

Drama – 2nd Grade- English Dept. College of Arts

William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*

Note to the students: *Reading these summaries and commentaries can never be a substitute to the reading of the text.*

Brief Biography of William Shakespeare

The most influential writer in all of English literature, William Shakespeare was born in 1564 to a -successful middle-class glove-maker in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. Shakespeare attended grammar school, but his formal education proceeded no further. In 1582 he married an older woman, Anne Hathaway, and had three children with her. Around 1590 he left his family behind and traveled to London to work as an actor and playwright. Public and critical acclaim quickly followed, and Shakespeare eventually became the most popular playwright in England and part-owner of the Globe Theater. His career bridged the reigns of Elizabeth I (ruled 1558–1603) and James I (ruled 1603–1625), and he was a favorite of both monarchs. Indeed, James granted his company the greatest possible compliment by bestowing upon its members the title of King's Men. Wealthy and renowned, Shakespeare retired to Stratford and died in 1616 at age fifty-two. At the time of his death, literary luminaries such as Ben Jonson hailed his works as timeless.

Shakespeare's works were collected and printed in various editions in the century following his death, and by the early eighteenth century his reputation as the greatest poet ever to write in English was well established. The unprecedented admiration garnered by his works led to a fierce curiosity about Shakespeare's life, but the dearth of biographical information has left many details of Shakespeare's personal history shrouded in mystery. Some people have concluded from this fact and from Shakespeare's modest education that Shakespeare's plays were actually written by someone else—Francis Bacon and the Earl of Oxford are the two most popular

candidates—but the support for this claim is overwhelmingly circumstantial, and the theory is not taken seriously by many scholars.

In the absence of credible evidence to the contrary, Shakespeare must be viewed as the author of the thirty-seven plays and 154 sonnets that bear his name. The legacy of this body of work is immense. A number of Shakespeare's plays seem to have transcended even the category of brilliance, becoming so influential as to affect profoundly the course of Western literature and culture ever after.

Twelfth Night

Shakespeare wrote *Twelfth Night* near the middle of his career, probably in the year 1601. Most critics consider it one of his greatest comedies, along with plays such as *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *Twelfth Night* is about illusion, deception, disguises, madness, and the extraordinary things that love will cause us to do—and to see.

Twelfth Night is the only one of Shakespeare's plays to have an alternative title: the play is actually called *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*. Critics are divided over what the two titles mean, but "Twelfth Night" is usually considered to be a reference to Epiphany, or the twelfth night of the Christmas celebration (January 6). In Shakespeare's day, this holiday was celebrated as a festival in which everything was turned upside down—much like the upside-down, chaotic world of Illyria in the play.

Twelfth Night is one of Shakespeare's so-called transvestite comedies, a category that also includes *As You Like It* and *The Merchant of Venice*. These plays feature female protagonists who, for one reason or another, have to disguise themselves as young men. It is important to remember that in Shakespeare's day, *all* of the parts were played by men, so Viola would actually have been a male pretending to be a female pretending to be a male. Contemporary critics have found a great deal of interest in the homoerotic implications of these plays.

As is the case with most of Shakespeare's plays, the story of *Twelfth Night* is derived from other sources. In particular, Shakespeare seems to have consulted an Italian play

from the 1530s entitled *Gl'Ingannati*, which features twins who are mistaken for each other and contains a version of the Viola-Olivia-Orsino love triangle in *Twelfth Night*. He also seems to have used a 1581 English story entitled "Apollonius and Silla," by Barnabe Riche, which mirrors the plot of *Twelfth Night* up to a point, with a shipwreck, a pair of twins, and a woman disguised as a man. A number of sources have been suggested for the Malvolio subplot, but none of them is very convincing. Sir Toby, Maria, and the luckless steward seem to have sprung largely from Shakespeare's own imagination.

Summary and Themes of William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*

Of all Shakespeare's comedies, *Twelfth Night* is perhaps the most perfect: the most technically and structurally accomplished, the most unified in terms of its wordplay and themes and characters, and the most profound. Beneath all of the cross-dressing and mistaken identities, *Twelfth Night* probes some deep truths about the nature of love. When Olivia falls in love with Viola at first sight, when Viola is disguised as Cesario, whom does she fall in love with, exactly? And when she marries Sebastian, Viola's twin brother, in the mistaken belief that Sebastian is actually Cesario, does this suggest that her love is only skin deep? This is why *Twelfth Night* is one of Shakespeare's most continually popular comedies. It invites us to ask such questions about the nature of love and deception: questions which resist easy answers or analysis. Nevertheless, let's try to analyse some of *Twelfth Night*'s most salient themes and features.

Plot summary of *Twelfth Night*

Act 1

The play opens with the Duke of Illyria, Orsino, pining away with love for Olivia, a countess whose father died a year ago and whose brother has recently died. Olivia has vowed to shut herself away from society for seven years as a result of these deaths. Meanwhile, a lady named Viola is shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria, and fears her twin brother,

Sebastian, with whom she was travelling, may have died during the wreck. Viola, keen to establish herself in this new place, decides that she will serve Orsino, disguising herself as a male youth named Cesario.

Olivia's uncle, a drunken aristocrat named Sir Toby Belch, is chastised by Olivia's gentlewoman and chambermaid, Maria, for coming home late, drunk. Sir Toby's friend, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, arrives; Sir Toby is trying to put in a good word for his friend, who is trying to woo Olivia (unsuccessfully). Sir Andrew, convinced Olivia will never agree to see him, is intent on giving up the chase, but Sir Toby persuades him to stay a little longer, convincing him that he has a chance with the countess.

Viola has only been serving Orsino for three days, but – disguised as a boy, Cesario – she has already made an impression on the Duke. Orsino tasks Viola-Cesario with securing an audience with Olivia and telling Olivia about the Duke's affection for her. Meanwhile, Maria chides Feste, Olivia's Fool, for being late. Feste tries to cheer up Olivia, much to the disapproval of Malvolio, Olivia's humourless steward. Viola (as Cesario) arrives at the gate, and Olivia grants 'him' an audience after Viola-Cesario refuses to go away until she sees 'him'. Olivia is smitten with 'Cesario', but tells 'him' that she cannot return Orsino's affection. However, she tells Cesario that 'he' may call upon her again. When Cesario leaves, Olivia takes a ring from her finger and gives it to Malvolio, claiming that Cesario left it behind by accident, and that Malvolio should go after the youth and give it back.

Act 2

Meanwhile, Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, has also survived their shipwreck, but like Viola he believes his sibling has been drowned at sea. And, like Viola, he decides to head for Orsino's court. Antonio, who has enemies at Orsino's court, nevertheless resolves to follow his master there.

Malvolio catches up with Cesario, and presents the ring to 'him', which Cesario denies having dropped at Olivia's. When Malvolio has gone, Viola wonders why Olivia sent Malvolio after her with the ring. She realises that Olivia loves her as Cesario. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Feste drunkenly sing at Olivia's, rousing both Maria and Malvolio, who tells Sir Toby that Olivia is getting tired of his behaviour and

would be glad to see him gone from her house. When Malvolio has gone, Maria tells Sir Toby and Sir Andrew how she dislikes Malvolio's vanity and self-regard, and that she plans to bring him down a peg or two. She hatches a plot to leave love letters in Malvolio's chamber, written in what looks to be Olivia's handwriting (but is really Maria's).

Act 3

As Orsino and Cesario listen to music, it becomes obvious that Cesario – i.e. Viola – loves Orsino. Orsino sends Cesario to Olivia again, with a jewel for a gift. Meanwhile, Maria's plan to make a fool of Malvolio begins to come to fruition: Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Fabian (another member of Olivia's household) conceal themselves in a box-tree while Malvolio prances about, talking to himself, convinced that Olivia loves him. Malvolio imagines what it would be like to be married to Olivia and thus be able to lord it over her uncle, Sir Toby Belch; from their concealment in the tree, Sir Toby and his friends take exception to Malvolio's arrogance. Malvolio then discovers a letter, forged by Maria, but purporting to be in Olivia's handwriting; the letter makes Malvolio think that Olivia wants him to be cross-gartered and wear yellow stockings, so he resolves to get kitted out in such clothes to impress her. The letter also suggests that Malvolio smile in Olivia's presence, so that she might discreetly know he returns her affections. When Malvolio is gone, Sir Toby and the others laugh at Malvolio's gullibility.

Viola, as Cesario, has another audience with Olivia, during which Olivia confesses her love for 'him'. Cesario rebuffs her, and leaves. Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who walked in on them, complains to Sir Toby and Fabian that Olivia, who spurns his advances, was bestowing her affection upon a mere servant. Sir Toby and Fabian persuade Sir Andrew to write a letter challenging Cesario to a duel: they say that Olivia is bound to be impressed by his valour. When he's gone, Maria arrives to tell Sir Toby and Fabian that Malvolio has acted upon the advice in the forged letter, and is cross-gartered and wearing yellow stockings.

Olivia speaks with Malvolio, and is shocked by his attire and his perpetual smiling. She leaves to welcome Cesario back, and Sir Toby, Maria, and Fabian confront Malvolio, pretending to think him mad. Malvolio leaves, and Sir Andrew appears with his letter of challenge drafted for Cesario, challenging 'him' to a duel over Olivia. Once Sir

Andrew has left to await Cesario, Sir Toby reveals that he will not deliver the letter to Cesario, but instead goes and tells 'him' about Sir Andrew's challenge in person. Cesario retreats into the house, but Sir Andrew pursues him. They go to duel, but just as they are drawing their swords, Antonio shows up, thinking he's found Sebastian – because 'Cesario' looks exactly the same! Antonio is arrested for piracy, leaving Viola hoping that her brother really is alive.

Act 4

Olivia, mistaking Sebastian for Cesario, is overjoyed when Sebastian agrees to marry her. Meanwhile, Feste, disguised as Sir Topas the curate, visits Malvolio where he has been incarcerated because of his strange behaviour, with everyone thinking he's gone mad. Olivia and Sebastian marry, with Olivia still thinking she is marrying Cesario.

Act 5

Orsino confronts Antonio for his crimes, and when Olivia arrives and rejects Orsino's advances again, he denounces her. Olivia, believing she is speaking to her newlywed husband Sebastian, is amazed when Viola (as Cesario) professes her love for Orsino. Olivia demands Cesario remains behind when 'he' goes to follow Orsino, and calls upon the priest who married her to Sebastian to confirm that they are married. Orsino believes that Cesario has betrayed him and married the woman he loves, and flies into a rage again. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, having been beaten up by Sebastian, turn up and accuse Cesario of having done it. Thankfully, Sebastian then arrives and when everyone sees him and Cesario/Viola in the same place, the confusion is cleared up. Malvolio is brought out of his cell, and confronts Olivia about the letter he thinks she wrote to him, professing her love and asking him to dress cross-gartered in yellow stockings. Olivia, seeing the letter, recognises it is Maria's handwriting, made to look like her own. Malvolio, realising he's been duped and that his mistress does not love him, storms off, announcing he will have his revenge on them all. With Viola's true identity now revealed, she and Orsino agree to be married. *Twelfth Night* ends with Feste singing a song, '**When that I was and a little tiny boy**'.

Themes of *Twelfth Night*

Disguise

Disguise plays a vital role in this play, and Viola's disguising of herself as Cesario is only the most prominent example. In a sense, the forged letter to Malvolio, proclaiming itself to be from Olivia herself, is a form of 'disguise', while Malvolio's comical dressing-up, cross-gartered and in yellow stockings, is what we might call an inadvertent disguise, since he believes he is turning himself into the man his mistress will fancy. *Twelfth Night* is a play where people are often not what they seem: Viola is not really a boy, Sebastian is not Cesario though is mistaken for 'him', Olivia does not really fancy Malvolio, the letter purporting to be from Olivia was actually her chambermaid Maria doing an impersonation of her mistress' handwriting, and so on. As Viola (disguised as Cesario) tells Olivia at a couple of points, 'I am not that I play' (I.5) and 'I am not what I am' (III.1).

The relationship between love and disguise – and, by extension, love and *illusion* – is a key one for the play, as Viola herself acknowledges in II.2:

*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!*

Many of Shakespeare's comedies use actual masks and disguises to hint at something which actually runs far deeper, especially in the field of romantic love: the capacity to fall in love with a shadow, for looks to be deceiving, and for lovers to get the wrong end of the stick (so, for instance, in *Much Ado about Nothing* Claudio is tricked into thinking he's 'seen' his betrothed, Hero, being unfaithful). Olivia falls in love with a 'youth' who doesn't really exist. The fact that Sebastian looks identical to Viola-Cesario is surely of only superficial significance: they are, nevertheless, different people. Perhaps the truest love, viewed this way, in the whole of *Twelfth Night* is the steadfast loyalty shown by Antonio to his master, young Sebastian: he follows him to Orsino's court out of devotion, and the youth he serves *is* who he says he is. By contrast, Malvolio's designs on Olivia stem from his own self-regard,

and a desire to lord it over Sir Toby Belch and chastise him for his drunkenness, rather than from any deep love for Olivia herself. It's her title and status he covets, not her personality. In this respect, in being tricked into putting on a false 'costume' – those yellow stockings – Maria succeeds in revealing the *real* Malvolio, in all his self-important ugliness, rather than concealing him behind a disguise. But the case of Malvolio obviously stands apart from the other disguises and dressing-up in *Twelfth Night*, most notably Viola's adoption of the 'Cesario' persona.

Doubling

Twelfth Night is a play about doubles, and not just because it has a set of identical twins, Viola and Sebastian, at its centre. Olivia is in double mourning (she's lost both her father and brother), she has two aristocratic suitors (Duke Orsino and the hapless Sir Andrew Aguecheek), Sebastian has two admirers (Olivia, thinking him Cesario; and Antonio, who is suffering from no such delusion), Viola plays two parts, and so on. Even the role of music finds itself doubled in the two plots, with Orsino finding that music echoes the deep pangs of love he feels for Olivia, while the songs that Feste, Sir Toby Belch, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek sing also reflect love, albeit in a different register. The two meet in Feste, who sings for both Sir Toby and Sir Andrew ('O mistress mine') and Orsino ('Come away, come away, death'). This shows just how structurally well worked-out this is: perhaps of all of Shakespeare's comedies it is the most cleverly assembled, in that 'doubling' goes beyond simple dressing-up and the adopting of a handy disguise. Like the theme of disguise itself, doubling is ingrained within the fabric of the play at many levels.

In the last analysis, *Twelfth Night* endures as one of Shakespeare's most structurally effective comedies, but its japes involving cross-dressing and mistaken identity aren't merely there for comic effect, as they tend to be in his earlier 'double' play, *The Comedy of Errors*. Shakespeare is making some profound observations about love and deception, especially self-deception. Malvolio is deluded into thinking he can become a great man. Olivia is deceived by Viola's disguise. There is a vein of potential tragedy in all this, even while the play is celebratory and comic.

Gender and Sexual Identity

In connection with the themes of deception, disguise, and performance, Twelfth Night raises questions about the nature of gender and sexual identity. That Viola has disguised herself as a man, and that her disguise fools Olivia into falling in love with her, is genuinely funny. On a more serious note, however, Viola's transformation into Cesario, and Olivia's impossible love for him/her, also imply that, maybe, distinctions between male/female and heterosexual/homosexual are not as absolutely firm as you might think.

The play stresses the potential ambiguity of gender: there are many instances in which characters refer to Cesario as an effeminate man. Even more radically than this, however, it also suggests that gender is something you can influence, based on how you act, rather than something that you are, based on the sexual organs you were born with. Twelfth Night also shows how gender-switches make the characters' sexual identities unstable. For instance, at times, Olivia seems to be attracted to Cesario because "he" is such a womanly-looking man, while Orsino at the end of the play seems as attracted to Cesario as he is to Viola.

Desire and Love

very major character in Twelfth Night experiences some form of desire or love. Duke Orsino is in love with Olivia. Viola falls in love with Orsino, while disguised as his pageboy, Cesario. Olivia falls in love with Cesario. This love triangle is only resolved when Olivia falls in love with Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, and, at the last minute, Orsino decides that he actually loves Viola. Twelfth Night derives much of its comic force by satirizing these lovers. For instance, Shakespeare pokes fun at Orsino's flowery love poetry, making it clear that Orsino is more in love with being in love than with his supposed beloveds. At the same time, by showing the details of the intricate rules that govern how nobles engage in courtship, Shakespeare examines how characters play the "game" of love.

Twelfth Night further mocks the main characters' romantic ideas about love through the escapades of the servants. Malvolio's idiotic behavior, which he believes will win Olivia's heart, serves to underli

ne Orsino's own only-slightly-less silly romantic ideas. Meanwhile, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Sir Toby Belch, and Maria, are always cracking crass double entendres that make it clear that while the nobles may spout flowery poetry about romantic love, that love is at least partly

motivated by desire and sex. Shakespeare further makes fun of romantic love by showing how the devotion that connects siblings (Viola and Sebastian) and servants to masters (Antonio to Sebastian and Maria to Olivia) actually prove more constant than any of the romantic bonds in the play.

Melancholy

During the Renaissance, melancholy was believed to be a sickness rather like modern depression, resulting from an imbalance in the fluids making up the human body. Melancholy was thought to arise from love: primarily narcissistic self-love or unrequited romantic love. Several characters in *Twelfth Night* suffer from some version of love-melancholy. Orsino exhibits many symptoms of the disease (including lethargy, inactivity, and interest in music and poetry). Dressed up as Cesario, Viola describes herself as dying of melancholy, because she is unable to act on her love for Orsino. Olivia also describes Malvolio as melancholy and blames it on his narcissism.

Through its emphasis on melancholy, *Twelfth Night* reveals the painfulness of love. At the same time, just as the play satirizes the way in which its more excessive characters act in proclaiming their love, it also satirizes some instances of melancholy and mourning that are exaggerated or insincere. For instance, while Viola seems to experience profound pain at her inability to be with Orsino, Orsino is cured of the intense lovesickness he experienced for Olivia as soon as he learns that Viola is available.

Madness

The theme of madness in *Twelfth Night* often overlaps the themes of desire and love. Orsino talks about the faculty of love producing multiple changing images of the beloved, similar to hallucinations. Olivia remarks at certain points that desire for Cesario is making her mad. These examples of madness are mostly metaphorical: madness becomes a way for characters to express the intensity of their romantic feelings.

But the play also has multiple characters that seem to go literally mad. As part of the prank that Maria, Sir Toby, and Fabian play on Malvolio, they convince everyone that he is crazy. The confusion that results from characters' mixing up Viola/Cesario and Sebastian, after Sebastian's arrival in Illyria, also leads many of them to think that they have lost their minds. The general comedy and chaos that creates

(and results from) this confusion also references the ritualized chaos of the Twelfth Night holiday in Renaissance England.

Twelfth Night ***Important Quotations Explained***

1. 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. [Music ceases] O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou That, notwithstanding thy capacity Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there, Of what validity and pitch so e'er, But falls into abatement and low price Even in a minute! So full of shapes is fancy That it alone is high fantastical. (I.i.1–15)

The play's opening speech includes one of its most famous lines, as the unhappy, lovesick Orsino tells this to his servants and musicians. This was in act I, scene I. the setting was Orsino's palace. In the speech that follows, Orsino asks for the musicians to give him so much musical love-food that he will overdose ("surfeit") and cease to desire love any longer. Through these words, Shakespeare introduces the image of love as something unwanted, something that comes upon people unexpectedly and that is not easily avoided. But this image is complicated by Orsino's comment about the relationship between romance and imagination: "So full of shapes is fancy / That it alone is high fantastical," he says, relating the idea of overpowering love ("fancy") to that of imagination (that which is "fantastical"). Through this connection, the play raises the question of whether romantic love has more to do with the reality of the person who is loved or with the lover's own imagination. For Orsino and Olivia, both of whom are willing to switch lovers at a moment's notice, imagination often seems more powerful than reality. Orsino will send a message to Olivia to show his love for her.

2. Make me a willow cabin at your gate And call upon my soul within the house, Write loyal cantons of contemnèd love, And sing them loud even in the dead of night; Hallow 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.(I.v.237–245)

Viola (in her disguise as Cesario) delivers this speech to Olivia after Orsino has sent her to carry his messages of love to Olivia. This was in Act I, scene I. The setting was olivia's house. In this speech, however, Cesario sets aside the prepared messages and instead tells Olivia what he would do if he were in love with her. This speech is significant, then, because it sets the stage for Olivia's infatuation with the person she thinks

is Cesario: instead of helping win Olivia for Orsino, Cesario's passionate words make Olivia fall in love with him. This development is understandable, when one considers what Viola says here—she insists that she would be outside Olivia's gate night and day, proclaiming her love, until Olivia took "pity" on her. This kind of devotion contrasts sharply with the way Orsino actually pursues his courtship of Olivia: instead of planting himself outside her door and demonstrating his devotion, he prefers to remain at home, lolling on couches and complaining of his broken heart. The contrast, then, between the devotion that Viola imagines here and the self-involvement that characterizes Orsino's passion for Olivia, suggests that Viola has a better understanding than Orsino of what true love should be. Olivia tells Cesario (Viola in her disguise) that she cannot love Orsino.

3. 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. Make no compare Between that love a woman can bear me And that I owe Olivia. (II.iv.91–101)

Orsino speaks these words as he discusses his love for Olivia with his young page, Cesario (Viola in her disguise), at Orsino's house. This was in act II, scene IV. Here, he argues that there can be no comparison between the kind of love that a man has for a woman and the kind of love that women feel for men. Women, he suggests, love only superficially—in the "palate," not the "liver," implying that for men love is somehow deeper and less changeable. While his love is constant, he insists, a woman's love suffers "surfeit, cloyment, and revolt." This speech shows the extent of Orsino's self-involvement by demonstrating that he cares only about his own emotions and assumes that whatever Olivia feels, it cannot "compare" to his own feelings for her. But there is also an irony here, since Orsino ascribes qualities to women's love that actually apply to his own infatuations. He claims that women love superficially and can have their feelings change easily; in fact, later in the play, he happily transfers his affections from Olivia to the revealed-as-female Viola. It is the woman, Viola, whose love for Orsino remains constant throughout. Indeed, Viola answers this speech by citing herself as an example of a woman who remains constant in love (without revealing that she is talking about herself, of course). Thus, given what the audience sees onstage, Orsino's opinions about love seem to be wrong on almost every count.

4. Daylight and champaign discovers not more. This is open. I will be proud, I will read politic authors, I will baffle Sir Toby, I will wash off gross acquaintance, I will be point-device the very man. I do not now fool myself, to let imagination jade me; for every reason excites to this, that my lady loves me. She did commend my yellow stockings of late, she did praise my leg, being cross-gartered, and in this she manifests herself to my love, and with a kind of injunction drives to these habits of her liking. I thank my stars, I am happy. I will be strange, stout, in yellow stockings, and cross-gartered, even with the swiftness of putting on. Jove and my stars be praised. (II.v.140–150)

Malvolio speaks these words to himself after he finds the letter written by Maria that seems to reveal that Olivia is in love with him. This is in act II, scene V. The Setting was Olivia's house. Until this point, Malvolio has seemed a straitlaced prig with no enthusiasms or desires beyond decorum and an orderly house. Here we see his puritanical exterior is only a veneer, covering powerful ambitions. Malvolio dreams of being loved by Olivia and of rising in the world to become a nobleman—both of these dreams seem to be fulfilled by the letter. For the audience, this scene is tremendously comic, since we can easily anticipate that Malvolio will make a fool of himself when he follows the letter's instructions and puts on yellow stockings and crossed garters. But there is also a hint of pathos in Malvolio's situation, since we know that his grand ambitions will come crashing down. Our pity for him increases in later scenes, when Sir Toby and Maria use his preposterous behavior to lock him away as a madman. Malvolio is not exactly a tragic figure; he is too absurd for that. But there is something at least pitiable in the way the vanity he displays in this speech leads to his undoing.

5. Orsino: If this be so, as yet the glass seems true, I shall have share in this most happy wrack. [To Viola] Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand times Thou never shouldst love woman like to me. Viola: And all those sayings will I overswear, And all those swearings keep as true in soul As doth that orbèd continent the fire That severs day from night. Orsino: Give me thy hand, And let me see thee in thy woman's weeds. (V.i.258–266)

This exchange is between Orsino and Viola in Act V, scene I. The Setting was It follows the climax of the play, when Sebastian and Viola are reunited, and all the misunderstandings are cleared up. Here, Orsino ushers in a happy ending for his long-suffering Viola by declaring his willingness to wed her. This quote thus sets the stage for general rejoicing but it is worth noting that even here, the -gender ambiguities that Viola's disguise has created still persist. Orsino knows that Viola is a woman

who apparently, to- whom he is attracted. He is accepting her vows of love. They will marry and will live happily ever after.