

VARIED CONCEPTIONS OF LOVE IN *TWELFTH NIGHT*

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Abstract:

In Twelfth Night love is incorporated in a distinct modenot as something which comes psychologically within the body, but instead as a sort of amorous affection. The play indicates that love is not an emotion, in the common sense of the word. Examined by the requisite of time, it is rather as a gesture of body. It is apparent from Orsino's actions, rather than the moves of his heart, that he does not love Olivia. But shortly it is discernible in the way he behaves with Cesario, that it is this individual he loves. On the other hand, the play does not hinge upon the belief that love is mainly a "motion of the liver;" it does not subdue it to plain action or types of demeanour. Music is pivotal to the play's theatrical performance of love because it does its act internally, through the manipulation of passions that it stirs.

Keywords: *Unrequited love, music, same-sex love, cross-dressing and gender politics.*

The opening lines of the play depict love as a fundamentally inward state which nonetheless sustains a strange economy of ingestion and languish in its association to the outside world. The nature of love and its affiliation to longing has been the subject of philosophers from Plato onwards. As Plato defines love in the *Symposium* by its inherent association with yearning and deficiency or want, "everyone who desires, desires that which he has not already, and which is future and not present, and which he has not, and is not, and of which he is in want;-these are the sort of things which love and desire seek" (Schalkwyk 83). The loneliness of the lovers results from their undergoing of unrequited love, an undergoing which leaves them thwarted and ungratified.

Schalkwyk writes that "The famous opening line of *Twelfth Night* encapsulates its play's ruling concepts and their interaction: "If music be the food of love, play on . . ." The conditional mode of Orsino's utterance is less a claim than a question about the relationships among its governing concepts: "music," "food", and "love" (81). Orsino's outcry for music, relishes it, and then promptly sees it tedious and wearisome. On the other hand, Bruce R. Smith says that "So full of shapes is fancy / That it alone is high fantastical": the climax to Orsino's opening speech in *Twelfth Night* metamorphoses the poly-sensuous into the polysemous" (65). It is important to notice that Orsino's love is no more than an illusion. He is not in love, "but rather in love with love itself. He is in love with himself as the paradigmatic embodiment of materialist, Galenic psychology" (Schalkwyk 89).

Alexander Leggatt indicates that "His unrequited love for Olivia may appear to be the centre of his life, but even in the first scene his attitude to that love shifts uneasily" (223). As the line hints that "O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou!" (I.i.9), the life-giving indications of the "quick and fresh" are abruptly relocated by a picture of obliteration. In Shakespeare's plays, "the sea suggests both destruction and new life" (Leggatt 223). For a moment he appears certain and emphatic, in the role of the preponderant, masculine lover; then he yells out, "Away before me to sweet beds of flow'rs: / Love-thoughts lie rich when canopied with bow'rs" (I.i.40-41). And again his love fizzles into passive intemperance. The love of Olivia governs his life, or so he thinks. But that there is no explicit picture of that love, or of Olivia herself, emanates from this scene.

The play raises the question, who personifies love at the plainest level; Orsino or Cesario? And which one of these is true love? Cesario explicitly embodies deeply suppressed desire. Cesario is entangled

within Viola's enacted body: avid to unveil or exhibit herself as an allegory of the truth that women are really as sufficient of imperishable love as men are, she wants self-assurance to stake the forfeit "either as an actively desiring woman or as an immature, inexperienced, and therefore unreliable, young man" (Schalkwyk 88). Viola's varying ego her imaginary sister who "sat like patience on a monument, smiling at grief." Her "concealment feed[s] on her damask cheek," and she yields to the meagre "green sickness""green and yellow melancholy"fantastical to pensive virgins. But Viola/Cesario herself substantiates "neither the stereotype of the voraciously unstable "appetite" of Orsino's conception of woman, nor the self-sacrificial melancholy of her alter ego" (Schalkwyk 88). When she exclaims to her master, in an endeavour to prop up the fabrication of male solidarity that in fact omits her as female, "We men say more, swear more, but indeed / Our shows are more than will; for still we prove / Much in our vows, but little in our love" (II.iv.116-118). Here, she is both drawing the contradiction that love is less an intrinsic stipulation than a sort of action; something that depicts the trial of time and behaviour. This hypothesis draws erotic love into the abstract compass of male friendship.

According to Harold C. Goddard, she (Viola) is completely free of the misdeeds and emotionalism of the world, and she is ready to acclimatize what chance she gets. Again Goddard hints that, "She never toys with that possibility for a moment. Though she wears masculine attire, Viola is no boy-girl as Rosalind was" (304), and the most dejecting and disappointing thing about *Twelfth Night* to most readers is the point that "such a rare girl as Viola shall have fallen in love with such a spineless creature as the Duke" (304).

Marjorie Garber points out in her famous book, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare*, Viola/Cesario discovers a parallel sister, "who never told her love and pined away like Patience on a monument, smiling at grief" (37). Her intention in this creation is, most plainly, to teach the "obtuse Orsino about the strength of a woman's love" (Garber 37). She writes that concomitantly the sister dislocates Viola's own buried and desperate passion for Orsino himself; her story is at the same time an imagination and a truth. Yet Viola herself is not the variety to sigh away, and having conveyed her emotions in this slanting and symbolic way:

Duke: What dost thou know?

Viola: Too well what love women to men may owe.

In faith, they are as true of heart as we.

My father had a daughter loved a man,

As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman

I should your lordship.

Duke: And what's her history?

Viola: A blank, my lord. She never told her love,

But let concealment, like a worm 'n th' bud

Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,

And with a green and yellow melancholy

She sat, like Patience on a monument,

Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?

Our shows are more than will, for still we prove

Much in our vows, but little in our love. (II.iv.107-121)

She confidently goes on with the unwholesome work of pursuing Olivia with unforeseen but pleasing outcomes. "Once again the absent sister serves as a useful reminder of what might have been and a sign of Viola's (and the French ladies) ability to grow, learn and change" (Garber 38).

In his trailblazing book, *Shakespeare the Thinker* (2007), A.D. Nuttal writes that when Viola, herself the emulative image of her twin, acts the proxy pursuing of Olivia on the behalf of Orsino, we might be calmed into wishing the play to become insubstantial, fragile: "a person who is herself an image can offer no more than a decaying after-image of the Duke's original Passion. But Viola voices overwhelming,

vivid love” (244). Nuttall hints that Orsino's actual love is Viola. Her original love can be noticed in the following passage where s/he indirectly expresses her utmost love for the Duke:

Make me a willow cabin at your gate,
And call upon my soul within the house;
Write loyal cantos of contemned love,
And sing them loud even in the deed of night;
Halloo your name to the reverberate hills,
And make the bubbling gossip of the air
Cry out “Olivia” (I.v.268-74).

Further, Nuttall writes that Rosalind as Ganymede tempted Orlando to exercise his method on her, “Viola as Cesario redirects the passion she actually feels for Orsino at Olivia, and does so as a selfless act of service to that same Orsino” (244-245). The probability of homo erotic love getting apparent in this mystification of gender parts is eventually shorter than it was in *As You Like It*.

A similar thing may be said of her counterpart, Antonio, whose love to her brother, Sebastian, is expressed through “self-sacrificial action rather than the anatomizing interiority of humoral description” (Schalkwyk 89). Antonio delineates the intensity of his love to Sebastian in language that requires small account in the words of humoral psychology: “I do adore thee so / That danger will seem sport, and I will go” (II.i.41-42, III.iii.4-13). *The Sonnets* and comedies exhibit Shakespeare's sound involvement between complicated male friendship and heterosexual conjugation, for instance, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* espouses the classical Renaissance cordiality of Valentine and Proteus, closing with Valentine's perturbing offer to provide his beloved to the companion who has just attempted to outrage her. Exclusively the well-timed swooning of Julia camouflaged as a page, disturbs the traditional self-renunciation of amity that Valentine enunciates. Because Julia's part so evidently augurs Cesario's place as the cross-dressed page who courts another for her loved master, the associations between the two plays have focused around Cesario's corresponding heterosexual longing.

The Sonnets and Shakespeare's comedies exhibit that he employed several overtures to dig into the jarring loves expressed above, for instance, *The Merchant of Venice* scars Antonio's blemished pursuit for the concupiscent love of reciprocal cordiality with Bassanio against Bassanio's own heterosexual undertaking. On the other hand, Portia and Jessica from *The Merchant of Venice* like Julia from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, transvestites to chase their sweethearts, but Cesario has no antecedent heterosexual declaration to prosecute.

In this regard, Laurie E. Osborne suggests that “because her disguise and her male name throughout the play occlude her female identity almost from the start, she can only seek friendship with Orsino” (100). As Osborne hints that even so, because of Cesario's cloaked femaleness, most critical analyses of homoeroticism and friendship in the play turn to other personas, focusing on Antonio's homoerotic love for Sebastian or, more freshly, “Olivia's love for Cesario as female-female eroticism” (Osborne 100). According to Joseph Pequigney, both Antonios are involved in relationships that can be considered as amity, but that Sebastian and Antonio in “*Twelfth Night* have an active and continuing homosexual relationship that goes well beyond the bounds of friendship” (Osborne 100).

Harold Bloom asserts that Olivia entralls us with her power and authority, and with her “erotic-arbitrariness” (235). The phrase “erotic-arbitrariness” indicates Olivia's sexual capriciousness and whimsicality. But no spectator assumes for the love she accords to Viola. Bloom points out that, “The two heroines are oddly assorted, and Shakespeare must have delighted in the imaginative labour he gives us when we attempt to understand why Olivia falls in love with the supposed Cesario” (235). In the opening of the play, Olivia mourns over the death of her brother and wears a veil for the course of seven years. It also shows Olivia's other aspect of life; she conceals herself due to the turbulence which she faces from Duke's side. Her sadness and despondency disappears when she looks at disguised Cesario and loves at first sight.

In this regard Bloom says that, “Since Olivia is just as crazy as Orsino, perhaps any handsome young man without aggressive effect might have done as well as Cesario” (235).

Freud assumed all object-preference was either self-interested or a propping against. But Shakespeare's thinking is nearer to a “black-box theory” (Bloom 235). After the exit of Cesario; one can understand the mental condition of Olivia. She talks to herself in aside, “Fate, show thy force; ourselves we do not owe”, where owe means “control” (Bloom 235-36). Olivia's second conversation with cross-dressed Viola gives us our greatest sense of a nature that only incites our interest and attraction “as its self-indulgence touches sublimity” (Bloom 235-36). This self-engrossment arouses sympathy in the viewer.

Olivia enquires disguised Viola/Cesario, “Tell what thou think'st of me” (III.i.139); it reveals that she is emotionally attracted towards Cesario's manly outlook, and Viola/Cesario responds to Olivia, “That you do think you are not what you are” (III.i.140). It indicates that Olivia is sexually enthralled towards Cesario. As Olivia displays her intense love for Cesario, “If I think so, I think the same of you” (III.i.141), it shows that she is deeply in love with attired Cesario. Viola/Cesario tells Olivia, “Then think you right; I am not what I am” (III.i.142). Olivia broods in aside:

Olivia (aside):

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 moon.
 Cesario, by the roses of the Spring,
 By maidenhood, honour, truth, and everything,
 I love thee so, that maugre all they pride.
 Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide.
 Do not extort thy reasons from clause:
 For that I woo, thou therefore hast no cause.
 But rather reason thus with reason fetter:
 Love sought is good, but given unsought better (III.i.143-155).

Olivia meditates in aside: “Love's night is moon”, it indicates her romantic temperament and sexual feelings for Viola/Cesario. Again Olivia expresses her utmost love and desire for camouflaged Viola: “maidenhood, honour, truth and everything”. It also reveals her intensity of love being in love. Here, she confesses her intense love for Viola/Cesario persona:

Viola: By innocence I swear, and by my youth,
 I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth,
 And that no woman has; nor never none
 Shall mistress be of it, save I alone.
 And so adieu, good madam, never more
 Will I my master's tears to you deplore.

Olivia: Yet come again; for thou perhaps mayst move
 That heart which now abhors, to like his love (III.i.155-162).

Bloom points out that Viola/Cesario tells Olivia that she has “one heart, one bosom and one truth”; it shows that she is not what she is performing in the play. As Cesario says: “And that no woman has; nor never none / shall mistress be of it, save I alone”. Bloom hints that: “It is a set piece that demands two great actresses skilled at romantic comedy, particularly in the exchange of the four monosyllabic lines” (241-244), which admit of several meanings” (237). The spectator is likely to appreciate both parts evenly here: Viola for its dexterity in a pleasurable incongruous condition, Olivia's for its audacity. Again Bloom states that: “Shakespeare himself is highly outrageous, here as elsewhere in *Twelfth Night* (237).

Marcela Kostihova writes that in Polesny's production, Olivia's love remains with Cesario: “whom

she had passionately kissed earlier in the play, marking one of the first female same-sex kisses in Czech Shakespeare” (143); and she displays significant suffering having felt that “She has married her beloved's substitute” (Kostihova 143). Further, she asserts that Polesny's production radically escapes from the convention of *Twelfth Night* rendition as well as common thinking of gender identity and masculinity. According to Kostihova, *Twelfth Night* is a romantic comedy about love with a pungent morose undercurrent and arduous happy end. In this context Osborne suggests that although it is noticeable that heterosexual love in Cesario pre-exists, in fact, she reveals heterosexual cravings at the very end of interchange. She indicates that, “Like Olivia who falls in love with Cesario because of his imagined wooing” (105), and Cesario accepts his/her love, after the scene that makes attractive speech. In the aside Cesario expresses his/her multifarious longings, “Whoev'r I woo, / Myself would be his wife” (I.iv.41-42). Cesario's retaliation prefigures Olivia aside about her love and how “quickly may one catch the plague” (I.v.265).

The comedies, therefore, can be said to convey a different version of love as expressed in the overall vision of Shakespeare. They show how Shakespeare could include a different sexuality in his general approach to love. Shakespeare was aware, as a number of others coming after him were not, that same sex relationships were real and true. He never adopted a narrowly moralistic stance on this subject. The comedies of Shakespeare are therefore not to be treated as ordinary comedies but as plays that looked into the nature of love without getting too moralistic or orthodoxal.

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