



LITERATURE PERSPECTIVES

VATE Literature Perspectives 2017

Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare

Perspective by Margaret Saltau

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by William Shakespeare

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Twelfth Night

Perspective by Margaret Saltau

Introduction

The Cambridge School Shakespeare edition of *Twelfth Night* is the prescribed edition for VCE Literature Units 3 and 4. All quotations and passages come from this edition. The notes and activities in it are extensive, accessible and often scholarly, couched in student-friendly language. In this Perspective, I have endeavoured to avoid replicating the material in the Cambridge edition, assuming that teachers will be making use of it.

The play 'shalbe best furnished with rich apparel, have greate variety and change of Musicke and daunces, and of a Subject that may be most pleasing to her Maiestie'.¹

Twelfth Night is 6 January (or 5 January if Christmas is seen to start on 24 December), the feast of the Epiphany (in the Christian calendar), marking the visit of the Three Kings to the Christ child. In Shakespeare's time, a holiday atmosphere reigned, evoking 'the mood of twelfth-night holiday: a time for sentiment, frivolity, pranks and misrule'.² In the festivities, social rank was reversed, with the 'Lord of Misrule' from the lower classes ruling over his betters. The essence of the festival of Twelfth Night is a sort of chaotic madness, which can be seen also as the essence of comedy.

In her introduction to the Cambridge University Press *New Cambridge Shakespeare*, Penny Gay argues that *Twelfth Night* was probably written in 1601-2, citing some contemporary references suggesting this.³ Thus, after the earlier performances at the Globe, it would have been adapted for indoor staging during the winter months.

These dates put *Twelfth Night* in the category of Shakespeare's middle plays. Most of the great tragedies are still to come, as are the late plays, 'the vast pastoral lyric',⁴ that is, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, probably Shakespeare's final play, and perhaps his farewell to the theatre. The mad riotousness of *Twelfth Night* becomes muted in the plays after 1602; indeed, in this play there are some dark strands running through the fabric of what can seem on the surface like a chaotic romp. After *Twelfth Night*, the comedies become bleaker, almost

1 From the Lord Chamberlain's memorandum.

2 Elizabeth Story Donno, Introduction to the New Cambridge edition of *Twelfth Night*, 1985, p. 4. She adds that the repeated catch-phrase, 'That's all one', adds to the air of lightheartedness and inconsequence proper to a comedy whose subtitle is *What You Will*.

3 p. 2.

4 Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, p. 547.

nihilistic, continuing to strike the note which, accompanying the neat marriages which end the play, sounded by Malvolio's promise of revenge and Feste's gently sad elegy for life, resonates after the curtain falls.

Shakespeare drew on several versions of comedies centred around mistaken identity. One was *Gl'Ingannati (The Deceived)* printed at Venice in 1527, in which a brother and sister, Fabritio and Lelia, have been separated at the sack of Rome. The name Malvolio is mentioned in the introduction.⁵ The exotic names and setting give Shakespeare's play a romantic Mediterranean mood, but his *Twelfth Night* reflects the morés and values of the England the playwright was living in. The title comes from the tradition of misrule to mark the twelfth day after Christmas; killjoy Malvolio is a savage portrait of the Puritans who wanted the theatres shut down. The play is funny, witty, outrageous, but nevertheless the social conventions of Illyria are those of early seventeenth-century England in the hierarchical layering of human relationships according to birth and wealth.

The experiences of Shakespeare's early seventeenth-century audiences would have been very different to our own in the early twenty-first century. We also need to remember, as visits to the theatre become more rare amongst young people because of the cost and a perception of elitism, that our students need encouragement to 'take the play off the page', to see it as a dynamic experience, as drama. Those of our students familiar with stage productions are familiar with the proscenium arch, not the physical and social landscape of the early modern theatre.

The theatre spaces in Middle Temple Hall and the Globe are different. The first recorded performance of *Twelfth Night* took place in the Middle Temple Hall in 1602, possibly with Shakespeare in the cast. Middle Temple, as one of the four Inns of Court, is a legal venue; in the seventeenth century it was a favourite setting for lavish entertainments, which Queen Elizabeth often attended. Capacity was small—500 in comparison with the 2,500 to 3,000 of the Globe and other theatres of the time. Because there was a roof, performances could take place in winter and in the evenings. Lighting was mainly from candles—which led to the need for intervals, to replace burnt-out candles. And, of course, food and drink were served to the audience in these breaks. In this indoor

5 Boas, p. 315.

setting, whose acoustics were much better than the vast Globe with its openness to the elements, music and song were a major part of plays, as we see in *Twelfth Night*. Actors' words could be clearly heard in this hall. The scenery could be more elaborate, also reflecting a more lavish budget.

There is a brief description of performances at both the Middle Temple Hall and the Globe Theatre in the students' set text, pp. 174—175.

Performing *Twelfth Night* at the Globe

If we can't take students to Southwark in London to the modern reconstruction of the Globe Theatre, we can take them on a virtual tour at: <http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/about-us/virtual-tour>

At the time when Shakespeare was writing and his plays were being performed in London, all parts were played by male actors. Boys whose voices had not yet broken played women. It is likely that a famous actor would appear as Feste (in this case, Robert Armin), and probable that his apprentice would fill the unusually big role of Maria.⁶

Students (and teachers) must 'get their heads around' the cross-dressing, gender confusion in the play. For instance, Viola, a young woman played by a boy, pretends to be a boy, falls in love with Orsino, is sent to woo Olivia for Orsino, becomes the object of Olivia's desire, is forced to duel with Sir Andrew without any of the weaponry a male would have... Much of the play's laughs are engendered from these predicaments, but we need to remember that Shakespeare's play reflects a world in which there are sharply defined gender roles, and equally sharp punishments for those who transgress. Students should try to suggest reasons why Viola disguises herself as a male. It is not just a whim, but a means to survival. Why?

Basic scenery, few props, and what was often a rowdy audience influenced performances.

The groundlings, those who paid a penny for a ticket that allowed them to stand in front of the stage, which projected apron-like into this standing area, were close to the actors and demanded quality entertainment.

In the early seventeenth century, theatres were often shut down, for one of two reasons: **plague and puritans**. In 1603, for instance, London's theatres were shut for almost the entire year because of the bubonic plague. There were various farfetched contemporary beliefs about the causes of the disease, but the actual ones—fleas and rats—would have flourished in the crowded theatres:

Waves of epidemic illness swept away the urban crowd in the most terrible ways. In 1593 more than 14 per cent of the population died of plague, and more than twice that number were infected.⁷

6 Madelaine, Richard, 'The Apprentice, the Clown, and the Puritan: Comic Revenge as Theatrical Drawing-out in *Twelfth Night*', in *Parergon* 29.1.2012.

7 Ackroyd, Peter 2005, *Shakespeare*, Nan A. Talese, New York, p. 112.

King Henry VIII, father of Elizabeth I, who died in 1603 after a forty-five year reign, had declared himself head of the Church of England, thus replacing Catholicism with what we know as Protestantism. Thus, when Shakespeare was writing, Catholics were often persecuted, tortured, even killed, although, co-existent with this, there could be found some official tolerance. The group who became known as puritans, because they wanted a more pure form of worship, wanted further reform and removal of all vestiges of Catholic worship. Their name has become synonymous with a religion that is strict, joyless and narrow. Typical puritan dress was simple and plain, shunning ostentation and lavish ornamentation. In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio represents the worst aspects of puritanism.

Puritans considered the playhouses dangerous; one reason was their conviction that the:

overflowing animal spirits of the actors could affect the spirits of the audience.⁸

Additionally, it could be argued that the theatricality that had been present in the practice of the Catholic religion was now to be seen only in the theatre. Positioned at the extreme end of Protestantism, the puritans condemned and feared any manifestation of such practices. Playhouses were also in competition with the pulpits, entertaining audiences instead of instructing them. The theatres, situated in the most disreputable part of London, attracted large audiences of the kind that would attend the nearby bear baiting pits, drink in the rough taverns of Bankside, even end up in the jails on this southern side of the Thames River. Puritans were not mollified by the absence of women on stage; they saw (probably accurately) sexual innuendo in boys playing girls, arousing desire in men. Even an actor playing a prince was seen as disrupting the hierarchy delineating the place of every aspect of life, from God downwards.

Genre—comedy

What expectations do we have of comedy? A class discussion will probably throw up the idea that we laugh at different things, and that our laughter is not always joyous. There are many lines, plot twists and characters in *Twelfth Night* that we laugh at, but at times there is little joy and some darkness in our laughter. According to Elias Canetti, the Italian Nobel laureate, laughter was originally an expression of pleasure at the imminent capture of prey. We laugh at the man who falls—pratfall or bathetic plunge—because he reminds us of a hunted animal run down by the pack. Thus, the fallen are our prey and laughter is the better part of slaughter.⁹ It's worth thinking about this idea as we study *Twelfth Night*.

Some conventions of a Shakespearean comedy (adapted from Northrop Frye)

- It ends with marriage(s), a happy ending. There are riches here for students to discuss. Some questions to debate include: Why marriage? Which characters are rewarded and why? How do we explain those who are excluded, Malvolio and Antonio? What vision of marriage is evoked in the play, in comparison with the concept of marriage that students have?
- Characters include low-life characters who take up much more of the action than those found in the tragedies. The Clown or Fool in *Twelfth Night* has the final word.
- The comic plot often turns on mistaken identity, and disruption of order.
- Characters are disguised, often as the opposite gender.
- Often, a 'parasite', a rascal is drawn in, not cast out. Thus, Sir Toby is married, presumably to be reined in by Maria.
- Blocking characters who obstruct the hero's and heroine's happiness are removed at the end. Students should discuss whether this is so.
- The relationship between the characters and their societal structure is crucial; often, at the end of the play, the new world order can now accommodate the character(s) who had no place in it at the start.
- The end brings a sense of reconciliation. The final society is an inclusive one. Thus, when Malvolio is excluded at the end of *Twelfth Night*, storming off

8 Ackroyd, p. 218

9 <https://dailyreview.com.au/i-malvolio-review-fairfax-studio-melbourne/17160/>

threatening, 'I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you', he is, in effect, removing himself from the social world formed at the end of the play. Alternatively, he has exhibited none of the qualities that qualify him to live in such a world.

- The setting is often an exotic, romantic country, wherein the morés and social values reflect those of early modern England.
- The final act is a revelatory, celebratory one, in which impossible situations are resolved, all is revealed and almost everyone is happy.

Language and style

Shakespeare's language

Most of Shakespeare's plays are predominantly written in verse—in poetry. We call this particular poetry **blank verse**.

- As a rule, there are ten syllables per line, and the even numbered syllables are stressed. Linguist David Crystal points out that this metre mimics the natural rhythms of English speech, and that we human beings can easily remember five things, and blank verse has five stressed sounds. Remember, of course, that Shakespeare's pronunciation would have been different to ours.
- As a rule, the lines do not rhyme, but some do, so that a speech or scene might end in a rhyming couplet.
- If lines do not have ten syllables, there might be an extra, eleventh, unstressed syllable (often called a feminine ending)
- Sometimes characters share a line—for instance, if one line is five syllables long, the next speaker might also have a five syllable line. This suggests a connection between the characters; one finishes the other's line.
- Remember, especially for Shakespeare, all rules are made to be broken
- *Twelfth Night* is unusual in that so much of the play is written in prose (language in its ordinary form, without metrical structure). Shakespeare uses **prose**:
 - for relaxed, informal, colloquial exchanges between characters;
 - for his clowns, his uneducated comic characters. In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew speak in prose, though they are not low-born characters. Why is this so?
 - It is important to notice when Shakespeare uses prose, as it contributes to his meaning
 - Both the Countess Olivia and the 'gentleman' Cesario/Viola speak in prose at their first meeting. Why?

Asides: brief comments made by a character on stage, usually heard by the audience only.

Soliloquies: a soliloquy is, as its name suggests, a monologue spoken by a character who is usually alone on stage. No-one on stage can hear it, and thus the audience is made privy to that character's innermost thoughts and feelings. Soliloquies are usually spoken at times of great inner turmoil, and can

be like an internal debate in the character's mind. In this play, Viola's soliloquy in Act 2 Scene 2, beginning with the realisation, 'I left no ring with her' heightens the comic predicament she is in, with its series of opposed seemingly unreconcilable 'facts'. The rhythms enact her realisation that 'It is too hard a knot for me to untie', with punctuation breaks dividing lines and indicating her dilemma: 'As I am man' is balanced or cancelled out by 'As I am woman'.

Perspective on the text

At our feast wee had a play called '*Twelve Night or What You Will*', much like the *Commedy of Errores*, or *Menechmi in Plautus*, but most like and neere to that in Italian called *Inganni* (sic). A good practice in it to make the Steward beleve his Lady Widdow was in love with him, by counterfeyting a letter as from his Lady in generall termes, telling him what she liked best in him, and prescribing his gesture in smiling, his aparaille, &c, and then when he came to practise making him beleve they tooke him to be mad.¹⁰

In Illyria, Duke Orsino courts the Countess Olivia, who, in mourning for her brother, refuses to pay heed to him. Olivia's uncle, Sir Toby, meanwhile tries to match her with the pitiful Sir Andrew Aguecheek, although the two men spend most of their time drinking with Feste, the clown. Into this topsy-turvy world enters Viola, survivor of a shipwreck. Viola, to protect herself until she can discover her identity, disguises herself as a boy (Cesario). She falls in love with Duke Orsino, and, unwittingly, becomes the object of Olivia's desires. In a subplot, Olivia's steward, Malvolio, is gulled into thinking that Olivia loves him. Meanwhile, Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, thought lost in the same shipwreck, arrives in Illyria. Chaos ensues. Sebastian marries Olivia and is then reunited with his twin. Once Viola has revealed that she is a woman, Orsino declares he will marry her. The final moment is marred when the wronged Malvolio calls out for revenge, and then exits.¹¹

Influenced by many of the traditional themes of *Twelfth Night*'s end-of-Christmas celebrations, Shakespeare's comedy hinges on mistaken identity and role reversal¹² and 'the strange cross-purposes of the human heart'¹³ 'It is a comedy mixed with darker tones, but like all Shakespearean comedies, love is the force from which the play springs.'¹⁴ The play is full of pairings, of siblings, of lovers, but it transcends mere binary oppositions. Sexual tension is present throughout, both from the intricacy of relationships and the tension between what seems and what is, and from the fact that the cast would have been all-male.

The tone of *Twelfth Night* is set by the dreamy, narcissistic opening speech from Orsino as he pensively commands his musician, 'If music be the food of love, play on'. Self-indulgent and whimsical, these words are spoken by the Duke of Illyria, who, it appears, is a ruler who does little ruling. Indeed, as we will see, he even sends others to do the business of wooing for him. The situation in Illyria is in keeping with the holiday, disordered mood of *Twelfth Night* revels; Shakespeare sets this out methodically in Act I, in short scenes.

Music both opens and concludes the play, contributes to its merriment and to its melancholy sense of yearning. Paradoxically, critics often label *Twelfth Night* 'autumnal', despite January 6 being in English mid-winter; its Illyrian garden settings often have directors creating idyllic summer scenes. From Orsino's first speech in which, in rhythms mimicking the rising and falling of waves, images of the sea pervade the play. Viola and Sebastian each believe the other drowned; each is saved by a seaman; the ocean is represented as an uncontrollable natural force in strong contrast to the social conventions and striations of the human world.

Many of Shakespeare's plays have sub-plots, and it is perhaps fitting that in *Twelfth Night*, which is predicated on the idea of temporary disorder, the sub-plot is so powerful that its wild energy seems in danger of prevailing over the order which must be restored and sustained. In Act I Scene 3, having established in Scene 1 Orsino's persistent but hopeless love for Olivia who is 'keep[ing] fresh / And lasting' her grief for her brother for seven years, and in Scene 2 having had Viola decide to serve Orsino 'as an eunuch', Shakespeare opens with Sir Toby's complaint about Olivia's inconvenient sorrow. Immediately, Maria's words set up for the audience a central conflict between 'the modest limits of order' and Sir Toby's anarchic, voracious devotion to anything he sees

10 John Manningham, 1602, *Diary*.

11 Kendall, Gillian Murray 2011, '*Twelfth Night*' in *Shakespeare: The Essential Guide to the Plays*, Firefly Books Ltd.

12 <https://www.rsc.org.uk/twelfth-night/about-the-play>

13 Boas, p. 315.

14 Gregory, Miles, in the Introduction to the Pop-Up Globe production in Auckland 2016.

as 'life'. His hyperbolic expletive-filled prose contrasts with Orsino's genteel poetry, and with the balanced, evocative poetry of Viola's lines.

Shakespeare portrays two households—those of the Duke Orsino and of his closest social equal, Countess Olivia whose uncle, Sir Toby, lives in her house and is bent on carousing his way through the fortune of his unfortunate 'friend' Sir Andrew Aguecheek. These characters' names denote their broad comic purpose, but their functions are not simple. One critic writes:

Loyalty in its most asinine aberration is preferable to heartless self-seeking, and the gull Sir Andrew is less odious than Sir Toby the blood-sucker.¹⁵

Students could consider to what extent they agree with this interpretation. Two other characters are crucial not just to the operation of the sub-plot, but to Shakespeare's development of his ideas in the play: Maria, Olivia's 'gentlewoman', who remonstrates with Sir Toby at first; and Malvolio, Olivia's steward whose puritanical condemnation of the 'below stairs partying' goads Maria into orchestrating revenge, a revenge which combines the ideas of love and madness.

Perhaps the most important member of Olivia's household is her fool, Feste. He, too, is consistently in conflict with Malvolio, but his role in the play transcends this. A fool 'who wears not motley in his brain', and whose name denotes the carnivalesque atmosphere of *Twelfth Night*, Feste is a unifying strand in the play. His verbal jousting with Olivia in Act I Scene 5 cleverly proves her a 'fool', but is generated by affection and wisdom. He is much more than the 'barren rascal' Malvolio calls him; Olivia is correct with her 'O you are sick of self-love, Malvolio', and the play shows that Malvolio never recovers from this inward-directed love.

Feste's songs punctuate *Twelfth Night* and his wistful song concludes the play. Order is re-established, and this final ditty is both a recognition of 'the wind and the rain' that is a more realistic personification of life than 'cakes and ale', and a courtly farewell to the play's audience. Students need to be able to develop a justified response to the question, 'How happy is the ending?'

'Are all the people mad?' Sebastian asks bemusedly (p. 111); this question points audiences to one of Shakespeare's central concepts, one that lies at the heart of the celebration of *Twelfth Night* and of this play whose characters enact the reversal of status and order, until all is, if not rectified, perhaps reconstructed. If the play is often described as being about

love in all its forms, it is also concerned with the concept of madness, a word which is rarely used in our politically correct world.

Those who are mad (and the play shows madness in many of its forms) are excluded, cast out. Yet the revels of *Twelfth Night* are, by definition, ruled by madness, epitomised by the Lord of Misrule, the socially 'inferior' character appointed as temporary ruler. By the end of *Twelfth Night*, the new social structure has embraced almost all the characters, but there are still those who have no place in it. Each of these has been labeled 'mad'. Antonio could be seen as a 'loose end', who although not specifically mentioned, will be saved when order is fully restored; but if he is not, he will be put to death, perhaps a punishment for his clear desire for Sebastian?

Malvolio is a different matter, despite Olivia's compassionate 'poor fool, how they have baffled thee!' it is his 'self-love', his narrow desire to quench joy, his confusion of love with social position that Shakespeare depicts as leading to his lonely exit after his 'punishment'. It is Maria, Olivia's gentlewoman, who orchestrates the riotous group's revenge on the puritanical Malvolio. The play 'rewards' her with marriage to Sir Toby; she is certainly not punished for the cruelty in which they all partake. Perhaps Maria is a symbol of moderation, goaded into her reaction by the steward's life-denying strictures. Is Shakespeare suggesting that Malvolio is not 'virtuous' at all? Is his position in Olivia's household linked to her decision to live 'like a cloistress' for seven years? Olivia is brought back to life, but Malvolio learns nothing but a thirst for revenge. And there is no indication in the play that he can hear the music with which *Twelfth Night* is imbued.

It is interesting that the Clown, the Fool, Feste, insulted as 'a barren rascal' by Malvolio in Act I Scene 5 where we first meet Olivia, is instrumental in the carrying out of Maria's scheme and presides over the hapless steward in the 'dark room'. As he begs 'Sir Topas' for light and 'pen, ink and paper' (p. 119), Malvolio claims he is 'a gentleman', a jarring assertion in a play which makes clear distinctions between the social strata. As a steward, he is in control of the household's domestic affairs; as a countess, Olivia would not be concerned with these details. It makes his conceited ambition to 'love' his mistress seem more ridiculous. Malvolio's inability or refusal to contemplate what relationships with others might entail can be seen as a rejection of wisdom, a quality paradoxically associated with the fool, Feste.

Viola's voice is not heard again after she has (presumably) agreed to marry Orsino, and explained that her 'maid's garments' are with the Captain, whom Malvolio has had put 'in durance'. However, until this point, her voice resonates through the play. Her great speeches in which she explicates

the essence of love reduce the romantic posturings of Orsino and Olivia to ‘sentimental excess’.¹⁶ Her comic alarm as she realises that ‘I am the man’ loved by Olivia leavens the deep seriousness of the pathos in her words when she tells Orsino in her ‘My father had a daughter loved a man’ speech of her silent love. Here, images of disease and ‘green and yellow melancholy’ provide insight into her plight—a sense of paralysed negation is created. She is claiming for women an equal ability to love as deeply as men, but demonstrating greater knowledge and feeling than the Duke, who while professing that ‘My love can give no place, bide no deny’ (p. 57), is content to enjoy his lovesick state, while sending Cesario to woo Olivia.

The action becomes more hectic, with characters entering and exiting as the sense of muddle and confusion builds; Viola is mistaken for Sebastian (who is mistaken for her...) and is challenged to a duel by the silly, mindlessly aggressive Sir Andrew. Her panic and complete lack of any means to fight a duel, something a well-born young man would be expert in, underlines the sharply gendered world she inhabits. The complications of mistaken identity and cross-dressing are initiated in the play’s second scene when Viola asks the Captain to ‘Conceal me what I am’. Ship-wrecked, her brother and protector apparently lost, she will be safer in the guise of a male, than as a lone, vulnerable young woman.

By the end of the play, Orsino is no longer pining for love of a woman who is shunning life for seven years in mourning for her brother. He assumes command, at first even dramatically threatening to ‘Kill what I love’ before the ‘knot’ of disguises and mistaken identity is unraveled. Confronted with the fact of Sebastian’s and Olivia’s marriage, he seamlessly turns to Viola, saying, ‘Give me thy hand’ (p. 141), as he realises, ‘Thou never shouldst love woman like to me.’ The play’s closing words are Orsino’s, as in tidy rhyming couplets, he incorporates Viola—of gentle birth and thus worthy of his position—into the conventional role of seventeenth century marriage morés. When appearances are appropriate, she will be ‘his’, combining the importance of clothes as indicators of worth with the idea of ownership in marriage—‘when in other habits you are seen,/ Orsino’s mistress, and his fancy’s queen.’

Possible uses in the classroom for Unit 3: Form and transformation

In Unit 3, at least one assessment includes an oral component. *Twelfth Night* lends itself to oral assessment in either area of study.

Area of Study 1: Adaptations and transformations

Student questions/activities

The set text offers, in pages v to xii, a pictorial summary of the play, using stills from a variety of productions. Students could discuss the interpretation of character, costume and setting as presented here, and argue for or against these readings. This activity could take the form of a class discussion, or students could develop a more complex response to the ‘story’ told through the photographs, and present an oral critique, using these and alternative images to justify their point of view.

Students should construct a table comparing the conventions of Shakespeare’s theatre with those of film. This can be the starting point for a more sophisticated study of form and genre as exemplified in the various available versions of *Twelfth Night*. For instance, under Shakespearean/Elizabethan drama, subheadings could be: Context, Audience, Social mores, Theatre buildings and equipment, Conventions, Actors and costumes. The second column would cover these and any other appropriate categories for film, while a third would summarise how column two changes meaning. Thus, students have compiled a summary of cogent points. They might prefer to present their information in different forms such as mind maps.

Students could consider the following ideas, and add a fourth column to their table, listing similarities between Shakespeare’s theatre and the cinema:

Using no sets whatsoever, he could move as freely as he liked from place to place, indoors or outdoors—from house to street, from street to fields, from fields to cliffs, and from cliffs to the open sea itself. ... the characters move ceaselessly ... The action always remains fluid. The parallel with the cinema is obvious. ...he wanted his plays to drive forward without any intermission in one continuous flow of movement from place to place—often indicating with words thrown in here or there the nature of the setting, where this mattered to the atmosphere of the moment. The film today, possessing real scenic mobility, can let the audience actually see the places to which the action moves, and through the

.....
16 Boas, p. 322.

arts of design, lighting and photography can give these places an appropriate dramatic atmosphere. The structure is the same as in Shakespeare, but the method of presentation filled out with fully realized backgrounds or locations.¹⁷

Shakespeare's theatre was to his audiences what the cinema is to modern audiences: accessible, popular, appealing to the masses, reliant on large audiences for its existence. His plays were written for the public theatre, not the private theatres of the rich and powerful. So, while *Twelfth Night* was performed at the Middle Temple Hall, it was first played at the Globe Theatre. The majority of the audience here would have been groundlings, those who had paid a penny entry fee, and who relied on the flag flown on the roof of the Globe to announce a performance, as they could not read. In fact, our cinema is a far more respectable experience than the theatre was in Shakespeare's day.

Shakespeare appealed to the box office through: violence, happy endings (marriage) in his comedies, low comedy, obscenity, pageantry, processions, interludes, romance, glamour. What forms of entertainment offer these qualities in the twenty-first century?

If the fluidity and excitement of the action of Shakespeare's plays can be exploited on the screen, we need to remember the most important quality of his writing is in the **dialogue, the dramatic poetry and prose.**

Below are some easily available film versions of *Twelfth Night* which can form the basis of study and comparison, with students' developed interpretations, and with each other.

- **1979** Director: John Gorrie, BBC TV
- **1996** Director:¹⁸ Trevor Nunn
- **2003** Director:¹⁹ Tim Supple, made for Television Multicultural, features an Anglo-Indian cast.
- **2006** *She's the Man*, Director:²⁰ Andy Fickman
- **2012** The Globe's 2012 production of *Twelfth Night*. Director: Tim Carroll. This is a film of a live performance of the play, on stage at Shakespeare's

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17 Manvell, Roger 1971, *Shakespeare and Film*, p. 10 J. M. Dent, London.

18 Script at: http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/movie_script.php?movie=twelfth-night-or-what-you-will

19 Documentary about the making of this film: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0354265/>

20 Script at: <http://www.veryabc.cn/movie/uploads/script/sheistheman.txt>

Globe Theatre, with an all-male cast, including the brilliant Mark Rylance as Olivia. Although the theatre is a reconstruction, this film gives us insight into the implications of using only male actors, on a stage relatively bare of props and technology, with the celebratory joy of performance. This can be purchased at: <http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/shop/product/2012-season-shakespeares-globe-twelfth-night-dvd/1346#sthash.AXgpyese.dpuf>

When viewing a film adaptation, ask students:

- When was the film made? What was happening in the world in this year? What was the zeitgeist that could be reflected in the mood of the film. For example, the 2003 telemovie, made only two years post-9/11, is a very dark film. Why?
- What is the context of both director and production?
- What setting is this scene positioned in? Comment on the suitability of this choice. Does setting affect meaning?
- How do the actors convey character? Relevance of the choice of actors? Do the main actors bring any 'luggage' with them? Are we used to seeing them as villains, comic figures...? Are their roles in these *Twelfth Night* films in keeping with our expectations of the actors' oeuvres?
- Do their physical appearances matter? Race? A black Orsino and a blonde Olivia? What is the sub-text here?
- Lighting? Should a comedy be brightly lit?
- What colours predominate? What is the effect?
- From the opening line, music is central to Shakespeare's concerns in *Twelfth Night*. How do the films use music, both diegetic and non-diegetic? Is meaning enhanced or changed?
- How is the camera used to convey nuances that a stage production cannot? What freedom comes with the liberation from the stage? Or is a film at risk of moving the audience's focus away from Shakespeare's words?
- When is the adaptation set? Why? Is this appropriate? Reasons?
- How does costuming enhance, or affect, or inhibit, the conveying of Shakespeare's ideas? Remember that in Shakespeare's world clothes indicated social worth.

- What changes to the play have been made? What has been cut? What has been added? In what order are scenes presented?
- Shakespeare provides almost no stage directions. How do we know what he intended?

Suggestions for assessing Outcome 1

There must be an oral component when assessing either Outcome 1 or Outcome 2 in Unit 3. Outcome 1 presents numerous opportunities for students to express ideas orally.

- In his 2003 telemovie, director Tim Supple's multiracial cast and depiction of some characters as asylum seekers utterly alters the overall meaning of Shakespeare's play. It is as if the film is arguing that, in the world of 2003, there is little to laugh at or celebrate.
- Students could create a multimedia presentation analysing one of the film adaptations of *Twelfth Night*, in comparison with their own justified interpretation.
- Which film version of the play most closely captures Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*? How is this achieved?
- 'Shakespeare's work is part of our canon. It should be translated faithfully to the screen.' Debate this idea orally, using multimedia or in writing.
- If Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* reflects the zeitgeist of the playwright's own world, to what extent does one of the available film adaptations reflect the world at the time of its making?
- Is laughter universal, or subject to change and fashion? How does the filmmaker convey the comedy in *Twelfth Night*?

Area of Study 2: Creative response to texts

In this Area of Study, students are asked to respond creatively to a text and comment on the connections between the text and the response. Writing a creative response in a manner consistent with the style and context of the original text can be problematical when the author of the original text is Shakespeare! Few of us can write effectively in Shakespeare's style.

However, there are many creative possibilities to be found in *Twelfth Night*: 'in another setting or form', adding to the text, filling in gaps, introducing another point of view of a scene or incident.

The reflective commentary that must accompany the creative response plays a crucial role in helping students hone and refine their writing. It is valuable if students keep their commentary as a record of their thought and writing processes; this makes all aspects of their work on the task easier. It is worth their starting it as a statement of aims, then evolving it as they write. The relationship between the commentary and the creative response should be organic, with one of the functions of the commentary being to reveal the strengths and nuances of the response. This is where the author explains the reason for the use of characters' names, points out the use of figurative language which echoes that of the original text, uses metalanguage to reflect on the creative process.

To fulfil the oral component of Unit 3, perhaps students could present their reflective commentary orally.

Student questions/activities

- Model responses and commentaries from previous years' students, so that students have a clear idea of strengths and weaknesses to aim for or avoid. Small group work can be enjoyable and fruitful here.
- Brainstorm as a class on possible topics/tasks, with group discussion as to what might/might not work, and why.
- A series of short writing exercises—one sentence long that can be expanded upon later.
- If Shakespeare was writing for the masses, how might he present *Twelfth Night* in the twenty-first century?

Suggestions for assessing Outcome 2

- The traditional happy ending of the comedy genre is overshadowed by Malvolio's final words, 'I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!' After he exits, where does he go? What does the future hold for him, the man who has 'been most notoriously abused', but whom the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness has not touched?
- Now that *Twelfth Night* is over, what does the future hold for Maria and Sir Toby, in their married life? Is there 'no more cakes and ale'?
- One of the play's pervading themes is that of love, and the necessity for love in its various forms in human life. Transfer *Twelfth Night* to the twenty-first century; how satisfactory are shows like *The Bachelor* in quenching our thirst for love? Is the neat finish of the play a moral modern parallel with *The Bachelor* and *Married at First Sight*?
- Write about Antonio in the future.
- Neither Antonio nor Malvolio is left with a place in the social structure of the world of Illyria. Yet, they are not equally undeserving.
- What does the need for festivals and wild celebrations tell us about our daily lives? What 'over the top' socially endorsed partying can you find in our world? Write a twenty-first century version of *Twelfth Night*.
- Introduce a new female character?
- Five years later—the marriages.

Possible uses in the classroom for Unit 4: Interpreting texts

Area of Study 1: Literary perspectives

Some theoretical approaches that students could research and consider in this area of study include:

- New Historicism, exemplified by the writings of Stephen Greenblatt²¹. Associated with this perspective is a Cultural Studies approach, with Richard Madaleine's article on apprentices in the play valuable. The idea of the Carnavalesque comes out of the need for release in a rigidly ordered social, religious and natural order such as that of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Russian critic, Bakhtin²² claims that the topsy-turvy celebration is not temporary but introduces a new, fresh order.
- Feminism.
- Psychoanalytical, which examines such aspects of the play as Orsino's narcissism, and also the powerful water imagery which contributes to the sense of dissolution of identity which pervades *Twelfth Night*.
- Gender / queer theory, especially as a complication of the traditional Petrarchan 'take' on love.

Some ways to approach this Area of Study:

- An excursion to the State Library of Victoria. Give students the task to research different perspectives on the play. Approaches could vary from 'free-range' in which students all do their own searching for critical works, to more focused, guided activities in which different students or small groups will research particular literary approaches.
- Have students develop a complex written analysis of a character, then provide them with a selection of brief critical comments. Begin with small group discussion and reporting back, then students will practise writing.

For instance, consider these perspectives on Malvolio:

- 'Malvolio desires decorum and formality, self-control, and denial of sensuous pleasure. He longs

.....

21 Greenblatt, S. 'Fiction and Friction' in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, University of California Press, 1988.

22 Bakhtin, Mikhail 1965, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. H. Iswolsky, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

for rank and power, and insists on law and order in the house. He wants Olivia's trappings rather than her company... Since egotism and love of status are isolating qualities, and the inability to feel pleasure and love is like being cut off from light and warmth, his "punishment"—being isolated in darkness and treated as if he were mad—is an emblem for his emotional state.²³

- Some critics (but NOT all) argue that Malvolio is the central figure in the play.²⁴
- 'The comparison between Olivia and Malvolio is one that the play specifically invites. He is the trusted steward of her household, and he suits her, she says, by being "sad and civil."... But if Olivia and Malvolio are united in seeking to impose an ordered regimen on these unruly elements, that does not mean, though I have found it said, that they share a doctrine of austerity. Indeed, the resemblance between them serves to bring out a distinction that is fundamental to the play. It is clearly marked for us on their first appearance. ... What Olivia delights in, Malvolio finds "barren".²⁵
- 'Charles Lamb shrewdly considered Malvolio a tragi-comic figure, a Don Quixote of erotomania... Shakespeare's Malvolio is more the victim of his own psychic propensities than he is Maria's gull. ... Marxist criticism interprets Malvolio as a study in class ideology, but that reduces both the figure and the play. What matters most about Malvolio is not that he is Olivia's household steward but that he so dreams that he malforms his sense of reality, and so falls victim to Maria's shrewd insights into his nature.²⁶

Consider these critics' perspectives on a minor but very important character, Antonio:

- '...Sebastian's marriage to a stranger heiress need not significantly affect Antonio's relationship with him. They might all live together in Olivia's house (as Sir Toby does); she may well prefer to spend her time with Maria and Viola (who will surely tire of

Orsino) rather than with the naïve, swashbuckling husband whom she has mistakenly married. So Antonio need not appear at the end of *Twelfth Night* as the defeated and melancholy outsider that critics have supposed; a director might show him delighted with his boyfriend's lucky break.²⁷

- 'The homoerotic energies of Viola, Olivia and Orsino are displaced onto Antonio, whose relation to Sebastian is finally sacrificed for the maintenance of institutionalised heterosexuality and generational continuity. ... The result is a more rigid dedication to the ideology of binarism, wherein gender and status inequalities are all the more forcefully reinscribed.'

Suggestions for assessing Outcome 1

The assessment task enables students to produce a written interpretation of a text using two different perspectives to inform their response:

- What is the play suggesting about the role of women in Illyria? How much agency do you see Shakespeare granting them? Draw on two different views in constructing your response.
- To what degree is Shakespeare arguing that the ability to respond fully to life is crucial to human experience? Draw on two different views in constructing your response.
- How important is marriage in the world of *Twelfth Night*? What role does Shakespeare see it playing in maintaining the status quo? Draw on two different views in constructing your response.

23 French, Marilyn, 1981, *Shakespeare's Division Of Experience*, Summit Books, New York, pp. 118-9.

24 Crane, Milton 1955, 'Twelfth Night and Shakespearean Comedy' in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, VI.

25 Jenkins, Harold, 'Shakespeare's Twelfth Night' in Muir, K. (Ed.) 1965, *Shakespeare The Comedies*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey.

26 Bloom, p. 238

27 Sinfield, Alan, 'How to read the Merchant of Venice' in Chedgzoy, K 2001, *Shakespeare, Feminism and Gender*, Palgrave Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire. p. 129.

Area of Study 2: Close analysis

In this Area of Study, students are to focus on the language, style, concerns and construction of the play, attending closely to textual detail to examine the ways specific features and/or passages contribute to an overall interpretation. Teachers set an assessment task that enables them to analyse the features of *Twelfth Night* and develop and justify their own interpretation of the play.

Activity

- Divide students into groups
- Ask them to decide what authorial concerns Shakespeare is exploring in *Twelfth Night*.
- How do they know? Justification?
- Ask them for evidence
- Ask them to provide about five passages from the play in which their chosen ideas or concerns are developed and explored.
- Use butchers' paper, etc, to paste passages in relation to each other. Annotate and highlight to show connections, contrasts, links.
- Checklist: setting, characters (present and absent, silent and speaking), plot, language, imagery...
- Present to class and display.
- Why is each passage important in the play? What is its function? Each group writes answers to these questions.
- Students reflect on their writing. Was the choice too narrow?
- Next: what happens when one passage changes?

Passages for close analysis

The passages suggested here are grouped in three; teachers could use them for the assessment task, or as activities or exam practice for students. Students and teachers can change a passage to another group of three in order to better understand the relationships between passages, and how, in combination, they illuminate the text. And just for fun (and some sophisticated analysis) try using Feste's final song as the third passage every time!

Group 1

Music. Enter ORSINO canopied with bowers. (pp. 3-5)

Once more, Cesario ... bide no deny. (pp. 55-57)

I am sorry, madam ... And let me see thee in thy woman's weeds. (pp. 139-141)

Group 2

Enter ANTONIO *and* SEBASTIAN ... and I will go. *Exit.* (pp. 37-39)

You do mistake me, sir. ... I'll after him again and beat him. (pp. 105-107)

When that is known ... we'll strive to please you every day. (pp. 147-149)

Group 3

What country, friends, is this? ... Lead me on. (pp. 5-9)

That youth's a rare courtier ... for now I am your fool. (pp. 75-77)

Will you make me believe ... be thus to dream, still let me sleep! (pp. 111-113)

Group 4

What a plague means my niece to take ...
have the gift of a grave. (pp. 9-11)

Save thee, friend, and thy music! ... quite
taint their wit. (pp. 71-73)

If it be aught to the old tune ... thou and
I henceforth may never meet. (pp. 133-135)

Group 5

Stand you awhile aloof ... myself would be
his wife. (pp. 17-19)

Why then, methinks 'tis time to smile again
... now abhors to like his love. (pp. 77-79)

I am as mad as he ... this is very midsummer
madness. (pp. 89-91)

Group 6

Wit, and't be thy will, put me into ... though
he do nothing but reprove. (pp. 21-23)

Give me some music – ... To weep there. (pp.
51-55)

This is the air, that is the glorious sun ... may
fairly note this act of mine. (pp. 121-123)

Group 7

My masters, are you mad? ... I know I can do
it. (pp. 45-47)

'M.O.A.I.' This simulation ... thou most
excellent devil of wit! (pp. 65-67)

Alas, Malvolio, this is not my writing
... and his fancy's queen. (pp. 145-147)

Group 8

Were you not even now with ... too hard a
knot for me t'untie. (pp. 39-41)

'Tis but fortune; all is fortune ... in contempt
of question, her hand. (pp. 61-63)

My father had a mole upon his brow. ...
follower of my lady's. (p. 141)

Group 9

Enter MARIA ... we will hear this divinity.
(pp. 27-29)

A false conclusion: ... Youth's a stuff will not
endure. (pp. 41-43)

Madam, you have done me wrong ...
whirligig of time brings in his revenges. (pp.
145-147)

Group 10

Good madam, let me see your face ... I am a
gentleman. (pp. 29-33)

I would not by my will have troubled you, ...
I do remember. *Exeunt*. (pp. 85-87)

You can fool no more money out of me at this
throw. ... What do you say, Cesario? Good
my lord... (pp. 129-131)

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