

**FIVE LECTURES ON SHAKESPEARE'S  
*TWELFTH NIGHT***

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*NOTE. This series of lectures was originally illustrated by clips from three film versions of Twelfth Night: (1) the 1980 BBC version directed by John Gorrie with Felicity Kendal as Viola, Sinead Cusack as Olivia, Trevor Peacock as Feste, and Alec McCowan as Malvolio; (2) the 1988 video version of the Renaissance Theatre Company's stage production, directed by Kenneth Branagh, with Frances Barber as Viola, Caroline Langrishe as Olivia, Richard Briers as Malvolio, Anton Lesser as Feste, and Christopher Ravenscroft as Orsino; (3) the 1995 film directed by Trevor Nunn, with Imogen Stubbs as Viola, Helena Bonham-Carter as Olivia, Nigel Hawthorne as Malvolio, and Ben Kingsley as Feste.*

## LECTURE ONE

It is often said that whereas *As You Like It* has a minimalist plot, *Twelfth Night*, written at about the same time, has a plot of such complexity that it is hard to keep everything straight. So perhaps we should begin with a summary, and get a sense of how the play is organized.

*Viola is shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria. Thinking her twin brother Sebastian has been lost in the storm, she disguises herself as a page and seeks a position at the court of Duke Orsino. The Duke is in pursuit of Olivia, a gentlewoman, who has declared that she will mourn for her dead brother for seven years and has spurned his suit. Viola is immediately attracted to Orsino, but is required to serve as his messenger to Olivia. Olivia falls in love with Viola/Cesario. Later, when Sebastian appears, Olivia thinks him Cesario and persuades him to marry her. Orsino is furious --until Viola appears, recognizes Sebastian and explains all.*

*Meanwhile, Sir Toby, Olivia's cousin, his friend Sir Andrew, and the servant Maria, are leading a boisterous life in Olivia's house. Her steward Malvolio disapproves. Maria leaves a letter for Malvolio that purports to come from Olivia and declares her love for him. To please her, Malvolio makes himself ridiculous, is shut in a dark room as a madman, and finally, when the plot is revealed, declares that he will have his revenge. [Modified from Halliday]*

Beyond this bare outline of the plot lies a multitude of interpretations: like several other Shakespeare plays, *Twelfth Night* has received wildly varying readings over the years from its critics and directors. Regarded by the Victorians as a relatively uncomplicated comedy, popular in the theatre, it became in the course of the twentieth century, and at the hands of a succession of directors, a darker, more tentative affair, presided over by a melancholy clown and haunted by a joyless steward on whom is perpetrated a practical joke that goes badly wrong. The Problem of Malvolio and the relative rise in his importance within the play will inevitably come up in the course of our analysis.

Critics and scholars analyze plays as structures; directors treat them as opportunities. The first approach offers insights into the plays of Shakespeare as works of art but is often of little assistance to the poor director faced with the need to make choices: if you are an actor or a director, it is hard to see characters in a play as anything but complete people, even though the scholar keeps telling you that they are essentially *partis pris*, positions taken in a philosophical argument. The second approach pushes at the boundaries of a play's plausibility, particularly when the play is often performed, and questions of authorial intention often give way to instances of directorial opportunism. My own intent is partly to pay some attention to modern productions, and potential productions, of the play, but primarily to show how this play fits into the larger context of Shakespeare's *oeuvre*. There are readings of this play that are just plain wrong, and

others that seem to me to go beyond the boundary that separates adaptation from radical rewriting. It is one thing to adapt an old play to modern concerns, but quite another to rewrite an old play to have it perform some function at odds with the story it was intended to deliver. Adaptation of Shakespeare is good: his myths have always reshaped themselves to reflect contemporary anxieties; but rewriting of Shakespeare is something else – not necessarily bad, but different: its willful distortions, however rewarding they may be, must be recognized for what they are.

*Romeo and Juliet*, our last port of call, will be my beginning point. What happened, over a period of five years or so, between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night*? Having completed the early history plays and the early comedies (*The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labor's Lost*), Shakespeare worked on *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at about the same time. All three plays are marked by a rich sense of the poetic: *Romeo and Juliet*, tragedy though it is, feeds into the poetry and the experience of the mature comedies, all of which have their moments of incipient tragedy – moments that actually serve to heighten their ordered outcomes. This comic vein began earlier than *Romeo and Juliet*, back in *The Comedy of Errors*, a play that Shakespeare mined for much of his career. In fact, one of Shakespeare's strongest characteristics is the fact that he threw very little away, constantly returning to the same themes, the same plot turns, the same combinations of characters. Of course, Shakespeare wrote not so much because he wanted to produce complete works of art but because he wanted to provide dramatized versions of stories suitable for the commercial theatre. He chose the tried and true. If something worked, he used it again. If something didn't work, he tended to play with it until it did.

Northrop Frye pointed out many years ago that Shakespearean comedy has three stages: a rule-bound and apparently arbitrary "old" society gives way to a state of confusion and loss of identity, which is followed in turn by a third stage in which a "new" society is established out of the old. This new society is more flexible, more accommodating, and frequently even incorporates within its dynamic some of the elements that in the middle stage constituted threats. The new society, the re-created community, tends to be held together through the institution of marriage.

The comedies, lively and simple in *The Comedy of Errors*, become more ambiguous in the complex equivocation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Two Gentlemen* and its betrayal and ending, and *Love's Labor's Lost* and the delayed gratification of its conclusion. From *Romeo and Juliet* the path to *Twelfth Night* leads on through *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *As You Like It*. Each has its dark ambiguities. *The Merchant of Venice*, comedy though it is, is almost overpowered by the figure of Shylock, one who uses the law for his own ends, carries death on the point of his knife, and is excluded at the end from the notably Christian consensus that has condemned him and his kind to the life of outsiders for generations. This genuinely tragic figure sits uneasily in a play in which even the alleged good guys are found seriously wanting. He has his successor, in little, in Malvolio, also excluded from the consensus, the community of shared irony. Like Shylock, Malvolio has recourse to the law (his prosecution of the

Sea Captain has the effect of postponing the full effect of the happy ending), and like Shylock he is tricked into submission and exclusion. *Much Ado* has a villain of a different kind: Don John, as motiveless as an Iago, undoes the consensus because it is there: the dramatic strength of the play comes in large part from the threats that he instigates and the patterns of loyalty needed to resist them. *As You Like It*, when we get past the cruelties of the opening, balances cold realism and literary fantasy, turning the conventions of pastoral on their heads. As for *Twelfth Night*, it too rejects the stale conventions of stylized love and balances festival against humdrum existence, workday against holiday.

It is not just the comedies that lead us to *Twelfth Night*, but the histories as well. *Henry V*, written within a year or two of *Twelfth Night*, completes two rounds of history plays.. The intricate plotting of *Twelfth Night* has some of its beginnings in what might be described as the great discovery of the two *Henry IV* plays, namely the use of a comic plot to highlight the main plot through a kind of subversive irony. The device is used in a slightly different way in *Henry V*. Malvolio's ventures into love, his sickness of self-love, the collapse of his dignity, these things throw the main plot into relief. And Sir Toby is a version of Falstaff, feckless, drunk, but attractive in his very debauchery. His showing-up of Malvolio, engineered primarily by Maria, involves an elaborate plot of a complexity to rival *Hamlet* itself. I should also add that, while there is much disagreement about its date, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* may date from about this time – and this play ends with the showing-up of Falstaff himself as spectacularly, and as mortifyingly, as Malvolio is shown up in *Twelfth Night*.

There are those who see *Twelfth Night* not so much as the culmination of a sequence of comedies, after which the path leads to the so-called problem plays like *Measure for Measure*, but rather as the first of these complex and inter-generic works (this is the way the Royal Shakespeare Company played it under the direction of John Caird in 1983). While this strikes me as overstating the case, we should remember that *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet* are close in time (both from around 1600), and that the sharp division that we are inclined to fix between the so-called mature comedies and the later romances is by no means as clear as we might like it to be.

Our play is a neatly organized series of situations, built out of elements already encountered (as though Shakespeare's works are one huge continuum), but in a new combination. We can note the following:

- A female lead: Viola resembles earlier strong women, like Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*.
- A heroine disguised, like Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.
- Twins and mistaken identity, as in *The Comedy of Errors*.
- A Falstaff figure in Sir Toby, derived from *1 Henry IV* and *2 Henry IV*.

- A clown in the long line running back to Dogberry and Launce, but notably related to Touchstone in *As You Like It*.
- Travel to a foreign country and shipwreck, as in *The Comedy of Errors*.
- Songs, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *As You Like It*.
- The Princess's year of mourning for a father in *Love's Labor's Lost* becomes Olivia's seven years' mourning for a brother.

The play is a household comedy, set primarily in Olivia's house, though the layout of the play really involves Orsino's palace and Olivia's house and the road in between – where Viola and Feste meet or pass, and along which Orsino ultimately travels. If we were to draw a plan of the geography of the play, it would show the Illyrian seashore and, back from it, the palace of Orsino. Down the road from the palace – perhaps across town, perhaps across a stretch of countryside (as in Trevor Nunn's spectacularly beautiful Cornish setting), is Olivia's house, the setting for most of the main action and all of the subplot. In effect, the play consists of a set of static figures (Olivia, Toby, Malvolio, Orsino), plus solvents, primarily Viola and in some measure Maria, who unstick the moral gridlock that seems to afflict the main characters as the play opens. These solvent figures rearrange and free up the static elements to bring about a coincidence of sexual and family love in the play's conclusion. Until then, sexual love must be disguised, and family is divided.

When we first meet him at the opening of the play, the Duke Orsino is totally lovesick – a true Petrarchan lover. He is turned inward, self-regarding, deeply self-centered:

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. (1.1.1-15)

Music in abundance should lessen the pangs of love; but the fact is that anything given to love immediately loses its value and we are worse off than we were before. Note the

reference to violets (Viola will soon appear, and violets are particularly associated with sexuality) and to the sea (Viola will appear from a shipwreck, like Venus rising from the waves).

Orsino is like Actaeon, destroyed by the very thoughts of his beloved. This wonderfully powerful image is at the heart of a notable sonnet by Samuel Daniel published a few years before:

Whilst youth and error led my wand'ring mind,  
 And set my thoughts in heedless ways to range,  
 All unawares a goddess chaste I find,  
 Diana-like, to work my sudden change.  
 For her no sooner had my view bewray'd,  
 But with disdain to see me in that place,  
 With fairest hand the sweet unkindest maid  
 Casts water-cold disdain upon my face –  
 Which turn'd my sport into a heart's despair,  
 Which still is chased, whilst I have any breath,  
 By mine own thoughts: set on me by my fair,  
 My thoughts like hounds pursue me to my death.  
 Those that I foster'd of mine own accord  
 Are made by her to murder thus their lord. (*Delia* 5, [1592])

The image occurs elsewhere among the sonneteers (e.g. in Griffin's *Fidessa* and William Smith's *Chloris*): here and in Orsino's speech it neatly reinforces the frustration of a love turned in on itself. Missing in Orsino's life is productive love. Perhaps Viola will be his Juliet as Olivia is his Rosaline.

This beloved, Olivia, laments the death of her brother and swears she will avoid the world for seven years. Missing in *her* life is a brother, perhaps a younger brother, not unlike a Sebastian or a Viola? Her self-centered choice of a kind of secular monasticism looks like a denial of her sexual role, in fact a posture of sexual fear: she will break out of this self-imposed isolation through a woman (rather than a man) with a name that is almost an anagram of her own. And through Viola the road leads to Sebastian. Perhaps in some sense Viola is an extension of herself, and the dead brother of the one woman can be replaced in due course by the soon-to-be-found living brother of the other.

Think how she'll love when she recognizes me for what I am! exclaims Orsino, his mind seeking a parallel of sexual and sisterly love:

O, she that hath a heart of that fine frame  
 To pay this debt of love but to a brother,  
 How will she love when the rich golden shaft  
 Hath kill'd the flock of all affections else  
 That live in her; when liver, brain, and heart,  
 These sovereign thrones, are all supplied and fill'd,

Her sweet perfections, with one self king! (1.1.33-39)

We are already in deep. One of the notable characteristics of this play is the sheer complexity of its sexual patterning: Viola's transsexual disguise makes her a potential attraction for both Olivia and Orsino, and the fact of the disguise allows their love to grow, unfulfilled, much as Orlando's grows for Rosalind under the controlled circumstances of her tutelage (she is disguised as a man). In due course, Orlando's love will be transferred (and transformed in the process) from Olivia to Viola, and Olivia's love will move from a female Viola to her identical male version, Sebastian.

Jan Kott speaks of the "erotic delirium" of the play – the merging of types of love, of gender, of love and friendship, "the metamorphoses of sex." The impossibility of choice....

Note that both Orsino and Olivia are fundamentally immature in their behavior. They are, says Ruth Nevo, "in unstable tension with themselves."

The shore on which Viola is washed up is a magical shore, and Illyria, like Prospero's island (scene of another shipwreck), is a magic place. To ask why Viola, stepping, or rather rolling, ashore, chooses almost at once to disguise herself is to ask the unknowable. We know next to nothing about why she and her brother are out on the high seas in the first place. There are fatal forces in this play – not really magic, I suppose, yet unexplained. The adamant that draws Viola to Illyria's shores is a precursor of the magic that brings Prospero's compatriots to his island: this shipwreck is a kind of *naufragium felix*, a fortunate wreck, bringing to Illyria a brother and sister who can unstick the amatory gridlock into which it appears to have fallen. Are these forces like the forces that drive fiction? Must we play-act to reach truth?

Viola begins by wishing to serve the lady Olivia, so that she "might not be delivered to the world, / Till I had made my own occasion mellow, / What my estate is", but, finding this impossible, she decides to serve the Duke.

In 1.3 we meet the foolish Sir Andrew and Sir Toby; in 1.4 we learn that Viola loves Orsino. Interestingly, he sends Viola to Olivia *because* she seems feminine.... We will come back to these episodes, but let's pursue Viola's connection with Olivia a little further by turning to scene 5 and the meeting of the two.

Viola's situation, as we discover in 1.2, parallels Olivia's: her brother seems dead (line 4). Viola and Olivia become two near-allied elements: the attraction of Olivia for Viola seems sexual but is in part a merging of personality. (The ultimate rediscovery of Sebastian will bring a more than adequate substitute for a brother to one of them and a real long-lost brother for the other.) Olivia is drawn to Viola, and, in her way, Viola to Olivia.

Both of them, then, are mourning – Olivia negatively, by watering her chamber round with tears, Viola assertively, by assuming the very appearance of her lost twin (Viola, we

are told later, *imitates* her brother [3.4.389]). The two reflect one another – even in their names. While *Twelfth Night* tells us at numerous junctures that we must be suspicious of words and appearances, Viola’s name is too much like Olivia’s for us not to search for similarities between these two young women, both loved, in very different ways, by a single man. “Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,” writes our poet in Sonnet 144,

Which like two spirits do suggest me still:  
The better angel is a man right fair,  
The worser spirit a woman colored ill.

The influence of the man-woman Viola-Cesario who, as it turns out, is not (to use the language of Sonnet 20) “pricked . . . out for women’s pleasure,” is benign and comforting to Orsino (“The better angel is a man right fair”), but that of Olivia, “the worser spirit,” unproductive, leading only to Orsino’s languorous despair. Remarks Alexander Leggatt, in *Shakespeare’s Comedy of Love* (1974): “The irony is that Orsino and Viola, in exchanging experiences as they do [throughout the play], demonstrate a sympathy they cannot express: the images they have found for love belittle and even betray it, concentrating on its privateness, but the interplay of minds that surrounds these images suggests a deeper capacity for love than either of them can make articulate” (237-238). In short, the language of love fails them, but is replaced by what Donne might call an inter-assurance of the mind, a firm base for their love when it finally blossoms.

If Viola’s name seems an anagram for Olivia’s, Malvolio’s is its opposite. As Benvolio means good will (the Benvolio of *Romeo and Juliet* is a faithful confidant), Malvolio is its opposite – ill will.

As Viola imitates her brother (3.4.389), so all the major characters in the play are engaged in role-playing, not to say locked into their respective roles: Orsino is the suitor, full of clichés of love and tags of Petrarchanism; Olivia is the grief-stricken sister; Malvolio is the poor player who seeks to assume roles and cannot.

And why is the play called *Twelfth Night*? The titles of Shakespeare’s comedies, while they always have a certain relevance, are often not easily understood or interpreted. What makes *The Winter’s Tale* a winter’s tale? Why is the play of Beatrice and Benedick *Much Ado About Nothing*? The connection of this current play with the night before the last of the twelve days of Christmas, namely January 5 or Epiphany Eve, followed on January 6 by the Feast of the Epiphany, seems obscure. The full title is *Twelfth Night, or What You will*, a clear link to *As You Like It*. *What You Will* was also the title of a play by Marston from this same period, so perhaps it was a working title that was then discarded.

As the eve of the last day of Christmas, Twelfth Night was a time of final celebrations before life settled down to normalcy, and particularly to the long stretch of dark nights and cold days that extended ultimately into an English spring. This was the time when, in country places, the decorations hung in the hall were taken down and burned, and when the Yule Log, dragged into the hall at the beginning of Christmas and kept burning

throughout the celebration, was extinguished before it could burn out completely, so that the old log could be used as kindling for the new in the following year. Christmas in general was a time of misrule, when masters and servants shared a common board and servants were sometimes even licensed to take command. We have a fairly complete account of at least part of the Christmas festivities at Gray's Inn in 1594-95 in a little book published almost a hundred years later, in 1688, entitled *Gesta Grayorum*. This account is particularly interesting to Shakespeareans because it includes reference to a performance of what was probably Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* as a part of the program. The celebrations, which were so riotous that guests from the Inner Temple actually retired from the scene, were presided over by one Henry, Prince of Purpoole, a lord of misrule chosen from among the company.

Sometimes, the lord of the revels was chosen for the last night of Christmas celebrations only. A poem by Robert Herrick tells us how the selection was made:

Now, now the mirth comes  
 With the cake full of plums,  
 Where Beane's the King of the sport here;  
 Beside we must know,  
 The Pea also  
 Must revell, as Queene, in the Court here.

A bean was hidden in the Twelfth cake baked for the occasion for the gentlemen and the recipient was made King of the Revels for the evening. His queen was chosen by a pea hidden in what must have been a different Twelfth cake for the ladies. (Hiding coins in Christmas puddings continues in Britain to this day.)

What does this have to do with our play? We know the play was acted in 1601/02 at the Inns of Court on Candlemas (Feb. 2), but it is conjectured (e.g. by Hotson) that it was performed a year earlier, Jan. 6, 1601, when Don Virginio Orsino, Duke of Bracciano, was a guest at court; Lord Hunsdon, Lord Chamberlain, writes of selecting and preparing a play for the occasion. The situation perhaps resembled the competition for the entertainment at the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the Mechanicals, receiving the good news that their play "is preferred," are able to go on and perform it before the lords and ladies. What more natural than that Lord Hunsdon should have turned to his own company, known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the best known company in England at the time, of which Shakespeare was a member?

(The company was formed in 1594 and was resident initially at the Theatre, built in 1576 just outside the north wall of London in an area known (then as now) as Shoreditch. In 1599 the company was evicted from the Theatre on the expiration of their lease and the owner of the land announced that he was going to pull the structure down. The Lord Chamberlain's men anticipated him by pulling it down themselves and transporting the timbers to the south bank of the Thames, where they built the Globe, opened in 1599.)

If there is rather more conjecture in Hotson's theory than most people are entirely comfortable with, none the less the play shows many of the characteristics of what C.L.Barber describes as "Shakespeare's festive comedies" – comedies that made use of the spirit and the traditions of festival such as Shakespeare's audience, newly urbanized and deracinated, would have associated with the old village festivals they may well have grown up with. Barber explains: "I have been led into an exploration of the way the social form of Elizabethan holidays contributed to the dramatic form of festive comedy ... we can see here ... how art develops underlying configurations in the social life of a culture." If we go along with I.B.Cauthen's theory that Sir Toby's drunken song "O' the twelfth day of December" (2.3.85) is an intoxicated error for "O' the twelfth day of Christmas," then we have at least a reference to Twelfth Day embedded in the play. But the general spirit of festival runs all through the play, taking in Feste the Clown and various of the other characters, perhaps even Malvolio himself. As for Twelfth Night itself, it was particularly well known as an occasion for dressing up and acting out. Writes Leigh Hunt, in the early nineteenth century, "All the world are Kings and Queens. Everybody is somebody else, and learns at once to laugh at, and to tolerate, characters different from his own by enacting them." [Quoted in Miles and John Hadfield, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, 1961]

An ancestor of Father Christmas introduces Ben Jonson's *Christmas His Masque*, presented at court in 1616: "*Enter Christmas with two or three of the guard. He is attired in round hose, long stockings, a close doublet, a high-crowned hat with a brooch, a long thin beard, a truncheon, little ruffs, white shoes, his scarfs and garters tied cross, and his drum beaten before him.*" Even Malvolio is not dressed as fantastically as this – but we note that fantastic dressing is associated with the season.

Whether the time of the play is intended as December and January, or whether its title simply reflects the fact that it is an entertainment suitable for that season, we cannot readily ascertain. Most directors place it in warmer temperatures, though there have been modern productions that set the play in winter – Kenneth Branagh's video version for example, or Terry Hands's Royal Shakespeare Company production of 1979, part of Branagh's inspiration. Perhaps the very question is illegitimate: Illyria, after all, is a real place and no place, a part of the Adriatic coast inhabited by people with Italian-sounding names like Orsino and Olivia (and famous, by the way, for its pirates), but with a sub-plot consisting of people called Toby Belch and Andrew Aguecheek, as English as the others are Italian. Perhaps the play is of all seasons and none... Later in his career, Shakespeare will write a play called *The Winter's Tale* which includes a sheep-shearing festival and features a Bohemia complete with a sea-coast.... And *The Taming of the Shrew* starts with an English frame that contains an Italian fiction.

In any case, we may wish to note that *Twelfth Night* does seem to have been written with a sophisticated private audience in mind, rather than for the public theatre..

## LECTURE TWO

In the first lecture we noted that this play is made up of many elements from previous plays: Shakespeare was always reworking his materials. The play is concerned with marriage, as so many comedies are – just as tragedies are concerned with death. *Romeo and Juliet*, of course is concerned with both....

It has a plucky heroine, who, like Julia in *Two Gentlemen*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, Rosalind in *As You Like It*, dresses as a man. The leader of its subplot, Sir Toby Belch, looks back to Falstaff in the two Henry IV plays and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. It involves a shipwreck, like *The Comedy of Errors*, and, most particularly like *The Comedy of Errors*, it revolves around the mistaken identities of a pair of twins.

*The Comedy of Errors*, complicated as it is by having two pairs of twins at the center of the action, has twins of the same sex: in *Twelfth Night*, by linking the confusion of twins with the confusion of disguise, Shakespeare introduces sexual and gender ambiguity into the mix. Given that female parts were normally played by boys on the Elizabethan stage, this innovation of gender ambiguity perhaps only legitimizes through the fiction something already present in the workaday reality of the theatre of the day. In this sense, the play is a play about play-acting – as indeed it is in other ways: it is populated by people playing roles. Orsino adopts the persona of the lovelorn Petrarchan lover; Olivia adopts, or seeks to adopt, that of the chaste penitent, the secular nun; Malvolio is tricked into assuming the role of the tasteless and absurd lover (at the very opposite end of the aesthetic spectrum from Orsino's courtly lover).

We noted also that *Twelfth Night* came around 1600 at the end of a line of comedies – from *The Comedy of Errors* by way of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *As You Like It*.

We noted also that its date is almost the same as that of *Hamlet* and the beginning of the major tragedies. Thomas Mann once said of comedy and tragedy that “a shift of lighting suffices to convert one into the other.” Much depends not on where the characters are, but where the audience is in relation to the characters: as Russ McDonald reminds us, “to slip on a banana peel is painful to the slipper, but potentially hilarious to the uninvolved spectator.” We would do well before we are through to inquire whether the incompleteness of the conclusion of *Twelfth Night* (Malvolio is not part of the consensus and Viola does not have her maiden's weeds) has some bearing on the proximity of the

tragedies – though, as we well know, in Shakespeare comedy is seldom complete, seldom unalloyed.

We begin, then, with a lovesick Orsino addressing a life-denying Olivia, sworn to seven years of mourning for her brother's death. Both (to use a term that Olivia uses of Malvolio) are "sick of self-love," so taken up with themselves, so narcissistic, that they are lost to the rest of the world. Viola the fixer, the ingenious, the optimistic, floats into town like Venus rising from the waves, and, after a complex series of adventures, brings, through her influence and that of her alter ego her brother, the various parties together and allows the community to move forward productively by causing its leaders to escape from their imprisoned selves. It would not be too much to call Viola the spirit of love, drawn by who knows what adamant and power of attraction to Illyria, and disguise, and the Duke's court. Such miracles are possible at certain times of the year – at times of festival when the forces of negativity are driven back....

The BBC version of *Twelfth Night* makes 1.5, the scene in which Viola first comes calling on Olivia, into a complex patterning of sex and language, attraction and verbalism. We reach this part of the scene through a series of incidents that serve as a kind of preparation for it. We begin with Maria and Feste. Feste, it seems, has absented himself from the household (one wonders whether this is because he finds the funereal atmosphere suffocating, or perhaps because of Malvolio's unwelcoming and censorious presence, or perhaps because he has been hanging out at Orsino's place). Says Maria, "My lady will hang thee for thy absence." This, it seems, is no idle prophecy: one has the impression that a good deal hangs on Feste's ability to get through to Olivia when she appears on the scene: "Wit, and't be thy will, put me into good fooling," he says to himself.

In Trevor Nunn's version of the episode, we see a cold and reluctant Olivia, freshly come from church and in deep mourning, whose initial behavior towards Feste is hostile. We are also rapidly made aware of the tension between the feckless fool and the coolly efficient steward. Malvolio, dismissive of Feste's talents, seems to suggest that, if Olivia insists on having a fool around, there are plenty to be had on the open market: Feste, says Malvolio, was recently put down "by an ordinary fool."

But, for all her initial hostility, Olivia comes alive, turns positive, as Feste speaks. Feste focuses on Olivia's mourning for her dead brother, catching her with her own words and suggesting that her preoccupation with mourning is unproductive and self-defeating.

CLOWN. Good madonna, why mourn'st thou?

OLIVIA. Good fool, for my brother's death.

CLOWN. I think his soul is in hell, madonna.

OLIVIA. I know his soul is in heaven, fool.

CLOWN. The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul, being in heaven. Take away the fool, gentlemen. (1.5.64-70)

The episode is deftly executed in Trevor Nunn's production, and it helps explain Feste's implacable hostility towards Malvolio down to the very end: in Act 5 he repeats to Malvolio Malvolio's words: "'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." (5.1.373-6) As Nunn interprets it, this incident concerns Feste's continued employment, and Malvolio's effort to break what we discover is a strong bond between Feste and Olivia.

Branagh also makes much of the incident, with a similarly melancholy Feste. It is of course the efficient Malvolio who is sent to get rid of the young man at the gate, coming back with the news that he refuses to leave:

Madam, yond fellow swears he will speak with you. I told him you were sick; he takes on him to understand so much, and therefore comes to speak with you. I told him you were asleep; he seems to have a foreknowledge of that too, and therefore comes to speak with you. What is to be said to him, lady? He's fortified against any denial. (1.5.140-147)

And what manner of man is he? Says Malvolio:

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 in standing water, between boy and man. (1.5.158-161)

Why does Olivia let him in? His obduracy? Malvolio's description of him? Trevor Nunn, by having Feste first raise the veil on Olivia's face, seems to suggest that it is Feste who starts the process of bringing Olivia back to life: his unveiling of her anticipates Viola's similar action later on in the scene. Perhaps Orsino is right to send a boy who seems a girl on such a mission:

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. (1.4.31-34)

Olivia's almost fanatical mourning for her dead brother may seem like a refusal to leave the love of brothers behind and embrace the sexual love that moves us from dependence on family towards independence: her love is turned back on itself, and made barren. As Viola says a little later on, echoing Shakespeare's sonnets,

'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. (1.5.242-6)

Shakespeare writes as follows in Sonnet 3, and the theme is carried through the first block of sonnets in the sequence:

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest,  
 Now is the time that face should form another,  
 Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,  
 Thou dost beguile the world, unless some mother.

Perhaps, in the first instance, Olivia's admittance of Viola is as mysterious as Viola's arrival on the Illyrian seashore. Perhaps it is Feste's touch that has brought Olivia far enough back to allow her to consider admitting Viola-Cesario. In any event, this non-threatening figure, barely masculine at all, is right for Olivia. "I hold the olive in my hand," says Viola when she arrives – meaning that she comes in peace, but meaning so much more, though she herself does not know it.

In the BBC version, the arrival of Viola leads to a brilliant verbal exchange that is at the same time a kind of awakening of Olivia. Next to the act of sex itself, language is the most sexual of human behaviors: Viola brings Olivia back from mourning and into the daylight – a fact made the more emphatic through the raising of her veil.

But Viola does her master's bidding too well: her almost defiant confusion upon arrival only makes her the more attractive, and Olivia is soon caught up in a wooing-by-proxy that becomes, for her if not for Viola, a wooing-in-earnest.

Yet even for Viola the wooing takes on a curious intensity, because it is as though her words are directed not so much at Olivia as at Orsino: she *becomes* a willing proxy for Olivia, an Olivia as eager for Orsino as Orsino is for Olivia. Her superb final speech is the speech not of a young man sent to woo for his master but of a girl willing to wait for ever to win a young man. What would she do?

Make me a willow cabin at your gate,  
 And call upon my soul within the house;  
 Write loyal cantons of contemned love,  
 And sing them loud even in the dead of night;  
 Halloo your name to the reverberate hills,  
 And make the babbling gossip of the air  
 Cry out 'Olivia!' O, you should not rest  
 Between the elements of air and earth,  
 But you should pity me. (1.5.272-280)

Trevor Nunn fails to get this little episode right, but John Gorrie and the BBC do it (in my view) just the way it should be done. In Shakespeare, great love is expressed and validated through great poetry: so, here, the poetry arises spontaneously from the very intensity of Viola's love. One is reminded of the sonnet that Romeo and Juliet utter together when they first meet: poetry rises to those lovers' lips as spontaneously as the love that they feel. One could, I suppose, argue that Viola is only giving voice to

Orsino's instructions: in the previous scene the Duke tells her, "Be not denied access, stand at her doors, / And tell them, there thy fixed foot shall grow / Till thou have audience." But John Gorrie is at pains to emphasize the spontaneity of it all: Felicity Kendal, his Viola, hesitates for long enough to make it clear that this is no set speech (a point made the more obvious by the sheer awkwardness of her efforts to deliver such speeches at the beginning of the interview), but she then launches herself into it with the verve of a surfer, riding its beauty.

Thus the misprision of these two figures, so alike and yet so different, is complete. It doesn't take long for Viola to figure out what is going on. After Olivia has sent her a ring, by way of Malvolio, that she claims Cesario/Viola left behind, Viola understands what is all too obvious to her audience:

I left no ring with her; what means this lady?  
 Fortune forbid my outside have not charm'd her!  
 She made good view of me; indeed, so much  
 That methought her eyes had lost her tongue,  
 For she did speak in starts distractedly.  
 She loves me, sure: the cunning of her passion  
 Invites me in this churlish messenger.  
 None of my lord's ring! Why, he sent her none.  
 I am the man. If it be so- as 'tis-  
 Poor lady, she were better love a dream.  
 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!  
 Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we!  
 For such as we are made of, such we be.  
 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.  
 What will become of this? As I am man,  
 My state is desperate for my master's love;  
 As I am woman- now alas the day!-  
 What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe!  
 O Time, thou must untangle this, not I;  
 It is too hard a knot for me t' untie! (2.2.16-40)

Branagh, whose less buoyant characters hardly allow themselves the flights of fancy and emotion that we find in the BBC interpretation, directed by John Gorrie, emphasizes Viola's sense of inadequacy when the radiant beauty of Olivia is revealed.

As we move out of Act 1, the action is already well under way. It was launched in effect in three ways: by Viola's arrival in Illyria (1.2), by Orsino's dispatch of Viola to visit Olivia (1.4), and also, between the two, in 1.3, by some minor by-play between Sir

Andrew and Sir Toby. Asks Sir Andrew, as the scene ends, “Shall we set about some revels?” “What shall we do else?” asks Sir Toby. One is reminded of Rosalind’s famous question of Celia in *As You Like It* (1.2.24), “Let me see, what think you of falling in love?” And so the play is launched and goes rolling forward.

As 1.2 showed us the arrival of Viola, 2.1 brings us Sebastian. What is the nature of the relationship between Sebastian and Antonio? Antonio rescued Sebastian from drowning, and is clearly powerfully drawn to him. “If you will not murder me for my love, let me be your servant,” says Antonio (2.1.35). Sebastian, grateful though he is, keeps his distance: “If you will not undo what you have done, that is, kill him whom you have recovered, desire it not.” Sebastian departs, and Antonio at once (a) switches into verse and (b) moves from the second person plural (you) to the second person singular (thee), declaring:

I have many enemies in Orsino’s court,  
Else would I very shortly see thee there:  
But come what may, I do adore thee so,  
That danger shall seem sport, and I will go. (2.1.44-47)

The episode is perhaps best compared with an episode early in *The Merchant of Venice*, when another Antonio (the Merchant of Venice himself of course) agrees to help Bassanio finance his wooing of Portia. Frequently the episode is played to suggest Antonio’s erotic attraction to Bassanio and hence the sadness of a love great enough to grant the requests of the beloved even when they mean a greater and permanent separation. The possibility of a similar kind of attraction here in *Twelfth Night* does seem reinforced by the language. It also offers a parallel to the previous scene, in which heterosexual love (Viola speaking for Orsino to Olivia) and homosexual love (Olivia falling for a Cesario who is in fact Viola) are hopelessly entangled. As one scene shows the love of females, so the other shows the love of males. No wonder Viola asks, in the next scene, “How will this fadge?” “It is too hard a knot for me t’untie,” she adds.

In truth we have a triple alignment in three successive scenes: Orsino is drawn to the maiden’s cheek and rubious lip of Viola in 1.4; Olivia is attracted to Viola, thinking her a man, in 1.5; Antonio is attracted to Viola’s male copy, Sebastian, in 2.1. This fluidity of sexual interactions, following and crisscrossing gender boundaries, opens up in the center of the play an abundance of possibilities that are normally kept at bay or eliminated by strict understandings and assumptions imposed by society and biological and economic necessity: sexual attraction normally leads to marriage, and normally crosses gender lines. But comedy, especially romantic comedy of this kind, set in the magical region of Illyria, lowers and remove such limitations: at the center of the play is a time and a place in which all attractions are in some sense legitimized. The purpose of this opening out of possibilities is in effect to perform surgery on a sexual regime that has gone badly wrong. The license of festival makes all things possible, so that sexual attraction can be freed from artificial constraint as a preliminary to realigning it in conformity with the rules of heterosexual love at the end of the play. Northrop Frye’s three-stage dynamic of comedy is at work here: deadlocked and unproductive social pressures (stage 1) are released into a

freedom licensed by comedy (stage 2) in order to bring nature and convention back into alignment (stage 3).

Getting the balance, the pitch of the hall, is hard in this play: how do we play the sexuality? (Antonio and Sebastian? Olivia and Viola? Duke and Viola? Toby and Maria?). How do we play the cruelty (Malvolio)? The differences among directors are notable.

And will Malvolio be pulled back into the consensus after the play has ended? Perhaps the play has to end for it to end.... Will Malvolio have revenge on us because Christmas is over? Says Toby, "Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" (2.3.114-15). The answer, perhaps, is yes, because Sir Toby's world of festival idleness will inevitably give way to Malvolio's killjoy world of every day. If Sir Toby is one long party, Malvolio is the Department of Motor Vehicles, the IRS, the zoning board. Without marriage that is aligned with love, and love that is aligned with fecundity, we have no defense against the killjoys and the small-minded.

### LECTURE THREE

Shakespeare wrote *Twelfth Night* probably at about the same time as he wrote *Henry V*, completing a run of comedies at about the same time as he was completing the second of his two four-play history sequences. Other plays from this same period included *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*. Each of these plays deals in some way with the donning of disguise, and with the conscious self-presentation that we associate with acting.

*Henry V*, for example, begins with a stirring prologue that draws attention to the dramatic fiction:

Can this cockpit hold  
The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram  
Within this wooden O the very casques  
That did affright the air at Agincourt?  
O, pardon – since a crooked figure may  
Attest in little place a million;  
And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,  
On your imaginary forces work.... (1. Prologue. 11-18)

Henry himself has a sense of theater that holds him in good stead when he traps Scroop, Cambridge and Gray by presenting them with their death warrants under the guise of marching orders, and this is matched by a sense of the value of rhetorical performance: his grand speeches, at Harfleur and at Agincourt, are not only grand utterances outside the fiction, but also very carefully staged *performances within the fiction*, a skill he has learned from his father Henry IV.

In *Hamlet*, our hero puts an antic disposition on, in order to confuse those around him, and he uses theater as a device to reveal his uncle's treachery.

“This wide and universal theater / Presents more woeful pageants than the scene / Wherein we play in,” remarks Duke Senior in *As You Like It*, as Orlando bursts on the scene in search of food for his old retainer Adam. “All the world's a stage,” remarks Jaques, in a sudden access of melancholy, and at once launches into an examination of the analogy between theater and reality. In fact, the notion of play-acting is built into the very structure and plot of *As You Like It*, since it turns on the male disguise that Rosalind

has put on in order to travel into the forest. This disguise begins as a device for survival and becomes a means of coaxing love from a confused Orlando – he who, when he first meets Rosalind is struck dumb with her beauty: “What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue? / I cannot speak to her, yet she urged conference” (1.2.233-34). He falls irredeemably in love with her, but, while he can give vent to his feelings through bad poetry, hanging his poetic utterances on the trees of the forest, he cannot, it seems, deal directly with Rosalind herself. Perhaps if he could the result would be good poetry – just as Romeo and Juliet make good poetry to replace the moony narcissism of Romeo’s Petrarchan oxymorons.

One might argue that, whatever ails Orsino, it is not a reluctance to declare his love, and in this regard he is very different from Orlando. But in one respect the two resemble one another: both are brought to true and authentic love through a relationship with a girl disguised as a boy: same-sex attraction leads ultimately to socially (and economically) productive heterosexual love (with misprisions along the way, as when Phebe falls for Ganymede/Rosalind). More to the point, Orlando’s inability to take action is contrasted with Rosalind’s willingness to take charge, as she dons man’s clothing and as she assumes responsibility for Orlando’s love-life. Viola, too, shows a certain aptitude for taking charge: surely one of the qualities that attract Olivia to her is her very assumption of the role of active wooer, unwilling to be put off by denial and able to launch herself into the forthright passion of the willow-cabin speech.

Make me a willow cabin at your gate,  
And call upon my soul within the house;  
Write loyal cantons of contemned love,  
And sing them loud even in the dead of night;  
Halloo your name to the reverberate hills,  
And make the babbling gossip of the air  
Cry out ‘Olivia!’ O, you should not rest  
Between the elements of air and earth,  
But you should pity me. (1.5.272-280)

In short, Viola, like Rosalind before her, hijacks a certain masculinity in an environment where that quality is sadly missing, at least when it comes to love, and, most particularly, the articulateness that love requires. (Orlando, of course, in *As You Like It*, is the strong silent type, who can neither speak his love nor render it in passable poetry.)

We noted last time that in Act 1 and the beginning of Act 2 of *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare rings the changes on types of love, as Orsino seems oddly attracted by a girl who is pretending to be a boy, and Olivia is attracted by a boy who is actually a girl. This is followed in turn by a scene in which a man seems attracted by the girl’s twin brother. If Sebastian can be brought into this mix, we think, perhaps the various relationships can subside into biologically productive love....

Thus the misprisions of *As You Like It* are deepened and expanded to become a central theme in *Twelfth Night*. We might note, though, that whereas Orlando and Rosalind are

near-anagrams who ultimately marry -- analogous naming leads to productive loving -- in *Twelfth Night* it is two women, Viola and Olivia, who spell one another, so that even as the play ends the two couples are linked by two occult bonds, the one of linguistic analogy between Viola and Olivia, and the other of biological twinship between Viola and Sebastian: Viola resembles Olivia linguistically and Sebastian genetically and she is set to marry Orsino.... These lovers are bound together more magically even than those in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, because they are in effect metaphoric and metamorphic manifestations of one another: if Illyria is a language, they are metaphors within that language, and, like metaphors, they are shape-changers, whose interaction gives them a kind of protean brilliance.

If I were engaged in a different pursuit right now, I would point to interest among Shakespeare's contemporaries in the question of the autonomous self. Shakespeare's theory of love, like John Donne's, posits a fusion of personality, a platonic union of selves. In that most famous of Donne's poems, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," the speaker describes a union of the spirit that overcomes geographical separation:

Dull sublunary lovers' love  
 (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit  
 Absence, because it doth remove  
 Those things which elemented it.

But we, by a love so much refin'd  
 That our selves know not what it is,  
 Inter-assurèd of the mind,  
 Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls, therefore, which are one,  
 Though I must go, endure not yet  
 A breach, but an expansion,  
 Like gold to airy thinness beat.

Love, Donne suggests elsewhere, may create an autonomy of the loving pair: "She's all states, all princes I: nothing else is" -- just as such an autonomy is hinted at in *Romeo and Juliet*, even as the world closes in and destroys it. Love is a fusion, a merging of selves. Spenser, in the stanzas that originally ended Book III of *The Faerie Queene*, used the image of the hermaphrodite to represent the union of lovers. Donne's poem "The Ecstasy" returns to the subject in a different way:

But as all several souls contain  
 Mixture of things, they know not what,  
 Love these mix'd souls doth mix again,  
 And makes both one, each this and that.

A single violet transplant, --  
 The strength, the colour, and the size,

All which before was poor, and scant,  
Redoubles still, and multiplies.

When love, with one another so  
Interinanimates two souls,  
That abler soul, which thence doth flow,  
Defects of loneliness controls.

Shakespeare expresses similar sentiments in *The Phoenix and the Turtle*, where these two mysterious birds seem to merge into a single being:

So they loved, as love in twain  
Had the essence but in one;  
Two distincts, division none:  
Number there in love was slain.

The Sonnets, for example number 116, speak of a kind of permanence and immovability of love, as though it defies and overcomes all external forces, binding the lovers together within its universe of power:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me prov'd,  
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

We have lost the ability to understand the force of such sentiments, just as we are bewildered by twins and anagrams in *Twelfth Night*. In a recent book by Barbara Maria Stafford, *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), the author suggests that in the realm of the modern and the postmodern “we possess no language for talking about resemblance, only an exaggerated awareness of difference.” “Without a sophisticated theory of analogy,” she adds, “there is only the negative dialectics of difference, ending in the unbreachable impasse of pretended assimilation or the self-enclosed insistence on absolute identity with no possibility for meaningful communication” (p.51). Analogy, she suggests, is emphatically not the same thing as sameness. We are good at finding sameness and finding difference, but poor at bridging the two. While she does not discuss rhyme, we might note that poetic

rhyme in English is a form of analogy: identical words do not rhyme, but similar words do. The calculus of love in *Twelfth Night* calls for just such a rhyme-scheme of love, just such occult analogy. Viola and Olivia are not the same, but each constitutes a manifestation of Orsino's desire: the loves of comfort and despair are near-allied. Viola and Sebastian are not the same, but a mere difference of genitalia separates the two.

But who is this shadowy Sebastian? Is it most useful to see him as a fourth figure, washed up like Viola on the shores of Illyria, and necessary to the resolution of the play? Or should we not rather see him as a kind of alter ego of Viola, a different manifestation of our heroine, now "prick'd out for women's pleasure," as the sonnet puts it? I am inclined, for all the reasons mentioned, to think the latter.

This sonnet, by the way, is number 20. It bears quoting in its entirety, not least because it seems to echo Orsino's observations about Cesario and his "rubious" lip in Act 1 scene 4, and his comments about women's weakness later on in the play (to which I will come in a moment).

A woman's face with nature's own hand painted,  
Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion;  
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted  
With shifting change, as is false women's fashion:  
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,  
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;  
A man in hue all 'hues' in his controlling,  
Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.  
And for a woman wert thou first created;  
Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,  
And by addition me of thee defeated,  
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.  
But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,  
Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure.

As for Orsino himself, I remarked last time that he seems caught between a love unproductive because spurned – his self-centered and self-punishing love for Olivia – and a love comforting and yet potentially unproductive because homosexual – his love for Cesario-Viola. He is, in short, like the speaker in Sonnet 144, possessed of two loves, "of comfort and despair." Unthreatening to Olivia, Viola is the right kind of envoy to send to her, because she is able to break through Olivia's resistance to love. When Viola is carried away, in Olivia's presence, by the poetry of her love for Orsino, it is Olivia who falls for her – which is ultimately all right because she will eventually be seemingly magically transformed into Sebastian. As for Orsino, Viola is no challenge to him either – he of macho aspirations:

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 called 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. (2.4.93-101)

The speech, in Act 2, scene 4, echoes Orsino's opening speech. Perhaps in some sense Illyria itself, Orsino's realm, is Orsino's being. If so, he little realizes what has washed up on his shore, and how strongly this woman's heart can beat. This slight page turns out indeed to be master-mistress of his passion.

For the moment, though, our concern is with a different matter, the riotous behavior of Sir Toby and his friends. Orsino, we might say, is concerned with feelings and ideas; Sir Toby is concerned with the physical. Viola, in Act 2 scene 2, has just tumbled to the fact that Olivia is in love with her and for this reason has sent Malvolio after her: "She loves me sure; the cunning of her passion / Invites me in this churlish messenger" (2.2.23-24). Now, we return to Sir Toby and Sir Andrew. "Shall we set about some revels?" asked Sir Andrew at the end of Act 1 scene 3. And so the revels begin.

Toby and Andrew are joined by Feste ("Did you never see the picture of 'we three'?" he asks), whose charming song "O mistress mine" is a *carpe diem*, an appeal to seize the day:

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter,  
 Present mirth hath present laughter:  
 What's to come is still unsure.  
 In delay there lies no plenty,  
 Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty:  
 Youth's a stuff will not endure. (2.3.48-53)

Some directors make it seem that Feste sees through Viola's disguise, others that he recognizes the attraction of Olivia for Cesario, but one thing is certain: we know already that Feste disapproves of his mistress's insistence on prolonged mourning for her brother, indeed that, in its various ways, the entire household does. So singing such a song in a house of mourning is both a breach of decorum (a house of mourning is no place for songs) and an exhortation. If Feste sings sweetly, his friends sing merely boisterously, ending with a rendering of something called "O' the twelfth day of December," which, as we have seen, some scholars suggest may be a misquotation for the well-known song on the twelve days of Christmas.

And right on cue, Malvolio appears:

My masters, are you mad? Or what are you? 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? Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you? (2.3.87-93).

The answer of course is that there is not. Sir Toby, perhaps deliberately misconstruing Malvolio's reference to their lack of respect for time, suggests that he is criticizing the quality of their singing:

Out o' time, sir? Art any more than a steward? Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale? (2.3.113-115)

If Sir Toby does have in mind the song of the twelve days of Christmas (2.3.85) – a song that concludes with the twelfth and makes the title of the play more than a mere label of convenience – he has hit a raw nerve, not among the characters in the play but among the audience. Cakes and ale end with the end of Christmas, misrule gives way to the restoration of order, and the Malvolios of this world bring in a sorry January, to be followed by a lenten February. It is Sir Toby, imagining that stewards do *not* rule the world, who has things wrong.

But Malvolio – his name implying that he is the very opposite of Viola and Olivia – is not only the enemy of Sir Toby and Maria, not only the enemy of Feste, but also the enemy of love itself. It is this life-denying force that everyone must beat down: authority, as Romeo and Juliet learned to their cost, is the enemy of passion.

Most contemporary readings of the showing-up of the steward Malvolio ultimately come down on the side of compassion for this unsmiling stick of a man, beginning with the path-breaking Peter Hall production of 1958, the first of the “modernist” *Twelfth Nights*. Yes, the ending of the play is, to say the least, emotionally complex, but Malvolio's primary significance in this play is not even simply as killjoy, but as the very embodiment of all that suppresses the spirit. “Marry sir,” says Maria, “sometimes he is a kind of Puritan” (2.3.140) – but not even that all the time.

The devil a Puritan that he is, or anything constantly, but a time-pleaser, an affectioned ass, that cons state without book, and utters it by great swarths: 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. (2.3.146-153)

The mousetrap that Maria sets is as cunningly wrought as Hamlet's and, in its way, as effective. It involves a letter dropped in his way, purporting to come from Olivia but in fact written by Maria.

We return briefly to the Duke and Viola. Orsino's mood is reminiscent of what we saw of him at the opening of the play: he listens to music, remarks on the depth and instability of his love – and, now, draws from Viola responses whose ambiguity only we as audience can fully appreciate. Feste, sent for by Orsino, appears and sings a further song. We might note that as Viola moves back and forth between the two houses, so does Feste

(Olivia may have had this in mind when she accused him of dishonesty earlier in the play), his music providing moods appropriate to the location. Here the song is about the death of a spurned lover, the ultimate in Petrarchan melancholy:

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. (2.4.51-54)

This death, exemplary of spurned love, must not be mourned, lest the mourning grow out of all proportion, into “a thousand thousand sighs.” “I would have men of such constancy put to sea,” says Feste, in an ironic reminder of the watery arrival of the unwaveringly constant Viola (she who comes from the sea is un-sea-like in her constancy; Orsino is protean like the sea).

The melancholy of the song is reflected in the melancholy of the scene as a whole – a sharp contrast to the world of Sir Toby and his cronies from which we just parted and to which we will shortly return. In response to Orsino’s suggestion that women lack the power to love as men do, Viola-Cesario suggests otherwise:

In faith, they are as true of heart as we.  
My father had a daughter lov’d a man,  
As it might be perhaps, were I a woman,  
I should your lordship. (2.4.107-110)

“And what’s her history?” asks Orsino. “A blank, my lord: she never told her love, / But let concealment like a worm i’ th’ bud / Feed on her damask cheek.” “But died thy sister of her love, my boy?” asks Orsino, perhaps implying that such death may afflict men but that women lack the depth to die of love (a variant on Rosalind’s witticism in *As You Like It*). With the past drawn up so tight against the present – Viola, after all, still lives – Viola’s response is cryptic and we pass on. And so Viola sets out once more to win Olivia’s love.

We might note that – at least in the BBC version of the play and in the Trevor Nunn movie – there are frequent shifts of mood and pace in 2.3 and 2.4. There are of course ways of playing these scenes in a faster and less disturbing way, but the text does seem to support such rapid changes. Penny Gay (31) quotes Judi Dench, who played Viola in the 1969 John Barton production: “She is never just a jaunty boy; she is desperately vulnerable and there are tremendous areas of great sadness in her although she is the catalyst in the play.”

We might also note that Viola in effect becomes the wooer in this scene: she controls the action, and it is she who pulls back to address the main agenda, the wooing of Olivia. Her male disguise allows her, like Rosalind, to woo rather than being wooed – and, like Rosalind, her view of love is altogether more mature than that of the rather rudderless man she woos. More than anyone else in the play, it is Viola who is the spirit of love,

she who brings it to a benighted Illyria, and she who has an understanding of it far beyond her years. Hence the sadness as well as the energy, the melancholy as well as the optimism.

The entrapment of Malvolio (“the trout that must be caught with tickling,” Maria calls him) takes place in the garden, in a box-tree walk, where the close-cut box hedges (box is a kind of small-leafed privet) afford good cover for our on-stage audience. We note, of course, that we have here a situation not dissimilar from the play-within-the-play in Hamlet: Malvolio in the center, an audience of interested parties on the stage, commenting on what they are witnessing, and the theater audience beyond, able to assess the significance of the events in the context of audience comment. We are let in on an elaborate fantasy: any suggestion that Malvolio’s zealous intervention the previous night was mere respect for his mistress’s seven-year mourning is exploded in his soliloquy as he wanders along the walk. First, it is Maria:

Maria once told me she did affect me, and I have heard herself come thus near, that should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion. (2.5.23-26)

Olivia called Malvolio “sick of self-love.” It is hard to see such blindness as anything else. But the steward is not content with musing on his attractiveness to his fellow employees: he already has Olivia in his sights. Clearly he sees himself as capturing Olivia’s attention and her love, which he regards as first and foremost an opportunity to lord it over everyone else. Indeed, Malvolio is obsessed not so much with sex as with power.

To be Count Malvolio...! Having been three months married to her, sitting in my state ... Calling my officers about me, in my branched velvet gown, having come from a day-bed, where I have left Olivia sleeping ... And then to have the humour of state; and after a demure travel of regard, telling them I know my place, as I would they should theirs, to ask for my kinsman Toby ... Seven of my people, with an obedient start, make out for him. I frown the while, and perchance wind up my watch, or play with my – some rich jewel. Toby approaches; curtsies there to me ... I extend my hand to him thus, quenching my familiar smile with an austere regard of control.... (2.5.35-67)

And thus it continues. So it is not the letter that sets Malvolio going, but rather the letter that confirms his fantasies. In such a state of suggestibility, he has no need to check the handwriting: he knows it is his lady’s hand: “These be her very C’s, her U’s, and her T’s, and thus makes she her great P’s.” The fact that the letters form a reference to the female genitalia, “and thus she makes her great P’s,” only adds to the absurdity of it all (careful scholars have pointed out that there are no capital C’s or P’s in the letter itself...).

On Olivia’s seal, we note, is the figure of Lucretia, the ultimate example of the faithful wife – she who was raped by Sextus Tarquinius and subsequently took her own life, after swearing her husband and his friends to vengeance. But the letter left in Malvolio’s way is, to say the least, enigmatic, beginning with two doggerel verses:

Jove knows I love;  
 But who?  
 Lips, do not move,  
 No man must know.

I may command where I adore;  
 But silence, like a Lucrece knife,  
 With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore;  
 M.O.A.I. doth sway my life. (2.5.98-101, 106-109)

Why M.O.A.I? The conjectures of editors from Shakespeare's day to our own have been less than convincing. Malvolios all, we might say. Malvolio, puzzling over its meaning, is as baffled as they. In a play in which Olivia and Viola do indeed seem to be bonded by their names, we can perhaps be forgiven for looking for an answer (or is the joke on us for doing so?). However, since Maria's intention is to incite while preserving deniability, there probably is none, beyond perhaps I AM O, "I am nothing." It takes even the credulous Malvolio a while to understand that the letters M, O, A and I are all contained in his name: "to crush this a little, it would bow to me, for every one of these letters are in my name." Three of them are in Maria's name too, we might add....

But to the credulous it is enough, and when Malvolio is told to be "opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants," to smile a lot, and (like Father Christmas in Ben Jonson's masque) to wear cross-garters and yellow stockings, he is at once ready to oblige. "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them," writes the temptress Maria, but it is entirely appropriate that Malvolio does not recognize her biblical source, the Gospel of St. Matthew (19.12): "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." And what kind of eunuch are you, Malvolio? the letter seems to ask. The trap is set. An exultant Malvolio declares, "Daylight and champagne discovers not more!"

I will not delay us long with unpacking this scene – a scene that is hilarious in its execution and which overbalances only if we see Sir Toby and company as unworthy of a victory and Malvolio as a figure deserving of compassion rather than contempt. Personally, as I have pointed out before, I have difficulty with what I regard as such misplaced compassion. Malvolio is odious – a killjoy and a spoil-sport. Yes, he is loyal to Olivia when others are not; yes, he seeks to keep some semblance of order in her household. But the fantasies that we overhear him indulging in (and, mark you, *before* the plot laid for him takes effect) are not those of orderly housekeeping or loyal stewardship but, at best, the petty vengeance of a small-minded retainer and, at worst, the ravings of a power-hungry misanthrope. And am I not right to see here a collection of Brits – Tobys and Andrews and Marys – subverting the affectations of a hopelessly Italianate household? Thomas Nashe, in *Have with you to Saffron Walden* makes famous fun of Spenser's humorless friend Gabriel Harvey for his Italianate affectations before the

Queen on the occasion of her visit to Audley End a few years before. The truth-tellers of England are once again at work on exploding the affectations of Italy....

Illyria, we should note once again, is a mixture of Italy (Orsino, Olivia, Viola) and England (Aguecheek, Belch), or rather a riotous England embedded in a romantic Italy. *The Comedy of Errors* is set in a Mediterranean world, though it too has its farcical core and its romantic frame.

The relationship of plot to subplot of course embodies a dynamic related to the one that we see at work in the *Henry IV* plays and *Henry V*, where the subplot makes fun of set assumptions about honor, and where the lesser folks imitate absurdly the actions of their leaders. “On, on, on, on, on, to the breach, to the breach,” cries the disloyal and vapid Bardolph following Henry V’s grand speech at Harfleur. “What is honor? A word. What is in that word honor?... Air – a trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died a Wednesday” – thus Falstaff, as Henry IV’s army prepares to do battle against Hotspur and the Douglas. It does not necessarily undermine the main plot, but causes us to define and redefine our terms, to accept nothing at face value, to ask for the reality behind mere appearances.

But I wander a long way from my text. As we enter the third act, the stage is set for a series of confusions, which will be played out in the remainder of the play, to remarkable effect.

## LECTURE FOUR

At the end of his efforts to interpret the letter that Maria has written and that purports to come from Olivia, Malvolio declares, “Daylight and champaign discovers not more!” Soon, as we noted last time, daylight and champaign will be replaced by a dark room: Malvolio will be declared mad. Says Sir Toby, “Why, thou hast put him in such a dream, that when the image of it leaves him he must run mad.” Malvolio’s supposed madness gives concrete expression to what is surely a central theme of *Twelfth Night*: the shifting shapes of personality, and the extreme difficulty of pinning characters down to a firm and definable place. The lovers themselves shift with the sea, and they move through a series of self-generated errors and misunderstandings. As Ruth Nevo puts it, “no play of Shakespeare’s is launched with greater dispatch into its vortex of truth-discovering deception than this.”

When John Manningham, studying law at the Middle Temple, described the Feb. 2, 1602, performance of *Twelfth Night* at the Inns of Court, the first recorded performance, he wrote, “At our feast we had a play called Twelve night or what you will, much like the comedy of errors or Menechmi in plautus...” It is interesting that he seizes on this aspect of the play, since Plautus’s play of twins certainly lies behind the figures of Viola and Sebastian, and the confinement of Malvolio, but barely figures in the first half of the play at all. I want now to turn now to the second half.

Latin theatre was popular in the Renaissance. The *Menaechmi*, of Plautus (250-184 BC), a play of mistaken identities, had been performed on a couple of occasions at the English court (for example 1577 and 1583, according to Leah Scragg), and Shakespeare modeled the central plot of *The Comedy of Errors* on it, adding a second pair of twins. A translation by William Warner came out in 1595 (see Arden edition p.xxv): Shakespeare may have read it in manuscript. More likely, he had done the play at school in Stratford.

The fact that Shakespeare comes back to this play of Plautus inevitably causes us to contemplate the connections with *The Comedy of Errors*. Is *Twelfth Night*, the only other Shakespeare play that deals with misunderstandings arising from the confusion of twins, in some sense a rewriting of its predecessor?

In Plautus’s play, a merchant of Syracuse loses one of his twin sons in Epidamnum, where he is raised by a local merchant. Years later, the other son returns to Epidamnum

to find him. The two sons are mistaken for one another, and a whole sequence of misunderstandings takes place, culminating in a declaration by the wife of the Epidamnum twin that her husband is crazy. She calls in a doctor to drive out the madness. Finally the twins arrive on the stage at the same time and all is discovered.

While Plautus's play is relatively simple, Shakespeare seizes on the confusion that arises from the invasion of identity. He moves his action to Ephesus, a city well known, ever since the time of St. Paul, as the home of witches. The misunderstandings that arise are accordingly attributed either to witchcraft (by the visitors from Syracuse) or madness (by the local inhabitants). Though *The Comedy of Errors* is best described as a farce set in a romance frame, there is a distinctly unsettling quality to the loss of identity that the twins suffer because the people around them no longer recognize them for what they are. The confusion is, to use my earlier terms, one in which sameness replaces analogy: to the other inhabitants of Ephesus, the two twins become one and the same person. The misprision of the Ephesians is transferred to the victim and labeled madness.

Though madness is much talked about in *The Comedy of Errors*, as it is in such obvious contexts as *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, the word, with its variants, occurs more frequently in *Twelfth Night* than in any other Shakespeare play. Malvolio is trapped into madness: he plays out, in more elaborate form, the fate reserved for Plautus's Menaechmus of Epidamnum, and repeated by Shakespeare's Antipholus of Ephesus, who is labeled as mad by his wife, bound, and subjected to the ministrations of Doctor Pinch (see Act 4 of that play). Sebastian, mistaken for Viola, and Viola, mistaken by Antonio for Sebastian, suffer some of the misunderstandings that Plautus built into his play: when Antonio gives Sebastian his purse and then asks for it back from Viola, he is essentially repeating an event in *The Comedy of Errors*, which is in turn derived from Plautus.

But there are two fundamental differences between *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*. First, the errors in the latter play are, as I have already suggested, mostly self-generated: they arise because the characters make choices (Maria and Sir Toby *mislead* Malvolio; Viola creates confusion because she *chooses* to assume a disguise). Thus a play of chance is replaced by a play in which the imagination creates its own confusion. Second, the twins in *Twelfth Night* are of different sexes, and Viola's crossing of gender lines creates sexual confusion of a quite different kind from that generated in *The Comedy of Errors*. Shakespeare's other great play of confused identity, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, also uses a device essentially external to character, namely magic.

*The Comedy of Errors* is a play primarily (though not exclusively) about men. The love of man and woman is a matter of secondary interest. Indeed the only romantic relationship in the play is the incipient love between Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse, to which I will return in a moment. In *Twelfth Night*, however, love is a central concern. *The Comedy of Errors* is about relationships already formed; *Twelfth Night*, like its immediate predecessors *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, is about relationships in the process of formation.

But the story of Viola, Orsino and Olivia really has its origins not directly in Plautus but in a play performed in Siena in 1531 and following Plautus at a distance, entitled *Gl'ingannati* (the mistaken ones). Leah Scragg, who writes lucidly about the connection, summarizes the plot of the Italian play as follows:

This play concerns the amorous adventures of a young woman who, having been separated from her brother during the sack of Rome, and lodged in a convent by her father, has run away from the sisters to enter the service of a man she loves disguised as a page, only to be employed by him as emissary to the lady he wishes to marry. In executing her master's commission, the heroine becomes the object of her rival's affections, and is extricated from the triangular relationship she has unwittingly created only by the appearance of her brother, who is mistakenly afforded an opportunity to impose his own attentions on his sister's suitor.

The play was adapted as a novella by Giraldi Cinthio, known to Shakespeare and a source for *Othello*, and by Barnabe Riche. Riche's story, known as *Apolonius and Silla*, was published in *Riche His Farewell to Militarie Profession* (1581). Riche has the young lady shipwrecked at the beginning – and she enters the service of the man she is pursuing and who has previously spurned her love.

In the Italian play and in Riche, we are dealing with siblings, but, as we have seen, in *Twelfth Night* and *The Comedy of Errors* they are twins, “with all the divisible indivisibility which that traditionally mysterious relationship implies,” as Scragg puts it. In *The Comedy of Errors*, the two brothers are in effect drawn together by mysterious forces – or so we sense. Something similar seems to happen also in *Twelfth Night*: Shakespeare, as we have seen, is frequently interested in mysterious powers bringing people together and keeping them apart.

Scragg enumerates some of the parallels between the two plays. In both we have a shipwreck, with all the implications of fearful life-crossings that such things imply in Shakespeare (*The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello* all have dangerous sea-crossings or shipwrecks, and *Pericles* has more than one) and the contrast of formless water (a place of shape-changing and magic) versus solid land. It was, by the way, a stroke of genius that caused Trevor Nunn to set his movie version of *Twelfth Night* in Cornwall, a place where the sea is never far away, and the shots of the seashore, or of the sea-girt St. Michael's Mount, here serving as the palace of Orsino, help remind us of the turbulent identities of the people who inhabit the maritime Illyria.

Antipholus of Syracuse in *The Comedy of Errors* is lodged at the Centaur, Sebastian in *Twelfth Night* at the Elephant. Sebastian sets out to “see the relics” of the town (3.3.19) (a nice example of early tourism), while Antipholus says he will “view the manners of the town / Peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings” (1.2.11-13). Like Antonio, Sebastian is accosted by a servant (Feste in 4.1.1ff), invited to the house of a lady he has not met (4.1.1) and addressed fondly by a woman he does not know (Olivia at 4.1.50), finally rediscovering himself and finding a marriage partner. He questions his own sanity and, at the end, he is saluted as a ghost (“If spirits can assume both form and suit,” says Viola,

“You come to fright us,” 5.1.233-6). There is a major mix-up with money, as in *The Comedy of Errors*. Antonio, required to explain himself to the Duke, resembles Egeon, the father in *The Comedy of Errors*, in his narrative (5.1.74ff). As with Egeon, he has been drawn to an alien town in his search for a young man, only to be repudiated by him in his hour of need.

In many ways *The Comedy of Errors* seems the quarry from which Shakespeare drew his material for an entire career as a comic playwright. When Adriana and her sister Luciana discuss the proper role of a wife in the second act of this play, they begin a line of thought about spousal relations that blossoms into an entire play – *The Taming of the Shrew*. When, later, Antipholus of Syracuse woos Luciana, he falls into a mode of poetic speech, a kind of sonnet-like discourse, that Shakespeare explores in greater detail in *Love’s Labor’s Lost*, a play that looks directly at the relationship between poetry and love, and again in *Romeo and Juliet*. And if the magic of Ephesus is but an illusion of the misguided, it becomes real in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Running through all of these plays, and others besides, is a growing interest in the nature of love and its effect on those it touches. As we have seen, the Sonnets serve as a gloss on the exploration of love in these plays and in the mature comedies. So does Shakespeare’s most mysterious poem, *The Phoenix and the Turtle*.

*Love’s Labor’s Lost* calls into question the reliability of language, an issue that reappears on the table at the dead center of *Twelfth Night*. In 3.1, Viola and Feste come together, meeting on the street, as it were. These two figures, we recall, are unique and in some sense privileged in that they move freely between the two houses – Orsino’s and Olivia’s. Each in a way is a go-between. The topic of their conversational encounter is language. The scene begins with a quibble:

VIOLA. Save thee, friend, and thy music! Dost thou live by thy tabor?

CLOWN. No, sir, I live by the church.

VIOLA. Art thou a churchman?

CLOWN. 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.... (3.1.1-7)

“A sentence is but a chev’ril glove to a good wit – how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward,” says Feste. “Words,” he adds, “are grown so false, I am loath to prove reason with them..”

Of Olivia, Feste says, “I am not indeed her fool, but her corrupter of words.”

It is not new, this anxiety about language. The Princess, in *Love’s Labor’s Lost*, assessing the sincerity of the young men’s expressions of love, conveyed to her and her ladies in writing, asserts:

We have received your letters, full of love;

Your favours, the ambassadors of love;

And in our maiden council, rated them

At courtship, pleasant jest, and courtesy,  
 As bombast and as lining to the time;  
 But more devout than this in our respects  
 Have we not been.... (5.2.765-771)

In vain Dumain replies, “Our letters, madam, show’d much more than jest.” The age was itself profoundly ambivalent about language, particularly language intended to persuade, and about ornament, the natural accompaniment of persuasive language. Such language has the power to seduce, as George Herbert and others make clear.

In this play, language is a poor mediator between Orsino and Olivia, indeed a misguided and misleading force in the hands, and the mouth, of Orsino himself, whose rhetorical excesses about the nature of his love for Olivia really own serve to create barriers between him and the rest of the world. It is not language that stirs Olivia, but ocular proof. It is *seeing* Viola that stirs her love.

We have just come from the supreme case of words misleading: the love-letter that Maria creates to catch Malvolio makes her a corrupter of words of a different kind: her palpable improbabilities catch the attention of a self-absorbed Malvolio and he is readily convinced. So perhaps we should say that, in this play at least, words composed in a kind of sincerity (if that is what Orsino reveals) go nowhere, whereas words intended to mislead do so all too effectively.

Questions about reading or listening (Viola conveying Orsino’s messages; Maria catching Malvolio) are accompanied by questions about seeing. It is a disguised Viola who appeals to Olivia, and the fact that her identity is hidden makes for a kind of amatory deadlock that collapses into various kinds of unrequited love. While direct sight of people in this play seems to have a more profound and valid effect than mere words about them, as Viola’s effect on Olivia testifies (or, for that matter, Viola’s effect on Orsino), Viola is still captive within her disguise.

As the third act opens, we are moving, in fact, into a situation in the households of Olivia and Orsino in which even the old uncomfortable consensus is beginning to fall apart. We know from experience that the old, unsatisfactory community with which Shakespeare’s comedies customarily open has to be swept away before it can be replaced with a restructured community. This is in effect the process that we now embark on – intensifying into the (customary) near-chaos of Act 4. (Consider in this connection the parallel with *The Comedy of Errors*: the arrival at Antipholus of Ephesus’s house at the beginning of Act 3, where Antipholus of Syracuse in effect usurps his twin brother’s position, is the turning-point which leads in due course and through a series of misprisions already set in motion, to the chaos of Act 4.)

As for Viola, she ends this initial episode in Act 3 by meditating on Feste’s power:

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. (3.1.61-69)

The little speech is a reminder of the extent to which Viola, in her generosity of spirit, is an empathetic personality. She feels so strongly for those around her – for Orsino suffering in self-delusion or in love; for Olivia confused about her surroundings. Above all, her wandering back and forth between the houses, for all that it is conducted in disguise and against her better interests, is a wandering of the free. The other characters are caught in themselves – Orsino in his self-made Petrarchan prison, Olivia watering her chamber round like a caged bear, Malvolio sick of self-love, Sir Andrew tied to Sir Toby and Sir Toby tied to his bottle and to Sir Andrew's ATM card. These are self-regarding prisoners: Viola and Feste see with wider vision.

Feste is, as we readily recognize, one in a line of Shakespearean fools, and perhaps most like Touchstone in *As You Like It*. The part was probably played by Robert Armin, who may also have played Touchstone and gone on to play the Fool in *Lear*. His predecessor was Will Kempe, a comedian whose broader style was evident in such characters as Dogberry in *Much Ado* or Launce in *Two Gentlemen*. Touchstone and Feste have a melancholy wisdom beyond mere foolery. "This professional jester," remarks Welsford (381) of characters like this, "is no longer a mere butt or foil to the normal members of the community, but his detachment enables him to be their critic. The laughter becomes more subtle. It is no longer caused by the mere juxtaposition of normal and abnormal; it is caused by the incongruity of the servant being in reality stronger than the master, the madman wiser than the man of sense." In short, then, Feste represents a kind of permanent presence of misrule in the household, a reality check for the other characters. As such, he is both a part of the household and detached from it, both a member of the community and privileged by his separation.

Viola's meeting with Olivia in 3.1 brings Olivia's apologies – for the ring and the embarrassment it may have caused Viola. Now, by the way, we understand why Malvolio took his mission in 2.2 in such ill part: *he* wants Olivia and saw Viola as a rival. He is not trying to keep a mourning household but trying to hold on to his advantage, as he sees it.

Olivia is confused, emotionally overwrought. First she tells Viola that she will hold off: "I will not have you, / And yet when wit and youth is come to harvest / Your wife is like to reap a proper man" (3.1.133-135). Like the speaker in Shakespeare's sonnets, Olivia wishes her beloved on someone else (one is reminded of Viola's declaration that Olivia should marry and have children when she first sees her face in 1.5). We go through an exchange in which each party emphasizes her disguise and her separation from her surroundings:

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. (3.1.140-143)

Viola's formulation, "That you do think you are not what you are," may seem an odd displacement, but Viola is presumably suggesting that Olivia thinks she is in love with a man. As for Olivia, used to dominating others, to running a household, to keeping even the Duke himself at bay by her disdain, she cannot understand the emotions that she feels in Viola's presence, though she perhaps understands all too well that Viola spurns her much as she has been spurning Orsino. The very indifference fuels her passion. And so she bursts out in a declaration of love, brought on, we note, by Cesario's very scorn:

O, what a deal of scorn looks beautiful  
 In the contempt and anger of his lip!  
 A murd'rous guilt shows not itself more soon  
 Than love that would seem hid: love's night is noon.  
 Cesario, by the roses of the spring,  
 By maidhood, honour, truth, and every thing,  
 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. (3.1.147-158)

The declaration of love is rendered in couplets: it is almost as though the word "noon," the inevitable conclusion of the lines before it, sets the couplets going: the very regularity of the verse is a sign of the force of the emotion.

And so now we have three cases of unrequited love – Olivia's for Viola, Viola's for Orsino, Orsino's for Olivia. Viola scorns Olivia who scorns Orsino. The pressure is on for the rediscovery of Sebastian, the shedding of the disguise, and the turning of this love triangle into a square....

The hilarious episode of the duel again depends on the corruption of words, specifically on the deceptive conveyance of messages between Sir Andrew and Viola. Sir Andrew begins the process. Says Sir Toby, sending him off to write a challenge:

Taunt him with the licence of ink. If thou thou'st him some thrice, it shall not be amiss, and as many lies as will lie in thy sheet of paper, although the sheet were big enough for the bed of Ware in England, set it down. (3.2.42-46)

And we are hurried off to see Malvolio cross-gartered.

But not before we return to Sebastian and Antonio – a welcome reminder (much needed at this point) that Sebastian has not ridden out of the play permanently. Antonio shows huge generosity in treating Sebastian as he does – one of the few people in the play to do so, to anyone – especially when we learn that he is *persona non grata* in Illyria. He gives his purse to Sebastian, setting us up for a Plautan misunderstanding, and Sebastian heads off to see the sights. Little does he know what he is letting himself in for.

Olivia is a girl in love as 3.4 opens

I have sent after him, he says he'll come:  
How shall I feast him? What bestow of him? (3.4.1-2)

Perhaps it is hard for her really to attend to Malvolio, but his garb and his conversation are as attention-getting as they are incomprehensible. Indeed, his quoting from a letter that Olivia has never seen (she does not even know that he is quoting, of course) leads to the most abject and complete collapse of language that we have in the play. The arrival of Cesario calls her away, but Sir Toby continues the deception:

Come, we'll have him in a dark room and bound. My niece is already in the belief that he's mad. We may carry it thus, for our pleasure and his penance, till our very pastime, tired out of breath, prompt us to have mercy on him; at which time we will bring the device to the bar and crown thee for a finder of madmen. (3.4.136-143)

Sir Andrew's idiotic challenge separates us from the latest interview of Viola and Olivia. It is brief and poignant. Says Olivia:

Here, wear this jewel for me; 'tis my picture.  
Refuse it not; it hath no tongue to vex you.  
And I beseech you come again to-morrow.  
What shall you ask of me that I'll deny,  
That honour sav'd may upon asking give? (3.4.210-214).

“Nothing but this, your true love for my master,” replies Viola. But, says Olivia, “How with mine honour may I give him that / Which I have given to you?” Says Viola in reply, “I will acquit thee.”

Why does Viola return to Olivia's house so willingly? Is she driven by her love for Orsino? Is she perhaps motivated by a certain determination to succeed? More likely, is she driven by compassion for Olivia? This little exchange here makes me think that she is discovering a somewhat different role for herself, a little bit like Rosalind's promise to Phebe in *As You Like It* that she will love her under certain conditions (“I will marry you if ever I marry woman” 5.2.112-113). Rosalind has already told Silvius, who loves Phebe, “Say this to her: that if she love me, I charge her to love thee; if she will not, I will never have her unless thou entreat for her” 4.2.69-71. Viola, as I read the situation here,

sees a possibility that, if she can attract Olivia to her, she can in due course redirect those affections to Orsino. In other words, she can serve as a kind of proxy for Orsino.

“A fiend like thee might bear my soul to hell,” she adds, with unconscious allusion perhaps to what is happening to Malvolio even as she speaks, and picking up on the imagery of devils that is scattered through the latter half of the play.

In the duel, no letter is used, but rather the shuttle anti-diplomacy of Sir Toby. His goal? Our amusement and his (because he is in league with the audience in some measure), and the showing-up of Sir Andrew Aguecheek, with whom he is evidently becoming a little bored, and who is clearly giving him more trouble than it’s worth.

Viola is a rather unimpressive opponent for Sir Andrew, but the arrival, suddenly of Antonio, generosity itself, changes the picture: he breaks up the fight almost before it can start. But the officers are in pursuit and seize Antonio in turn (the outside world has suddenly invaded the self-contained household of Olivia), and this leads to further misprision as Viola fails to respond to Antonio’s need for money as Sebastian might be expected to do. And of course Antonio uses Viola’s brother’s name to refer to her.

“He named Sebastian,” says Viola,

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. O, if it prove,  
Tempests are kind, and salt waves fresh in love! (3.4.389-394)

Can she pass through this glass? Can she somehow reach her brother?

Sebastian now enters a Plautan world, as Olivia intervenes to save him from Sir Toby, dismissing Sir Toby in the process,

Will it be ever thus? Ungracious wretch,  
Fit for the mountains and the barbarous caves,  
Where manners ne'er were preach'd! Out of my sight!  
Be not offended, dear Cesario.  
Rudesby, be gone! (4.1.46-50)

(This last is perhaps addressed to Sir Andrew.) Thus Olivia breaks up another piece of the uneasy harmony in her household, but replaces a reticent Viola with a willing, if perplexed, Sebastian. “Are all the people mad?” he asks, as bewildered as Antipholus of Syracuse in the earlier play; and he adds, “Or I am mad, or else this is a dream.” (Cf. Antipholus of Syracuse: “Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell? / Sleeping or waking, mad or well-advised” (*Comedy of Errors* 2.2.213-214).

Act 4, Scene 2 is focused on Malvolio, about whom more later. Malvolio clinging to his prison bars is in some sense an emblem for the entire play, at least before the grand recognition scene of Act 5. Feste, in the role of Sir Topas, taunts him, and is funny even as he does so, but Sir Toby grows weary of the joke, and sees himself as somehow caught in a sequence of events he can no longer control:

To him in thine own voice, and bring me word how thou find'st him. I would we were well rid of this knavery. If he may be conveniently deliver'd, I would he were; for I am now so far in offence with my niece that I cannot pursue with any safety this sport to the upshot. (4.2.68-73)

For Feste too the joke has worn thin. Back with Malvolio in his own person, he promises Malvolio ink and paper so that he may write to his mistress. This decision itself obviously compromises both Sir Toby and Maria, and so it is just as well that in Act 5 we discover that the two have married (if Maria and Toby have been such an item from the beginning, this throws their taunting of Sir Andrew in 1.3 into a new light). Maria is thereby safe from Olivia's wrath and Sir Toby is presumably intending to turn over a new leaf.

For the moment, though, Malvolio gives concrete representation to a psychological reality that runs all through the play. If the image of Malvolio clinging to his prison bars is indeed a legitimate picture, it might also be an image for Olivia, caught in the prison of her grief, or like Orsino, trapped in the golden ropes of Petrarchan love, or like Sir Toby, a hopeless layabout, or like Sir Andrew, as captive as a tame bear. While Viola is in a sense a free spirit, she too is captive in her boy's clothing.

In a way (though I would not push the parallel too far!), Malvolio resembles Gloucester in *King Lear*. Gloucester's blindness gives concrete realization in the sub-plot to the psychological blindness of Lear in the main plot: the literal imprisonment of Malvolio resembles the metaphorical imprisonment and isolation of the other characters. This paralleling of main plot and subplot, so subtly exploited by Shakespeare in many of his plays and brought to perfection in the character of Falstaff, is here at work again, this time with the Falstaff-like Sir Toby, whose exploits are at one and the same time an expression of underlying festival (something that must in due course be abandoned) and an examination of the deception and disguise that predominates in the main plot as well.

## LECTURE FIVE

I ended my previous lecture by focusing on Act 4, an act that belongs to Malvolio and to Sebastian. We turn now to Act 5. Act 4 actually begins, you will recall, with Feste coming in search of Sebastian and encountering him in much the same way as he encounters Viola at the opening of Act 3 and will encounter Orsino at the beginning of Act 5. (In fact, Feste's role in the play is defined in part by encounters with each of the play's four lovers in turn, beginning with his meeting with Olivia at the beginning of 1.5, then Viola, then Sebastian, and finally Orsino. He has criticism for each.).

Sebastian proves immediately that he does not lack that "little thing" that Viola declares she lacks right before the duel in Act 3: when Sir Andrew strikes him he returns the blow, and only Olivia's intervention prevents further bloodshed with Sir Toby. Sir Toby is firmly rebuked by Olivia and in effect driven off into her disfavor. The scene ends with Sebastian going off with Olivia.

It is worth pointing out that the end of the first scene of Act 4, with Olivia's departure with Sebastian, is subject to various interpretations, and is one of the many episodes in *Twelfth Night* that are heavily dependent on directorial decision. Does Olivia make overtures to Sebastian that are clearly sexual? Or might Sebastian interpret her behavior not as an expression of sexual interest, but as an expression of interest in his service – much as Viola was accepted into Orsino's household and had hoped, briefly, to be accepted into Olivia's? "O that I served that lady!" exclaimed Viola in 1.2. Is this what is happening here to her alter ego Sebastian? In a sense the question is academic: when we next meet Sebastian in 4.3 he is on his way to his wedding.

The three scenes of Act 4 form a pair of brackets around a core episode: we begin with Sebastian, switch to Malvolio, and return to Sebastian. Malvolio's imprisonment offers an absurd parallel to, and a commentary on, Sebastian's sudden contract of marriage. We recall that Feste said to Viola, back in 3.1, "The Lady Olivia has no folly. She will keep no fool, sir, till she be married, and fools are as like husbands as pilchards are to herrings, the husband's the bigger."

But as Malvolio is imprisoned and deprived of light in scene 2, Sebastian seems to emerge into light at the opening of scene 3, almost as though his spirit has been released *because* Malvolio's is held in check:

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. (4.3.1-4)

Sebastian is part of the new order, the reconstituted community that will arise from the ashes of the old, flawed community. Act 4, Scene 2 is focused on Malvolio, a part of the old order now humbled and in disarray. Feste, as Sir Topas, is amusing in his taunting of the steward, but he seems to grow weary of the joke, which is already out of hand. Sir Toby, who has drawn on Sebastian, has been dismissed by Olivia with fighting words, and Toby has also grown weary of the joke, which has spiraled out of control: "I would we were well rid of this knavery. If he may be conveniently delivered, I would he were..." (4.2.69-71).

Returning to Malvolio in his own person, rather than the character of Sir Topas, Feste, in promising Malvolio ink and paper, opens up the probability of Olivia's discovery of the deception practiced on Malvolio and the end of this burned-out joke. No wonder Sir Toby and Maria get married, thereby removing themselves from Olivia's retribution. It is left to Fabian, a minor character about whose fate we are less likely to be concerned, to explain in Act 5 the circumstances of the deception.

As I suggested earlier, Malvolio gives concrete representation to a psychological reality that runs all through the play: the image of Malvolio clinging to his prison bars is also an image of Olivia, caught in the prison of her grief, or Orsino, trapped in the golden ropes of Petrarchan love, or Sir Toby, a hopeless layabout, or Sir Andrew, as captive as a tame bear. Even Viola is a captive of her disguise. Malvolio, I suggested, resembles Gloucester in *King Lear*: his blindness gives explicit expression to the psychological blindness of Lear in the main plot. Shakespeare develops this paralleling of main plot by subplot primarily in the two parts of *Henry IV*, where Falstaff and his exploits provide running commentary on the main action. In some respects Sir Toby is a re-creation of Falstaff and his holiday sentiments. Thus such episodes as Sir Toby's incitement of Sir Andrew and Viola-Cesario by a kind of shuttle diplomacy parallel Viola's story, in this case her shuttling between Orsino's house and Olivia's. And Malvolio's unrequited love is a comic version of that of Olivia and of Orsino.

Sir Toby functions as a great manipulator in this play from the outset – first with Sir Andrew, then with Viola, and above all with Malvolio. His manipulations get bigger and bigger as the play progresses, until ultimately they implode. The cause of the implosion is Viola's other half, Sebastian.

We make a mistake if we see Malvolio with 20<sup>th</sup>-century (not to say 21<sup>st</sup>-century) eyes, as a victim for whom we must show sympathy because it is P.C. to sympathize with the underdog. Yes, he merits a certain amount of our concern, but what matters most is that he has brought his misfortune on himself, by his overweening pride, his egotism, his love

of power, his unwillingness to join the world, to make common cause with others. In this regard we are all Malvolios, and his showing-up is our showing-up.

Of course, there are less benign constructions that we can put on the discomfiture of Olivia's steward. From the beginning of the play Shakespeare is at pains, for whatever reason, to make clear the distinction between masters and servants. In 1.2, in one of several exchanges of money in this play, Viola gives the Sea Captain money to help her disguise herself; "I'll pay thee bounteously," she says), and, in an access of *noblesse oblige*, offers a reading of the lower classes that only one of more distinguished background would be inclined to utter:

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 will believe thou hast a mind that suits  
With this thy fair and outward character. (1.2.47-51)

She "thous" the Captain throughout, and he "yous" her in response.

At the end of Act 1, and in response to Viola's pouring out her heart in the willow-cabin speech, Olivia's question seems almost irrelevant: "What is your parentage?" And Viola replies: "Above my fortunes, yet my state is well: / I am a gentleman." Olivia in fact is a step ahead of us: her question clearly signals that her sexual attraction to Viola/Cesario has caused her thoughts to turn to marriage. (Orsino, thinking of marriage in 5.1, reassures his listeners in similar terms about the nobility of Sebastian's blood, and hence Viola's: 5.1.262.) Predictably, Viola refuses Olivia's proffered tip: "I am no fee'd post, lady; keep your purse."

Not so Feste, the perpetual outsider. No aristocrat he. He needs sixpence to sing to Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in 2.3, takes money from Orsino under rather more ambiguous circumstances following his song "Come away, come away death" (2.4), collects from Viola at the opening of Act 3, from Sebastian at the opening of Act 4, and Orsino at the opening of Act 5.

And if there were any doubts at all that Malvolio might make a suitable match for Olivia, we have Sir Toby's memorable confrontation with Malvolio in 2.3. "Art any more than a steward?" asks Sir Toby, insinuatingly. "Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" (Sebastian's acceptance of Antonio's purse in 3.3, one of the more creaking plot devices in the play, is clearly a gift rather than a payment – the sort of thing the previously well-to-do might expect of their fellows: Antonio and Sebastian "you" one another throughout the scene.)

With the lines between servants and masters so clearly defined (Maria is the only exception: some readings make her a companion to Olivia, others a chamber-maid; historically the former is more likely), one could read the play in class terms: a collection of decadent, seldom entirely sober upper-class representatives of the privately wealthy

are momentarily threatened by their trusted servants, who, in the person of Malvolio, get ideas above their station (the notion that the Steward might marry the Mistress) and are in due course humiliated and put down. Certainly the politics of the power struggle between Sir Toby and Malvolio have their intrinsic interest. It is indeed true that Shakespearean comedy, whether or not it follows the notoriously conservative dynamic of pastoral, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *As You Like It*, or has other settings, as in *Twelfth Night*, tends to deal with threats to the existing social hierarchy which are ultimately put down. Thus Hermia's defiance of the laws of marriage at the opening of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* unleashes a kind of chaotic magic at mid-play, only to have it absorbed into the pre-existing social hierarchy, now made flexible enough to absorb and co-opt the very forces that threatened to engulf the social hierarchy in the first place. The Mechanicals, of course, provide a class parody of such subversion, absorbed in turn into the consensus through the power of art: they *act out* subversion under the auspices of the hierarchy itself. But the whole point about *Misrule* is that it never turns into *Rule*: when the feasting is over, servants go back to behaving like servants, and masters like masters.

Northrop Frye, as we have noted earlier, divides Shakespearean comedy into three stages: a rule-bound, anti-comic "old" society, followed by confusion and loss of identity, followed by a third stage in which the confusion of the second stage is resolved, generally through the institution of marriage. One can, of course, also see this as a process of growing up: a stage in which we are subject to the apparently arbitrary rules of others, followed by a stage of self-discovery, followed by a mature stage in which we make the rules. One can also interpret it as a counter-revolutionary process, in which instability is followed by incipient revolution, and society responds by broadening its parameters just sufficiently to co-opt and integrate into itself the previously revolutionary impulses.

But if the struggle of Malvolio and Sir Toby is a class struggle, Feste is on the wrong side; and there are other complications inherent in an attempt to foreground such a reading. I mention this approach to the character of Malvolio in part in the interests of full disclosure. It is a reading given particular sanction in the egalitarian environment of the modern theatre (and many modern productions exploit it), but it is at odds with the more hierarchical turn of mind of the Elizabethans. More time and space would be needed to tease out the specifics of that hierarchy, but suffice it to say that the economics and politics of the households of the Elizabethan nobility were complex: servants destined to remain servants jostled with nobility cast as servants, who dealt with nobility acting as nobility. And in amongst all this, the second person singular and the second person plural played a complex role as social indicators.

As Act 5 opens, the letter is written. It is Fabian who carries it, not Feste, who is, after all, a freelancer rather than a salaried servant (hence his freedom to move between the two households earlier in the play): Fabian will not allow Feste to see the letter, perhaps because Fabian wishes to maximize his leverage in dealing with the inevitable débacle that will follow when the true story is revealed. Sir Toby, of course, is needed elsewhere, as bleeding evidence of Sebastian's skill with a cudgel. And the newly-married Maria has disappeared from sight, or at least from hearing: she may not even be present in Act 5.

We have noted already that something causes Orsino to put on his hat and coat and make his way from his palace to the house of Olivia. His motive remains a mystery: like Viola arriving on the shores of Illyria, he seems driven by some power (though, just possibly, Viola) to undertake the walk from the one place to the other. Shakespeare of course needs him in Act 5, and that may be the only explanation of his presence that we can provide. He comes, we might note, from an oddly sterile and inhospitable palace into a place that is at least full of life: Orsino and Viola might as well be alone in his palace for all that we ever learn about anyone else in his household. Indeed, it is Orsino's solitude that surely comes across to us most strongly here (as we have noted, a kind of spiritual solitude holds most of the characters in this play apart from one another). But the house of Olivia is at least full of activity, increasingly from people who arrive from outside. Perhaps, in fact, Orsino's crossing of the distance between the two houses signifies a kind of breaking out of the bonds of self-regard and narcissism.

Antonio, the first person, after Viola herself, to parachute into Olivia's household – to rescue Viola from Sir Andrew in 3.4 – now appears conveniently on the stage, to be recognized as “notable pirate” and “salt-water thief” by Orsino (remember Illyria's association with piracy), and as her deliverer by Viola. But Antonio in effect looks past Viola to recognize her as Sebastian, claiming that he has been with Sebastian constantly for the past three months, a statement denied by Orsino: “Three months this youth hath tended upon me; / But more of that anon,” because in the meantime Olivia has appeared (“Now heaven walks on earth,” declares Orsino).

But Olivia's appearance on the stage, and consequently her first meeting with Orsino in the entire action of the play, leads immediately to an explosion of hostility, on both sides. We are reminded of Titania and Oberon meeting in the forest in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Both Viola and Orsino talk at once. When Olivia turns to Viola, Viola defers to Orsino:

VIOLA. My lord would speak, my duty hushes me.  
 OLIVIA. If it be aught to the old tune, my lord,  
           It is as fat and fulsome to mine ear  
           As howling after music. (5.1.105-108)

Hardly a conciliatory conversation-opener, especially to one about whose love of music we learned at the very beginning of the play.... Orsino's reaction is immediate:

                                  You uncivil lady,  
 To whose ingrate and unauspicious altars  
 My soul the faithfull'st off'rings hath breath'd out  
 That e'er devotion tender'd – What shall I do? (5.1.110-113)

Orsino still talks like a young man trapped inside a sonnet, and one who believes that he should be given an A just for effort. His anger, violent, sudden, somewhat unexpected, is total. In a glancing reference to Heliodorus's late-Greek romance *Ethiopica*, he cries:

Why should I not, had I the heart to do it,  
 Like to th'Egyptian thief at point of death,  
 Kill what I love? (5.1.115-117)

In Heliodorus, the Egyptian thief in question attempts to kill his beloved when faced with certain death himself, in order to prevent her from falling into the hands of his enemies. In Orsino's mind, then, he is the thief and Olivia is the beloved. But, in an interesting turn, Orsino thinks better of such an idea:

Since you to non-regardance cast my faith,  
 And that I partly know the instrument  
 That screws me from my true place in your favour,  
 Live you the marble-breasted tyrant still.  
 But this your minion, whom I know you love,  
 And whom, by heaven, I swear I tender dearly,  
 Him will I tear out of that cruel eye,  
 Where he sits crowned in his master's spite. (5.1.119-126)

So he will rewrite Heliodorus by killing the object of his beloved's affections rather than his beloved herself. But will he?

Come, boy with me; my thoughts are ripe in mischief:  
 I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love,  
 To spite a raven's heart within a dove. (5.1.128-129)

"Thus Olivia hurls discretion to the winds in her pursuit of Cesario and in her precipitous marriage, which, added to Cesario's smooth and rubious lip brings out an excess of masculine aggressiveness in Orsino," suggests Ruth Nevo (212). "The speech ... in which this is expressed is as packed and as menacing as anything in the tragedies still to be written.... It is a dangerous moment. It is the moment of incipient disaster, of incipient tragic possibility, for which the remedies in comic plots provide a providential salvation." In short, we need this moment when all bets are off, the disorder and disintegration are total, and chaos might come again....

But who is Orsino's beloved: the dove-like woman with the heart of a raven, or the boy, now called, suddenly "the lamb *that I do love*"? The image from Heliodorus remains, but the identity of the beloved shifts. I earlier described Orsino as resembling the speaker of Sonnet 144, caught between two loves, "of comfort and despair."

The better angel is a man right fair,  
 The worser spirit a woman colored ill.

Thus the raven-like "woman colored ill" is rejected in favor of the "man right fair." As for that man, Cesario/Viola is ready even to endure death for Orsino's sake: "And I most jocund, apt, and willingly, / To do you rest, a thousand deaths would die."

And Viola turns from Olivia and follows Orsino as he prepares to leave the stage. But even thoughts of murder can be deflected: when Olivia addresses Viola as “husband,” she gets even Orsino’s attention. And of course she backs her assertion up by bringing the priest along to testify that he has performed the marriage.

One interruption follows another, and the audience bounces from crisis to crisis along with the characters on the stage. Now it is Sir Andrew and Sir Toby who appear, both beat about the head by someone they took for Cesario. We note in passing that Sir Toby rounds on Sir Andrew:

SIR ANDREW. I’ll help you, Sir Toby, because we’ll be dressed together.  
 SIR TOBY. Will you help? An ass-head, and a coxcomb, and a knave, a thin-faced knave, a gull? (5.1.204-206)

With Sebastian’s arrival, we are set for the grand recognition scene. But it moves forward with tantalizing slowness. First Sebastian turns to Antonio, standing there with the Officers. “How have you made division of yourself?” asks Antonio in amazement. As for Olivia, her response is simply a heartfelt “Most wonderful!”

And what does it mean, Olivia’s “Most wonderful!”? Is it simply an expression of surprise, or delight at the notion that she may have two young men for the price of one, or even a realization that she has two companions of different genders? Modern productions have played on all three possibilities, most notably Peter Gill’s 1974 RSC production. In this production, Olivia even turns mistakenly to Viola and Orsino to Sebastian before they realize their mistake.

But, before we get lost again in the labyrinths of sexual interchangeability, let’s follow the process forward:

SEBASTIAN. Do I stand there? I never had a brother;  
 Nor can there be that deity in my nature  
 Of here and everywhere. I had a sister  
 Whom the blind waves and surges have devour'd.  
 Of charity, what kin are you to me?  
 What countryman, what name, what parentage?  
 VIOLA. Of Messaline; Sebastian was my father.  
 Such a Sebastian was my brother too;  
 So went he suited to his watery tomb;  
 If spirits can assume both form and suit,  
 You come to fright us. (5.1.224-234)

The moment is magical: the twins seem to be looking at one another through a glass, each afraid that the other is mere reflection, or a mere ghost. We savor the moment. Alexander Leggatt points out interestingly, that this is the only case in Shakespeare where a disguise put on by one character has an objective reality in another [see Nevo, who

points this out]. Sebastian knows that he is real enough, and yet he seems to see only his reflection in the glass, not the sister he has lost. As for Viola, she, who said (3.4.389-390) “I my brother know / But living in my glass,” fears that the self-deception merely continues.

SEBASTIAN. A spirit I am indeed,  
 But am in that dimension grossly clad  
 Which from the womb I did participate.  
 Were you a woman, as the rest goes even,  
 I should my tears let fall upon your cheek,  
 And say 'Thrice welcome, drowned Viola!'  
 VIOLA. My father had a mole upon his brow.  
 SEBASTIAN. And so had mine.  
 VIOLA. And died that day when Viola from her birth  
 Had numb'ed thirteen years.  
 SEBASTIAN. O, that record is lively in my soul!  
 He finished indeed his mortal act  
 That day that made my sister thirteen years. (5.1.234-246)

But Viola, circumspect and slightly distant, still cannot fully believe. We are confronted with a suspended recognition: only when she reassumes her female appearance, puts on her sexuality again, will the recognition be complete:

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 preserv'd to serve this noble Count.  
 All the occurrence of my fortune since  
 Hath been between this lady and this lord. (5.1.247-256)

Philip Edwards calls this moment “the truest thing in *Twelfth Night*.” “It is so much greater,” he adds, “than the ritual of converging lovers.... There was something here to hold on to, when the celebration of achieved love may have wearied Shakespeare.”

While I do not agree with Edwards about the peremptoriness of the revealing of the lovers, I do think it worth reminding ourselves that this play and *Hamlet* were likely written at much the same time, and that it is at least possible to see *Twelfth Night* as closer to *Measure for Measure* than to the earlier more uncomplicated comedies. Even *As You Like It* is characterized by a certain *Weltschmerz*. And this is as good a moment as any to point to another historical truth: it was in August 1596 that Shakespeare's twin son Hamnet, brother to Judith, died in Stratford at the age of 11½.... To what extent is *Twelfth Night*, with its echoes of the sonnets and its meditations on twinship,

Shakespeare's way of working through some of his personal concerns? To what extent do Olivia's grief for a dead brother or Viola's rediscovery of a lost twin brother reflect Shakespeare's own preoccupations three or four years after, when he can perhaps finally write about such things?

But let us return to the text. Leggatt, perceptively, describes this recognition scene as "a freezing of the moment of romantic contemplation, before the practical business of marriage," and he speaks of a happiness that is "stylized and conventional." I am not sure that I would characterize it quite in this way, but certainly there is a kind of separation between the resolution of our geometrical problem (the triangle of lovers becomes a square) and the tribulations of ordinary life that appear to be going on just outside the door. This is, in some sense, happiness delayed – not as in *Love's Labor's Lost*, for a full twelvemonth, but at least until holiday and workday can be reintegrated into a world we recognize. "Not since *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*," Leggatt remarks elsewhere (221), "has there been such emphasis on the pains rather than the pleasures of love."

As for Orsino, the miracle that the speaker of Shakespeare's sonnets seems to wish for has actually occurred right before his eyes: a young man has become a young woman and can be his. "If this be so," he says, "as yet the glass seems true," (i.e. not a distorted glass) "I shall have share in this most happy wreck." It is "a happy wreck" indeed: Orsino was locked in 1.1, Viola in 1.2. She could come to him only in disguise. Now, together in 5.1, they need only make appearance match reality by transforming Viola back into femininity.

Deprived of wild embraces and unalloyed relief, we may admire the careful restraint of this most poetic of meetings, or we may be irritated at a certain coyness; we may savor the moment, or we may see even so momentous an occasion as the meeting of long-lost twins filtered through Shakespeare's skepticism about romance and happy endings.

At the end, says Leah Scraggs, "though a sense of wonder ... pervades the final scene, it is tinged with a wistfulness born of the characters' experience of loss, and of the spectators' awareness of the precariousness of the happiness that has been achieved." If the disguise has drawn Orsino and Olivia out of their isolation, will its removal assure their happiness and that of Viola and Sebastian? Either way, the matter of Viola's clothing takes on huge symbolic importance.

Now Viola adds another crucially important piece of information:

The captain that did bring me first on shore  
Hath my maid's garments. He, upon some action,  
Is now in durance, at Malvolio's suit,  
A gentleman and follower of my lady's. (5.1.272-275)

"Durance" means forced confinement. In short, the Sea Captain we met at the beginning of the play is in jail on a charge brought by none other than Malvolio – he who is himself

imprisoned. The implication is clear: unless Olivia springs Malvolio, and unless Malvolio can spring the captain, Viola cannot spring her maid's garments, and the play cannot come to a satisfactory conclusion....

Stage one, then, is to release Malvolio, forgotten in this collective jollity. The mood shifts. Feste, no longer Sir Topas, reads Malvolio's letter as if he is Malvolio. Olivia entrusts the reading to a more reliable and less excitable reader, Fabian.

As Fabian goes off to bring Malvolio to Olivia, we are provided with a further moment of realignment in the reconciliation of Olivia and Orsino. Says Olivia:

My lord, so please you, these things further thought on,  
To think me as 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. (5.1.315-318)

It is Olivia, ever practical, who thinks about the mechanics of Viola's marriage to Orsino, but, more than that, takes it on as a project. More than *that*: actually proposes it.... And if she has shifted from the role of Orsino's potential wife, she can now become his sister - which, of course, makes Orsino not a predator but, in his way, a replacement for Olivia's dead brother.

Says the Duke in reply, "Madam, I am most apt t' embrace your offer," and, turning to Viola:

Your master quits you; and, for your service done him,  
So much against the mettle of your sex,  
So far beneath your soft and tender breeding,  
And since you call'd me master for so long,  
Here is my hand; you shall from this time be  
You master's mistress. (5.1.320-324)

But the mood shifts again. Now Malvolio stands before the assembled company. His appearance on the stage can evoke different emotions, depending on the directorial decisions to which I alluded earlier. Do we see, as we see in the Branagh version, an utterly humiliated, filthy, bedraggled Malvolio? In that case, it is not wholly trivial or carping to wonder why the room in which Malvolio was confined was quite so filthy, why his clothing has literally come apart at the seams in the course of a few hours, and whether the director does not have an agenda that he plans to carry through regardless of the text.... Malvolio's predicament is obviously unsettling, a dissonant element in a carefully choreographed sequence of recognitions and marital plans. Donald Sinden, playing Malvolio in John Barton's RSC production of 1969, exited through the back of the stage while the other characters left at the end of the play through the front, as though somehow the spirit of Malvolio had to be removed to allow for a happy ending. In Peter Gill's 1974 production, Nicol Williamson fairly tore the collective heart out of the audience in his portrayal of a despairing and desolate Malvolio screaming his exit lines

“I’ll be revenged on the whole pack of you!” So powerful was Antony Sher’s interpretation of the role in Bill Alexander’s 1987 RSC production that there were those who saw the play as the Tragedy of Malvolio.

It is not for me to say that such readings of Malvolio are wrong. Shakespeare’s plays offer many interpretations, and this is nowhere more apparent than in *Twelfth Night*. Consider for example the question of the ages of the various characters. Traditionally, Orsino and Olivia have been played as older than the twins, but there is nothing in the text to suggest this. It may be altogether preferable to see all four of them as young, in a world in which (unlike most other Shakespeare comedies) there are no parents to order them around, or to give them guidance. How old is Malvolio? Or Feste? They have been played in different ways over the years. Even Sir Toby has been de-Falstaffed on occasion and made truly young rather than Falstaff-young.

But to me what is most intriguing at this point in the play is that Malvolio, abused and wronged as he is, with his dignity down around his ankles and his libido waving in the wind, none the less has the Sea Captain, and hence access to Viola’s femininity, in an odd way under his control, “in durance” no less. This is of course the Sea Captain of whom Viola said, back in 1.2.

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 will believe thou hast a mind that suits  
With this thy fair and outward character. (1.2.47-51)

So Malvolio’s killjoy reach extends even to good men like this. I called Malvolio the Department of Motor Vehicles, the IRS, the workaday world of the-day-after-the-day-after-Twelfth-Night. And this is surely so. These rejoicing young men and women, delighted, finally, to be alive and themselves, must still come to terms with those they love to hate. And why do they love to hate them? Because they are not members of the community of irony, the community of shared perceptions and shared aesthetics, to which our young aristocrats belong – and to which the audience is also invited so strongly to belong.

And so, with Malvolio’s words echoing from the wings, the play essentially ends. Olivia regrets the “notorious abuse” of Malvolio, and the Duke asks that he be brought back: “Pursue him, and entreat him to a peace.” Perhaps, in Act 6, he is indeed brought back, and peace is made and apologies are delivered. Perhaps, instead, Act 6 is set in a lawyer’s office with Malvolio’s attorneys talking to Olivia’s attorneys. What I do not think is likely, though at least one 1980s production suggested as much, is that Malvolio plans to leave the stage to commit suicide.

The reference to Malvolio’s litigiousness reminds us that the Elizabethans were a litigious lot, and that the law was for the Elizabethans in many ways the new world that

replaced the old world of the landed aristocracy and inherited value. So perhaps I was too hasty in my rejection of class and economics as issues in this play.

Malvolio's situation is not the only problematic situation as the play ends. Antonio, famously, is provided no release by Orsino, who, ending the play as he began it in his role as ruler of this little country of Illyria and master of our community of actors, has plenty of opportunity to set him free. Should we conclude, as most directors do, that such release is assumed in the general harmony, or should we go along with at least one recent director (Denise Coffey at the Young Vic in 1983), who marches him off in chains on his way to execution?

Denise Coffey's production was one of a number of somber renderings of the 1980s. Indeed, John Gorrie's 1979 BBC production was eclipsed by productions more along the lines of Kenneth Branagh's wintry 1988 version until Trevor Nunn's movie came along in 1995, preceded by what was apparently a rather insipid RSC production directed by Ian Judge in 1994. Perhaps, in this respect as in so many others, Shakespeare productions were simply moving with the times: as more than one critic has pointed out, the fluid, multi-gendered sexuality of the 1970s was replaced by the fear of AIDS in the 1980s and sexuality itself took on a new sense of menace. Under either circumstance, the settled conformity of marriage perhaps seemed to the directors of these years almost anticlimactic, banal.

Be that as it may, the intermingling of personality, the crossing of sexual boundaries, the exploration of the limits of sexuality, ends with the pairing off of lovers and the tacit consensus of characters and audience around the institution of generative marriage. Yet in the course of the play Shakespeare has explored gender assumptions with a subtlety comparable only to that of the Sonnets, and he has suggested to us ways of defining human relationships that are not determined by reproductive imperatives and economic necessity. "I am yet so near the manners of my mother," says Sebastian to Antonio in 2.1, "that upon the least occasion more mine eyes will tell tales of me." Viola, meanwhile, resembling Sebastian in ways normally reserved for identical twins (it is worth pointing out that their status in the play is in fact a biological impossibility...), is given a licence to play the role of aggressive male in her masculine attire. As for Olivia and Orsino, Viola causes them both to touch the limits of socially sanctioned sexuality, even as they draw back at the end of the play, the disguises drop away and the conventional takes over. Is this a narrow escape or a sexual utopia denied?

Either way, the epilogue belongs to Feste, the melancholy clown who sings now of wind and rain appropriate to an English January and whose little song contains a life's story as he moves from childhood ("a little tiny boy") to adulthood, to marriage, and so "unto my beds," and the wind and the rain lash on. "Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges," as Feste earlier pointed out to Malvolio.

If Orsino presides over the community, Feste presides over the play of which the community is a part. For me, at least, *Twelfth Night* is a reminder that the spirit of festival, and the spirit of love, do endure, even though they must be cherished and

nurtured and are all too frequently difficult to find. On the other hand, perhaps Malvolio has the last word in other ways too. You will recall that in the final scene Feste reminds Malvolio of his words back in 1.5, where it all began: “Madam, why laugh you at such a barren rascal; and you smile not, he’s gagged.” But Malvolio says something else as well. Olivia asks him, “What think you of this fool, Malvolio? Doth he not mend?” “Yes, and shall till the pangs of death shake him,” replies Malvolio. As Feste sings to us at the end of the play, time-worn and unsentimental, perhaps we should conclude that Malvolio got it right. “But that’s all one, our play is done,” sings Feste. Does he perhaps also add as we all of us rise to leave, aware at least and at last of the sheer complexity of it all, “Now take away the fool, gentlemen”?

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## Some Productions of *Twelfth Night*

[See bibliography, above: Gay, Parsons and Mason, McKernan and Terris.]

1910. Silent movie, dir. Charles Kent. Abbreviated version of the play, with Florence Turner as Viola and Kent himself as Malvolio.

1912. Dir. Harley Granville-Barker. A melancholy and aging Feste.

1947. SMT. Dir. Walter Hudd, who also played Malvolio, gave depth to the figure of Malvolio. John Blatchley as Sir Toby gave some lightness to the part, and Daphne Slater portrayed a young Olivia (a departure from the traditional madonna). Imprisoned Malvolio was made painful. Beatrix Lehmann, at 44, played Viola as a “strong-chinned, short-haired, modern-looking woman. The social disruptions of World War II perhaps brought this masculine type of woman to the fore.

1955. SMT. After an eight-year hiatus. Dir. John Gielgud, with Laurence Olivier as Malvolio and Vivien Leigh as Viola. Keith Mitchell as Orsino was heavily made-up, coiffed, bejewelled. Maxine Audley as Olivia was mature, sensible. Set suggested “a Persian court as an Italian old master might have imagined it.” Malvolio was played as a Puritan steward, instead of the traditional Italian grandee, but Olivier presented him, said Gielgud, “like a Jewish hairdresser, with a lisp and an extraordinary accent,” an arriviste. Olivier balanced the enormity of Malvolio’s plight with a determination not to make him tragic.

1957. Hallmark Hall of Fame TV production, dir. David Greene. Maurice Evans plays Malvolio, Rosemary Harris is Viola.

1958. Dir. Peter Hall. SMT. Visual tone was autumnal, with a “faint air of over-lushness.” Max Adrian, as Feste, set the tone. Geraldine McEwan, as Olivia, played her as a poseuse and coquette, creating a sensation. This was Olivia sexualized. “Most wonderful,” she exclaimed, at the thought of enjoying two Sebastians at the end.... Some objected that this was not what the play presented in this character. Dorothy Tutin played Viola as cheeky and mischievous. Mark Dignam played Malvolio in 1958, and Eric Porter in the 1960 revival.

1966. Dir. Clifford Williams. RSC. Diana Rigg as Viola, played the role as a strapping principal boy. Alan Howard as Orsino brought a new sensuality to the role, playing it as a slightly decadent Renaissance prince. Estelle Kohler’s Olivia was also sensuous in the Peter Hall way. Ian Holm played Malvolio as a somewhat effeminized martinet.

1969. Dir. John Barton. RSC. A late-afternoon Elizn world, with Emrys James's Feste, "wistfully wise." Play took place in a kind of wickerwork hall (a "willow cabin" as it were). Lisa Harrow, as Olivia, was young. Judi Dench played Viola, with "comic naiveté" and freshness, but, as Dench herself said, Viola "is never just a jaunty boy; she is desperately vulnerable and there are tremendous areas of great sadness in her although she is the catalyst in the play." Production was described as "beautiful" but tended to play down the sexuality. Described as "Chekhovian." Donald Sinden played Malvolio.

1974. Dir. Peter Gill. RSC. Confronted the sexual and psychological ambiguity far more directly. Set was dominated by a huge picture of Narcissus, to which characters turned, intoxicated by their own reflections. Jane Lapotaire played Viola, John Price Orsino. Frank Thornton's Sir Andrew was sad and David Waller's Sir Toby "a cynical bully." Much emphasis on bodies and sex, in all directions. Viola "is fondled in turn by both Orsino and Olivia ... and treated as a kind of intellectual love object." No tomboy here. Mary Rutherford played Olivia as aggressive. Orsino and Sebastian seemed more passive, feminine, than the women. Nicol Williamson "moves the house to heartbreak" in his final words. Ron Pember played Feste, gritty, saturnine, an outsider.

1979-80. BBC-TV production dir. John Gorrie, with Felicity Kendal as Viola, Sinead Cusack as Olivia, Alec McCowen as Malvolio, Trevor Peacock as Feste. Described by McKernan and Terris as "the very best of the BBC Television Shakespeare series."

1979. Dir Terry Hands. RSC. Interest in seasonal myth caused Hands to set play in winter, with drab b/w costumes. This was the first of a series of RSC dark readings of the comedies. Feste is on the stage throughout, plants spring flowers. Enid Welsford on the wise fool lies behind the production. Disillusionment dominates at the end. Sexuality plays important part. Says Benedict Nightingale, "In Illyria love is a sudden and alarming affliction, a variety of glandular fever." Gareth Thomas played Orsino as a "grizzled gentleman-pirate." Kate Nicholls as Olivia, tall and forthcoming. Cherie Lunghi played Viola. She and Olivia were "both adolescent girls in a hothouse of emotion." Viola is looking for "emotional wholeness." John Woodvine played Malvolio with "downright lust and social panic."

1983. Dir. John Caird. RSC. Production was "steeped in an atmosphere of autumnal rejection," with people withering under the strain of hopeless love." Set dominated by a bare-branched tree, with sea pounding in the distance. Zoë Wanamaker was at a disadvantage as Viola in a production that favored the losers. Sir Toby was played as cruel. The production stressed the failure of romantic love. A post-AIDS production? Emrys James played Malvolio. The play seemed more connected with *MfM* or *Hamlet* than with the plays that went before it. The duels were "very extended and very violent."

1983. Dir. Denise Coffey. Young Vic. Set in 1930s in palm court setting: Feste sang jazz alto. Antonio remains in captivity at the end – on his way to execution. Deborah Poplet as Viola; Christina Nagy as Olivia; Stephen Lewis as Malvolio; James Bowman as Feste.

1986. Film based on the 1983 Lighthouse production, Playhouse, Adelaide. Dir. Neil Armfield. Heavy emphasis on sexuality, incl. homosexuality. Setting: a holiday-resort island. Gillian Jones (Viola), Jacqy Phillips (Olivia), Peter Cummins (Malvolio), Kerry Walker (Feste). In the video version, Gillian Jones plays both Viola and Sebastian.

1987. Dir. Bill Alexander. RSC. Action set, incongruously, in the central square of an Aegean village. Viola was played by Harriet Walter “perpetually on the point of tears.” Donald Sumpter’s Orsino was “a balding, bad-tempered, middle-aged village tyrant.” Alexander was more interested in the alienation of the characters than in their sexuality. A young Sir Toby (Roger Allam) was youngish, good-looking and given to casual brutality (“the left’s image of the upper-class remnant at play”). Deborah Findlay, as Olivia, seemed not very interested in Viola. Antony Sher played a young Malvolio doing a major display to Olivia. In fact the play really became the tragedy of Malvolio.

1988. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. Renaissance Theatre Company. Frances Barber as Viola, Caroline Langrishe as Olivia, Richard Briers as Malvolio, and Anton Lesser as Feste. Later shot for Thames Television and broadcast at Christmas 1988.

1991. Dir. Michael Pennington. English Shakespeare Company. Jenny Quayle as Viola, Allie Byrne as Olivia, Timothy Davies as Malvolio, Colin Farrell as Feste.

1995. Movie, dir. Trevor Nunn. Imogen Stubbs as Viola, Ben Kingsley as a melancholy Feste strongly attached to Olivia, played by Helena Bonham-Carter. Malvolio played by Nigel Hawthorne, Sir Toby by Mel Smith. Filmed in Cornwall, primarily at St. Michael’s Mount, Lanhydrock House, and Prideaux Place. Spectacular scenery. Extended prologue performing a function not dissimilar from the Elizabethan dumb-show.

Rhyming verse etc. produces distance in *CofE*. Here there is greater involvement – and there are pauses in the forward action. The audience is placed in a conspiratorial relationship with Viola, not least because of asides (1.4.41, 3.4.307 etc.). It is also partly wrong-footed by sympathy with Sir Toby and Maria.

The play is different in that it is not family entanglements that delay the outcome, but the deceptions of the characters themselves. A critique, in short, of self-presentation and play-acting.

Sir Andrew “is perhaps as marvellously impenetrable to self-knowledge as any character in drama” – Nevo 210

Aguecheek’s nemesis will be the duel. (Nevo)

We are invited to take in “the unequivocal manliness” of Sebastian, who leaves a trail of broken coxcombs behind him. He rejects, firmly but gently, Antonio’s passionate devotion. His arrival brings in the masculinity that Viola pretended to possess, that Olivia needed (a Penelope badgered by suitors); that Sir Andrew aped; that Malvolio pretended to, and that Orsino lacked. Nevo 214

“Feste is the most detached, observant (his livelihood depends upon it) and ironic of Sh’s fools, and the tutelary spirit of a play whose marvellous fooling is as serious as it is funny.” Nevo 215