rome after learning that his wife died in battle, convinces him to stay in Egypt:

Sir, you and I must part, but that's not it:
Sir you and I have lov'd, but there's not it;
That you know well, something it is I would—
O, my oblivion is a very Antony,
And I am all forgotten. (I, iii, ll. 87-91)

In line 89, "…something it is I would" suggests that there is something that she would want to say, do, or have done. The intentional vagueness leaves us, and certainly Antony, to wonder. Though this sort of writing may appear lackadaisical for all that it leaves out, here the vagueness functions to portray Cleopatra as rhetorically sophisticated. Similarly, when asked what thing a crocodile is (meaning Antony himself who is being compared to a crocodile), Antony slyly evades the question by giving a vague reply:

It is shap'd, sir, like itself, and it is as broad as it hath breadth.
It is just so high as it is, and moves with it own organs.
It lives by that which nourisheth it, and, the elements once out of it, it transmigrates. (II, vii,

ll. 43-46)

This kind of evasiveness, or doubletalk, occurs often in Shakespeare's writing and requires extra patience on the part of the reader.

Shakespeare's Words
As we read Shakespeare's plays, we will encounter uncommon words. Many of these words are not in use today. As *Romeo and Juliet* opens, we notice words like "shrift" (confession) and "holidame" (a holy relic). Words like these should be explained in notes to the text. Shakespeare also employs words which we still use, though with different meaning. For example, in *The Merchant of Venice* "caskets" refer to small, decorative chests for holding jewels. However, modern readers may think of a large cask instead of the smaller, diminutive casket.

Another trouble modern readers will have with Shakespeare's English is with words that are still in use today, but which mean something different in Elizabethan use. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare uses the word "straight" (as in "straight away") where we would say "immediately." Here, the modern reader is unlikely to carry away the wrong message, however, since the modern meaning will simply make no sense. In this case, textual notes will clarify a phrase's meaning. To cite another example, in Romeo and Juliet, after Mercutio dies, Romeo states that the "black fate on moe days doth depend" (emphasis added). In this case, "depend" really means "impend."

Shakespeare's Wordplay
All of Shakespeare's works exhibit his mastery of playing with language and with such variety that many people have authored entire books on this subject alone. Shakespeare's most frequently used types of wordplay are common: metaphors, similes, synecdoche and metonymy, personification, allusion, and puns. It is when Shakespeare violates the normal use of these devices, or rhetorical figures, that the language becomes confusing.

A metaphor is a comparison in which an object or idea is replaced by another object or idea with common attributes. For example, in Macbeth a murderer tells Macbeth that Banquo has been murdered, as directed, but that his son, Fleance, escaped, having witnessed his father's murder. Fleance, now a threat to *Macbeth*, is described as a serpent:

> There the grown serpent lies, the worm that's fled
> Hath nature that in time will venom breed,
> No teeth for the present. (III, iv, ll. 29-31)

Similes, on the other hand, compare objects or ideas while using the words "like" or "as." In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo tells Juliet that "Love goes toward love as schoolboys from their books" (II, ii, l. 156). Such similes often give way to more involved comparisons, "extended similes." For example, Juliet tells Romeo:

> 'Tis almost morning,
> I would have thee gone,
> And yet no farther than a wonton's bird,
> That lets it hop a little from his hand
> Like a poor prisoner in his twisted gyves,
> And with silken thread plucks it back again,
> So loving-jealous of his liberty. (II, ii, ll. 176-181)

An epic simile, a device borrowed from heroic poetry, is an extended simile that builds into an even more elaborate comparison. In *Macbeth*, Macbeth describes King Duncan's virtues with an angelic, celestial simile

and then drives immediately into another simile that redirects us into a vision of warfare and destruction:

> …Besides this Duncan
> Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
> So clear in his great office, that his virtues
> Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
> The deep damnation of his taking-off;
> And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
> Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
> Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
> That tears shall drown the wind…. (I, vii, ll. 16-25)

Shakespeare employs other devices, like synecdoche and metonymy, to achieve "verbal economy," or using one or two words to express more than one thought. Synecdoche is a figure of speech using a part for the whole. An example of synecdoche is using the word boards to imply a stage. Boards are only a small part of the materials that make up a stage, however, the term boards has become a colloquial synonym for stage. Metonymy is a figure of speech using the name of one thing for that of another which it is associated. An example of metonymy is using crown to mean the king (as used in the sentence "These lands belong to the crown"). Since a crown is associated with or an attribute of the king, the word crown has become a metonymy for the king. It is important to understand that every metonymy is a synecdoche, but not every synecdoche is a metonymy. This is rule is true because a metonymy must not only be a part of the root word, making a synecdoche, but also be a unique attribute of or associated with the root word.

Synecdoche and metonymy in Shakespeare's works is often very confusing to a new student because he creates uses for words that they usually do not perform. This technique is often complicated and yet very subtle, which makes it difficult of a new student to dissect and understand. An example of these devices in one of Shakespeare's plays can be found in *The Merchant of Venice* . In warning his daughter, Jessica, to ignore the Christian revelries in the streets below, Shylock says:

> Lock up my doors; and when you hear the drum
> And the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife,
> Clamber not you up to the casements then… (I, v, ll. 30-32)

The phrase of importance in this quote is "the wry-necked fife." When a reader examines this phrase it does not seem to make sense; a fife is a cylinder-shaped instrument, there is no part of it that can be called a neck. The phrase then must be taken to refer to the fife-player, who has to twist his or her neck to play the fife. Fife, therefore, is a synecdoche for fife-player, much as boards is for stage. The trouble with understanding this phrase is that "vile squealing" logically refers to the sound of the fife, not the fife-player, and the reader might be led to take fife as the instrument because of the parallel reference to "drum" in the previous line. The best solution to this quandary is that Shakespeare uses the word fife to refer to both the instrument and the player. Both the player and the instrument are needed to complete the wordplay in this phrase, which, though difficult to understand to new readers, cannot be seen as a flaw since Shakespeare manages to convey two meanings with one word. This remarkable example of synecdoche illuminates Shakespeare's mastery of "verbal economy."

Shakespeare also uses vivid and imagistic wordplay through personification, in which human capacities and behaviors are attributed to inanimate objects. Bassanio, in *The Merchant of Venice*, almost speechless when Portia promises to marry him and share all her worldly wealth, states "my blood speaks to you in my veins…" (III, ii, l. 176). How deeply he must feel since even his blood can speak. Similarly, Portia, learning of the penalty that Antonio must pay for defaulting on his debt, tells Salerio, "There are some shrewd contents in

yond same paper/That steals the color from Bassanio's cheek" (III, ii, ll. 243-244).

Another important facet of Shakespeare's rhetorical repertoire is his use of allusion. An allusion is a reference to another author or to an historical figure or event. Very often Shakespeare alludes to the heroes and heroines of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. For example, in Cymbeline an entire room is decorated with images illustrating the stories from this classical work, and the heroine, Imogen, has been reading from this text. Similarly, in *Titus Andronicus* characters not only read directly from the *Metamorphoses*, but a subplot re-enacts one of the Metamorphoses's most famous stories, the rape and mutilation of Philomel. Another way Shakespeare uses allusion is to drop names of mythological, historical and literary figures. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, for instance, Petruchio compares Katharina, the woman whom he is courting, to Diana (II, i, l. 55), the virgin goddess, in order to suggest that Katharina is a man-hater. At times, Shakespeare will allude to well-known figures without so much as mentioning their names. In *Twelfth Night*, for example, though the Duke and Valentine are ostensibly interested in Olivia, a rich countess, Shakespeare asks his audience to compare the Duke's emotional turmoil to the plight of Acteon, whom the goddess Diana transforms into a deer to be hunted and killed by Acteon's own dogs:

> Duke:
> That instant was I turn'd into a hart,
> And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
> E'er since pursue me. […]
>
> Valentine:
> But like a cloistress she will veiled walk,
> And water once a day her chamber round…. (I, i, l. 20 ff.)

Shakespeare's use of puns spotlights his exceptional wit. His comedies in particular are loaded with puns, usually of a sexual nature. Puns work through the ambiguity that results when multiple senses of a word are evoked; homophones often cause this sort of ambiguity. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Enobarbus believes "there is mettle in death" (I, ii, l. 146), meaning that there is "courage" in death; at the same time, mettle suggests the homophone metal, referring to swords made of metal causing death. In early editions of Shakespeare's work there was no distinction made between the two words. Antony puns on the word "earing," (I, ii, ll. 112-114) meaning both plowing (as in rooting out weeds) and hearing: he angrily sends away a messenger, not wishing to hear the message from his wife, Fulvia: "…O then we bring forth weeds,/when our quick minds lie still, and our ills told us/Is as our earing." If ill-natured news is planted in one's "hearing," it will render an "earing" (harvest) of ill-natured thoughts. A particularly clever pun, also in *Antony and Cleopatra*, stands out after Antony's troops have fought Octavius's men in Egypt: "We have beat him to his camp. Run one before,/And let the queen know of our gests" (IV, viii, ll. 1-2). Here "gests" means deeds (in this case, deeds of battle); it is also a pun on "guests," as though Octavius' slain soldiers were to be guests when buried in Egypt.

One should note that Elizabethan pronunciation was in several cases different from our own. Thus, modern readers, especially Americans, will miss out on the many puns based on homophones. The textual notes will point up many of these "lost" puns, however.

Shakespeare's sexual innuendoes can be either clever or tedious depending upon the speaker and situation. The modern reader should recall that sexuality in Shakespeare's time was far more complex than in ours and that characters may refer to such things as masturbation and homosexual activity. Textual notes in some editions will point out these puns but rarely explain them. An example of a sexual pun or innuendo can be found in *The Merchant of Venice* when Portia and Nerissa are discussing Portia's past suitors using innuendo to tell of their sexual prowess:

Portia:
I pray thee, overname them, and as thou namest them, I will describe them, and according to my description level at my affection.

Nerrisa:
First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

Portia:
Ay, that's a colt indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse, and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts that he can shoe him himself. I am much afeard my lady his mother played false with the smith. (I, ii, ll. 35-45)

The "Neapolitan prince" is given a grade of an inexperienced youth when Portia describes him as a "colt." The prince is thought to be inexperienced because he did nothing but "talk of his horse" (a pun for his penis) and his other great attributes. Portia goes on to say that the prince boasted that he could "shoe him [his horse] himself," a possible pun meaning that the prince was very proud that he could masturbate. Finally, Portia makes an attack upon the prince's mother, saying that "my lady his mother played false with the smith," a pun to say his mother must have committed adultery with a blacksmith to give birth to such a vulgar man having an obsession with "shoeing his horse."

It is worth mentioning that Shakespeare gives the reader hints when his characters might be using puns and innuendoes. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia's lines are given in prose when she is joking, or engaged in bawdy conversations. Later on the reader will notice that Portia's lines are rhymed in poetry, such as when she is talking in court or to Bassanio. This is Shakespeare's way of letting the reader know when Portia is jesting and when she is serious.

Shakespeare's Dramatic Verse
Finally, the reader will notice that some lines are actually rhymed verse while others are in verse without rhyme; and much of Shakespeare's drama is in prose. Shakespeare usually has his lovers speak in the language of love poetry which uses rhymed couplets. The archetypal example of this comes, of course, from *Romeo and Juliet*:

The grey-ey'd morn smiles on the frowning night,
Check'ring the eastern clouds with streaks of light,
And fleckled darkness like a drunkard reels
From forth day's path and Titan's fiery wheels.
(II, iii, ll. 1-4)

Here it is ironic that Friar Lawrence should speak these lines since he is not the one in love. He, therefore, appears buffoonish and out of touch with reality. Shakespeare often has his characters speak in rhymed verse to let the reader know that the character is acting in jest, and vice-versa.

Perhaps the majority of Shakespeare's lines are in blank verse, a form of poetry which does not use rhyme (hence the name blank) but still employs a rhythm native to the English language, iambic pentameter, where every second syllable in a line of ten syllables receives stress. Consider the following verses from *Hamlet*, and note the accents and the lack of end-rhyme:

The síngle ánd pecúliar lífe is bóund
With áll the stréngth and ármor óf the mínd (III, iii, ll. 12-13)

The final syllable of these verses receives stress and is said to have a hard, or "strong," ending. A soft ending, also said to be "weak," receives no stress. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare uses a soft ending to shape a verse that demonstrates through both sound (meter) and sense the capacity of the feminine to propagate:

> and thén I lóv'd thee
> And shów'd thee áll the quálitíes o' th' ísle,
> The frésh spríngs, bríne-pits, bárren pláce and fértile. (I, ii, ll. 338-40)

The first and third of these lines here have soft endings.

In general, Shakespeare saves blank verse for his characters of noble birth. Therefore, it is significant when his lofty characters speak in prose. Prose holds a special place in Shakespeare's dialogues; he uses it to represent the speech habits of the common people. Not only do lowly servants and common citizens speak in prose, but important, lower class figures also use this fun, at times ribald variety of speech. Though Shakespeare crafts some very ornate lines in verse, his prose can be equally daunting, for some of his characters may speechify and break into doubletalk in their attempts to show sophistication. A clever instance of this comes when the Third Citizen in Coriolanus refers to the people's paradoxical lack of power when they must elect Coriolanus as their new leader once Coriolanus has orated how he has courageously fought for them in battle:

> We have power in ourselves to do it, but it is a power that we have no power to do; for if he show us his wounds and tell us his deeds, we are to put our tongues into those wounds and speak for them; so, if he tell us his noble deeds, we must also tell him our noble acceptance of them. Ingratitude is monstrous, and for the multitude to be ingrateful were to make a monster of the multitude, of the which we, being members, should bring ourselves to be monstrous members. (II, ii, ll. 3-13)

Notice that this passage contains as many metaphors, hideous though they be, as any other passage in Shakespeare's dramatic verse.

When reading Shakespeare, paying attention to characters who suddenly break into rhymed verse, or who slip into prose after speaking in blank verse, will heighten your awareness of a character's mood and personal development. For instance, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the famous military leader Marcus Antony usually speaks in blank verse, but also speaks in fits of prose (II, iii, ll. 43-46) once his masculinity and authority have been questioned. Similarly, in *Timon of Athens*, after the wealthy lord Timon abandons the city of Athens to live in a cave, he harangues anyone whom he encounters in prose (IV, iii, l. 331 ff.). In contrast, the reader should wonder why the bestial Caliban in *The Tempest* speaks in blank verse rather than in prose.

Implied Stage Action

When we read a Shakespearean play, we are reading a performance text. Actors interact through dialogue, but at the same time these actors cry, gesticulate, throw tantrums, pick up daggers, and compulsively wash murderous "blood" from their hands. Some of the action that takes place on stage is explicitly stated in stage directions. However, some of the stage activity is couched within the dialogue itself. Attentiveness to these cues is important as one conceives how to visualize the action. When Iago in *Othello* feigns concern for Cassio whom he himself has stabbed, he calls to the surrounding men, "Come, come:/Lend me a light" (V, i, ll. 86-87). It is almost sure that one of the actors involved will bring him a torch or lantern. In the same play, Emilia, Desdemona's maidservant, asks if she should fetch her lady's nightgown and Desdemona replies, "No, unpin me here" (IV, iii, l. 37). In Macbeth, after killing Duncan, Macbeth brings the murder weapon back with him. When he tells his wife that he cannot return to the scene and place the daggers to suggest that the king's guards murdered Duncan, she castigates him: "Infirm of purpose/Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead are but as pictures" (II, ii, ll. 50-52). As she exits, it is easy to visualize Lady Macbeth

grabbing the daggers from her husband.

For 400 years, readers have found it greatly satisfying to work with all aspects of Shakespeare's language—the implied stage action, word choice, sentence structure, and wordplay—until all aspects come to life. Just as seeing a fine performance of a Shakespearean play is exciting, staging the play in one's own mind's eye, and revisiting lines to enrich the sense of the action, will enhance one's appreciation of Shakespeare's extraordinary literary and dramatic achievements.

Twelfth Night: List of Characters

Orsino—the Duke of Illyria, who is madly in love with Olivia.

Olivia—the countess with whom Orsino is in love and who rejects him.

Curio—one of the Duke's attendants.

Valentine—another gentlemen attending the Duke.

Viola—the female of a brother–sister pair of twins who enters Illyria disguised as Cesario and finds love.

A Sea Captain—a friend to Viola who comes ashore with her.

Sir Toby Belch—Olivia's uncle who drinks a lot and marries Maria.

Maria—Olivia's lady-in-waiting.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek—Sir Toby's friend who thinks he is a potential suitor for Olivia.

Feste the Clown—servant to Olivia who sings and provides entertainment.

Malvolio—steward to Olivia.

Fabian—another servant to Olivia.

Antonio—another sea captain who is friend to Viola and who comes ashore with Sebastian.

Sebastian—Viola's twin brother.

First Officer—officer in the service of the Duke.

Second Officer—also in the service of the Duke.

A Priest—marries Sebastian and Olivia.

Musicians—playing for Duke.

Sailors—come ashore with the Captain and Viola.

Lords, Attendants

Twelfth Night: Historical Background

Although fifteenth-century England had been a time of grave civil unrest and violence, by the time Shakespeare achieved prominence during Elizabeth and James' reigns it was enjoying a period of socio-political security and respect for the arts. Queen Elizabeth's reign extended from 1558 until 1603, when she was succeeded by the Scottish King James. Shakespeare received the patronage of both monarchs during his career as a playwright.

Elizabeth's reign was not without its tensions. There was an intense religious climate in which the Queen had to act decisively. The religious tensions that existed during Elizabeth's reign continued during James' reign, when he was pitted against the Puritans. England had gone to war with Spain. In other foreign affairs, the Queen was moderate, practicing a prudent diplomatic neutrality. There were, however, several plots on her life.

There was also evidence of progress. The nation experienced a commercial revolution. Elizabeth's government instituted two important social measures: "the Statute of Artificers" and the "Poor Laws," both of which were aimed at helping the people displaced and hurt by changing conditions. Laws were passed to regulate the economy. Explorers started to venture into the unknown for riches and land. The machinery of government was transformed. The administrative style of government replaced the household form of leadership.

The Elizabethan Age was an age that made a great writer like Shakespeare and his contemporaries possible. It produced excellent drama; Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* are two examples. Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser produced masterpieces during Elizabeth's reign. Shakespeare was in good company.

Shakespeare was well suited to the English Renaissance, with its new-found faith in the dignity and worth of the individual. Shakespeare profoundly understood human nature and provided us with some of the most imaginative character studies in drama. Shakespeare wrote for his company of players, known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men. He achieved considerable prosperity as a playwright. In addition to his artistic brilliance, Shakespeare wrote under the influence of the philosophy and effervescent spirit of the Elizabethan Age. Notably, we find the presence of the "Great Chain of Being," a view of life that started with Plato and Aristotle, in some of his plays. Furthermore, other ideas and social structures established in the Middle Ages still held sway during the early seventeenth century.

Shakespeare could display his universality and penetration in the public theater for his audience. His work, largely free of didactic and political motives, proved very entertaining.

The date of the composition of *Twelfth Night* is fixed around 1600. In using his creative powers on original sources, such as the Plautine Gl'Ingannati and Barnabe Rich's "Of Apolonius and Silla," Shakespeare was following a Renaissance tradition of working creatively with original situations. Shakespeare thus enjoyed artistic freedom and encouragement to produce a play like *Twelfth Night* for his audience, knowing that it would entertain viewers of all ages and status.

Twelfth Night: Summary and Analysis

Act I, Scene 1 Summary and Analysis

New Characters:
Orsino: the Duke of Illyria, who is madly in love with Olivia

Curio: one of the Duke's attendants

Valentine: another gentleman attending the Duke

Summary
The play opens at the Duke's palace in Illyria. The Duke is lovesick, and so the first 15 lines express his powerful love for the Countess Olivia. He pours forth sweet words of passion for his love object.

He desires to have music feed his appetite for love. He feels at first that he can't get enough of the energizing "food of love," but abruptly urges the musicians to stop playing: "Enough, no more!"

Then, addressing the "spirit of love," he characterizes it as so broad a force that nothing can outdo or overcome it. Love is very, very powerful.

After this outpouring, one of the Duke's attendants, Curio, asks him if he plans to go hunting. But Orsino is in no mood for recreation; he is deeply in love. So his response is more than a mere "no." He says that his desire for Olivia has stronger control over him than anything else.

Valentine, another attendant, enters with words that the Duke does want to listen to because they concern Olivia. Valentine informs the Duke of Olivia's mourning. She is grieving the loss of her dead brother and plans to stay in mourning for a long time. So, for her, love is out!

This news frustrates the Duke. He realizes that he will not achieve the object of his desire—at least, not yet. He recognizes that Olivia is full of love, but is channeling it in another direction, away from him. Still, his lover's hope does not lessen as long as he feels that love will awaken in Olivia.

Analysis
The first scene leads us instantly into the major theme of the play—love. Shakespeare, the skillful dramatist, wastes no time in developing it. In so doing, he uses poetic devices such as metaphor, simile, puns, and synesthesia to reveal the extraordinary nature of true love.

The poetry of the Duke's opening speech clearly conveys the power of his love for Olivia:

> If music be the food of love, play on,
> Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken, and so die.

The Duke uses a physical metaphor of eating food to show how strong his experience of love is. He commands the musicians to overwhelm him with music, so that his lingering appetite for Olivia will die. He is totally wrapped up in his love for her.

Further on in the Duke's opening speech, he directly addresses the "spirit of love," using a falconry metaphor to indicate the depth of true love. One doesn't have to be a hunter to appreciate the thought he tries to convey. Consider that the sky is such a broad and spacious area and that falcons can reach great heights while flying. The power of the poetry here rests in comparing the experience of love with the falcon reaching its highest point in flight. It's a dizzying image. The bird reaches its highest point and then must come down to lower heights. Just as the falcon cannot outdistance the sky, so "nought" can overdo or overwhelm the power of love. All other forces and influences will "fall into abatement" if they try to overwhelm love.

The Duke has ample time to walk around his palace being in love, doing nothing else. This sense of stasis suggests that the Duke is illustrating true love in its intensity as it lasts. He is engaged in the process of loving; he has not entered into a relationship with Olivia or any other woman as yet.

Accordingly, it might be said that the Duke is "in love with love." But his speeches in Scene i; while exalting the business of love, also demonstrate that he knows his love object to be Olivia, a real, breathing person, and he makes an effort to win her.

The title of the play, *Twelfth Night*, orients the reader toward another element in the play, namely, that of the playful and festive atmosphere of the action. The *Twelfth Night* of Christmas was an occasion for merriment when a "Lord of Misrule" was appointed to direct the festivities. It is interesting that Shakespeare associated this particular holiday with the theme of love. In the festival running through the play, love plays an important part as the characters meet and pair off. Plots and affairs of love are entertaining to be involved in. The meaning of the subtitle, "What You Will," is not so apparent to the reader. It is spoken by Olivia at the end of Act I to Malvolio when she instructs him to get rid of Cesario, who's come to woo her for the Duke. The casualness of the phrase reflects her loose attitude toward the Duke's love. It points up the contrast between her feelings and those of the Duke. Feste, the Clown, will later emphasize this mundane level of love. It may also suggest a satire on the foibles of man.

Act I, Scene 2 Summary and Analysis

New Characters:
Viola: the female of a twin brother–sister pair, who enters Illyria disguised as Cesario and finds love

A Sea Captain: a friend to Viola who comes ashore with her

Summary
The setting of this scene is appropriately away from the majestic atmosphere of the Duke's palace. We meet Viola and a captain on a seacoast. Viola's practical nature serves to complement the Duke's romantic character.

Shipwrecked, Viola asks the Captain and sailors where she is. The Captain tells her that they are in a region called "Illyria." Her brother, who had also been on the ship with her, is separated from them, which causes Viola to wonder if he has drowned. The Captain suggests that he may still be alive because he last saw him struggling to stay afloat.

The Captain was born and raised in Illyria, and he knows about the Duke's courtship with Olivia. The Captain relates Olivia's disinclination to accept Orsino's pledge, as he has heard from gossip.

Upon hearing this, Viola is moved to serve Olivia. But the Captain tells her that that is impossible. Olivia has closed herself off to any new relationships while she deeply mourns the loss of her brother.

Viola quickly gets another idea. She decides to serve the Duke instead, as his eunuch. Since she is a woman, that plan will require a disguise: "Conceal me what I am." This plan is very practical, for it utilizes a disguise. Viola claims to have a purpose in assuming a disguise, but, at this point, it is not clear exactly what she wants to achieve. She even says, "What else may hap, to time I will commit."

Analysis
This scene shifts the thematic emphasis to a practical, commonsense aspect of love. In so doing, Shakespeare is implying that there's more to love than mere poetry. It's all right to put one's loved one up on a pedestal,

but it also becomes necessary to find a way to get her down and together with the wooer. Valentine, the Duke's servant, had only gone to Olivia to report the Duke's love for her and obtain a favorable reply. Viola represents a viable plan of action to bring the two together in love. Her offerings of money to the Captain, for example, symbolize this practical side to her character. Money is a tool and a means to an end. Viola is well aware that money represents a way to get people to do what she wants.

The disguise plan has been used a lot in Shakespeare's plays. Here, as in *Measure for Measure* and *As You Like It*, a noble character puts on a mask in order to influence the behavior of other characters. Since Viola desires to serve the Duke, her goal may be to help make the love match a reality for him.

Relevant to her noble motivation is Viola's stating of a significant Shakespearean theme, that is, appearances versus the reality underlying them. Shakespeare knew all too well that appearances can be deceiving. People seem other than what they are in order to deceive or hurt other people. Viola comments perceptively on the Captain's true character. He is authentic and can be trusted. Her valuing of an authentic character implies that her own motivation is for the Duke's benefit.

Viola repeats the music image of the first scene. True to her character as we've seen it thus far, she has in mind a specific practical use for music. She plans to "speak to him in many sorts of music." Clearly, Viola wants to get on the Duke's good side and help him. So, she will use music to do so. Notice the active/passive contrast of each character's use of music. Whereas the Duke passively requests that his musicians play music so it will fill him to overflow, Viola contemplates the active use of music to get into the good graces of the Duke.

Act I, Scene 3 Summary and Analysis

New Characters:
Sir Toby Belch: Olivia's uncle, who drinks a lot

Maria: Olivia's lady-in-waiting

Sir Andrew Aguecheek: Sir Toby's friend, who thinks he is a potential suitor for Olivia

Summary
This scene is set in Olivia's house, but we do not as yet meet Olivia. She is in extended mourning. Sir Toby, her uncle, opens with a question about Olivia. He is talking to Maria, Olivia's lady-in-waiting, who responds with a complaint about Toby's late carousing.

Maria refers to Sir Toby's friend, Sir Andrew, as a fool. She heard that Sir Toby had brought him to the house to woo Olivia. Sir Toby, on the other hand, praises the many virtues his friend possesses. He is handsome, has a good income, and speaks several languages. Furthermore, they are drinking buddies.

When Sir Andrew enters, Sir Toby immediately urges him on Maria, "board her, woo her, assail her," though Sir Andrew misunderstands him at first. As Sir Toby's meaning dawns on him, he asserts that he wouldn't do such a thing in Olivia's house.

Before departing, Maria invites Sir Andrew for a drink. Sir Toby realizes that her invitation was made in a joking manner, and he engages Sir Andrew in a playful conversation. Sir Andrew talks of leaving, having lost hope of winning Olivia's love. He believes the Count Orsino has a much better chance for her than he does. Nonetheless, Sir Toby reassures him that his chances are still good because Orsino is not the kind of man Olivia is looking for. This reassurance encourages Sir Andrew to stay a month longer.

So, continuing their conversation together, Sir Toby questions his friend's dancing ability. Sir Andrew says that he's quite a capable dancer. They then plan to go partying together.

Analysis
The characters of Maria and Sir Toby put us in touch with a lower class of people in Illyria; that is, they do not belong to the aristocracy as do Orsino and Olivia. This is a play for all kinds of people; love is for everyone. The disguise trick suggests this notion. It doesn't matter what your financial or social status is in love because true love does not play favorites. That is why Sir Andrew and Malvolio can entertain hopes of winning Olivia's love. Love is an experience that occurs between two human beings. A disguise can prove this statement because if you can conceal who or what you truly are, then it follows that it doesn't matter what your real identity is. Love can blossom. All is fair in love.

A note of competition enters the play in this scene. Sir Toby believes Sir Andrew to be a proper suitor for his niece. Despite his praise, however, the scene leaves us with the impression that Sir Andrew may not be so appropriate. Maria, for one, knocks him. By suggesting Sir Andrew for Olivia—in the light of his iffy status—Shakespeare asserts the universality of his love theme.

Beyond that, these characters illustrate the party-and-fun atmosphere, as implied in the title's holiday. They drink, dance, and flirt with the ladies, everything one would expect at a wild, exciting festival. There's a lighthearted playfulness all through the play; Sir Toby and Andrew seem to keep the celebration going. Their roles may be to suggest that liveliness and fun should surround the process of falling in love.

Notice how Shakespeare uses the language to reveal Sir Toby's free spirit. He parodies Maria's use of the word "exception." His repetition of the word "confine" with a new meaning is an instance of the figurative device called "ploce." Maria uses it in the sense of "keep," while Sir Toby switches to the sense of "dress." There's a sly defiance in this switch of senses that reflects his high-spirited nature. This example of "ploce" and others in this scene lend a sharp emphasis to the dialogue.

The scene ends with Sir Toby introducing a succession of "dance" images. This imagery both characterizes Sir Toby as the representative of partying that he is, and it strengthens the overall presence of a festival in Illyria.

Act I, Scene 4 Summary and Analysis

Summary
We find Viola (now named "Cesario") on her fourth day in the Duke's palace, her disguise having gained her the access she wished. Valentine is amazed, in fact, at how much favor she has already gained with the Duke.

The Duke assigns Cesario the task of pursuing Olivia for him. He urges him to be aggressive: "Be clamorous and leap all civil bounds." The Duke is confident that Cesario can effectively persuade Olivia to respond to his true passion. Cesario is doubtful.

Part of the Duke's confidence owes to his intuition of Cesario's real feminine qualities. He implies, in other words, that she can play the womanly matchmaker role well. He promises him a reward if he is successful in his undertaking.

Viola's last lines allude to another plot strand in the play, her love for the Duke, which she cannot reveal because of her disguise.

Analysis
It is appropriate to consider a definition of the type of play (or "genre") that *Twelfth Night* is. Twelfth Night belongs to a species of drama known as "comedy." We expect the course of action in a comedy to be different from that in a tragedy. As M.H. Abrams puts it in A Glossary of Literary Terms:

> Romantic comedy, as developed by Shakespeare and some of his Elizabethan contemporaries, is concerned with a love affair that involves a beautiful and idealized heroine (sometimes disguised as a man); the course of this love does not run smooth, but overcomes all difficulties to end in a happy union.

Twelfth Night contains both of these elements and a lot more. The definition enlightens us about the ending; it will be a happy one. In comedy, love conquers all. Northrop Frye makes it clear that comedy is "community-oriented, its vision has a social significance. This vision calls for the establishing of society as we would like it." (Frye, 286)

Recall, therefore, that up until the fourth scene, the Duke's love is virtually the "talk of the town." Not only does the Duke brim with lyrical expression of his love, but the other characters are also aware of his infatuation. This tight interweaving of the Orsino courtship strand develops the love theme quite nicely.

This scene offers an inkling as to a slight alteration in the Duke's impassioned stance toward Olivia. Cesario's brief stay has exerted a subtle influence on him. Orsino closes the scene with a display of common sense that moves him momentarily away from the love-filled garden he's been in. He judges Cesario's ability to perform the errand and offers him wealth if he succeeds.

Act I, Scene 5 Summary and Analysis

New Characters:
Olivia: the countess with whom Orsino is in love and who rejects him

Clown: servant to Olivia who sings and provides entertainment

Malvolio: steward to Olivia

Summary
This scene opens with Maria and the Clown engaged in conversation. Maria, wondering where the Clown has been, tells him that he'll be punished for his absence unless he has good reason for it. This threat fails to scare the Clown, as he shows in his offhand replies.

The Clown is equally offhand with Olivia when she enters. He responds to her with insult, ironically calling her a "fool." Although she tries to get rid of him, the Clown prevails on her to prove that she is the fool. To that end, he questions her about her mourning her brother's death.

Unoffended, Olivia turns to her steward Malvolio for his opinion of the Clown. An exchange of insults follows her question. The Clown puts down Malvolio and Malvolio puts down the Clown. Malvolio considers the Clown a stupid, useless character. Olivia sides with the Clown, even calling Malvolio an "egotist," because the Clown is only playing his role as "fool" properly.

Maria announces Cesario's arrival. Olivia is not in the mood to listen to a suit from the Duke. Malvolio returns to Olivia to tell her that Cesario stubbornly refuses to leave until Olivia will speak with him. Olivia wonders what kind of man he is. She allows him to enter and puts on a veil.

Cesario begins by showering lover's compliments on Olivia. Cesario makes a point of the fact that her suit is memorized. Everything he will say has been rehearsed beforehand.

Shortly after starting his speech of love, Cesario requests to see Olivia's face. Olivia complies and is met with praise for her "beauty truly blent." Cesario further affirms the Duke's passion for Olivia, expressing a hope that Olivia will reciprocate the Duke's love.

Unfortunately for the Duke, Olivia has no desire to love him. Cesario does not quite believe her rejection of Orsino. He can do little more than express a hope that Olivia will return the Duke's love, before he exits.

Olivia then reveals that she has been taken with the youth. His charms have worked their subtle ways on Olivia's eyes. So, she sends Malvolio after him with a token of her newfound affection, a ring. Her final words intimate some confusion about what is happening to her.

Analysis
The original love connection of the Duke admiring Olivia has gone awry by the end of this scene. We witness two twists: Viola states her attraction to Orsino, and Olivia reveals a liking for Cesario. These two twists suggest that, for Shakespeare, love is truly a subjective experience. When a person sees a potential sweetheart and falls in love, he or she feels it in his or her own heart and mind. One cannot be forced to love another by the sheer strength of the other's attraction, as the Duke's suit might imply.

Another way that Shakespeare emphasizes the subjective nature of love is through the Clown's speech. The Clown stands in counterpoint to the Duke in respect to his attitude toward Olivia. The smitten Duke utters his passionate feeling for Olivia, but the Clown's insults are couched in a jarringly logical manner. The former exalts Olivia; the latter belittles her. The Clown insists on proving Olivia a "fool." This slighting of Olivia reveals her to be a real person rather than the idealized goddess that the Duke opens the play with.

Shakespeare's plays have fools and clowns in them, whose speech very often has relevance to the action. The most famous example is Lear's fool, who utters profound commentary on Lear's plight. The Clown's role in *Twelfth Night* is a bit more subtle. As noted, the Clown's self-conscious reference to words and logic provide an indirect commentary on the Duke's love.

In an obvious way, the Clown is the clown of the party in the play. His wordplay and attitude toward Olivia demonstrate that he's enjoying the amusement that is found in a festive atmosphere. In keeping with the fun-filled atmosphere, Sir Toby makes a drunken entrance to comment briefly on Cesario's arrival.

Cesario's prepared speech for Olivia, on Orsino's behalf, contains an extended theological metaphor, which Olivia picks up on and carries forward. Cesario contends that he has a sacred message for Olivia. The loftiness of the theological metaphor reflects the great value placed on Orsino's suit. His love is sacred; Olivia is his goddess. A special bond is thus formed between Cesario and Olivia in view of the way Olivia responds to the theological language of his speech. Perhaps she is valuing the speaker more than the speech.

Cesario finishes his effort to persuade Olivia with speech that has not been studied. He includes hyperbole to emphasize the Duke's passion. (1. 256) Cesario earnestly believes that Olivia should return the Duke's offer of love. He regards her closed¬mindedness as cruel.

Act II, Scene 1 Summary and Analysis

New Characters:
Antonio: a sea captain, friend to Sebastian, who wishes to serve him

Sebastian: Viola's twin brother, who survives the shipwreck and initially believes Viola has drowned

Summary
This short scene serves the purpose of letting us know that Sebastian, Viola's twin brother, has reached the shores of Illyria. We need this information to prepare our understanding of later scenes.

Sebastian tells us a little about himself, thus informing us that he has a twin sister. He thinks that she drowned while he managed to gain safety.

He wishes to separate from Antonio and wander about the area. But shortly afterward, he contradicts himself in this intention by stating that he, specifically, wants to go to "the Count Orsino's court." Although Antonio offers to serve Sebastian, he cannot go immediately with him to Orsino's court because he has "many enemies" there. Yet, we will learn that Antonio's affection for Sebastian is strong enough to prompt him to follow after him eventually.

Analysis
Notice the very straightforward and formal manner in which these men talk to one another. Since this scene serves an informative purpose, the formal dialogue is most appropriate. There is very little poetry in this scene. They are not expressing their love for a woman as Orsino was doing in the first scene. The dialogue serves up numerous indications that its purpose here is just to inform. Antonio starts the dialogue with a straightforward yes-or-no question: "Will you stay no longer?" Sebastian gives his answer. Then Antonio makes a request whose very words explicitly suggest that this scene is providing the audience with information: "Let me know of you whither you are bound." Finally, Sebastian states background information in his next speech.

The contrast between the formal prose of this scene and the poetry of the love speeches should teach us about Shakespeare's use of language. Poetry expresses feeling, often strong feeling, so using it to reveal the depth of one's love is a fine touch. Prose aims to inform and enlighten us about a particular subject or issue, and it is often, though not always, free of the embellishments and imagination of poetry.

The use of shipwrecked twins in a romantic plot, such as in *Twelfth Night*, is not an idea original to Shakespeare. As with most of his plays, he used source materials to inspire him with characters and plots. L.G. Salingar enlightens us as to the way in which Shakespeare manipulated his sources:

> There are four essential characters to Gl'Ingannati [a Sienese comedy], Bandello [story], Riche [story], and Shakespeare; namely, a lover, a heroine in his service disguised as a page, her twin brother (who at first has disappeared), and a second heroine. The basic elements common to all four plots are: the heroine's secret love for her master; her employment as go-between, leading to the complication of a cross-wooing; and a final solution by means of the unforeseen arrival of the missing twin.

Even Shakespeare's mastery required original source materials on which to work.

Act II, Scene 2 Summary and Analysis

Summary
Malvolio catches up with Cesario to give him the ring from Olivia. Naturally, he is surprised inasmuch as he knows he did not leave a ring. Malvolio also repeats Olivia's desire not to have any further dealings with Orsino. Before leaving, Malvolio puts the ring on the ground.

Left alone on stage, Cesario utters a soliloquy in which he expresses his confusion over the ring. He now realizes that Olivia has fallen in love with him. “She loves me sure,” he asserts. He acknowledges that the disguise must be responsible for stirring up her love. He finishes up the soliloquy wondering how this mistaken love on his part and frustrated love on his master’s part will be resolved. As matters currently stand, there is a mess for all the lovers involved. Time will bring in the solutions.

Analysis
It is useful to understand the function of a soliloquy in drama. Sometimes a playwright cannot include important information about character or plot in the dialogue, so a soliloquy may become necessary.

> Soliloquy is the act of talking to oneself, silently or aloud. In drama it denotes the convention by which a character, alone on the stage, utters his thoughts aloud; the playwright uses this device as a convenient way to convey directly to the audience information about a character’s motives, intentions, and state of mind, as well as for purposes of general exposition. (Abrams, 180)

In this scene, Cesario certainly makes an important commentary about the love situation while alone on stage. A soliloquy like the one he utters is true to the character of Cesario we’ve seen so far.

His words continue to reflect his role as representative of the practical, commonsense aspect of love in this play. He very logically takes account of Olivia and Orsino’s feelings. True, he may be capable of such intense feelings for another person, but he realizes that people have to get along in the real world each day, too. This play gives us the feeling that the depiction of love would somehow be incomplete if it emphasized just the romance and passion of Orsino and Olivia’s feelings. Love can still see the beloved as an ordinary human being.

Critics have argued over how to interpret Malvolio. The issue relates to Malvolio’s character and the significance of the comic plot centered on him. Consider how dutiful and nonchalant he appears in this scene. He brings the ring, delivers Olivia’s message, and takes off. We can start to form our opinion of his character.

In his soliloquy, Cesario repeats the motif of “appearances versus reality.” Every instance of a motif should enhance our understanding of the playwright’s views on that particular subject.

> Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness
> Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.
> How easy is it for the proper false
> In women’s waxen hearts to set their forms!

These lines express his concern that appearances are deceiving. In this context, Olivia has fallen in love with Cesario’s outer masculinity, which causes him to realize that a mask can lead someone into love, regardless of the true character of the person beneath it. It is not Cesario’s intention, however, to seduce Olivia.

Act II, Scene 3 Summary and Analysis

Summary
In case we’d forgotten about the merriment of the play, this scene puts us back in Olivia’s house and opens with the leader of the party, Sir Toby. If we follow the love plot of the previous scene, we are then led astray by what these two men say. They begin by talking about going to bed early. Sir Toby says that going to bed after midnight is equal to going to bed early. Toby calls for some wine to have with their food.

When Feste the Clown enters, Andrew compliments his singing voice and his skill displayed in entertainment the previous night: “Why, this is best fooling, when all is done.” Then, continuing in this vein, Sir Toby calls for another frequently used element in Shakespeare’s plays—a song. Feste suggests either a love song or a song with a moral. Naturally, a love song is apropos. The Clown sings a song that recalls the Duke’s elevated emotion of the first scene; he also defines “love.” Very pleased with the Clown’s song, they engage him in some more singing.

Nevertheless, Maria enters and chides them for their nonsense. Sir Toby banters with her, as is appropriate to his role as “lord of misrule,” (to use the holiday expression). Malvolio’s questions refer to their purpose as the merrymakers in the play. His question, “Do ye make an alehouse of my lady’s house?”, best points up the intersection of the holiday atmosphere and the love theme, which constitutes the play’s peculiar blend. Malvolio seriously restates his lady’s displeasure with Sir Toby’s revels. What follows, to Malvolio’s chagrin, is more singing and wine-drinking. Malvolio departs with an insult from Maria.

It is at this point that the comic plot is hatched. Maria reveals that she wants revenge on Malvolio, and Sir Toby and Andrew go right along with her scheme. Maria believes that she is wreaking revenge on Malvolio’s Puritan character. Maria explains the plot: it involves dropping letters in Malvolio’s way, supposedly written by Olivia (in her own hand), which will lead him to believe that Olivia is professing her love to him. They are to delight in the spectacle.

Analysis

This scene is a good illustration of what L.G. Salingar (quoting Enid Welsford) characterizes as Shakepeare’s transmuting “into poetry the quintessence of the Saturnalia.” There is plenty of wine and singing running through a scene that also gives us the springboard for Malvolio’s pending humiliation. To clarify this important element of the play, Salingar further adds, “The sub-plot shows a prolonged season of misrule, or ‘uncivil rule,’ in Olivia’s household, with Sir Toby turning night into day; there are drinking, dancing, and singing,…and the gulling of an unpopular member of the household.” So, by this point, the significance of the title should be quite clear.

It is noteworthy how appropriate the song from Feste the Clown is, for it defines love. This is a play that illustrates the theme of love, showing a particular vision of the love experience. The song is divided into two halves: the first half resembles the outpourings that we’ve already read from the Duke. It expresses praise and longing for the love object. The second half embodies the theme, “What is love?” The definition emphasizes the intensity of feeling such as the Duke has shown. Thus it has little relevance to Cesario’s role in the play. There is a double-faceted nature to love. (Some may even see or feel more facets.) Willard Gaylin puts it this way in his *Rediscovering Love*:

> Obviously loving and being loved can and should coexist in one relationship—there is no real conflict between the two. One may so dominate the psychological needs of an individual as to exclude the other [as we clearly see with Orsino], but they have a natural compatibility. (Gaylin, 108)

In the opening scene, the Duke has no relationship with Olivia as he utters his love. Cesario enters his service to engender a loving relationship for him.

As for the controversy surrounding Malvolio, there is no reason to expect that he take part in the revelling. So, Maria’s criticism of his being too straitlaced doesn’t hold a lot of water. He performs his service earnestly and dutifully for his lady. We ought to ponder whether revenge is a fitting motive for the deception to follow. Some readers might conclude that Maria and Sir Toby resent Malvolio because he appears moralistic and judgmental.

Act II, Scene 4 Summary and Analysis

Summary
In this scene, we are back at the Duke's palace. Once again, the Duke wants to hear some music, the food for his love. He calls for the Clown, who happens not to be there at the moment. While waiting for the Clown to be located, he speaks with Cesario.

The Duke affirms his true love. He continues to be the passionate lover who yearns for his beloved. His emotions, as a lover, are topsy-turvy.

The Duke surmises that Cesario had once also been in love, as he currently is. He answers "yes" that she was of the same age and temperament as the Duke. He responds with his belief that the woman should be the younger of the pair, so as to ensure that the love remain robust.

The Clown returns and Orsino is eager for a love song, a song that deals with the innocence of love, such as he is experiencing. The emphasis in the Clown's song is prophetic. It focuses on the Duke's frustration with and failure to obtain Olivia, his heart's desire. The lover in the song is "slain by a fair cruel maid." In short, it's a song of unrequited love.

Interestingly, in spite of the Duke's praise for this song, the Clown insults Orsino in a manner similar to the way he insulted Olivia in Act I. The Clown suggests that he lacks consistency and direction, though the logical form of his expression is not so apparent as in his insult to Olivia.

The Duke sends Cesario to Olivia to woo her for him. Cesario warns him that Olivia is not open to romance with him. Cesario asks the Duke if he would love a woman just because she had an intense attraction to him. The Duke does not think that that is a valid comparison, suggesting that a man's love is more powerful. Cesario disagrees with the Duke's proposition. Women are capable of very strong love attachments. Cesario, in fact, refers to his father's daughter as an example.

Analysis
The Duke wants to hear some music. This is the same request he makes at the start of Act I. This suggests that his love is still strong. The frustration has failed to extinguish the fire in his heart. Again, he is in the passive role of wanting the music to work on his feelings. His request for Feste to sing again should also remind us of the festive spirit.

As the Duke speaks to Cesario, we find him in the same infatuated frame of mind as in previous scenes. Shakespeare thus illustrates the love theme. The Duke is in the state of "loving" (in Gaylin's terms). He is not yet in the condition that Cesario perhaps represents.

Cesario presents more evidence that he is in touch with the reality of the situation. After the Duke requests that he go to Olivia to sue, Cesario counters with an eye-opening question: "But if she cannot love you, sir?" Not only does the Duke's answer suggest that his love continues intense, but it also demonstrates that love has a will of its own that may run at variance with reality. "No" is not a viable answer for him. In this way, Cesario is trying to reason with Orsino. Just because he is in love with Olivia, it doesn't follow that Olivia will fall in love with him.

The song Feste sings is prophetic, so it relates to the theme in a forward-looking manner. It expresses the death of love, which, in view of the Duke's confidence, may astonish the reader. The Duke feels that Olivia should reciprocate his love. But there's a song that tells of a "fair, cruel maid," who is obviously Olivia, who has killed her wooer. Cesario has already referred to Olivia as "fair cruelty." Olivia never accepts the love of

Orsino. To the passionate lover, such rejection is tantamount to murder. So intense are the rejected lover's feelings that he desires to be buried in a grave. This intensity is fitting for Orsino, who has already expressed such passionate feelings for his beloved.

Act II, Scene 5 Summary and Analysis

New Character:
Fabian: the servant to Olivia who is the third spectator to Malvolio's humiliation

Summary
This scene is devoted exclusively to the devious comic plot. Sir Toby gathers Fabian, another servant, and Andrew to enjoy the exercise in shame that Maria is about to execute. Fabian seems to have a bone to pick with him, so he is interested in what will happen to Malvolio.

Maria has the whole trick worked out. They will hide in a box tree and observe as Malvolio picks up the falsified letter to read it. Olivia is on Malvolio's mind when he enters. Sir Toby and Fabian believe that Malvolio's arrogance makes him suitable game for the trap that's been set. Malvolio fancies himself a suitor to Olivia.

Speaking aloud, Malvolio continues to let his imagination run wild over the prospect of loving Olivia and the accompanying self-aggrandizement. While doing so, Sir Toby, Fabian, and Andrew devilishly comment on his behavior. That they are sadistic in intention is evident in such remarks as "Pistol him, pistol him" and "O for a stonebow, to hit him in the eye."

Eventually Malvolio sees the letter, which appears to him to be in Olivia's handwriting. Though it is a love letter, it doesn't completely mention Malvolio by name. Malvolio takes the declaration of love to be addressed to him because it identifies the beloved as "M,O,A,I," four letters that can be found in Malvolio's name. Furthermore, the phrase "I may command where I adore" leads him to believe that he is the man because he is her servant.

The letter goes on to suggest that fortune is now smiling on Malvolio. The letter also induces him to adopt peculiar behaviors. He is to be hostile with a kinsman, smile in Olivia's presence, study political treatises for advice, and wear yellow stockings and cross-garters. Malvolio, convinced of the letter's authenticity, resolves to follow all of its suggestions.

Sir Toby foreshadows his subsequent marriage to Maria in this scene. He is so intrigued by her skill in the trap that he cannot help feeling love for her: "I could marry this wench for this device."

As yet, Malvolio has not humiliated himself before Olivia. The scheme will come to fruition when Malvolio confronts Olivia with smiles and yellow stockings, cross-gartered. So, for this devilish group, the best is yet to come.

Analysis
"Whether Malvolio has been most notoriously abused, or whether he is the well-deserving victim of a practical joke that explodes his vanity, social-climbing, and pretentiousness is the point at issue," says Maurice Charney. Until the device of Maria's letter, the play does not firmly emphasize Malvolio's vanity and social-climbing. As has been shown, he properly carries out his duty for Olivia. Only through what other characters say of him may we feel justified in labeling him an "overweening rogue," as Sir Toby does. His behavior, though, is quite proper.

What we should come to terms with is the relationship of this comic plot to the other plot. What it has in common, of course, is the theme of love. Malvolio is duped into believing that Olivia loves him, and he falls in love. This "symbolist drama," as Ralph Berry terms it, becomes a perversion of Orsino's love for Olivia. Malvolio may be likened to the Duke in the way that the letter ignites his passion for her. The letter, as a practical means of expression, reminds us of Cesario's position in the total rendering of the love theme. But, since the letter is a trick, Malvolio's love is a parody of the feelings and behavior of the Duke and Cesario. Olivia does not, nor will she, love Malvolio.

Perhaps the most glaring instance of perverseness is in the endings of the plots. Comedy prescribes a happy ending for the lovers in the romantic plot. Maria's contrived plot only issues forth a cruel outcome for Malvolio. The letter contains no truth. Malvolio will go mad.

This scheme is too cruel to be characterized as a bit of sport in keeping with the festive atmosphere. The desire for revenge that Sir Toby and Maria reveal undermines the acceptability of such as "jest," as Sir Toby euphemistically calls it. Malvolio is alienated from the rest of the household, and the way in which its members so handily trap him, "the woodcock near the gin," emphasizes his alienation. From the moment Malvolio enters, he is unaware of the others in the box tree. His lines are interspersed with the reactions of the spectators, with neither side being able to hear the other. This gives us a physical representation of the psychological phenomenon of "alienation." The spectators enjoy the device on Malvolio at the expense of his pride and feelings.

It is evident why this plot element in the play has been puzzling to critics.

The spectators to the trick associate animal imagery with Malvolio throughout this scene. This imagery lays emphasis on both his alienation from them as human beings and their view of him as an egotistical fool. Sir Toby's first question to Fabian refers to Malvolio as a "sheep-biter," that is, sneaky dog. To Maria, he is the "trout that must be caught with tickling." For Fabian, he is alternately a "rare turkey cock" and a "woodcock near the gin." Sir Toby also uses a bird image after Malvolio has begun reading the letter. As these characters delight in the cruel scheme, they feel that they have Malvolio right where they want him. Reducing Malvolio in their eyes to animal status sharply conveys that feeling. Animals lack reason, so they are wrapped up in their own little worlds to the extent that they operate by instincts. Sir Toby, Fabian, Andrew, and Maria are presumably drawing a parallel between the animals' instinctual selfishness and Malvolio's egoism.

Act III, Scene 1 Summary and Analysis

Summary
Cesario and Feste the Clown are conversing in Olivia's garden. Cesario, of course, has arrived with the purpose of courting Olivia. Cesario begins by asking the Clown if he earns a living with his tabor. In addition to engaging Cesario in wordplay, the Clown comments on the arbitrariness of words. People can do whatever they like with them regardless of good or bad intentions. Cesario briefly turns the conversation to identifying the fool. Feste, as usual, cannot give her a straight answer. He answers ironically that Olivia has no fool until she marries the man who will accept the role. In a short span, the Clown mentions a beard for Cesario, coins earning interest, and the love story of *Troilus and Cressida*. The Clown then goes to fetch Olivia. While awaiting Olivia, Cesario praises Feste's skillfulness at being a fool.

Sir Toby and Andrew arrive before Olivia. Sir Toby informs Cesario that Olivia is eager to see him. Paradoxically, Cesario asserts that he is Olivia's servant as well as Orsino's because the Duke has put himself at Olivia's service. His servant therefore is also hers. Olivia insists that she does not want to hear anymore wooing. Orsino is out.

Olivia, recalling the ring, broaches the subject of love toward Cesario. Cesario, rather than accept her love, says that he feels pity for Olivia. Cesario faithfully suggests the Duke's love again only to hear Olivia pour out her feelings of love for him: "I love thee so that, maugre all thy pride,/Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide." Cesario does not wish to form a relationship with Olivia or any woman.

Analysis

We are meant to note a kind of kinship between Feste and Cesario. Shakespeare establishes this kinship by means of the ploce in the opening dialogue. For example, when Cesario says that those who manipulate words can make them "wanton," meaning equivocal, Feste picks up on another sense of "wanton," that is, unchaste, in his response. They have used the same word but in different senses. To play on someone else's words shows an interconnection between the two characters' ways of thinking. Cesario appreciates the Clown and even pays him for acting his role as fool.

The Clown of this play is a wordsmith and logician, in addition to being a good singer of the thematic songs. It behooves us to question the Clown's self-conscious commentary about words and their logic. He even refers to himself as not the fool, but rather Olivia's "corrupter of words." In essence, the Clown indicates his understanding of the arbitrariness of words: "Words are grown so false I am loath to/prove reason with them." There is no necessary and sufficient relationship between words and the reality to which they refer. Therefore, people can so manipulate words to do and say what they want, whether or not the words are true to the reality of the situation. Keeping in mind Cesario's connection with the motif of "appearances versus reality," his appreciation for the Clown's sensitivity to that issue is readily understandable. This scene sketches the Clown/fool's role in the play. For the characters in the play, this role of fool has entertainment value, and for the readers, his words have relevance to the play's interpretation.

In his short soliloquy following the Clown's departure, Cesario reveals his appreciation for the skill Feste exercises: "And to do that well craves a kind of wit." If Cesario can appreciate this skill, he is certainly capable of exercising it himself. The Clown is attuned to the mood and quality of people with whom he practices his fooling. Although we can assert that the Clown is very talented in his use of words, the truth value of what he says about others is not so clear.

Cesario, who represents practical common sense for the lovers, is everywhere a most admirable character. He makes a diligent effort to woo on Orsino's behalf. Another way that Shakespeare demonstrates his good communication skills is in the way he uses the same metaphors as other characters. When Sir Toby uses a trade metaphor, "trade be to," to characterize Cesario's presence in the garden, Cesario responds with another expression drawn from the language of trade, "I am bound to your niece." Cesario understands and can get along with all the characters in the play.

Olivia discloses her love for Cesario in this scene. The fundamental irony is that Cesario is there on the Duke's behalf, but Olivia expresses love for Cesario. This creates a complication in the original plot. Not only has Olivia not reciprocated her love to Orsino, but she's also bestowed it on Cesario. At this point, although we should expect a happy resolution to this entanglement, the issue of who-joins-who is not clear in this scene. Olivia, in declaring her love, is in the state of "loving": Cesario does not accept her offer.

The one clue we have that Cesario cannot wind up with Olivia is the knowledge of his true gender. Cesario is really a woman, so he must be paired with a male. At this point, we can surmise that Cesario will form a relationship with Orsino, the man for whom his female self has already expressed an attraction. Herschel Baker argues that the delay in the happy ending derives from the characters' inability to know the truth about themselves. This brings in the issue of "self-knowledge." Not everyone knows who they are, what they believe, or what they really want out of life. Thus, Cesario's disguise represents any such intellectual and emotional confusion of the other characters in concrete terms. It is only when he unmasks at the end and the misconception is cleared up that they can feel a sense of liberation from their illusions. Self-knowledge is

attained, according to this view. This view changes Cesario's place in the love theme.

Taking the plunge into the experience of love, as Orsino and Olivia amply demonstrate, appears easy enough. The important related step of cementing a bond between the two persons is not so easy. Understanding this truism makes Cesario an appealing and curious character in the play.

Act III, Scene 2 Summary and Analysis

Summary
Sir Andrew is disappointed that Olivia has not shown an interest in him. He has seen her giving more attention to Cesario than to him. Fabian claims that Olivia was deliberately trying to exasperate Andrew so as to spur him to more aggressive action. Andrew should have seized the moment to prove his masculinity: "You should have banged the youth into dumbness." Having failed to act has put Andrew way out of Olivia's thoughts, unless he can act quickly to arouse her admiration with his valor. Andrew agrees.

Sir Toby's idea for Andrew to achieve Olivia's love is to challenge Cesario to a fight. A fight will kindle her admiration. Sir Toby tells Andrew to write out a provocative challenge—"Let there be gall enough in thy ink"—to Cesario. Despite this incitement, Sir Toby says he will not actually deliver the letter to the youth.

Sir Toby espies Maria with a term of affection. Maria informs them how hilarious Malvolio's deception has turned out. He has obeyed every point of the letter. She manifests her sadistic pleasure in the way he is so taken over by the letter.

Analysis
Sir Toby plays his role as "lord of misrule" in this scene as well as in others. No sooner has Sir Andrew conveyed his frustration at winning Olivia's hand than does Toby devise a hostile plan to get her attention. It might be more proper to designate someone to court Olivia, as Cesario has done for Orsino, But, he instead tells Sir Andrew to write an inflammatory letter to Cesario, a letter Sir Toby does not intend to pass on. Sir Toby keeps the action lively, stirring up a fracas that has love as its dubious impetus.

Sir Toby's plan reveals, moreover, underlying masculine values. First of all, he proposes a fight, which is often considered a manly activity. Secondly, he and Fabian place a great value on "valor" as a stimulus to love. This statement of belief in valor as a "lovebroker" for Sir Andrew is more evidence of the breadth of the love theme. Love is very subjective. People may love another for varied reasons and in varying intensities. In Sir Toby's masculine world, the reputation of valor may lead a woman into love.

Maria comes in to report that her scheme is reaching its high point. She deems it odd that Malvolio has so naively accepted the contents of the letter to the point of following every item. She mentions the confrontation with Olivia that is about to take place. However perverse it may be, Malvolio's embarrassing descent into love is also indicative of the subjective nature of the experience of love. It's puzzling, however, why Malvolio was so ripe to fall for his lady—unless the reader accepts the argument that Malvolio is egotistical and arrogant.

Act III, Scene 3 Summary and Analysis

Summary
This short scene lets us know that Sebastian and Antonio are making their way into the action; they have not been left out. Antonio explains to a grateful Sebastian that both love and concern for his safety urged him to catch up to the youth. Antonio knows the area; Sebastian does not.

Sebastian desires to do some sightseeing in town, to see the "memorials and the things of fame," but Antonio has to back out. Antonio is wanted by Orsino's court for his part in a previous incident at sea. Sebastian reckons that perhaps he has murdered. Not so; Antonio says he is only guilty of piracy.

Antonio gives his money to Sebastian in case he wishes to purchase something, while Antonio lays low. He also recommends an inn where they can meet (the Elephant). They agree to find each other there.

Analysis
This scene does advance the plot even though there is no mention of either character's being in love. Sebastian is Viola's twin brother. As far as the love theme is concerned, we can predict—since a theme should be coherently worked out—that just as Viola has a place in the love plot, so too will Sebastian. He is a missing link. Olivia, Orsino, and Cesario expressing love make an uneven number. One more is needed to make two couples. These two couples, as they will eventually turn out to be, constitute two of the three love knots that are realized by the end of the play. Malvolio's love comes to naught, however, and Sir Andrew never gets Olivia.

We have had plenty of exposure to Olivia, Orsino, and Cesario's brand of loving and being loved in the play. So, Shakespeare need not belabor the role that Cesario has represented as the practical, commonsense-oriented person in the relationship. It's the Cesarios that keep the relationship going from day to day. The family tie that exists between Viola and Sebastian also implies a thematic parallel between the two characters. Shakespeare's economy had no need to dramatize Sebastian's practicality.

Antonio is familiar with the Duke and his Illyria. He, unfortunately, has had a run-in with the Duke's men in the past, so he feels it necessary to hide his presence. Shakespeare keeps him involved in the plot in such a way that will call attention to the illusion created by Viola's disguise. Later on, Antonio will take Cesario for Sebastian.

Act III, Scene 4 Summary and Analysis

New Characters:
Servant: the one who informs Olivia of Cesario's return

First Officer: one of the Duke's officials who comes to arrest Antonio

Second Officer: accompanies the First Officer to carry out the arrest

Summary
Olivia, longing for Cesario and out of sorts, wonders where Malvolio is. Here, she commends his nature as agreeable to her. Maria alerts her to his agitated state: "He is sure possessed." In accordance with the letter, Malvolio is smiling about the place. Nonetheless, Olivia wants to see him because she feels as disturbed as he.

Malvolio speaks to Olivia as though she knew about the letter. His smiling doesn't fit the mood Olivia is in. After Malvolio refers to his cross-gartering, Olivia asks if there is something wrong. Malvolio only mentions the commands of the letter to explain his behavior. For the rest of the dialogue between them, Malvolio quotes directly from Maria's letter, while Olivia intersperses her bewildered replies. Having been subjected to this unaccountable behavior, Olivia considers Malvolio to be mad: "Why, this is very midsummer madness." At this point, a servant enters with news that Cesario has come.

In his soliloquy, Malvolio sounds convinced that Olivia is following the letter. So, her bewilderment was lost on him as he raved on. He thanks Jove for the divine assistance he's been given.

Sir Toby, along with Fabian and Maria, comes to investigate Malvolio's behavior. Malvolio assumes the hostility toward him that the letter commands, not listening to the mock sympathy Sir Toby demonstrates. Fabian and Maria's similarly mock sympathy must be false because they know he's still under the influence of the letter. When Malvolio leaves, the culprits reflect on Malvolio's absorption by the letter. Sir Toby foreshadows at Malvolio's madness and ordeal in the dark room.

Sir Andrew enters with his letter of challenge. Fabian compliments the phrasing of the letter, containing a challenge to a fight, as Sir Toby reads it aloud. Sir Andrew is then egged on to draw on Cesario in the orchard. Claiming that Sir Andrew's letter will not ring true for Cesario, Sir Toby chooses to convey the challenge by word of mouth in order to "drive the gentleman…into a most hideous opinion of his rage, skill, fury, and impetuosity."

Following this, there is a brief interlude involving Olivia and Cesario. Olivia complains that her protestations of love are falling on deaf ears. Part of her thinks that it is blameworthy to be so bold, but another part of her holds that love gives her the freedom to speak her love. Cesario likens Olivia's passion to Orsino's. Giving Cesario a jewel, Olivia asks him to return tomorrow. Olivia, conscious of her honor, wonders what it will inspire her to give Cesario. Cesario wants nothing but her return of love to the Duke. That is not possible for Olivia because she's given her love to Cesario. Olivia repeats her request for Cesario to come tomorrow.

When Olivia departs, Sir Toby alarms Cesario with the news that Sir Andrew is preparing to attack him. He urges Cesario to prepare to defend himself. Innocently Cesario cannot believe that he's done offense to anyone. Sir Toby counters that he has given cause for a fight. Sir Toby further tries to frighten Cesario with Sir Andrew's strength and prowess. Sir Toby conjures an image of Sir Andrew as a valiant and well-connected knight who has three deaths in dueling to his credit. Cesario refuses to fight, it's not his way. So he seeks an escort from Lady Olivia.

Cesario surmises that Sir Andrew is only trying to test his valor. But Sir Toby explains that he has just cause. Cesario therefore must face the challenge. At Cesario's request, Sir Toby leaves to get Sir Andrew so he can tell him what offense Cesario has done. Fabian only admits to knowing that Sir Andrew is incensed against him. Fabian echoes Sir Toby's spurious praise of Sir Andrew's skill and power.

When Sir Toby finds Andrew, he scares him with an equally spurious account of Cesario's skill at fencing. Likewise, Andrew decides to avoid the duel, even offering his horse as a peace offering. Sir Toby supposedly rides off to make the proposal to Cesario. Cesario and Andrew are holding images of each other's hostility.

As these two men finally come together, Sir Toby alters the situation by claiming the cause not to be as grave as it was first thought to be. But, as a formality, they should have a duel. Sir Toby assures both of them that harm will not come of it.

After they draw, Antonio makes a timely entrance into the garden. His first impulse is to protect Cesario, who he believes is Sebastian. As soon as Sir Toby draws on Antonio, the Duke's officers enter. They recognize Antonio and arrest him. Antonio asks Cesario for some of the money he gave Sebastian. Cesario, though confused at this request (not being Sebastian), offers Antonio some of his own money. Antonio takes that as a denial and warns him that he will become angry at his ingratitude. Cesario affirms that Antonio is a stranger to him; Antonio cannot possibly hold a claim on him. Antonio recounts how he rescued Sebastian from drowning and showed him brotherly love. Antonio, feeling betrayed, leaves with the officers.

Cesario gathers that Antonio was referring to her brother, Sebastian. Realizing that he closely resembles his brother, Cesario fervently hopes that Antonio meant Sebastian.

Sir Toby judges Cesario a coward. This stirs up Sir Andrew's ire to fight, which is met with Sir Toby's command to give him a good thwacking.

Analysis
This is a lengthy scene in which Shakespeare draws together some of the loose ends of the love plot. Considering that Sebastian's presence is now signaled, this scene becomes the climax of the rising action. This revelation constitutes the major surprise, for the rest of the scene forms a logical continuation of plots that have been in motion since Act I. "This scene as a whole," according to L.G. Salingar, "with its rapid changes of mood and action, from Olivia to the sub¬plot and back towards Sebastian, braces together the whole comic design."

In order for Malvolio's humiliation to be complete, he has to face Olivia under the influence of the letter. Olivia, at the start of the scene, has her mind on Cesario. She wants to see him and considers how she can best allure him. She speaks solemnly of Malvolio, "he is sad and civil," with whom she desires some fellowship. Maria alerts her to his mental agitation.

Malvolio's dialogue with Olivia is at once comic and per¬verse. We must laugh at the way he has been so duped by the other characters, as well as the way he carries the illusion until he is undeceived. The perversion of the love experience stands out promi¬nently. Malvolio has the commands of the letter on his mind as he speaks to Olivia. Such love has no genuine source, as Orsino and Olivia's does. Malvolio elaborates on a love that Olivia has no idea of, nor has she any intention of falling in love with her servant. The only genuine element in this whole perverse matter is Malvolio's temporary infatuation. Shakespeare heightens the cruelty of the trick by having Maria play dumb and Olivia bespeak concern for his state of mind. Charles T. Prouty sums it up this way: "Thus the subplot may be seen as representing the obverse, the other side of the coin. In the main plot the characters move in the world of an established convention while in the other the characters are alien, if not antithetical, to the convention."

Sir Andrew returns to show Sir Toby the letter he has written. Sir Andrew has obviously taken a liking to Olivia; we have just not heard him utter his passion. Sir Toby's commonsense plan to interest Olivia in his friend partakes too much of the playful spirit of the play to qualify as reasonable interceding. Nonetheless, Sir Toby as the "lord of misrule" brings together these two major aspects of the play, love and foolery. Those two aspects intersect in the duel scene.

The interlude between Cesario and Olivia keeps their two distinct roles in the play sharply focused. The dialogue does not surprise us, so we can take pleasure in Cesario's consistency as representative of a practical quality. Olivia says that she has poured out her heart to a heart of stone. Cesario asserts his master's love, thus finely playing his role of intermediary.

In addition to blending the play's two key elements, the arranged fight between Cesario and Sir Andrew prepares the way for Antonio's timely rescue. Antonio comes upon the duel and believes he is saving his friend Sebastian. Regardless of whether the officers had come for him or not, it is evident that he would have made Sebastian's existence known. Upon his arrest, Antonio asks of Cesario the money he had given to Sebastian. The interchange that ensues finally brings out the name "Sebastian." Cesario's hope for her brother is revived.

Act IV, Scene 1 Summary and Analysis

Summary
The Clown and Sebastian are talking in front of Olivia's house. Sebastian, unlike his sister, has not taken so well to Feste. They seem at odds with each other. Sebastian dismisses the Clown, maintaining that he has no

business with him. The Clown, characteristically clever, responds by denying the reality of everything: "Nothing that is so is so." Indeed, Sebastian is not Cesario. Sebastian orders Feste to take his folly elsewhere. The Clown, clever though he be, is not omniscient, so he thinks that Sebastian is just pretending ignorance. He requests a message for Olivia. Sebastian dismisses him with an insult, but not without giving him a tip. The Clown is thankful.

Sir Andrew, Sir Toby, and Fabian enter. Sir Andrew immediately strikes Sebastian, mistaking him for Cesario. Though puzzled, Sebastian strikes multiple blows in return. Sir Toby joins the fray to help Sir Andrew by seizing Sebastian. After witnessing the fray, the Clown goes off to inform Olivia.

They continue the fight, with Sir Andrew threatening legal action and Sebastian ordering them to let go. Sebastian forcefully disentangles himself from their holds and warns them that on further provocation, he'll draw his sword. Apparently, Sir Toby cannot resist; he draws on Sebastian.

Olivia enters and surveys the scene to her distaste. The fracas is yet another instance of Sir Toby's uncivilized tastes. She orders them to stop and get out. That her beloved (or the one she thinks is Cesario) is involved in the fight adds to her sense of offense. Olivia hopes that Sebastian will look rationally on the incident. She invites him to her house so she can tell him about Sir Toby's other "fruitless pranks."

Olivia's invitation baffles Sebastian. He wishes for further oblivion to add to the confusion he is experiencing. Yet, when Olivia repeats her invitation, he accepts.

Analysis

Critics disagree on how to interpret Feste's role. Despite Sebastian's attitude to Feste, the Clown and his role retain their dignity within the play. If anything, Sebastian depreciates the value of the Clown's content, that is, what it is he talks about. Cesario's praise for his wit, however, is well-taken. And his wit is clever in this scene. Although the Clown's songs have relevance to the theme and plot, the relevance of his dialogue is less clear. He is good with words and logic, and his displays of skill have proven quite entertaining, but whether he penetrates character and motive remains debatable. After all, in reality, Sebastian is not dissembling. Feste does not know he's with Sebastian instead of Cesario. L.G. Salingar puts it this way, "Feste is not the ringleader in *Twelfth Night*, nor is he exactly the play's philosopher." Similarly, Maurice Charney, in his chapter on *Twelfth Night*, discusses only Feste's agile mind at wordplay.

This is the scene in which Sebastian and Olivia are brought together, the foursome of the love plot is hence complete. Rightly so, the confusion seems all on Sebastian's part.

> What relish is in this? How runs the stream?
> Or I am mad, or else this is a dream.
> Let fancy still my sense in Lethe steep;
> If it be thus to dream, still let me sleep! (4.1.60–3)

This confusion arises out of the familiar way in which Olivia addresses Sebastian, whom she thinks is Cesario. Olivia has had dealings with Cesario already and expressed her love for him. In this scene, since they are twins, she thinks it is he. Sebastian does not fall in love with Olivia; rather, he puzzles over her familiarity. What does she mean, he wonders. The whole situation seems so unreal that he thinks he may have lost his senses. Yet he goes along with Olivia, perhaps taking pleasure in the illusion. He asks for oblivion so he can prolong the dream that Olivia is sustaining. To the extent that Sebastian's analogous role (to his sister's) is a necessary component to the love theme, his acquiescence in Olivia's dream is very likely. One of the complications of the plot is about to be cleared up, and the genre's happy ending is happily in the offing.

Act IV, Scene 2 Summary and Analysis

Summary
Maria gives the Clown a gown and beard, apparently wishing to prolong the sham with Malvolio. Feste readily accepts the offer to play Chaucer's Sir Topas. He has a stereotyped notion of a curate and a student, which he doesn't fit, though he does account himself an honest man and a good citizen. Sir Toby enters, greeting him as a parson, and pushes him on to Malvolio.

The Clown, dressed as Sir Topas, visits Malvolio in a very dark room. Malvolio immediately orders Sir Topas to go to Olivia without specifying the contents of his message. Malvolio perceives himself as a wronged man. He says that to Sir Topas and, in the same breath, he asserts his sanity. Sir Topas responds with assurance of his own mildness. Malvolio insists that the house is dark and that his abusers have laid him in the darkness. Sir Topas points out that there are sources of light coming into the room. Malvolio suggests that it's perhaps a figurative darkness surrounding him as well as maintaining his sanity once again. Sir Topas does not admit to any darkness, insinuating instead that Malvolio is full of perplexity.

Malvolio asks for a test of his sanity, to which Sir Topas responds with a question about Pythagoras' doctrine. Malvolio answers aptly, but Sir Topas does not admit his sanity.

According to Maria, Malvolio is so blinded he cannot even see the Clown's disguise. The Clown goes once more, at Sir Toby's prompting, to talk with Malvolio. Sir Toby shows that his sadism in the matter has not subsided. The reason he must stop the trick is Olivia's disapproval of his antics.

The second conversation between Malvolio and Sir Topas follows in the same vein as the previous one. This time, Malvolio requests a pen, ink, and paper with which he can write to Olivia. The Clown (as Sir Topas) persists in the contention that Malvolio is mad, which Malvolio vigorously rejects. Moreover, Malvolio's counterclaim of abuse in this scene provides compelling evidence of the validity of his perceptions. He has indeed been played with.

During this conversation, the Clown speaks to Malvolio as both the Clown and Sir Topas. When Malvolio realizes this, he asks the Clown to get him some paper and light. He wants to send a message to Olivia. The Clown, though agreeing to help, still cannot resist implying that Malvolio is mad.

The Clown ends this scene with a song, whose significance is a bit obscure but does bear relevance to Malvolio's present predicament.

Analysis
The Clown puts on an act in this scene. He goes to Malvolio's room disguised as a Chaucerian curate, Sir Topas. This performance is commendable to the extent that the Clown is fulfilling his role as jester. It is truly his role to entertain the others. The talent the Clown exhibits is also impressive. It is not easy to do all that he does in this play.

Maria shows that she wants to antagonize Malvolio and continue the cruel deception. The Clown operates more out of the requirements of his role than a desire to further vex Malvolio. What he says to Malvolio helps to illuminate Malvolio's character and the effect of the trick on him. Malvolio is certain that he has been wronged. The confidence with which he asserts the abuse builds our sympathy for him. He appears the undeserving victim of a cruel hoax. A man who can perceive the wickedness of abuse would probably not be the kind to foist abuse on others. His perception therefore is valid.

The Clown insinuates that he is mad. Malvolio maintains his sanity. His perception of his sanity is reinforced by his desire to communicate with Olivia. He knows he has humiliated himself before her, and the reasonable thing to do is to make amends. The impulse to communicate is a sound one. Presumably he wants to apologize and to show her that he is in possession of his faculties.

The darkness surrounding Malvolio symbolizes his alienation from the other members of the household, which has reached a grotesque level. The darkness also suggests more. It may symbolize the cruelty and lack of understanding of the other characters. They are the ones who have abused him as he eloquently maintains. The Clown points out that there are sources of light in the room. They just aren't illuminating a man who has been swooped down on by malicious associates. The darkness may symbolize the closedmindedness of the Puritans. His incarceration may be the "lack of freedom" of the Puritanical philosophy.

The image of darkness coupled with allusions to the Devil offer compelling evidence of bad intentions on the other characters' parts and Malvolio's sound character. Sir Topas' second speech to Malvolio reflects this: "Out hyperbolical fiend! How vexest thou this/Man!" Sir Topas states explicitly that the forces impinging on Malvolio are malicious.

Act IV, Scene 3 Summary and Analysis

Summary
This scene is set in the garden, a fitting locale for the culmination of a love match. Sebastian tries to come to terms with his good luck in his opening soliloquy. This love match is so quick that we have no inkling as to Sebastian's feelings about love as an experience and as they relate to Olivia.

He tells us that she gave him a pearl. He marvels at his new-found sweetheart and discounts that he is mad. He wishes for Antonio, who he couldn't locate at the Elephant, and for his esteemed advice. The improbability of his good fortune leads him to doubt the reality of what has happened. Unlike Cesario, however, he doesn't reject Olivia's gift of love. When the thought crosses his mind that Olivia may be mad, he dispels it immediately with the knowledge that Olivia is such a competent and fit manager of the affairs of her household. His good instincts conclude that there's some kind of deception attaching to Olivia's love.

Olivia wastes no time in proposing marriage. She has brought a priest to Sebastian to marry them. She invites Sebastian to the nearby chapel to participate in the ceremony. She promises him confidentiality until such time as he becomes ready to divulge the news of their wedlock. Sebastian accepts, pledging his everlasting faithfulness.

Analysis
In this scene, one of the love matches is fully realized. Olivia and Sebastian marry. This is a hasty move for Sebastian, who accepts, but not for Olivia. She has been in love with his twin (Cesario) throughout the play. So, she feels a sense of triumph in gaining her beloved. Sebastian, on the other hand, should express the surprise and wonder that he does. The play hitherto has given us little knowledge of his thoughts and feelings. Sebastian's significance resides in his symbolic function as Viola's thematic twin.

Sebastian and Olivia serve to illustrate the love theme quite well. Olivia has expressed her love; Sebastian takes his place as the practical, common sense complement to the loving aspect. His soliloquy reflects his appreciation for the role of reason and prudent management in life. He praises Olivia for the latter.

Act V, Scene 1 Summary and Analysis

Summary
This scene forms a conglomeration of previous elements in the play. We are before Olivia's house when it opens with Fabian and the Clown. Fabian is asking Feste to show him Malvolio's letter to Olivia, which he doesn't want to show him.

After this brief exchange, the Duke, Cesario, Curio, and other lords are on the scene. After inquiring of Feste and Fabian if they are connected to Olivia, the Duke recognizes one of them as the Clown. Upon being asked how he is, the Clown starts in with his wordplay. He answers ironically that, as far as his foes are concerned, he is better, and as far as his friends are concerned, he is worse. That makes no sense to the Duke, so he requests an explanation. The Clown's explanation holds that friends deceive, while enemies tell the cold truth. Once explained, the Duke likes the idea and tips him. The Clown wants more and gets another coin from the Duke. Before leaving to summon Olivia, the Clown requests yet another coin from the Duke.

Antonio and the officers then enter. Cesario recognizes Antonio as the man who stepped in on his fight with Sir Andrew. The Duke also recognizes Antonio from the time when he did courageous battle with one of his ships. An officer relates that he arrested Antonio while fighting in the street. Cesario hastens to his defense mentioning his help, though his speech quite perplexed him.

Antonio recounts how he saved Sebastian, inadvertently referring to Cesario, and offered his love and service to him. He exposed himself to danger for Sebastian's sake. Yet, Sebastian denied him when he intervened in the fight. Sebastian held back his purse, too.

Cesario wonders how that could be possible. He has been under the Duke's service since arriving in Illyria.

In walks Olivia asking the Duke how she can be of service to him. She takes Cesario for Sebastian. Olivia's speech thus baffles Cesario. Olivia repeats her rejection of the Duke. The Duke expresses his disappointment and adds a fierce note for emphasis. He retaliates by spiriting Cesario away, out of Olivia's sight. Cesario, supportive of the Duke, reveals his love for him.

Olivia calls for the priest to remind Cesario that they are married. She thinks that Cesario is afraid to admit the truth. The priest comes to substantiate the marital bond that exists between them (her and Sebastian). This proof convinces the Duke, who becomes angry with Cesario.

Sir Andrew, entering injured, calls for a doctor to attend him and Sir Toby. Sir Andrew lays the blame for this violence on Cesario. Cesario, of course, denies the charge. Sir Andrew was set on him by Sir Toby. Sir Toby enters limping and requests a doctor. Olivia orders him to bed.

Sebastian enters with an apology for the injuries he has produced. He was justified inasmuch as he acted in self-defense. The Duke notices the resemblance between him and Cesario, considering it an optical illusion. Sebastian is glad to see Antonio.

For the first time in the play, Sebastian speaks to Cesario. Cesario offers clear proof that he and Sebastian are related. The time is not right for Cesario to unmask, but he promises to bring Sebastian to where his woman's clothes are hidden.

Sebastian characterizes Olivia's mistake as natural since she was attracted to Cesario's masculine exterior.

Seeing a chance for his own happiness, the Duke shows interest in Cesario. Cesario accepts because she did, in fact, fall in love with him. The Duke wishes to see the Viola beneath the Cesario.

Olivia then requests to see Malvolio, at which point the Clown enters with his letter. Feste continues to ascribe madness to Malvolio. Irked by his unusual manner of reading the letter, Olivia asks Fabian to read it. The letter blames Olivia for the cruel joke that's been played on him. Though her love letter led him astray, he still kept his wits about him. He intends to broadcast the wrong she's done him. Olivia requests to see him.

The Duke proposes to Viola.

Malvolio enters chastising Olivia. She need only read her letter for the proof. Malvolio asked what possessed her to stoop to such a wicked scheme. Olivia recognizes the handwriting as Maria's and assures Malvolio that he will get justice. Fabian confesses his and the others' wrongdoing. He attributes their actions to "some stubborn and uncourteous parts," character flaws in them. Now that the trick has been exposed, Malvolio vows revenge on all those involved. Olivia acknowledges the abuse he's suffered at her servants' hands.

The Duke desires that a solemn combination be made of their hearts at a propitious hour. The third couple to join the other two is Maria and Sir Toby. Sir Toby proposed to Maria as a reward for her cleverness.

Analysis

This is the last scene of the play, so Shakespeare must provide a sense of closure. The way the action wraps up determines the overall meaning of the play. The genre of comedy has already provided us with some sense of the play's message. The dizzying sequence of interludes mirrors the festive form of the previous acts and gives the impression of a large holiday gathering. This scene is a fitting conglomeration of the play's elements—all the more satisfying because it resolves previous misunderstandings and complications. It ends in a happy "combination" of three couples. Even Malvolio is presented with some consolation from Olivia.

The Clown's irreverence toward the Duke is entirely in character. He is a wit to the very end. The Duke, pleased with his foolery, tips him twice before he goes off to get Olivia.

Antonio is necessary as a catalyst to the recognition scene. Having already raised hope of Sebastian's existence for Cesario, in this scene, Antonio dramatizes the duality of character. He speaks to Cesario as though he were Sebastian, which astonishes Cesario. The twins look alike, but they are not the same person. Antonio's previous dealings have been with Sebastian.

When Olivia enters, the Duke speaks the last words of love to her that he will ever speak. She has remained steadfast in her rejection. He acknowledges how futile his passion has been.

The confusion over mistaken identities continues a bit longer as Cesario prepares to leave with Orsino. Olivia speaks to Cesario as though he were her husband. This causes more astonishment for the Duke and Cesario—clarification has not yet come. The priest adds to the confusion by confirming the marriage ceremony between Sebastian and Olivia.

Happily the moment of recognition and resolution comes when Sebastian himself enters hard on the heels of Sir Andrew and Sir Toby. The twins, now together for the first time in the play, face each other and make their relationship clear. They are brother and sister. This clarification paves the way for the pairing of Viola and the Duke: "You shall from this time be/Your master's mistress." Critics offer numerous opinions on this ending. Alexander Leggat affirms that the play embodies the theme of love: "The ending takes little account of the reasons for particular attachments; it is, on the contrary, a generalized image of love." The pairings make up a formal design, which, in turn, illustrates the theme.

The cruel scheme against Malvolio is also laid bare in this scene. Fabian reads Malvolio's letter in which he accuses Olivia of abuse. Knowing herself innocent, Olivia requests to see Malvolio. When Malvolio comes, Olivia has a chance to vindicate herself and assign the blame to Maria where it belongs, for she composed the letter. Once again, this resolution, which may perhaps be cathartic for Malvolio, becomes a perverse reflection of the resolution of the love plot. Olivia tries to console him with the prospect of justice being served, while Malvolio, more harshly, thirsts for revenge.

Feste ends the play with a song, which unlike previous examples, has a looser connection to the action. The fact that the rain comes down every day has a bearing on their lives and activities. By referring to life's stages and natural imagery, he places the action in a larger, more ambiguous context. The song tells us how we are to take all the confusion and how we are to react to it. We shouldn't take troubles too seriously; life works itself out. The song is nonetheless open to interpretation. One critic has said of it that it is just "whistling in the dark."

Twelfth Night: Quizzes

Act I, Scene 1 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What is the major theme of the play?

2. With whom is the Duke in love?

3. In what kinds of poetry does the Duke express his love?

4. Is it entirely true that the Duke is "in love with love"?

5. What type of metaphor does the Duke use when he addresses the "spirit of love"?

6. What is the subtitle of the play?

7. Toward what does the title *Twelfth Night* orient the reader?

8. What recreation does Curio ask the Duke about?

9. What is "*Twelfth Night*"?

10. What kind of part does love play in the festival atmosphere of the play?

Answers
1. Love is the major theme of the play.

2. The Duke is in love with Olivia.

3. The Duke's poetry contains metaphors, puns, synesthesia, and similes.

4. No, it is not completely true because the Duke is clearly in love with Olivia, a specific person.

5. He uses a metaphor drawn from falconry when he addresses the "spirit of love."

6. The subtitle of the play is “What You Will.”

7. The title orients the reader toward the playful and festive atmosphere of the action.

8. Curio asks the Duke if he is going hunting.

9. “*Twelfth Night*” is a holiday and occasion for merriment.

10. Love plays an important part as the characters meet and pair off.

Act I, Scene 2 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. Where do we first meet Viola?

2. What happened to Viola’s brother?

3. What kind of nature does Viola have?

4. What does Shakespeare imply about love in his shift of thematic emphasis?

5. What device does Viola use to get into the Duke’s service?

6. Is it clear what Viola wants to achieve in the Duke’s service?

7. How does Shakespeare symbolize Viola’s practical side?

8. Is *Twelfth Night* the only play that involves a character putting on a disguise?

9. What other significant Shakespearean theme does Viola state?

10. What image that the Duke employs does Viola also use?

Answers
1. We first meet Viola on a seacoast.

2. He was separated from Viola when the ship sank.

3. Viola has a practical nature.

4. Shakespeare implies that there’s more to love than mere poetry.

5. Viola uses the disguise device to get into the Duke’s service.

6. No, it is not clear as yet what Viola’s specific goal is.

7. Shakespeare symbolizes Viola’s practical side by having her offer money in payment for favors to her.

8. No, Shakespeare has used disguised characters in other plays.

9. Viola states the theme of “appearances versus reality.”

10. Viola repeats the music image of the first scene.

Act I, Scene 3 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. Do we meet Olivia in this scene?

2. What is Sir Andrew’s relationship to Sir Toby?

3. What did Maria hear about Sir Andrew’s purpose for being in the house?

4. What does the presence of Maria and Sir Toby as characters imply?

5. Who brings in a note of competition to the scene?

6. Does Sir Andrew seem an appropriate suitor for Olivia?

7. What else do Sir Toby and Sir Andrew illustrate in the play?

8. How does Shakespeare reveal Sir Toby’s free spirit?

9. What is “ploce”?

10. What type of imagery does Sir Toby introduce at the end of the scene?

Answers
1. No, we do not meet Olivia in this scene.

2. They are friends.

3. Maria heard that Sir Toby brought him to the house to woo Olivia.

4. They imply that love is for all kinds of people, no matter what their status is.

5. Sir Andrew brings in a note of competition.

6. No, the scene leaves us with the impression that Sir Andrew may not be an appropriate suitor for Olivia.

7. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew illustrate the party-and-fun atmosphere, as implied in the title’s holiday.

8. Shakespeare reveals Sir Toby’s free spirit through the language.

9. “Ploce” is the repetition of a word in a different sense.

10. Sir Toby introduces a succession of “dance” images.

Act I, Scene 4 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What is Viola's male name?

2. What task does the Duke assign Cesario?

3. For whom does Cesario feel love for?

4. To what genre does the play *Twelfth Night* belong?

5. What kind of an ending do we expect in comedy?

6. What kind of vision does comedy have, according to Northrop Frye?

7. What is the community of Illyria doing about the Duke's love?

8. How does the Duke respond to Cesario's doubts that Olivia is too "abandoned to her sorrow" to listen to his suit?

9. Does the Duke change?

10. What does Orsino display at the end of the scene?

Answers
1. Viola's male name is "Cesario."

2. The Duke assigns Cesario the task of pursuing Olivia for him.

3. Cesario feels love for the Duke.

4. *Twelfth Night* belongs to the genre of "comedy."

5. We expect a happy ending in comedy.

6. Comedy's vision has a social significance.

7. The community in Illyria is well aware of and talking about the Duke's love.

8. The Duke tells him to "be clamorous and leap all civil bounds."

9. The Duke's impassioned stance toward Olivia changes slightly.

10. Orsino displays common sense at the end of the scene.

Act I, Scene 5 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What does Maria threaten the Clown with?

2. What kind of attitude does the Clown evidence toward Olivia?

3. What does the Clown try to prove about Olivia?

4. What is the name of Olivia's steward?

5. What does Olivia put on before speaking with Cesario?

6. Who falls in love with whom in this scene?

7. What do the two love twists we've witnessed suggest?

8. Which character serves to emphasize the subjective nature of "love" ?

9. In what manner are the Clown's insults couched?

10. That type of metaphor does Cesario use to lend emphasis to the great love the Duke holds for Olivia?

Answers
1. Maria threatens the Clown with punishment for his absence.

2. The Clown evidences an offhand attitude toward Olivia.

3. The Clown tries to prove that Olivia is a fool.

4. Malvolio is Olivia's steward.

5. Olivia puts on a veil before speaking with Cesario.

6. Olivia falls in love with Cesario.

7. The love twists suggest just how subjective is the experience of love.

8. The Clown's speech emphasizes the subjective nature of "love."

9. The Clown's insults are couched in a jarringly logical manner.

10. Cesario uses an extended theological metaphor to reflect the Duke's great love.

Act II, Scene 1 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What is Antonio's occupation?

2. What relation does Sebastian hold to Viola?

3. What does Sebastian think has happened to Viola?

4. Where do Antonio and Sebastian find themselves in this scene?

5. What purpose does this scene serve?

6. How would you characterize the style of the dialogue?

7. Where does Sebastian say he is headed?

8. What does Antonio want to do for Sebastian?

9. Name one source for *Twelfth Night*.

10. Essentially, what do the sources and the play *Twelfth Night* have in common?

Answers
1. Antonio is a sea captain.

2. Sebastian is Viola's brother.

3. Sebastian thinks that Viola has drowned.

4. They find themselves on Illyria's shore.

5. The purpose of this scene is to inform us about Viola's twin brother.

6. The style is one of formal, straightforward prose.

7. Sebastian says he is headed for Orsino's court.

8. Antonio wishes to serve Sebastian.

9. The sources for *Twelfth Night* are Gl'Ingannati, Bandello, and Riche.

10. The sources have the four essential characters and the plot in common with Shakespeare.

Act II, Scene 2 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. Why does Malvolio seek Cesario?

2. Whose ring is it?

3. What kind of speech is it that Cesario utters?

4. What does Malvolio emphasize to Cesario?

5. Where does Malvolio put the ring?

6. What does Cesario feel about the ring?

7. Who has fallen in love with Cesario?

8. What does Cesario wonder in the latter part of the soliloquy?

9. What motif does Cesario repeat in his soliloquy?

10. What is the critics' attitude toward Malvolio?

Answers
1. Malvolio seeks Cesario to give him a ring.

2. It is a ring from Olivia.

3. Cesario utters a soliloquy.

4. Malvolio emphasizes that Olivia wants Orsino to stop his wooing.

5. Malvolio places the ring on the ground.

6. Cesario feels confused about the ring.

7. Olivia has fallen in love with Cesario.

8. Cesario wonders how the mistaken love will be resolved.

9. Cesario repeats the motif of "appearances versus reality."

10. Critics have argued over how to interpret Malvolio.

Act II, Scene 3 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What does going to bed after midnight mean for Sir Toby?

2. What does Sir Andrew call Feste the Clown?

3. What ability of the Clown does Sir Andrew compliment?

4. What do Sir Toby and Andrew offer to Feste for his singing?

5. What two types of songs does the Clown suggest?

6. What does the Clown's song define?

7. In keeping with the holiday tradition, what title can we apply to Sir Toby?

8. What plot is hatched in this scene?

9. What is Maria's motive for the scheme?

10. What does Maria plan to drop in Malvolio's way?

Answers
1. For Sir Toby, going to bed after midnight means going to bed early.

2. Sir Andrew calls Feste “the fool.”

3. Sir Andrew compliments the Clown’s singing voice.

4. They offer him money.

5. The Clown suggests either a love song or a song with a moral.

6. The Clown’s song defines “love.”

7. Sir Toby can take on the title of the “lord of misrule.”

8. The comic plot is hatched in this scene.

9. Maria’s motive for the scheme is revenge.

10. Maria plans to drop letters in Malvolio’s way.

Act II, Scene 4 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What is the first item the Duke requests?

2. Who is not immediately available to sing the song?

3. What kind of a lover does Orsino classify himself as?

4. What does the Duke surmise about Cesario?

5. According to the Duke, does the age of the man in a relationship matter?

6. What does the Clown’s song focus on?

7. Who does the Clown insult?

8. Where does Cesario go once again?

9. What warning does Cesario give to Orsino about Olivia?

10. In what does the lover of the Clown’s song wish to be laid?

Answers
1. The Duke requests some music.

2. The Clown is not immediately available to sing the song.

3. Orsino classifies himself as a “true lover.”

4. The Duke surmises that Cesario has been in love.

5. Yes, the age of the male partner does matter.

6. The Clown's song focuses on the Duke's frustration with and subsequent failure to obtain Olivia.

7. The Clown insults the Duke.

8. Cesario goes to woo for the Duke.

9. Cesario warns the Duke that Olivia is not open to romance with him.

10. The lover is ready to be buried in a coffin.

Act II, Scene 5 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. Who is Fabian?

2. What is his motive for tricking Malvolio?

3. Who has worked out the scheme?

4. Where will the spectators of the device hide?

5. What does Malvolio fancy himself?

6. What kind of intention do Sir Toby and Andrew evidence by their remarks?

7. In whose handwriting supposedly is the letter that Malvolio finds?

8. What four letters in the letter lead Malvolio to believe it is addressed to him?

9. What is the source of imagery used by Sir Toby, Andrew, Maria, and Fabian to characterize Malvolio's situation?

10. From whom is Malvolio alienated?

Answers
1. Fabian is another of Olivia's servants.

2. Fabian apparently has a bone to pick with Malvolio.

3. Maria has worked out the scheme.

4. The spectators will hide in a box tree.

5. Malvolio fancies himself a suitor to Olivia.

6. Sir Toby and Andrew evidence a sadistic intention.

7. The letter is supposedly in Olivia's handwriting.

8. "M,O,A,I" lead Malvolio to believe it is addressed to him.

9. They use animal imagery to enlighten us about Malvolio's situation.

10. Malvolio is alienated from the rest of the household.

Act III, Scene 1 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What instrument is the Clown holding?

2. Where does the Clown say he lives by?

3. Why is the Clown upset with words?

4. Rather than Lady Olivia's fool, what does Feste claim to be?

5. What does Cesario praise while waiting for Olivia?

6. Who declares love in this scene?

7. What is Olivia's response to Cesario's wooing for the Duke?

8. Between what two characters does Shakespeare establish a kinship?

9. What happens when wise men act foolishly?

10. According to Herschel Baker, what do the characters lack?

Answers
1. The Clown is holding a tabor.

2. The Clown says he lives by a church.

3. The Clown is upset with words because they are rascals whose bonds disgraced them.

4. Feste claims to be Olivia's "corrupter of words."

5. Cesario praises the Clown's skill as a fool.

6. Olivia declares her love for Cesario in this scene.

7. Olivia rejects the Duke.

8. Shakespeare establishes a kinship between Cesario and the Clown.

9. They betray their common sense.

10. The characters lack self-knowledge.

Act III, Scene 2 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What is Sir Andrew getting ready to do?

2. On whom does Andrew see Olivia bestow her affection?

3. What is Fabian's explanation for that favoritism?

4. What element does Fabian think will stir Olivia's passion?

5. What idea does Sir Toby come up with to help Sir Andrew?

6. What task does Sir Toby assign Sir Andrew?

7. What does Sir Toby not plan to do, though?

8. In what manner does Sir Toby hail Maria?

9. How does Maria describe Malvolio's absorption in the letter?

10. What role does Sir Toby continue to play well?

Answers
1. Sir Andrew is getting ready to leave.

2. Andrew sees Olivia bestow her affection on Cesario.

3. Fabian asserts that she is doing that to exasperate Andrew and to rouse him to some action.

4. Fabian thinks that valor will stir Olivia to passion.

5. Sir Toby comes up with the idea of a fight.

6. Sir Toby assigns a letter to Sir Andrew to be delivered to Cesario.

7. Sir Toby does not plan to deliver the letter.

8. Sir Toby hails Maria in an affectionate manner.

9. Maria describes Malvolio's absorption in the letter as hilarious.

10. Sir Toby continues to play the role of "lord of misrule" well.

Act III, Scene 3 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What does Sebastian say he will not do to Antonio?

2. Where do they meet?

3. What encouraged Antonio to keep up with Sebastian?

4. How does Antonio describe the area they're in?

5. What does Sebastian desire to do in Illyria?

6. Why does Antonio have to decline Sebastian's offer to see the town?

7. What does Sebastian reckon Antonio has done?

8. What does Antonio say he is guilty of?

9. Who is the missing link in the love strands?

10. With what character does Sebastian have a similar thematic function?

Answers
1. Sebastian says he will not chide him.

2. They meet in a street.

3. Antonio's love and concern for Sebastian encouraged him to keep up.

4. Antonio describes the area as "rough and unhospitable."

5. Sebastian desires to go sightseeing.

6. Antonio has to decline Sebastian's offer to accompany him because he is a wanted man.

7. Sebastian reckons Antonio has murdered.

8. Antonio says he is guilty of piracy.

9. Antonio is the missing link in the love strands.

10. Sebastian and Viola have similar thematic functions.

Act III, Scene 4 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. How is Olivia feeling at the opening of the scene?

2. What does Olivia commend about Malvolio?

3. What influence sways Malvolio's mind as he speaks with Olivia?

4. In what words does Malvolio try to dismiss Sir Toby when he enters?

5. What does Sir Toby indicate his attitude toward Malvolio will be when the trick is done?

6. What does Sir Andrew return with?

7. How receptive is Cesario to Olivia's love?

8. With what news does Sir Toby alarm Cesario?

9. What does the knowledge of Sebastian's existence make of this scene?

10. How can we characterize Malvolio's dialogue with Olivia?

Answers
1. Olivia is out of sorts.

2. Olivia commends Malvolio's nature.

3. The commands of the letter sway Malvolio's mind as he speaks with Olivia.

4. Malvolio tries to dismiss Sir Toby with "Go off; I discard you."

5. Sir Toby indicates that he will show mercy on Malvolio when the trick is done.

6. Sir Andrew returns with the letter he wrote.

7. Cesario is not receptive to Olivia's love.

8. Sir Toby alarms Cesario with the report that Sir Andrew is preparing to attack him.

9. Knowledge of Sebastian's existence makes this a climactic scene.

10. We can characterize Malvolio's dialogue with Olivia as comic and perverse.

Act IV, Scene 1 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. How does Sebastian react to Feste?

2. What does Sebastian tell the Clown to vent elsewhere?

3. Who tells the other to abandon his pretense?

4. Who fights in this scene?

5. When the Clown sees the fray, what does he do?

6. Who breaks up the fight?

7. How does Olivia characterize Sir Toby's behavior?

8. To whom does Olivia issue an invitation?

9. How does Sebastian respond to Olivia's invitation?

10. What does Maurice Charney say about Feste's mind?

Answers
1. Sebastian dismisses the Clown.

2. Sebastian tells the Clown to vent his folly elsewhere.

3. Feste tells Sebastian to abandon his pretense, "ungird thy strangeness."

4. Sebastian, Sir Andrew, and Sir Toby fight in this scene.

5. The Clown goes off to inform Olivia.

6. Olivia breaks up the fight.

7. Olivia calls Sir Toby a "rudesby" and "ungracious wretch."

8. Olivia issues an invitation to Sebastian.

9. Sebastian is surprised at Olivia's invitation.

10. Maurice Charney says that Feste has an "agile mind at wordplay."

Act IV, Scene 2 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. What two articles does Maria give the Clown?

2. Whom does she want Feste to play?

3. What label does Sir Topas greet Malvolio with?

4. What kind of room is Malvolio in?

5. What are the two sources of light in that room?

6. How does Malvolio perceive himself?

7. What items does Malvolio request from Sir Topas?

8. What kind of test does Malvolio ask for?

9. Why does Sir Toby feel compelled to put a stop to the trick?

10. What image in the scene suggests the cruelty of Maria and Sir Toby?

Answers
1. Maria gives the Clown a gown and a beard.

2. Maria wants Feste to play Sir Topas.

3. Sir Topas greets Malvolio as “Malvolio the lunatic.”

4. Malvolio is in a very dark room.

5. The two sources of light in the room are bay windows and clerestories.

6. Malvolio perceives himself as a wronged man.

7. Malvolio requests a candle, pen, ink, and paper from Sir Topas.

8. Malvolio asks for a test of his sanity.

9. Sir Toby feels compelled to put a stop to the trick because Olivia disapproves of his nonsense.

10. The darkness image suggests the cruelty of Maria and Sir Toby.

Act IV, Scene 3 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. Why is the garden an appropriate setting for this scene?

2. What does Sebastian try to come to terms with?

3. What does the rapidity of the love match prevent us from obtaining?

4. What gift has Olivia given Sebastian?

5. Whom does Sebastian wish to speak with?

6. Does he accept or reject Olivia’s love?

7. What skill of Olivia’s does Sebastian praise?

8. What plans has Olivia made?

9. Who has she brought to carry out those plans?

10. What is the key symbolic element of this scene?

Answers
1. It is appropriate because a wedding is about to take place.

2. Sebastian tries to come to terms with his good luck.

3. The rapidity of the love match prevents us from obtaining Sebastian’s feelings about love.

4. Olivia gives Sebastian a pearl.

5. Sebastian wishes to speak with Antonio.

6. He accepts Olivia's love.

7. Sebastian praises Olivia's management of affairs in the house.

8. Olivia has planned a wedding ceremony.

9. She has brought a priest to tie the knot.

10. The key symbolic element is the twins.

Act V, Scene 1 Questions and Answers

Study Questions
1. Whose letter does Feste refuse to show Fabian?

2. With what disparaging term does the Clown refer to himself and Fabian?

3. Whom does Antonio think Cesario is?

4. Why does Olivia call in the priest?

5. What has happened to Sir Andrew?

6. What does Sebastian's presence signal?

7. Whom does Malvolio cast blame on in his letter?

8. With Olivia and Sebastian being the first couple, who make up the second couple?

9. Who make up the third pairing?

10. What satisfaction does Malvolio want for the trick?

Answers
1. Feste refuses to show Malvolio's letter.

2. The Clown refers to Fabian and himself as Olivia's "trappings."

3. Antonio thinks Cesario is Sebastian.

4. Olivia calls in the priest to verify her marriage to Sebastian.

5. Sir Andrew has been injured by Sebastian.

6. Sebastian's presence signals the resolution of the mistaken identity plot.

7. Malvolio casts blame on Olivia.

8. The second couple consists of the Duke and Viola.

9. Sir Toby and Maria make up the third couple.

10. Malvolio desires revenge on all his malefactors.

Twelfth Night: Essential Passages

Essential Passages by Character: Viola

Essential Passage 1: Act 1, Scene 2, Lines 55-64

VIOLA:
I prithee, and I'll pay thee bounteously,
Conceal me what I am, and be my aid
For such disguise as haply shall become
The form of my intent. I'll serve this duke:
Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him:
It may be worth thy pains; for I can sing
And speak to him in many sorts of music
That will allow me very worth his service.
What else may hap to time I will commit;
Only shape thou silence to my wit.

Summary
Viola, a gentlewoman of Messaline, has been shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria, along with the ship's captain. Having a twin brother on the ship, Viola believes him drowned. On inquiring from the captain where they are, she learns that Illyria is the captain's birthplace, and they are near the home of Count Orsino, a duke who is currently a bachelor. Viola had heard her father speak of Orsino and is curious about the bachelorhood of so rich and noble a man. The captain tells her of Orsino's love for Olivia, a lady of the region. However, because Olivia is in mourning for her father and brother, she will accept no suitors. Viola is intrigued by this tale and decides that she would like to aid the duke's suit. At first she proposes to present herself as a lady-in-waiting to Olivia, but the captain informs her that Olivia is not even accepting visitors. Viola then decides to disguise herself as a male eunuch (i.e., person surgically altered prior to the onset of puberty so as to prevent the development of secondary sex characteristics such as a beard) to Count Orsino as a servant. Her intent is to act as a matchmaker between Orsino and Olivia because she desires to see true love fulfilled.

Essential Passage 2: Act 1, Scene 4, Lines 22-44

DUKE ORSINO:
O, then unfold the passion of my love,
Surprise her with discourse of my dear faith:
It shall become thee well to act my woes;
She will attend it better in thy youth
Than in a nuncio's of more grave aspect.

VIOLA:
I think not so, my lord.

DUKE ORSINO:
Dear lad, believe it;
For they shall yet belie thy happy years,
That say thou art a man: Diana's lip
Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe
Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
And all is semblative a woman's part.
I know thy constellation is right apt
For this affair. Some four or five attend him:
All, if you will; for I myself am best
When least in company. Prosper well in this
And thou shalt live as freely as thy lord,
To call his fortunes thine.

VIOLA:
I'll do my best
To woo your lady. [Aside] Yet, a barful strife!
Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife.

Summary
Viola has presented herself to Count Orsino as a eunuch named Cesario. Within a matter of days, she has earned his trust to the point where he is comfortable sending Viola to Olivia to persuade her to accept his suit. Orsino believes that Olivia will be more accepting of "Cesario" than she will of himself. Although Viola is doubtful, Orsino points out that her feminine appearance will be less off-putting than his own. He observes that Viola's features are closer to a woman's than a man's. Her mouth is softer, her voice more tender, her very appearance is womanly (this is a reference to his belief that "Cesario" is a eunuch and thus has retained more boyish qualities). Orsino sends Viola off with several attendants and bids them leave, as he wants to be alone. Viola promises that she will do her best to present him as a fitting suitor to Olivia, but in an aside she reveals that she is now in love with Orsino and would sooner woo him for herself.

Essential Passage 3: Act 5, Scene 1, Lines 258-284

VIOLA:
If nothing lets to make us happy both
But this my masculine usurp'd attire,
Do not embrace me till each circumstance
Of place, time, fortune, do cohere and jump
That I am Viola: which to confirm,
I'll bring you to a captain in this town,
Where lie my maiden weeds; by whose gentle help
I was preserved to serve this noble Count;
All the occurrence of my fortune since
Hath been between this lady and this lord.

SEBASTIAN:
[To Olivia]
So comes it, lady, you have been
mistook:
But nature to her bias drew in that.
You would have been contracted to a maid;

Nor are you therein, by my life, deceived,
You are betroth'd both to a maid and man.

DUKE ORSINO:
Be not amazed; right noble is his blood.
If this be so, as yet the glass seems true,
I shall have share in this most happy wreck:
[To Viola.]
Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand times,
Thou never shouldst love woman like to me.

VIOLA:
And all those sayings will I overswear;
And all those swearings keep as true in soul
As doth that orbed continent the fire
That severs day from night.

DUKE ORSINO:
Give me thy hand;
And let me see thee in thy woman's weeds.

Summary
At the conclusion of the play, all the principal characters are together on stage. Sebastian and Viola meet for the first time since the shipwreck. Because both believe the other has been drowned, they are incredulous at what they see, Sebastian more so, since his sister is dressed as a man. Yet Viola reveals herself to be a noble lady and the sister of Sebastian. As proof, she mentions the sea captain, resident in the town, who has her original clothing. Sebastian then says to Olivia, whom he has just married, that she escaped being wedded to a woman. Instead, she has been married to a virginal man and thus has retained her honor. Orsino wonders at Viola's deception, yet remembers that she, as Cesario, promised him that she loved Orsino as she could never love a woman. As Viola swears her love to him again, Orsino asks for her hand in marriage.

Analysis of Essential Passages
As the central character in *Twelfth Night*, Viola is the hub of the action and the link between the play's different plots. She is the connection between the home of Orsino and that of Olivia, where the drama involving "Cesario," Sebastian, and Olivia is played out. Her ability to be "all things to all men" facilitates the chaos of the disguised identities, hidden plots, and unknown twists that weave through the story.

After the shipwreck, she decides to be a matchmaker to two people who are strangers to her. Unable to play the part of a woman and serve Olivia, she ingeniously takes up the guise of a man to serve Orsino. Wisely she portrays herself as a eunuch. Because a eunuch has undergone surgery as a youth in order to prohibit the onset of puberty, her high voice and lack of beard will give some credence to her disguise, whereas a simple costume change would have immediately revealed her true gender.

Yet her femininity is still apparent, even with such a plausible disguise. Orsino identifies not just womanly features but the subtle personality differences that were attributed to a woman of that time. It is these attributes that Orsino believes will make "Cesario" more acceptable to Olivia as a messenger than if he had sent a man. This perception on the part of Orsino will also ease the way at the end from his thinking of her as a man to thinking of her as a woman and thus an "acceptable" object of love.

In one of the play's several plot twists, Viola falls in love with the man she is to represent to another woman. Yet, against what might be expected, Viola in no way shirks this duty; she truly tries to present Orsino to

Olivia as the man of her dreams. The complication arises, however, when Olivia falls in love with Viola in the guise of Cesario. The oddness of this lies not so much in the fact of their being two women, but in the fact that Cesario is a eunuch. Viola's seeming "boyishness" hides her femininity but does not hide her attractiveness to either gender. This misunderstanding is the root of the comedic element in Shakespearean drama: in the Bard's plays, there are most always complications on the road to love.

As the romantic resolutions unfold in the final act, it is Viola's revelation of her gender that ties up all the loose ends. Olivia's hasty marriage to Sebastian is the catalyst that forces her to reveal her true identity. Olivia has believed that she has known "Cesario" for enough time to warrant marriage, yet Sebastian has known Olivia for a very short time indeed before he acceded to her request to wed. Olivia's confusion of Sebastian for "Cesario" propels Viola to uncover her true self. Also, her shock in finding her brother alive slows this revelation so a full explanation can advance the plot.

Almost unbelievably swiftly, Orsino transfers his love from Olivia to a person just moments before he believed to be a male eunuch. Yet instantaneous love is a typical Shakespearean element to speedily resolve conflicts and bring the plot to a conclusion. Thus all (with the exception of the embittered Malvolio) are joined in happy wedlock, completing the revelries that are associated with the "Twelfth Night" festivities of the Christmas holidays.

Essential Passages by Theme: Love

Essential Passage 1: Act 1, Scene 1, Lines 1-15

> **DUKE ORSINO:**
> If music be the food of love, play on;
> Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken, and so die.
> That strain again! it had a dying fall:
> O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound,
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour! Enough; no more;
> 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
> O spirit of love! how quick and fresh art thou,
> That, notwithstanding thy capacity
> Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
> Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
> But falls into abatement and low price,
> Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy
> That it alone is high fantastical.

Summary
Orsino, Count (or Duke) of Illyria, is sick with love for the lady Olivia. In his chamber, he is listening to the court musicians perform a love song. Bidding them to play on, he hopes the music will increase his feeling of love until he is sick of it. Overindulgence will break the obsession, he believes, and thus release him from the pain of unrequited affection. At last he calls a halt to the music, saying it is not so sweet as when it first began: he is sick of the music but not of love. Orsino thinks that there does not seem to be a limit to love's capacity. Like the sea that refuses to rise no matter how much water is added to it from the rivers and the rains, his love for Olivia is full. He acknowledges that as the sea level changes with the rise and fall of the tides, love may do likewise without changing capacity. His messenger arrives to announce that Olivia will not entertain Orsino's suit, because she is still in mourning after the death of her brother. Orsino is content to wait but vows he will

not give up until he wins Olivia's heart.

Essential Passage 2: Act 2, Scene 4, Lines 103-120

DUKE ORSINO:
There is no woman's sides
Can bide the beating of so strong a passion
As love doth give my heart; no woman's heart
So big, to hold so much; they lack retention.
Alas, their love may be call'd appetite,
No motion of the liver, but the palate,
That suffer surfeit, cloyment and revolt;
But mine is all as hungry as the sea,
And can digest as much: make no compare
Between that love a woman can bear me
And that I owe Olivia.

VIOLA:
Ay, but I know—

DUKE ORSINO:
What dost thou know?

VIOLA:
Too well what love women to men may owe:
In faith, they are as true of heart as we.
My father had a daughter loved a man,
As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman,
I should your lordship.

Summary
Orsino has commissioned Viola/Cesario to plead his case to Olivia, who refuses to accept him as a suitor. He commands Cesario to force Olivia love him, which Cesario states cannot be possible. Love is not obedient to a command, but must be given freely. Orsino, however, disagrees. He believes that a woman is subject to passion, but not to love, and therefore her passions must be appealed to. A woman's love, he says, is like an appetite that must be fed. A man's capacity, however, is as big as the sea, which can accept all love and still not be satisfied. But a woman is too weak and too inconstant to be capable of so much love, and therefore is easily swayed. Viola/Cesario knows, however, the amount of love a woman may give to a man. She refers to "her father's daughter" who once loved a man, as Cesario himself would love Orsino—if he were a woman. Of course, since Cesario is really Viola, she is skirting around the edges of a confession of her own love for Orsino, to which Orsino is immune.

Essential Passage 3: Act 3, Scene 1, Lines 157-164

OLIVIA:
Cesario, by the roses of the spring,
By maidhood, honour, truth, and everything,
I love thee so, that, maugre all thy pride,
Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide.
Do not extort thy reasons from this clause,
For that I woo thou therefore hast no cause,

But rather reason thus with reason fetter,
Love sought is good, but given unsought is better.

Summary
Viola in the disguise of Cesario has come to woo Olivia on behalf of Orsino, who is sick with love for her. Yet Olivia is not open to love due to the grief she feels at the death of a brother. However, this grief seems to fade when she comes into increasing contact with Viola/Cesario. Gradually Olivia falls in love with Cesario, despite the fact that he on a mission to win her affections for another and he is (as Olivia believes) a eunuch. Olivia pushes past Cesario's scorn and swears her love. Because Olivia woos Cesario, he has no reason to woo her in return. Yet she presents to Cesario the belief that a love that has been sought for is good, but a love that is given freely is even better. It is this better kind of love that she is offering to Cesario.

Analysis of Essential Passages
Love is a constant theme in Shakespearean comedy, especially a love that encounters difficulties. The hurdles that love encounters in *Twelfth Night* are varied, yielding to many twists and turns until the final resolution, when all marry the person they are somehow destined to marry.

Count Orsino represents love that is unrequited. His devotion to Olivia is rejected, not so much because of the source of the love, but because of the circumstances in which the love is first acknowledged. Orsino, however, also believes that love is pure emotion. As an emotion, it can be controlled, in the case of the opening act by cranking up the level of that emotion until its very weight causes it to fall into a more manageable state. It is a habit that can be overcome. It is delicious treat that can lose its appeal by surfeit. The emotion of love is temporary, so it must be satisfied before it dies away.

Yet in his argument with Viola (who is disguised as Cesario), it is a woman's love that Orsino stamps as emotional rather than stable. This is indicative of the ephemeral nature of his love, which will become apparent in the final act as he so easily transfers his "undying passion" from Olivia to Viola. The near-anagram state of the two women's names perhaps indicates that it does not really matter whom one loves, just so long as one loves someone (at least in Orsino's point of view).

It is Viola, however, who has the clearest understanding of love. Although her love has come quickly to fall upon Orsino, it does not change. In fact, it rises to the level of self-sacrifice, as Viola does not renege in her duty to encourage Olivia to fall in love with Orsino, despite Viola's own feelings for him. Her steadiness is perhaps not deserved by so vacillating a person as Orsino, but nevertheless she bestows it freely on him.

As Olivia freely gives her love to "Cesario" (and by extension and more appropriately to Sebastian), Olivia also reflects the nature of love. It is love unsought and therefore of a higher value. Like Orsino, Sebastian quickly decides he loves Olivia, with as little thought.

The women in *Twelfth Night* thus show a more thorough understanding of constant love than do the men. Despite Orsino's contention that a woman's love is based on mere passion, it is the women who give their hearts thorough examination. Despite the obstacles, as usual, love conquers all. As the fate of the flawed hero is ruled by destiny in Shakespearean tragedies, so too destiny rules in the matters of love in the comedies.

Twelfth Night: Themes

The essential spirit of *Twelfth Night* is captured in its title. It refers to the "*Twelfth Night*" of Christmas, the Feast of the Epiphany celebrating the gift of the Magi to the infant Jesus. Believed by the Elizabethans to also be the day of Jesus' baptism, the *Twelfth Night* was an even more important holiday in Shakespeare's time than Christmas itself. In (partial) contrast to our own domesticated Christmas, this was not only a festive

season for the Elizabethans but a time when excess and license were expected to run rampant. It was a time of merry-making, of hard drinking, and of romantic (or lusty) pursuits. The play is unique among Shakespeare's works in having a second or subtitle, "What You Will." This second part to the play's title is an open-ended invitation by Shakespeare to his audiences. They can choose to enjoy the play as a simple, romantic comedy with a happy ending, but they are also free to take note of certain negative or problematic aspects woven into the general revelry by the mature Bard.

The world of *Twelfth Night* is one of comedy and comic excess; and among all of the characters in the play, it is the drunken, misbehaving and prankish Sir Toby Belch who epitomizes its humorous nature. The plot against Malvolio is, to an extent, a jocular undoing of a negative character, an authority figure without power intent upon silencing Sir Toby. The humor here is amplified by the degree to which Malvolio comes to see himself as Olivia's equal. Thus, in the phony letter he receives, Malvolio emphasizes the words, "Some are (born) great, some (achieve) greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em" (II.v.144-145). No matter how he slices it, Malvolio comes to the opinion that he, a mere steward, is somehow great or deserves to become great by virtue of his pomposity. The audience is in on the joke from the start, so that Malvolio's reading of the letter is entertaining in itself and magnifies the humor of his ultimate demise when Olivia's behavior makes it plain that Malvolio is not great, but deluded.

In addition to the comic moments of mistaken identity that arise in the course of *Twelfth Night*, there are many funny bits in the play that stand on their own. In the first scene of Act III, the clown Feste is asked by Cesario if he is a musician who "lives by" playing the tabor. He replies that he "lives by the church." When the disguised Viola then asks "Art thou a churchman?" Feste answers: "No such matter, sir: I do live by the church; for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by a church" (III.i.1-5). Along with Sir Toby, Andrew, and Maria, Feste is one of several characters in *Twelfth Night* who engages in comic wordplay, some of it on purpose and some of it unwittingly. After learning of Olivia's love for Cesario, the disguised Viola says to the countess at the end of Act III, scene ii:

> I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth,
> And that no woman has; nor never none
> Shall mistress be of it, save I alone.
> And so adieu, good madam; never more
> Will I my master's tears to you deplore.
> (III.i.158-162)

This speech is, of course, ironic, since the speaker is, in fact, a woman. But above this, Viola's response to Olivia's overture highlights the primary subject of the play: romantic love. In her coupling of "one heart, one bosom, and one truth," Viola gives expression to an idealized conception of "true" love as being an all-consuming passion for a single "authentic" lover that will overcome any and all obstacles.

Twelfth Night validates this idea of love, but with some disconcerting qualifications. Love is true in *Twelfth Night*, but it is also irrational, excessive and fickle; it wanes over time, as does its chief cause, physical beauty. Duke Orsino opens the play with the lines: If music be the food of love, play on, / Give me excess of it; that surfeiting, / The appetite may sicken and so die (I.i.1-4).

But after hearing strands of the same tune being played in the background, Orsino commands "Enough; no more; / 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before" (I.i.10-11). In *Twelfth Night*, Orsino is irrational in his pursuit of the lovely Olivia, but he cedes her readily to Sebastian and then falls instantly in love with "Cesario" when he reveals himself to be Viola. Love is powerful, but its constancy is certainly in question. In Act II, scene iv, the Duke says to Cesario that "For women are as roses, whose fair flower, / Being once display'd, doth fall that very hour" (ll.38-39). Love at first sight is rampant in Shakespeare's Illyria, but he will not vouchsafe its permanence.

Worse, in *Twelfth Night*, love is consistently associated with madness. After seeing Cesario for the first time, the love struck Olivia says at the end of Act I, "Mine eye [is] too great a flatterer for my mind" (I.v.309). Love is a form of insanity, in which one's senses deceive and overcome one's reason. In Act IV, scene iii, Sebastian waxes about his instantaneous love for Olivia:

> This is the air, that is the glorious sun;
> This pearl she gave to me, I do feel't and see't:
> And though 'tis wonder that enrapts me thus,
> Yet 'tis not madness. …
> (IV.iii.1-4).

Sebastian's denial that his love for Olivia is madness only underscores the connection between unbounded passion and an unbalanced mind. Shortly thereafter, Sebastian says that because of his love for Olivia, he is willing to "distrust mine eyes" and "wrangle with my reason" (IV.iii.13-14). In a play in which many references are made to being possessed by the devil and being victimized by witchcraft, love is of necessity equated with being mad.

There is one character in *Twelfth Night* for whom love (co-mingled with self-infatuation) is madness—the steward Malvolio, whose professions of love to Olivia lead to his being restrained as a lunatic. Over the centuries, Shakespearean critics have discussed the so-called "Malvolio problem." On the one hand, Malvolio is basically a stock comic figure who deserves the comeuppance that he receives. But on the other, his imprisonment is excessive, and he excludes himself from the closing marriage ceremony with good cause. Indeed, when he speaks finally of exacting revenge in Act V, Malvolio evokes a certain sympathetic understanding. Malvolio has been abused as the target of a trick perpetrated by the parasitical, self-serving Uncle Toby. For his part, Uncle Toby, Malvolio's chief tormentor, is a merry soul, but he is also a rouge who is scheming to marry his fair niece to the absurdly non-heroic, non-romantic figure of Sir Andrew. If we view the play as a standard romantic comedy, Malvolio warrants the comedown that he undergoes; but as a matter of justice, Malvolio has done very little to earn a humiliating payback.

Twelfth Night: Character Analysis

Sir Andrew Aguecheek (Character Analysis)

Sir Andrew Aguecheek is a friend of Sir Toby Belch, a suitor to Sir Toby's rich niece Olivia, and a participant in the play's subplot. (A subplot is a secondary or subordinate plot which often reflects on or complicates the major plot in a work of fiction such as a play.) In I.iii.20, Toby praises Sir Andrew Aguecheek for being gallant, or "as tall a man as any's in Illyria." He defends his friend as cultured and talented, claiming that Sir Andrew knows how to play a musical instrument and can speak "three or four languages word for word" (I.iii.25-28). Maria, on the other hand, calls Sir Andrew a "fool and a prodigal," a "great quarreller," and a "coward," who spends his nights getting drunk with Toby (I.iii.24,30,31,36-37). What Sir Toby, in fact, values about his friend is his money, for Sir Andrew has a comfortable income of "three thousand ducats a year," and he spends it generously (I.iii.22).

Aguecheek—whose name suggests that he has a thin or pinched face as though he had a chill, or an ague—makes his first appearance in I.iii.44-139, where he shows himself to be indeed foolish. When, for example, Toby introduces him to Maria with the admonishment to "accost" or greet her, Sir Andrew mistakenly thinks that Maria's last name is "Accost" (I.iii.49,52). In response to a question in French, Sir Andrew proves that, contrary to Toby's claim, he has little knowledge of foreign languages, revealing instead his other, less academic interests: "What is pourquoy? do or not do? I would I had bestowed that time in the tongues that I have in fencing, dancing, and bear-baiting" (I.iii.91-93).

Sir Andrew's principal grievance in the play is that he is wasting his time and money courting Olivia, when she clearly has no interest in him but is in fact more attentive to Duke Orsino's page, Viola/ Cesario. Off and on during the play, he threatens to abandon his suit and go home, but Sir Toby flatters him, exploiting his love of "masques and revels" to convince Aguecheek to stay longer and spend more money (I.iii.93-94). In III.ii, he even persuades the cowardly Sir Andrew to challenge Viola/Cesario to a duel. At the close of the play (V.i.173-208), Aguecheek's money has been used up, and his head has been bloodied in a sword fight with Sebastian (whom he had mistaken for Viola/Cesario). Sir Toby, who has also been injured, takes the opportunity to tell Sir Andrew what he really thinks of him and calls the knight "an ass-head, and a coxcomb, and a knave, a thin-faced knave, a gull!" (V.i.206-07).

Critics note that Sir Andrew Aguecheek's drunken revels with Sir Toby contribute to the festive, holiday atmosphere of the play. Further, because of his foolishness, his phony gallantry, and his lack of skill in wooing (in III.i.86-91, he memorizes flowery words that he hears Viola/Cesario using on Olivia, hoping to try them out later, himself), Sir Andrew has been described as a parody of a courtly lover. As such, he is also a parody of Duke Orsino—Sir Andrew's rival for Olivia's affections. (To parody means to imitate something or someone for the purposes of comic effect or ridicule.)

Critics have also remarked that sometimes Aguecheek is a poignant character, as for example, when he admits in I.iii.82-86 that he is not as witty or clever as he would like to be; and again in II.iii.181, when in response to Toby's comment that he is adored by Maria, Sir Andrew wistfully replies, "I was adored once too." All the same, critics conclude that while these moments reveal Shakespeare's skill at creating complex characters, Sir Andrew Aguecheek remains a ridiculous figure.

Sir Toby Belch (Character Analysis)

Sir Toby Belch is Olivia's uncle and a co-director of the play's subplots involving Aguecheek and Malvolio. (A subplot is a secondary or subordinate plot which often reflects on or complicates the major plot in a work of fiction such as a play.) Sir Toby embodies the riot of the Christmas season. He is drunk throughout the play and gives full vent to his whims and passions. In this sense, Uncle Toby is a positive character who is placed in opposition to the grumpy Malvolio.

Believing that "care's an enemy to life," Toby indulges in food, drink, and song, and hopes to do so as long as there is "drink in Illyria" (I.iii.2-3, 40). His last name is appropriate to his dissipated manner of living, and his dissipation is in keeping with the play's festive title.

He is also a freeloader who lives off his niece and takes money from his friend, Sir Andrew Aguecheek. While Toby's antics are amusing, his plans for Olivia come close to those of a pimp, for he wishes to "sell" his niece to the eminently foolish Sir Andrew, a fop whom Toby can easily control. Sir Toby Belch is annoyed with Olivia, who has "abjured the company / And sight of men" and has chosen instead to spend seven years of her young life hidden and in mourning for her dead brother (I.ii.40-41).

While characters like Viola and Feste comment on the passing of time and the decay of youthfulness, and while Olivia spends her hours keeping her brother's memory alive with her tears, Sir Toby alters time to suit his own purpose. During a long night of partying, for example, he announces to Sir Andrew that "Not to be a-bed after midnight is to be up betimes"—or that staying up late is the same as getting up early. He then cites a Latin quote which claims that being up before dawn is good for one's health (II.iii.1-3). Shortly afterward, when Olivia's steward, Malvolio, chastises him for being unconcerned about where he is or how late it has gotten ("Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?"), Sir Toby retorts that he has indeed been keeping time—in the "catches," or round songs which he and his friends have been singing by turns (II.iii.91-92, 93).

Critics note that Sir Toby's drunken carelessness stands in direct opposition to Malvolio's strictness and self-importance. "Art any more than a steward?"—Sir Toby sneers at the scolding Malvolio, who is in fact simply another of Olivia's servants, and thus lower in rank than both her and her uncle (II.iii.114). "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"—Sir Toby adds, annoyed with the steward for being a killjoy (II.iii.114-16).

Thanks to Maria, Toby gets his revenge against the officious steward when Malvolio is fooled into believing that Olivia wants to marry him. The "gulling" of Malvolio begins as a joke shared with the audience, who listens in with Toby, Fabian, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek as Malvolio reads aloud a phony love-letter and succeeds at convincing himself that the letter is both genuine and meant for him (II.v). It ends with Malvolio's imprisonment in a dark room for his apparent insanity. By that time, the joke has gotten old even for Sir Toby, who is already in serious trouble with his niece for his dissolute behavior and cannot afford to add this practical joke to his list of misdemeanors (IV.ii.66-71).

Critics remark that thanks to his drunken jokes and festive, topsy-turvy approach to life, Sir Toby Belch is an appealing character; at the same time, he is a sponger with a mean streak. To hang on to his lucrative source of income, Sir Toby spends much of his time persuading the well-off but foolish Sir Andrew that he has a chance at marrying Olivia. He even arranges a comically timid duel between Aguecheek and Viola/Cesario to prevent Sir Andrew's departure. But at the close of the play, Sir Andrew is out of money, and both he and Sir Toby have been soundly beaten by Sebastian. Now, Sir Toby scorns his former meal-ticket, calling him "an ass-head, and a coxcomb, and a knave, a thinfaced knave, a gull!" (V.i.206-07).

Fabian (Character Analysis)

Fabian is one of Olivia's servants as well as a character in the play's subplot. (A subplot is a secondary or subordinate plot which often reflects on or complicates the major plot in a work of fiction such as a play.) In II.v, Fabian is invited by Sir Toby Belch to join him in spying on Malvolio when he finds and reads the phony love-note forged by Maria to look as though it were written to the steward by Olivia. Like Maria and Sir Toby, Fabian resents Malvolio for bringing him "out o' favour" with the countess and thus looks forward to Malvolio's humiliation (II.v.7-8). Fabian's main function during the phony-letter scene is to restrain Sir Toby's outrage as Malvolio's fantasies about Olivia become increasingly arrogant. "Nay, patience," Fabian counsels Sir Toby, "or we break the sinews of our plot" and spoil the practical joke (II.v.75-76).

In III.ii and iv, Fabian helps Toby direct the various elements of the subplot. In III.ii, for example, he joins in persuading Sir Andrew Aguecheek to challenge his "rival," Viola/Cesario, to a duel. In III.iv.84-141, he participates once more in the practical joke against Malvolio. Shortly afterward, he sees "More matter for a May morning" (in other words, additional subject matter for a comedy) when Sir Andrew Aguecheek arrives with his timidly written challenge to Viola/Cesario (III.iv.142). Fabian's final moment of stage directing comes when he helps Toby to convince Viola/Cesario that Sir Andrew is a skilled and ferocious opponent (III.iv.257-72). His final appearance in the play occurs in V.i, when his employer, Olivia, puts an end to the comic subplot by ordering Fabian to release the "notoriously abus'd" Malvolio (V.i.315, 379). At this point, the confusion among the lovers has been resolved, and each pair has been united (Orsino and Viola; Olivia and Sebastian). Hoping to forestall any "quarrel" or "brawl" that would spoil the wonder of the moment and the lovers' happiness, Fabian voluntarily confesses to the role that he played, along with Sir Toby and Maria, in the humiliation of Malvolio (V.i.355-68).

Feste the Clown (Character Analysis)

Feste, also referred to as "clown," is Olivia's professional jester, or fool. During the Renaissance, monarchs and sometimes members of the nobility retained fools in their households as a source of entertainment—to

sing, make witty observations, and to engage in practical jokes. The traditional costume of a fool consisted of motley, or parti-colored cloth. Thus in I.v.57, when Feste declares, "I wear not motley in my brain," he means that although his body is clothed in the official garb of the jester, his mind is not "naturally" foolish—unlike, for example, the genuinely foolish mind of Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

Feste is one of Shakespeare's many clowns or jesters, and while he may not hold a candle to the fool of King Lear, Feste has certain insights into human nature that are wise in their own way. Feste is a fellow drawn to mirth and hence to the circle of Sir Toby. But unlike Toby, Feste realizes that folly is just that, being a necessary dimension of humanity.

To a certain extent—and true to his profession—Feste contributes to the holiday tone of *Twelfth Night*. His very name makes up part of the word "festival," and he is frequently called upon during the play to sing or to make jokes. Critics have compared him to the Lord of Misrule who according to tradition is crowned, then placed in charge of Twelfth-night festivities and high jinks. Indeed in II.iii, Feste joins the drunken revels of Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, singing love songs at their request, participating in round-songs, and remarking that the raucous Sir Toby is in "admirable fooling" (II.iii.80). Additionally, in IV.ii, Feste observes the time-honored, Twelfth-Night practice of role-reversal when he disguises himself as the wise priest Sir Topas and treats the steward Malvolio like a madman or fool.

Feste has also been referred to as the only character in *Twelfth Night* who remains detached from the play's conflicts, thus being able to comment objectively on the other characters' actions and shortcomings. In I.v.57-72, for example, he argues that his employer Olivia is a fool when he points out that she mourns for her dead brother even though his soul lies safely in heaven. After singing for the duke in II.iv, Feste asks the god of melancholy to protect Orsino, and also asserts that the duke's mind is as changeable as the colors in an opal, thereby implying that his love-sickness is pure self-indulgence and likely to change its focus—as it does in V.i when Orsino readily settles for Viola in lieu of Olivia. None of this behavior surprises Feste, because as he observes in III.i.38-39, all sorts of people all over the world do silly things: "Foolery … does walk about the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere." In III.i, Viola sums up Feste's conventional function as commentator and wise fool when she declares that to be successful a jester must pay close attention to the variety of social mores and human attitudes which occur around him:

> This fellow's 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;
> And like the haggard, check at every feather
> That comes before his eye. This is a practice
> As full of labour as a wise man's art;
> For folly that he wisely shows is fit,
> But wise men, folly-fallen, quite taint their wit.
> (III.i.60-68)

Characters such as Olivia, Orsino, and Viola are not insulted by Feste's sharp observations, because fools are expected to make entertaining comments and are exempt from the rules of tact which apply to the rest of society. It is significant, then, that the self-important Malvolio is the only person in the play who considers Feste's witticisms offensive (I.v.83-89).

Critics have acknowledged Feste's role in communicating the play's more wistful theme of the shortness of life and the decay of youth. In I.v.52, Feste reminds Olivia that "beauty's a flower," or that it fades quickly. Elsewhere, he comments on the weakness of the body and the ravages of time by asserting that self-indulgence or "pleasure will be paid, one time or another." (II.iv.70-71).

Finally, *Twelfth Night* is filled with songs, many of which are sung by Feste, and most of which warn the listener of the harsh effects of time on love, beauty, and youth. In II.iii.47-52, he sings a verse which stresses the urgency of enjoying love and youth for the short time that it lasts. Feste closes the play with a song that documents the stages in a person's life—beginning with carefree childhood and including the grimmer aspects of adulthood, aging, and overindulgence.

Malvolio (Character Analysis)

Malvolio is Olivia's steward. Just as there is a downside to Sir Toby, there is an upside to Malvolio. To be sure, Olivia's steward is a self-inflated, pompous man, and it is precisely these character traits that make him vulnerable to the joke set up by Toby, Maria and the other light-hearted figures of the play and amplifies the humor when the plot reaches its climax. Malvolio wishes that the riot of Christmas would stop altogether. That being so, he is essentially a blocking figure who stands in the way of passion and is, in his own mind, an obstacle to the union of Olivia with any other man, including Cesario and her brother, Sebastian. Malvolio does not take part in the wedding festivities that concludes *Twelfth Night*, and his final words of revenge are discordant with the play's ending. There is, however, the "Malvolio problem." Overly dour in disposition and harboring an inflated opinion of himself, Malvolio's only crime lies in his character. We may view him as a mere butt of jest; we may alternatively see him as a man who has been treated unfairly.

Malvolio's name means "ill will." He wears dark clothing and has no sense of humor, both of which are appropriate to Olivia's observance of mourning. The countess values Malvolio as a servant because he "is sad [serious] and civil" (III.iv.5). However, she also chides him for being "sick of self-love," and—in a remark which looks ahead to Malvolio's gulling and his subsequent bitterness—Olivia adds that "To be generous, guiltless, and of free disposition, is to take those things for bird-bolts that you deem cannon bullets"—something Malvolio is unable to do (I.v.90, 91-93).

Olivia's servant Fabian dislikes Malvolio for bringing him "out o' favour" with the countess (II.v.7-8). Sir Toby Belch feels particularly antagonistic toward the steward because Malvolio condemns Toby's drunkenness, sabotages fun, and has ideas above his social station in life. Feste and Malvolio are complete opposites—in names and professions as well as their personalities. The steward has nothing but contempt for Feste's word games and riddles: "I marvel your ladyship takes delight in such a barren rascal," Malvolio tells the countess (I.v.83-84).

Thus the stage is set for the "gulling," or fooling, of Malvolio in I.v and all that it entails: his smiles, yellow stockings, and crossed garters which astound Olivia in III.iv; and his imprisonment for apparent madness by Toby and Maria in IV.ii. Both the festival of Twelfth Night and Shakespeare's play of the same name are about the inversion of social and personal expectations. Malvolio had hoped to rise above his social status and become a count; instead, he falls so low that by IV.ii he has been locked in a dark room and is being badgered by a fool dressed in a fake beard and priestly robes. Seeking to be released from the dark room, Malvolio finds himself in the humiliating and ironic situation of having to "convince" Feste that he is not insane. "I am as well in my wits, fool, as thou art," he tells the jester, to which Feste replies, "Then you are mad indeed, if you be no better in your wits than a fool" (IV.ii.88,89-90).

Critics are divided over the justness of Malvolio's treatment, especially with regard to his incarceration in the dark room. Some have argued that he is a scapegoat who is humiliated simply for the sake of a few laughs. Others contend that the practical joke is genuinely funny and that it stays within the limits of good taste up until the moment that Malvolio is imprisoned and tormented by "Sir Topas." Alternatively, some critics point out that Malvolio would not have been fooled by Maria's nonsensical letter if he had not already harbored delusions of grandeur. Even before he catches sight of the letter, the steward can be heard fantasizing about marriage with Olivia, calling himself "Count Malvolio," and imagining his nemesis Sir Toby curtseying

before him (II.v.23-80). In any case, the steward's angry threat in V.i.378—"I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you"—sounds an ominous note in the wake of Twelfth Night festivities and in anticipation of the joyful multiple marriages which await the close of this romantic comedy.

Ultimately most people agree that there is a difference between reading about the gulling of Malvolio and actually seeing it performed onstage. When they are caught up in the momentum of the actors' performances, and once they are able to see the grinning Malvolio in his cross-gartered yellow stockings, many audience members applaud Maria and Toby's revenge from start to finish. On the other hand, while experiencing the joke as it slowly unfolds in print, the reader has time to feel sympathy for the steward.

Maria (Character Analysis)

Maria is Olivia's lady-in-waiting and is a balancing character. She scolds Toby and Andrew for their drunkenness, but she also tolerates them and shows her own capacity for pranks by initiating the phony love letter ploy against her supervisor, Malvolio.

In I.iii, Maria draws our attention to Sir Toby Belch's habitual late nights and drunkenness when she warns him that his niece, Countess Olivia, has lost patience with his dissolute behavior. She also prepares us for the entrance shortly afterward of Sir Andrew Aguecheek by referring to him as "a foolish knight" whom Sir Toby "brought in one night here to be [Olivia's] wooer" (I.iii.15-17). In I.v.1-31, she introduces us to the clown Feste when she scolds him on behalf of his employer, Olivia, for having been absent when Olivia wanted entertainment.

Maria's reproofs frequently give way to jokes and lively wordplay. She teases Sir Andrew Aguecheek for his foolishness in I.iii.66-79 and outdoes Feste at punning in I.v.1-31. Her cleverness inspires admiration in Sir Toby Belch, whose affection for her is apparent in the nicknames he gives her—names which also happen to indicate her small size. In II.iii.179, for example, Toby refers to her affectionately as "a beagle true-bred." Elsewhere he fondly describes her as a "little villain" and as his "metal [gold] of India" (II.v.13,14). In III.ii.66, he calls her "the youngest wren of nine" (in other words, the smallest in a nest of wrens—a type of bird which is very small even after it is full-grown).

In II.iii, Maria tries without success to quiet Sir Toby and his friends in their noisy revels, only to be chastised soon afterward by Malvolio, who suspects her of encouraging Toby's drunkenness. In revenge, she invents the practical joke which humiliates Malvolio and forms part of the play's subplot. Calling the steward a puritanical "time-pleaser," or flatterer, who is conceited enough to believe "that all that look on him love him," Maria devises a trick meant to exploit "that vice in him" (II.iii.148,152-53). She mimics Olivia's handwriting while composing "some obscure epistles of love" and drops them where Malvolio is certain to find them (II.iii.155-56). Maria is confident that the steward thinks so highly of himself that he will believe it possible for the countess to fall in love with him; and sure enough, Malvolio convinces himself that the epistle, or letter, was written by Olivia to him. Maria helps things along by telling Malvolio that Olivia "affects" (is fond of) him (II.v.23-24) and by warning the countess that Malvolio is crazy, or "tainted in his wits" (III.iv.13). Her practical joke is so successful that the delighted Sir Toby marries her "in recompense" (V.i.364).

Olivia (Character Analysis)

Olivia, of course, is the main female role, the object of amorous intentions by the Duke, by Sir Andrew, by Malvolio and, eventually, by Sebastian. She is obviously a beautiful young woman of proper breeding who disapproves of Sir Toby's tipsy rabble-rousing but nonetheless generously tolerates his presence in her household. Her kindness is also evident in Olivia's efforts to bring Malvolio back into the wedding society at

the play's end. On the other side of the coin, Olivia is a moody woman whose reclusiveness seems more a matter of posturing than of genuine mourning. We note, for example, that her devotion to her brother's memory is jettisoned in short order after she meets Cesario, and that she switches her love from Cesario to "his" brother, Sebastian, in a heartbeat.

Olivia is a rich countess who is loved by Orsino even though she does not feel the same way about him. In I.i.23-31, we learn that Olivia plans to spend seven years mourning for her dead brother, during which time she will hide her face with a veil, reject any declarations of love, and weep daily to keep her brother's memory alive. Orsino considers the countess beautiful but cruel (II.iv.80-86). Viola's friend the captain describes Olivia as "a virtuous maid" (I.ii.36). Viola/Cesario calls her beautiful but "too proud" and scolds her for refusing to marry and for thus failing to "leave the world [a] copy" of her beauty by having children (I.v.243,250-51). Olivia's uncle, Sir Toby Belch, is impatient with her: "What a plague means my niece, to take the death of her brother thus?" he wonders in I.iii.1-2. Feste, who is Olivia's professional clown, or fool, argues that she is in fact the real fool since she wastes her youth and beauty in seclusion while weeping for a brother whose "soul is in heaven" (I.v.69-72).

When Viola/Cesario arrives with messages of love from the duke, Olivia is prepared to reject them as calmly as she has always done; and indeed she announces yet again that she "cannot love" Orsino and that "He might [or should] have took his answer long ago," since she has consistently sent him the same negative reply (I.v.263-64). Olivia is not prepared, however, for her own infatuation with the duke's page (that is, the young gentlewoman, Viola, disguised as the youth, Cesario). "How now?" Olivia asks herself, "Even so quickly may one catch the plague? / Methinks I feel this youth's perfections / With an invisible and subtle stealth / To creep in at mine eyes" (I.v.294-98). Critics have pointed out that like several other characters in the play (Sebastian and Viola, for example), Olivia quickly accepts what happens to her as part of her fate. "Well, let it be," she concludes; "Fate, show thy force. Ourselves we do not owe: / What is decreed must be; and be this so!" (I.v.298,310-11).

By the time she sees Viola/Cesario again, Olivia is passionately in love and determined to win the page's affections, even at the cost of her own pride. Orsino earlier described Olivia as cruel, and she in her turn accuses Viola/Cesario of being scornful and proud (III.i.144-51). Viola/Cesario pities the countess for her mistake and for the "thriftless sighs" which Olivia's unrequited love will wring from her (II.ii.39). *Twelfth Night* is, however, a comedy: Renaissance comedies are meant to end in marriages and happiness. Thus when Olivia encounters Sebastian in IV.i, she mistakes him for Viola/Cesario, takes him home, and in IV.iii she marries him. At the close of the play, her new husband, Sebastian, suggests that by falling in love with his disguised twin sister, Olivia was merely proving that nature meant for her all along to love someone like Sebastian (V.i.259-63).

Critics have argued that Olivia's prolonged period of mourning is as artificial as Orsino's courtly love and that, like the duke, the countess needs to be awakened from her dream world by Viola and her brother.

Orsino (Character Analysis)

Also: Duke Orsino, also known as the Count

Orsino is the duke of Illyria. It is to Duke Orsino that Shakespeare assigns the highest poetical lines of *Twelfth Night*, the ruler of Illyria being given to philosophical statements in lyrical terms. There is, in this, a certain self-consciousness. Nevertheless, the Duke is basically a good fellow who bonds with the lost Cesario and pardons Antonio. Like Olivia, the Duke is fickle, for he quickly embraces the revealed Viola and forgets about Olivia as soon as the mechanical confusion of the play is resolved.

Although Orsino appears less often than most of the other major characters, his speeches are important to the play's assessment of love and human nature. When the play begins, Orsino is so preoccupied with unrequited love for Olivia that he feels unable to do anything but listen to music. "If music be the food of love, play on," he tells his musicians, "Give me excess of it; that, surfeiting, / The appetite may sicken and so die" (I.i.1-3). He hopes to kill his feelings for Olivia by letting them gorge themselves to death on music—which has been described as the "food of love." Unfortunately, his feelings tire of the music before they can be sickened by it, and so his love for Olivia survives. Several lines afterward, the duke compares his lovesick heart to a "hart" (deer) which has been attacked by "cruel" hunting dogs (I.i.17-22). Later, when he hears that Olivia is in mourning for her dead brother and refuses to care for anyone else for the next seven years, Orsino is impressed with her ability "To pay this debt of love" to someone who is simply a brother; and his mind boggles when he thinks about how great Olivia's devotion will be when she someday receives a wound from Cupid's "rich golden shaft," or the gold-tipped arrow of romantic love (I.i.32-38). As the scene closes, the duke decides to indulge rather than kill his love by surrounding himself with the heady fragrance of flowers (I.i.39-40).

Orsino's use of elaborate, poetic language to identify his feelings indicates that he is experiencing courtly love—a system of romantic love which flourished during the Middle Ages. According to this system, a man falls deeply in love, usually at first sight and, initially at least, without his affection being returned. The woman who is the object of this love is extraordinarily beautiful but also extremely cruel for her refusal to reciprocate. The spurned lover feels ill and loses sleep; he alternately burns and freezes from the intensity of his passion. He is, as Orsino explains to Viola/Cesario, "Unstaid and skittish" in all of his thoughts and emotions "Save in the constant image of the creature / That is belov'd" (II.iv.18,19-20). In conformity with tradition, the heartsick courtly lover often prefers to be alone, contemplating his unhappiness. As Duke Orsino puts it, "I myself am best / When least in company" (I.iv.37-38). When the afflicted lover finds himself with other people, he spends much of his time debating the nature of love. So, for example, in II.iv.29-41 and 89-109, the duke discusses with Viola/Cesario the differences between male and female affections and fidelity.

Orsino does not in fact appear in any scenes with his adored Olivia until the final one (V.i), when he gives up on her and at last falls in love with his former page, Viola. Although Olivia had never once been in love with him (according to Sir Toby, she refuses to marry anyone who is older than she is or whose income or social rank is higher than hers [I.iii.109-11]), she acknowledges that Orsino is noble, good-looking, well-educated, brave, and admired by his people (I.v.258-62). As for Orsino's own affections, critics have observed that the duke is more devoted to love than he ever is to Olivia and that his feelings are sterile and lack self-awareness. Thus as the play closes, he is able to shift instantly from idolizing Olivia to loving Viola, especially since in the meantime, through her sensible conversations and her fidelity, Viola has taught Orsino the enduring connection between love and friendship.

Sebastian (Character Analysis)

Sebastian is Viola's twin brother. The two of them were victims of a shipwreck, and each believes the other has been drowned at sea. Unlike his sister, Sebastian makes only a few, short appearances in the play. He is essentially a minor character whose nature as a "good young man" is subordinated to the demands of the plot. He first enters in II.i accompanied by his devoted rescuer, Antonio. Mourning the apparent death of Viola and feeling aimless in the foreign country of Illyria, Sebastian initially decides to head for Duke Orsino's court but then in III.iii opts instead for touring the local sights.

Sebastian has been called a passive character. His argument for setting off on his own in II.i is that he has been the victim of bad luck and does not want the "malignancy" of his own fate to influence Antonio's luck. In IV.i.24-43, he fights with Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, but only because they attack him first after mistaking him

for Viola/Cesario. When Olivia offers to take him to her home afterward, he is amazed but goes along without questioning her, agreeing to be "ruled" by her request and concluding that "If it be thus to dream, still let me sleep!" (IV.i.64,63). His reaction to Olivia's proposal of marriage in IV.iii is the same—even though he is astonished by her behavior, he submits to a hasty wedding. In IV.iii.1-21, Sebastian describes his state of mind: sometimes he thinks he is the victim of a misunderstanding, while at other times he wonders whether he or the citizens of Illyria are insane. In any case, Sebastian wishes that Antonio were with him and observes that "His counsel now might do me golden service" (IV.iii.8).

It is made clear in the play that Sebastian is a very young man. Antonio refers to him as a "young gentleman" and a "boy" (III.iv.312; V.i.77), and he affectionately lends Sebastian a purseful of money with which to buy souvenirs (III.iii.44-45). Once the confusion regarding Viola and her brother has been solved in V.i.263, Sebastian himself refers to his youthfulness, telling Olivia that she has married "a maid," or virgin, as well as a man. This reference to a maid highlights his resemblance to (and hence confusion with) his sister, Viola, but it also emphasizes Sebastian's youthfulness.

Critics point out that at first Sebastian's arrival throws the unsuspecting members of Olivia's and Orsino's households into confusion (since they mistake him for Viola/Cesario) but that ultimately Sebastian's presence on the stage with his sister is necessary to the happy resolution of the play. Both he and Olivia are contented with their marriage to one another, and Viola is free to stop being Cesario and to marry her beloved Orsino.

Viola (Character Analysis)

Viola is a gentlewoman from a country called Messaline and also the twin sister of Sebastian. Whether disguised as the young man Cesario or in her true identity as Sebastian's sister, Viola is the central character of the play. Not only does the main plot dilemma hinge upon Viola, she is the only one of the characters (or at least the first) who knows its kinks. In this sense, Viola has greater wisdom than the others do, for she is able to objectively evaluate (most) of the events that take place while others remain in the dark. Resourceful, loving and loyal, Viola is an attractive young woman. Nevertheless, she too is subject to instantaneous love, falling for Duke Orsino immediately after arriving at his court.

Viola first appears on the coast of Illyria in I.ii, accompanied by the captain who saved her from drowning in a shipwreck, and concerned about the fate of her missing brother who had been traveling with her. "And what should I do in Illyria?"—she wonders—"My brother he is in Elysium [heaven]" (I.ii.3-4). Once the captain gives her reason to hope that her brother is still alive, Viola sets about the business of fending for herself in a foreign country. At the close of I.ii, Viola has decided to disguise herself and seek employment with Duke Orsino; I.ii is the first and last time that Viola appears in women's clothing. For the rest of the play she wears men's clothing appropriate to her disguise as Orsino's page, Cesario.

By her next appearance in the play and after only three days, Viola/Cesario has become the duke's favorite attendant. Orsino sends her to court Olivia for him, with strict instructions to "stand at her doors" and insist upon admittance (I.iv.16). In an aside, Viola/Cesario confesses that she has herself fallen secretly in love with the duke: "Yet a barful strife! / Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife (I.iv.42). (An aside occurs when a character speaks to the audience without being overheard by the other characters onstage. Asides are used to reveal the character's inner thoughts.) In spite of her own feelings, Viola/Cesario loyally persists until she is allowed to deliver her message to Olivia, leading Malvolio to complain that Orsino's page is "fortified against any denial" (I.v.145). Olivia promptly rejects the duke's lovesick message, but she is intrigued with his messenger's boldness; by the end of the interview, the countess has fallen in love with Viola/Cesario, with chaotic results.

In II.i, Sebastian offers a brief but affectionate description of his twin, Viola, whom he thinks has drowned at sea:

> A lady, sir, though it was said she much
> resembled me, was yet of many accounted beautiful;
> but though I could not, with such estimable wonder,
> overfar believe that, yet thus far I will boldly publish
> her: she bore a mind that envy could not but call fair.
> (II.i.25-29)

All other assessments of Viola occur after she has disguised herself as Cesario; therefore, they focus not on her womanly beauty but on her apparent boyishness, and more on the boldness of her mind than on its "fairness," or virtue. Malvolio, for example, grumpily asserts that Viola/Cesario is "Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy; as a squash is before 'tis a peascod, or a codling, when 'tis almost an apple: 'tis with him e'en standing water, between boy and man. He is very well-favoured, and he speaks very shrewishly; one would think his mother's milk were scarce out of him" (I.v.156-62). The steward's difficulty in settling on an accurate description of Viola/Cesario results in dramatic irony. Dramatic irony happens when the audience understands the real significance of a character's words or actions, but the character or those around him or her do not. In this case, both Viola and the audience know that she is a woman, but everyone else is struggling to decide whether she is a boy or an extremely young-looking man. Another example of dramatic irony is the duke's remark to his page that "they shall yet belie thy happy years / That say thou art a man"; this produces a comical moment because we know that no matter how many years pass, Viola/Cesario will never become a man (I.iv.30-31); Orsino's observation shortly afterward that Viola/Cesario's "small pipe" (vocal chords), is as high and clear as a "maiden's" is also amusing for its dramatic irony, since we know and Viola/Cesario knows that she is indeed a maiden and that her "shrill and sound" voice will never break (I.iv.32-33). (See also Feste's arch but good-natured blessing that Viola/Cesario may someday grow a beard, and her wistfully comic aside in response [III.i.44-48]). These moments of dramatic irony contribute to a sympathetic portrait of Viola by giving us something in common with her—we as the audience share information with Viola which for the moment she feels she must withhold from the other characters.

Viola has been called a central character because of her influence over other characters in the play. Some critics suggest that her disguise as Cesario allows her and the audience to see through the pretenses of characters like Olivia and Orsino. For example, Olivia's reclusive and elaborate period of mourning for her brother stands in contrast to Viola's optimistic and active engagement with the world of Illyria in spite of her own brother's apparent death. Additionally, Viola's patient and self-sacrificing love for Orsino helps the duke to reassess his own artificial and self-indulgent love of love.

Viola's observations about the destructive influence of time and melancholy on youth and beauty have been compared to similar remarks made by Feste. In I.v.241-43, for example, she upbraids Olivia for wasting her beauty by leading it to the grave rather than marrying and transmitting her beauty to her children. In II.iv.110-15, thinking of her own hidden love for Orsino, Viola paints a vivid picture of the effects of time and unrequited, unproclaimed love on the "damask cheek" of a maiden who "sat like patience on a monument, / Smiling at grief."

It has also been pointed out that Viola can be fatalistic in her attitude to time. When she discovers that Olivia has fallen in love with her, Viola/Cesario pities the countess but concludes that time "must untangle this, not I; / It is too hard a knot for me to untie!" (II.ii.40-41).

Interestingly, unlike other Shakespearean female characters who adopt disguises, Viola does not remove her men's clothing at the end of the play, and the rest of the characters, including Duke Orsino, are left to take her true identity on faith.

Antonio (Character Analysis)

Antonio is the sea captain who rescues Sebastian and is more of a full-fledged character than Viola's twin, Sebastian. Antonio is a helping character who demonstrates the Christian quality of placing his own life in jeopardy for the sake of his friend. He becomes Sebastian's devoted friend after rescuing him from a shipwreck. Antonio's discussion with his new friend in II.i introduces the fact that Sebastian and his sister, Viola, are twins who were "born [with] in an hour" of one another (II.i.19). Antonio's affection for Sebastian is so strong that he decides to follow the young man to Orsino's household, even though Antonio has "many enemies in Orsino's court" and would face danger if he went there (II.i.45-48).

When he catches up with Sebastian in III.iii, Antonio explains that he was once in a sea battle against the count's galleys and is wanted in Illyria for piracy. Antonio's status as an outlaw is significant to the action of *Twelfth Night* because it means that he must often leave Sebastian and not "walk too open" or he might be arrested (III.iii.37). Inevitably, during one of these separations, he encounters Viola/Cesario and thinks that she is her brother, Sebastian, adding to the chaos in this play of shifting identities and miscommunication.

Scholars have remarked that during the Renaissance, friendship was considered more important than was sexual love, and that friendship is in fact one of the themes in *Twelfth Night*. Antonio repeatedly expresses his affection for Sebastian. In III.iii, he worries about Sebastian's safety in a foreign land and helps him out by securing him room and board at a local inn; he even lends Sebastian a purseful of money for buying souvenirs (III.iii.38-46). Thus Antonio feels deeply hurt when, mistaking her for Sebastian, he defends Viola/Cesario against Sir Andrew Aguecheek, only to be recognized and arrested by Orsino's men, and to have the astonished Viola/Cesario declare that she's never seen him before (III.iv.312-57). Feeling betrayed, the unhappy Antonio rethinks his definition of friendship. He concludes that he had been misled by Sebastian's good looks into thinking that he was a worthy companion, but now realizes that an honorable mind is more important when it comes to friendship than a pleasing exterior: "In nature there's no blemish but the mind; / None can be call'd deform'd but the unkind" (III.iv.367-68).

When he is delivered over to the duke in V.i, Antonio again reproaches Viola/Cesario for her apparent betrayal. Shortly afterward, it is his turn to be astonished when the real Sebastian appears, prompting Antonio to exclaim as he looks wonderingly at Viola and her brother, "How have you made division of yourself? / An apple, cleft in two, is not more twin / Than these two creatures. Which is Sebastian?" (V.i.222-24).

Other Characters (Analysis)

Andrew (Sir Andrew Aguecheek)
See Aguecheek

Attendants
These are unnamed characters with no speaking parts. Attendants accompany the duke and Olivia throughout the play.

Captain (Sea Captain)
His first and only appearance occurs in I.ii when he comes ashore with Viola after having rescued her from a shipwreck. The captain's role in the play is brief but useful since he provides us with important introductory information. For example, he tells Viola the name of the country where the play is set (Illyria), as well as the name of its ruler (Duke Orsino). He also informs her that he saw her brother, Sebastian, still alive and clinging to a mast after their ship sank, thus preparing the way for Sebastian's entrance in II.i. Finally, the captain is the character to whom Viola confides her plan to disguise herself as the youth Cesario and seek employment with Orsino. At the close of the play, Viola mentions that she left her "maiden weeds," or female clothing, in the

captain's safekeeping while she masqueraded as Cesario, and that he can "confirm" that she is in fact Viola (V.i.249-56). The last we hear of the captain is that he has been imprisoned on charges brought against him by Malvolio; thus the captain's function at this point is to shift our attention away from the lovers and toward the steward, who, as Olivia now remembers, has himself been taken into custody for madness (V.i.274-83).

Cesario (Viola/Cesario)
Se Viola

Clown
See Feste

Countess
See Olivia

Curio
Curio is one of two gentlemen who serve Duke Orsino (the other is Valentine). In I.i.16 he invites Orsino deer hunting, thus giving the lovesick duke the opportunity to use the word "hart" (a term for a male deer) as a pun on the word "heart" and also providing Orsino with the chance to make an allusion to the Roman myth about the hunter Actaeon, who was transformed into a stag by the goddess Diana after seeing her bathing and subsequently killed by his own hunting dogs. (A pun is a play on words which depends for its humor on the similarity of the sound of the words—for example, "heart" and "hart," "son" and "sun," "dear" and "deer." An allusion is a brief or implied reference to something or someone in, for example, literature or history.) Orsino's ability to play word games even while he is pining for Olivia suggests that he is enamored with the idea of love rather than genuinely in love with the countess. Curio speaks again, in II.iv, when he seeks out Olivia's jester, Feste, to sing for the duke.

Duke (Duke Orsino)
See Orsino

Gentlewoman
A gentlewoman is mentioned in the stage directions of III.i as accompanying Olivia.

Lords
These are unnamed minor characters with no lines to speak. They appear with Orsino in the opening scene of the play.

Musicians
The musicians play for Orsino in the opening scene of the play. Although they are not mentioned specifically in the stage directions of II.iv (perhaps the are included in the "others" that accompany the duke), Orsino asks for music; and the stage directions indicate that music is played at this point in the scene.

Officers
The officers (1. Officer, 2. Officer) appear in III.iv when they arrest Antonio and speak a couple of lines during the course of this action. The officers appear again in V.i when they present Antonio to Orsino. Only the first officer speaks in this scene.

Priest
He is brought in by Olivia in IV.iii.22 to perform the marriage ceremony between her and the amazed but willing Sebastian, whom Olivia has mistaken for Viola/Cesario. Olivia sends for the priest once more in V.i.142, so that he can testify that she and Viola/Cesario are married. Like everyone else in the play, the priest is unable to tell any difference between Sebastian and Viola/Cesario, so he does indeed verify Olivia's claim,

which results in Viola's astonished denial and Orsino's jealous rage (V.i.156-170).

Sailors
These are unnamed characters who appear with the captain and Viola in I.ii. They have no speaking parts.

Sea Captain
See Captain

Servant
A servant appears in III.iv and addresses Olivia.

Toby (Sir Toby Belch)
See Belch

Valentine
He is one of two gentlemen who serve Duke Orsino (the other is Curio). Valentine has a couple of brief speeches which present information important to action of the play. The first one occurs in I.i.23-31 when, after trying unsuccessfully to deliver a message from Orsino to Olivia, he informs the lovesick duke that the countess is observing seven years of mourning for her dead brother, during which time she will remain cloistered at home with her face veiled. Then in I.iv.1-8, Valentine remarks to Viola (newly disguised as Cesario) that within only three short days she has won the duke's favor as a page. Shortly afterward, Orsino uses his favorite new page "Cesario" to court Olivia, thereby inadvertently initiating a love triangle between himself, Viola/Cesario, and the countess.

Viola/Cesario
See Viola

Twelfth Night: Principal Topics

Celebration and Festivity
Twelfth Night's light-hearted gaiety is fitting for a play named for the Epiphany, the last night in the twelve days of Christmas. While the Christian tradition celebrated January 6 as the Feast of the Magi, the celebrations of the Renaissance era were a time for plays, banquets, and disguises, when cultural roles were reversed and normal customs playfully subverted. The historical precedent to this celebration is the Roman Saturnalia, which took place during the winter solstice and included the practices of gift-giving and showing mock hostility to those authority figures normally associated with dampening celebration. While the action of *Twelfth Night* occurs in the spring, and no mention of Epiphany is made, the joyful spirit of the play reflects the Saturnalian release and carnival pursuits generally associated with the holiday. The youthful lovers engage in courtship rituals, and the one figure who rebukes festivity, Malvolio, is mocked for his commitment to order. The Saturnalian tradition of disguise is also a major theme in *Twelfth Night*, with Viola donning the uniform of a pageboy, Olivia hiding behind a veil of mourning, Malvolio appearing in cross-gartered yellow stockings, and the wisest of all characters, Feste, in the costume of a clown. However, some critics argue that, as Feste reminds the audience, that nothing is as it seems, underneath the festival atmosphere of Illyria lies a darker side, which is revealed in brief episodes such as the gulling of Malvolio. While the merrymakers contribute to the high comedy of the play through their practical joke, its conception lies in their desire for revenge.

Role Playing and Problems of Identity
Nearly every character in *Twelfth Night* adopts a role or otherwise disguises his or her identity. Viola disguises herself as a man upon her arrival in Illyria, setting the plot in motion. Feste disguises himself as a

priest and visits the imprisoned Malvolio. The deliberate deception of these consciously adopted disguises provides a contrast to the subtle self-deception practiced by Olivia and Orsino: when the play opens Olivia is clinging to the role of grieving sister long after the time for such behavior has passed, while Orsino stubbornly hangs on to the role of persistent suitor despite Olivia's lack of interest in him. Yet another example of role playing can be seen in the duping of Malvolio, which involves outlining a role for him to play before Olivia—that of a secretly loved servant.

Critics have attempted to show how these disguises and adopted roles relate to the various themes of the play. Their overall effect is to make Illyria a place where appearances cannot be trusted, and the discrepancy between appearances and reality is a central issue in *Twelfth Night*. The appearance of a woman as a man, a fool as a priest, and a servant as the suitor of a noblewoman evoke the festivities and revelry of the Christmas holidays when the everyday social order of the period was temporarily abandoned. On a deeper level, the roles and disguises influence the major characters' ability to find love and happiness.

Language and Communication
Wordplay is one of the most notable features of *Twelfth Night*. Feste's wittiness is an obvious example: words that seem to mean one thing are twisted around to mean another. He states that words cannot be trusted, that they are "grown so false I am loath to prove reason with;" yet he skillfully uses words for his own purposes. Viola, too, demonstrates a talent for wordplay in her conversations with Orsino, when she hints at her feelings for him, and with Olivia, when she makes veiled references to her disguise. In these instances, the listener must look beneath the surface meaning of the words being used to discover their true import. Thus, language contributes to the contrast of illusion and reality in the play.

Commentators have also examined how the written messages in *Twelfth Night* also contribute to the theme of language and communication. When the play begins, Orsino and Olivia are engaged in a continuing exchange of messages that state and restate their stubbornly held positions which lack any real emotion to back them up. Another formal message, in the form of a letter, dupes Malvolio into believing that Olivia loves him. In these instances, formal messages convey no truth, but serve only to perpetuate the fantasies of the characters in the play. Malvolio's message to Olivia is an exception: while he is imprisoned, Malvolio pleads his case passionately to her in a letter. This instance of true communication provides a contrast to the self-indulgent fantasizing of Olivia and Orsino.

Twelfth Night: Essays

Worm i'the bud: The Games of Love in Twelfth Night

According to Patrick Swinden in his book, *An Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies*, a comedy does not demand "the degree of concentration and belief" required by tragedy. As a result, an audience of a play "is amusedly aware that it's all a play, a game that they are sharing with the actors". [1] In *Twelfth Night*, it is the characters, almost without exception, who, in varying degrees, are involved in deception. Swinden says, "Whether we look in the plot that Shakespeare took (indirectly) from the Italian, or the plot he made up to put beside it, we shall discover deceit piled on deceit." [2] Cesario/Viola deceives Olivia, Orsino, Sir Andrew, and Sir Toby, while Maria, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Feste deceive Malvolio.

In an intricate pattern of "concealment" and "revealment" the play spins dizzily toward its happy resolution with all the deceptions that had, and had been, concealed revealed. Is the end of the play really a happy ending? What dynamic in the process of deception could cause Sir Andrew to disappear or force Malvolio to declare, "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!" (V.i.380)? Are the characters bettered or changed by their experiences when they arrive at the end of Act V than when they started at the beginning of Act I? Whether it be a practical joke or a clever disguise, the games being played in Illyria simultaneously result

from and protect each character's deception not only of others but also, more importantly of themselves. The clearest examples are Duke Orsino and Olivia.

The games begin with Orsino's opening lines to the play:

> If music be the food of love, play on;
> Give me excess of it, that surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken and die (I.i.1-4).

As Orsino continues to wax rhetorical and hysterical about being in love, it rapidly becomes apparent that he is playing a game with himself, which he will continue throughout the play. He is not in love, but in love with love. Olivia is unattainable and she has told him so repeatedly. Yet Orsino persists in making himself suffer, listening to sad love songs, writing to her, staying awake at night and crying into his pillow because he believes that this is the way someone in love acts. We almost want to shout at him "Get over it. Move on." It is part of the game that while it may appear that Orsino is rhapsodizing about Olivia, he is actually concentrating on himself. The words "I," "me," and "mine" occur ten times in the opening passage, culminating with:

> How will she love...
> ... when live, brain, and heart,
> Those sovereign thrones, are all supplied and filled
> Her sweet perfections with one selfsame king! (35-39).

Shakespeare's use of "selfsame" intensifies not only Orsino's description of Olivia, but also his focus on himself. Throughout these lines there is a sense that Orsino's sexual identity, encased in a male body, has not yet been clearly defined, hence his necessity for adopting what he thinks are the affectations of a successful lover.

Orsino begins Act II, scene iv in the same way he begins Act I: "Give me some music" (II.iv.1). Here, however, Orsino requests a specific song, one overheard just the night before, as Feste, Olivia's fool, sang it. How Orsino managed to overhear Feste's performance is one of the mysteries of the play, but its effect on Orsino is unquestionable "it did relieve my passion much" (II.iv.4). The song's lyrics are most depressing:

> Come away, come away, Death,
> And in sad cypress let me be laid.
> Fie away, fie away, breath,
> I am slain by a fair cruel maid;
> My shroud of white, all stuck with yew,
> O prepare it.
> My part of death no one so true
> Did share it.
> Not a flower, not a flower sweet
> On my black coffin let there be strown;
> Not a friend, not a friend greet
> My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown.
> A thousand thousand sighs to save
> Lay me, O where
> Sad lover never find my grave
> To weep there (II.iv.49-64).

Although Orsino says that he heard only a "piece of song" (II.iv.2), he also notes that it is an "old and antique song" (II.iv.3), indicating that he knows it in its entirety. Its tune and sentiment are so powerful that it remains with him the next morning. It is possible that the song reminds Orsino that he is no longer young enough to pursue an amorous campaign, and that there will be neither lover nor child to mourn him as Olivia mourns her brother. In modern pop-psychology terminology, Orsino appears to be having a mid-life crisis.

Orsino's game reaches a breaking point when Cesario interrupts his rhetoric with, "Ay, but I know" (II.iv.99). Orsino is shocked that this young man may have love experiences to which he has not been privy. He questions what Cesario knows about love and women and is eager to hear the boy's "blank" (II.iv.106) story. Yet, Orsino remains oblivious to Cesario's confession: "I am all the daughters of my father's house, And all the brothers, too" (II.iv.116-117). Orsino seems to be uncomfortable with this very personal, very intense revelation from another man since his "Ay, that's the theme" (II.iv.119) appears to restore his concentration to the safety and comfort of the pursuit of Olivia.

Orsino decides to discard his affectations and goes to speak directly with Olivia. Whatever has transpired between him and Cesario in their "three months" (V.i.88) silence of Acts III and IV has given him the strength to declare that he "will be so much a sinner to be a double-dealer" (V.i.27).

Many productions have offered Orsino actually falling in love with Cesario, such as the 1994 Royal Shakespeare Company version which had the events of Act II scene iv take place in Orsino's bed. Orsino and Cesario share a passionate kiss that surprises them both, but the kiss also seems to flow from the action and its location. Trevor Nunn's 1996 film moves the moment of passion to the scene during which Feste sings a love madrigal in a stable. Feste who coughs at the critical moment of their lips almost touching breaks the momentum. The interpretation is a valid one based on Orsino's customarily rhetorical proclamations of love for Cesario:

> Why should I not ... Kill what I love. (V.i.106, 108)
> ...This your minion ... whom, by heaven I swear I tender dearly (V.i.114-115)
> ... the lamb that I do love (V.i.119).

Has Orsino fallen out of love with love and in love with Cesario? His proclamations arise from his anger at Olivia's very public rejection of them as "fat and fulsome to mine ear / As howling music" (V.i.98-99), the same music that he has found so soothing. This anger is not generated by some newfound awareness. Swinden comments: "He is talking about Cesario, not Olivia... The presence on stage of both partners during the tirade brings out very delicately the ambiguity of Orsino's shift in feeling. He fails to distinguish the object of his anger from the object of his love." [3]

Even when Cesario is revealed to be Viola, his acceptance of a "share in this most happy wrack" (V.i.250) seems to be dependent on his seeing her in "woman's weeds" (V.i.257). Yet it is to Viola still dressed as Cesario to whom Orsino offers his hand, not once but twice. That Orsino will not accept Viola unless she looks like a proper woman and yet offers his hand to the male vision suggests that Orsino has not surrendered completely his comfortable sexual cocoon into which he has only admitted Cesario and then only with restraint. This reticence is confirmed at the play's end when Orsino admits:

> ... Cesario come -
> For so you shall be while you are a man,
> But when in other habits you are seen
> Orsino's mistress, and his fancy's queen (V.i.362-365).

In his essay, "The two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*," Joseph Pequigney explains that, "[Orsino's] attraction to Olivia, where he is heterosexually straight, like the other

would-be wooers Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Malvolio, is a disaster. The love Cesario could not have changed instantaneously with the revelation of his femaleness; if it is erotic, then it would have been erotic before; what does change is that marriage suddenly becomes possible, hence the immediate proposal." [4] This proposal is followed by a mournful song from Feste on the stages of a love life, which brings the play back to the beginning. Clearly, Orsino has not changed from the man he was: he will still have his "fancy." He is as he was at the beginning of the play: he cannot totally abandon his own sexual game. In all likelihood, Viola will now become an Olivia substitute, "his fancy's queen."

As Orsino hides behind the game of love, Olivia hides behind the game of grief cut off from love, adopting an Orsino version of mourning behaviour. Her entire household is in mourning and she daily goes to her brother's grave. As long as she grieves for her dead bother, her sexual desires can be put on hold. Grieving gives her the perfect excuse for rejecting Orsino's suit and relieves her of making a sexual investment in any man until she chooses "the sight / And company of men" (I.ii.40-41). Unlike Orsino, Olivia has put a seven-year limit on her mourning for her father and brother of which "twelvemonth" has already elapsed when Viola lands in Illyria.

In addition, Olivia differs from Orsino significantly since she can:

> sway her house, command her followers,
> Take and give back affairs and them dispatch
> With such a smooth, discreet and stable bearing (IV.iii.17-19).

She is generous and tolerant, boarding Sir Toby and his guest, Sir Andrew, and positive in her view of the repressed Malvolio. With Feste's logical and systematic stripping away of her facade, with Olivia's consent, Olivia is free in a way that eludes Orsino. She demonstrates keen judgment about the affectations of love: "'Tis not that time of the moon with me to make one in so skipping a dialogue" (I.v.164-165). She has an agile mind and is able to counter Cesario's metaphors as quickly as he issues them. She is inquisitive and only asks Cesario the necessary questions. She seems to be a realist, offering "divers schedules of my beauty" (I.v.200-201) in response to Cesario's lyricism. These qualities refuse to be submerged even as she finds herself falling in love with Cesario:

> ... Not too fast! Soft, soft!
> ... Even so quickly may one catch the plague.
> Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
> With an invisible and subtle stealth
> To creep in at mine eyes. Well, let it be. (I.v.248, 250-253)

Olivia thus chooses to abandon the safety of her game and pursue Cesario with complete abandon and confidence in her womanhood. In her pursuit, free from her facade, Olivia is naively honest with herself and Cesario. She confesses in Act III scene i that she sent "a ring in chase of" him (III.i.98). She asks him honestly, "I prithee tell me what thou think'st of me" (III.i.123). Cesario attempts to repay this honesty, "That you do think you are not what you are" (III.i.124). Because of her naïveté, Olivia takes the phrase literally and assures Cesario that she is not mad. However, the line also points out that Olivia, the noblewoman, has fallen in love with a manservant, though a "gentleman," and that that gentleman is actually a gentlewoman. Even so, Olivia is rational enough to realise that, "wit nor reason can my passion hide" (III.i.137). Unlike Orsino, Olivia embraces the opportunity for sexual fulfilment with such enthusiasm that she will attempt to overcome every obstacle with actions, not moaning and words. She is quite lucid on love, "Love sought is good, but giv'n unsought is better" (III.i.141). In this sense, she is the sexual positive to Orsino's negative.

Olivia's views will be challenged, however, when confronted by Sebastian. Since fraternal identical twins are a biological impossibility, it would seem that Olivia would note some difference between Cesario and Sebastian. But in the throes of sacrificing love, she would rather soothe her beloved's ire with tales of "how

many fruitless pranks" have been instigated by Sir Toby than launch an investigation into any differences that may exist between the sister and brother.

For his part, Sebastian seems to think that nature caused Olivia's consistency in being sexually attracted to a woman who looks just like him. But like Orsino, Olivia is eager for the sexual experience promised by marriage. Olivia is actually very much steeped in Orsino's "selfsame" deception. She was in love with the image of a man, not a man, admitting she was suffering from "a most extracting frenzy of mine own" (V.i.265). With this admission, Olivia too returns to being as she was at the beginning, involved in a self-deceiving sexual game, as Cesario had lamented: "Poor lady, she were better love a dream" (II.ii.23).

Although Sebastian notes that he sees the reality and thinks it a dream, Olivia's relationship with Sebastian will ostensibly have to be redefined, as will Orsino's with Viola. Pequigney observes:

> Like Orsino, Olivia goes through a homoerotic phase that lasts through and beyond betrothal; both have experiences that evince their bisexuality. Nor do they ever pass beyond it, for the sine qua non of their psychological development - his away from fruitless doting on her, hers away from fixation on a dead brother - and it has a crucial, integral, and unerasable part in both their love stories, that of Orsino with Cesario/Viola and that of Olivia with Cesario/Sebastian. [5]

Twelfth Night not only asks the comic question, "How does an individual get out of tune with society?" But also the tragic question, "Why does the individual behave this way, and why does society insists upon its standards." [6] This play is unique in that it asks these questions simultaneously, and within the context of the sexual games of the play, the answers can be found in the most basic and defining activity of human kind: sex.

FOOTNOTES

1. Swinden, p. 13.

2. Swinden, p. 127.

3. Swinden, p. 136.

4. Pequigney, p. 180.

5. Pequigney, p. 184.

6. Markels, p. 78.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Markels, Julian. "Shakespeare's Confluence of Tragedy and Comedy: *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. no. 15, 1964.

Pequigney, Joseph. "The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*." *Shakespeare and Gender: A History*. Deborah Barker and Ivo Kamps, eds. London: Verso, 1995.

Swinden, Patrick. *An Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies*. London: Macmillan, 1973.

Feste and Fabian: Plots and Complots

Act II, scene v of *Twelfth Night* opens with Sir Toby's injunction to a character we have never seen before: "Come thy ways, Signor Fabian" (II.v.1). Fabian's reply indicates that he not only knows of the intended "sport," but that he too has a grudge against Malvolio: "You know he brought me out o' favour with my lady about a bear-baiting here" (II.v.6-7). By Maria's entrance, it becomes clear that it is to be Fabian, and not Feste, who is to hide in the box-tree with Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in order to observe Malvolio's antics over the letter; indeed that Feste will not appear in the scene at all. The sudden and unexpected appearance of Fabian in the famous "box-tree" scene is one of the intriguing elements of *Twelfth Night*. His appearance is intriguing because he has apparently replaced Feste in Sir Toby and Maria's plot against Malvolio. Yet in Act II scene iii, where the idea for the letter is conceived, Maria quite clearly suggests, "the fool make a third" (II.iii.167-68). Why does Shakespeare suddenly replace "the fool" with Fabian with no warning? The answer to this question lies in the character of Feste. Examining Fabian's role in the Sir Toby-Maria plot against Malvolio gives us a greater understanding of Feste and his overall function within the play.

I would like to look briefly at who Feste is, before addressing the question of Fabian, in order to establish the social and intellectual differences between the two characters. The list of characters describes Feste as "the clown, [Olivia's] jester" [1], yet throughout the play he is referred to as "the fool." These terms may have been interchangeable but the Oxford English Dictionary defines a clown as "a fool or jester as a stage character, or (in Shakespeare) a retainer of a court or great house" [2] and a fool as "one who professionally counterfeits folly for the entertainment of others." [3] Whilst these definitions are certainly close, it is interesting to note that a "fool" is not necessarily attached to a house or court. We are also told that Feste is "a fool that the lady Olivia's father took much delight in" (II.iv.11-12), but are given the impression that he has been absent from Olivia's house for sometime: "Nay, [either] tell me where thou hast been…. My lady will hang thee for thy absence" (I.v.1-3). Feste appears to be more of a "free spirit" since he doesn't appear to be part of Olivia's permanent household and we are given the impression of a passing itinerant who doesn't entirely belong in Illyria.

Feste is a lone character; a commentator and an analyst who in many respects provides a link between the audience and the action of the play. Trevor Nunn's 1996 film of the play makes all three of these points very strongly. Ben Kingsley's Feste hovers on the fringes of the Edwardian society in which the film is set. He is an itinerant musician, a traveller with license to appear at Olivia's home and Orsino's palace. Trevor Nunn comments:

> The image of a traveller… seemed to me to provide what Malvolio would revile, what Sir Toby would relate to, what Olivia would forgive, what Maria would scold, and that by which Viola would feel threatened, Sebastian pestered and Orsino disturbed. [4]

The welcome extended to him by Olivia suggests long acquaintance; he has known her since she was a small child and shrewdly reads the truth behind her actions and her moods. Yet despite this intimacy with Olivia, Feste remains an outsider throughout the film. His quiet departure from the scene of midnight revels immediately expunges him from the possibility of becoming part of the gulling of Malvolio (interestingly, Maria's line, "let the fool make a third" (II.iii.167-68) is cut), and his ability to disturb Orsino, Sebastian and Viola with his penetrating questions and perceptive observations gives him the quality of an "otherworldly" visitor. This impression is given credence by the fact that Feste is the only character that makes direct eye contact with the camera; we later realize that it is his voice that has spoken the "prologue" at the beginning of the film. In effect, the film makes him a storyteller and we watch the story through his eyes.

Turning to Fabian, it is harder to define exactly who he is in the social world of the play. Actors playing Fabian have found him a difficult character to play since he has no stated function in Olivia's household, and

is given little opportunity to develop a distinct character in the play. Directors have also found Fabian a problem in terms of introducing him and fitting him into the fabric of the play. Bill Alexander felt that he had partially solved the problem of how to fit Fabian into the play in his 1987 production at Stratford-upon-Avon by making him "a kind of under-steward to Malvolio… it gives him a potential aspiration and a relationship to Malvolio – a reason why he should join in a plot against Malvolio." [5] Describing the effectiveness of this solution, Alexander comments that:

> I think it helps… to introduce him [Fabian] silently into the earlier scenes: for instance, when Olivia and Malvolio first appear, he was clearly one down the pecking order from Malvolio – he did what Malvolio told him to physically, and he hung around and was dressed in a way that suggested a sort of second-in-command. [6]

Alexander's comment takes us to Fabian's grudge against Malvolio over the "bear-baiting," which seems to me to provide a strong clue about Shakespeare's reasons for replacing Feste with Fabian in the "box-tree" scene. Fabian's comment not only provides us with evidence about his connection with Olivia's household, it clearly, and more importantly, allies Fabian with Sir Toby and identifies him with Sir Toby's world of "cakes and ale." This is a world, which Feste, for reasons we shall examine, is never a complete part of; he lives on the fringe of the Illyrian worlds and effectively becomes a kind of Greek chorus, a link between the audience and the world of the play. Fabian however, is "all-Illyrian" and therefore practically useful to Sir Toby in ways that Feste can never be.

Critics have described Fabian's sudden appearance as both "crude" and "clumsy," arguing that his abrupt introduction "contrasts strikingly with the theatrical expertise of the play so far." [7] Certainly the theatricality of Fabian's first entrance seems somewhat contrived and clumsy as Sir Toby initiates Fabian into the plot and introduces him to the audience. The pace of this very comic and theatrically accomplished scene lags somewhat in its opening moments as we register Fabian's presence and Feste's absence. Warren and Wells note that it is at this point the "difficulties" of the second half of the play begin. The first half of the play has a tight theatrical structure and moves smoothly through the introduction of the major characters and their situations. The second half however, falters slightly around the middle of the play, "especially in the very long 3.4." [8] Warren and Wells attribute this faltering of the dramatic rhythm to Fabian, partly because of his verbosity in this later scene:

> Fabian not only plays a major part in spurring Sir Andrew on to challenge Viola, he does so at length and in a very elaborate, even laboured, style, with formally balanced phrases and contrived comparisons… not like the utterance of a dramatic utterance but like a set speech… Shakespeare is cranking the dual plot into action….[9]

The idea that Fabian's appearance occurs as the secondary plot is starting to unfold is also helpful for examining the reasons behind why he replaces Feste. The gulling of Malvolio is the brainchild of Maria and Sir Toby and Feste has had no part in developing it. Looking ahead to the theatricality of the box-tree scene, Sir Toby clearly needs an accomplice to exploit the humour of this scene; Sir Andrew is included by association, but he does not have the wit necessary to carry the comedy; Maria has written the letter and her part is effectively played, so a third character is needed to offset Sir Toby's boisterous humour. When the idea for the plot is raised in Act II scene iii, Feste is present. Many productions show him leaving soon after Malvolio's exit because he says nothing further in the scene. However there is no stage direction to imply that he exits before the others so that Maria's suggestion that "the fool make a third" (II.iii.167-68) is made in his hearing.

Sir Toby instantly applauds Maria's proposal in a typically boisterous and enthusiastic way. She includes Feste in the plot at that stage, much in the way that she makes Sir Andrew the implicit "second": he is still present and he has been part of the midnight high-jinks interrupted by Malvolio. It is not because either of

them are obvious choices; Sir Andrew is a visitor to the house and has no long-standing personal grudge against Malvolio, and Feste is not the obvious "third" in terms of character or motive. Maria's idea for the gulling of Malvolio is a prank reminiscent of playground humour, earthily and bawdily comic, but is hardly in keeping with the analytical and intellectual wit we have seen from Feste. The Elizabethan Fool held a special position in royal or noble households and was given license to speak his mind without punishment. As Olivia rather impatiently tells Malvolio, "there's no slander in an allowed fool" (I.v.89-90). It seems unlikely that a Fool who values and promotes his position as a professional in his trade would achieve any degree of professional satisfaction from a prank such as this.

If Feste remains onstage as the text indicates, then the problem arises of how to explain his silence after Maria's suggestion that he become "a third" in the gulling plot. He says nothing and his silence is frequently taken for complicity. This compounds our surprise (and chagrin) at the appearance of Fabian in Act II scene v – we are expecting the subtle wit and intellectual humour of the Fool and instead we are given a characterless nobody. If, however, we consider the staging of the "midnight revels" scene and the theatrical possibilities inherent in stage silences then plausible alternatives for Feste's silence become evident, in-line with his character. His silence in this scene gives him the opportunity of physically rather than verbally disassociating himself with Maria's plan, and indeed this does occur in performance. Warren and Wells observe that:

> His [Feste's] silence may make dramatic points. Peter Hall's 1958 production… let Feste 'feign sleep, head on arm, at a table. As the others went out he raised his head and stared thoughtfully after them…' this Feste was a detached observer. The Feste of Hall's 1991 version made this detachment more specific: after Malvolio's exit, he lay stretched on a seat, and when Maria said let the fool make a third, he simply waved a dismissive hand; Fabian was clearly needed to make a third here. [10]

A "dismissive" gesture from Feste here makes the point clearly; he is "out," and Sir Toby and Maria will need to find someone else to fill the place. Therefore a new character is needed and Fabian's later appearance is explained.

Removing Feste from the gulling of Malvolio returns the focus of the gulling plot to the worlds within the play. Illyria is almost a parallel universe: Orsino, Olivia, Viola, and Sebastian belong to the world of courtly and romantic love; Sir Toby to the world of "cakes and ale" and the spirit of Twelfth Night. The gulling of Malvolio belongs firmly in Sir Toby's world and Sir Toby's accomplices need, by association, also to be part of that world. Fabian, with his second line referring to the "bear-baiting," establishes himself as an integral part of the "Sir Toby world" in which gaming, drinking, duelling, and sports such as "bear-baiting" reflect the world of Elizabethan England. Whilst Feste is able to play the role of Fool with Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in Act II scene iii and join their drunken banter, he remains removed from their world, hence his sudden silence toward the end of this scene.

Sir Toby's hasty acceptance of Fabian's involvement with the plot against Malvolio at the beginning of Act II scene v suggests a familiarity between them that does not exist with Feste. Whilst Sir Toby addresses Feste in familiar terms, Feste always refers to him as "Sir Toby," maintaining a personal distance. Sir Toby refers to Fabian as "Signor," possibly ironically, but equally possibly suggesting that Fabian has the status of a gentleman. Fabian himself seems on easy terms with Sir Toby, addressing him familiarly as "man" ("I would exult, man" (II.v.6)) and their collusion in both this scene, and the later duel scene with Sir Andrew and Viola serves to sideline Sir Andrew and instate Fabian as fellow-conspirator in the Sir Toby-Maria jest against Malvolio. Feste however, seems to exist on the fringes of both worlds, able to interact with both, but never becoming a part of them. He moves easily from the gentle catechism of Olivia, to the riotous midnight revels with Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria, to the melancholic mood of Orsino's court. In acknowledging this it is therefore impossible to see him playing an active part in the gulling of Malvolio or taking delight in the burlesque duel between Sir Andrew and Viola-Cesario.

Feste does, of course, have his own agenda in relation to Malvolio, and we see his contribution to the downfall of Malvolio in the often-troublesome "dark house" scene in Act IV scene ii. Sir Toby's treatment of Malvolio in confining him in the dark house often seems vindictive and unnecessarily cruel, yet it is Feste who prolongs the scene and taunts Malvolio still further. Sir Toby admits to Feste that it has been a "sport" to humiliate Malvolio in this way; it is at his suggestion that Feste impersonates Sir Topas the curate in order to further "baffle" Malvolio's wits, but he leaves Feste to his own devices and does not stay to witness the "knavery." The scene becomes troublesome when we suspect that Feste goes beyond the role of impartial observer that he has hitherto represented, and becomes actively and primarily involved in the degradation of Malvolio.

Sir Toby's aversion to Malvolio, as we have seen, is because he represents a Puritan threat to the celebration of festivities such as Twelfth Night. Feste's involvement is harder to explain. He has a much more personal axe to grind, and in Act V scene we are given his explanation: "…but do you remember, Madam, why laugh you at such a barren rascal, an you smile not, he's gagged…" (V.i.370-72), as he reminds Olivia of the moment in Act I scene v, when Malvolio denigrates both Feste and his wit. The line suggests that Feste's professional pride has been abused by Malvolio's comments and that the nonsensical catechism of Malvolio in the "dark house" scene is his way of proving Malvolio to be a fool. His final comment to Olivia seems to suggest that his motives were not sinister, and that he regards the "Sir Topas" episode as a consequence of Malvolio's unpleasantness: "…thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges" (V.i.373). As John Caird comments,

> …what Feste is saying to Malvolio is, 'Do you remember, you who were so pompous… Now look who the joke's on. Thus, the whirligig of time brings in its revenges. I didn't.' Feste doesn't actually do anything. [11]

Theatrical interpretations of both this and the "dark house" scene itself vary considerably, with directors portraying Feste at both ends of the revenger-joker spectrum.

In posing the question of the reasons behind Feste's treatment of Malvolio in the "dark house" scene, it is useful to contrast Fabian's function in the play with Feste's function. Fabian, as we have seen, is a useful adjunct to Sir Toby's tremendous energy in the gulling of Malvolio. He is the crucial accomplice in the "box-tree" and the "duel" scene, and he does this successfully because he is an unremarkable character who does nothing to detract the focus from Sir Toby. Feste, on the other hand is a remarkable character, and to expend his energies as Sir Toby's back-up man would detract considerably from his complexity and versatility as a character. Feste describes himself to Viola-Cesario as Olivia's "corrupter of words" (III.i.34-5) and he plays with and distorts language much as the play itself plays with and distorts concepts of gender. Shakespeare uses distortion of gender to reveal truths about the nature of love, and he uses Feste to distort language to reveal psychological truths about the other characters.

In Trevor Nunn's film, Ben Kingsley's Feste highlights the character's function as an analyst: he analyses Olivia's grief, analyses Orsino, analyses Malvolio, even analyses Viola. Rather in the manner of a psychological clairvoyant, he is able to see truths that the other characters cannot see, and through his Fool's "toolbox" of wit and language distortion, he forces the main protagonists to see truths about themselves. He takes Olivia through a mock catechism to reveal to her the absurdity of her elaborate mourning regime, and proving her a "fool." This routine is repeated in the "dark house" scene with Malvolio in which Feste, as "Sir Topaz" attempts to restore the apparently mad Malvolio to his right mind through a catechism on a series of contemporary Elizabethan religious issues, and in doing so, proves Malvolio to be the real "fool" of the play. For this reason, it seems preferable to accept John Caird's interpretation of Feste's final comment since it becomes the way in which Feste attempts to show Malvolio the truth about himself. Thus, Feste's function as comentator and analyst is fulfilled, and his final song to the audience provides the link between the world of the play and the audience's world in the "wind and rain" of reality.

FOOTNOTES

1. Oxford Shakespeare, p. 692.

2. OED, sense 3.

3. OED, sense 2.a.

4. Nunn, intro.

5. Billington, p. 103.

6. Ibid.

7. Warren and Wells, p. 53.

8. Ibid. p. 52.

9. Ibid. p. 53.

10. Warren and Wells, p. 130.

11. Billington, p. 66.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Billington, Michaels, ed. *Directors Shakespeare: Approaches to* Twelfth Night. London: Nick Hern Books, 1990.

Brockbank, Philip. *Players of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 1, 1988.

Jackson, Russell and Robert Smallwood. *Players of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 2, 1988.

Nunn, Trevor. *Twelfth Night*. London: Methuen Drama, 1996.

Warren, Roger and Stanley Wells, eds. *Twelfth Night*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Wells, Stanley, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Present Me As An Eunuch: Female Identity in Twelfth Night

Throughout *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare examines patterns of love and courtship through a repositioning of traditional Elizabethan gender roles. The familiar comic formula of identical twins creating confusion is employed with an added twist so that identical twins of opposite gender provide the foundation for the comic confusion. Viola, the protagonist, is stranded on the shores of a foreign land by a shipwreck. She adopts the identity of her brother, Sebastian, so that she can live in safety without a male protector. Shakespeare uses the comedy behind Viola's gender transformation to explore the notion that concepts of romantic love are not always selective by gender. In the course of the play we are presented with a series of same-gender love

situations (Olivia for Viola, Orsino for Cesario-Viola, Antonio for Sebastian) that parallel "legitimate" opposite gender love relationships (Orsino for Olivia, Viola for Orsino, Maria for Sir Toby and in some respects Malvolio for Olivia). The result is a unique "comedy of gender" that uses gender and disguise of gender to reveal one of the play's chief messages: "nothing that is so, is so" (IV.i.8).

The "unnatural" love relationships in *Twelfth Night* highlight a major gender issue in Shakespearean drama: the role of boy players. They also bring into account the position of Elizabethan women in society and how that position was undergoing subtle changes during the period. Shakespeare's notion of Elizabethan gender roles, and in particular those of Elizabethan women, was presumably that of the accepted theological doctrine, which taught that Adam was created first, and Eve from his body; she was created specifically to give him comfort, and was to be subordinate to him, to obey him and to accept her lesser status. Thus, to Elizabethans the concept of sexual equality would have been anathema. A dominant woman was unnatural, a symptom of disorder. Shakespeare apparently endorses this belief in his comedies, returning his heroines to the accepted and "safe" role of wife/daughter once the resolution of the play takes place. However the theatre itself is a place of fluidity and artifice where "nothing that is so, is so." I will discuss the ways in which Shakespearean theatrical conventions override Elizabethan notions of the female role and in *Twelfth Night*, establish female characters not as two-dimensional Elizabethan archetypes but as tenacious and distinct characters with a strong sense of identity.

Viola, the chief female protagonist, is by far the strongest character in *Twelfth Night*. After the tragic shipwreck that has separated her from her brother, Viola disguises herself as a man for most of the play not only to protect herself, but also in order to preserve her state of free will. It can be argued that in placing his heroine in this situation, Shakespeare is using Viola as a means for examining female capabilities and instincts. The shipwreck has left her in an unprecedented, indeterminate state: she has no one to connect with at all. Lacking anyone to provide for her, she is forced to take measures to protect herself so that the understood reason for her deception is to insure herself against immediate danger, but also to retain her prospects and status for the kind of future that she would like to have. She is unwilling to accept the female role of complete passivity just as Olivia is unwilling to submit to Orsino's advances because she enjoys playing her role as "lady of the manor." Viola enjoys her life and position as a man, and does not reveal who she is until the last scene of the play. Curiously, she also voluntarily accepts the role that society would impose on her again at the close of the play: that of a wife. It is important to note however, that she freely chooses this role and does so out of her own sense of self. For Viola, it is a personal choice based on her desires. She is in love with Orsino and keeping the pretence of her male identity is no longer necessary, as she desires to be his wife.

Shakespeare's female characters have frequently been criticised as two-dimensional and unrealistic portrayals of subservient women, a notion that clearly overlooks the complex contradictions not to mention the acting challenges inherent in roles such as Portia, Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra. The general assertion has often been that the roles of women in his plays were prominent for the time and culture that he lived in. Little conclusive evidence exists concerning the actual involvement of women with the Elizabethan stage. Women were not permitted to act on the stage, with the occasional exception of women at court taking part in special, private performances for Elizabeth and her guests. By the reign of James I it was not uncommon for the ladies at court, including Queen Anne, to take part in the masques that were a popular form of court entertainment. It does seem however, that the appearance of women on the public stage was not altogether unknown. Coryat's Crudities of 1611, recounting experiences in Venice comments: "I saw women acte, a thing that I never saw before, though I have heard that it hath beene sometimes used in London". [1] It is therefore clear that although they took part in plays on the Continent, particularly in the popular Commedia dell'arte plays, it was not the norm for women to act on the public English stage. Boys or young men whose voices had not yet changed acted the women's parts, and it is this convention of contemporary Shakespearean theatre practices that in many ways contributes to the development of positive and powerful female characters in Shakespearean drama.

Boys acting as women disguised as boys provide the strongest visual symbol of Feste's comment in *Twelfth Night* that "nothing that is so, is so" (IV.i.8). Several of Shakespeare's comic plays, of which *Twelfth Night* is just one, capitalize on the effect of boys acting women, who then take on disguise as boys. Sylvia (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*), Portia, Nerissa and Jessica (*The Merchant of Venice*), Rosalind (*As You Like It*), and Imogen (*Cymbeline*) are other well-known characters. Shakespeare often exploits the extra layer of irony available in this situation by having the character refer to his/her/his male/female attributes. Much of the ironic humour of Viola's situation comes from her own wry acknowledgement of her assumed manhood. In Act II scene ii when Malvolio catches up with her after leaving Olivia's house, she meditates on Olivia's motives in sending the ring to her. She quickly anticipates Olivia's feelings: "Fortune forbid my outside have not charmed her" (II.ii.18), but goes on to contemplate the possible complexities of the situation: "How will this fadge? My master loves her dearly, / And I, poor monster, fond as much on him, / And she, mistaken seems to dote on me" (II.ii.33-35). Shakespeare is setting up a double level of humour: the humour inherent in the age-old love triangle, but also the humour of a male actor wooing a boy actor playing a girl, who is wooing a boy actor playing a girl who is posing as a boy, who in turn is a boy actor playing a girl posing as a boy who is in love with the first male actor! The humour thus worked on an entirely different level for Shakespeare's audience than it does for a modern audience.

By placing boy actors in these complex levels of cross-dressing humour, Shakespeare, along with the other dramatists of his time was flouting biblical law and incurring considerable opposition from the Puritan faction. Their argument against the practice was based on the biblical verse Deuteronomy 22.5 in which it is stated:

> The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.

The notion of boys playing women clearly went against this law, yet the playhouses continued to uphold the practice, and in some cases they had their supporters. John Case, a defender of the drama on Humanist grounds pointed out: "It is not necessarily indecorum for a man to wear the dress of a harlot on the stage, if his object is to expose the vices of harlotry." [2] The idea that drama could function as a means for moral instruction was not a new one; indeed the Church itself sanctioned drama for that purpose in the medieval period. However Case's cautious endorsement raises another possibility: that women in drama could be presented in an alternative way to the traditional view of women and womankind; that boy players actually legitimize women as strong, thinking individuals.

In order to explore this notion further it is useful to look briefly at the way women were viewed socially and iconographically at this time. The Medieval church in Europe established a view of women that was split between the ideal of the Virgin Mary and her weaker counterpart Eve, or the anti-type to the ideal, the Whore of Babylon. The Elizabethan church continued this tenet, supported by the general distrust of women portrayed in frequently misogynistic Medieval and Renaissance literature. Shakespeare's Henry VI, Part One depicts the French heroine Joan of Arc as a witch, a devil-woman in league with Hecate and a "foul accursèd minister of hell" (I Henry III, V.vi.93); but Queen Elizabeth ("Gloriana," "the Virgin Queen," "Good Queen Bess") is portrayed variously in literature as a female ideal. It is for this reason that Shakespeare's plays frequently demonstrate that men have difficulty seeing women as something between these two extremes: if they are not perfect they must be whores and/or witches. This goes some way to explaining the abrupt swing between love and hate in such characters as Claudio (*Much Ado About Nothing*), Othello (*Othello*), and Leontes (*The Winter's Tale*). The accepted hierarchy of the sexes was that women were the lesser sex because of their unpredictability.

The female in Elizabethan society was not only subordinate to the male because of her unpredictability but also because of her nature as the "gentler sex." A woman was considered to be fit for homemaking and child-bearing; she was considered to have no interest in, or ability to, understand politics and her virtue was at

all times protected, firstly by her father, brother, or guardian and subsequently by her husband. For a woman to show an interest in current affairs, to express opinions or even to write literature other than a personal diary was to exhibit unladylike and indecorous behaviour. The major female figurehead to escape the shackles of contemporary Elizabethan womanhood was Elizabeth I, who became a powerful image of female authority despite her unmarried state and who commanded respect for her hard-headed intellect in all manner of political, religious, social, and artistic affairs. The presence of such a figurehead on the throne of England created an interesting situation for the literary and dramatic worlds in terms of the way they could now portray women in general. For the dramatic world, the move away from allegorical representations of character to more three-dimensional characters also allowed for more diversity in the ways women were portrayed, and the use of boys in the women's roles seems to have been part of this move. It is hard to imagine that a male representation of a woman, particularly given the social and religious history, could be anything other than stereotypical, however, in order to refute this, it is necessary to return to Shakespeare's text.

The inherent humour of boys playing girls is exploited in many ways throughout the play. In Act III, scene i, Olivia displays the confusion created for both characters and audience as she takes on the traditionally male role of wooer in an attempt to win the disguised Viola, whom she knows as Cesario. Viola, too, is in an unusual position, being firstly dressed as a boy and secondly sent to woo Olivia on behalf of Orsino. The sexual ambiguity of both Viola and Olivia in this scene highlights the way in which both women are supposed to be behaving and are not. Neither young woman is displaying behaviour appropriate to females of the era: Viola because she is dressed as a man and not chaperoned, and Olivia through her overt interest in a young "man" with whom she has no acquaintance. Judged by the morals of the time, both women, had they been real people, would be labelled whores. However the play neither passes judgement nor censure on them. Arguably, this is because the "women" that Shakespeare's audience were seeing on the stage were well known to actually be male. If a man plays the part of a woman then the female character and behaviour become hypothetical rather than actual. Through Viola Shakespeare seems to be celebrating the female potential for honour, loyalty and truth as opposed to censuring the behaviour of a whore.

The approbation given to boy actors such as the celebrated Nathan Field, suggests that their portrayals of women were at least realistic enough to be believable in comic situations and to arouse appropriate levels of pity and fear in tragedies. In 1582, Stephen Gosson complained in his Epistle to Sir Francis Walsingham about the practice of boys playing women, and in doing so, highlights an interesting point about the success of the boys in these roles:

> The Law of God very straightly forbids men to put on women's garments… In Stage Playes for a boy to put one the attyre, the gesture, the passions of a woman is by outwarde signes to shew them selues otherwise then they are, and so with in the compasse of a lye…[3]

His comment, designed as it was to challenge the existence of the boy players on a theological level serves to defend them on a dramatic level. Gosson's observations suggest that the boys are not simply putting on the clothing of a woman they are actually mimicking female gestures and passions; so much so that they are "within the compass of a lie." This type of characterization is a huge development from the two-dimensional figures of the morality plays and early imitative comedy that used classical "stock" characters and plots. The notion that the boys were starting to imitate female voices, movements and habits suggests a much greater attention to the detail of characterization. Therefore, despite the "fact" of the male actor behind the female character, what the audience sees is a "woman" exemplifying behaviour outside of the normal female spectrum without becoming the two-dimensional "virgin Mary" ideal or the "devil-woman." In the case of both Viola and Olivia, Shakespeare can be said to have moved them beyond the extremes of Elizabethan womanhood to a point that is both acceptable and desirable to Elizabethan men; in this case Orsino and Sebastian.

Whilst it is these situations of sexual ambiguity that provide much of the comedy and also much of the lyrical poetry in the play, these two female characters also represent contradictory female role models for Elizabethan

women. As already remarked, it can hardly be thought that Viola's situation in *Twelfth Night* can be considered a typical one for an Elizabethan woman. Her trials and tribulations in Illyria are very much the stuff of fairytale: an accident, separation from her brother, near disaster followed by despair, frustrated love, and finally love triumphant are all part of the romantic comedy formula that was starting to emerge in dramatic literature at the beginning of the seventeenth century. What is of particular note about romantic comedies is the fact that Shakespeare's women start to be portrayed in subtly different ways. Unlike characters such as Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* or Adriana in *The Comedy of Errors*, the heroines of romantic comedy - for example Viola, Rosalind, and Portia - despite acknowledging their state as "helpless" females, prove themselves assertive, capable and intelligent. They are often responsible for creating comic misunderstandings but also challenge the stability of appearances, gender roles, and the "off-limits" territory of same-sex-desire. This also applies to the secondary female characters who start to appear as confidante and support to the heroine (Celia and Nerissa are good examples), or, as in Olivia's case, as a foil or counterbalance to the heroine. Both scenarios allow for enriched comic interaction and female dominated scenes and situations such as the battle of wits between Olivia and Viola.

Viola shares the same characteristics that Shakespeare imparted onto many of his later heroines; characteristics that make them strong, and fiercely individual. Though Elizabethan society demands certain behaviour from women, Viola, through necessity, chooses to undertake a different path to deny that behaviour. In doing so, she promotes self over public image and proves that women can be both individual and intellectual without compromising what Elizabethan men saw as the "ideal" in womanhood. Presenting Viola as "an eunuch" is a way of legitimizing her choice and free will, and at the same time liberating female characters from two-dimensional stereotypes. *Twelfth Night* stands out particularly well as a play in which Shakespeare, though conforming to contemporary attitudes of women, circumvented them. He did this by utilizing theatrical conventions to his advantage in order to experiment with the creation of resolute female characters with a strong sense of self and an individual identity.

FOOTNOTES

1. Chambers, p. 371.

2. Ibid. p. 251.

3. Ibid. p. 217.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Billington, Michaels, ed. *Directors Shakespeare: Approaches to* Twelfth Night. London: Nick Hern Books, 1990.

Brockbank, Philip. *Players of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 1, 1988.

Chambers, E.K. *The Elizabethan Stage*. London: Clarendon Press, 1923.

Jackson, Russell and Robert Smallwood. *Players of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 2, 1988.

Nunn, Trevor. *Twelfth Night*. London: Methuen Drama, 1996.

Warren, Roger and Stanley Wells, eds. *Twelfth Night*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Wells, Stanley, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Chaos and Order in Twelfth Night

The only reference to *Twelfth Night* during Shakespeare's own lifetime is to a performance on February 2, 1602. A law student named John Manningham wrote in his diary about a feast he attended at the Middle Temple in London where he was a law student and where "we had a play called *Twelfth Night; Or, What You Will*." [1] This was likely to have been an early performance since it is generally agreed that the play was probably written in 1601. In 1954 Sir Leslie Hotson's book, *The First Night of Twelfth Night*, sought to identify the exact date of the first performance of *Twelfth Night*. He used the evidence of old records to suggest that Queen Elizabeth asked for a new play for the last night of the Christmas 1600-01 season, the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6, and that Shakespeare wrote *Twelfth Night* accordingly.

Among other evidence for this conclusion cited by Hotson is the information that during this period Queen Elizabeth was entertaining at court one Don Virginio Orsino, the Duke of Bracciano, who supposedly gave his name to the chief male character in the play. Hotson's conclusion is that this play was written specifically for this occasion – hence the title. Whether or not this was indeed the case, and the play did in fact gain its primary title from the date of its first performance, has continued to be a source of disagreement for critics, directors, and actors, some of whom, like Samuel Pepys, agree that the play is "not at all related to the name of that day." [2] The title is therefore not necessarily helpful in ascribing time, or even place to *Twelfth Night*. It has been variously presented onstage at any time of the year from the deepest and bleakest English midwinter to the height of "midsummer madness" on a Greek island. I would like to address two issues: firstly, what kind of relationship the play has with its title, and secondly, where, or rather what, Illyria is.

The festival of Twelfth Night is the Roman Saturnalia, the Feast of Fools. There can be little doubt that the license that marked this occasion had its origin in very ancient pagan customs. As Christianity spread across Europe, the church subsumed the old pagan festivals and replaced them with celebrations of religious significance. However the old traditions took centuries to die out, and the feast of the Epiphany on January 6 retained a Saturnalian flavour for many centuries. Even superficially, it is quite clear that *Twelfth Night* echoes this religious and cultural "compromise" by highlighting notions of order and chaos: the order of accepted religious and social morals, and the chaos of pagan Saturnalian licence. It is certainly possible from Leslie Hotson's extensive research that the play was indeed performed on this date, but I suggest that the title has more to do with the atmosphere surrounding the play than the actual date of the original performance. Unlike Samuel Pepys, I cannot contend that the play has nothing to do with the feast – indeed I will argue that the festival of Twelfth Night and the traditions surrounding it are central to both the sustaining mood of the play as well as its final outcomes.

The world of *Twelfth Night* is often seen to be a utopia of "Olde Englande," where the old traditions are given free reign and where that elusive "happy ever after" quality can be achieved. Yet there are disquieting elements in Illyria that in many ways reflect the situation in early seventeenth century England. Despite the exotic and distant sound of its name, Illyria is in fact a peculiarly English setting and the play is sprinkled liberally with references to the social life and customs of Jacobean England: Antonio and Sebastian lodge at the Elephant (probably an inn south of the Thames in London); Fabian is in trouble with Olivia for a "bear-baiting," Sir Andrew is a "great eater of beef" (I.iii.81); Sir Toby talks heartily of beagles, staniels and bumbailies; and we hear variously of spinsters, tinkers, tosspots, peascods, bawcocks and woodcocks. The disquieting element comes with the revelation that despite Sir Toby's freedom to drink and make merry, despite Malvolio's strict adherence to puritanical doctrine and despite Orsino's romantic inclinations not one of them is truly happy; in fact nobody in Illyria is happy. Society cannot function normally because the extremes of social and religious life depicted by Sir Toby Belch and Malvolio cannot co-exist.

The cause of the underlying despondency is the way in which Illyrian society works in reverse to social norms. This reversal is linked closely with the festivities of Twelfth Night. The central idea of Twelfth Night was derived from the old notion behind Saturnalia: a brief social revolution or period of "misrule" in which power, dignity, or impunity is reversed upon those ordinarily in a subordinate position so that masters become servants and servants become masters. A mock figure known as the "Carnival King" or "Boy-Bishop" was elected to head the festivities; a figure echoed in *Twelfth Night* both by Sir Toby Belch, who becomes a kind of "carnival king" upholding the feasting, revelry and license of the festival period, and by Feste who impersonates a clergyman in his attempts to "re-educate" Malvolio into his "right" mind. When challenged about his drinking by Maria; “Ay but you must confine yourself within the limits of order,” Sir Toby retorts, “Confine! I'll confine myself no finer than I am." In the true style of Saturnalia, Sir Toby overturns all norms. He almost literally turns night into day through his apparently continuous drinking: “Cousin, cousin, how have you come so early by this lethargy” (I.v.102), and is cheerfully unrepentant of his behaviour: “I’ll go burn some sack; ‘tis too late to go to bed now” (II.iii.159-60). He presides over the mock duel between Viola and Sir Andrew, and he finally rejects the social norms of his class to marry a waiting maid.

However in Shakespeare’s day, the ruling Church of England was not only attempting to retain control over the excesses of festivals such as Twelfth Night, but also endeavouring to temper a compromise between the rival factions of Rome and Geneva; in other words, to mitigate the abstemiousness of the Puritans. The "Roman" faction favoured observance of the old saints’ days (also called "holy days" or "holidays"), which, as we have seen, retained elements of the old pagan rituals, whilst the Puritans frowned on festivities of all kinds. Sir Toby’s response to Malvolio’s puritanical admonishments in the "midnight revels" scene: “Dost thou think that, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?” (II.iii.114-15), is essentially a rejoinder to the sobriety of the Puritans. If Toby’s drunkenness and unconventional behaviour are purely Saturnalian, Shakespeare also shows the diametrically opposite excesses at Olivia’s house: her mourning for her dead brother verges on self-confinement in a nunnery and her steward’s objections to all merry-making voice the confines of Puritanism.

Both the main plot and the sub-plot of *Twelfth Night* strongly echo the idea of Saturnalian "misrule," as Warren and Wells identify in the Oxford edition of the play:

> …in the main plot, the Duke Orsino is educated out of his aberrant state of love-melancholy by his servant, who then becomes her "master’s mistress;" in the sub-plot, Olivia’s steward aspires to become his mistress’s master. [3]

Social boundaries are crossed and re-crossed as the characters undergo transformations in class distinctions, appearance and gender. These transgressions of the norm cause varying degrees of chaos that can only be eventually restored to order through the appearance of both twins onstage together, providing a visual sense of order that resolves the chaos created by their separation. Orsino, Olivia, Sir Toby, Malvolio, and implicitly, Maria’s love interests lead them across the divisions of the social classes defined in the play, just in the way that social codes were reversed during the period of Twelfth Night. The crossing of gender norms and gender boundaries is constantly examined through the actions of the main characters. Viola and Sebastian, fraternal twins, are mistaken for each other because they wear the same clothing. In the true spirit of carnival, the audience becomes complicit in the element of misrule as they suspend their disbelief to "see" these fraternal twins as identical beings. Similarly, we are asked to believe in, and recognize love at first sight. Viola's transvestism is also emblematic of the antic nature of festival. Cross-dressing was a feature of Twelfth Night revels, and gives Viola not only the appearance of a male, but the privileges and power of masculinity. In this way, by reversing her own notions of social and romantic normality, Viola becomes the servant in charge of her master, the woman in charge of a man, and leads Illyrian society towards a normal hierarchy.

At the beginning of the play, Orsino declares his passionate love for Olivia, who is probably his social equal and therefore an appropriate marriage partner, although Sir Toby interestingly tells Sir Andrew that Olivia

will “not match above her degree” (I.iii.102-3). His affection for her is soon perceived by the audience as merely self-indulgent and during the course of the play, we are led to assume, becomes focused instead on his page, the disguised Viola. The comic confusion of this situation is given greater effect through the reversal in the master-servant relationship as Viola-Cesario. By the end of the play Orsino accepts as his “fancy's queen” this young woman who only five minutes before functioned as his male page, underscoring the opal-like quality of his affections. Olivia, who has spurned the sight of men rejects the love of her social equal Orsino and instead embraces a complete stranger, the Duke's page, as a worthy partner. It is interesting that in doing so, she also rejects the conventional forms of wooing as she takes the initiative both in appearance and in fact; much as Viola does on Orsino’s behalf. She eventually marries Sebastian whom we gather is not of her class, but his blood is “right noble” (V.i.258), making the marriage socially acceptable. Sir Toby too, rejects social expectation and eventually marries his niece’s waiting-woman, Maria, rather than a woman of his own class. Maria provides an interesting parallel with Malvolio in that she, like Malvolio, seeks a liaison outside her social class. The difference is that unlike Malvolio, she is able to see the necessity of both excess and restraint. She is therefore rewarded for her clever schemes by being allowed to rise through the social hierarchy as she becomes the wife of a knight.

Of all the characters however, it is Malvolio who gains nothing from the play’s resolutions. Malvolio’s very name, Italian for "ill-will" sets him up in opposition to the other characters. His social status is quite clearly defined – he is the steward of Olivia’s household, a figure who, in the Elizabethan period was a highly trained and often well-educated person with responsibility for the running of a large house and estate. Malvolio, however, has developed a greater sense of his own importance. He is, as Maria points out, “a kind of puritan” (II.iii.130), and the humour of the "box-tree" scene and his appearance in yellow stockings “derives from the incongruity between his puritanical rectitude and the context in which he finds himself…".[4] The Puritan faction was a crucial part of Shakespearean society, providing a threat to both the social and religious traditions of generations. Forty years after *Twelfth Night* was written, the Civil War saw them running the country; a fact that critics often claim the play very accurately foreshows in Malvolio’s somewhat disconcerting exit line, “I’ll be revenged on the whole pack of you” (V.i.368). It is certainly tempting to read the play as a call for moderation in the changing society of the early seventeenth century.

Whilst Maria’s description suggests that Malvolio only adopts a puritanical demeanour when it suits him, it does not adequately explain that it is his unbending attitude towards his fellow human beings that means that eventually, he cannot be redeemed from himself. Being the puritan in the general Illyrian atmosphere of license and revelry allows him to create a sense of dignity and authority. What he forgets, and what Sir Toby reminds him of so abruptly in the "midnight revels" scene, that he is, in truth, no more than a steward. Malvolio’s crime, and the one for which he undergoes punishment, not only in the dark house but also by leaving the impending wedding festivities without allowing himself to be reconciled to the other inhabitants, is that he refuses to acknowledge a balance between the extremes of his existence and that of Sir Toby.

Taking Malvolio and Sir Toby as the opposite ends of the Illyrian spectrum gives us a personified image of the Saturnalian spirits of chaos and order. Sir Toby represents not only the advocate of perpetual festivity, but through it, the chaotic aspects of Illyria. For Illyria, whilst a place of magic and enchantment, is also a place of lurking dangers inspired by carnival revelry and reversals of normal behaviour. There is a wild and uncontrolled element that lurks beneath the apparent festivity and jollity of the surroundings. Illyria is, in the language of the play, a world "gone mad." No-one, not even the sanctimonious Malvolio is exempt from the influences of Illyrian magic and its carnivalesque reversals of normality and acceptability. It is a world pervaded by the non-conformist spirit of carnival that allows aristocrats to fall in love with servants, servants with their masters, and where stewards are able to entertain absurd delusions of grandeur. Disguise, mistaken identity, and gender reversals combine to provide a deliberate and provoking reversal of sixteenth century English social norms. Notions of madness and sanity are frequently invoked to provide a counterpoint to the normality of life outside the play, a fact we are reminded of by Feste, when he sings of the "wind and the rain" in his final song. It is not in fact a "real" place at all. Geographically, Shakespeare used the name for an area

on the Adriatic coast, but in terms of the play, it exists only as a hypothetical parallel universe inhabited by drunkards and zealots.

Into this peculiar melting pot of puritan extremism and festive license arrives Viola, a heroine who brings with her the power for a restorative balance to the wild swings of mood, temperament, and behaviour inherent in Illyrian society. If Sir Toby represents the archaic "carnival king," and Malvolio the unbending proponent of puritanical abstinence, then Viola can be seen to approximate the reverse: the voice of reason and renewal. Sir Toby upholds chaos, Malvolio maintains rigid adherence to unrealistic self-denial, and Viola is eventually the mechanism for normality and order. Viola's arrival suggests an influence from the external world – our world, the world of the audience – where festivity is confined within proper boundaries, and an apposite balance of gravity is achieved: nothing occurs in excess.

What we see therefore is that *Twelfth Night* refers not to the time of year at which the events in the play take place, nor perhaps even the time at which it was first performed. *Twelfth Night* is not about the end of the Christmas festivity period when the decorations come down and "normal" life is resumed, it is instead a picture of the chaos and order created by extremism at both ends of the spectrum. By association, the place in which the play is set is not geographically representative of any actual place, but of a hypothetical state in which the norms and order of everyday life are absent, and the chaos of excess runs unchecked. The opposing elements of liberalism and Puritanism espoused by the chief characters of the play, and the way in which the multi-plots of *Twelfth Night* rely heavily on the elements inherent in the historical festivities of Twelfth Night show that the title has much more to do with the pervading "anything goes" spirit of festival; the "What You Will" of the subtitle.

Footnotes

1. Billington, p. x.

2. Billington, p. xi.

3. Warren and Wells, p. 5.

4. Warren and Wells, p. 43.

Bibliography

The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Billington, Michaels, ed. *Directors Shakespeare: Approaches to* Twelfth Night. London: Nick Hern Books, 1990.

Brockbank, Philip. *Players of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 1, 1988.

Jackson, Russell and Robert Smallwood. *Players of Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, vol. 2, 1988.

Nunn, Trevor. *Twelfth Night*. London: Methuen Drama, 1996.

Warren, Roger and Stanley Wells, eds. *Twelfth Night*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Wells, Stanley, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

The Image and Metaphor of "Drowning" in Twelfth Night

William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night; Or, What You Will* is a comedy rich in poetry and puns, a masque concerning masks, a romance with none of the required elements missing. Beyond this, it is a play about drowning: in love, in sorrow, in appetite. It is an intriguing statement about people who are so immersed in excesses of various sorts that they cannot see beyond their own immediate desires in order to act to obtain what they claim to want. The play is a bridge between the comedies that Shakespeare wrote previously and the tragedies to come; as such it has elements of both and is an echo and a prophecy.

The purpose of this essay is to explore the image and metaphor of "drowning" in this play as it relates to the central themes, and to examine some of the ways in which this image takes the play out of the realm of pure fun and farce into Shakespeare's usual realm of profound human truths.

Drowning in *Twelfth Night* is nearly always a metaphor for loss, usually a loss of perspective through submersion in excess. The theme is seen in the first speech of the play, as Orsino asks to be drowned in the music that feeds his melancholy love. Act I is primarily concerned with exposing the ways in which the central characters are caught up, as Orsino is, in the final stages of emotion. Scene ii gives us the first of the two literal scenes of drowning, which turn out to be counterfeit in two senses: Sebastian is not really drowned as Viola believes; and Viola does not drown, but comes out of the sea to Illyria and is thus the person who rescues the inhabitants of that land from inundation.

Sir Toby Belch's particular sea is that of drink; in Act I we find that he is "drunk nightly" in, as he puts it, "drinking healths to my neice." Feste is the first to seize upon this metaphor when speaking of Sir Toby, whom he likens to a "drowned man, a fool, a madman - in the third degree of drink - he's drowned." The image is picked up by others, including Viola, who speaks to Olivia of Orsino's love as being with "adorations, with fertile tears," here linking Orsino's tears to Olivia's, called by Valentine, "eye offending brine."

Act II moves back to the sea, where Sebastian becomes the second person to be saved from the deep; again the image of tears is linked to drowning, this time by Sebastian, speaking of his sister: "She is drowned already sir, with salt water, though I seem to drown her remembrance again with more." Two very different images associated with the sea occur later in the act in a dialogue between Feste and Orsino. Feste suggests to Orsino that men like him, with such changeable minds, should be "put to sea that their business might be everything, and their intent everywhere; for that's it that always makes a good voyage of nothing." Orsino answers with his own view: his love is "all as hungry as the sea and can digest as much."

In terms of the play's major theme, Antonio's sea imagery in Act V is the most important; the lines might have better been spoken by Viola:

> That most ingrateful boy there by your side
> From the rude sea's enraged and foamy mouth
> Did I redeem. A wrack past hope he was.
> His life I gave him, and did thereto add
> My love without retention or restraint,
> All his in dedication.

Later in the act it is Viola who is again, though mistakenly, linked to drowning and the sea. Sebastian speaks: "I had a sister, / Whom the blind waves and surges have devoured," and were she alive, "I should my tears let fall upon your cheek and say, 'Thrice welcome, drowned Viola!'".

Other characters are drowning in things other than tears or drink. Sir Andrew Aguecheek is absorbed in eating, Maria in troublemaking, Malvolio in his own self-importance. The one thing that the characters all have in common is boredom as the reason for their individual monomanias. What kind of place is this Illyria, which allows its inhabitants the freedom to indulge in such nonsensical excesses? Joseph H. Summers has noted that in this world,

> the responsible older generation has been abolished, and there are no parents at all... in which young ladies, fatherless and motherless, embark on disguised actions, or rule, after a fashion, their own household, and in which the only individuals possible over thirty are drunkards, jokesters, and gulls, totally without authority. [1]

If irresponsibility can reign supreme in this land at any time, imagine the scene on Twelfth Night, when the spirit of revelry is in complete control, and drunkenness and practical joking at their height. It would seem that, of all the characters, only Feste and Viola are interested in disturbing the revelry and games so that the real business of living can begin.

Viola is responsible for saving those similar spirits, Orsino and Olivia from their sea of tears; both are startled out of their sense of propriety by falling in love with her as Cesario. Olivia is distraught because she has fallen for a servant, Orsino because he is attracted to a boy. Viola manages the situation purely through verbal skill and a charming double-edged wit. We can see in Viola the one person who keeps her head above water for the length of the play; she is the only one with any strong inclination toward self-preservation. She is a realist in the company of complete sentimentalists, and with Feste, finds something to love in these weak Illyrians, and so saves them.

Feste, the sharpest wit of all Shakespearian clowns, attempts through mockery to pull the other characters out of their absurd moods; he sees the essential sanity in his cynicism, as opposed to the madness of the rest of the Illyrians: "I wear not motley in my brain." No one escapes Feste's cutting wit; there is no one whom he cannot outsmart or out talk, and yet he is also the only person to treat Malvolio humanely, with actions and not just words. Viola is the only one to see Feste's real accomplishments: "This fellow is wise enough to play the fool, / And to do that well craves a kind of wit. This is a practice as full of labor as a wise man's art." Feste's art is best put to use in his scene with Malvolio, in which he impersonates Sir Topas. Malvolio's prison is a sea of sorts, in which he is drowning in confusion and terror. Although Feste has been sent in to mock Malvolio, he perhaps sees the comic truth in Malvolio's assertion that he is "as well in my wits as any man in Illyria," and he promises to help him. The song with which Feste ends the play also serves to tie together some of the tear and drowning imagery, whether it be with a sexual pun, as Leslie Hotson has suggested, or through the references to drowning in the rain. [2]

Shakespeare's most serious commentary on the evils of excess is contained in the subplot concerning the gulling of Malvolio. This is a perfect example of a joke that has gone too far and of the imposition of the neurotic compulsion towards "fun," that comes from boredom and drink, on another person. Malvolio’s humiliation comes close to marring the comic spirit of the play and yet, the incident is a necessary one in terms of portraying the limits of human cruelty. Malvolio alone remains untouched by Viola’s saving goodness; the most serious note in the play is sounded by Feste when he explains the situation and concludes: "And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.”

It is interesting to ask to what extent the excesses of the beginning of the play have given way to moderation at the conclusion. Olivia seems not to have changed much; the hasty marriage and then the easy acceptance of Sebastian hint that she is still more in love with the idea of love than with her husband. Orsino easily accepts Cesario-Viola as his bride, in place of Olivia, but any hope we have for the success of this match rests on Viola's talent for love. Maria and Sir Toby get what they deserve: each other, and they will probably cause more mischief as a team then they ever did alone. Malvolio does not seem to have learned very much, and

swears to be "revenged on the whole pack of you!" Feste, of course, remains alone to comment on the coming follies of the Illyrians. All in all, however, no one has really been lost. There is no more cause for tears in Illyria, and this in itself is a salvation from drowning. *Twelfth Night* is the most festive of Shakespeare's plays, and yet much of the humor and singing is ironic, with the mockery turned towards both characters and audience. One may, of course, choose to ignore the undercurrents and concentrate solely upon the fun. The poles of the play are quite clearly drawn in Orsino's first speech: one may be drowning in sentimentality and enjoy it; and yet there comes the time when one realizes that, "'Tis not so sweet now as it was before." Shakespeare gives us his play with a choice of perspectives: the festival of Twelfth Night or, what you will.

FOOTNOTES

1. Summers, p. 25.

2. Hotson, p. 157.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hotson, Leslie. *The First Night or* Twelfth Night. New York, 1955.

Summers, Joseph. "The Masks of *Twelfth Night*." *The University Review*. XXII, 1955.

Twelfth Night: Criticism

Overview

Harley Granville-Barker

[*In an essay originally published in 1912, Granville-Barker offers his vision for* Twelfth Night *as a director, beginning by describing what he believes was Shakespeare's intention for the set and how he may have written some parts such as Feste and Maria for specific actors. Barker also discusses the way he thinks Shakespeare constructed the play, suggesting that he may have originally intended a different outcome, and that on the Elizabethan stage, Viola/Cesario would have been played by a young boy, not a girl. He describes the casting choices Shakespeare may have made for other characters, including Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Fabian, Feste and Antonio and in conclusion, describes the prose and verse of the play, defending his position that Elizabethan prose should be spoken quickly.]*

Twelfth Night is classed, as to the period of its writing, with *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Henry V*. But however close in date, in spirit I am very sure it is far from them. I confess to liking those other three as little as any plays he ever wrote. I find them so stodgily good, even a little (dare one say it?) vulgar, the work of a successful man who is caring most for success. I can imagine the lovers of his work losing hope in the Shakespeare of that year or two. He was thirty-five and the first impulse of his art had spent itself. He was popular. There was welcome enough, we may be sure, for as many *Much Ado*'s and *As You Like It*'s and jingo history pageants as he'd choose to manufacture. It was a turning point and he might have remained a popular dramatist. But from some rebirth in him that mediocre satisfaction was foregone, and, to our profit at least, came *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Lear*, and the rest. *Hamlet*, perhaps, was popular, though Burbage may have claimed a just share in making it so. But I doubt if the great heart of the public would beat any more constantly towards the rarer tragedies in that century and society than it will in this. To the average man or play-goer three hundred or indeed three thousand years are as a day. While we have Shakespeare's own comment even on that "supporter to a state," Polonius (true type of the official mind. And was he not indeed Lord Chamberlain?), that where art is concerned, "He's for a jig, or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps."

Twelfth Night is, to me, the last play of Shakespeare's golden age. I feel happy ease in the writing, and find much happy carelessness in the putting together. It is akin to the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (compare Viola and Julia), it echoes a little to the same tune as the sweeter parts of the *Merchant of Venice*, and its comic spirit is the spirit of the Falstaff scenes of *Henry IV*, that are to my taste the truest comedy he wrote.

There is much to show that the play was designed for performance upon a bare platform stage without traverses or inner rooms or the like. It has the virtues of this method, swiftness and cleanness of writing and simple directness of arrangement even where the plot is least simple. It takes full advantage of the method's convenience. The scene changes constantly from anywhere suitable to anywhere else that is equally so. The time of the play's action is any time that suits the author as he goes along. Scenery is an inconvenience. I am pretty sure that Shakespeare's performance went through without a break. Certainly its conventional arrangement into five acts for the printing of the Folio is neither by Shakespeare's nor any other sensitive hand; it is shockingly bad. If one must have intervals (as the discomforts of most theatres demand), I think the play falls as easily into the three divisions I have marked as any. [Intervals after II, iii and IV, i.]

I believe the play was written with a special cast in mind. Who was Shakespeare's clown, a sweet-voiced singer and something much more than a comic actor? He wrote Feste for him, and later the Fool in *Lear*. At least, I can conceive no dramatist risking the writing of such parts unless he knew he had a man to play them. And why a diminutive Maria—Penthesilea, the youngest wren of nine—unless it was only that the actor of the part was to be such a very small boy? I have cudgelled my brains to discover why Maria, as Maria, should be tiny, and finding no reason have ignored the point.

I believe too (this is a commonplace of criticism) that the plan of the play was altered in the writing of it. Shakespeare sets out upon a passionate love romance, perseveres in this until (one detects the moment, it is that jolly midnight revel) Malvolio, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew completely capture him. Even then, perhaps, Maria's notable revenge on the affectioned ass is still to be kept within bounds. But two scenes later he begins to elaborate the new idea. The character of Fabian is added to take Feste's share of the rough practical joke and set him free for subtler wit. Then Shakespeare lets fling and works out the humorous business to his heart's content. That done, little enough space is left him if the play is to be over at the proper hour, and, it may be (if the play was being prepared for an occasion, the famous festivity in the Middle Temple Hall or another), there was little enough time to finish writing it in either. From any cause, we certainly have a scandalously ill-arranged and ill-written last scene, the despair of any stage manager. But one can discover, I believe, amid the chaos scraps of the play he first meant to write. Olivia suffers not so much by the midway change of plan, for it is about her house that the later action of the play proceeds, and she is on her author's hands. It is on Orsino, that interesting romantic, that the blow falls.

> Why should I not, had I the heart to do it,
> Like to the Egyptian thief at point of death,
> Kill what I love?—a savage jealousy
> That sometime savours nobly.

On that fine fury of his—shamefully reduced to those few lines—I believe the last part of the play was to have hung. It is too good a theme to have been meant to be so wasted. And the revelation of Olivia's marriage to his page (as he supposes), his reconciliation with her, and the more vital discovery that his comradely love for Viola is worth more to him after all than any high-sounding passion, is now all muddled up with the final rounding off of the comic relief. The character suffers severely. Orsino remains a finely interesting figure; he might have been a magnificent one. But there, it was Shakespeare's way to come out on the other side of his romance.

The most important aspect of the play must be viewed, to view it rightly, with Elizabethan eyes. Viola was played, and was meant to be played, by a boy. See what this involves. To that original audience the strain of

make-believe in the matter ended just where for us it most begins, at Viola's entrance as a page. Shakespeare's audience saw Cesario without effort as Orsino sees him; more importantly they saw him as Olivia sees him; indeed it was over Olivia they had most to make believe. One feels at once how this affects the sympathy and balance of the love scenes of the play. One sees how dramatically right is the delicate still grace of the dialogue between Orsino and Cesario, and how possible it makes the more outspoken passion of the scenes with Olivia. Give to Olivia, as we must do now, all the value of her sex, and to the supposed Cesario none of the value of his, we are naturally quite unmoved by the business. Olivia looks a fool. And it is the common practice for actresses of Viola to seize every chance of reminding the audience that they are girls dressed up, to impress on one moreover, by childish by-play as to legs and petticoats or the absence of them, that this is the play's supreme joke. Now Shakespeare has devised one most carefully placed soliloquy where we are to be forcibly reminded that Cesario is Viola; in it he has as carefully divided the comic from the serious side of the matter. That scene played, Viola, who does not do her best, as far as the passages with Olivia are concerned, to make us believe, as Olivia believes, that she is a man, shows, to my mind, a lack of imagination and is guilty of dramatic bad manners, knocking, for the sake of a little laughter, the whole of the play's romantic plot on the head.

Let me explain briefly the interpretation I favour of four or five other points.

I do not think that Sir Toby is meant for nothing but a bestial sot. He is a gentleman by birth, or he would not be Olivia's uncle (or cousin, if that is the relationship). He has been, it would seem, a soldier. He is a drinker, and while idleness leads him to excess, the boredom of Olivia's drawing-room, where she sits solitary in her mourning, drives him to such jolly companions as he can find: Maria and Fabian and the Fool. He is a poor relation, and has been dear to Sir Andrew some two thousand strong or so (poor Sir Andrew), but as to that he might say he was but anticipating his commission as matrimonial agent. Now, dull though Olivia's house may be, it is free quarters. He is, it seems, in some danger of losing them, but if only by good luck he could see Sir Andrew installed there as master! Not perhaps all one could wish for in an uncle; but to found an interpretation of Sir Toby only upon a study of his unfortunate surname is, I think, for the actor to give us both less and more than Shakespeare meant.

I do not believe that Sir Andrew is meant for a cretinous idiot. His accomplishments may not quite stand to Sir Toby's boast of them; alas! the three or four languages, word for word without book, seem to end at "Dieu vous garde, Monsieur." But Sir Andrew, as he would be if he could—the scholar to no purpose, the fine fellow to no end, in short the perfect gentleman—is still the ideal of better men than he who yet can find nothing better to do. One can meet a score of Sir Andrews, in greater or less perfection, any day after a west-end London lunch, doing, what I believe is called, a slope down Bond.

Fabian, I think, is not a young man, for he hardly treats Sir Toby as his senior, he is the cautious one of the practical jokers, and he has the courage to speak out to Olivia at the end. He treats Sir Andrew with a certain respect. He is a family retainer of some sort; from his talk he has to do with horses and dogs.

Feste, I feel, is not a young man either. There runs through all he says and does that vein of irony by which we may so often mark one of life's self-acknowledged failures. We gather that in those days, for a man of parts without character and with more wit than sense, there was a kindly refuge from the world's struggle as an allowed fool. Nowadays we no longer put them in livery.

I believe Antonio to be an exact picture of an Elizabethan seaman-adventurer, and Orsino's view of him to be just such as a Spanish grandee would have taken of Drake. "Notable pirate" and "salt-water thief," he calls him.

> A bawbling vessel was he captain of,
> For shallow draught and bulk unprizable;

With which such scathful grapple did he make
With the most noble bottom of our fleet,
That very envy and the tongue of loss
Cried fame and honour on him.

And Antonio is a passionate fellow as those west countrymen were. I am always reminded of him by the story of Richard Grenville chewing a wineglass in his rage.

The keynotes of the poetry of the play are that it is passionate and it is exquisite. It is life, I believe, as Shakespeare glimpsed it with the eye of his genius in that half-Italianised court of Elizabeth. Orsino, Olivia, Antonio, Sebastian, Viola are passionate all, and conscious of the worth of their passion in terms of beauty. To have one's full laugh at the play's comedy is no longer possible, even for an audience of Elizabethan experts. Though the humour that is set in character is humour still, so much of the salt of it, its play upon the time and place, can have no savour for us. Instead we have learned editors disputing over the existence and meaning of jokes at which the simplest soul was meant to laugh unthinkingly. I would cut out nothing else, but I think I am justified in cutting those pathetic survivals.

Finally, as to the speaking of the verse and prose. The prose is mostly simple and straightforward. True, he could no more resist a fine-sounding word than, as has been said, he could resist a pun. They abound, but if we have any taste for the flavour of a language he makes us delight in them equally. There is none of that difficult involuted decoration for its own sake in which he revelled in the later plays. The verse is still regular, still lyrical in its inspiration, and it should I think be spoken swiftly . . .

I think that all Elizabethan dramatic verse must be spoken swiftly, and nothing can make me think otherwise. My fellow workers acting in *The Winter's Tale* were accused by some people (only by some) of gabbling. I readily take that accusation on myself, and I deny it. Gabbling implies hasty speech, but our ideal was speed, nor was the speed universal, nor, but in a dozen well-defined passages, really so great. Unexpected it was, I don't doubt; and once exceed the legal limit, as well accuse you of seventy miles an hour as twenty-one. But I call in question the evidence of mere policemen-critics. I question a little their expertness of hearing, a little too their quickness of understanding Elizabethan English not at its easiest, just a little their lack of delight in anything that is not as they thought it always would be, and I suggest that it is more difficult than they think to look and listen and remember and appraise all in the same flash of time. But be all the shortcomings on one side and that side ours, it is still no proof that the thing come short of is not the right thing. That is the important point to determine, and for much criticism that has been helpful in amending what we did and making clearer what we should strive towards— I tender thanks.

The Winter's Tale, as I see its writing, is complex, vivid, abundant in the variety of its mood and pace and colour, now disordered, now at rest, the product of a mind rapid, changing, and over-full. I believe its interpretation should express all that. *Twelfth Night* is quite other. Daily, as we rehearse together, I learn more what it is and should be; the working together of the theatre is a fine thing. But, as a man is asked to name his stroke at billiards, I will even now commit myself to this: its serious mood is passionate, its verse is lyrical, the speaking of it needs swiftness and fine tone; not rush, but rhythm, constant and compelling. And now I wait contentedly to be told that less rhythmic speaking of Shakespeare has never been heard.

SOURCE: "Preface to *Twelfth Night*" in *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Vol. VI, B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1974, pp. 26-32.

Celebration and Festivity

The themes of celebration and festivity were inherent in Shakespeare's sources; the incorporation of the Twelfth Night holiday was probably suggested by the Italian play *Gl'Ingannati*, which contained a reference to La Notte di Beffania, the Epiphany. However, recent criticism has reached past the surface gaiety suggested in the title, and delved into themes behind the temporary release of a celebration.

Michael Taylor

[*Taylor compares the passive posturing of Orsino, who reflects the acceptance of events shaped by a carefree or festive approach, to the more active stance of Viola, who aptly captures the essence of the subtitle, "What You Will." Olivia and Orsino both retreat from reality in their respective emotional indulgences: Orsino's in unrequited love and Olivia's in grief for her brother. The critic contends that Malvolio, however, believes he can change his reality through sheer force of will and therefore also acts according to the subtitle in his quest for greatness*.]

Although the exact chronology of Shakespeare's plays is still in dispute, on the available evidence most commentators think *Twelfth Night* to be the last of the Romantic Comedies, close in time to *Hamlet*. The piquancy of this association has not gone unnoticed, and there is occasionally an anachronistic ring to critical judgements on *Twelfth Night*, caught best by the one that thrusts Hamlet's greatness upon Malvolio. Yet the dilemma which confounds the tragic protagonist appears also to disturb the equanimity of those in the comedy who, like him, balk at what seem to them excessively difficult situations, and who, like him also, are unable to end their troubles simply by opposing them. Even in indulgent Illyria, retreat into langour or knock-about-comedy does not muffle entirely the clamorous demands from the real world for decisions to be made and actions taken. Over the play hangs Sir Toby's great question, "Is it a world to hide virtues in?" (I.3.117-118).

In many ways, of course, Illyria, unlike *Hamlet*'s Denmark, offers its aristocratic inhabitants a life freed from the obligation to exercise their virtues. The kind of licence that the play's main title conveys can be enjoyed at its most untrammelled in the simple indulgences of the sub-plot. Although Sir Toby has as much contempt for his drinking companion, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, as he has for his puritan enemy, Malvolio, Sir Andrew's naive conception of the good life lies at the heart of their activity: "it rather consists of eating and drinking" (II.3.10-11). If it were not for Maria, who hatches the plot against Malvolio, the sub-plot would have little to offer other than the spectacle of aimless roistering. Despite Sir Toby's noisy contempt for "the modest limits of order" (I.3.8), or his lack of respect for place, persons, and time (to echo Malvolio's accusation), his belligerent claim to the hedonistic life does not amount to very much. The festive spirit, given free reign on Twelfth Night, depends here, as elsewhere in the play, upon an essential passivity on the part of its adherents.

Passivity in the guise of a carefree enjoyment of the good things of life may be more tolerable than in the form it takes with Orsino, whose contribution to a Twelfth Night philosophy has nothing to recommend it. Of all Shakespeare's romantic heroes his role must surely be the most difficult for any actor to make attractive. Supine in his passion, Orsino conducts his love-affair with Olivia through emissaries, Valentine initially, and then Viola as Cesario. This leaves him free to contemplate the tyrant sway of his "love-thoughts" from which in fact he longs to escape, or says he does: "And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds / E'er since pursue me" (I.1.23-24). Unable to act, he cannot take responsibility for his own feelings, as his figure indicates, divorcing himself from them as though they were external agents sent to plague him. He seems no more able to translate words into deeds than Olivia's other suitor, Sir Andrew, whom he also resembles, though on a more highly poetic plane, in his vacillation and instability of opinion. In the space of some ninety lines in Act II, Orsino moves from a conception of himself as devoted to the "constant image of the creature / That is beloved" (II.4.18-19) through an attack on the inconstancy of men's affections when compared with women's (II.4.32-34) to an attack on women's inconstancy in love when compared with men:

> Alas, their love may be called appetite,
> No motion of the liver but the palate,

That suffers surfeit, cloyment, and revolt.
(II.4.96-98)

Orsino's patronizing regret, here, for the crudity of women's love for men not only contradicts his recent opinion as to "giddy and unfirm" masculine fancies, but does so in language which cannot but remind us of the play's opening lines, where he appeals on his own behalf for a medicinal "surfeiting" in order that his "appetite may sicken and so die" (I.1.3). "Surfeit, cloyment, and revolt," in fact, constitute the cycle from whose paralyzing influence Orsino escapes only in his marriage to Viola.

Subject to every fleeting whim, what can someone like Orsino *do*? He cannot do much more than talk about what he might do, or, at best, demand that others do urgently for him what he can only urgently demand them to do. "Be clamorous and leap all civil bounds" (I.4.20) he urges Viola, for (in a prophetic line) "It shall become thee well to act my woes" (I.4.25). "What shall I do?" (V.1.109) he asks Olivia, whose reply nicely balances courtesy and contempt: "Even what it please my lord, that shall become him" (V.1.110). Although his question may not be so inane as Sir Andrew's "What is 'pourquoi'? Do, or not do?" (I.3.83), between them they voice in comic fashion the alternative which faces Hamlet: do, or not do. In both their cases (unlike his), any attempt to take decisive action is doomed to be comically ineffectual. When Orsino discovers that Olivia believes herself to be in love with Cesario he indulges his fury in self-dramatization and empty threats:

Why should I not, had I the heart to do it,
Like to th'Egypmn tiuef at point of death,
Kill what I love?
(V.1.111-113)

Such bombast circumstance gives way to a recognition of impotence (though still phrased bombastically): "Live you the marble-breasted tyrant still" (V.1.118).

Indolence, passivity and impotence are constitutive of a Twelfth Night philosophy: care must be, indeed, the enemy of this life. With Viola's entry onto *Twelfth Night* 's stage, the emphasis shifts temporarily (to return each time she returns) to a meaning of the play's sub-title, "What You Will" which offers itself as a genuine alternative to the main title. She supplies what those idling through an Illyrian Twelfth Night lack: direction, willed purpose, persistence and decisiveness. "I'll serve this duke" (I.2.55) she says when we meet her first, indicating how much more than simply an Orsinian lament was her original question: "And what should I do in Illyria?" (I.2.3). In her disguise as Cesario, she obeys Orsino's instructions to the letter, much to Malvolio's discomfiture. "He's fortified against any denial" (I.5.138-139) Malvolio complains to an intrigued Olivia, "He'll speak with you, will you or no" (I.5.147-148). How much her purposefulness becomes her is indicated, of course, in Olivia's admiring, "You might do much" (I.5.263). In these circumstances, Viola's perplexity over Olivia's continued rejection of Orsino's suit does not extend beyond herself. We can see quite clearly why her active involvement in Illyrian affairs should in a trice break down Olivia's self-denying and artificial barriers against natural feeling. "Even so quickly may one catch the plague?" (I.5.281) wonders Olivia. In these circumstances, even so.

Having caught it Olivia does not retire into sweet beds of flowers, even though she suffers the same treatment from Viola that she has been according Orsino. Her resilience here does not come as a total surprise to us, for she has displayed, from the outset, her own brand of willed purpose. In her misplaced determination to mourn her brother's death for seven years, we acknowledge a strength of will, however perverse. Valentine's caustic account to Orsino of her decision grasps its comic impropriety:

But like a cloistress she will veiled walk,
And water once a day her chamber round
With eye-offending brine all this to season

A brother's dead love, which she would keep fresh
And lasting in her sad remembrance.
(I.1.29-33)

Valentine reduces Olivia's daily expression of devotion to an unthinking exercise in the art of sad remembrance, as mechanical as watering flowers, except that the salt in Olivia's tears hurts her eyes. His metaphor from preserving meat, the ambiguity in "eye-offending" and his pointed use of the transferred epithet ("a brother's dead love") tell us why Olivia might well have to strain hard for her tears. Her persistence is unnatural and foolish, a stubborn exertion of the misdirected will.

A determination to pursue a course of action, no matter how fatuous, obviously provides no real alternative to an indulgence of inertia. Olivia's activity in memory of her dead brother resembles Orsino's languor in behalf of love: each a retreat from reality. In Shakespeare's presentation of Malvolio (whose name means "bad will"), his conviction that reality can be transformed by an exercise of the will overwhelms all his notions of social decorum and subdues his common-sense. Malvolio has no intention of hiding his virtues, for he is, in Maria's words, "the best persuaded of himself; so crammed as he thinks, with excellencies that it is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him" (II.3.136-139). Maria's trick against him exploits this supreme conceit, relying on Malvolio's strength of will to pursue inanity to excess and surfeit. Her letter cleverly appeals to his "blood" and "spirit," asking him to inure himself "to what thou art like to be, cast thy humble slough and appear fresh" (II.5.135-137). Unlike Orsino, Malvolio finds nothing difficult nor distasteful in the activities demanded of him, despite their demeaning tricks of singularity:

Be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants.
Let thy tongue tang arguments of state;
put thyself into the trick of singularity . . .
Remember who commended thy yellow stockings
and wished to see thee ever cross-gartered.
(II.5.137-141)

Malvolio's performance exceeds expectation. Only a man blindly convinced of his own worth, assured that in no circumstances can he possibly appear ridiculous, could parade himself in this manner. Arrogantly self-willed, Malvolio, more extremely than Olivia, brings the notion of self-assertion in the play's sub-title into greater disrepute than Sir Toby the license implicit in "Twelfth Night." The letter speaks to his deepest convictions about himself, especially in one of its last injunctions: "Go to, thou art made, *if thou desir'st to be so"* (II.5.142-143) [my italics], releasing in him a flood of "wills":

I will be proud, I will read politic authors,
I will baffle Sir Toby, I will wash off gross acquaintance,
I will be point-devise, the very man.
(II.5.148-150)

Such a rhapsody, despite his insistence on Jove's benign intervention, places Malvolio squarely in the second and third of the three categories of greatness the letter describes: "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em" (II.5.132-134).

SOURCE: "'*Twelfth Night*' and *'What You Will*'", in *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 01, Spring, 1974, pp. 71-80.

Thad Jenkins Logan

[*Logan explores the darker side of the carnival atmosphere of* Twelfth Night*, arguing that in the night world of the play, festivity has lost its innocence. He identifies the theme of the main plot as sexual, and the subplot,*

revelry, explaining that sexuality and revelry are the "two faces of the Saturnalian experience." The critic contends that the characters of the play are able to lose themselves in festivity because they, with the exception of Feste and Malvolio, are young and wealthy and literally carefree. Malvolio plays the parental role, and true to the reversal which underlies Saturnalian festivity, is imprisoned, just as those natural impulses of restraint are locked up and ignored during the pursuits of pleasure. Feste links the plots and suggests through his melancholy songs that festivity isn't as satisfying as it appears. Logan maintains that in Twelfth Night*, love has nothing to do with personality and that Shakespeare intends to demonstrate to his audience through removing natural limits in the stage world that Saturnaian festivity taken to its final extreme is not reconcilable with social or moral norms, and results in violence and indiscriminate passion.*]

In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare presents us with a world given over to pleasure, intoxication, and freedom. Any accurate interpretation must acknowledge the thematic importance of festivity, and critics like Barber, Leslie Hotson, L. G. Salingar, and John Hollander have provided valuable insights in this respect. Yet none of these critics has dealt quite adequately with the particular nature of festivity in this play, and my concentration on the dark side of the carnival world of *Twelfth Night* should be viewed as a supplement to their interpretations. It is clear that festive experience permits of distinctions: a New Year's Eve party, a Christmas dinner, and a wedding are all festive occasions, but constitute different experiences. Similarly, from a point of view of structure, the formal features which lead Barber to characterize a comedy as "festive" may be discovered in many plays, but crucial differences among the plays exist within that framework. The experience of *Twelfth Night* is very different from that of *As You Like It* or *Midsummer Night's Dream*, plays in which a critic may find similar dramatic elements and a number of formal analogues; I conceive the identifying, distinctive experience of *Twelfth Night* to be a function of the nature of festivity in that play. As its title suggests, the world of this play is a night world, and festivity here has lost its innocence.

Leslie Hotson has noted [in *The First Night of Twelfth Night*, 1954] that the subtitle "what you will" recalls the motto of the Abbaye de Theleme: "fay ce que vouldras." The phrase suggests that a fundamental concern of the play is what [David Horowitz, *Shakespeare: An Existential View* (London: Tavistock, 1965)] has called "multiple pleasures and wills to pleasure." Jan Kott, in a brilliant though idiosyncratic assessment of *Twelfth Night*, asserts that sex is the theme of the play ["Shakespeare's Bitter Arcadia," in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 1964]; this is accurate enough but it is incomplete, since the secondary plot is highly significant in terms of stage time, and that plot is not primarily centered on sexuality, but on a set of drives that have to do with food, drink, song, dance, and fun. "Revelry" is probably as good a term as any to describe these particular sorts of pleasure, and I will use it in this essay to refer specifically to them. The relationship between the two plots is, in part, dependent on the fact that revelry and eroticism are closely allied; they are the two faces of Saturnalian experience. *Twelfth Night*, then, is an anatomy of festivity which focuses in the main plot on sexuality and in the sub-plot on revelry; the subtitle implies that these are what we, the audience, want.

It is crucial to recognize that the play makes an appeal to our own drives toward pleasure, toward liberation from the restraints of ordinary life. This is not, finally, an immoral play, but its authentic morality can only be discovered if we are willing to make a descent into the night world: its meaning remains opaque if we insist on seeing at every moment in every play a conservative, Apollonian Shakespeare. (We will do well to remember that Dionysus is the presiding genius of the theater.) *Twelfth Night* is not an enticement to licentious behavior, but it is an invitation to participate imaginatively in a Saturnalian feast.

A pervasive atmosphere of liberty and license is established by the opening scenes. The first thing we recognize about Illyria is that it is a world of privilege and leisure in which the aristocracy are at play. Goddard, whose vision of the play is in many ways similar to my own, calls Illyria "a counterfeit Elysium" [in *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, 1954], and characterizes its citizens as parasitical pleasure-seekers, partly on the grounds that any aristocratic society is founded on "the unrecognized labors of others". Certainly, there are only two characters in the play who seem to have any work to do: they are Feste and Malvolio, whose

positions in the social world will be discussed at greater length; for most of the characters, leisure is a way of life. There are no rude mechanicals here. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria are clearly not members of the lower class, although the conventions of comedy and Shakespeare's usual practices have sometimes led directors to make that mistake about them. That the characters of the sub-plot are themselves members of the aristocracy is a significant feature of this play. Olivia and Orsino are at the very top of the social hierarchy; they are young, rich, elegant, and fashionable. The captain who rescues Viola suggests something of their eclat in his initial description of Orsino [quotations from *The Riverside Shakespeare* (1974)]:

> And then 'twas fresh in murmur (as you know,
> What great ones do, the less will prattle of)
> That he did seek the love of fair Olivia.
> (I.ii.32-34)

Even the shipwrecked twins are well-off; Sebastian is amply provided for by the doting Antonio upon his arrival in Illyria, and Viola has somehow emerged from the sea with enough gold to pay the captain "bounteously."

The wealth and social position of the characters are important in several ways and should be established clearly in production; besides setting the action in a framework of aristocratic values, pleasures, and mores, they contribute a great deal to a sense of liberation and license. Characters are, in part, free to pursue "what they will" because they can afford to do so. The financial conditions upon which Illyrian revelry depends are made explicit by Sir Toby: "Let's to bed, knight. Thou hadst need send for more money" (II.iii.182 and 183). Along with economic freedom, the social status of the main characters allows them to pursue pleasure according to their fancy. Orsino is attended by courtiers who provide him with music, and presumably with "sweet beds of flow'rs," on command; Olivia speaks to Cesario/Sebastian from a position of power, arranging rendezvous as she chooses. Her disorderly kinsman and his guest may be threatened by her displeasure, but they are apparently in no danger from any sort of civil authority; in the brawl that follows the practical joke played on Viola and Sir Andrew, it is only the outsider, Antonio, who is arrested.

Political power is, in fact, vested in Orsino; as the Duke of Illyria, he might be expected to function as the parent-figure in Northrop Frye's model of the structure of comedy ["The Mythos of Spring: Comedy" in *Anatomy of Criticism*, 1957]. From his first speech, however, it becomes clear that Orsino is not going to embody principles of law, order, and restraint in this comic world. In fact, there are no parents at all in Illyria, as Joseph Summers has cogently noted [in "The Masks of *Twelfth Night*" in *The University of Kansas City Review*, 1955]. Here, the social order is in the hands of youth, and wealth and power are at the service of youth's pursuit of pleasure.

It is Malvolio, of course, who fills the dramatic functions of the senex and the blocking figure, but what is curious about Malvolio in this respect is that he is a servant of Olivia. In a comic world noticeably lacking parents, Malvolio becomes a parent figure insofar as he performs some characteristic parental roles: it is he who tells the revellers to be quiet and go to bed. Yet Malvolio is a remarkably ineffective blocking figure; he shows himself powerless to control Sir Toby and Maria, much less to inhibit the actions of the lovers. The figure who stands for law and order in this play is not only made the butt of practical jokes, but is, in the structure of the play's society, only an employee. As such, he has no real authority: his "parenting" may be made use of by Olivia when it is convenient, and dispensed with when it is not. No one is morally or legally compelled to obey Malvolio; certainly no one is inclined to do so, nor is anyone inclined to share his stolid, earnest, workaday consciousness.

In the course of the play, the sort of consciousness that Malvolio embodies is literally locked away in the dark. His imprisonment is a striking emblem of the psychic reversal that underlies Saturnalian festivity: impulses that are normally repressed are liberated, while the controls of the super-ego are temporarily held in check.

What gives Illyria its distinctive atmosphere is our sense that in this world such a reversal is a way of life. For most of the characters, everyday is holiday. Festivity is the norm here, and misrule is the order of the night.

The audience of *Twelfth Night* participates imaginatively in an experience of psychic liberation, but does not share the "madness" of the Illyrians; in Freudian terms, our ego and super-ego continue to function normally. There are modes of awareness available to us that are not available to the characters (we hold, for example, the keys to all riddles of identity in this play), and we retain an integrity of consciousness that the characters do not. Freud, of course, conceived of art as a transformation of unconscious fantasy material into a publicly acceptable form; while a Freudian theory of art tends to be limited and reductive, it provides a useful model for an audience's experience of *Twelfth Night*. Fantasies of love and anarchy, given free in Illyria, are presented on the stage, made present for our contemplation as well as our imaginative participation. It is as though we are allowed to be at once asleep and awake; our own fantasies, "what we will," are newly discovered to us. The sorts of things we learn about the night-world of the psyche are profoundly disturbing. Festivity turns out to be fraught with dangers and complications: Eros mocks the individual; Dionysis is a god of pain as well as a god of pleasure.

According to Leslie Hotson, for Shakespeare and his original audience "what the Dalmatian-Croatian *Illyria* brought to mind was thoughts of wild riot and drunkenness." In the sub-plot of *Twelfth Night*, as in the Bacchic rites, what riot and drunkenness lead to are violence and cruelty. Among all Shakespeare's comedies, it is only in *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* that there is literally blood on the stage. It is characteristic of the violence in the former play to be artificial in the sense of being invented by the characters themselves rather than necessitated by the movement of the plot or brought in from outside the comic world by a villain. In *As You Like It*, for instance, violence is created by the wicked Duke Frederick or by the encounter of man and nature. Because the violence of *Twelfth Night*, at least that which we see on the stage, is directly or indirectly effected by an appetite for diversion, there is always an element of superfluity about it that is curiously disturbing; it is like the underside of play. Violence in this play is optional, chosen, "what we will."

Freud has taught us that cruelty is the genesis of practical jokes. Whether or not Malvolio deserves his treatment at the hands of Maria, it seems to me that her sadistic impulses towards him are obvious. Once he has been gulled into smiles and yellow stockings, her response to him is "I can hardly forbear hurling things at him" (III.ii.81). Her "sportful malice" creates a web of illusion that is, up to a point, very funny indeed. Yet from the moment Malvolio cries out, "they have laid me here in hideous darkness" (IV.ii.29 and 30), he begins to claim a share of the audience's sympathy. His plight is too close to our own nightmare fears, his language too evocative, for us to feel quite comfortable laughing at him. The feeling that the joke has gone too far is voiced by Sir Toby: "I would we were well rid of this knavery" (IV.ii.67-68). The game threatens to come real: "We shall make him mad indeed," objects Fabian, to which Maria responds, "The house will be the quieter" (III.iv.133-34). She has, she says, "dogg'd him like his murtherer" (III.ii.76-77), and she is in earnest in her perpetration of psychic violence. That Maria bears the name of the Virgin is another example of the reversal characteristic of Saturnalian festivity.

Once Malvolio has fallen prey to the machinations of the revellers and to his own fantasies, Sir Toby's idea of a good time is to set Cesario and Sir Andrew at one another. He does not, of course, expect blood to be spilled—certainly not his own—but he has not reckoned with encountering the energies of Sebastian. Energy is precisely what he does encounter, however, and it leaves him and his companion broken and bloody. The play discovers to us the fact that festive revelry is likely to unleash psychic forces that are not easily controlled. In the metaphoric language of stage action, the wounded revellers function both in terms of myth and in terms of quotidian experience: in one sense, they are suffering the predictable consequences of a drunken brawl; in another, they remind us that the rites of Bacchus culminate in bloodshed.

There is within the play world one character who provides an ironic commentary on revelry, who seems to know that the pursuit of pleasure can be destructive, and who leads the audience toward a recognition of the

emptiness of festive excess. Paradoxically, this is Feste the jester, whose name and office closely associate him with the festive experience. Festivity, as I have suggested, is the conceptual and experiential link between the sub-plot and the main plot; similarly, Feste acts in the play as a link between different sets of characters, moving freely from one group to another, like the spirit of festivity incarnate in the world of Illyria. But oddly, festivity itself, as incarnate in Feste, seems to participate in the principle of reversal characteristic of the play, and hover on the verge of becoming its opposite.

As Feste moves through the world of Illyria, he challenges our assumptions about festivity and foolery; he suggests not only that the fool is the only sane person in this world, but also that festivity is not as satisfying an experience as we might imagine. All three of his songs direct our attention to aspects of experience we might prefer to forget: death, the swift passage of time, and the fact that, on the whole, life is likely to bring us more pain than pleasure. Feste does not often amuse us, or the other characters; we do not often laugh with him—he does not give us occasion to do so. He seems to be, on the whole, rather an unhappy fellow. He is first discovered to us as an employee who may be dismissed; like Malvolio, Feste is a professional. Festivity is work for him, and it is evidently work which has become tiresome. He appears on stage as though he is returning from a long absence; his first words are "Let her hang me!" in response to Maria's scolding that his absence has displeased Olivia. It is easy to imagine Feste played as though he were disillusioned, cynical, and bored. Olivia herself calls him "a dry fool," says he grows dishonest, and tells him "your fooling grows old, and people dislike it" (I.v.110). Feste is distanced from the other inhabitants of Illyria because he is immune to the lures of drink, love, fantasy, and the distortions they create: he seems to have known these things and come out the other side. The festive experience is his trade; it holds no mysteries for him, and no delights.

Feste and Malvolio are, as we might expect, antagonists. They quarrel early in the play, and in the last scene Feste recalls that quarrel, taking special pleasure in Malvolio's humiliation and the part he has played in it. There seems to be a good deal of personal rancor in his "And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges" (V.i.376, 377). The experience of dislike is not a common one in Shakespeare's comedies, and its appearance here is disturbing. Feste also does not like Viola, who makes a serious mistake about his nature; "I warrant thou art a merry fellow, and car'st for nothing." His response is a cold one: "Not so, sir, I do care for something; but in my conscience, sir, I do not care for you. If that be to care for nothing, sir, I would it would make you invisible" (III.i.26-30). The straightforward statement of dislike, of a motiveless personal hostility, sounds a new note in the comic world; it is, of course, Feste who at the end of the play will lead us out of that world.

There is a similar moment of "dis-integration" when Sir Toby reveals his true feelings about Sir Andrew: "Will you help?—an ass-head and a coxcomb and a knave, a thin-fac'd knave, a gull!" (V.i.206-207). There is never much sense of a human community established in *Twelfth Night*. Friendship is not a significant structural feature of the main plot, as it is in *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*. The revellers' fellowship is broken by the end of the play, and they do not participate in the happy ending. We are, admittedly, told that Sir Toby has married Maria, but we do not see them together on stage at the end. Antonio, so far as we can tell from the script, is never released from arrest, and Malvolio leaves the stage in anger. Critical notions that the end of the play is a vision of harmony and communal integration seem to me totally unjustified. A social community based on charitable love is never created in *Twelfth Night*; here, erotic love does not become a figure for charity, and marriage does not symbolize a universal harmony.

"What is love?" asks Feste. The conclusions we are led toward by the action of *Twelfth Night* are not, on the whole, happy ones. Sexuality in Illyria is mysterious and illusive. "What are we? What would we?" are questions the play sets for its audience. In Feste's lyric, love is the immediate gratification of desire: "Then come kiss me sweet and twenty." The play, however, begins with a stalemate: desire is frustrated, and fantasies conflict. Orsino wants Olivia, Olivia "will admit no kind of suit." It is the characteristic situation of courtly love; the roles Olivia and Orsino choose to play are familiar ones. In the course of the play, Shakespeare leads us from conventional modalities of love to a discovery of other erotic truths. This discovery

is effected by the relationship of the four lovers as it is played out in the stage-world.

Part of the extraordinary appeal of Viola and Sebastian (and they have been almost as attractive to critics as to the characters in the play) comes from their air of innocence. Both Olivia and Orsino explicitly use the word "youth" on almost every occasion when they speak to or about Cesario. The twins bring a special vernal quality into the play; it is their appearance that breaks the stalemate established in the first scene. They are, in a sense, the green world. A significant number of critics assume that they teach Olivia and Orsino the meaning of love, and redeem the world into which they enter. I believe that such an interpretation does not sufficiently acknowledge our experience of the erotic aspects of the play. It is important, first of all, to notice that both Viola and Sebastian are androgynous.

Throughout the play we are compelled to pay attention to Viola's shifting sexual identity. We see her first as a girl, and watch her make decisions about how to present herself to the world; the idea of disguise thus becomes prominent, and entails the awareness that we ordinarily determine gender by dress, by appearance. The possibility of disguise suggests that there is something arbitrary about identity, and a disguise that involves a change of gender similarly suggests that our apprehension of sexual identity is mutable and susceptible to illusion. After her first scene, Viola never again appears to us as anything but a boy; unlike Rosalind, she does not re-assume her "woman's weeds" at the end of the play. A number of lines in the play draw attention to her disguise. The most notable is Orsino's description:

> Diana's lip is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe
> Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
> And all is semblative a woman's part.
> (I.iv.31-34)

A modern audience perceives this as a moment in which Orsino is close to discovering the "truth" about Cesario; Shakespeare, however, must have written the lines assuming that Orsino would deliver them to a boy disguised as a girl disguised as a boy. Viola, in fact, seems to be both a boy and a girl, and is romantically involved with both a man and a woman.

Sebastian also combines characteristics of both genders. Although I have remarked on his energy, Sebastian says of himself (on parting with Antonio), "I am yet so near the manners of my mother, that upon the least occasion more mine eyes will tell tales of me" (II.i.40-42). In relation to both Antonio and Olivia, Sebastian takes a passive, classically feminine role; he enjoys their attentions, and allows them to present him with lavish gifts. Now in one sense Antonio is a nurturing parent-figure, and again the principle of reversal is operative; the parent is subservient to the child: "If you will not murther me for my love," cries Antonio, "let me be your servant" (II.i.35-36). Antonio not only speaks to Sebastian like a doting parent, however, but also like a lover. Against Sebastian's wishes, he has followed him to Illyria:

> I could not stay behind you. My desire
> (More sharp than filed steel) did spur me forth,
> And not all love to see you (though so much
> As might have drawn one to a longer voyage)
> But jealousy what might befall your travel.
> (III.iii 4-8)

Like Viola, Sebastian is involved in erotic relationships with both a man and a woman.

The twins' androgyny may be, as some critics have suggested, related to their youth and innocence, but it also makes any romantic relationship into which they enter suspect. As soon as Viola/Cesario becomes an object of desire, we are drawn into the night world. Insofar as Viola is a girl, her encounters with Olivia inevitably

suggest lesbianism; insofar as Cesario is a boy, all his relations with Orsino suggest homosexuality. Barber, in attempting to deal with this issue, assures us that "with sexual as with other relations, it is when the normal is secure that playful aberration is benign [in *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, 1959]." Undoubtedly, but what sexual relation can we perceive as normal in Illyria?

What we see on stage in the course of the play is a delirious erotic chase; Viola pursues Orsino who pursues Olivia who pursues both Viola and Sebastian, who is pursued by Antonio. Salingar has noted [in "The Design of *Twelfth Night*" in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 1958] that "the main action of *Twelfth Night*, then, is planned with a suggestive likeness to a revel." Indeed. And the sort of revel it is most like is an orgy. Ordinarily, sexual experience is private, and involves two partners. In orgiastic experience, the number of possible sexual partners is multiplied, and distinctions of gender become less important. On the stage, we see Sebastian erotically linked with Antonio and Olivia, Orsino with Cesario and Olivia, Viola with Orsino and Olivia, Olivia with Viola and Sebastian. For the spectators of this "whirligig," and for the characters caught up in it, the complexities of eroticism in Illyria are dizzying.

There never is, needless to say, a real orgy; the playwright is in control of the revels, after all, and the comedy ends in marriage; sexual energy is channelled into appropriate social institutions. In Barber's words, "delusions and misapprehensions are resolved by the finding of objects appropriate to passions." Well, yes. Orsino marries Cesario, who loves him, and Olivia marries a man. But by this time passions have so slipped their moorings in terms of objects of desire (who, for example, does Olivia love?) that this finding of objects appropriate to passions seems rather like a game of musical chairs. My point is that the marriages at the end of *Twelfth Night* do not convince us that sexuality is ever ordered and controlled with regard to the individual in society.

In the final scene Olivia and Orsino claim their partners. There is no doubt, from an audience's perspective, who is in control here: Olivia and Orsino are older and they possess social status that the twins do not; they further control the scene in the special theatrical sense of having most of the lines. Olivia has already, by the last scene, engineered a marriage with the complaisant Sebastian. Having effected her own wedding by sheer force of will, it is Olivia who moves at the end of the play to arrange the betrothal of Viola and Orsino:

> My Lord, so please you, these things further thought on,
> To think me well a sister as a wife,
> One day shall crown th' alliance on't, so please you,
> Here at my house and at my proper cost.
> (V.i.316-19)

Orsino embraces her offer, and takes Viola's hand. It is important to remember that if we saw this scene in a theater, we would see him take Cesario's hand; the actor is still dressed as a boy, as he is some moments later when Orsino leads him from the stage.

Throughout the play, Olivia and Orsino are self-absorbed, self-willed and self-indulgent creatures: there is no evidence that they change significantly as a result of their encounters with the twins. Orsino's last words, like his first, are about himself: "But when in other habits you are seen, / Orsino's mistress, and his fancy's queen" (V.i.387-88). He is still speaking of "fancy." Orsino's anagnorisis seems to involve only the recognition that if he cannot have Olivia he may as well take Cesario: "I shall have share in this most happy wrack" (V.i.266). Similarly, there is no reason for an audience to believe that Olivia has made meaningful discoveries about the nature of love. If she was headstrong and reckless in loving Cesario, it is hard to see her as docile and prudent in her relations with Sebastian. At the end of the play, as at the beginning, Olivia is doing precisely what she wants to do.

While Olivia and Orsino have not really learned anything about love during the play, we in the audience have. As I have suggested earlier, when external obstacles to the pursuit of love are removed, as they are in Illyria, it is the nature of passion itself that lovers must contend with. "Bright things come to confusion" readily enough in our world without the interference of blocking figures. Love, first of all, can be unrequited. It is, horribly enough, possible to love someone who—for no good reason—just does not return that love. Olivia makes it perfectly clear:

> I cannot love him,
> Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,
> Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth;
> In voices well divulg'd, free, learn'd, and valiant,
> And in dimension, and the shape of nature,
> A gracious person. But yet I cannot love him.
> (I.v.257-62)

Orsino responds, "I cannot be so answer'd," and continues to long for what he cannot have in a particularly elegant, "poetical" fashion. Olivia, faced with rejection by Cesario, takes a more active approach; her "headstrong potent fault" finds expression in direct, aggressive confrontation with Cesario. It is Viola whose response to loving without requital has become best known:

> She never told her love,
> But let concealement like a worm i' the bud
> Feed on her damask cheek; she pin'd in thought,
> And with a green and yellow melancholy
> She sate like Patience on a monument,
> Smiling at grief.
> (II.iv.110-15)

It has been argued that this is not really an accurate description of Viola; perhaps it is exaggerated, but certainly Viola's reaction to loving one who loves another is of this same kind; she waits for "Time" to resolve a painful situation made more painful by her concealed identity. It seems to me very peculiar to regard this as a norm or an ideal, as some critics suggest.

At last, of course, Viola has her reward; Orsino's love for Olivia, which could "give no place, bide no delay," suddenly turns to her. That love can so turn is another of its characteristics that *Twelfth Night* discovers to us; again, it is an old truth. Here, in a comic structure, love's capriciousness works toward a comic resolution of the plot. Orsino can, after all, love Viola; Olivia can just as well marry Sebastian as Cesario. Yet Dr. Johnson's objection [in *Johnson as a Critic*, 1973] to Olivia's marriage is, as one might expect, lucid and to the point. Only in myth and ritual are twins the same person, and while the stage world is, in part, a mythic realm, theater—and Shakespeare's theater in particular—is closely bound to the empirical, naturalistic world the audience inhabits. In that frame of reference, Olivia abandons her vow of chastity to pursue the first new man she meets, marries his (her) twin brother by mistake, and seems willing to transfer her affections to a man she does not know because he looks like the one she fell in love with.

The crucial point is this: at the end of the play we perceive that love really has little or nothing to do with personality. It is, as Kott has said of love in *As You Like It*, an electric current that passes through the bodies of men and women, boys and girls. Passion violates identity. That this is true in terms of the individual's consciousness is a truism. "Ourselves we do not owe," cries Olivia, succumbing to her feelings for Cesario. The action of *Twelfth Night* suggests that it is not only the personality of the lover that is disrupted by passion: it is personality itself, the whole concept of unique, distinct identity. Cesario, the beloved, is both Viola and Sebastian; it really doesn't matter. Olivia and Viola are ultimately as interchangeable as their names suggest.

As in Spenser's Garden of Adonis, forms change, but Form remains; here, however, the "Form" is not a structure or a pattern, but energy, energy which propels individuals, sometimes against their will, toward others who may or may not be so moved. Such, it seems to me, is love in *Twelfth Night*.

Shakespeare has made similar suggestions about the nature of love in *As You Like It* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, plays which also deal with psychic liberation; yet these plays do not lead us to a dark vision of the psyche. Nor do they have the melancholy tone of *Twelfth Night*; the language of this comedy is unusual in being not bawdy but grim. There are remarkably few ribald puns in *Twelfth Night*; by my count, there are twenty-nine references to madness in the play, twenty-two references to disease, twenty-five to devilry, and thirty-seven to destruction and death. The play's somber language would seem to be at odds with its festive structure; in my view, the structure and language are particularly compatible given the nature of festivity in *Twelfth Night*.

One difference between Illyria and the Wood of Athens is that in the wood, powerful and ultimately benevolent beings exist to set things right, beings who are intimately allied with, indeed embodiments of, the natural world. Illyria is a city, not a forest. In *Twelfth Night*, unlike *As You Like It* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, festivity is divorced from pastoral, and this is crucially important to our experience of the play, since it means that sexuality is not perceived in relation to nature.

The concept of nature which the Renaissance inherited from the Middle Ages made a distinction between material phenomena (natura naturata) and an organizing principle (natura naturans); the latter was conceived as a structuring energy which, under Divine Providence, brought the physical phenomena into existence and patterned their being. As a manifestation of natura naturans, sexuality may wreak havoc in individual lives, but pursues its own ends of fertility and generation. Thus, as in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, a loss of identity can result from being subsumed in forces greater than the conscious self; personality may be blurred or erased by these forces, but finally they are beneficent in that they drive towards the preservation of life. The multiple marriages at the end of *As You Like It* provoke even from Jacques the comment (the realization), "these couples are coming to the ark." But in *Twelfth Night*, the absence of pastoral distances festivity from fertility, just as the absence of bawdry distances sexuality from a simple, homely pleasure that all humans share with the beasts. Illyria is beautiful, aristocratic, and sterile.

Festivity in *Twelfth Night* is divorced not only from nature, but, as I have indicated, from occasion. It is not a temporary release from social restraints but a permanent condition. The Forest of Arden and the Wood of Athens are places into which people enter in the course of the play and from which they will return; there is, to paraphrase Ralph Berry, "no escape from Illyria." The marriages there do not seem to place erotic love in a community, or to anchor it in a social life where impulses are ordered—not necessarily repressed, but controlled and contained.

That ordering, in a healthy society, provides more, rather than less individual freedom; the ability to control drives and impulses means, for the individual, freedom from the tyranny of the unconscious, while societal restraints ultimately protect the individual from the tyranny of others. The real tragedy of Malvolio lies in the fact that in this play the principle of order has become too rigid and too perverse to accommodate pleasure. Of course we laugh at him, he is ridiculous, yet his expulsion from the comic world brings an end to "Shakespeare's Festive Comedy," since it means that sobriety and intoxication, parents and children, workday and holiday, restraint and release, cannot be reconciled. In this way, Malvolio's exit is as disturbing as Mercade's entrance in *Love's Labours Lost* with his message of death. We feel, in the audience, the necessity of somehow making peace with him, and he is gone. His last line must certainly include everyone in the theater.

The play itself has discovered to us the dangers of life without the principle of order that Malvolio stands for; Feste's final song serves as a vivid reminder. The Rabelaisian ideal of freedom (the Abbaye de Theleme) only

is possible when human nature can be trusted; doing what we will can be a horror if the forces that drive us are dark. In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare leads us to explore the possibility that our drives to pleasure are ultimately irreconcilable with social and moral norms of goodness; it is the antithesis of *As You Like It*, which works from the hypothesis that people are basically good at heart. In *As You Like It*, the characters and the audience arrive at a restoration of the world; in *Twelfth Night*, what the characters and the audience come to are the limits of festival, and at that extremity are violence and indiscriminate passion.

The play does not so much tell us but show us that these are what we want. It is the audience who finally approve, with their laughter and applause, the actions of the characters. I do not mean to suggest that we should not laugh and applaud, or that we should become a community of Malvolios, hostile to pleasure. This is a very funny play, and nearly all the characters—certainly including Orsino and Olivia— are enormously appealing. That is just the point. What I am suggesting is this: to delight in the pranks of the revellers is to participate vicariously in a form of Dionysian frenzy; to assent to the ending, to confirm it as a "happy" one, is to embrace the possibility of erotic love as transpersonal and trans-sexual. But the play does not wholeheartedly confirm the value of Saturnalian pleasure; if it is not sentimentalized in production, if festivity is allowed to reach its limits, then the play itself will create an awareness that "what we will" is potentially dark and dangerous.

SOURCE: "*Twelfth Night*: The Limits of Festivity" in *Studies in English Literature*, 1500 to 1900, Vol. 22, No. 2, Spring, 1982, pp. 223-38.

Role Playing and Problems of Identity

J. Dennis Huston

[*Huston outlines a number of "unanswered problems" in* Twelfth Night. *Among these are the juxtaposition of scenes which take place three months apart, Viola's puzzling reaction to the appearance of her brother, and the lack of any resolution to the matter of Antonio's imprisonment. The critic maintains that these questions arise from the sense of detachment the play creates in its audience by presenting Illyria as a kind of fairy-tale world. Huston goes on to offer a psychological analysis of Viola's masculine disguise, describing it in terms of an "identity crisis" brought about by her belief that her twin brother has died and by her arrival in a foreign land. According to Huston, Viola is reluctant to embrace her sexual identity in this new world and finds a sense of security and "masculine freedom" by adopting the identity of her lost brother.*]

One of the most perplexing difficulties confronting a reader of *Twelfth Night*, or any other Shakespearean play, is how to deal with what might be called its residual problems, those testy questions that critical analyses ignore or leave unanswered. Some such problems, indigenous to Shakespearean drama, are really unanswerable. And *Twelfth Night* has its share of these. Partly the condition of Shakespeare's text is to blame. We shall never know, for instance, whether the fourth stanza of Feste's final song is as it should be: there surely Shakespeare's, and Feste's, sense of context is hardly given just representation by the sentence fragment passed on in the text. But, just as surely, conjecture about this problem is essentially fruitless, since the content of the stanza is clear enough without textual emendation. The bed that should be the still, fixed center of a generatively fruitful marriage is instead fractured by the drunk's unproductive activity and, like him, spun out into the unstable perimeter of one-night stands, and falls, in the company of other tosspots.

Partly, too, insoluble problems are a necessary result of the way Shakespeare wrote—swiftly and commercially, so that accuracy of petty detail is sometimes sacrificed to more pressing immediate effects. The contradictory double time scheme in *Twelfth Night* is, as a consequence, neither very noticeable nor very important. It hardly matters that Sebastian and Viola collide spatially when they are temporally almost three months apart. Superficially, they meet at the same time, for Viola has served Orsino during the three months that Sebastian has accompanied Antonio with "not a minute's vacancy" (V.i.98) [quotations from the

Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. Hardin Craig (1951)]. Viola is, however, first sent as an emissary to Olivia only three days after her arrival in Orsino's court, and her return journey to that court is interrupted by the scene in which Sebastian takes leave of Antonio after a stay of three months, though the length of this stay is not revealed until we have forgotten its technical impossibility. Shakespeare is not so much anticipating the modern movie technique of the flash-forward as he is sacrificing consistency of detail to thematic effect, by assuring his audience that Sebastian lives, that Olivia's love can find a suitable object, and that all of the intricately interwoven complications of plot are under the guiding and beneficent control of a dramatist who means to bring them eventually to a harmonious conclusion. If in the process he can successfully employ one of his favorite dramatic sleights of hand, double time, that is only further proof of his suprahuman powers as creator.

Mostly, though, unanswered problems in *Twelfth Night* evolve out of the very nature of the dramatic form itself, with its carefully delimited boundaries of action and character. Such boundaries may appear almost unlimited, as the controversial complexity of a world like Hamlet's proves, but such complexity is the result of carefully controlled exclusion: we do not notice boundaries because we do not look for them. Fascinated by what we see and hear of Hamlet, we forget that what we see and hear of him is all there is. As a consequence, we often ignore problems that the dramatist ignores, although they could never pass unnoticed in real life. We may wonder briefly how Horatio could have remained a month at Elsinore without ever meeting Hamlet, and why everyone in Denmark has conveniently forgotten that Hamlet is the real heir to his father's throne, but we dismiss such queries as quibbles. Shakespeare does not worry about them, so why should we?

There are similar kinds of delitescent boundaries to the action of *Twelfth Night*. For example, Viola changes her plans for disguise between the time we first see her and the time she arrives at Orsino's court, where she appears as a page, not a eunuch. Her brother likewise alters his purpose after his initial appearance, for although he takes leave of Antonio specifically to go to Orsino's court, he next appears as a casual sight-seer who has apparently put aside all thoughts of count and court. Finally, Olivia could hardly marry Sebastian while confused about his identity, because the error would be exposed during the exchange of vows. Even in his euphoric state of wonder, Sebastian would have to recognize that he was not "Cesario."

But the reader fastidious enough to worry about problems like these must also wonder if he is not perhaps throwing in his lot with the likes of Pope's dunces and digging around in the fertile soil of Shakespeare's plays merely to turn up grubs and worms and bits of hair. Still, the plain fact about grubs and worms is that they often indicate where the soil is richest: trivial problems are not the only ones left unanswered in *Twelfth Night*. Others more substantial linger and tease us out of thought until, like Malvolio struggling to decode the cryptic content of Maria's note, we think we glimpse the figure of a grander, yet undisclosed, design. For instance, why is Viola, who is at least once called Sebastian and who has hoped from the first that her brother is not really drowned, so slow to realize that he is in Illyria? And why, when she finally sees him, does she initiate such an unnecessarily long and artificial recognition scene? What happens to Antonio, who is conspicuously ignored in the closing speeches of pardon? How are we to interpret Orsino's insistent desire to see Viola in feminine dress before accepting her as a woman? And finally, as a corollary to this question, we might wonder just how we are supposed to feel about the betrothal of this vain, self-serving Duke to such an energetic and interesting heroine.

These questions do overreach the boundaries of explicit action in *Twelfth Night*, but the play itself encourages this kind of conjecturing by repeatedly calling forth the Renaissance equivalent of the *Verfremdungseffekt*. Almost never is the audience allowed to forget that it is watching a play whose world is manufactured out of the shaping imagination of the dramatist. That is why Sebastian first appears so early in the play, even at the cost of temporal consistency; that is why Malvolio, enthralled by Maria's letter, does not notice his boisterous deceivers, who are near enough to hear *him* clearly as he reads; and that is why Fabian interrupts the gulling of Malvolio to exclaim, "If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction" (III.iv.140-41). In addition, there are other less obvious, but equally important, promptings to detachment.

Riddles and puns are dominant figures of speech in the language of Feste and Viola, who use them in part to signal their detachment from the restrictive roles forced upon them in Illyria. And in the process their detachment is passed on to the audience, which is similarly encouraged to view the action critically from its own, even broader, perspective. Even the playwright's cursory suggestions about the geography of Illyria distance it from actual human experience by locating it somewhere in the middle distance between fairyland and reality.

At first the world of the play seems insulated like the setting of a fairy tale, which, even when its action is supposedly wide-ranging, presents us with a realm that is everywhere the same—ravaged by the same kind of giant, dragon, or wicked stepmother. Here the sea, through its mythical associations with tempest, leviathan, and chaos, laps at the edges of the land and people grounded there, threatening imminent dissolution. It already has robbed this world of considerable masculine force and left its women exposed and isolated. Sebastian has apparently drowned, and Viola is shipwrecked on a strange shore. Olivia's father and brother have died, and while her uncle drowns his days and nights in drink, she is undergoing a sea-change of her own by closing up her house and heart in order to "water once a day her chamber round / With eye-offending brine" (I.i.29-30). Even the ruling Duke is figuratively paralyzed by a love that, like the sea, swallows all that it encounters.

This world, too, seems characterized by the psychological simplicity of the bedtime story, where human motives are transparent and actions exaggerated. The Duke cares for nothing but his love or love; Olivia has resolved to honor her brother's memory by shutting herself off from the sun for seven years; and her uncle just as foolishly insulates himself against an outside world of time and responsibility by drunkenly obliterating all distinctions between late and betimes. Then there is Viola—orphaned, shipwrecked, and washed up on a strange shore—clearly an identifiable personage from fairy tale: she is the quester, the young, untested hero of uncertain origins who has come to rejuvenate the wasteland and heal its languishing, impotent ruler. To emphasize her apparently mythical role, Shakespeare makes her introduction as simply direct as "once upon a time" and her motivation as transparent as fairyland love: "What country, friends, is this? . . . Who governs here? . . . Orsino! I have heard my father name him: / He was a bachelor then" (I.ii.1, 24, 28-29). Then, further identifying her with the questing hero, Shakespeare dresses her as a young man and sends her to court, in both senses of the word.

But as the action of the play moves inland from the sea, situation and motivation become much more complicated, and the sharp outlines of the fairy-tale world dissolve. In its place appear the vague perimeters of the realm on the other side of Illyria from the sea. There men do not open their arms and gates to shipwrecked strangers; they shut them tightly for fear of knaves and thieves. There revelers who drink through the night cannot forever playfully catch the sounds of morning by claiming to be up betimes; they must eventually confront the jarring dissonances of the morning after the night before. And there marriage is not the promise of joy lived happily ever afterwards; it is a perilous undertaking which all too often ends in misunderstanding and sorrow. This world on the other side of Illyria is less well known to the characters than to the audience, which, after all, inhabits it daily and has come to the play partly in flight from its wind and rain. But the play will not let the audience forget it altogether; Feste is there to remind it that such a world indelibly marks the souls of those who have been there, even if they can regularly return to the realm of imagination and play. Like the audience, Feste is thus a participant in two worlds. And, also like it, he enters and exits from the realm outside Illyria.

At his entrance the first thing we hear of him is that he has been away, and his habitual detachment from the action of the play suggests that the world he has been visiting still has him partly in its grasp. There he has learned that language shifts meaning according to context and that, as a result, boundaries are no longer distinct: "That that is is" (IV.ii.17) at one time, but at another "Nothing that is so is so" (IV.i.9). Like language, then, philosophy becomes for Feste a cheveril glove that can be turned at will to conceal wear and tear; from almost all that goes on around him he maintains a measure of detachment. Only once in the drama

is he so completely drawn into an action that he does not manage to retain a degree of aloofness from it: he mistakes Sebastian for Viola-Cesario. And then his error may signal a confusion of identity that belongs as much to psychological complexity and the realm of the audience as to dramatic irony and the world of Illyria.

Feste's exit, though, is even more obviously out from Illyria into the world of the audience. In his closing lyric he sings of experience removed from, but relevant to, that of the play. Here also we are presented with fool's play, a closed house, revelry, and marriage, but what we are given is really the underside—or, in the spatial terms suggested by the play, the other side—of the human experience depicted in the drama. For Feste's talk of closed houses that remain locked up against outsiders, of revelry followed by collapse, and of marriage blighted by the failure of expectation can perhaps be taken as a comment upon the apparently harmonious resolution of the plot. At the very least, the song encourages speculation about a conclusion where closed houses are opened up and revelry is ceremonialized in multiple marriages, and where in the process so many troublesome questions are left unanswered.

Finally, a further complication to the original simplicity of story line and character is presented by the entrance of Sebastian, whose manner and dress resemble Viola's and whose situation is almost an exact parallel to hers: saved by a ship captain and lamenting the loss of his twin, he sets out to seek his fortune at Orsino's court. Now suddenly there are two questing heroes spawned by the same sea, appareled in the same clothes, and bound for the same court. And now too the problems facing the audience, as well as the Illyrians, are compounded almost fourfold, for with Sebastian's introduction come also the knotty questions of Viola's reluctance to admit him living to her consciousness, double time, Antonio's captivity, and Orsino's insistence on redressing his page before acknowledging her identity as woman. Sebastian's presence is no doubt dramatically necessary, since he is needed to satisfy Olivia, but for her a man like Antonio might have served just as well: all that is really necessary is someone radically different from the languishing Orsino. Why then bring on Sebastian? Shakespeare is not inalterably bound to use twins just because his source does. Once early in his dramatic career he added a set of twins to a plot borrowed from Plautus; here he might just as easily have taken one away and avoided some of the dramatic problems precipitated by Sebastian's appearance. But of course he never meant to avoid them, because what surely drew him to the story in the first place was the very presence of the twins; it is one of the few details in the source he does not alter.

Since the time of the Roman theater, separated twins have provided the dramatist with a wealth of ready-made possibilities for comedy nourished by misunderstanding and mistaken identity, and Shakespeare was hardly one to throw away a dramatic formula of proven worth. But the real reason he may have chosen to retain the twins from the source story has to do with mistaken—or uncertain—identity in a more complex way, for in this respect, as in so many things, he apparently anticipated some of the discoveries of modern psychology. Or if he did not actually anticipate them, he at least created a dramatic world expansive enough to hold them in suspension. For a moment let me, like Feste, enter the world of *Twelfth Night* from the side weathered by wind and rain.

One of the foremost concerns of modern psychoanalytic study—for theorists as radically different as R. D. Laing and Erik Erikson—is with problems of identity. "The patient of today," Erikson writes, [in *Childhood and Society* (1963)] "suffers most under the problem of what he should believe in and who he should—or, indeed, might—be or become. . . . The study of identity, then, becomes as strategic in our time as the study of sexuality was in Freud's time." Erikson suggests that modern man can expand his understanding of this problem by studying its manifestations in history, for in singular moments man's struggle with identity, if he is such a man as Luther or Gandhi, has unleashed forces of immeasurable creativity and reshaped his world. But Erikson does not draw his examples of identity crises from history alone. He finds them also in art, and particularly in Shakespeare's tragedies, which give us remarkably lifelike accounts of man's struggle to understand and fulfill his sense of identity. The most obvious example is Hamlet. For surely what Hamlet experiences as he struggles to integrate his remembrance of things past with a present time that seems out of joint is, in the language of contemporary psychology, an acute identity crisis. Repeatedly he reaches out for an

identity that just as repeatedly dissolves before his self-lacerating violence:

> What a piece of work is a man! . . .
> And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?
> (II.ii.314-22)
>
> O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
> (II.ii.576)
>
> To be, or not to be: that is the question. . .
> (III.i.56)
>
> What should such fellows as I do crawling
> between earth and heaven?
> (III.i. 130-32)

Shakespeare's interest in problems of identity is not restricted to his tragic drama, however. It is also recognizable as a concern in his comedies, where many of the problems that rack Hamlet are filtered through a different mode and mood. For instance, Shakespeare's comic heroines are often, like Hamlet, fatherless: Viola and Portia have lost their fathers to death, Rosalind has seen hers banished, and Beatrice and Helena are conspicuously fatherless in dramatic worlds where fathers play important roles. Sometimes, also like Hamlet, these heroines are called to answer the intransigent demands of their fathers' decrees: Hermia must wed Demetrius or choose between death and a nunnery, and Kate must marry if ever she is to escape endless unflattering comparisons with her sister. Portia's situation is most obviously like Hamlet's; the charge impressed by her father upon her comes from beyond the grave. Cut loose from a childhood identity secured by paternal protection, these heroines, also like the Danish Prince, soon discover the vulnerability of their newly exposed positions: Rosalind is banished under threat of death, Helena is abandoned in the enchanted wood, and Viola is stranded upon a strange shore.

In such a position Hamlet depends upon disguise to protect himself against violation of either the physical or psychological kind, and the heroines do the same thing. Most often they hide their sex, both literally and figuratively, behind the disguise of a page, with at least a twofold purpose. First, the disguise protects them from sexual attack; second, it secures for them a physical freedom that is the complementary corollary to their sudden vulnerability: without a father each is also without a circumscribed identity as a child and thus free to venture out into the broader world of adult responsibility and ultimately to choose a husband. Sometimes the disguise that these heroines wear is not consciously assumed, but even then it bespeaks a desire to enjoy the freedom associated with adulthood, particularly with the masculine role in the adult world. Kate and Beatrice do not actually dress themselves as young men; they just become masculinely independent and aggressive—by openly rebelling against the conventional feminine behavior expected of them.

No doubt there are other interesting similarities between the experiences of Hamlet and many of Shakespeare's heroines. Both undergo physical journeys that are related to psychological transportations; both are complemented by friends, often traveling companions, who speak for more socially conventional attitudes; and both experience setbacks in love which encourage doubt about the faithfulness, and ultimately about the very identity, of the loved one. To point out such similarities is not to argue that Shakespeare's comic heroines are really like Hamlet. Between them there is a world of difference: the difference between a comic and a tragic universe, between recreative psychic play and constrictive psychic paralysis, and, finally, between life and death. What *is* important about these similarities, from my point of view, is that they testify to Shakespeare's abiding concern with different forms of identity crisis. One such crisis is depicted in *Twelfth Night*, and it begins with Viola, stranded upon the shore.

Behind her is the sea of lost identity, which has washed away the foundations of her previous existence. Gone is her childhood tie to family, for her father is dead, her mother never to be heard of, and her brother apparently drowned. Gone too is Messaline, country of her birth, now so insulated by the perilous sea of experience that she cannot even think of returning there. Her world lies all before her, in thoughts of marriage and fulfilled sexual identity: "Orsino! I have heard my father name him: / He was a bachelor then" (I.ii.28-29). It is not by accident that she remembers her father as she thinks of Orsino, for she is in the process of turning from the security of parental protection to the uncertainty of sexual affection; but because the world of sexuality is also associated with pain and death—as Feste's first puns about hanging and Viola's later ones about dying emphasize—Viola is reluctant to commit herself completely to this new world. Her thoughts stray from Orsino to the softer figure of Olivia: "O that I served that lady / And might not be delivered to the world, / Till I had made mine own occasion mellow . . ." (I.ii.41-43). But occasion is not altogether under her control— Olivia will admit no kind of suit—and Viola is forced back to her original idea. She resolves to serve the Duke, though not yet with a clearly defined sexual identity. At first she thinks that she can obliterate all sexual considerations by appearing to Orsino as a eunuch; but once within his sphere of influence, she may sense that sexlessness is impossible and, still uncertain about the consequences of her female identity, adopts the disguise of a page to secure a measure of freedom and mobility. But what Viola is also doing by donning this disguise is providing herself with freedom in its manifestation as time.

In *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (1959), C. L. Barber made us aware of how important the concept of holiday is to Shakespearean comedy as a whole, where dramatic worlds often mirror the freedom of festival time when traditional rules are overturned and restrictions abandoned. But this kind of freedom is not limited to Shakespeare's dramatic universe in general; it may also find expression m the psyches of particular characters: an unloosening of bonds without may be matched by an equivalent unloosening of bonds within, and for similar reasons. In a time of revelry the state buys long-term obedience at the cost of short-term license; in the process of play the psyche often does the same thing, by temporarily putting away its usual restraints. The purpose of such a psychic holiday is obvious: it gives rein to impulses and energies in the psyche that might otherwise build to explosive proportions, and at the same time it allows for experimentation with, and maturation of, developing forms of identity.

In the development of the integrated human personality, modern psychoanalytic study suggests, the most important such psychic holiday occurs during adolescence. Erikson calls it a "psychosocial moratorium" and describes its crucial importance to adolescent girls:

> woman's life too contains ... a sanctioned period of delay of adult functioning. The maturing girl. . . may venture into "outer space" with a bearing and a curiosity which often appears hermaphroditic if not outright "masculine." A special ambulatory dimension is thus added to the inventory of her spatial behavior . . . the young girl tries out a variety of possible identifications with the phallic-ambulatory male.

What is most interesting about this analysis, from my perspective, is its relevance to Viola. Here is an account of psychic development that includes newly acquired freedom, adventure into a realm formerly unknown, uncertain sexual identity with a tendency toward hermaphroditic and masculine behavior, and experimentation with a variety of identifications—all important components of Viola's experience in Illyria. Much of the action of *Twelfth Night* can thus be viewed as the depiction of an adolescent identity crisis in Viola, who is struggling with the problems of transition from childhood to adulthood. And, as if to focus attention on this crisis, Shakespeare has compounded it by putting Viola in an isolated position, where she cannot turn back to parental guidance for help. She is, in short, subjected to the tyranny of freedom; liberated from her past, she must play out different roles in order to discover what her mature identity is to be in the future: to discover who she is, she has to discover also who she is not.

First she attempts to put problems of sexuality aside by proclaiming herself a eunuch, but that plan is apparently rejected as soon as she gets close enough to discover that sexual impulses cannot be negated merely by proclamation. It is an idea that Shakespeare used twice before as the starting point for comedy— in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Taming of the Shrew*— and would use again with more serious overtones in *Measure for Measure*. Here, however, it is passed over quickly in Viola's experience because it is going to be given much more thorough treatment in the characterization of Olivia.

The next role that Viola assumes, and is least inclined to put away at the end, is the one obviously associated with her disguise. It is what Erikson, in talking about the adolescent female in general, calls her "identifications with the phallic-ambulatory male"—ambulatory because she tries out the freedom of movement that society generally denies young women, phallic because such freedom and mobility enable her to penetrate into realms of experience previously unknown. In her disguise as a young man Viola is free to move first from the seashore to the court and then back and forth between the court and Olivia's house. In addition, the increasingly phallic nature of her activity in this disguise is suggested by the progression from her penetration by stealth into Orsino's court, through her more obvious verbal and psychological assault of Olivia, to her blatant confrontation of Sir Andrew with the ultimately phallic weapon, the sword. Of course both Sir Andrew and Viola assume their roles as duelists with the greatest reluctance because they are, finally, not fitted to their usurped masculine attire. Though for obviously different reasons, each is inadequately equipped to deal with the manifold social, sexual, and psychological responsibilities of mature masculine identity. But each can discover his inadequacies only by playing out his assumed role to its inevitable conclusion.

Viola must do so because her initial freedom is accompanied by a concomitant confusion of sexual identity. Partly this is a result of conflicts attending her situation in general, for confusion of sexual identity is a common problem for a young woman trying to decide who and what she is, and will become. During such time, Erikson writes [in *Identity, Youth and Crisis*], "the young person does not feel himself clearly to be a member of one sex or the other," and she may as a consequence experiment with a variety of sexual identities. But mostly Viola's confusion of identity results from the fact that she is a twin. Since she and Sebastian, as twins, together constitute "A natural perspective, that is and not" (V.i.224)—an apparent singleness of identity within a doubleness of form—her sense of self must necessarily include a sense of other self that is her brother. Thus when he is apparently lost, she faces the psychic extinction of debilitating inaction. In almost her first speech Viola describes the feeling of paralysis that threatens to accompany the loss of her brother; without him she wonders if she can *do* anything: "And what should I do in Illyria? / My brother he is in Elysium" (I.ii.3-4). As a woman, then, she may imagine herself psychically incomplete, because her female identity does not take adequate account of her missing male counterpart. Perhaps to compensate for this feeling, Viola attempts to integrate Sebastian's masculineness into her own personality: she dons his clothes and moves with the freedom characteristic of a young man. She does not, however, like her forerunner in the source story, assume her brother's name, because she is not trying to obliterate her own feminine identity; she is not trying to *become* Sebastian. Instead, her intention is to secure for herself a temporary psychic holiday in order to try out various modes of behavior before settling on the finality of adult commitment. She does not understand the action in these terms, but the language of delay appears recurrently in her thoughts:

> O that I served that lady
> And might not be delivered to the world,
> Till I had made mine own occasion mellow,
> What my estate is!
> (I.ii.41-44)

> What else may hap to time I will commit;
> Only shape thou thy silence to my wit.
> (I.ii.60-61)

O time! thou must untangle this, not I;
It is too hard a knot for me to untie!
(II.ii.41-42)

In her choice of name Viola emphasizes the tenuousness of her position, because "Cesario" suggests, among other things, premature birth, delivery into a world before the attainment of full growth. Whether its sound also suggests Arion on the sea, and thereby Sebastian as he is described by Viola's nameless ship captain, is a matter of conjecture. Such a suggestion, though, would underscore the idea that Viola, in putting on her disguise as Cesario, is attempting to integrate aspects of Sebastian's personality into her own. It might also help to explain why Viola is later so reluctant to recognize Sebastian as an entity unto himself. Having lived so long with him as part of her personality, she may be unconsciously hesitant to admit him to the outside world again, partly because he will then no longer be under her psychic management and partly because his reappearance signals the end to her period of play: she must then put away her masculine usurped attire, and with it a mobility and masculine freedom that she will never know again.

It is no wonder that she may experience this kind of unconscious reaction to surrendering her masculine freedom, since the only clearly feminine role she tries on as Cesario is hardly more suited to her developing sexual identity than the role of eunuch. And, like her identity as eunuch, its expression is confined to language, not action. The role is that of the silent, passive, long-suffering female, and it significantly involves time, not as delay for the germination of action, but as permanent entrapment in inaction and grief:

My father had a daughter loved a man,
she pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief.
(II.iv.110-18)

Viola may be silent about her love for Orsino—though in moments like this one she no doubt hopes he will penetrate her disguise—but she hardly sits like patience on a monument. Instead, she counters her sorrow with the almost constant activity in "outer space" that goes with her disguise as a young man. In this respect she provides a marked contrast to other characters in the play who respond to love by various kinds of withdrawal.

For instance, Olivia first expresses her love for her dead brother by withdrawing into her house and closing out even the sun. Then later, when she has decided to put aside her mourning veil, she sends a servant after Cesario and bids him come to her, where they may confer in private. Even her courtship of Sebastian is essentially an act of withdrawal: what she really wants to do with her lover-husband is lock him up within her own private inner space—in her house, in her church, in her bedroom, and ultimately in her body. But during such withdrawal she at least admits another person, even if her union with him is constrictively possessive. Orsino and Malvolio cannot do even that, because their idea of love is really just a form of self-involvement. Their erotic fantasies leave no room for another person—only for a self-generated image of that person. As a result, each ultimately calls for the absolute privacy of autistic isolation. "I myself am best / When least in company" (I.iv.37-38), Orsino assures his servants, while Malvolio, as is his habit, is a good deal blunter: "let me enjoy my private" (III.iv.99). Shakespeare's pun here—it is surely his and not Malvolio's—is also instructive because it emphasizes the kind of adolescent constrictiveness that logically results from such a self-serving approach to love. Like Malvolio's other Freudian slip about winding his watch and "play [ing] with my—some rich jewel" (II.v.66), it directs us to the essentially masturbatory nature of his, and Orsino's, withdrawal. Locked in the love of vain, self-generated images, each experiences figuratively what it is Malvolio's misfortune to endure literally; imprisonment in darkness with only the self for company.

Malvolio's imprisonment, though, does more than draw attention to his and the Duke's limitations as lovers; it also gives explicit dramatic expression to a motif of implicit thematic importance throughout: entrapment. Few characters in *Twelfth Night* escape imprisonment of one kind or another. The most obvious victims besides Malvolio are Viola's rescuer and Antonio, who are locked forever in the limbo of indefinite incarceration. Before the ship captain can be released, Malvolio has to be relocated and pacified; before Antonio can be freed, he must be pardoned by Orsino. Neither captive is in an enviable position, for Malvolio's promise of revenge attests to an uncompromising bitterness hardly compatible with the reconciliations characteristic of comic resolutions, and Orsino's failure to grant Antonio pardon is almost as conspicuous as the silence of Duke Antonio in the last scene of *The Tempest*. Both may be versions in the comic mode of Iago's "From this time forth I never will speak word" (*Othello* V.ii.304), an intransigent refusal to communicate with those whose values one cannot accept. Whether the audience is supposed to be consciously aware of such problems is a debatable question, though surely some measure of awareness is generated by the Duke's order to pursue Malvolio and by Antonio's presence on the stage. What cannot be denied, however, is the fact that such problems focus attention on other examples of imprisonment, both voluntary and involuntary, in the play.

Olivia is for a time locked in her house, while Sebastian is confined first at Antonio's and then at Olivia's. Sir Andrew and Sir Toby, rebelling against the confinement of Olivia's exaggerated mourning plan, become imprisoned in another kind of excess as the monotonous circularity of their early-morning catch suggests. Orsino and Malvolio, each in his own special way, are trapped in self-generated, autistic love. Even Feste and Viola, who are the most mobile of Illyria's inhabitants, are ultimately constricted by their Illyrian dress. The Fool, continually forced to adjust his mood to the tastes of his superiors, faces as the price of possible failure the ultimate form of constriction: "my lady will hang thee for thy absence" (I.v.3-4). And Viola, who first dons the disguise of Cesario in order to secure a greater measure of freedom, finds that disguise ever more restricting until at last it threatens her with both confinement and self-annihilation: "Cesario, husband, stay" (V.i.146).

Such suggestions of entrapment qualify the happiness of the resolution. In a world so marked by constriction, marriage may also appear as another form of imprisonment, particularly when it is entered upon in such haste and for such foolish reasons. Olivia does not even know the name of her husband, Sir Toby has married Maria to repay her for gulling Malvolio, and Orsino is betrothed to Viola because he liked her when she was a boy. To the end his concerns are with surface judgments and self-generated images of the loved one: before recognizing Viola as a woman he must see her in feminine dress, and even then his intention is to make her his *fancy's* queen. Perhaps as testimony to the precariousness of this union, to the violence that can at any moment transform Orsino's totalitarian commitment from love to hate, is the figure of Antonio, whose faithful, vigorous love has not, like Viola's, been at last rewarded by Orsino's grace. Antonio's fate, we know, can become hers if the outlines of her character do not match the figures of Orsino's fancy: "Why should I not, had I the heart to do it, / Like to the Egyptian thief at point of death, / Kill what I love?" (V.i.120-22). Momentarily the energies of such potential violence threaten the apparent order of the resolution, but they are quickly pushed back down beneath the surface of things by the happy ending. In Viola's action, however, there is perhaps some evidence of uncertainty. She ignores Antonio, as if she were afraid to recognize what his presence at her betrothal means. More noticeably, she seems to draw out the recognition scene with her brother interminably, as if, reluctant to discard her disguise, she were luxuriating for a few last, precious moments in the play world of masculine freedom. She talks about putting on her woman's weeds, but about this problem there is more than the necessary amount of talk, and less than the necessary amount of action. Then, at the end, she is strangely silent, as if she were fondly remembering all that is past. She might, though, for all we know, be joyfully anticipating the future and her role as Orsino's fancy's queen. If so, we wish her luck; but we cannot share her optimism, because we remember that Twelfth Night marks the conclusion of revelry and is always succeeded, as Feste reminds us, by a long season of wind and rain.

SOURCE: "'When I Came to Man's Estate': *Twelfth Night* and Problems of Identity," in *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3, September, 1972, pp. 274-88.

Language and Communication

Ralph Berry

[*Berry contends that the action in* Twelfth Night *centers on acts of communication—formal messages being sent and received. Most of these, in the critic's view, are not "true" communication: Olivia's message to Orsino in the first act, for example, is really an announcement to herself of her intention to continue mourning her brother. The letter that fools Malvolio is another instance of a message that fails to convey truth. In contrast, the critic describes Malvolio's message to Olivia from his confinement as the single act of true communication in the play.*]

The burden of the theme of fantasy and reality is entrusted to a particular device: the message. The action of *Twelfth Night* is in great part the business, literal and symbolic, of communication. Each Act sees one or more formal messages—I do not count informal and oral bringing of news. They constitute the archetypal action of the play.

The first scene contains an important message: Olivia to Orsino, a declaration of her absurd vow to mourn her brother for seven years. It is not a true communication, merely the publication of a fantasy; the "message" is a self-to-self statement. The same is true of Orsino's reply to Viola (I, 4); he, too, is announcing his own fantasy: "Surprise her with discourse of my dear faith; / It shall become thee well to act my woes." (1, 4, 24-25) The resonance of "act" is suggestive. Still, the nuncio's function is faithfully carried out by Viola:

> I will on with my speech in your praise and then
> show you the heart of my message. . .
> Tell me your mind I am a messenger. (I, 5, 181-2 . . . 194-5)

Viola has the understanding and intelligence for the discharge of her office. Even so, Olivia and Orsino cannot be said to communicate. The matter is repeated with greater emphasis and clarity in II, 4, when Orsino again sends his declaration of love. He is simply not interested in any answer but acceptance.

> *Viola*: But if she cannot love you, sir?
> *Duke*: I cannot be so answered
> (II, 4, 86-87)

In other words, he will not accept the realities of the situation. It is a manifesto of noncommunication. Olivia's message to Viola (II, 2) is no more satisfactory. The messenger, Malvolio, has no idea of what is going on, but Viola immediately apprehends the situation: "She loves me sure." (II, 2, 21) The fault lies in the sender, prey to another species of illusion.

The play's main pseudo-message is the letter, supposedly from Olivia to Malvolio. His fantasy has been penetrated, and the "message" is no more than an inflation of his hopes. The scene in which Malvolio discovers the letter is, in addition to its other qualities, pure symbolist drama. The point is that Malvolio goes for a walk in the sun.

> *Maria*: He has been yonder i' the sun
> practicing behavior to his own shadow this half hour.
> (II, 5, 14-15)

And "sun," in the terms of this play, is the associate of folly. Feste makes the connection, to Viola: "Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere." (III, 1, 37-38) The connection is in any case confirmed by IV, 2 (the structural balance to II, 5, in the design of *Twelfth Night*), which presents the complementary paradox of reason in darkness. So Malvolio's journey into illusion takes the form of a walk in the sun.

Thus the comic business develops the serious concern of *Twelfth Night*, the fallibility of human communication. And the variations on this theme continue in Act III, through Sir Andrew's letter to Viola/Cesario. That letter is totally misconceived, a triumph of noncommunication. Sir Andrew has misjudged the situation, the identity of his addressee, his language—and to crown all, his message is not even delivered. His effort ranks with Malvolio's as the non-message of the play. Sir Toby (whose role now contrasts with Viola, the ideal messenger) delivers orally two lying messages, to Viola and Sir Andrew. Their purpose is merely deception. But Sir Toby's view of the essence of correspondence has already been made plain in his advice to Sir Andrew in III, 2: the key word is "lies." (III, 2, 40)

That is as far as *Twelfth Night* can go in its variations on failure of communication. The remainder of the play shows a struggling toward the light. Act IV, 2 is the critical scene. It reveals a Malvolio purged of fantasy, and striving only to make contact with the realities of the world. Matched with the sunfilled garden of II, 5, the cell completes the pairing of symbolist scenes. The darkness that figures ignorance—a form of illusion—closes about Malvolio, but his mind is clear:

> *Malvolio*: I am not mad, Sir Topas I say to you this house is dark.
> *Clown*: Madman, thou errest. I say there is no darkness but ignorance, in which thou art more puzzled than the Egyptians in their fog.
> *Malvolio*: I say this house is as dark as ignorance, though ignorance were as dark as hell; and I say there was never man thus abused. I am no more mad than you are. Make the trial of it in any constant question
> (IV, 2, 40-48)

Malvolio's attempts to penetrate the darkness are obstructed by the clown's feignings. But Malvolio has regained a human dignity, that of a man as disciplined guardian of his faculties. His language is controlled and just: "I think nobly of the soul and in no way approve his opinion." (IV, 2, 54-55) And he has, at last, a full grasp of the priorities of human needs. "Good fool, some ink, paper, and light; and convey what I will set down to my lady." (IV, 2, 106-108) The light of reason, a just message to compose, and the means of communication, he can command. The clown cannot refuse his cooperation.

And this message, from Malvolio to Olivia, is the apotheosis of the final Act. It is the message of a man in full possession of his senses and the situation; it is mediated, not by the clown (his tone, as he himself seems to feel, would be wrong) but by the nondescript and "neutral" Fabian; it finds an understanding audience, both the Duke ("This savors not much of distraction," V, 1, 304) and Olivia, "He hath been most notoriously abused." (V, 1, 368) Malvolio's letter has the distinction of being— of all the formal messages in *Twelfth Night*—the only true communication. It is the only occasion in the play when the human mind, unencumbered by fantasy, reaches out toward another human mind and finds its message fairly delivered, understandingly received, and answered. All the other messages are deceptions or self-illusions.

The principals, however, are not compelled to face reality in the same way as Malvolio. Orsino, the premier fantasist, merely switches faces in his image of the dream-woman. His first impulse on learning of Viola's sex is "let me see thee in thy woman's weeds" (V, 1, 265); and the unabashed auto-eroticism of his humor is underscored in his final words to Viola: "But when in other habits you are seen, / Orsino's mistress and his fancy's queen." (V, 1, 376-377) For "fancy," read "fantasy." His last line is a poised, ambiguous phrase. Will Viola control his fantasy, or embody it? One cannot prophesy. Olivia, too, is doubtless well off with the

sensible Sebastian, but the "most extracting frenzy of mine own" (V, 1, 273) testifies to her susceptibility to the caprice of passion. As for the others, Sir Andrew's fantasy is ended. He had rather than forty pound he were at home; the phrase is a calculated multiplication of his earlier desire to exchange forty shillings for the trappings of folly. (II, 3, 18-19) His anagnorisis is to hear the truth from Sir Toby: "Will *you* help? An ass-head and a coxcomb and a knave, a thin-faced knave, a gull?" (V, 1, 198-199) We do not know his reactions; the audience will be able to savor his horrified face; but that truth, as with others in the play, must continue to fester. Sir Toby himself has married Maria "In recompense thereof . . ." (V, 1, 354), and in view of Maria's talents and shrewishness one is inclined to regard "recompense" as a pregnant word.

And there remains Malvolio. Here, I think, the critics have overcompensated. We have been told with considerable frequency of late years that one ought not to feel at all sorry for him, that he deserved all he got, that Elizabethan audiences would have laughed at his final disgrace, and that compassion is a nineteenth century invention anyway. No doubt all this is true. Elizabethan audiences, like modern ones, can never have been lacking in those who find only the most exquisite humor in the final "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you." But I don't think it really matters whether one feels sorry for Malvolio, or not. The point, surely, is that he is there. Malvolio is an unassimilable element, a part of what is conceived to be the structure of comedy, that refuses to participate in the final dance. That dance is a gavotte of the realists coolly taking on the fantasists; it is scarcely the "communal integration" of the sentimentalists. The "golden time" that Orsino speaks of sounds hollowly.

The play as a whole is a masterly exposition of theme through device, that is to say of form. If we agree that the theme of *Twelfth Night* is reality and illusion, then this theme, obviously, is expressed through disguise, deception, and error. But the action of *Twelfth Night*, as I have shown, consists of a succession of pseudo-messages, products of the world of illusion. And it incorporates two scenes of startling theater, in which Malvolio receives, and sends, a message. At these points, the scenes of sunlight and of darkness, the symbolism of the drama becomes overt. Yet they are only the most compelling manifestation of an action that, in Shakespeare's way, is always reaching toward symbolism. The literal events generate their further meanings.

The form of *Twelfth Night*, as I maintain, should govern our interpretation. The open-ended invitation of the subtitle is no reason for disregarding the structure of the play. Its atmosphere one can in part ascribe to a particular production, and this will vary very greatly. Yet I think W. H. Auden [in *The Dyer's Hand*, 1962] is right to sense the "inverted commas around the 'fun.'" This stems from the nature of the action, and the questions left in the air concerning the principals. Exposure to reality has, in different ways, involved pain for the "comic" characters; Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Malvolio. But for Orsino and Olivia, the ending is illusion condoned. To speak of "unmasking" is surely misleading, for they have begun neither to understand nor confront their problems; nor need they. The cynicism of *Twelfth Night* lies in its acceptance of the truths that fantasy need not bring unhappiness, not exposure to reality happiness. The preoccupation with illusion and reality, madness and sanity, wisdom and folly, points unmistakably toward *King Lear*. The synthesis of theme and device could not be repeated within the genre of comedy.

SOURCE: "The Messages of *Twelfth Night*," in *Shakespeare's Comedies: Explorations in Form*, Princeton University Press, 1972, pp. 196-212.

Elizabeth M. Yearling

[*Yearling contends that in* Twelfth Night*, language communicates truth, despite the play's deliberate deceptions and wordplay. Choice of language helps to convey a sense of character: Viola's ability to adapt to changing circumstances, for example, is reflected in her speech, which varies from courtly compliments to "rude jargon" depending on to whom she is speaking. Sir Toby mixes colloquial expressions with elaborate language, reflecting his "disorder" as a knight with questionable habits. Malvolio, even when he is alone, chooses pretentious words, reflecting his egotism. Yearling goes on to show how language supports a*

thematic contrast of the play: throughout Twelfth Night*, characters abruptly switch from elaborate, indirect speech to short, direct, action-focused sentences, reflecting the contrast between the make-believe world of holiday festivities and the ordinary world of work and responsibility*.]

By the late sixteenth century, it had become fashionable to decry eloquence and to praise plain, unassuming style. But theory has to be tested in practice. The greatest practitioner of the period, Shakespeare, happend to be a playwright, and drama, where the author does not directly address readers or audience, has its special problems. The dramatist needs many styles, not just one plain style. He can allow his villains to exploit deceptive words, but he must also find words for his heroes and heroines, who usually need to speak more than Cordelia's "nothing." He cannot embark on a diction which expresses the essence of things. Spenser's technique is a matter for the study, often—as with his spelling—for eye rather than ear. Shakespeare has to find ways of communicating truth which are more complex than any theoretical straightforward relationship of word and subject-matter.

His problems are aired—semi-seriously—in *Twelfth Night*. Half-way through the play, Viola and Feste meet and jest about words and meaning (3.1.1-60). The significance of their exchange is uncertain. T. W. Craik writes [in the Preface to *Twelfth Night*, New Arden, (1975)] that the encounter sounds like "a warming-up after a theatrical interval." Yet this is the only meeting between Shakespeare's heroine and his fool. Their quibbling shows the two-facedness of words. Feste comments on how quickly "the wrong side" of a sentence "may be turned outward." His own punning on Viola's description of words as "wanton"—"equivocal"—turns to absurdity the idea that words equal things. He worries about his sister's name since "her name's a word, and to dally with that word might make my sister wanton." He uses his theory that "words are very rascals" to avoid justifying his opinion, for "words are grown so false, I am loath to prove reason with them." The debate itself embodies the slippenness of words, and the confusion is compounded when Feste admits to being Olivia's "corrupter of words." His trade is to use words deceptively, and what he says cannot be trusted. Shakespeare makes it difficult to take the scene seriously.

Yet often in *Twelfth Night* he shows words to be frivolous, conventional, or false. Apart from Feste's comments there is Olivia's remark about the poetical being "the more like to be feigned" (1.5.197) [quotations from New Arden Shakespeare (1975)]. Occasionally characters use words as mere decoration. The most blatant example is Sir Andrew, who stores useful vocabulary such as the "odours," "pregnant," and "vouchsafed," of Viola's greeting to Olivia (3.1.92). Feste punctures words which he finds swollen. "Vent thy folly somewhere else," Sebastian snaps incautiously, and is punished by some sarcastic variations on "vent" which must cure him of the verb (4.1.10-17). Feste's mockery can conceal further jokes. To Viola he remarks, "who you are and what you would are out of my welkin. I might say 'element', but the word is overworn" (3.1.58-60). "Welkin" too is an old-fashioned, poetic word. The overworn noun "element" is used by several characters, from Viola to Malvoho. A time-bomb has been set for Malvolio's pompous "I am not of your element" (3.4.125).

But tired or inflated vocabulary brings us to one of the play's complexities. A rich source of chiche was the language of compliment, the store of polite but often insincere coutesies which came naturally to the well-bred but had to be taught to the uncourtly in manuals which suggested the right phrases for wooing and suing. And it is the heroine who is the play's main speaker in this fossilized, conventional style. Olivia rejects Viola's address.

Viola.
Cesario is your servant's name, fair princess.
Olivia.
My servant, sir? 'Twas never merry world
Since lowly feigning was called compliment:
Y'are servant to tke Count Orsino, youth.

She could also have criticized the fashionable epithet, "fair."

Viola justified her use of "servant" by explaining the word literally:

And he is yours, and his must needs be yours.
Your servant's servant is your servant, madam.
(3.1.99-104)

The sentence Viola turns into a neat excuse was still paraded as a compliment half-way through the century, in Philomusus's *The Academy of Compliments* (1646): "Sir, I am the servant of your servants" (p. 74). And Viola's "vouchsafed," so admired by Sir Andrew, is something of an affectation. The verb "vouchsafe" means "grant in a condescending manner" and was appropriate between subject and monarch but less fitting in other relationships. Its use is mocked as over-deferential by many Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists. Much of Viola's language, especially to Olivia, is affected, courtly, artificial, not the style we expect of a Shakespearian heroine. But Shakespeare exploits this conventional speech brilliantly. In act 1, scene 5, Viola's speeches in praise of Olivia are full of stock poetic phrases: "red and white," "cruell'st she alive," "sighs of fire," "call upon my soul," "contemned love" (11. 242-80). She borrows the standard phraseology of the sonnet-writers. But she also mocks herself. She worries about whether she is speaking to the right woman, and claims she is anxious to complete her penned speech. The scene turns on Viola's semi-serious use of conventional vocabulary and images, her knowledge of what she is doing, and our share in that knowledge. Yet there is more. The stereotyped language conveys a considerable depth of feeling. "'Tis beauty truly blent" is a genuine appreciation of Olivia's beauty and of Viola's task as a rival. "Make me a willow cabin . . ." is a powerful love speech. The strength and truth of feeling make it wrong to concentrate on the cliches and stock motifs, or on the speech's deception. Viola uses words devalued by over-exposure; she speaks them as Cesario, whose existence is illusory, but their emotion convinces. We must add to Olivia's remark that the poetical is "like to be feigned," Touchstone's ambiguous words in *As You Like It*: "the truest poetry is the most feigning" (3.3.16).

Viola's poetry shows us Shakespeare's success in using falsehood to communicate truth. She deceives Olivia. Yet the audience, though undeceived, receives from the same language a sense of shared and genuine emotion. There is another way in which Viola's words communicate a truth. Her style expresses her nature. She is a linguistic chameleon who adapts her style to her companion. Her vocabulary ranges from courtly compliment to rude jargon (1.5.205). But her variousness is not just verbal: her nature is to deal confidently with sudden changes. And the assumed registers, coupled often with sincere feelings, capture the blend of truth and illusion which Viola represents. It is difficult not to see a convincing personality breaking through the polite fiction which is Cesario. This is most notable in Viola's discussion of love with Orsino in act 2, scene 4, but even the play's less spectacular passages can take us below Cesario's surface. After Antonio, in the belief that she is Sebastian, has interrupted her reluctant duelling, he asks for his money:

> *Viola.*
> What money, sir?
> For the fair kindness you have show'd me here,
> And part being prompted by your present trouble,
> Out of my lean and low ability
> I'll lend you something
> My having is not much;
> I'll make division of my present with you.
> Hold, there's half my coffer.
> (3.4.349-55)

The last line echoes, with an important difference, Antonio's "Hold, sir, here's my purse" (3.3.38). Antonio's was a gift of unqualified generosity to a friend. Viola's is a carefully thought-out loan to a helpful but puzzling

stranger. She moves slowly towards the offer. "I'll lend" is preceded by a series of subordinate clauses and phrases outlining her reasons and stressing her poverty. "My having is not much" repeats the content of the line before, and adds to our impression that Viola feels an uncomfortable need to justify herself. Her next speech contrasts in its vehemence. Antonio reminds Viola of his former "kindnesses."

> *Viola*.
> I know of none,
> Nor know I you by voice or any feature.
> I hate ingratitude more in a man
> Than lying, vainness, babbling drunkenness,
> Or any taint of vice whose strong corruption
> Inhabits our frail blood.
> (3.4.361-6)

There is no delay in reaching the point here. The verbs come first, several of them, forcefully stating an immediate reaction. We are persuaded that the speaker is not the illusory Cesario. No courteous surface falsifies these emotions.

Although *Twelfth Night* includes Feste's scepticism and many instances of verbal folly and deception, Shakespeare's practice encourages a positive belief in the power of words. Character and theme emerge from the nature of the words and the way they are combined. Here we are a little closer to the Platonic theory of names. Several characters in *Twelfth Night* have an individual vocabulary and syntax. Orsino's relatively short part in the play contains a high proportion of new and often slightly pompous words. In act 1, scene 4, he praises Viola's youthful appearance: "Diana's lip / Is not more smooth and *rubious*; / And all is *semblative* a woman's part" (11.31-4). In act 2, scene 4, he contributes "cloyment" to the stodgy line, "That suffers surfeit, cloyment, and revolt" (1.100). Act 5, scene 1 brings more new vocabulary—"baubling" and "un-prizable" describe Antonio's ship (11. 52-3); Olivia, the "marble-breasted" tyrant (1. 122), casts his faith to "non-regardance" (1. 119). New words are common in Orsino's vocabulary, especially words of several syllables ending in suffixes. His syntax is appropriate. Barbara Hardy notes his long sentences and sustained images, characteristics which are marked in the first scene. He uses little colloquial, easy speech.

Sir Toby is an interesting contrast. He also invents long words "substractors" (1.3.34), "consanguineous" (2.3.78), "intercepter" (3.4.224). And his syntax is mannered. He teases Sir Andrew: "Wherefore are these things hid? Wherefore have these gifts a curtain before 'em? Are they like to take dust, like Mistress Mall's picture? Why dost thou not go to church in a galliard, and come home in a coranto?" (1.3.122-6). The rhetorical questions and repeated "wherefore" are part of a complete repetition of meaning in the first two questions, and there is syntactical balance in the last sentence. Sir Toby likes to put nouns in pairs, which sometimes alliterate: "they are scoundrels and substractors" (1.3.34); "he's a coward and a coistrel" (1.3.40). But Sir Toby's long words and patterned syntax are not enough to elevate his speech. His long words occur in prose, not verse, and their use undercuts their impressiveness: "substractor" is a nonce-word meaning "detractor" and it *sounds* like a drunken fumbling for words. Another good word to tumble over is "consanguineous" which is accompanied by a gentle parody of the scholar's habit of pairing foreign imports with simpler words: "Am not I consanguineous? Am I not of her blood?" M. M. Mahood notes that "exquisite" (2.3.142) is "a difficult word for the drunken knights to get their tongues round." The same must be true of Sir Toby's compliment to Maria: "Good night, Penthesilea" (2.3.177). The polysyllables are undermined by being spoken drunkenly, and also by the company they keep, since Sir Toby's speeches contain popular phrases and words of low origin. He is recorded as the first literary user of "bum-baily" (3.4.178), the meanest kind of bailiff, a title which must have been current in the least reputable areas of London. His first words are "What a plague" (1.3.1); he tells Malvolio to "Sneck up!" (2.3.94); he uses the vulgar phrase "call me cut" (2.3.187), and colloquial words such as "coistrel" (1.3.40) He is also the play's most frequent user of the second person pronoun "thou" instead of the more formal "you."

Sir Toby's speech mixes impressive vocabulary and mannered syntax with colloquial words. It reflects his disorder but at the same time a certain openness to experience. Malvolio's language indicates constraint. He introduces fewer new words than either Orsino or Sir Toby, but his mouth is full of pompous phrases and long words without the poetry of Orsino or the colloquialism of Sir Toby. He is at his worst in contemplation, in the letter scene (2.5.23-179). Inflated vocabulary is not simply a public front but is his very nature. "A look round" becomes "a demure travel of regard," "what do these letters mean?" becomes "what should that alphabetical position portend?" Long abstract words abound: "there is no consonancy in the sequel; that suffers under probation." The homelier words of his tirade in act 2, scene 3 are there only to signify his disgust: "Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty, but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? Do ye make an ale-house of my lady's house, that ye squeak out your coziers' catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice?" (11. 88-92). His style is noun-laden: nouns come in strings or separated by the preposition "of." The change when he woos Olivia (3.4.17-55) is interesting. He is still pompous and noun-obsessed—"this does make some obstruction in the blood"—but he throws in the fashionable word "sweet" and quotes fragments of popular songs: "Please one, and please all," "Ay, sweetheart, and I'll come to thee." Here he uses the familiar "thou," unthinkable from a servant to his lady. The visible changes in appearance and behaviour are accompanied by more subtle changes in his language.

Other characters have personal styles. Sir Andrew, magpie-like, purloins impressive words, misuses long words (5.1.179-80), and tends to echo the speaker before him (1.3.62-3, 2.3.56). Feste parodies his superiors' polysyllables: "I did impeticos thy gratillity" (2.3.27). He demands Olivia's attention to Malvolio's letter with the words "perpend, my princess" (5.1.298), mocking—M. P. Tilley argues—the style of Cambyses [in "Shakespeare and his Ridicule of *Cambyses*", *Modern Language Notes*, 24 (1909), 244-7, p. 244]. And he produces nonsense names, "Pigrogromitus" (2.3.23), "Quinapalus" (1.5.33). His verbal whimsy complicates the debate about words. His attacks on words and their falsehood tell us more about Feste than about words.

When we read or hear *Twelfth Night* we learn about the characters by attending to their vocabulary and syntax. Besides expressing character, the words and sentence structure can also clarify themes. One of the play's contrasts is between holiday and the work-a-day world. Although the title suggests festivity, recent criticism has qualified C. L. Barber's treatment of *Twelfth Night* as a festive comedy. Many modern critics dwell on the play's melancholy mood, but in more positive opposition to festivity are the characters' working lives. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew hope that life "consists of eating and drinking" (2.3.11-12), but their fellows have more to do. Even Orsino, who has let his dukedom rule itself, at last resumes his function as ruler and magistrate. Viola is kept hard at work, Feste too—and when he is absent without leave he is threatened with dismissal. Malvolio and Maria have duties in Olivia's household, and Olivia has that household to organize (4.3.16-20).

The contrast between holiday and work results in an interesting structural device. There are repeated movements from musing or conversation back to some necessary task. These shifts are embodied in the dialogue, and centre on Viola. It is easy to note the difference between the first scene's languor and the second scene's sense of purpose, but even within scene 2 there is a distinct change of mood. Viola and the Captain discuss her brother's fate and she is encouraged to hope for his safety:

> Mine own escape unfoldeth to my hope,
> Whereto thy speech serves for authority,
> The like of him.
> (1.2.19-21)

The lines are in verse, the first has a formal old-fashioned *-eth* verb ending, and the object is delayed by a subordinate clause. Viola then switches to practical questions about her present situation: "Know'st thou this country?" "Who governs here?" The crisper -s ending for the third-person verb belongs with the simple questions and short prose lines which contrast with the Captain's verse replies. Viola's interest in what has or

may have happened to her brother is superseded by a need to sort out her own affairs, and her style changes correspondingly. She installs herself in Orsino's service. As his attendant she has opportunities for leisurely talk, but she keeps remembering there are things to be done. In act 1, scene 5, she is Orsino's messenger to Olivia. At first she fences with Olivia but she suddenly returns to duty:

> *Olivia*. Are you a comedian?
> *Viola*. No, my profound heart: and yet, by the very fangs of malice
> I swear, I am not that I play.
> Are you the lady of the house?

Her ambiguity about herself is accompanied by an obscure oath. With her question, the conversation becomes more straightforward, only to hide in wordplay again.

Olivia. If I do not usurp myself, I am.
Viola. Most certain, if you are she, you do usurp yourself:
for what is yours to bestow is not yours to reserve

Viola's quibble is followed by an explanation both antithetical and cryptic. But then she changes to short statement—"But this is from my commission"—and a plain declaration of intent: "I will on with my speech in your praise, and then show you the heart of my message" (1.5.183-92). Similarly her debate with Feste is interrupted by the direct question, "Is thy lady within." Here too the preceding sentence is syntactically more elaborate and plays on words. Feste prays that Jove might send Cesario a beard and Viola replies: "By my troth, I'll tell thee, I am almost sick for one, [*Aside*] though I would not have it grow on my chin" (3.1.45-9). In act 2, scene 4, the discussion of love with Orsino, and the story of Cesario's "sister," draw to a close with Viola's

> I am all the daughters of my father's house,
> And all the brothers too: and yet I know not.

The riddle is couched in repeated phrase-patterns—"all the daughters," "all the brothers"—followed by a virtual aside. After this we are bound to read a meditative pause till Viola sharply changes the subject: "Sir, shall I to this lady?" (2.4.121-3). On each of these occasions brief statements and questions replace more complex syntax, often punning or patterned. Viola delights in conversation and jesting debate but is aware of her present duty.

Other characters move similarly into action. Olivia's style in act 1, scene 5 also involves syntactical contrasts although her questions are misleadingly direct. She lingers over jokes such as the inventory of her beauty, but follows with a pertinent question. "Were you sent hither to praise me?" (1.5.252-3). She continues with what seem to be the same sort of inquiries: "How does he love me?" "Why, what would you?" "What is your parentage?" (11. 258, 271, and 281). She is pursuing what has become important to her, but she has moved from the interview's business—Orsino—to Cesario-Viola, and she stops herself with crisp commands and statements which are more to the immediate purpose.

> Get you to your lord
> I cannot love him: let him send no more,
> Unless, perchance, you come to me again,
> To tell me how he takes it. Fare you well:
> I thank you for your pains: spend this for me.
> (1.5.283-7)

The short clauses emphasize her business-like manner. The syntax is more flowing only in the lines where she provides for a return by Cesario, who distracts her from the task of rejecting Orsino, and she couches these lines in the conditional. The lingering "unless" added to the brusque "let him send no more" captures her feelings. During her second meeting with Viola, Olivia's ears recall her from distracting thoughts.

> O world, how apt the poor are to be proud!
> If one should be a prey, how much the better
> To fall before the lion than the Wolf! [*Clock strikes.*]
> The clock upbraids me with the waste of time.
> Be not afraid, good youth, I will not have you,
> And yet when wit and youth is come to harvest,
> Your wife is like to reap a proper man
> There lies your way, due west
> (3.1.129-36)

Again complex writing—subordination, apostrophe, extended metaphor—accompanies the musing. Simple statements interrupt it. We may compare with Olivia's "waste of time" the First Officer's short, impatient sentences when his prisoner Antonio procrastinates: "What's that to us? The time goes by. Away!" (3.4.373). These people do not have all the time in the world. Tasks and duties press on them. Even Sebastian, who has nothing in particular to do in Illyria, is not prepared just to stand talking to Antonio. Again the transition is sudden; again questions replace conditionals and balanced phrases.

> But were my worth, as is my conscience, firm,
> You should find better dealing. What's to do?
> Shall we go see the relies of this town?
> (3.3.17-19)

Note especially "What's to *do*?" He is later caught up in Olivia's urge to action when she decides to marry him. His meditative speech, "This is the air, that is the glorious sun" (4.3.1 ff.), is cut off by her arrival with a request formed like a command: "Blame not this haste of mine" (4.3.22).

Orsino's resumption of office is the most elaborate change in the speed of action. At last he comes to woo Olivia himself. But before he can talk to her he is brought some work. The officers enter with Antonio, and Orsino's questioning of that "notable pirate" is interrupted by Olivia's arrival. For the audience this is their first meeting. The Duke's reaction is oddly mechanical:

> Here comes the Countess: now heaven walks on earth
> But for thee, fellow—fellow, thy words are madness
> (5.1.95-6)

Orsino's "but" sets the matter in hand against his response to Olivia. Compare these words with the equivalent passage in William Burnaby's eighteenth-century revision of the play. There the Duke has more to say about the woman he loves:

> Now Heav'n walks on Earth, and Beauty round
> Invades us all! Each glance devotes a Slave,
> And every step, she treads upon a heart,
> All of the Skies, but pitty you have brought.

Burnaby's addition is heavy-handed but shows he was aware that Orsino's brief welcome in the original is a little strange. It could be argued that since Orsino seems more interested in his own moods than in Olivia, he

can offer only a commonplace compliment when he actually meets her, and then directs his attention to the Antonio-Cesario conflict which fascinates him. But this is not what happens. Olivia is Orsino's business. When she appears he is needed as a magistrate and after acknowledging her briskly he returns to his case. Then, just as briskly, he quashes Antonio's complaint and reserves judgement, so that he can attend to his main concern:

> But for thee, fellow—fellow, thy words are madness.
> Three months this youth hath tended upon me;
> But more of that anon. Take him aside.
> (II. 96-8)

Again simple, brusque statements announce Orsino's despatching of business, and another "but" emphasizes the transitions and oppositions of the passage. Soon, Orsino resumes his polysyllables and complex sentences.

The words and syntax of *Twelfth Night* are interesting for what they say and for what they are. The nature of the characters' vocabulary tells us something about them; the sentence structure also exposes the characters and their moods, and points at thematic oppositions. Even if their surface meaning is deceptive, words can still communicate truthfully. Yet we are also told that words deceive. And here we might note a recurring syntactic pattern which embodies the deceptions of *Twelfth Night*. Earlier I quoted "I am not that I play" from Viola's first encounter with Olivia. This takes up her request to the Captain, "Conceal me what I am" (1.2.53) and prefigures a cryptic exchange with Olivia in act 3, scene 1:

> *Olivia*.
> I prithee tell me what thou think'st of me.
> *Viola*.
> That you do think you are not what you are.
> *Olivia*.
> If I think so, I think the same of you.
> *Viola*.
> Then think you right; I am not what I am.
> (11. 140-3)

The setting of negative against positive in conjunction with the verb "to be" is repeated at the end of the play when Orsino finds Sebastian and Viola forming "A natural perspective, that is, and is not!" (5.1.215). And it is mocked in Feste's joking: "'That that is, is': so, I, being Master Parson, am Master Parson; for what is 'that' but 'that'? and 'is' but 'is?'" (4.2.15-17). In fact here, that that is, is not. Feste is more accurate, but without knowing it, when he tells Sebastian, whom he mistakes for Cesario, "Nothing that is so, is so" (4.1.8-9). The repeated formula captures the confusion of actuality and fiction which these characters experience. Again the syntax tells us a truth while agreeing that words and events themselves can lie.

We cannot be certain about reality and falsehood when the genuine emotion of "My father had a daughter loved a man" can move us so. Shakespeare's achievement with language in *Twelfth Night* is to encapsulate the conflict of truth and illusion, and to remind us that facts and truth are not necessarily the same, that the truest poetry often is the most feigning.

SOURCE: "Language, Theme, and Character in *Twelfth Night*," in *Shakespeare Survey: An Annual Survey of Shakspearean Study and Production*, Vol. 35, 1982, pp. 79-86.

Viola and Olivia

Lydia Forbes

[*Forbes illustrates Shakespeare's theme of disguise versus self-deception throughout the story of Viola. Viola is presented as a purposeful young woman who sets out to achieve her goal through any means. She recognizes the scope of her abilities and consents to disguise to buy herself time. Likewise, Olivia adopts the veil of mourning to keep Orsino at bay, who spends most of the play lost in self-delusion, and therefore is unsuitable for her. Viola judges Olivia by what she has heard of her and proceeds to romance Olivia in a way that cannot be successful for Orsino. Consequently, Viola's approach to Olivia wins her not to the Duke, but to Viola. The critic maintains that Olivia is a reasonable woman and perceives Viola to be a match for her in independence and wit, yet Olivia confuses Viola and Sebastian because of her deeper intuitive sense. Olivia perceives similar qualities of spirit in both Sebastian and Cesario: Sebastian matches Cesario in integrity, but is as impetuous as Viola is patient.*]

. . . The story of the nobly born Viola, disguised as the page boy, "Cesario," is usually considered the principal plot of *Twelfth Night*. She sets her heart on the Duke Orsino of Illyria, and finally weds him. He is a good man and worthy of her, but temporarily so confused by a romantically far-fetched notion of love that he would not be able to appreciate her in her own feminine dress.

Beside this story we have a series of events engineered by a gentlewoman, Maria, attendant on the Countess Olivia. Maria's aim is to marry Olivia's uncle, Sir Toby Belch. By pretending to gratify Sir Toby's desire to be revenged on the officious steward, Malvolio, Maria succeeds in getting Sir Toby so far out of favor with his niece that he marries Maria in order to remain a member of the household.

Linking these two patterns, the Lady Olivia, as the unresponsive object of Orsino's attentions, moves briskly but with dignity, and an outstanding appreciation of honesty in respect to both the good and the bad.

In the opening scene of the play the audience is regaled with the full exuberance and verbal confusion that deception and self-delusion bring about. It is like a musical opening by Brahms, in which the themes are developed before they are stated. With the second scene, austere and isolated on the seacoast, the premises and the thesis of the play are demonstrated. The sea-captain, who rescues Viola from the shipwreck and brings her ashore in Illyria, describes the country and what he knows of its people. Viola gives us her own measure and his in her famous lines:

> There is a fair behavior in thee captain;
> And though that nature with a beauteous wall
> Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee
> I will believe thou hast a mind that suits
> With this thy fair and outward character.
> (I.ii.45)

While an ironic contrast exists between Viola's speech and her intention to disguise herself, her recognition of her own limitations and her own "fair behavior" after real peril clear the unreal atmosphere of the opening scene, and also put the following extravagances of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in their place.

Viola's charm and wit and continual self-consciousness about her own disguise help us understand the people she is dealing with. She is so reasonable and patient that when she trusts someone we are persuaded that her faith is justified. Only the unreasonable in human nature forces her to disguise herself. As a woman of her position, and in such a situation, she could not be a free agent, so she dresses like her brother and calls herself "Cesario." She, like Olivia, needs time to get her bearings after a calamity in her family. She and Olivia

dissemble in various ways to gain time.

Viola's first thought after being rescued is the hopeful one that her brother may also have survived. Her second thought is that she must now act on her own account. She has no family here. Since she has apparently heard of Orsino as a possible husband, she becomes a page in his household, to see for herself whether he might fill the bill. Though her deception serves her well, before the play is done Viola admits that disguise is, in fact, a "wickedness" wherein "the pregnant enemy [i.e. the Devil] does much."

The portrait of Viola shows that Shakespeare, in writing a stylized play, does not prevent his characters from coming alive. Their energy does not seem confined by any pattern, but occasionally the pattern becomes so clear that characterization takes second place. The two sea-captains who rescue Viola and Sebastian are a case in point. Shakespeare makes them both men of profound integrity. Antonio, who rescues Sebastian, scorns any disguise even though he knows his life is in danger here, and he is arrested by Orsino's men. Viola's nameless rescuer goes so far as to help her to disguise herself, and keeps her secret even when he is "in durance at Malvolio's suit." Both honest, both imprisoned in this odd land, these two men of the sea make a strong and arbitrary contrast to the prevailing distortions of life on shore in Illyna.

The first *sight* of Orsino, the Duke, should be as different from the first *sound*, as Viola's swaggering costume is from her very feminine nature. The reader of the play sees only the Duke's fantastic words, the actor will show the outward form of Orsino, who, in the last act, says to the sea-captain Antonio

> That face of his I do remember well,
> Yet, when I saw it last, it was besmear'd
> As black as Vulcan in the smoke of war:
> A bawbling vessel was the captain of,
> For shallow draught and bulk unprizable;
> With which most scathful grapple did he make
> With the most noble bottom of our fleet,
> That very envy and the tongue of loss
> Cried fame and honor on him.
> (V.i.55)

This Duke, who can recognize so well the quality of Antonio, is "noble in nature as in name." Yet for the greater part of the play he is baffled and deluded. Imagining that he is in love with Olivia, he feels both exalted and harassed by his "desires." He grants that he does not prize her riches, but he cannot see that he does not even prize her. Her beauty and her sex arouse in him a kind of emotion, conceit and mixed metaphor which he enjoys and thinks he needs so desperately that, at the end, he cries out for the heart to kill Olivia rather than lose her. So strong can the shape of fancy become!

By the fourth scene, Orsino has actually fallen in love with Viola. She wins him "liver and all" in the second act by talking to him in his own "fantastical" way. Her disguise lets him become devoted, without being confused by the erratic passions he associates with love of woman. That devotion is clear in one of the most comic moments in the last act, when his greeting to Olivia: "Now heaven walks on earth" is followed abruptly by a return to the puzzle of Antonio's identification of Cesario. The only sudden change in Orsino at the end of the play is his loss of the delusion that he loves Olivia.

Olivia's message to Orsino in the opening scene, refusing his suit, should seem like too much protestation, even without the benefit of hindsight. Here is a girl who is suddenly left all alone to manage the affairs of a great estate. She is saddled with her father's younger brother—a liability—and with an importunate neighbor who insists that she wed. She cannot accept him; so she publicly exaggerates out of all reason her natural grief at the death of her brother, so as to keep the unwelcome suitor at arm's length.

Viola, as Orsino's ambassador to Olivia, cannot help judging Olivia by what she has heard, and by the rebuffs encountered at the Countess's gate. To Viola, Olivia is like the subject of Shakespeare's 94th sonnet, one of those who "moving others, are themselves as stone," who take care to be "the lords and owners of their faces." Viola calls her "too proud" when Olivia's unveiling and itemizing of her face emphasize this attitude. There is certainly further deception, conscious or unconscious, by Viola in this first dialogue between these ladies. Viola carries out her master's orders to woo Olivia in a way that cannot succeed.

Viola's wit and aplomb, her independence and scorn for her own well-conned flowery speech are at once congenial to Olivia. When Viola, in exasperation, pulls out all the stops on her own natural poetry, Olivia dives into her bag of tricks to win "him." She tries to give "him" money, she sends "him" a ring, she wonders, when all her pleading seems to no avail: "How shall I feast him—what bestow of him—For youth is bought more oft than begged or borrowed."

Olivia is very young, then, and probably slight of figure to be suitably matched to "Cesario." Anyone as competent as she shows herself to be, as Sebastian notes that she is, and as a mistress would have to be to suit Malvolio, would not mismatch herself. She has been forced to grow up quickly in the last months, and her discovery of her own capabilities has gone to her head. But, since she is reasonable as well as practical, she can see that she is being swept off her feet and put suddenly into the position she has always objected to in Orsino (that of unrequited lover). This forces her to conceal her own nature from herself, to speak of "enchantment," and say in most un-Olivia-like tones these lines, which are noticeably difficult to say naturally:

> Fate, show thy force: ourselves we do not owe;
> What is decreed must be, and be this so.
> (I.v.331)

However this may comfort her, she does not actually leave to Fate anything which she can manage.

At her second visit as Cesario, careful to seem more courtly, formal and remote than the first time, Viola is met by the full storm of Olivia's recklessness. This is not only caused by passion, but by intuitive uneasiness:

> *Olivia*.
> Stay: I prithee, tell me what thou think'st of me.
> *Viola*.
> That you do think you are not what you are.
> *Olivia*.
> If I think so, I think the same of you.
> *Viola*.
> Then think you right: I am not what I am.
> *Olivia*.
> I would you were as I would have you be.
> (III.i.151)

Sebastian, Viola's twin, is exactly what Olivia would have him be.

The most fundamental consideration in the relationship between "seems" and "is" arises with the confusion of Sebastian and Viola. When Olivia mistakes Sebastian for "Cesario," she is seeing the same spirit in both. Her eye is not stopped at the surface by any probable difference of height and voice. She did not fall in love with a physique. This is a difficult theatrical problem, certainly, but one to be tackled with bravado rather than coyness, because it is more than a casual assumption of the plot—it is a considered criticism of what we are accustomed to call "real," the facade. Olivia must be consistently shown as a person who is wary of letting her

eye be "too great a flatterer for [her] mind." Her intuitive summing up of people is always made at a deeper level than this. As for the confusion of Antonio in mistaking Cesario for Sebastian, I believe that the only assumption the actor can make is that that honest stalwart could never entertain the suspicion of a disguise. He is far too much upset by the overwhelming sin of ingratitude to notice any surface changes in his erstwhile idol.

Sebastian has as much romantic venturesomeness, courage, charm and—all important to this play—integrity as Viola. But in his astonishing impetuosity he is a mirror image, rather than a copy, of his twin's equally astonishing patience. Their intentions are the same, their ways of carrying them out are very different.

Two such spirits as Viola and Sebastian are required as "fitting climax to the swelling act" which in the end unmasks all the characters of this play. They are needed by Olivia and Orsino as mates of the appropriate sex. They are used by Shakespeare to emphasize "what a piece of work is man". . . .

SOURCE: "What You Will?" in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. XIII, No. 4, Autumn, 1962, pp. 475-85.

Cynthia Lewis

[*Lewis positions Antonio as a Christ figure against which Viola's moral growth, the central concern of the play, is measured throughout* Twelfth Night. *Viola demonstrates sacrificial qualities early in the play, but they only come to fruition through her service and ultimate sacrifice to Orsino. Her major obstacle is her fear of losing control, but her salvation, the critic asserts, is her clear-sightedness. This quality is demonstrated in Viola's interpretation of Olivia returning the ring she claimed Viola left behind as opposed to Malvolio's cloudy reasoning when attempting to decipher the letter he thinks is from Olivia. Antonio's example of sacrificing himself for Cesario, whom he believes to be Sebastian, is compared with Viola's sacrifice, when she offers to take the punishment Orsino who would like to deal to Olivia. The critic links the ideal sacrifice to the manifestation of the Messiah in the Epiphany and asserts that Christian love informs romantic love in the play*.]

Viola's characterization throughout *Twelfth Night* reveals that the play concerns itself fundamentally with her moral growth. Shakespeare continually plays Viola off the other characters to illustrate how far she has come and how much farther she has to go. Initially, she has all the makings of an Antonio. She generously rewards first the sea captain and then Feste (I.ii.18, III.i.43), and she lashes out at ingratitude when Antonio accuses her of it (III.iv.354-57). Her willingness to woo another woman for the man she loves also indicates her magnanimity.

Yet she often appears self-absorbed. Nowhere is this trait clearer than when she offers Antonio only half her coffer (III.iv.345-47). Next to the total altruism that Antonio showed Sebastian in the preceding scene (III.iii.38), Viola's reserve seems downright stingy. Granted, Viola is not rich; nor does she even know Antonio. Her giving anything at all under these circumstances could thus be admired. But the contrast between the two characters is evident: Viola is willing to go far for someone else, but only so far. Similarly, Viola has good reason in III.iv to be stunned by the sudden possibility that Sebastian may yet live and thus to ignore Antonio's arrest; but Antonio, having intervened to save her life, surely deserves more attention from Viola/Cesario than she gives. Even if Viola exits at the close of this scene in pursuit of Antonio and the officers, she apparently does so not to aid Antonio but to discover more about Sebastian's history.

This key episode in which Viola and Antonio are contrasted reveals the major obstacle that Viola must surmount before she can grow to love completely: fear of losing control. That she loves both her brother and her master is obvious to us, but a great deal of the potential and actual destructiveness in *Twelfth Night* arises from Viola's refusal to expose herself openly to others—to give herself away. She is consistently associated with walls—barriers to love—throughout the play. Her disguise becomes an emblem of her and others' fear: many such walls appear in the play and must be let down or broken through before genuine love can be

enjoyed. Orsino uses cliched love language to put a safe distance between himself and Olivia (e.g., I.i); Viola refers to the hypocrisy of most people, who hide their wickedness behind the "beauteous wall" of appearance (I.ii.48); Viola herself attempts to use language like Orsino's in wooing Olivia and in protecting herself, until she finds it will not shield her well (e.g., II.ii); Olivia hides in her house and behind her wit and her veil (II.ii, etc.). The spirit of Epiphany, represented by Antonio's willingness to manifest his true self for the sake of another, is stifled behind these barriers.

Viola's brilliant repartee with Feste demonstrates her capacity for folly, for letting go and enjoying another's company (III.i.1-59). Admiring his wit, she expresses appreciation for its wisdom and thus signals her own association with Christlike folly and her own understanding that folly comes in two forms: "For folly that he wisely shows is fit, / But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit" (III.i.67-68). But when Feste cuts gently at Orsino's folly (11. 39-41), Viola resists hearing more: "Nay, and thou pass upon me, I'll no more with thee" (11. 42-43). Viola here seems reluctant to acknowledge the value of Feste's remarks. For a long time she appears unable either to admit that Orsino's attraction to Olivia is not genuine love or to deal directly with her feelings for Orsino. Her reaction to Feste's song in II.iv exemplifies the poor judgment that results from her infatuation. "Come away, come away, death" has got to be some of the most morbid verse ever set to music, as Feste kindly suggests to Orsino (II.iv.73-78), and the music that accompanies it would be anything but cheering. But Viola identifies with its gloom: "It gives a very echo to the seat / Where Love is thron'd" (II.iv.21-22). Viola's exaggerated sympathy for Orsino's pain mirrors his self-indulgence.

In its irrationality, Viola's love for Orsino resembles Antonio's love for Sebastian and Olivia's for Viola/ Cesario. It is potentially good folly. But enclosed within her, it waxes overly melancholic. When she can express it in even veiled language, as she does in II.iv, it regains some of its health:

> *Vio*. My father had a daughter lov'd a man
> As it might be perhaps, were I a woman,
> I should your lordship.
> *Duke*. And what's her history?
> *Vio*. A blank, my lord; she never told her love,
> But let concealment like a worm i' th' bud
> Feed on her damask cheek; she pin'd in thought,
> And with a green and yellow melancholy
> She sate like Patience on a monument,
> Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?
> (11. 107-15)

Perhaps because this passage demands that Viola objectify her feelings, it is less self-pitying than her attraction to Feste's song. Furthermore, Viola's hidden love at least eventually permits her to instruct Orsino:

> *Vio*. But if she [Olivia] cannot love you, sir?
> *Duke*. I cannot be so answer'd.
> *Vio*. Sooth, but you must
> (II.iv.87-88)

Yet Viola herself realizes that secret longings fester within, "like a worm i' th' bud." The self must be honestly exposed to survive; Viola must reveal her inner self to become fully human.

Another of Viola's potential virtues emerges as she is compared and contrasted with Malvolio. In much the same way that Malvolio seeks to unravel the letter he finds in II.v, Viola tries to read the significance of the allegedly returned ring in II.ii. The concept linking the two scenes is interpretation. On this score Viola

obviously does much better than Malvolio. Her vision is not so dreamy-eyed as to obscure the true meaning of receiving the ring, whereas poor Malvolio's hopes absolutely blind him to the facts. Viola's visionary quality—composed of a clear-sightedness like Feste's and a power like Antonio's to perceive how others feel—will guide her through the snarls to come. Yet on this point too she fudges, when she thrusts all responsibility onto an external force: "O time, thou must untangle this, not I, / It is too hard a knot for me t' untie" (II.ii.40-41). Notwithstanding the partial truth of this statement, Viola will sooner or later have to participate in shaping her own life. Time can and does help, but it requires a cooperation from her, a total commitment of herself to love.

Whether or not Viola learns how to make such an investment directly from Antonio, the sea captain's dramatic purpose is to provide such an example, and Viola comes to reflect his behavior. The turning point for her, when all the potentially fine qualities we have seen in her come together, is also the heart of the play. It comes in her answer to Orsino's angry threat on her life:

> I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love,
> To spite a raven's heart within a dove.
> (V.i.130-31)

The Christian implications of the "sacrificial lamb" ought to ring clear, and Viola's sudden "willingness" to give not just some, but all, endows her with new virtue:

> And I most jocund, apt, and willingly,
> To do you rest, a thousand deaths would die.
> (11.132-33)

Like Antonio, who has earlier offered to protect her with his life (III.iv.312-14), Viola now substitutes herself for Olivia, in order to give Orsino "rest." She gladly takes upon herself the punishment through which Orsino would "spite" another. Here lies the Epiphany in *Twelfth Night*, where the meaning of Christ's birth, His sacrifxce for humanity, manifests itself in the actions of human beings. Viola's commitment of her life to love is the wisest folly she can pursue. To dismiss all barriers to love, to disregard even the welfare of one's physical being, is divine.

Viola's altruistic attitude toward love, which alludes to a Christian ideal, permits spiritual love and romantic love to be linked in *Twelfth Night*. Ultimately, we are not shown a world in which different types of love—say, physical and non-physical—are qualitatively different or are opposed. Rather, Christian love, as epitomized in Antonio, works itself into the worldliest of relationships through the four lovers, principally Viola, as well as through Feste. Thus, Christian love can inform romantic love, and the two comic traditions that shape the play—the romantic and the serious—are joined compatibly as Viola grows to become more like Antonio. Significantly, in this final scene Olivia also grows to accept Viola/Cesario as a "sister" and Orsino as her brother (11. 326, 317). The good folly that is well on its way to triumphing over all is not limited to romantic love, but leads to general good will and fellowship.

Appropriately, after Viola's declaration of devotion to Orsino, the majority of the characters are in some respect set free. Viola's self-sacrifice is not the single twist in the plot that accounts for every subsequent revelation: many other actions, like Sebastian's entrance (1. 208), intervene before Viola's true identity is discovered. But Viola's new openness to love sets a tone early in the scene for the series of manifestations and apparent miracles to follow. The twins are reunited; the four lovers are rightly matched; the sea captain who has possession of Viola's clothes is "enlarged" (1. 278); and Malvolio is "deliver'd" (I. 315), though that does not guarantee his freedom, which only he can claim for himself. Even Fabian, caught up in the "wonder" of "this present hour," freely confesses the joke on Malvolio and tries to ease the tension between the revelers and the steward (11. 355-68). "Golden time" is ripe for love like Antonio's.

But the play's problematic nature persists to the end, modifying and augmenting the harmonious resolution. For instance, what of Antonio? Are we to assume that Orsino will also set him free? It seems rather that the question of Antonio's future, like so many other questions at the closing, is left dangling for a reason. Interestingly, the other salient loose end here is that Viola has still not removed her disguise by the time *Twelfth Night* is finished. These two details do more than blur the play's resolution, as do questions about whether Malvolio will repair his ruined pride and whether Maria will help curb her new husband's former excesses. Most importantly, these unresolved elements involve the audience's sense of responsibility in determining their own future. Indeed, Act V would not challenge us morally if it clearly and simply showed that all ended well. *Twelfth Night* finally asks us whether we will make all well by divesting ourselves of the walls around us that shut out love like Antonio's and keep it imprisoned. Will we embrace the spirit of Epiphany, which shapes the play throughout, and thus free Christian love in our own world? By agreeing to, we will, in effect, liberate Antonio and change as radically as if we moved, along with Viola, from male to female. When *Twelfth Night* closes, it has already "pleased" us, as Feste promises (V.i.408). If it is also going to teach us when the "play is done" (1. 407), then we must respond to it by unveiling.

SOURCE: "Viola, Antonio, and Epiphany in *Twelfth Night*" in *Essays in Literature*, Vol. XIII, No. 2, Fall, 1986, pp. 187-99.

Douglas H. Parker

[*Parker outlines the parallels between Olivia and Viola in* Twelfth Night*, regarding them as non-genetic twins. He begins by describing the similarities between the characters: their loss of fathers and brothers, their respective disguises, and their pursuit of unrequited love. Viola relates to Olivia's inability to love Orsino because of her own inability to love Olivia. In her frustration with the situation, she communicates to them both the consequences of refusing to accept love. The critic demonstrates how Olivia and Viola are intellectual equals and that Olivia falls in love with Viola because of the qualities in herself that she sees Viola mirror back. The women also recognize that they are both intellectually bested by Feste, accept it with good humor, and are the only two in the play who can appreciate Feste's wit. Finally the critic considers the etymology of their names, explains why Olivia is not suffering from melancholy, and comments on the fitting conclusion that Viola and Olivia should become sisters-in-law*.]

. . . Shakespeare stresses the non-genetic twinning between Olivia and Viola at many points m the play in a number of ways: certain situations in which one character finds herself are mirrored in the other character's situations; particular scenes in which one character appears are repeated with slight variation for the other, or events in individual scenes in which both appear show remarkable similarities; and, finally, the outcome of the action of the play is essentially identical for both.

That Shakespeare wants us to regard Viola and Olivia's relationship as an important and close one is clear from the number of scenes in which the two appear in conversation together. No other pair of characters in the play has as many meetings stretching over as many lines as these two. Initially they meet in I.v. when Viola comes to Olivia's house to sue on Orsino's behalf; here the conversation lasts for about 150 lines; at the end of this scene we first recognize Olivia's developing love for Viola [quotations from Lothian and Craik's New Arden edition]. They meet again in III.i. and try to deal with Olivia's love for Orsino's messenger; here the conversation runs to some 70 lines. And finally, their third and shortest meeting occurs in III.iv. where the matter of Olivia's love is again discussed for about 20 lines. These frequent encounters encourage us to feel that, if Sebastian had not appeared on the scene to satisfy Olivia's love, the two women might have gone on meeting indefinitely, for at the end of this final meeting Olivia encourages Viola to "come again tomorrow" (III.iv.218).

But the relationship between the two is far closer than a series of three meetings between them can suggest. In many of the play's situations, Viola and Olivia are identical characters: both have experienced the death of fathers; both think they have experienced the recent death of brothers. Both initially appear before the

members of Illyrian society in disguise which serves a double function, even though the stress placed on each function differs for each woman. We learn early in the play from Valentine that out of respect for her recently dead brother, Olivia is "veiled" (I.i.28), and later we see this for ourselves in her first meeting with Viola. Olivia's veil serves as an obvious sign of her mourning; however, it also serves, secondarily, as a type of disguise, since it allows her to hide her face from Orsino's suitors thereby letting them know that their master is not for her. The fact that Olivia is prepared to lift her veil so quickly in Viola's presence indicates that her vow of seven years' mourning is as much an attempt to discourage Orsino's love pleas as it is an outward sign of grief. This is not to say that her sorrow for her brother's death is insincere; it is only to say that her grief is an interior sentiment which in these peculiar circumstances needs to be manifested in an outward fashion to encourage the Duke to credit it as valid. Hence Olivia's veil and the daily tearful watering of her chamber are not obvious indications, as many critics suggest, that Olivia is wallowing in melancholy as the Duke is in love; they are, rather, necessary props used to convince a love-struck Duke, who surrounds himself with his own props in the form of music and "sweet beds of flowers" (I.i.40) that her sorrow is sincere. In short, Olivia shows herself to be an admirable judge of Orsino's character by choosing his own methods of validating his experiences to convince him of the sincerity of her own. In this respect, Olivia, like Viola, has a sophisticated awareness of the importance of disguise in dealing with life's problems. And like Viola who, while sincerely mourning the death of her brother is, nevertheless, aware that she must deal with the new situation in which she finds herself after the shipwreck, since she is now a stranger in a strange land— and certainly unlike the inactive, prostrate figure of the love-struck Orsino—Olivia is also intent on imposing an order on her life, evident in her attempt early in the play to bring Sir Toby to heel (I.iii.) and to discover the whereabouts of the derelict Feste (I.v.). In short, while Orsino's love renders him "unstaid and skittish in all motions" (II.iv.18), Viola and Olivia's grief does not overwhelm them to the point that it becomes an obsession preventing them from carrying on with the necessary business of living one's life.

Viola, too, appears in disguise in the initial scenes of the play, and her male disguise, as purposeful as Olivia's veil, is used to protect her from the unknown dangers of a foreign country. But like Olivia's, Viola's disguise also serves as a sign of her mourning, if for no one but herself, since her physical resemblance to her brother coupled with her male attire must make her appear, to herself at least, very much like Sebastian. In fact, in III.iv, in soliloquy, she mentions that as Cesario she copies her brother, stating

> I my brother know
> Yet living in my glass; even such and so
> In favour was my brother, and he went
> Still in this fashion, colour, ornament,
> For him I imitate.
> (389-93)

For Viola, as much as for Olivia, these disguises initially both protect them from dangers of one sort or another, and also permit them to legitimately keep their brothers' memories "fresh / And lasting, in ... [their] sad remembrance" (I.i.31-32).

The entire love situation in which Olivia and Viola find themselves entangled is also very similar. As is often the case in romantic comedy, both fall in love rapidly, Olivia after her first meeting with Viola, and Viola after only three days in Orsino's company. However, in this latter case, Shakespeare makes the three-day span seem as instantaneous as Olivia's more sudden love affliction by sacrificing chronological time to dramatic time. Although we hear from Valentine at the beginning of I.iv. that the Duke "hath known . . . [Viola] but three days" (3), their first actual stage encounter to which the audience is privy occurs in this same scene, and, as a result, Viola's love for the Duke seems as sudden as Olivia's for Viola. Both women must also endure unrequited love: despite the love tokens that each receives, Olivia cannot love Orsino any more than Viola can Olivia. And, further, just as Viola acts as the Duke's emissary, informing Olivia why she should love Orsino, Olivia herself, quite inadvertently no doubt, plays the same role as Viola as she informs her and us the

audience about Orsino's inherent worthiness as a husband. Lest Orsino has left a bad taste in the audience's mouth after his first horribly self-indulgent appearance, and lest, as a result, we cannot understand the commonsensical Viola's passion for him, Olivia tells us that even though she cannot love him, she supposes him

> virtuous . . . noble,
> Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth;
> In voices well divulg'd, free, learn'd, and valiant,
> And in dimension, and the shape of nature,
> A gracious person.
> (I.v.262-66)

Expecting to find Viola in I.v. suing on Orsino's behalf, the audience not only discovers this, but also the more unexpected, dramatically delightful event of Olivia serving as Orsino's spokesman and thereby mirroring Viola's role as go-between.

Viola's sense of the closeness of the two apparently hopeless love relationships is evident at a couple of points in the play. She is poignantly aware and understanding of Olivia's inability to love Orsino because she feels such an inability herself in her relationship with Olivia. Even though it is a sexual barrier that separates Olivia and Viola in contrast to an emotional one that separates Olivia and Orsino, the audience feels Viola mirroring her own frustration with Olivia's persistence when she says to the tenacious Orsino after he encourages her once again to return to Olivia to plead on his behalf: "But if she cannot love you, sir?" (II.iv.88). Also, in the same scene, perhaps reflecting on the apparent hopelessness of her own love for Orsino, she tells the Duke a story of a woman (actually Viola herself) who

> never told her love,
> But let concealment like a worm i' th' bud
> Feed on her damask cheek: she pin'd in thought,
> And with a green and yellow melancholy
> She sat like Patience on a monument,
> Smiling at grief.
> (II.iv.111-16)

This sad commentary on the loveless life, with its emphasis on death and decay, mirrors an earlier warning that Viola gave Olivia about her refusal to accept love—a warning which Shakespeare had given time and again in his sonnet sequence. Complimenting Olivia on her beauty, and, at the same time, encouraging her to capitalize on it while she can, she states:

> 'Tis beauty truly blent, whose red and white
> Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on.
> Lady, you are the cruell'st she alive
> If you will lead these graces to the grave
> And leave the world no copy.
> (I.v.241-46)

It is interesting to note the important similarities between these two speeches. The reference to the decay of female beauty is poignantly expressed in both; Viola's "damask cheek" in the first passage finds its counterpart in the second in the reference to Olivia's "red and white" beauty. Both images clearly refer to the feminine complexion and both are interchangeable commonplaces in Renaissance love poetry. The image of the "worm i' th' bud" is less metaphorically expressed in the second passage through the reference to the "grave" as the final and inevitable resting place of all earthly beauty. And finally, there is an admonitory tone

present in both passages even though it is more obliquely expressed in the first. In the first passage Viola, although addressing Orsino, seems to be telling herself that pining in thought, rather than acting by expressing her love to Orsino, could lead to a life of unfulfilled wishes ending in death, as the reference to "monument" suggests. In the second passage she more straightforwardly warns Olivia that the inevitable result of not acknowledging and accepting love is personal annihilation and "the grave."

In summary, in Olivia's and Viola's love situations, Shakespeare keeps the reader's mind fixed on the way in which each female reflects or mirrors the other's character, actions, or predicaments. The initial disguises of the two are clear mirrors of each other as each woman uses masking both to defend herself from unwanted advances or happenings and to serve as appropriate symbols of mourning reflecting a true inner grief. Further, each woman can be seen fulfilling the role of go-between for Orsino. As Viola confronts Olivia to sue on Orsino's behalf, so Olivia, through her complimentary comments on Orsino's character, assures Viola and the audience of his worthiness as a future husband. And finally, Viola herself, commenting in two different speeches on the nature of the two major female love patterns, sees a close relationship between her situation and Olivia's which Shakespeare stresses by using similar images, a similar admonitory tone, and by drawing similar conclusions.

Certain scenes in the play also emphasize the twin relationship that I see in Viola and Olivia. In the early part of the first meeting between the two women, Olivia shows anger at Viola's behaviour and asks why she began her conversation "rudely" (I.v.215). Viola's reply stresses the mirroring that runs through the play by making clear that she simply responded in kind to the reception she received at Olivia's hands; she states: "The rudeness that hath appeared in me have I learned from my entertainment" (217-18). Indeed, this entire first meeting between the two women is remarkable for the skill that each shows in conversing with the other, proving that each possesses a sharp wit. Initially the conversation begins with a display of verbal wit conducted in prose by both women. The ironically posturing Petrarchan love messenger, Viola, gets as good as she gives from the determined lady of the house, Olivia, whose true skill at repartee becomes evident when the messenger introduces the imagery of the religion of love. Both instinctively seem to recognize when the witty prologue to this first meeting concludes, for after this initial period of feeling each other out, both immediately switch from prose to poetry, a switch which indicates a movement that Berry characterizes [in *Shakespeare's Comedies: Exploration in Form* (1972)] as one from "the language of fencing and social deception" to "the language of truth and intensely felt emotion." Unlike so many of the other scenes in this play where one character takes advantage of or capitalizes on the linguistic or personality weaknesses of another, there is no sense that there is a clear victor-victim relationship at the end of this scene. This is a conversation between intellectual equals with no clear winner emerging at its conclusion. And the fact that by the end of the scene Olivia has fallen in love with the messenger seems to prove the point that the two women are alike; after Viola exits, Olivia comments on Viola's character as revealed in this scene by stating that "Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit / Do give thee five-fold blazon" (I.v.296-97). Earlier she had ironically catalogued her own beauty in a not entirely dissimilar way when she assured Viola that she would "give out divers schedules of my beauty" (247-48). That Shakespeare wants us to see that Olivia falls in love with Viola in this scene because she recognizes in her aspects of herself is evident in his uses of the word "blazon" to describe Viola's beauty and "schedules of beauty" to describe Olivia's. On the surface of it, there seems to be no apparent similarity between the two expressions, "blazon" being glossed in most editions as heraldic insignia, and "schedules" as written statements. But, in fact, the word "blazon" also has a more general meaning which the *OED* gives as "a description or record of any kind; *esp*. a record of virtues or excellencies," and adds the further meaning of "publication." Taken in this more general sense, Viola's "fivefold blazon" can be seen as the beauty she publicly displays or "publishes" in Olivia's presence; in other words, Viola's qualities serve as an obvious record of her virtues just as Olivia's qualities are ones that she ironically intends to make public by giving out "divers schedules," that is, written statements or publications of them. That Olivia should talk about the public demonstration of her beauty and then go on to describe Viola's in essentially the same terms, makes the point clear: at the end of this scene, Olivia has come to love Viola because she sees herself mirrored in her, a mirroring which we, the audience, have also been made to

see through the skillful and equal ironic verbal exchanges that have occurred in the scene. If it is, therefore, valid to claim that Olivia falls in love with Viola because the latter is, in fact, her alter ego—a view which Plato's Aristophanes would have no trouble accepting— then a new interpretation of Olivia's final words in this scene emerges. When, at the end of this scene, Olivia claims that "ourselves we do not owe" (314), she means, no doubt, as the traditional gloss of the lines states, that there are greater powers beyond us which seem to direct, shape and control us despite ourselves; but in the light of my interpretation of this scene, which sees Olivia's love for Viola emerging because of the similarities she comes to recognize between them, the line might also suggest Olivia's new awareness that her self is not something owned or possessed solely by her; it is, in fact, also part of her new love in whom she has just glimpsed characteristics of her own person.

In terms of the characters involved, methods of argumentation used and sentiments expressed by both Viola and Olivia, two other scenes in the play emphasize the character twinning with which this essay is concerned. Feste's catechizing of Olivia in I.v. in which he proves his mistress a "fool" for the undue grief she feels over the death of her brother, is mirrored in his extended verbal victory over Viola in III.i, which Viola recognizes as a type of instruction in the power and versatility of language. In the first exchange with Olivia, Feste's victory over his mistress is merely a verbal one; although by asking her the right questions he can demonstrate to her why she should not mourn her brother's death knowing his soul to be in heaven, he, nevertheless, cannot convince Olivia or the audience that her grief is unnecessary. The profound emotional effects of death go well beyond the logical conclusions derived from this form of verbal catechizing. One can find very little true consolation in Feste's argument, even as one admires its logic. The same phenomenon is evident in his exchange with Viola in III.i. Words once again appear to be infinitely capable of meaning what Feste wants them to as the skillful word crafter, or "corrupter of words" as he calls himself (37), attains victory over Viola by disabling her expectations—as he does Olivia's—and showing her his skill at turning language to his advantage. One example from this scene will suffice to make the point. When Feste tells Viola that he lives "by the church" and she asks him "Art thou a churchman?" his response undermines her line of thought. He answers:

> No such matter, sir.
> I do live by the church, for
> I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church. (5-7)

While we cannot help admiring Feste's skillful response here—as we admired his rational and verbal victory over Olivia—we must, at the same time, recognize that he is not really answering Viola's question—as earlier he was not truly convincing Olivia or us of her folly. In both cases he is merely using the symbols of thought—language itself—as tools for a clever but essentially specious game of verbal one-upmanship. What is interesting and important to notice is the women's almost identical responses to Feste's victory over them in each of these scenes. In Feste's exchange with Olivia, the dour steward of her household, Malvolio, is outraged at what he regards as Feste's impertinence. Obviously failing to see that Feste's victory is merely verbal and not substantial, he regards the clown's behaviour as insufferable. Olivia, clearly recognizing the true nature of Feste's "victory," takes his catechizing in the spirit in which it was intended and comments on Feste's effects:

> There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail, nor no railing in a known discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove. (I.v.93-96)

In a similar vein, at the conclusion of her exchange with Feste, Viola fleshes out Olivia's comment by analyzing the skill of the "allowed fool," a skill which Olivia has shown that she understands implicitly in the lines just quoted. Viola states:

> 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,
And like the haggard, check at every feather
That comes before his eye. This is a practice
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.
(III.i.61-69)

Of all the characters in the play, only these two women seem truly capable of appreciating Feste's verbal skill. Orsino, of course, is interested in Feste as well, but on a much more superficial and selfish level: he enjoys Feste's singing abilities because they help sustain his love mood. Viola and Olivia's good-spirited "defeats" at the clown's hands plus their comments on the witty fool's talents following these defeats, indicate their shared view of his gifts, and, in Olivia's case, at least, give support to Feste's words about his mistress to Viola when he states that "the Lady Olivia has no folly" (III.i.33). This telling comment lets us know how the wise Feste regards Olivia, and also indicates how seriously he must have taken his attempt to prove her a fool.

The sentiments expressed by both women at the conclusion of two other scenes in the play also add to the mirroring pattern that I have been tracing. At the end of I.v after Olivia has fallen in love with Viola, and, as a result, added another complication to her life, she is still level-headed enough to recognize how very much other forces are in control of an individual's situation. Hoping that her love might develop, and yet aware of her own impotence in making the outcome match her desires, she addresses fate:

Fate, show thy force; ourselves we do not owe
What is decreed, must be; and be this so.
(I.v.314-15)

Viola expresses a similar notion at the end of II.ii. Again, like Olivia earlier, Viola is contemplating her various love entanglements. And again, like Olivia, she is prudent enough to see how powerless she is to shape her own destiny in the face of these entanglements. As a result, she places her faith in time as Olivia has earlier placed hers in fate:

O time, thou must untangle this, not I,
It is too hard a knot for me t'untie.
(II.ii.39-40)

This faith in powers beyond themselves proves valid for both women at the end of the play where the final series of mirroring events occurs. It is not enough to state—as many others have—that the apparently hopeless love relationships work themselves out satisfactorily for Viola and Olivia. This is only the most obvious example of mirroring. What is also important to recognize is that Viola's happy recovery of her brother Sebastian is also found in Olivia's situation. Fate has indeed proven itself generous to Olivia as time has to Viola. For by steadfastly refusing to marry Orsino throughout the play, Olivia has managed by the play's end not only to marry the husband of her dreams, but also to recover a brother in the person of Orsino. That this recovery is at least as important as the marriage is evident in the way in which Shakespeare stresses the notion near the play's conclusion. Once the comic complications have been resolved, Olivia encourages Orsino "To think me as well a sister, as a wife" (V.i.316), and a few lines later Orsino complies by addressing his former beloved as "sweet sister" (383). These numerous similarities between Shakespeare's two principal female characters in *Twelfth Night* strike me as more than fortuitous; there are far too many of them and they are far too closely related to be attributed solely to chance. Besides, Shakespeare seems to be deliberately directing the reader's attention to this second pair of twins in his play not only through the various mirroring situations and scenes mentioned above, but also through their very names: both names etymologically derive from

similar aspects of animate nature— Olivia's name originates with the olive plant and Viola's with the flower violet. Schleiner states [in "Orsino and Viola: Are the Names of Serious Character in *Twelfth Night* Meaningful?" *Shakespeare Studies*, 16 (1983)] that both of these flowers "possibly refer to purgatives" which might suggest the part that both characters play in purging the drama of its comic complications: Viola by constantly sounding the note of common sense and Olivia through her constant refusal to marry Orsino, which, of course, permits Viola to finally have him, thereby creating the play's happy ending. Is it, then, altogether surprising in light of these connections between the two women that each name—Viola and Olivia—should be essentially an anagram of the other?

In conclusion, Shakespeare's major female characters in *Twelfth Night*, despite their passports and their parentage, possess a dramatic kinship which makes each stand head and shoulders above the Illyrian folly in the play. If, as some credulous critics suggest, Olivia is "addicted to a melancholy" (II.v.202-03) because of the death of her brother, the spectators never see it. We only hear that she waters "once a day her chamber round / "With eye-offending brine / All this to season / A brother's dead love" (I.i.29-31) from Valentine, Orsino's go-between, who has received the information from Olivia's handmaid. Further, melancholia in this period was generally regarded as a debilitating mental disease which left its victims free to do very little more than ponder their obsessive bitterness—witness, for instance, Hamlet and Jaques. As I have suggested earlier, Olivia is clearly concerned about the state of her household, the condition of Sir Toby and the whereabouts of Feste, concerns which would not enter the mind of a true melancholic. What we can truly speak of is Olivia's sadness which is clearly legitimate and understandable, and which, as I have suggested, mirrors Viola's. It is a sadness brought about by unrequited love just as Viola's is. Against the charges of self-deceit, one might counter that a self-deceived woman could scarcely hold out as long as Olivia does against Orsino's persistent wooing which, we sense, has been going on long before the play even opens. Further, the suggestion that Olivia will not marry Orsino because by doing so she would be marrying above her station, does not sound like the sentiment of a self-deceived person. As I have suggested above, she is no more self-deceived than Viola. Finally, it is through her refusal to marry Orsino that Olivia, as much as Viola or Sebastian, helps bring the play to a happy conclusion by throwing Viola into Orsino's arms thereby fulfilling Viola's wishes. By contributing to the play's resolution, Olivia shows herself to be in the tradition of other enlightened Shakespearean female figures: the four ladies in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Rosalind in *As You Like It* and, of course, Viola in this play.

From the beginning of *Twelfth Night* we, as well as Viola, know that Olivia's love for Viola is doomed to failure because of the sex they share by nature. What we need to learn, however, is that this marriage of bodies which cannot be actualized, does not prevent Shakespeare from depicting a "marriage of true minds" between Olivia and Viola. It is, therefore, a fitting climax to this play that at its end each woman should become the other's sister-in-law since throughout both have been, as I hope I have shown, sisters in sentiment, intellect, and spirit.

SOURCE: "Shakespeare's Female Twins in *Twelfth Night*: In Defense of Olivia" in *English Studies in Canada*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, March, 1987, pp. 23-34.

Malvolio

Malvolio has intrigued critics more than any other character in *Twelfth Night*. In the seventeenth century, Charles I was so taken by Malvolio's mistreatment that he changed the name of the play in the Second Folio to "Malvolio."

Melvin Seiden

[*Seiden examines Malvolio's role in the comic strategy of* Twelfth Night*, which is, the critic asserts, to divert the burden of comic scrutiny away from the festive lovers, and to lend a puritanical air which in contrast*

heightens the overriding sense of gaiety in the play. In the society of Illyria, Malvolio represents the new bourgeoisie, and is placed in conflict with the degenerate aristocracy of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, and not with the patrician lovers, as other commentators have argued. On the contrary, Seiden explains that Malvolio strives to uphold the social standards of Olivia's household, by which he lives and earns his keep, and is threatened by any subversion of the system. In principle, he is opposed to frivolity and to endow Malvolio with a sense of humor, as some readers have mused, would serve to make him into a tragic figure, clearly not what Shakespeare had intended. Seiden claims that Malvolio plays the bad cop not out of an excessive sense of self-love, as other critics have suggested, but out of an underdeveloped sense of self. He enforces restraint because he lacks an independent spirit within himself, and suffers an inferiority complex as a result. In conclusion, Seiden compares the comic strategies of Twelfth Night *to a typical catharsis in a Shakespearean tragedy and contrasts the fate of Malvolio to that of Falstaff in* Henry IV. *While the clown Falstaff was sacrificed as the world of comedy gave way to the reinstitution of normal life, Malvolio, who represents law and order in Illyria, was not heralded as the returning patron of seriousness and work, but at the finale remained unsatisfied and discredited, a scapegoat sacrificed to the gods of comedy*.]

. . . The miraculous, domesticated and made to serve the strategems of the dramatist, is one of the staples of comedy, especially that of Shakespeare. We recognize its power and beauty in the neatly-contrived and swiftly-executed denouement whereby the necessary "happy ending" is consummated. It is no less miraculous that the three lovers of *Twelfth Night* persistently escape involvement in the embarrassments and humiliations of the comic hurly-burly, and since this less obtrusive aspect of comic magic can lead us to a better understanding of what Shakespeare is up to in this play, we must examine its significance.

In the character of Falstaff and in the punitive comedy of Jonson one finds a curious phenomenon. Falstaff, Volpone, Subtle, and Face are comic impresarios; they cause others to appear ridiculous, thus ingratiating themselves without having to undergo as patients the comic action that, as agents, they have unleashed upon others. But the appetite for comedy that they have awakened in us is voracious and one not easily or quickly satisfied. Soon we want to see these impresarios sacrificed on altars of their own making. Jonson exploits this expectation, manipulating it to arouse suspense, and finally satisfying it by heaping on the heads of the comedy-makers comic punishments more extreme (and delightful to us) than anything that they, as agents, had been able to inflict on their victims. One might expect, therefore, that the pristine status of the three lovers would in a similar fashion arouse comic expectations and desires that could be fulfilled only at *their* expense.

Shakespeare's grand strategy is to divert the current of our expectations into another channel, to provide us with another object for our promiscuous and destructive laughter in the figure of Malvolio. One can enumerate the various vices of Malvolio that make him a fair target, a worthy object of comic deflation. These will tell us what is ludicrous and laughable in Malvolio. But if we are concerned with the more interesting question of Malvolio's *raison d'etre*, the answer must surely be that he exists so that Shakespeare's lovers may preserve their status free from the nothing-if-not-critical comic scrutiny which would otherwise expose their romantic pretensions to the withering winds of laughter. It is not Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby Belch, patricians manque, who are the true surrogates for the comic-"tragedies" that are never permitted to embroil the lovers, but the puritan Malvolio. He is the scapegoat; he is the man who undergoes a sacrificial comic death so that they may live unscathed; he is the man who, because of offensive seriousness (made to appear an antithetical ridiculousness) allows what is also ludicrous in the lovers to maintain its soberfaced pretense of impregnable seriousness.

Malvolio stands condemned of a mean, life-denying, but nevertheless principled utilitarianism. Shakespeare wants to excite our antipathy to Malvolio's anti-comic sobriety, his sour bourgeois version of Aristotle's ethical golden mean, and he provides us with many appropriate occasions for venting our antipathies. What Shakespeare does not want us to recognize, and what becomes clear once we are no longer involved emotionally in the play, is the fact that just as Malvolio is a creature of utility for his mistress Olivia, winning for his assiduous services only scorn and abuse, so for his creator Malvolio becomes an infinitely serviceable

comic instrument. We recognize that without Malvolio the comedy of *Twelfth Night* would be impoverished; I would go farther and argue that without him the comedy, the play as a whole, would not work, and it is precisely this indebtedness to Malvolio's multifarious utilitarianism that Shakespeare cannot acknowledge, since we are not meant to see what the old magician has up his sleeve or in his hat.

The social issues involved in the struggle between Malvolio's code of calculating utility and the comic values suggested by the title of the play (the bacchanalia, before the holiday ends) are not as clear as some critics have made them out to be. Tallying Malvolio's traits, we have no trouble seeing what these stand for. He is efficient, music-hating, fun-denying, power-seeking, austere, pompous, officious, and melancholy—in short, he is a Puritan and, in the first decade of the seventeenth century, an ur-version of the man of the future, the petty bourgeous. Curiously, however, these values are not pitted against the lovers' aristocratic ones; the conflict is not between Malvolio's excessively rigid and stifling code of responsibility and that of love, leisure, music, sensibility, elegance, and the higher irresponsibility. Shakespeare is particularly careful to avoid representing a direct clash between Malvolio and his aristocratic betters. He is gulled, baited, and scourged by Maria and Feste, socially his inferiors, who are aided by Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, and the latter are grossly perverted specimens of nobility. We need not look any farther than Falstaff to see that for Shakespeare the fallen aristocrat can be morally worse than the erect man of lower degree. The idea of a social hierarchy necessitates such a judgment. The good man of the middle ranks is likely to have only middling virtues and vices, but he is at least in his proper place. The degenerate, of whatever rank, threatens the whole of the great chain of being.

The conflict in *Twelfth Night* is then between aristocracy at its worst (Toby and Aguecheek, aided by the roisterers)—perverted, and thus the antithesis of what is implied in the ideal of *noblesse oblige*—and a representative of the new bourgeoisie presented in its most perfect archetypal form, since Malvolio, whatever else he is not, is true to the principles he represents. He has a radical existential authenticity; he is the quintessential bourgeois.

Shakespeare's overt—but I think questionable—point is that in its purest manifestation such dour puritanism is worse even than the corrupt patrician irresponsibility of the Belches and Aguecheeks. The point that he is at some pains to conceal—or rather, what he wishes to avoid making a point of—is that he must avoid challenging the values of the patrician lovers with those of Malvolio.

Why? For one thing, the antithesis between Malvolio's grubby puritanism and the lovers' exquisite manners is not the unequivocal conflict between beauty and the beast that so many of our critics have made it out to be. We all recognize that Malvolio stands for work, order, duty, sobriety—everything, in short, that permits a society to function. Olivia clearly recognizes this. She understands that Malvolio's stewardship is necessary to the functioning of her household. As steward, then, Malvolio represents the police force: law and order. The love-making, the sweet melancholy of long leisure hours spent in contemplation, the delight in music, the poeticizing of life—all this is possible because of the mean prose of Malvolio's labors as a steward.

In the modern world, Marxist propaganda describes the police force as a contemptible tool of the capitalist system. More than that, the Marxist has tried to win over the police force to its revolutionary side by pointing up a social irony: the police, it is said, are themselves exploited by the very system which they uphold. One can imagine the Marxist pamphlet which says to the police of the capitalist states: "With every brutality you inflict upon the poor, the ignorant, the socially impotent, you brutalize yourselves; in suppressing the have-nots you only enslave those who would liberate you." One doubts whether such appeals have ever won many recruits to the revolutionary cause. Pride in work—no matter what the work may be—seems to be more deeprooted and compelling than any doubts or scruples the worker may feel about the utility or morality of his work. So it is with Malvolio. His arrogance is not the swollen amour-propre it seems to be. Clearly this is a man who believes in work and in particular in his own work. He is fanatically conscientious in trying to enforce law and order, not as the play so slyly makes us believe merely because he is temperamentally

opposed to fun and play, but because he is also by principle antagonistic to whatever threatens to subvert the orderly social machinery of his mistress's household.

We in America have made a cult of that ambiguous virtue we call "a sense of humor." And so one hears it said, "If only Malvolio had a sense of humor, it would be possible to like him a little." What is being asked for here is that Malvolio be critical and detached, able to view his policeman's job skeptically and perhaps with the saving grace of an irony that would puncture the hypocrisies inherent in the job itself and his own seriousness. But this is impossible. Such a Malvolio would be a deeply divided man. Having the insight to see that in being Olivia's lackey he demeans himself and makes himself an object of contempt, Malvolio would indeed become what he comes perilously close to being in that extraordinary scene in which he suffers Feste's catechistic torments— a tragic figure. The so-called romantic critics assert that in this bitter, punitive scene, ending with the victim's impotent oath, "I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you!" Malvolio is in fact something like a tragic figure. But romantic critics and those who dismiss this view of Malvolio as sentimentality agree that it cannot have been Shakespeare's intention (or, seeking to avoid the dread intentional fallacy: that of the play) to endow Malvolio with tragic stature. Granting Malvolio the complex attitudes of a man with a sense of humor could all too easily engender tragic consequences.

There is in the American army the standard type of the supply or mess sergeant who is officious, bossy, and what is most damning, niggardly in dispensing food or clothing. "You'd think the stuff was his!" the indignant soldier cries out when his request for more (of whatever it is that he wants more of) has been turned down. The poor soldier sees only the irrationality of the sergeant's identifying his interest with Theirs (the army, the government, the taxpayers of America). From Their point of view, as expressed, say, by the officer who represents authority, it is precisely this identification between the underling, who has nothing to gain by being parsimonious, and constituted authority that makes a good supply sergeant or mess sergeant. The officer will soon want to get rid of the sergeant who recognizes that the stuff *isn't* his and acts accordingly.

Olivia, it can be assumed, would be the first to be displeased by a Malvolio who, winking broadly at Toby, had said, "Dost thou think because I must feign a steward's virtue I desire not the joys of cakes and ale?" Malvolio's frigid personality reflects his stern policies, and these are his mistress's. He is her surrogate, her cop; he is all superego in a libidinous society; and as we all come round to saying when we must justify whatever it is we do, Malvolio might have said, "That is what I'm paid to do." Malvolio, like the petty Nazi hireling defending himself at the Nuremberg trials, would have had to be a revolutionary to be different from what he was—not just a better man, but a radical critic of the society that created him, gave him employment, and provided sustenance.

Early in the play, in answer to Malvolio's contempt for the verbal tomfoolery with which Feste amuses his mistress, Olivia sums up Malvolio's chief vice neatly (and famously) in the line: "O, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distemper'd appetite." The tag has stuck. Self-love seems to explain almost everything. But does it? Is Malvolio's behavior that of a man who, thinking well of himself, thinks poorly of others? One ought not answer Yes too quickly.

A common schematic analysis of the theme of love in *Twelfth Night* is the following: all of the major characters, with the exception of Viola, are seen to be motivated by some heretical or distorted version of love. Orsino is in love with love itself, Olivia is in love with grief, Malvolio is smitten with self-love, and only Viola expresses true—that is, a properly directed and controlled—love. In this account, Malvolio's narcissistic love disables him from loving others.

Now it is certainly true that more than anything else it is the passionless, calculating, mercenary fashion in which Malvolio responds to the imaginary love of his mistress that makes him so repugnant. Despite the social impropriety, we might forgive him were he to court his mistress with passion. If he were a man by love possessed, unable to control an imperious passion, he would be the type of the romantic sinner we have no

difficulty forgiving. And, so far as the proprieties are concerned, it is no accident that the witty Maria, blessed because she is a wit, is fortunate enough to marry above her station. Only a twentieth century reader of the play, his mind corrupted by democratic and psychological principles alien to the world of *Twelfth Night*, will question Maria's good luck. For the Elizabethan, it cannot have much mattered that Toby is an ass; even as ass, if affiliated with nobility, may be a good catch for one of the downstairs folk. The point then is that Shakespeare's social hierarchy can, for comic purposes, be flexible enough to permit one of those who has ingratiated herself to us by ingeniously performing her role as maker of comedy the good fortune of succeeding as a social climber.

Malvolio's social climbing is therefore not evil per se. In comedy, success is conferred only upon those who please us by aiding and abetting the flow of the comedy. Malvolio is the very embodiment of the anti-comic spirit and the failure of his social climbing is due not simply or primarily to the immorality and impiety of the aim itself, but to his not having as it were bribed us by affording us comic pleasure. If Malvolio had been an agent of joy and comic abandon, Shakespeare would have had little difficulty in winning the sympathy of his audience for a man who at play's end inherits rather than becomes, as he does become, dispossessed.

The critics agree that Malvolio is a loveless Snopes, and the orthodox view, based on Olivia's judgment, is that inflated self-love incapacitates him for loving others. I want to suggest that what seems to Olivia to be self-love in Malvolio is more likely to be a deficiency of self-esteem. Like all those whose work is primarily that of imposing discipline, coercing obedience, enforcing respect and orderly behavior, checking "the natural man" in whatever guise he may assume with the "civilizing" force of control, constraint, and censorship, Malvolio is well suited to this job precisely because he does not possess a well developed, assertive ego. Plato as well as Freud recognized that the natural man within us calls out Yes, Yes, to the heart's deepest desires, and, whether it be called Reason or the Superego, that which makes possible comity among men must depend heavily upon the negation of these disruptive, antisocial desires. In the dialectical tension between the impatient affirmations of freedom and the unfeeling restraints of society every man must work out his own never perfectly satisfactory compromise. Those whose social roles require, as does Malvolio's, that they be constantly saying no to others must first learn to be deaf to the alluring siren songs within themselves. Whoever does any of society's police work must either be able to silence the powerful voice of self within himself or be so constituted as to have few or weak urgings of the kind that lead to independence of character and freedom of behavior.

If Malvolio loved himself more one can imagine him loving his policeman's work less. If this seeming self-love were genuine, Malvolio might have allowed himself to be caught up in the fun, the irresponsible high jinks, the holiday mood of the revelers. True self-love, witnessing the privileged hedonism of irresponsibility says, "Why should I be excluded? Why must I be the servant of fasting while others feast?" Malvolio earns the enmity of the other members of Olivia's household because his over-assertiveness seems to them to be an excess of self-love. To us, this aggressive and sullen wielding of authority and the peacock air of superiority are likely to seem the very opposite of what they pretend to be: not the firm conviction of integrity but a self-detructive sense of inferiority. Malvolio acts and talks like one whose show of strength is only a fantasy, the purpose of which is to abrogate a reality that is all weakness and self-contempt. It is no accident that in the first great scene of Malvolio's comic humiliation, where he is ensnared into ludicrous courtship of his mistress, it is precisely the fantasist in Malvolio that is played upon so outrageously and brilliantly by Maria and the other wits. And, if it be objected that the motives we impute to Malvolio are too serious, too sympathetic, the reply must be that we do not necessarily sympathize more with a self-deceived puritan than a simple moral bully, and, comedy or no comedy, Malvolio is a serious character; it is precisely his seriousness that we are asked to see as comic in the context of the others' horse-play. It seems perfectly legitimate and appropriate temporarily to remove that seriousness from its comic context and consider it seriously.

I have described the comic strategies of *Twelfth Night* as devious. It can also be said that they are curiously unShakespearean. In particular, I refer to the emotional and moral implications of the mechanism for resolving a comic action that is analogous to catharsis in tragedy.

It is a commonplace of the critical tradition to find in Shakespeare's Falstaff the embodiment of the comic spirit. Modern scholarship has tended to reinforce this tradition by showing that Falstaff derives from the character of Vice or Riot in the medieval morality plays. Because he is Riot, Falstaff represents the principle of the transvaluation of all normal values. The comedy of the *Henry IV* plays inheres precisely in the subverting of the normal, sane, responsible, ordered, workaday world. One can describe this opposition between the comic and the non-comic worlds in an almost endless series of antinomies—moral, social, political, psychological; but no matter how Falstaff's comic nature is described, one is inevitably led to the recognition that the fundamental differentiating trait is in his radical transvaluating of conventional values and attitudes.

Because more than being an impresario of comedy, Falstaff *is* comedy, it is inevitable that Falstaff be banished, purged, symbolically sacrificed after he has outlived his comic usefulness. The pattern of the *Henry IV* plays seems to be an archetypal one: the sane, sober, unmagical world of work and duty is turned topsy-turvy by comic anarchy; comic anarchy flourishes, evoking in us pleasure and wonder; the forces representing what most of us unphilosophically think of as "reality" reassert themselves, thus re-establishing a world that, whatever else it may be, is always a non-comic one.

This re-establishing of a non-comic world is, of course, equivalent to the return to a non-tragic world in tragic works. Indeed, the whole pattern is more than similar in comedy and tragedy: in both there is a radical overturning of that gray reality we all know best, followed by a return to equilibrium at every level at which the disharmony and disequilibrium had previously existed. What comedy and tragedy have in common is that in both a kind of insanity (one terrible, the other delightful) has been allowed to reign and is then purged.

Everything that has given us pleasure in *Henry IV* took place under the aegis of Falstaff. No wonder we are saddened and perhaps even indignant when we are forced to witness the humiliation of the fantastic creature that made all of this possible. The tensions of tragedy become increasingly intolerable and we demand that they be resolved. But we want the holidaying of comedy to go on and on—in our dreams, even forever. In both cases, however, we understand that life always provides a Fortinbras to insure that man and society will survive and that, for a similar but antithetical reason, King Henrys, judges, wives, babies, and empty cupboards contrive to bring the raptures of a comic holiday to an end.

There is no Falstaff in *Twelfth Night*; there are only those grossly inferior comedians, Feste, Maria, Toby, and Aguecheek and—quintessential antagonist to everything that Falstaff is and represents, that harsh and melancholy voice of the anti-comic spirit: Malvolio.

How clever of Shakespeare to get us to believe that puritanism is bad or ugly—so at least hundreds of college students of Shakespeare have unanimously believed—when in fact Malvolio's fundamental sin (I am tempted to say his only sin) is that in his very being he threatens the comic, holiday world that Maria, Feste and company are so gaily creating. It is irrelevant that Shakespeare the man may have loathed puritanism and everything it stood for. In this play, Malvolio's puritanism is a pretext, a convenient catch-all for traits and attitudes inimical to the lovely anarchy of comedy. He must be humiliated, gulled, baited, scourged, made to suffer the melancholy consequences of his melancholy personality, and, above all, rendered impotent so that the fever of comedy can range with full potency. If Malvolio is not the perfect mythic scapegoat, where in our literature does one find a figure who can be called a scapegoat? No, it simply will not do to say that one is sentimentalizing in describing Malvolio as a scapegoat sacrificed to the amoral, bacchanalian gods of comedy. To insist upon Malvolio's sacrificial status is not to excuse or justify his clearly repugnant personality. Least of all is it a covert plea for sympathy. Malvolio's function is to "die" a kind of comic death so that comedy

may live. And so, throughout the play we see him "dying" in various ways. However, the immense— and in my opinion, unsatisfactorily resolved—problem arises when the comedy itself, as is always the case, must "die." What does—what can—the dramatist do with Malvolio at that point?

The logic that ought to impose itself upon Shakespeare would seem to be as follows: since the reinstituting of the non-comic world in *Henry IV* requires the literal and symbolic sacrificing of the patron of riot and comedy who is Falstatf, the same strategic necessities in *Twelfth Night* ought to allow Malvolio, by virtue of his antithetical role, to come into his own with the "dying" of the comedy. He is the patron of the non-comic and it would seem natural that he should preside over the re-establishment of the hegemony of the non-comic that ends the play. But Shakespeare has provided himself with no machinery and aroused in us no expectations that would permit Malvolio to receive the blessing of a magic (and thus appropriately comic) and symbolic rebirth. Lodged uncomfortably at the center of this genial, loving, musical comedy is the harsh, unpurged punitive fate of Malvolio. Olivia says, "He hath been most notoriously abus'd"; and that is the only soft chord in the dissonant Malvolio music.

Let us be perfectly clear about this point. If Shakespeare is "unfair" in his treatment of Malvolio it is not in the severity of the punishments meted out to him during the course of the play; it is in Shakespeare's trying to have it both ways. Denier of comedy and its claims that Malvolio is, by comedy's standards he "deserves" his fate, but, when the resolution of the action itself denies, negates, "kills" the comedy, one expects that with the return to the world that Malvolio has been immolated for upholding, Malvolio himself will have his day. But Malvolio has been totally discredited in serving this world. He is like the politician who lives to see his name become anathema while the principles that soiled his good name, having once been defeated, return triumphantly. But these principles, miraculously, are no longer associated with the man who gave them their name.

Malvolio is Shakespeare's comic Coriolanus, a man beset by the wolves who are his enemies and the jackals who are or ought to be his friends. In America no one loves a cop—even when he's called a policeman. In Illyria the natives are apparently no different, and even light-hearted Illyrian comedy turns out to be a cannibalistic affair, at bottom.

SOURCE: "Malvolio Reconsidered," in *University of Kansas City Review*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, December, 1961, pp. 105-114.

David Willbern

[*Wilbern discusses the carnal side of* Twelfth Night*, asserting that Malvolio's repressed desire is reciprocal to the lover's indulgence. The critic maintains that Malvolio's social aspirations are motivated by a desire to sleep with Olivia. However, as Malvolio fails to keep separate his covert desire from his overt behavior, he is undone by his desire, and becomes the butt of the merrymakers' fun. The critic considers Shakespeare's wordplay in the letter supposedly from Olivia, suggesting that it provides insight into the psychology of Malvolio the censor, and into Shakespeare's erotic play with language. Malvolio's actions after his gulling resemble someone who is possessed, which is explained by the critic as a parallel to the basic scheme of a medieval Morality Play. The critic also considers the tension created by Malvolio in the final act, pointing out that it is typical of Shakespearean comedies to leave elements of irresolution in the finale. Willbern speculates on the hidden meaning of the cryptogram Sir Andrew questions, explaining that it represents a secret carnality at the heart of the play. He points out that festivity and loss are presented as reciprocal, and erotic desire and symbolic death are intermixed, creating a tone of romantic melancholy. Finally he compares Feste and Malvolio as symbolic brothers.*]

Malvolio, that humorless steward, sick of merrymakers and self-love, seems almost a stranger to the festive world of Illyria. His very first words reveal his acrimonious opinion of Feste, the soul of festivity [quotations from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 1974]:

Oli. What think you of this fool, Malvolio? doth he not mend?
Mal. Yes, and shall do till the pangs of death shake him.
Infirmity, that decays the wise, doth ever make the better fool.
(I. v. 73-77)

Everything about Malvolio's character sets him apart from frivolity.

Even his vocabulary isolates Malvolio. When he chastises a rowdy Sir Toby by demanding "Is there no respect of place, person, nor time in you?" Toby quips, "We did keep time, sir, in our catches" (II. iii. 91-94). For the solemn steward and the carousing knight, the word "time" has different meanings. Malvolio hears only a cacophonous violation of decorum; Toby hears only melody and lyrics. When, a few lines later, Toby and Feste "converse" with Malvolio in song, Malvolio simply does not understand (II. iii. 102 ff.).

But while Malvolio may have no use for festivity, festivity has considerable use for him. In the paragraphs that follow, I shall consider the steward's collision with the merrymakers, the nature of the damage he suffers, and its relevance to the general theme of festivity.

When Malvolio falls into Maria's cunning trap and makes his sole concession to frivolity by donning yellow cross-garters, the desires he has previously hidden beneath a staid composure suddenly emerge exultant. On the surface Malvolio's wish is to be a social climber, "to be Count Malvolio." Yet there is a deeper desire here, and even though cross-gartering "does make some obstruction in the blood," as he complains, it does not obstruct an unwitting expression of the steward's strongest yearning: to sleep with his lady Olivia. In the forged letter scene, he alludes to a daydream of "having come from a day-bed, where I have left Olivia sleeping" (II. v. 48-49). And he jumps eagerly at an imagined opportunity when Olivia, thinking that a man who dresses so oddly and smiles so incessantly must be deranged, suggests rest: "Wilt thou go to bed, Malvolio?" she asks. "To bed?" he exclaims. "Ay, sweet heart, and I'll come to thee" (III. iv. 29-31).

But Malvolio's latent sexual wishes are also evident in his reading of the forged letter. While his fantasy of leaving Olivia in their shared day-bed is romantic enough, his remark to Toby about fortune "having cast me on your niece" (II. v. 69-70) may be less so, and his spelling lesson betrays the crudest carnality. "By my life," he swears, "this is my lady's hand. These be her very c's, her u's, and her t's, and thus makes she her great P's." After thus spelling out the carnal focus of his fantasies, he sounds out the word itself, hidden within a term of disdain: "It is, in *contempt* of question, her hand" (II. v. 86-88). It must have been important to Shakespeare that the bawdy secret be heard, for Andrew immediately repeats, "Her c's, her u's, and her t's: Why that?"

Some fine and famous Shakespeareans have been unable or unwilling to hear the answer to this question. Arthur Innes reasoned in 1895 [in *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Twelfth Night, or, What you Will*, 1901] that "probably Shakespeare merely named letters that would sound well." [In *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 1971], G. L. Kittredge considered Andrew's question "impossible to answer." Once the bawdy note is sounded, of course, the question is embarrassingly easy to answer.

In one sense, the event illustrates Shakespeare's insight into the psychology of the bluenose censor, secretly fascinated by and desirous of the eroticism he contemns. But it may also demonstrate Shakespeare's playful insight into his own wordplay, so frequently erotic. As the body lies at the basis of metaphor, bawdiness is basic to much punning: playing around with language.

But Malvolio is not playing; he is being played, for a fool. His hidden desire emerges, but only cryptically. Later, Feste, with his characteristically well-disguised perspicacity, mockingly underscores Malvolio's latent wantonness. "Sir Topas, Sir Topas, good Sir Topas," cries Malvolio from his prison, "Go to my lady." To which the dissembling Feste replies, "Out, hyperbolical fiend! how vexest thou this man! Talkest thou nothing but of ladies?" (IV. ii. 23-26). Until his surrender to festivity, Malvolio's black suit and anti-comic bearing

have concealed his "fiend"; now it is out in the open.

Up to the moment of his fall, Malvolio had been able to keep his overt behavior and his covert desires neatly separate, thereby maintaining the condition he had earlier demanded of Toby the reveler: "If you can separate yourself and your misdemeanors, you are welcome to the house" (II. iii. 98-99). But Malvolio's careful division between act and desire, reason and fantasy, collapses when he falls into Maria's trap, even though he himself is certain he has maintained it yet. "I do not now fool myself," he asserts, "to let imagination jade me, for every reason excites to this, that my lady loves me" (II. v. 164-65). From the inverted perspective in which reason "excites" rather than informs, Malvolio finds the way to shape the letter in terms of himself, and then to reform himself in terms of the letter: "M. O. A. I. ... If I could make that resemble something in me!" (II. v. 109-20). It requires only a little "crush" to make the fit. Excited by false reasons, his reason fails him. His "madness" is thus his conviction that he is not mad, his illusion of maintaining control over circumstances when in fact he has lost control. "O peace!" Fabian cautions the impatient Andrew as they watch Malvolio drawing the net more tightly about himself: "Now he's deeply in. Look how imagination blows him" (II. v. 42-43). As he cleverly deciphers the forged letter, Malvolio believes that his supreme reason is shaping his destiny: "Thou art made," he reads, "if thou desir'st to be so" (II. v. 155). Instead of making him, however, his desire unmakes him. His efforts to reform his image lead to disgrace: a fall from grace which is not only personal and social, but has spiritual resonance as well.

Feste is not merely joking when he refers to Malvolio's "fiend." For indeed, the steward behaves, as Toby and Maria maliciously observe, as though he were "possessed." Maria claims that "Yond gull Malvolio is turn'd heathen, a very renegado; for there is no Christian that means to be sav'd by believing rightly can ever believe such impossible passages of grossness. He's in yellow stockings" (III. ii. 69-73). Malvolio's plight is comical, of course, but there is an undercurrent of seriousness throughout. Malvolio surely means to be saved by believing rightly, but erroneous beliefs and impure desires have placed his soul in precarious balance. A bit of Feste's seeming nonsense clarifies the situation. After paralleling himself and Malvolio (incarcerated) with the medieval figures of Vice and Devil, Feste departs with a song whose final line is "Adieu, goodman devil" (IV. u. 120-31). A typical Festean riddle, the phrase makes appropriate sense. It is a syntactic representation of the basic Morality Play scheme: "man" is centered between "good" and "devil" and should turn in the right direction, "*a Dieu*." This moment of mini-allegory prefigures Feste's later banter with Orsino, when the Duke tells the clown, "O, you give me ill counsel," and Feste continues: "Put your grace in your pocket, sir, for this once, and let your flesh and blood obey it" (V. i. 31-33). Feste's counsel here echoes the voice of the archdeceiver, perched on his victim's left shoulder: "let your flesh and blood run free," he advises, "just for this once. Don't worry about your soul, just hide it and the possibility of grace away temporarily, 'in your pocket, sir.'" Such brief transgressions, however, will not be forgotten. "Pleasure will be paid," Feste reminds us, "one time or another" (II. iv. 70-71).

The underlying seriousness of Malvolio's fall is further suggested by the nature of the punishment he suffers. On one level, he is imprisoned for the "madness" of being rigidly sane in a frivolous world. On another level, his humbling is a direct rebuke to his social-climbing aspirations. On a yet deeper level, he is punished for his hidden concupiscence, with the punishment combining various symbolic "deaths." Malvolio is not only mortified; metaphorically he is also mortally assaulted, killed, and buried. "I have dogg'd him," gloats Toby, "like his murtherer" (III. ii. 76). The steward who wanted to possess his lady is instead thrown into a small dark hole: having wished for a bed, he finds a grave. He complains to Feste, the singer of "Come away, come away, death, / And in sad cypress let me be laid" (II. iv. 51-52), saying that "they have laid me here in hideous darkness" (IV. ii. 29-30) Malvolio does symbolically "die," but not as he had hoped; his is not the sexual death of Feste's ambiguous song, but the comic scapegoat death of a victimized gull.

Even when released from his symbolic cell, however, the unrepentant steward refuses to participate in the lovers' celebrations. Faced again with merriment, he steadfastly clings to sobriety. His letter to Olivia from his cell—signed, accurately, "the madly-us'd Malvolio"— is calm, reasonable, and correctly descriptive of his

treatment (V. i. 302-11). His only request is "Tell me why."

> Why have you suffer'd me to be imprison'd,
> Kept in a dark house, visited by the priest,
> And made the most notorious geek and gull
> That e'er invention play'd on? Tell me why!
> (V. i. 341-44)

He receives no answer, and although Olivia promises him future justice, he is not appeased. The steward who earlier declared to Toby, Maria, and Fabian, "I am not of your element" (III. iv. 124), is thus alone at play's end. While Feste remains to sing his lovely and melancholy song, Malvolio exits, snarling promised revenge.

As Malvolio departs, he leaves behind an unresolved conclusion to the play, taking with him the key to any clear resolution. For all its conventional comic devices of repaired unions, the ending of *Twelfth Night* is indeterminate. We look for the settlement of disputes and the reunion of fragmented relationships, "confirm'd by mutual joinder of their hands," as the priest says of Olivia and Sebastian (V. i. 157). But though the final scene of *Twelfth Night* is in fact constructed so as to allow "mutual joinder," no such resolution occurs. The prolonged hesitation of Viola and Sebastian to identify each other which includes a careful scrutiny of all the evidence (names, sex, moles, age, clothing) finally results not in any embrace of recognition but in Viola's odd provision of postponement:

> Do not embrace me till each circumstance
> Of place, time, fortune, do cohere and jump
> That I am Viola.
> (V. i. 251-53)

One expects a coherence of circumstance place, time, and fortune at the conclusion of a successful comedy—and *Twelfth Night* has often been viewed as a paradigm of the form. But Shakespeare deliberately defers a denouement, and the play ends before we see one enacted. Viola maintains that the resumption of her true identity depends upon the old captain who brought her to Illyria, the captain who has kept her "maiden weeds." The captain, however, has been jailed by Malvolio, "upon some action" (V. i. 275-76). Malvolio is therefore essential to a final resolution of the plot; the ultimate coherence of time and circumstance depends upon the mistreated gull. When he stalks out, swearing revenge, he also disrupts the plot, refusing to fulfill his essential role in the final "mutual joinder." Orsino commands, "Pursue him and entreat him to a peace; he hath not told us of the captain yet" (V. i. 380-81). But we hear no more from Malvolio, nor from anyone else, for the play almost immediately concludes, with the loose ends of its unfinished plot knotted abruptly into Feste's final song.

Similar gestures of irresolution occur at the end of almost all of Shakespeare's comedies—as though he was habitually skeptical of the resolutions the genre typically provided. Whether through hints of failed marriage at the end of *As You Like It*, or the sudden mournful disruption at the end of *Love's Labor's Lost*, or the preposterous rapid-fire revelations at the end of *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare usually complicates the conventional comic ending, stressing the fragility of its artifice. As Feste's concluding song suggests in *Twelfth Night*, the momentary pleasures of plays and other toys are only transient episodes in a larger season of folly, thievery, drunkenness, and old age. To the extent that the tidy finales of conventional comedies deny such larger, extradramatic realities, Shakespeare seems to have been uneasy with them: the ending of *The Tempest* is his final manifestation of this uneasiness.

An aspect of Shakespeare's distrust of romantic conventions underlies Malvolio's spelling lesson, to return to that scene for a moment. I want to ask Andrew Aguecheek's question once more, and offer a speculative answer. "Her c's, her u's, and her t's: why that?" Why, indeed? Why does Shakespeare so carefully embed this

grossest of verbal improprieties in a play which even Eric Partridge [in *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, (1968)] calls "the cleanest comedy except *A Midsummer Night's Dream*"?

One answer involves what Shakespeare evidently considered the natural and undeniable bases of human behavior. The romantic comedy of *Twelfth Night* transmutes our basic appetites, sublimating carnal hunger into romantic yearning: food becomes music, as Orsino's opening speech reveals (but melancholy music, with "a dying fall"). *Twelfth Night* enacts an elaborate dance around a central core of carnality, which Malvolio's unconscious cryptogram literally spells out. The idealized festivity of *Twelfth Night* is to its secret erotic core as the innocent Maypole dance is to the symbol around which it revolves—except that the joys and celebrations of Maygames are muted in Shakespeare's play by wintry, "dying" tones of mourning and loss. Erotic desire and symbolic death intermix throughout the play, creating a continuous undertone of romantic melancholy best personified in the figure of Feste. Festivity and loss are presented as reciprocal: carnival is a farewell to the carnal (*carne-vale*).

What makes *Twelfth Night* ultimately so melancholy, however, is not the sounding of these baser tones in the music of love, but the futile (albeit beautiful) effort spent trying to deny the facts of desire and death with the artificial toys of romantic wish-fulfillment. Finally it won't work. In retrospect, the festive fantasy of innocent indulgence looks like another version of the puritanical Malvolio's effort to deny or repudiate base carnal desire. Illyria's romanticism is psychologically reciprocal to Malvolio's rigidity and restraint: both represent denials and sublimations. Feste's final song seems to admit the futility of both defenses against the real world.

For all their mutual antipathy, Malvolio and Feste are symbolic brothers: both estranged from yet integral to the festive yet melancholy world of Illyria. To achieve a comic world of reunion and restoration, it is necessary to omit or deny or banish their respective melancholies. But, since melancholy preceded and prompted the merriment, this is impossible. Malvolio therefore retreats to his threats of vengeance, Feste to his ambiguous lyric. Finally both characters withdraw from the comic world. But without them and the impulses of restraint and love they represent, that comic world has no motivation, no "reason" for being.

At Malvolio's fall we laughed all. Yet without the (scape) goat, there would have been no carnival to provide either the fall or the merriment attending it.

SOURCE: "Malvolio's Fall," in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1, Winter, 1978, pp. 85-90.

Feste

Alan S. Downer

[*Downer examines Feste's role as the fool in* Twelfth Night*, which allows Feste to speak freely and peel away the pretenses of the other characters. He is a pivotal figure in the play, and his presence elevates the play above the level of a mere romantic farce. Feste operates in each of the three subplots to round off the action of the play: first, Orsino must understand the nature of true love so he may marry Viola; second, Malvolio's inflated sense of self must be punctured; and third, Sebastian must take Viola's place in Olivia's heart. By speaking the truth, he ensures that his lord and lady will not be fools, and he closes the play with a song*.]

. . . Feste is disguised both in costume and in behavior. His suit is motley, the uniform of the Fool, and he carries the tabor and perhaps the bauble as his badge of office. When, however, Olivia calls him a fool-and we must return to this scene again-he points out that "cucullus non facit monachum [the cowl doesn't make the monk]." And as the man inside the monk's robe may be anything but a monk in spirit, so he, Feste, wears not motley in his brain. His disguise, like Viola's, is a kind of protection; he is an allowed fool and may speak frankly what other men, in other disguises, must say only to themselves. . . .

Feste's whole art and function depend upon his talents as a "notable corrupter of words," and he has much wisdom to utter on what we should probably call the problem of semantics. He concludes one wit combat by declaring that "words are grown so false that I am loath to prove reason with them." In many ways he is the central figure of the play, the symbol of its meaning. The plot could get on without him, no doubt; his practical function as message-bearer could be taken over by Fabian, who has little enough to keep him busy. But he is no mere embellishment. Without Feste, *Twelfth Night* would not be the enduring comedy it is but another romantic farce like *The Comedy of Errors*. *Twelfth Night* is Feste's night.

The Fool is as conventional in Shakespearean comedy as the intriguing slave or parasite in Plautus or Moliere. But, while Feste shares some of the characteristics of Tranio-Phormio-Sganarelle, he does not, like them, dazzle our eyes by juggling the elements of the plot into a complex pattern which only he can sort out for the necessary fortunate conclusion. Until the last act of the play, he does little but jest or sing. But for all his failure to take a positive part in the intrigue-emphasized perhaps when he drops out of the baiting of Malvolio-for all that he is not, that is to say, a protagonist, he nonetheless propounds the theme which gives *Twelfth Night* its unity and makes a single work of art out of what might have been a gorgeous patchwork.

A brief examination of the matter of the comedy will suggest the basis for such a conclusion. *Twelfth Night* is compounded of two, perhaps three, "plots," more or less independent actions, each of which must be rounded off before the play is concluded. In the first, Duke Orsino's eyes must be opened to the true nature of love that he may marry Viola; in the second, Malvolio must be reduced from the deluded superman to fallible humanity; in the third, which is closely tied with the first, Sebastian must be substituted for Viola in the affections of Olivia.

The structure is skilfully contrived not only to keep all three plots going and maintain a reasonable connection among them but to emphasize the similarity of their themes. Like most panoramic drama, the play may be divided into three organic movements rather than the meaningless editorial division into five acts. The first of these movements, from the introduction of Orsino to Viola's discovery that she has charmed Olivia (I, 1-II, 3), is concerned almost exclusively with establishing the triangular love affair. Toby, Andrew, and Maria are brought on to whet our appetites for their plot, and, just before the movement ends, Sebastian appears that we may be reassured all will come right before the play is over. However, we should note a speech of Feste's made to Maria during his first appearance (I, 5), in which he refers obliquely to the common subject of the separate actions: "If Sir Toby would leave drinking, thou wert as witty a piece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria." If all were as it should be and according to the order of nature, Toby would wed Maria. But Toby drinks, and the Duke loves Olivia, and Olivia (as we shall see in a moment) loves Viola. All most *un*natural.

In the second movement (II, 3-IV, I) the love triangle remains unchanged, and the trapping of Malvolio occupies most of the action. We observe the offense for which he is to be punished, the plotting of revenge, and the success of the scheme. Sebastian has again made only a token appearance, but in the final scene of the movement (III, 4) all three actions are brought together with the greatest of ease as the deluded Malvolio is handed over to Toby, and Andrew and Viola are inveigled into a duel from which both are rescued by the intervention and arrest of Sebastian's friend, Antonio.

The final movement, the last two acts of the play, is in a sense Sebastian's. Mistaken for Viola, he brings about a fortunate unknotting of the love tangle, rescues his friend Antonio from the clutches of the Duke, and forces a confession of their machinations from Toby and company. The point to notice here is that Feste is the character who, innocently enough, drives Sebastian into Olivia's arms. It is Feste's only direct contribution to the action of the play; it is also the single decisive action which cuts the comic knot; and it is a visual dramatic symbol of his relationship to the whole play. It is the action of a man whose professional function is to perceive and declare the true state of affairs in the face of scorn, threats, and discouragement from the self-deluded. Shakespeare has in fact prepared us for this action at several important points earlier in the play.

On his first appearance, with Maria, Feste demonstrates not only that he is able to more than hold his own in a wit combat but that he is shrewd enough to see the true state of affairs in the household. A moment later, with the license of an allowed fool, he is demonstrating to Olivia the folly of her resolution to withdraw from the world for seven years in mourning for her brother.

> *FESTE*: Good madonna, why mournest thou?
> *OLIVIA*: Good fool, for my brother's death.
> *FESTE*: I think his soul is in hell, madonna.
> *OLIVIA*: I know his soul is in heaven, fool.
> *FESTE*: The more fool, madonna, to mourn
> for your brother's soul, being in heaven.
> Taken away the fool, gentlemen
> [I, 5, 72-78].

The little passage is in the most artificial of dialogue forms, stichomythia, and it is perhaps only a bit of logic-chopping, but it presents the common-sense view of a sentimental and un-Christian attitude.
The exposure of Olivia takes place in the first movement of the play. In the second movement Feste undertakes to tell the Duke a few plain truths, but, since the undeceiving of the mighty is ticklish business, he goes about it in an oblique manner.

Shakespeare has introduced the Duke in a most ambiguous way. To him falls an opening speech as rich in texture and sound as any love poetry in the language. To him also falls an attitude that cannot fail to win both our admiration and our exasperation. We admire his constancy, that is, but are somewhat impatient with his refusal to "take his answer." Further, if we accept him at his own evaluation as presented in his speeches, his sudden switch to Viola in the last scene becomes pure comic convention without reason or meaning, a botched-up happy ending.

But, if we have been beguiled by our own sentimentality into sympathy with the Duke, Feste will set us right, and most particularly in that romantic scene (II, 4) where he has been thrust in to sing the song which Viola seems not prepared to perform. It is as early in the morning as the love-smitten Duke would arise from bed. He enters, calling at once for music, and requests Cesario (that is, Viola) for that "old and antique song" they heard last night. While his servant Curio goes in search of Feste to sing it, Orsino proceeds to analyze it for us. The description is famous and explicit:

> It is old and plain,
> The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
> And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
> Do use to chant it. It is silly sooth,
> And dallies with the innocence of love
> Like the old age
> [II, 4, 44-49].

That is, a simple song, presumably a folk song or ballad, fit accompaniment to a household task. It is a love song, but not impassioned, not from the point of view of fervent youth. It dallies with the harmless pleasure of love as if the experience were but the memory of the old, a memory recollected in tranquillity. Whereupon Feste sings:

> Come away, come away, death,
> And in sad cypress let me be laid.
> Fly away, fly away, breath,
> I'm slain by a fair cruel maid

My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
O prepare it! My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.

In the second stanza the love imagery becomes more extravagant.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,
On my black coffin let there be strown;
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones shall be thrown.
A thousand, thousand sighs to save,
Lay me, O where Sad, true lover ne'er find my grave,
To weep there.

Without the original music, which cannot be traced, it is impossible to say for certain, but, from the striking difference between the song as anticipated and the song as sung, Feste seems to have been mocking, indirectly, the Duke's passion. "Come away, death" is indeed a love song, but it can hardly be said to dally with the innocence of love. This would explain the Duke's abrupt, "There's for thy pains," and his immediate dismissal, not only of the singer, but of his entire court. Perhaps he is afraid that there may have been some sniggering behind his back as Feste sang. There is just a hint in the play that his household is a little wearied of his unavailing pursuit of Olivia.

And Feste, going off, dares a parting thrust. "Now the melancholy god protect thee," he says, and bids him put to sea to make a good voyage of nothing. In this scene, I suggest, Feste "exposes" the Duke as he has earlier exposed Olivia. By mocking them both, he points out that their loves are sentimental and foolish. And the Duke, unlike Olivia, is angry. He dismisses his attendants and sends Viola once more to "same sovereign cruelty," with a stubborn determination to act out the role he has cast himself in.

With this as a clue to his character, the actor of course has it in his power to make evident the Duke's melancholy, his fashionable love-sickness, from the start. In the first scene, even in his gorgeous opening set-piece, he is plainly worshiping love for its own sake and fostering his emotion for sentimental purposes. His first words demand that the music play on, that he may experience again his pleasurable mood of Thwarted Lover. For all the beauty of the verse, the attitude is distinctly unhealthy. He must have music for his love to feed on, even upon arising in the morning; or, for a substitute, a garden of sweet-scented flowers. And is he not, like Romeo in the throes of puppy love for the equally unresponsive Rosaline, "best when least in company"?

The parallel exposing of Malvolio, which is capped by Feste in the third movement, is the clearest statement of the theme in action, since it is unencumbered by romantic love, an element which can blind an audience to the true state of affairs as effectively as it can blind the romantic lovers. Malvolio, in this play, is plain text. As Olivia's steward he is sufficiently in charge of her affairs to bring suit against a sea captain for dereliction of duty; as her butler, he is ready with falsehoods to defend her privacy; as her would-be husband, he has prepared schemes for the proper and efficient conduct of their household. These are all admirable traits for his several capacities: the alert businessman, the devoted servant, the careful husband. But there is a fault in him, an obvious fault. There is something too much of the cold gaze from half-shut eyes down the prominent beak, something too much of the demure travel of regard. Malvolio would not only be virtuous, he would have others so, and he would define the term. It is a cause of delight to discover that the elegant creature with snow-broth in his veins, so superior to the drunken carousing of Toby, the witty trifling of Feste, the dalliance of Olivia-that this man of virtue is only human, like ourselves. And in this exposure, that the whirligig of time may bring his revenges, Feste is permitted to play the visually dominant part.

The action is so arranged that, of all the conspirators, only Feste has a scene alone with Malvolio, in which, for nobody's pleasure but his own, he teases and torments the benighted steward and reduces the proud man to a state of wretched groveling: "I tell thee," cries Malvolio at last, "I am as well in my wits as any man in Illyria," and Feste replies, "Well-a-day that you were, sir."

This does not seem to be idly spoken. Feste is saying that he wishes Malvolio were not sick of self-love but like a normal Illyrian. Like Toby, for example, who would go to church in a galliard and return in a coranto, and whose fair round belly symbolizes his philosophy, that there is a place for cakes and ale even in a world turning Puritan. The point is made simply and emphatically, with Feste *solus* on the stage, and Malvolio perhaps clamoring behind the Judas window of the stage door: the Elizabethan equivalent of a motion-picture close-up-on Feste.

Thus it is Feste's function in both parts of the action to make plain to the audience the artificial, foolish attitudes of the principal figures. Malvolio loves himself, Orsino loves love, and Olivia loves a ghost. This, says Feste, is unnatural, against common sense. In this similarity of situation and Feste's single-minded attitude in each case lies the unity of *Twelfth Night*, its theme.

Feste states it clearly. Since he is primarily a singing fool, he states it in song:

> What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
> Present mirth hath present laughter. . . .
> Youth's a stuff will not endure.

Feste's philosophy is as old as the hills, as old as the comic attitude, the acceptance of the facts of life. His philosophy, however, goes somewhat deeper than a mere sentimental optimism.

> Journeys end in lovers' meeting
> Every wise man's son doth know.

As a wise man's son, or as an understanding fool, he sees to it that there shall be a meeting of true lovers at the end of the journey of Viola and Sebastian. In his scene with Malvolio he even discards his priestly disguise and appears in his own motley to restore the vision of the self-blinded man. And, by his introduction of Sebastian to Olivia, he makes possible the shedding of all disguises both physical and spiritual at the denouement.

Critical opinion has been somewhat divided about Feste. There is general agreement about his remarkable clean-spokenness; he has been called the merriest of Shakespeare's fools, and the loneliest. He has been taken to be the symbol of misrule that governs the *Twelfth Night* activities. Yet, when the recognition scene is over, all the characters romantically paired off, Malvolio reduced to a very human bellow-"I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!"-and Feste prepares to sing his foolish little epilogue, does he not seem to be something more than merry, or lonely, or the spirit of misrule?

Observe him, alone on the great stage which is the emptier for the departure of the grandly dressed ladies and gentlemen who have crowded it during the last scene, and the quieter after the vigorous excitement that attended the denouement: the twins united, the marriage and betrothal, the explosion of Malvolio, the brawling of Andrew and Toby. Feste is perhaps older than the other characters, "a fool that the Lady Olivia's father took much delight in." But he has been, for a fool, a rather quiet character; no loud, bawdy jokes and very little slapstick. His brain is not parti-colored: *cucullus non facit monachum*. As Viola observes:

> This fellow's 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 practice
As full of labor as a wise man's art.

It is the function of this fool to speak the truth, however quizzically he must phrase it. It is his task to persuade his lord and lady *not* to be fools. It is the task of comedy, too.

And now he is alone. Now he sings his lonely, foolish song:

When that I was and a little tiny boy
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain, etc.

Perhaps it is not so foolish. There is one constant thing in this world, he says, the facts of nature, the wind and the rain that raineth every day. Thieves may be shut out and evil men by bars and locks but not the rain that raineth every day. Like a true jester, he makes a little joke out of his moral. When he took a wife, he planned to be master in his own house, but nature defeated him, for it is the order of nature that men shall be henpecked, and suffer from hangovers, as surely as the rain shall fall. He emphasizes the antiquity of his wisdom:

A great while ago, the world began
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain.

Then, with a quizzical smile, as if to say, "I have made my point, or the comedy has made it for me; no need to quote history-"he slips into the epilogue pattern we have been awaiting:

But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.

It is, after all, as he reminds us, just a play. But it has its purpose for being, just as the great tragedies have. *Twelfth Night* is Feste's night, and we may look to be well edified when the Fool delivers the Madmen.

SOURCE: "Feste's Night" in *College English*, Vol. 13, No. 5, February, 1952, pp. 258-65.

Joan Hartwig

[*Hartwig analyzes the relationship between Malvolio and Feste, suggesting that while Feste claims Malvolio's humiliation is "the whirligig of time" bringing its revenge back on Malvolio, it is really the result of Feste and Maria manipulating Malvolio by human means to achieve their own revenge. While Malvolio praises divine intervention when he finds the letter, believing that what Fate has decreed must be, he fails to anticipate the intrusion of Feste and Maria. When Malvolio is faced with the discrepancy between what he wants, and what really is, he refuses to broaden his spectrum of reality and is confronted by the possibility of madness. In the same way that Feste manipulates Malvolio into an unpredictable position, so comic providence leads the audience to an unexpected finale*.]

Shakespeare's plays frequently counterpose the powers of human and of suprahuman will, and the antithesis usually generates a definition of natures, both human and suprahuman. These definitions vary, however, according to the play. For instance, Hamlet's "providence" does not seem the same as the darker, equivocating power that encourages Macbeth to pit his will against a larger order; and these controls differ from Diana and Apollo in the later plays, *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*. Furthermore, Hamlet's submission and Macbeth's

submission to non-human controls (if indeed they do submit their individual wills) cannot be understood as the same action or even to imply the same kind of human vision.

Many of the conflicts of *Twelfth Night* seem to be concerned with the contest between human will and suprahuman control; yet, the latter manifests itself in various ways and is called different names by the characters themselves. As each contest between the human will and another designer works itself out, the involved characters recognize that their will is fulfilled, but not according to their planning. The individual's will is finally secondary to a design that benevolently, but unpredictably, accords with what he truly desires. For example, when Olivia, at the end of Act I, implores Fate to accord with her will in allowing her love for Cesario to flourish, she has no idea that her will must be circumvented for her own happiness. Yet the substitution of Sebastian for Cesario in her love fulfills her wishes more appropriately than her own design could have done. Inversely, when Duke Orsino says in the opening scene that he expects to replace Olivia's brother in her "debt of love," he doesn't realize that literally he will become her "brother" (I.i.34-40) [quotations from *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Alfred Harbage (1969).]

As the closing moments of the play bring Olivia and the Duke together on the stage for the only time, she says to him, "think me as well a sister as a wife" (V.i.307); and the Duke responds in kind: "Madam, I am most apt t' embrace your offer," and a bit later, "Meantime, sweet sister, / We will not part from hence" (V.i.310, 373-74). The Duke had not understood the literal force of his prediction, but his early statement of his hope plants a subtle suggestion for the audience. When the play's action accords with Duke Orsino's "will," the discrepancy between intention and fulfillment is a delightful irony which points again to the fact that "what you will" may be realized, but under conditions which the human will cannot manipulate. Orsino's desire to love and be loved, on the other hand, is fulfilled by his fancy's true queen, Viola, more appropriately than his design for Olivia would have allowed.

The one character whose true desires are not fulfilled in the play is Malvolio. His hope to gain Olivia in marriage results in public humiliation at the hands of Feste, who takes obvious satisfaction in being able to throw Malvolio's former haughty words back at him under their new context of Malvolio's demonstrated foolishness:

> Why, 'some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrown upon them.' I was one, sir, in this interlude, one Sir Topas, sir; but that's all one. 'By the Lord, fool, I am not mad!' But do you remember, 'Madam, why laugh you at such a barren rascal? An you smile not, he's gagged?' And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges. (V.i.360-66)

Feste's assertion that the "whirligig of time" has brought this revenge upon Malvolio neglects the fact that Maria has been the instigator and Feste the enforcer of the plot to harass Malvolio. Time's design, insofar as Malvolio is concerned, depends upon Maria's and Feste's will, which differs significantly from a central point that the main plot makes-that human will is not the controller of events. The characters in the main plot learn from the play's confusing action that human designs are frequently inadequate for securing "what you will," and that a design outside their control brings fulfillment in unexpected ways. Feste's fallacy, of course, makes the results of the subplot *seem* to be the same as the results of the main plot, but Time's revenges on Malvolio are primarily human revenges, and this particular measure for measure is thoroughly within human control. Feste's justice allows no mitigation for missing the mark in human action; and the incipient cruelty that his precise justice manifests is felt, apparently, by other characters in the play.

When Olivia and her company hear Malvolio's case, she responds with compassion: "Alas, poor fool, how have they baffled thee! . . . He hath been most notoriously abused" (V.i.359, 368). Duke Orsino, upon hearing Malvolio's letter of explanation, comments, "This savors not much of distraction" (V.i.304). And even Sir Toby has become uneasy about the harsh treatment of Malvolio in the imprisonment scene: "I would we were

well rid of this knavery. If he may be conveniently delivered, I would he were; for I am now so far in offense with my niece that I cannot pursue with any safety this sport to the upshot" (IV.ii.66-70). Actually, to place the responses into this sequence reverses the play's order; and we should consider the fact that Shakespeare builds *toward* a compassionate comment, with Olivia's statement climaxing an unwillingness to condone the actions of Feste and Maria in gulling Malvolio-at least in its last phase. Feste's exact form of justice without mercy has always characterized revenge, and even the word "revenge" is stressed by several of the characters in the subplot. When Maria voices her apparently spontaneous plot to gull Malvolio, she says:

> The devil a Puritan that he is... the best persuaded of himself; so crammed, as he thinks, with, excellencies that it is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him; and on that vice in him will my revenge find notable cause to work. (II.iii.134-40)

Maria's successful implementation of her "revenge" elicits Sir Toby's total admiration. At the end of II.v, he exclaims, "I could marry this wench for this device" (168), and when Maria appears soon thereafter, he asks, "Wilt thou set thy foot o' my neck?" (174). The battlefield image of the victor and the victim is mockheroic, of course; but in the final scene Fabian testifies to its literal fruition: "Maria writ / The letter, at Sir Toby's great importance, / In recompense whereof he hath married her" (V.i.352-54). Sir Toby's submission to Maria's will is a comic parallel for two actions: the pairing off of lovers, and the submission of the individual's will to a design other than his own. Yet the inclusion of a parodic version of marriage-harmony in the subplot does not fully ease discomfort of the subplot's conclusion. Fabian tries to smooth it away when he suggests that the "sportful malice" of gulling Malvolio "may rather pluck on laughter than revenge" (V.i.355-58). Neither Feste nor Malvolio seems to be convinced, however. Feste's "whirligig of time brings in his revenges," and Malvolio quits the stage with, "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!" (V.i.366-67). The forgiveness that should conclude the comic pattern is "notoriously" missing from the subplot and cannot be absorbed successfully by the Duke's line, "Pursue him and entreat him to a peace." Malvolio seems unlikely to return. The major differences between the subplot and the main plot is clearest at this dramatic moment: revenge is a human action that destroys; love, graced by the sanction of a higher providence, creates a "golden time."

Feste's "whirligig" seems to be a parody of Fortune's wheel in its inevitable turning, particularly with its suggestions of giddy swiftness and change. It provides a perfect image for the wild but symmetrical comic conclusion of the play's action. Feste's speech which includes it gives the appearance of completion to a mad cycle of events over which no human had much control. Only in Malvolio's case was human control of events evident. In her forged letter, Maria caters to Malvolio's "will" and, by encouraging him to accept his own interpretation of circumstances as his desire dictates, she leads him not only into foolishness, but also into a defense of his sanity. The discrepancy between Malvolio's assumption that fortune is leading him on his way and the fact that Maria is in charge of his fate manifests itself clearly in the juxtaposition of her directions to the revelers (as she leaves the stage) with Malvolio's lines as he enters:

> *MARIA*. Get ye all three into the box tree. . . . Observe him, for the love of mockery; for I know this letter "will make a contemplative idiot of him. Close, in the name of jesting. [*The others hide*] Lie thou there [*throws down a letter*]; for here comes the trout that must be caught with tickling. *Exit*.
>
> *Enter Malvolio.*
>
> *MALVOLIO*. 'Tis but fortune, all is fortune. Maria once told me she [Olivia] did affect me. (II.v. 13-22)

The gulling of Malvolio which follows is hilariously funny, partly because Malvolio brings it all on himself. Even before he finds the letter, his assumptions of rank and his plans for putting Sir Toby in his place elicit volatile responses from the box tree. And after he finds the forged letter, Malvolio's self-aggrandizing

interpretations of the often cryptic statements evoke howls of glee mixed with the already disdainful laughter. The comedy of this scene is simple in its objective exploitation of Malvolio's self-love, and Malvolio becomes an appropriately comic butt. The audience's hilarity is probably more controlled than Sir Toby's and the box tree audience's excessive laughter; still, we are united in laughing at Malvolio's foolishness. And when Malvolio appears in his yellow stockings and cross-garters, the visual comedy encourages a total release in the fun of the game-Malvolio is gulled and we need not feel the least bit guilty, because he is marvelously unaware of his own foolishness. Oblivious to any reality but his own, Malvolio thinks he is irresistibly appealing with his repugnant dress and his continuous smiles-so contrary to his usual solemnity-and Olivia concludes that he has gone mad. "Why, this is very midsummer madness," she says, and, then, as she is leaving to receive Cesario, she commends Malvolio to Maria's care.

> Good Maria, let this fellow be looked to.
> Where's my cousin Toby?
> Let some of my people have a special care of him.
> I would not have him miscarry for the half of my dowry.
> III.iv.55-58)

Malvolio misconstrues Olivia's generous concern as amorous passion and he thanks Jove for contriving circumstances so appropriately:

> I have limed her; but it is Jove's doing, and Jove make me thankful. . . .
> Nothing that can be can come between me and the full prospect of my hopes.
> Well, Jove, not I, is the doer of this, and he is to be thanked.
> (III.iv.68-77)

Malvolio's scrupulous praise of a higher designer than himself is a parodic echo of Olivia's earlier submission to Fate after she has begun to love Cesario: "What is decreed must be-and be this so!" (I.v.297). The impulses underlying Malvolio's speech (and to some extent, Olivia's speech as well) exert opposite pulls: Malvolio wants to attribute control of circumstances to Jove at the same time he wants divine identity. He attempts to simulate foreknowledge through predictive assertion: "Nothing that can be can come between me and the full prospect of my hopes." As long as events are in the hands of a non-human control, man cannot destroy or divert the predetermined order. But Malvolio cannot foresee the vindictive wit of Maria (often pronounced "Moriah"), nor can Olivia foresee the necessary substitution of Sebastian for Viola-Cesario. Each must learn that he, like the characters he wishes to control, is subject to an unpredictable will not his own. Precisely at this moment-when the character is forced to see a discrepancy between what he "wills" and what "is"-the possibility that he is mad confronts him.

Feste seems to adopt the disguise of Sir Topas to convince Malvolio that he is mad, and the imprisonment scene evokes a different response than the letter that exploits Malvolio by encouraging him to wear yellow stockings and cross-garters. In the earlier phase of the gulling, Malvolio is a comic butt after the fashion of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, unaware of his foolishness; however, imprisoned, Malvolio is a helpless victim, fully aware that he is being abused. With Olivia, his extraordinary costume and perpetual smiles make him a visible clown, and, as a result, he even seems good-humored. But with Maria and Feste in the imprisonment scene, he is not visible; we only hear him and his protestations of abuse. These different visual presentations produce a notable difference in comic effect because visual comedy often changes a serious tone in the dialogue.

In the imprisonment scene, Sir Topas keeps insisting that things are not as Malvolio perceives them; but Malvolio refuses to admit a discrepancy between what he perceives and reality. Accordingly, Malvolio insists that he is not mad.

Malvolio within.
MALVOLIO. Who calls there?
CLOWN. Sir Topas the curate, who comes to visit Malvolio the lunatic. . . .
MALVOLIO. Sir Topas, never was man thus wronged. Good Sir Topas, do not think I am mad. They have laid me here in hideous darkness.
CLOWN. Fie, thou dishonest Satan. I call thee by the most modest terms, for I am one of those gentle ones that will use the devil himself with courtesy. Say'st thou that house is dark?
MALVOLIO. As hell, Sir Topas.
CLOWN. Why, it hath bay windows transparent as barricadoes, and the clerestories toward the south north are as lustrous as ebony, and yet complainest thou of obstruction?
MALVOLIO. I am not mad, Sir Topas I say to you this house is dark.
CLOWN. Madman, thou errest. I say there is no darkness but ignorance, in which thou art more puzzled than the Egyptians in their fog.
MALVOLIO. I say this house is as dark as ignorance, though ignorance were as dark as hell; and I say there was never man thus abused. I am no more mad than you are.
(IV.ii.20-48)

In the darkness of his prison, Malvolio literally is unable to see, and Feste makes the most of the symbolic implications of Malvolio's blindness. The audience perceives with Feste that the house is not dark (that hypothetical Globe audience would have been able to see the literal daylight in the playhouse), yet the audience also knows that Malvolio is being "abused" because he cannot see the light. The audience is therefore led to a double awareness of values in this scene: we are able to absorb the emblematic significance of Malvolio's separation from good-humored sanity and to know at the same time that Malvolio is not mad in the literal way that Feste, Maria, and Sir Toby insist. Although the literal action engenders the emblematic awareness, the literal action does not necessarily support the emblematic meaning. This pull in two opposite directions occurs simultaneously and places the audience in a slightly uncomfortable position. We prefer to move in one direction or in the other. Yet it seems that here Shakespeare asks us to forgo the either-or alternatives and to hold contradictory impressions together. Malvolio cannot be dismissed as a simple comic butt when his trial in the dark has such severe implications.

The ambiguities of his situation are clear to everyone except Malvolio, but he rigidly maintains his single point of view. Because he refuses to allow more than his own narrowed focus, he is *emblematically* an appropriate butt for the harsh comic action that blots out his power to see as well as to act. He must ultimately depend upon the fool to bring him "ink, paper, and light" so that he may extricate himself from his prison, a situation which would have seemed to Malvolio earlier in the play "mad" indeed. Feste thus does force Malvolio to act against his will in submitting to the fool, but Malvolio fails to change his attitudes. Malvolio remains a literalist-Feste's visual disguise is for the audience so that we can see as well as hear the ambiguities of his performance, a point that Maria brings into focus when she says "Thou mightest have done this without thy beard and gown. He sees thee not" (IV.ii.63-64).

In the very next scene, Sebastian presents a contrast which delineates even more clearly the narrowness of Malvolio's response to an uncontrollable situation. Sebastian, too, confronts the possibility that he is mad: his situation in Illyria is anything but under his control.

This is the air; that is the glorious sun;
This pearl she gave me, I do feel't and see't;
And *though* 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus,
Yet 'tis not madness. . . .
For *though* my soul disputes well with my sense
That this may be some error, *but* no madness,
Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune

So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
That I am ready to distrust mine eyes
And wrangle with my reason that persuades me
To any other trust *but* that I am mad, Or *else* the lady's mad.
(IV. iii. 1-16: my italics)

Sebastian's pile of contrasting conjunctions ("though," "yet," "but") underlines his hesitance to form a final judgment, unlike Malvolio, whose point of view never changes despite the onslaught of unmanageable circumstances. The contradictions of his sensory perceptions lead Sebastian to a state of "wonder" in which he is able to suspend reason and delay judgment, and this signifies a flexibility of perception which Malvolio cannot attain. Malvolio is not stirred by the discrepancies of experience to consider that appearances may not be reality; but Sebastian can appreciate the undefinable workings of a power beyond the evident. Sebastian's ability to sense the "wonder" in a world where cause and effect have been severed gives him a stature that Malvolio cannot achieve. Yet the difference between them is due to the source of their manipulation as well as to their response. Sebastian is manipulated by Fate or by Fortune; Malvolio, by Maria and Feste. Human manipulators parody suprahuman control and because they do, Maria and Feste define both levels of action.

Feste, Maria, and Sir Toby are all in a set and predictable world of sporting gullery, and the rules for their games are known. Feste's "whirligig" associates Time with a toy (perhaps even with an instrument of torture) and limits Time to human terms of punishment. On the other hand, the Time that Viola addresses does untie her problematic knot of disguise. Feste's attribution of revenge to this "whirligig of Time" points up the difference between the two controls. The whirligig becomes a parodic substitute for the larger providence that other characters talk about under other titles: Time, Jove, Fate, Fortune, or Chance. Significantly, Malvolio's humiliation is the only humanly designed action that fulfills itself as planned. The subplot performs its parody in many other ways, but in Feste's summary "whirligig" it displays the double vision that Shakespearean parody typically provides. The foibles of the romantics in Illyria are seen in their reduced terms through Sir Toby, Maria, and Sir Andrew, but the limitations of the parodic characters also heighten by contrast the expansive and expanding world of the play. Love, not revenge, is celebrated.

But even Feste's whirligig takes another spin and does not stop at revenge: in the play's final song the playwright extends an embrace to his audience. Feste's song creates an ambiguity of perspective which fuses the actual world with an ideal one: "the rain it raineth every day" is hardly the world described by the play. Romantic Illyria seems to have little to do with such realistic intrusions. Yet, the recognition of continuous rain is in itself an excess-it does not rain every day in the actual world, at least not in the same place. Thus, the pessimistic excess of the song balances the optimistic excesses of the romance world of Illyria; neither excess accurately reflects the actual world. Despite the apparent progress the song describes of a man's growing from infancy to maturity and to old age, it remains something of an enigma. The ambiguities of the first four stanzas build to a contrast of direct statements in the final stanza.

> 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.

The first line of this stanza seems to imply that the world has its own, independent design; and it also suggests that man's actions must take their place and find meaning within this larger and older pattern. The specific meaning of that larger design, however, remains concealed within the previous ambiguities of Feste's song. His philosophic pretensions to explain that design are comically vague and he knows it. He tosses them aside to speak directly to the audience: "But that's all one, our play is done." This is the same phrase Feste uses with Malvolio in his summary speech in Act V: "I was one, sir, in this interlude, one Sir Topas, sir; but that's all one." In both cases, Feste avoids an explanation.

Turning to the audience and shattering the dramatic illusion is typical in epilogues, but Feste's inclusion of the audience into his consciousness of the play as a metaphor for actual experience has a special significance here. Throughout *Twelfth Night*, Feste has engaged various characters in dialogues of self-determination. In one game of wit, he points out that Olivia is a fool "to mourn for your Brother's soul, being in heaven" (I.v. 65-66). By his irrefutable logic, he wins Olivia's favor and her tacit agreement that her mourning has been overdone. The Duke also is subject to Feste's evaluation in two scenes. Following his performance, upon the Duke's request, of a sad song of unrequited love, Feste leaves a paradoxical benediction:

> Now the melancholy god protect thee, and the tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal. I would have men of such constancy put to sea, that their business might be everything, and their intent everywhere; for that's it that always makes a good voyage of nothing. (II.iv.72-77)

And later, when the Duke is approaching Olivia's house, Feste encounters him with one of his typically unique and audaciously applied truisms:

> *DUKE*. I know thee well. How dost thou, my good fellow?
> *CLOWN*. Truly, sir, the better for my foes, and the worse for my friends.
> *DUKE*. Just the contrary: the better for thy friends.
> *CLOWN*. No, sir, the worse.
> *DUKE*. How can that be?
> *CLOWN*. Marry, sir, they praise me and make an ass of me. Now my foes tell me plainly I am an ass; so that by my foes, sir, I profit in the knowledge of myself, and by my friends I am abused; so that, conclusions to be as kisses, if your four negatives make your two affirmatives, why then, the worse for my friends, and the better for my foes. (V.i.9-20)

The Duke has in fact lacked some knowledge of himself, and Feste's pointed remark makes it clear that he is using his role as fool to point up the true foolishness of others. In the prison scene with Malvolio, Feste provides a confusing game of switching identities from the Clown to Sir Topas. In each situation, Feste provides the other person with a different perspective for seeing himself. Thus, it is more than merely appropriate that at the end of the play Feste engages the audience in its own definition of self. By asking them to look at their participation in the dramatic illusion, Feste is requesting them to recognize their own desire for humanly willed happiness.

The playwright, like the comic providence in the play, has understood "what we will" and has led us to a pleasurable fulfillment of our desires, but in ways which we could not have foreseen or controlled. The substitution of the final line, "And we'll strive to please you every day," for the refrain, "For the rain it raineth every day," is a crucial change. Like the incremental repetition in the folk ballad, this pessimistic refrain has built a dynamic tension which is released in the recognition that the play is an actual experience in the lives of the audience, even though it is enacted in an imagined world. The players, and the playwright who arranges them, are engaged in an ongoing effort to please the audience. The providential design remains incomplete within the play's action and only promises a "golden time"; similarly, the playwright promises further delightful experiences for his audience. The subplot's action, on the other hand, is limited within the framework of revenge: the revenge of the subplot characters elicits Malvolio's cry for revenge.

Malvolio is the only one who refuses to see himself in a subservient position to a larger design. And possibly because that design is too small, we cannot feel that his abuse and final exclusion from the happy community of lovers and friends allows the golden time to be fulfilled within the play. Feste's manipulation of Malvolio resembles the playwright's manipulation of his audience's will, but in such a reduced way that we cannot avoid seeing the difference between merely human revenge and the larger benevolence that controls the play's

design.

SOURCE: "Feste's 'Whirligig of Time' and the Comic Providence of *Twelfth Night*," in *ELH*, Vol. 40, No. 4, Winter, 1973, pp. 501-13.

Twelfth Night: Selected Quotes

> **O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou,**
> **That notwithstanding thy capacity**
> **Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there,**
> **Of what validity and pitch so'er,**
> **But falls into abatement and low price**
> **Even in a minute.**
> (I.i.9-14)

Orsino's opening meditation on his unrequited love for Olivia encompasses some of the most famous lines and images in the whole Shakespeare canon. The lines also identify the major themes and concerns of *Twelfth Night*. In the lines above, the references to love and to the sea encompass elements that will resound throughout the action of the play. Orsino compares the capacity of love to the capacity of the ocean in its ability to be infinite and overpowering. (cf: Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* who also expresses her love in the same terms: "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, / my love as deep. The more I give to thee / the more I have for both are infinite" II.i.175-177.) He goes on to say that love can also be destructive since, like the sea, its ability to completely consume the mind and heart of a person can eventually destroy them—much as the sea eventually destroys and devalues everything that is washed into it.

> **So full of shapes is fancy**
> **That it alone is high fantastical.**
> (I.i.14-15)

The essence of these lines is that love can take many shapes and forms. Not only that, but it can also be highly imaginative in the way it presents itself and consumes the mind and imagination of lovers. The word 'fancy' is often associated with love in Shakespeare, particularly with love that is illusory or deceptive. Orsino's over-romanticised love for Olivia is deceptive in that his love is presented as fancy: he loves with his eyes and only imagines that his love comes from the heart. The notion of fancy, or illusory love sets up the situation for Orsino's journey in the play. He needs to be 'cured' of his imaginative fancies about love and to discover what 'true' love really is.

> **O when mine eyes did see Olivia first,**
> **Methought she purged the air of pestilence;**
> (I.i.18-19)

Orsino's declaration of his love for Olivia prepares us for the play's focus on the kaleidoscopic nature of love. Love in Illyria takes many different forms: love at first sight; love versus lust; self-love; self-indulgent love; the love of true friendship; true love. In this quote it is clear that Orsino's love for Olivia is based on his first sighting of her: his love is about seeing rather than feeling. His words also identify love with disease, specifically a pestilence or plague. To the Elizabethans, the word 'pestilence' carried negative and frightening associations since the plague was an ever-present threat to their lives. In this case, Orsino suggests that the very sight of Olivia has the power to cleanse the air around her of disease, but the irony is that Orsino himself has fallen prey to the disease of love.

That instant was I turned into a hart,
And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
E'er since pursue me.
(I.i.20-22)

One of the play's many classical allusions, and one that expresses love in violent imagery. Orsino is vividly expressing his frustrated love for Olivia by comparing himself in metaphor to the hunter Actaeon. In Greek legend, Actaeon saw the goddess Artemis bathing naked in a river. In punishment she turned him into a stag whereupon he was pursued by his own hounds and torn to pieces by them. These lines again highlight the destructive abilities of love, particularly of illusory love. Orsino is also continuing the hart/heart pun on Valentine's earlier question as to whether Orsino intends to hunt that day.

And what should I do in Illyria?
My brother, he is in Elysium.
(I.ii.2-3)

Viola believes that her brother has drowned during the storm that wrecked the ship. She asks what is to become of her now that her brother is no longer alive to protect her. Elysium, the classical Greek equivalent to heaven represents a place of peace and eternal joy. The similarity in the sounds of the names seems to link Illyria with Elysium, suggesting a place of security and happiness. The inference is that Illyria will eventually provide the healing that Viola needs after the (apparent) loss of her brother.

There is a fair behaviour in thee, captain
And though that nature with a beauteous wall
Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee
I well believe thou hast a mind that suits
With this thy fair and outward character.
(I.ii.43-47)

Viola confides her plans for disguising herself as a boy to the Sea-Captain who has saved her from the storm. She comments that although a fair and kindly exterior can sometimes conceal a corrupt soul, she believes that the Captain's nature is as true and loyal as his appearance suggests. This being so she intends to trust him with her secret plan of dressing herself as a boy to protect herself whilst she is in Illyria, and will even ask the Captain's aid in achieving this.

Even so quickly may one catch the plague?
Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
With an invisible and subtle stealth
To creep in at mine eyes.
(I.v.285-288)

As Orsino does in Act I, scene i, Olivia identifies the notion of love at first sight. She declares that 'Cesario's' charms are working on her eyes and she is overwhelmed by what she has seen. Just as Orsino's love for Olivia is presented as 'fancy' or illusory love, so is Olivia's sudden and violent emotion towards Viola-Cesario. Yet this is also a comic moment since as an audience, we know of her vow of seven-year grieving (reported by Valentine in Act I, scene i). With the advent of Viola-Cesario, Olivia's solemn vow towards the memory of her brother is completely overturned in the extravagance of her reactions to this personable young man. It is the moment at which Olivia's character displays the comic edge that remains throughout the play altering our image from than the romantic, tragic figure in mourning that Orsino has described.

Fate, show thy force; ourselves we do not owe.
What is decreed must be; and be this so.
(I.v.300-301)

Olivia's rapturous rhyming couplet after Viola-Cesario's exit at the end of Act I, scene v, identifies another of the play's themes: that of Fate as the ultimate controller of human destiny. Olivia's words are comparable with Viola's invocation to Time to "untangle this, not I." (II.ii.40), when she realises that Olivia "loves me sure" (II.ii.22). In this scene, Olivia places the situation in the hands of Fate because, she argues, humans do not own (ie: control) their own destinies, therefore she will have to wait and see what happens. (cf: Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well* whose attitude is opposite: Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie / Which we ascribe to heaven. The fated sky / Gives us free scope … " (I.i.212-214). She ends with a variation on the proverbial phrase "what must be will be." This gleeful resolution to let Fate take its course anticipates the comic situation at the end of the play where Olivia does try and take Fate into her own hands by marrying 'Cesario' out-of-hand.

Did you never see the picture of 'we three'?
(II.iii.15-16)

This is a topical reference to the caption of contemporary seventeenth-century 'trick' pictures of two fools or clowns, in which the viewer of the picture then becomes the third 'fool'. An anonymous painting of two fools, possibly the well-known jesters Tom Derry and Archie Armstrong, exists by this title 'WeeThree Logerhds' and it is possible that Shakespeare has something like this painting in mind when he wrote this line. Other versions are known to have existed as inn signs, in which the two 'fools' were depicted as asses, which may explain Sir Toby's greeting to Feste "Welcome, ass" (II.iii.17).

Dost thou think that because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?
(II.iii.110-111)

Sir Toby is confronting an irate Malvolio who has come to investigate the noise made by the midnight revelry of Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Feste. The 'cakes and ale' of Sir Toby's speech are a metaphor for the title of the play and also encompasses the idea of Illyria as a place of permanent informality and festivity. Twelfth Night marked the end of the season of Christmas festivity and Yuletide leniency which pervaded the great English houses over the twelve days of Christmas from 25 December to 6 January. During this period normal conventions and behaviour were disregarded and all attention given to merry-making and revelry. Malvolio, who is said to be "a kind of puritan" (II.iii.119) represents the puritanical disapproval of over-eating and drinking—so much so that he is prepared to challenge his employer's uncle on his behaviour. Sir Toby's mocking question is both a challenge to Malvolio's authority and his puritan beliefs. It highlights his scorn and disregard for his niece's steward, and anticipates the 'revenge' he takes on Malvolio later in the play when he has him imprisoned in the dark house.

Why, thou hast put him in such a dream that when the image of it leaves him, he must run mad.
(II.v.186-188)

The image of love wavering closely between dreaming and madness is another of the play's motifs. Maria is referring to the 'dream' that Malvolio is experiencing of Olivia being in love with him through the trick played by Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Fabian. She suggests that once Malvolio realises it is a trick and that Olivia is not in love with him, the knowledge will drive him mad. Compare these lines with Sebastian's lines in Act IV, scene i and his soliloquy at the beginning of Act IV, scene iii. Olivia has declared that she is in love with him, and he has never seen her before. In IV.i he initially decides that "this is a dream / … If it be thus to dream, still let me sleep" (IV.i.60-62). The dreamlike state continues and in IV.iii he is desperately trying to seek some

kind of explanation for the situation he finds himself in. He tries to convince himself that "'tis not madness" (IV.iii.4), and "this may be some error but no madness" (IV.iii.10), but is finally forced to conclude "that I am mad, / Or else the lady's mad" (IV.iii.15-16). Sebastian's 'dream' is temporary in that the apparent madness is dispelled when the identity of the twins is finally revealed and he can claim Olivia as his wife. However Malvolio's experience in the dark house turns his 'dream' into a living nightmare in which his protestations of sanity are ignored and he is humiliated and humbled.

> **Have you not set mine honour at the stake**
> **And baited it with all th'unmuzzled thoughts**
> **That tyrannous heart can think?**
> (III.i.116-118)

Another example of the violent intensity of love. Olivia is referring to the Elizabethan sport of bear-baiting in which a bear was tethered to a stake and is baited by dogs which eventually tore it to pieces. Olivia's metaphor suggests that she is the bear, and her love for Cesario resembles the unmuzzled dogs that tear at the bear's flesh. This violent image is similar to the one Orsino uses at the beginning of the play in which he compares himself to Actaeon being torn apart by dogs.

> **Come, we'll have him in a dark room and bound. My niece is already in the belief that he's mad.**
> (III.iv.130-1)

Sir Toby's injunction continues the motif of madness, but introduces a darker and more troublesome side to the play. Whilst love can induce a kind of madness that can create the kind of melancholy suffered by Orsino, Sir Toby is refers here to mental insanity. The common cure for insanity during this period was to imprison the patient in a dark room in the belief that the darkness would drive out the evil spirits from the patient's body. This cruel and often violent practice that continued for many years. Sir Toby's proposal to subject Malvolio to this 'cure' when he knows that the madness is not real indicates a dark side to Sir Toby's character. (cf: Dr. Pinch's proposed treatment for Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus in *The Comedy of Errors*: "They must be bound and laid in some dark room" IV.iv.95).

> **Nothing that is so, is so.**
> (IV.i.8)

This line, more than any other perhaps, encompasses one of the dominant themes of *Twelfth Night*, that of deceptive appearances. Within the world of the play almost everything is deceptive: appearances, love, even death. Feste is speaking this line to Sebastian, whom he believes to be Cesario. Yet Cesario is not who he 'seems' to be either. The play is dominated by a man who 'seems' to be in love with a woman who does not return his love, and this woman herself is in love with a woman who 'seems' to be a man. Viola's brother 'seems' to be drowned, and Sebastian believes his sister to have died during the shipwreck. These images of deceptive reality also capture the mercurial spirit of the world of Illyria. Shakespeare has endowed Illyria with a kind of magical quality that allows these inversions of normal behaviour and situations. It is only in Illyria that the festival of Twelfth Night can be carried on permanently by Sir Toby and his associates; only in Illyria in which girls can masquerade as boys; only in Illyria where dead siblings can be resurrected. Illyria 'seems' like a real place with a sea-coast, storms and ruling dukes, but it too is not as it seems to be. It is a make-believe world of illusion and fantasy comparable with Shakespeare's other 'created', 'magical' worlds: the forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, and Ephesus in *The Comedy of Errors*.

> **Clown: But do you remember—'Madam, why laugh you at such a barren rascal, and you smile not, he's gagged'? And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.**

Malvolio: I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!
(V.i.370-374)

Feste's line reminds Malvolio of the incident in Act I, scene v in which Malvolio dismisses the wit of the fool. Clearly, Feste has nursed a grudge against the steward for his condescending rebuke, and the 'jest' against Malvolio in the dark house has been by way of Feste's revenge. The 'whirligig of time' becomes the explanation as to why Malvolio has been treated the way he has. The wheel has come full circle and Feste's remark seems to indicate that through the Sir Topas jest he and Malvolio are now square and the 'feud' between them can end. Malvolio however does not see it this way and seems set to continue the feud, which casts a damper of reality over the closing moments of the play. In the theatre, these lines have been played in countless different ways—particularly with regard to Malvolio's final line and exit. Malvolio's threat could be directly addressed to the perpetrators of the 'joke'—Maria, Sir Toby and Fabian, or more specifically at Feste with whom he seems to have a running antagonism. Maria describes Malvolio as a "kind of Puritan" (II.iii.135), and it has also been suggested that this line anticipates the Puritan control of England forty years later during which the theatres were closed and 'Twelfth Night' revels were ended.

Twelfth Night: Suggested Essay Topics

Act I, Scene 1
1. Does the Duke’s opening speech show praise for Olivia in particular or for the experience of love in general? Explain your answer by citing specific lines.

2. What kind of judgment would you make about the Duke’s character based on his speech and behavior in the first scene? Discuss why you get this impression. Discuss either several specific qualities or one generalized personality trait.

Act I, Scene 2
1. Viola comments on the deceptiveness of appearances. People aren’t always what they seem to be. Why do you think this theme would be significant in a play that deals with love? Cite evidence from the play to support your answer.

2. Why does the love object have to come down from the altar of the lover’s worship? Why, that is, can’t the Duke keep praising Olivia forever? How does Viola make it clear that there’s more to being in love than just poetry? Make sure you present your topic sentences clearly in the essay.

Act I, Scene 3
1. Sir Andrew may not be a good suitor for Olivia. Defend this thesis statement referring to specific examples from the dialogue.

2. Analyze the dance imagery found in lines 116–138. Why do you think Shakespeare included it in the dialogue? With what aspect of the play does it tie in? What does it emphasize?

Act I, Scene 4
1. Think of your efforts to win a sweetheart when you’ve fallen in love, or what you might do to win one. In what ways would those efforts be similar or different from Cesario’s endeavors to woo Olivia for the Duke?

2. Consider once again the definition of “Romantic comedy” stated earlier. Why do you think the society of a given era would desire a happy ending? Would you like to see *Twelfth Night* end in another way than it does?

Act I, Scene 5
1. How does the Clown prove that Olivia is a fool? Is he correct or incorrect in his assessment? Explain your answer with evidence found in the text.

2. How many love strands does the first act contain? Who is involved in them? Where do the relationships stand by the end of Act I in relation to how they will eventually develop?

Act II, Scene 1
1. Name one characteristic of poetic language and one of prose. After you state those, select one speech in the play that contains poetry and another from Act II, Scene i that contains prose, and explain the differences you notice between the two. Allow your imagination to explore the significance of the two different styles.

2. An important issue to be aware of when discussing characters' motivations and fates is that of "free will" versus "determinism or fate." Define these two concepts. And then, consider lines 3–8, spoken by Sebastian, in the light of that issue. Does Sebastian feel that he is in full control of things?

Act II, Scene 2
1. Name one characteristic of poetic language and one of prose. After you state those, select one speech in the play that contains poetry and another from Act II, Scene i that contains prose, and explain the differences you notice between the two. Allow your imagination to explore the significance of the two different styles.

2. An important issue to be aware of when discussing characters' motivations and fates is that of "free will" versus "determinism or fate." Define these two concepts. And then, consider lines 3–8, spoken by Sebastian, in the light of that issue. Does Sebastian feel that he is in full control of things?

Act II, Scene 3
1. Describe the fun and festive atmosphere that makes up most of this scene. What role does Feste the Clown play in it? Cite specific lines to strengthen your description. Do you enjoy the playfulness? Why or why not?

2. Analyze Maria's speeches in this scene. Explain carefully her motive to entrap Malvolio. Do you believe that she is justified in doing it?

Act II, Scene 4
1. Analyze the song in this scene. Who and what is involved in it? Which *Twelfth Night* character does it relate to? Explain your answer.

2. Why does the Duke believe that the man should be older than the woman in a relationship? Consider lines 29–39. Do you agree with his opinion? Why or why not?

Act II, Scene 5
1. Make the argument that Sir Toby, Andrew, Maria, and Fabian are behaving cruelly toward Malvolio. Is their cruelty justified in the light of the whole play? Do you personally accept the gulling of Malvolio?

2. Write an essay on "the love letter." First of all, define what you think it is. Does Maria's dropped letter fit your definition? What do you think of the requests made in the letter? How would you compose your own real love letter.

Act III, Scene 1
1. Describe the way in which the Clown carries out his role as "fool." What functions does he see himself as performing? Does he fulfill them as he thinks he should? Make a judgment at the end of your essay as to whether he is a necessary or superfluous character in the play.

2. As Olivia is in the process of revealing her feelings for Cesario, she makes use of metaphors drawn from the animal kingdom—lines 120–122 and lines 130–131. State what these animal metaphors are, and then explain their significance. How do they illuminate the depth of Olivia's feelings at the moment?

Act III, Scene 2
1. Articulate Fabian and Sir Toby's assumption about the strength of a man's valor in inciting love. Then write an opinion essay on whether you think valor, "machoness," manliness, etc. are all that are necessary to win a woman's love. Are they sound bases to build a love on? Explain your thesis.

2. Summarize briefly all the love connections up to this point. Even sound like a gossip. Tell who loves who and who has hopes of who. Then, in the remainder of the essay, explain who you think deserves to be together with whom. In other words, you be the matchmaker. (You don't have to agree with Shakespeare's resolution of the complications.)

Act III, Scene 3
1. Why doesn't Antonio find love in this play? Is it because a play can only have so many major and minor characters? Does he deserve to be matched up with Olivia, Viola, or some other woman in Illyria?

2. How does Shakespeare render the relationship between Antonio and Sebastian? Compare their relationship to Sir Toby and Sir Andrew's. Discuss the importance of friendship in a play like *Twelfth Night*.

Act III, Scene 4
1. Some critics have argued that Malvolio is presumptuous and arrogant. Discuss the extent to which those characteristics are responsible for his gulling and eventual madness. Support your case with evidence from the text.

2. Analyze this play in terms of its credibility and realism. To what extent is the action credible? To what extent is it fantasy and romance? Define the concepts you work with in your essay.

Act IV, Scene 1
1. In what way do Viola–Sebastian constitute a "poetic symbol," as one critic has said. In other words, if they are one spirit in two bodies, how does that technique help us to understand Shakespeare's vision of love in the play? Be careful to explain the symbolism before you construct your argument.

2. Discuss Olivia's attitude toward the brawl she comes upon. Find other places in the play where Sir Toby's foolery is criticized and list them. Why do you think characters express disapproval for the festive behavior? How would the play stand without Sir Toby's merriment?

Act IV, Scene 2
1. Why does the Clown insist that Malvolio is mad? Whom do you believe, Malvolio or Sir Topas/Clown? If Malvolio is not mad, in your opinion, what does the Clown's insistence suggest about his role in the play? If Malvolio is mad, explain why you don't accept his contentions.

2. Analyze the song with which the Clown closes the scene. Is the allusion to the Devil in harmony with the preceding allusions in the scene? How does the song pass judgment on Malvolio?

Act IV, Scene 3
1. What is an "arranged marriage"? Do you know of anyone who was part of an arrangement? What motives may be involved? Compare an arranged marriage to the manner in which Sebastian and Olivia are brought together.

2. Consider the influence of “accident and flood of fortune” on Sebastian’s success with Olivia. Is the marriage just good luck and is Sebastian taking advantage of an opportunity to marry up? Discuss Sebastian’s attitude to Olivia in your essay.

Act V, Scene 1
1. Explain Antonio’s function in the play. Is he a minor or major character? Does he clarify or interpret what is going on with the twins? Does he oppose or support the twins?

2. Isolate the methods that Shakespeare uses to establish and reveal character. It would probably be best to do a character study of one particular character. Are the actions of the characters properly motivated and consistent?

Twelfth Night: Sample Essay Outlines

The following paper topics are designed to test your understanding of the play as a whole and to analyze important themes and literary devices. Following each question is a sample outline to help you get started.

Topic #1
It is obvious that the play’s tapestry contains more than a single plot. Write an essay analyzing the way in which the comic plot involving Malvolio becomes a perverse reflection of the love plot involving Orsino and Olivia. Discuss Cesario’s role as go-between for the Duke.

Outline
I. Thesis Statement: *The comic plot involving Malvolio becomes a perverse reflection of the romantic plot involving Olivia and the Duke*.

II. Explain the romantic plot.
A. An aristocratic man falls in love with a countess.
1. The Duke has seen Olivia and desires union with her.
2. He initially expresses the depth of his feeling in poetic lines.
B. Cesario acts as a go-between for the Duke.
1. Cesario forms a practical complement to the Duke’s romantic behavior.
2. Cesario woos Olivia on the Duke’s behalf.
C. Olivia rejects the Duke’s love.
1. Olivia says that she cannot love the Duke while she mourns her brother’s death.
2. Olivia, rather, falls in love with Cesario.

III. Explain the comic plot.
A. Maria plots to gull Malvolio.
1. There is no genuine source for Malvolio’s love; it’s the result of a scheme.
2. The letter left by Maria is falsified.
B. Malvolio picks up and reads a falsified letter.
1. The letter seems to be in Olivia’s hand.
2. It commands him to adopt peculiar behaviors.
C. Malvolio proceeds under the influence of a devious trick.
1. Malvolio thinks Olivia is in love with him.
2. Malvolio approaches Olivia in yellow stockings and cross-gartered.

IV. Malvolio’s love is a perversion of the Duke’s and Olivia’s.
A. Malvolio’s love is an artificial fantasy—put stress on the “artificial.”

1. Malvolio loves on the basis of a letter and a readiness in his own mind.
2. Malvolio's love has no possibility of being realized because Olivia has no intention of loving him.
B. Orsino, by contrast, is truly in love with Olivia.
1. Orsino's feelings have a genuine source.
2. Orsino is truly involved in an effort to court a woman.
3. Ideally, he could possibly achieve Olivia.
C. Malvolio winds up humiliated.
1. Malvolio isolates himself with a sense of being abused.
2. Rather than being an accepted lover, Malvolio winds up wronged and humiliated.

V. Conclusion: To the extent that the schemers are cruel, Malvolio's love for Olivia is perverse. Love cannot thrive in an atmosphere of ill will.

Topic # 2
Many playwrights have dealt with the theme of love. It's a theme that carries so much interest because of the power it wields in peoples' lives. Write an essay that explores Shakespeare's treatment of the theme of love in *Twelfth Night*.

Outline
I. Thesis Statement: *The formal design of Twelfth Night illustrates the theme of love as having two key aspects, "loving" and maintaining the relationship*.

II. The aspect of "loving" as embodied in the play
A. Define the concept of "loving."
1. The Duke serves as an example of the true lover.
2. The Duke places Olivia on a pedestal.
B. Olivia falls in love with Cesario.
1. Just as the Duke loved Olivia upon seeing her, so Olivia loves Cesario when they meet.
2. Olivia pours forth poetic feeling for Cesario.
C. Both Orsino and Olivia are rejected in their loving.
1. Olivia rejects the love of the Duke.
2. Cesario rejects Olivia's love.

III. Cesario represents the practical aspect of love that sustains a relationship.
A. Cesario goes to work for the Duke.
1. Cesario's speech shows that he understands the need to be realistic and practical.
2. Cesario diligently attempts to woo Olivia for the Duke.
B. Cesario does not give himself over to sentiment.
1. Cesario does not fall in love and utter love speeches.
2. Cesario is a man of action, not of words.
C. Cesario has a twin brother.
1. Cesario's twin brother, Sebastian, will prove a similar complement to Olivia.
2. Olivia's love is similar to the Duke's in its romantic nature.

IV. The two aspects of love are brought together in the final harmony of the play.
A. Sebastian enters Illyria.
1. Sebastian is puzzled over Olivia's immediate affection for him.
2. The two lovers can achieve their other halves because Sebastian joins Viola.
B. Cesario reveals his true female identity.
1. Olivia and Sebastian have married; Cesario is not a man.
2. The Duke can propose to Viola upon learning of Olivia's marriage.

C. The couples of the love plot complement each other perfectly.
1. Cesario is the practical aspect that sustains the love which Orsino embodies.
2. Sebastian, like his sister, represents the practical aspect for Olivia's amalgam of love feeling.

V. Conclusion: Looking at a theme in an abstract sort of way, as here with love, requires that the play be seen quite like a static work of art. Characters thus become more like poetic symbols than real, dynamic personalities.

Topic # 3
The festive atmosphere is so much a part of this play that it should be considered to gain a deeper understanding. Sir Toby, as the "lord of misrule," is the master of ceremonies and surely keeps the party going. Write an essay that explores the function of the foolery and fun within the play.

Outline
I. Thesis Statement: *Shakespeare weaves in a festive atmosphere that enhances the enjoyment of the love plot.*

II. Define the festive atmosphere.
A. The title *Twelfth Night* indicates a holiday and day of ¬revelry.
1. Tradition places a "lord of misrule" in charge of the fun in this play.
2. The holiday includes eating, drinking, and entertainment.
B. Sir Toby handles the merriment quite well.
1. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew eat and drink for diversion.
2. Sir Toby instigates a fight that provides high-spirited entertainment.
C. The Clown plays a remarkable role in the festivities.
1. The Clown is a jester who is clever at wordplay.
2. The Clown sings for the Duke and the other characters.

III. The saturnalia is absorbed in the action of the play.
A. The gulling of Malvolio as an example of high jinks
1. Sir Toby approves of the way Maria orchestrates the scheme.
2. The spectators take eerie pleasure in Malvolio's humiliation.
B. Imagery underscores the awareness of a holiday
1. Sir Toby uses dance images in a conversation with Sir Andrew.
2. Sir Toby refers to wines and has a reputation for being a drunk.
C. Feste's role in the festive design
1. He impersonates Sir Topas when speaking with Malvolio.
2. Feste and Cesario have a meeting of the minds in their conversation.

IV. The intersection of the festive element and the love theme
A. Sir Andrew as one of Sir Toby's men has a mock duel with Cesario.
1. Sir Toby suggests that a show of valor will entice Olivia.
2. Sir Andrew is egged on to confront Cesario.
B. The content of the Clown's songs relates to the theme of love.
1. The first song Feste sings deals with true love.
2. Feste also sings a song that expresses Orsino's frustrated love.
C. The last act consists in a dizzying array of interludes.
1. The act has the semblance of a large party with all the characters coming together to share in the roistering.
2. Sir Toby marries Maria in recompense for her cleverness.

V. Conclusion: Love can thrive in almost any environment. But, perhaps an ambience that is full of fun and liveliness can best match the emotional high that being in love means for some.

Twelfth Night: Modern Connections

Twelfth Night is a holiday that occurs on January 6, which is the festival of Epiphany and the last day of the twelve days of Christmas. During Shakespeare's time, *Twelfth Night* marked the end of a period of seasonal festivities when dances, parties, and banquets were held and plays were performed, and the traditional social order was temporarily overturned— ideally to allow any tensions that had built up over the year to be safely released. A king or lord of misrule was crowned, and traditional social roles (master/servant, bishop/choirboy, king/fool) were reversed. Today, Halloween, New Year's Eve, and Mardi Gras perform a similar function: on these holidays, many people eat and drink whatever they want, go to parties until early in the morning, and temporarily lose their cares and sometimes their inhibitions by wearing costumes or masks, pretending for a short time to be someone else.

Although Shakespeare never makes it clear whether or not the play's action occurs during the Christmas season, *Twelfth Night* has been described as carnivalesque in plot and tone, and indeed, Sir Toby Belch, for example, seems to be perpetually drinking and partying until late at night with his friend Sir Andrew Aguecheek. There are also plenty of role reversals in the play, including a fool speaking words of wisdom (Feste), a humorless steward made to look like a fool (Malvolio), and a woman (Viola) pretending to be a man.

Women were not employed in acting troupes during Shakespeare's time, so female roles—such as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* or Ophelia in *Hamlet*— had to be performed by boys whose voices had not yet deepened. This fact added an extra bit of humor to the action in *Twelfth Night*: Renaissance audiences knew that the part of Viola was played by a boy, and would find it amusing when Viola disguised herself as Cesario, thereby in reality becoming a boy playing a woman playing a young man.

Today, the part of Viola is customarily performed by a woman, which allows modern audiences to focus more on her heart-to-heart discussions with Duke Orsino regarding the differences between the sexes—an issue that continues to interest us today. In II.iv.29-41, for example, Orsino supports his remark that women should marry men who are older than themselves by arguing that men's "fancies are more giddy and unfirm, / More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn, / Than women's are." Today, those who say that men behave badly, or that they are just like little boys, are voicing arguments similar to the duke's. Orsino then asserts that men need to marry younger women because female beauty does not last very long: "women," he declares, "are as roses, whose fair flow'r / Being once display'd, doth fall that very hour." This sounds very much like the still current attitude of some people that men grow distinguished but women grow old.

Viola, however, strongly disagrees with Orsino's claim in II.iv.93-103 that women cannot love as passionately and profoundly as men can. Still disguised as the male page Cesario, Viola asserts that men are all talk and no commitment when it comes to love: "We men may say more, swear more, but indeed / Our shows are more than will; for still we prove / Much in our vows, but little in our love" (Il.iv.l 16-18). The debate over the intensity of a man's love versus a woman's persists today, and men are often stereotyped as being afraid of commitment.

Finally, *Twelfth Night* focuses not only on the roles of the sexes, but on those of the different social classes as well. As a countess, Olivia is a member of the nobility; on the other hand, her steward, Malvolio, is a commoner and is expected to recognize and remain in his place as Olivia's inferior. All the same, Malvolio has hopes. Just before he falls victim to Sir Toby and Maria's practical joke, the steward is heard fantasizing about marrying the countess, telling himself that weddings between commoners and the nobility have happened before. "There is example for't," he says, "the Lady of the Strachy married the yeoman of the wardrobe" (II.v.39-40). In the United States, there isn't a formal class system like the one that plagues Malvolio, but there are divisions between the rich, the middle class, and the poor. There are no rules which

prevent marriages between members of different financial classes; nevertheless someone who is poor or middle class usually cannot afford to travel in the same circles as someone who is fabulously wealthy. Like Malvolio, some Americans may dream about marrying someone rich and famous, but that doesn't mean it is likely to happen.

Twelfth Night: FAQs

Why is the play set in Illyria?

Although all of the characters speak English and there are noteworthy resemblances between Olivia's lifestyle and those of an Elizabethan gentlewoman, Shakespeare elects to specify "Illyria" as the setting of *Twelfth Night*. Illyria was known to Shakespeare and his contemporaries as an actual region off the coast of the Adriatic Sea in what is today Albania. As such, it was a distant land with which English had very little contact, and therefore a generically exotic setting for a play replete with romance and intrigue, as well as one that offered the preconditions for a shipwreck. But more particularly, Illyria was associated in the Elizabethan mind with piracy. As Antonio, Sebastian's sea captain friend puts it, "these parts often prove rough and inhospitable" and there is an intimation that Antonio himself was a privateer." Moreover, Illyria's reputation in England as a haven for pirates finds reference in both Henry IV: Part 2 and Measure for Measure. The play contains swordplay and subterfuge. Moreover, it presents us with the piratical Uncle Toby, as inebriated opportunist who shows no qualms in trying to pry treasure from Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

How can Duke Orsino switch his affections so quickly from Olivia to Viola?

At the conclusion of *Twelfth Night*, Viola sheds her disguise as the young officer Cesario, Duke Orsino instantly drops his opposition to her (and her twin brother Sebastian's) love for Olivia and then "switches" his affections to a young woman whom he has thus far known only as a man. The gender confusion aside, this turnabout seems extremely odd, for Orsino has doggedly pursued his Olivia, praising the singularity of her character and charms. From the outset of the play we are directed to the fickleness of Orsino's moods, as when he first orders music to accompany reverie over Olivia and then suddenly commands it to be stopped. Although seemingly steadfast in his suit for Olivia, by end of first scene we realize that Orsino is not truly in love with Olivia; rather, he is in love with his own role as an irrational lover immersed in a romantic reverie. Indeed, Orsino openly boasts of his "unstaid and skittish" conduct, which he displays as a symptom of his self-exalted status as a romantic lover.

Does Malvolio get what he deserves?

At the play's conclusion, a thoroughly humiliated Malvolio vows "I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you" (V, i., l.378), and many Shakespeare critics maintain that he has good cause to utter this discordant oath. Over the centuries, scholars have pondered what has come to be called the "problem of Malvolio." By this they mean that although Malvolio is a prude, a hypocrite, and an upstart, he does not deserve the cruel treatment that he receives from the ruse perpetrated by Maria, Uncle Toby, and the clown Feste. True, Malvolio is a "joy-killer" by nature who consistently punctures the merriment of Toby and his crew, but Toby himself is not a complete innocent by any means. Moreover, Malvolio' inflated sense of self-importance is behind his brusque behavior toward Cesario (Viola) when he bring his mistress's ring to this strange youth. Nonetheless, imprisoned for his lunacy, Malvolio is subjected to the decidedly "unfunny" taunts of Feste, and even Uncle Toby suggests that his fellow conspirators put an end to the steward's torment. Malvolio, then, is a complicated character who earns both our derision and, owing to the severity of the abuse heaped upon him,

our sympathies as well.

Why does Twelfth Night end on a sour note?

Twelfth Night end on a somewhat sour note. The final epilogue to the play is a song by the mean clown Feste who relates his life as a wastrel, unable to find a wife and reduced to sleeping with drunken tosspots. In Feste's final ditty, life is depicted as grim, "for the rain it raineth every day" (V, i., l.392). Along with the "problem of Malvolio" (see FAQ #3), there are some other disturbing aspects to *Twelfth Night*. There are, for example, numerous references to madness and insanity, and we are given a look at the treatment afforded to "lunatics" by society when Malvolio is locked up. *Twelfth Night* is a comedy, but it anticipates Shakespeare's problem plays and appears to demonstrate the limits of a comic conception of life through its insertion of discordance.

Twelfth Night: Bibliography and Further Reading

*If available, books are linked to Amazon.com

Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981.

Barber, Cesar Lombardi . Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Berry, Edward. Shakespeare's Comic Rites. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Berry, Ralph. *Shakespeare's Comedies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Brown, John Russell. Discovering Shakespeare: A New Guide to the Plays. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

Brown, John. R. *Shakespeare and His Comedies*. London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1957.

Charney, Maurice. *All of Shakespeare*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

Gaylin, Willard. *Rediscovering Love*. New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1986.

Granville-Barker, Harley. Prefaces to Shakespeare. Princeton:
Princeton University Press, 1963.

Hotson, Leslie. The First Night of *Twelfth Night*. New York: MacMillan, 1954.

Leech, Clifford. '*Twelfth Night*' and Shakespearean Comedy. Toronto: Dalhousie University Press, 1965.

Leggatt, Alexander. *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love*. London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1974.

Levin, Richard. *Love and Society in Shakespearean Comedy*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985.

Muir, Kenneth. Shakespeare's Comic Sequence. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1979.

Nevo, Ruth. Comic Transformations in Shakespeare. New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1981.

Palmer, John. Comic Characters of Shakespeare. London: Macmillan, 1946.

Randle, John. *Understanding Britain*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1981.

Richmond, Hugh. Shakespeare's Sexual Comedy: A Mirror for Lovers. Indianapolis: Bobbs—Merrill, 1971.

Schultz, Harold J. *History of England*. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

Swinden, Patrick. *An Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies*. London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1973.

Van Doren, Mark. Shakespeare. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1939.

Wells, Stanley. (Ed.). The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Wilson, J. Dover. Shakespeare's Happy Comedies. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1962.

Encyclopedias:
Britannica. Volume 27. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1993, pp. 253–262.

Parrot, Thomas Marc. "William Shakespeare." *Collier's Encyclopedia*. New York: P.F. Collier, 1992, pp. 631–636.

Smith, Hallet. "William Shakespeare." *Encyclopedia Americana*. Danbury: Grolier Incorporated, 1994, pp. 652–659.

Quotations of *Twelfth Night* are taken from the following edition:
Shakespeare, William. *Twelfth Night*, ed. Herschel Baker. New York: New American Library, 1965.

Twelfth Night: Pictures

Copyright