

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: Disguise, Gender Roles, and Goal-Setting

Senior Paper

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For a Degree Bachelor of Arts with
A Major in Literature at The University of North
Carolina at Asheville Fall 2006

By *Stephen Travis Crowder*

Director Dr. Dee
James

Thesis Advisor
Dr. Gary Ettari

Shakespeare's Twelfth Night: Disguise, Gender Roles, and Goal Setting

Shakespeare is perhaps the greatest playwright that ever lived. His plays were fascinating and brilliantly written. In Shakespeare's plays, one notable character wears a literal disguise to accomplish a goal, while others use figurative disguises (Markels 63). These ideas are best exemplified in Twelfth Night, written by Shakespeare between 1599 and 1601 (Eastman 747). In this comedy, Viola, the main female protagonist, dresses as a man in order to search the country of Illyria for her brother, Sebastian, who was lost at sea during a storm. In order to fulfill the goal of finding her brother, Viola disguises herself as a man in order to fulfill the goal of finding her brother, and as a result, causes confusion among Illyria's aristocracy.

Twelfth Night opens in a scene with Orsino, Duke of Illyria. The Duke is "love-sick," and pining for the affections of Lady Olivia (1.1). Orsino states "If music be the food of love, play on; give me excess of it..." (1.1). Later, in the same scene, it is learned that Olivia is the subject of that "love-sickness," and that nothing can quench his love like she. From the above quote, it is apparent that the Duke's love is superficial. He describes possible emotion that he can think of at the moment, but never expresses why he loves her. Thus, Orsino, through his love-sick state, has created a disguise for himself. He is not in love with a person, but in "love with love."

Orsino does not understand what love truly is; and, therefore, remains locked in a state of helplessness. Joseph Summers, in "The Masks of Twelfth Night," from Twentieth Century Interpretations of Shakespeare, argues that although Orsino is "A noble duke, in nature as in name" (1.2), he is bound by his

own mask of love. The mask is a distorted sense of love and is fed by boredom, lack of physical love, and excessive imagination (16-17).

The falseness of Orsino's love is compounded by the real emotion that Viola feels for her brother, Sebastian. It is no surprise that she is the next character the audience is introduced to after Orsino. At the beginning of the play, Viola walks ashore after a violent storm destroys the ship that she and her brother, Sebastian, were sailing upon. Her brother is now missing and she begins to inquire concerning his whereabouts. Confronting the captain, she hears that Illyria is the most probable place that her brother could be, and he assures her that Sebastian did not perish. The captain states:

"...to comfort you with chance, assure yourself, after our ship did split,
 When you, and those poor number saved with you,
 Hung on our driving boat, I saw your brother, Most
 provident in peril, bind himself— Courage and hope
 both teaching him the practice-To a strong mast that
 lived upon the sea... I saw him hold acquaintance with
 the waves So long as I could see" (1.2)

Viola appears to believe the captain regarding her missing brother. More importantly, Viola is hopeful that her brother is still among the living. Anyone else would have done the same in the given situation.

After hearing the captain's assuring words, she inquires after Lady Olivia, the first Illyrian that the captain alludes to in his speech. Viola states: "O, that I

served that lady / And might not be deliver'd to the world..." (1.2). Viola later decides that it would be better for her to seek for service in Duke Orsino's court, the second Illyrian that the captain mentions. It is interesting to note that Viola does not seek service with Olivia. If Viola sought service with Olivia, the play would not have had the effective comedy of a woman in a man's disguise. Also, Viola would not have had the freedom, or the chance to view life from the male perspective.

In order to do so, she must disguise herself as a man, later known as Cesario, to assist her in finding her brother. She comments:

"I prithee,—and I'll pay thee bounteously,—
 Conceal me what I am; and be my aid
 For such disguise as haply shall become

The form of my intent. I'll serve this duke..." (1.2). Dressing as a man would ensure her safety, especially against sexual dangers, and Viola would have access to certain parts of the city that might be closed to females. In addition, the disguise would preserve her virtue. She is new in Illyria, and being new and female at the same time would pose a problem for a female. A man, however, would be safer because of his gender, and Viola needs this safety, as well as sexual acceptance so that her goal can be properly fulfilled. Of course, it is notable that Viola's decision to dress as a male adds to the comedy of the play. Donning a male costume, she becomes Cesario, a page in Duke Orsino's court.

Feminist critics adore Viola's adoption of a male disguise. Written by essayists Carol Neely, Gayle Greene, and Carolyn Lenz, The Woman's Part:

Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare, focuses on the societal restraints that Viola was able to break. Carol Neely in the article "Shakespeare's Cressida: A Kind of Self published in the above-mentioned book, states that it was important for Viola to assume a male role if she wanted to successfully break the barriers that Elizabethan society had forced upon her sex (45-46). "Viola forgets that society has bound her sex by regulations regarding proper roles; therefore, she sets out on a quest, trans-gendered, removing all restraints, and becomes a liberated individual" (48). Such liberation is found by dressing as a man, as well as showing characteristics of a man in her actions.

Regarding Viola, New Critic L.G. Salingar, in, "The Design of Twelfth Night," agrees that disguise helps create a barrier from dangers, especially the sexual advances of men (16). Salingar, however, names the disguise a "mask," and asserts that in society, one must adopt a mask for self-preservation (17). Viola's masculine mask is adopted quickly because she understands her "estate". This estate is a dangerous one: she is shipwrecked, a virgin, and in a strange land. Nothing could be more dangerous at this time in her life (17).

While Viola's disguise gives her access to a different world, it also causes many problems. It can be speculated that Orsino does have romantic feelings for Viola as they have a close relationship. Viola falls in love with Orsino at sight, but her disguise keeps her from acting on this feeling. Instead, the relationship becomes a "friendship" and the characters divulge personal romantic information to one another. Viola's disguise gives her the chance to work as a page in Orsino's court, a situation in which she is privy to Orsino's feelings considering Lady Olivia. Orsino says: "...I have unclapst / To thee the book even of my secret

soul..." (1.4) According to the text, Orsino's soul is open to Viola. He later tells her to "...unfold the passion of my love..." (1.4) to Olivia. Only someone with an intense connection with another's feelings could possibly hold such intimate information. In this passage, Shakespeare offers a commentary on the relationship between love and disguise: perhaps disguise is necessary for romance to blossom.

Could it be that a romance will spark between Orsino and Cesario? If Shakespeare's commentary is read correctly, will Viola's disguise create a romantic atmosphere? Orsino comments that he has bared his soul and his feelings to Cesario. "Thou know'st no less but all..." (1.4). Viola, according to Orsino, knows his deepest passions, something that no one else knows. Had Viola kept her feminine costume, she would never have been privy to Orsino's intimate feelings; but, as Cesario, and as a male, she has a seemingly physical connection with Orsino. Orsino recognizes the connection and is willing to share his affections with Cesario.

Viola's goal and the donning of a male disguise cause some problems within the world of Illyria. In the beginning, Viola's intention was to use her disguise to search for Sebastian as it would give her access to the kingdom. Her disguise still serves its original purpose, but is also taking on other functions.

Because of the new function of her disguise, Viola must interact with Olivia not as a woman, but as a man. Orsino, concerning Olivia, remarked to Cesario:

Once more, Cesario,

Get thee to yond same sovereign cruelty;

Tell her my love more noble than the world
Prizes not quantity of dirty lands;
But 'tis that miracle and queen of gems,
That nature pranks her in, attracts my soul (2.4)

It is now Viola's job to be the mediator between Orsino and Olivia. Here, Viola has experienced a barrier: her disguise is causing her to undertake a job that she had not considered. Obviously, Viola had not thought she would be the messenger for Orsino because her thoughts had been consumed by concern for her missing brother. Fate, however, takes a turn and causes Viola to be the page that delivers love messages.

While Cesario is delivering messages to Olivia, Olivia becomes keenly attracted to Cesario, another circumstance that Viola had not anticipated. Viola's intention had been to dress as Cesario so that she could find her brother, but now, another woman is attracted to the disguise of Cesario. It is also ironic that Viola ends up in the house of the Lady that she had first considered working for. Nonetheless, Viola's goal is on temporary stand-by while she ushers memorandums concerning Orsino's emotions to Olivia.

Orsino is the character who suffers from his disguise—the disguise that he creates concerning love. He suffers from a severe case of love-sickness, stating that he is in love with Lady Olivia. Ordering his musical players to "play on," he is obviously enjoying his depressed state, using the music as a metaphor for his "love." "If music be the food of love, play on / Give me excess of it..." (1.1) says Orsino. The conclusion drawn is that he is more caught up in the idea of being in love as opposed to loving someone.

"O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour!" (1.1)

The love that he feels came upon him quickly, and he later describes how this quick love has made him feel: "Away before me to sweet beds of flowers / Love-thoughts lie rich when canopied with bowers" (1.1). He is not interested in finding true love—he only appears to be happy in his love-sick state. Cesario, at this time in Orsino's life, offers a remedy. Perhaps Cesario can win Olivia's affections for Orsino and bring him out of this state; but, that becomes a hardship in itself as Cesario falls in love with Orsino. On the surface, this relationship can not take place. Heterosexual views of Elizabethan England would not have permitted it.

Northrop Frye on Shakespeare is a series of essays that critiques the characters in *Twelfth Night*. Frye's publication is the first that addresses self-knowledge, more specifically the self-knowledge of Orsino, Olivia, and Viola. According to Frye's essay, "Shakespeare's Romances" from Northrop Frye on Shakespeare, Orsino and Olivia are in search of self-knowledge. Orsino has no "real" concept of self-knowledge because he falls in love with the idea of being in love. Such a character, says Frye, could never understand who he is because he has refused to look deep within himself to discover what he truly wants in a companion. Olivia, states Frye, takes up her own form of "love-sickness" and pines for the affections of a man who is really a woman. Both are out of touch with emotion, moping around in sorrows, longing for something that they can

never have (177-78). Olivia's search for self-knowledge is created because she is possibly discovering her feelings for a woman, an idea that will be discussed later.

In these essays, Frye explains that these characters temporarily lose their identity in order to achieve a sense of self-knowledge (180). They are out of touch with who they are, and are unknowingly searching for true meaning. Frye also argues that marriage ultimately allows for the achievement of self-knowledge. In the end, a new feeling / identity is "crystallized," as the characters seem happy with their new-found identities. He explains that Olivia finds a "new identity" by marrying Sebastian, who she thought was Cesario. Perhaps, states Frye, Olivia did not know herself as well as she thought she did as her attraction changes at the end of the play (206).

One of the larger problems with Frye's work is that it fails to adequately discuss Viola as a character. Earlier in his career, in "The Argument of Comedy" that discusses Viola more deeply than his later essays, Frye explains that Olivia has a poor sense of self-knowledge because of her sudden change in emotions (63). Viola, however, has a clear concept of self-knowledge and how it relates to her specific situation. Her emotions and feelings are not altered at all during the course of the play (64).

Self-knowledge was an aspect of characterization that Larry Champion, another New Critic, in The Evolution of Shakespeare's Comedies, also focused on. Champion asserts that in *Twelfth Night*, Viola gains self-knowledge through a change in identity (23-24). Changing surface appearance gave Viola a chance to see the world through a different lens. Through this lens, Viola was able to see romance from a male perspective. She saw the pain Orsino was experiencing as

well as the passion that Olivia had for Cesario. Without changing identity, it would have been impossible for Viola to effectively view the male world through a male lens (25). It is noticeable that Viola is seeing the world from a male perspective; but, is she ever able to completely remove the female lens that she has looked through so many times before? Champion's main argument is that Viola learns more about herself by seeing the world through a different set of eyes. Each perspective has to pass through the "mind's eye/" a lens that cannot be altered with a change in appearance.

John Russell Brown echoes these thoughts in the article "Shakespeare Survey" in 1955. Brown noted that Viola's placement in Orsino's court eventually led to personal enjoyment because she fell in love with him (152). Orsino hires Viola; therefore, he gives himself access to the woman with whom he eventually falls in love. This access can be construed as fate, but it is coincidental that Orsino hires the "woman" that he eventually adores. Brown's main assertion is that Orsino finds a new self-identity because of he finds himself loving Cesario/Viola (Brown 152). Orsino's new identity is characterized by his passion for Cesario.

New Criticism tends to reject claims of Orsino's homosexual tendencies. Brown's criticism was ahead of its time; it was written in the 1950's and focused on a taboo topic of that time period, namely homosexuality. In the 1970's, C.L. Barber, also a New Critic who examined characterization in *Twelfth Night*, had a different opinion concerning its characters. He conjectures that the characters in *Twelfth Night* are "celebrants of their love", and want to obtain happiness through the "release of their energies" (203). Finding a new self-identity is

irrelevant, states Barber (203). At the end, the characters are perfectly willing to return to their prior states. They want "normalcy," not "newness" (204-205). A new self-identity would have forced Orsino to re-evaluate his situation, perhaps realizing that he is not after love, but after the "thought" of being in love. Olivia is in the same position as Orsino. Loving Cesario in the beginning, her attraction shifts to Sebastian, Viola's brother when she realizes that Cesario is really a woman in disguise. Actually, Barber also argued that Viola does not gain a new self-identity because she is willing to return to the man that she loved at the beginning of the play (Orsino). Her affections have not changed, and Barber states that Viola does not obtain a new identity.

Does this mean that one must have a complete mental make-over in order to obtain a new identity? Would Viola have had to realize that her new-found identity was sexual freedom and to fall in love would only compromise that freedom? Barber's discourse seems to lean towards these ideas; however, a new identity is not limited to something that can be measured physically. Viola did find, as Brown noted, a new identity. She was comfortable in her guise as a male, and because of this comfortable feeling, she found love in Orsino. Comfortableness on Viola's part allowed her to share her feelings. The sharing of these feelings, the information that she gives to Orsino regarding her true desires made it possible for her to fall in love with him.

Mysteriously, she confesses her love to him. Cesario recounts a story about his father's daughter (in actuality, Viola) stating:

She never told her love, But let concealment,
like a worm I'th'bud,

Feed on her damasked cheek: she pined in thought She sat like Patience on a monument Smiling at grief (2.4). Viola pines for the love of Orsino, and is waiting patiently to reveal this love. She would not have had this intimate session with Orsino had he known she was a woman. Here, they are able to confide in one another without the trivialities of a courtship. Neither is trying to impress the other, as many people do during courtship. Viola is able to see Orsino for the person that he really is, not the person that he would have been had they been "courting." With this new identity, Viola is able to pursue Orsino.

Character analyses continue to be a subject of interest, especially to the New Historicists. Differing from the New Critics, the Historicists analyze literature based on the cultural context in which it was written. Robert Kimbrough, a New Historicist, offers a different critique of sexuality in *Twelfth Night*. In his article, "Androgyny Seen Through Shakespeare's Disguise" Kimbrough explains that during the staging of the play, boys would have played the parts of the female characters, and sexuality would not have been an issue with the Elizabethan audience (22). Such thinking is almost impossible for the contemporary audience. Fueled by constant sexual agendas in the media, a contemporary audience cannot help but notice the sexual attraction that occurs between Olivia and Viola without regard to the idea that, in these moments, Viola is Cesario, a man. But, the erotic atmosphere that develops would not have been fully noticed by the Elizabethan audience, states Kimbrough (25-27).

Stephen Greenblatt, the most famous of the New Historicist critics, details his feelings regarding sexuality in Shakespeare's play. In his article, "Fiction and Friction/" from Shakespearean Negotiations, Greenblatt discusses how homoeroticism is definitely an issue within Twelfth Night (142). Conservative views allow the coupling of heterosexual beings only. Greenblatt states: "The coupling of Orsino and Cesario is an impossible coupling. Olivia and Cesario is an impossible coupling as well. Viola's disguise has not only created sexual confusion, but Elizabethan conservatism is being challenged as well." (142-143).

It is apparent how disguise has confused the characters. These characters are able to continue being attracted to Viola because of the disguise that she wears. As long as Viola wears the male disguise, Olivia is able to be attracted to her. Disguise changes the appearance of reality for the audience as well as for the characters (Greenblatt 145). Olivia believes that she is attracted to Cesario, and the audience is perfectly willing to allow that to happen as long as Olivia is not aware that Cesario is truly a woman (Greenblatt 147).

It was evident earlier in Greenblatt's writing that disguise helped to abolish any bias that an audience may have concerning a character. In "Invisible Bullets," from Shakespearean Negotiations, Greenblatt states that cultural perceptions could easily be destroyed through disguise as well as drama (88). The Elizabethan audience would not have given considerable thought to the homoerotic nature of the play. They would have been aware that Cesario was a woman in disguise, and this would destroy any serious thought regarding homoeroticism.

Greenblatt continues his analysis by stating that the audience realizes the relationship between Olivia and Cesario is set up to fail. A homosexual relationship is impossible when regarding the time period (90). With the removal of the disguise, the romantic problems will be solved, but Viola is unable to remove the disguise until her goal is fulfilled. An early removal of the disguise would compromise the search for her brother (Greenblatt 90).

According to the text, Viola is sent to Lady Olivia to woo her for Orsino. Ironically, Olivia falls in love with Cesario (Viola) instead. Olivia says, "Stay: I prithee, tell what thou think'st of me" (3.1) Cesario is there to tell about Orsino's undying affection, but Olivia is concerned with how Cesario perceived her. Is it merely that Olivia was attracted by Cesario's charm? Olivia tells Cesario: "I would you were as I would have you be" (3.1). Ironically, Olivia begins conversing with Viola about the true nature of her identity. Viola reproaches Olivia, stating that Olivia does not know herself. After a reproach from Olivia, Viola states: "I am not what I am" (3.1). Olivia's discourse gives me the opinion that she desperately wants Cesario to return the love she feels. Cesario announces that no woman will hold the key to his heart (3.3), but Olivia continues to woo him, hopeful of his submission.

Regarding gender roles and the confusion associated therewith, Joseph Summers, in "The Masks of Twelfth Night," states that Olivia becomes aggressive in her pursuit of Cesario. The love that she has for Cesario's "male exterior" causes Olivia to transform from the socially acceptable "weak" female and into the aggressive male (17). Olivia's transformation makes Orsino look weak in his depressed state. He should be the aggressive character, chasing after Olivia, if he

desires her as passionately as he describes (18). Orsino, thus, becomes "feminine" and his character enters a state of gender confusion (18-19).

Are these characters to continue in this new role that they have begun to identify with? Or, will they be saved from the gender confusion that Viola's disguise has offered? Olivia desperately wants Cesario, but cannot have him because "he" is really a woman. Viola, dressed as Cesario, is unable to express her emotions for Orsino because of the trust that he has placed in her as a page in his court. Her goal is to find her brother, but this goal is temporarily ignored to sort through the problems that her disguise has created.

Was this what Viola had envisioned when she arrived in Illyria? More than likely, she was unable to foresee the problems that her disguise would cause. In the beginning, the issues surrounding the disguise could not be seen. I feel that Viola did not fully comprehend the repercussions that a "mask" would have. The idea behind the male disguise was to use it to search for Sebastian, and Viola did not realize that she would be later intimately linked with two of Illyria's most prominent citizens. Her goal of finding her brother has been impeded because she now has to find a way to work out the problems that she has created.

Twelfth Night, because of the gender confusion, creates suspense regarding the outcome of Olivia's attraction to Cesario. Reviewing earlier events, Olivia falls in love with Cesario, and the love is deep enough for her to ponder thoughts of marriage. Olivia tells Cesario: "...I love thee so, that, maugre all thy pride / Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide..." (3.1). At this point, Olivia is not in love with a disguise, but in love with the actual person (Viola) that wears the disguise. Although Viola is wearing a disguise, it is the person underneath the

disguise that is participating in the discourse. Perhaps it was okay for Olivia to like the disguise, but now the admiration has deepened. Olivia continues, Do not extort thy reasons from this clause For that I woo, Thou therefore hast no cause; But, rather, reason thus with reason fetter—, Love sought is good, but given unsought is better (3.1). Olivia is seeking an answer from Cesario. Does he, or does he not, return her affections? Cesario is not at all reluctant in his answer, and replies,

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 (3.1).

With this answer, Cesario makes his case plain to Olivia. Cesario is rejecting Olivia's love, and by using abstract terms such as "one heart" and "one truth," Cesario maintains an emotional distance from her. Olivia falls in love, but it is a saddening experience because it is a relationship that is doomed. If Viola revealed her identity to save the awkwardness that she is feeling, she would compromise her search. Necessity forces her to remain in disguise, although it has created this issue.

From Viola's discourse with Olivia, it is apparent how great she is as an actress. Today, in contemporary cinema, there is a distinction between those actors and actresses that can discriminate between the character they are playing,

and the character that they are in reality. Wearing a costume masks the character that one truly is, and helps the individual obtain a new identity.

There are critics who reject this claim, stating that acting is not the contributing factor to effective characterization; but, that it is from the costume that one wears. Such a view is offered by Peter Stallybrass, a New Historicist who focused on the costumes of the Elizabethan stage in the *iQSo's-QO*. His fascinating article, "Worn Worlds: Clothes and Identity on the Renaissance Stage" conjectures that it is imperative that "an actor have the perfect costume for his part" (290). The clothing, according to Stallybrass, will make the individual; the individual does not create the costume (292). With this view, Stallybrass states that Viola contributes nothing to her male identity. It is the costume that shapes Viola's character, and the audience better understands Viola because of the costume that she wears (292-293).

If Stallybrass is accurate in his attempt to analyze Viola, why then was Olivia so keenly attracted to Cesario? It is obvious that Olivia found a kinship in Viola, and used that kinship to feed her passion for Viola's companionship. This kinship is found because both characters are women. They connect on an intimate level because they understand the romantic anguish that each is experiencing. Harold Bloom, however, rejects this claim.

Bloom, from Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human, feels that Viola, as a character, is perhaps the greatest actress that ever lived in the realm of the imagination (228). Viola not only takes on the costume, but speaks in such a way that demands someone to hearken. She is the only character who offers true feeling, as she comments: "Write loyal cantons of contemned love / And sing

them loud even in the dead of night..." (1.4). Not only is she poetic, but she is demanding in her tone: "O, You should not rest / Between the elements of air and earth / But you should pity me" (1.4). In a monologue, she expresses such a poetic version of her love. Bloom is correct in stating that Viola is a great actress. Her speech and unwavering affection make her the only "true" character in the play.

Susan Fischer backs up this claim in her article "Some are Born Great...Comic Resolution in Twelfth Night." From a New Historicist perspective, Fischer uses her 1989 article to describe how costume affects one's ability to fully become the character he or she is trying to portray. According to Fischer, the costume that Viola wears only causes confusion for others outside the costume, never for Viola who is in it (80). Because Viola is an excellent actress, the transformation is a successful one (83). Although the costume affects how other characters perceive her, this perception does not affect Viola personally. Viola is not deceived by her own costume. There is one more lingering question regarding Fischer's analysis. Could Viola have been confused about her identity? I feel that because Viola is aware that she is a woman, and comments on her sexuality to Olivia (no woman will be mistress of her heart), she is not confused about her identity.

The arrival of Sebastian creates the solution. Sebastian appears on the scene; he will free Viola from the chains of the disguise. Once she realizes that Sebastian is alive, there is no need for her to remain dressed as a man. Shakespeare presents Sebastian to the audience in Scene III. Speaking to Antonio, a young man that Sebastian meets by chance in Illyria, Sebastian states

I would not by my will have troubled you;
But, since you make your pleasure of your pains,
I will no further chide in you (3.3).

Sebastian is in need of some answers. He confronts Antonio, someone that he happens upon by chance, and questions him about the city of Illyria. Sebastian continues his discourse with Antonio:

I pray you, let us satisfy our eyes
With the memorials and the things of fame
That do renown this city (3.3).

Antonio responds to Sebastian's first remark by saying: "...My desire / More sharp than filed steel, did spur me forth / And not all love to see you though so much as might have drawn me to a longer voyage" (3.3). From this quote, it is evident that Antonio has formed an attraction to Sebastian. His desire is sharper than steel and "love" drew Antonio to Sebastian, creating another homoerotic relationship in the play.

Laurie Osborne, a New Historicist critic, explains in her article "Antonio's Pardon" that from the beginning of Antonio's discourse, it is apparent that he is a homosexual (109). His passionate speeches to Sebastian are clear depictions of his feelings (109-110). The question remains: will Sebastian return these affections? With all the confusion that has been created regarding gender roles, one can only wait until the completion of the play to discover if the Antonio / Sebastian relationship will develop (ill).

Entering Illyria, Sebastian happens upon Olivia's house, and while he is there, Olivia sees him, and mistakes him for Cesario. Sebastian, having no

understanding of Viola's disguise, or her connection with Olivia, harkens to her cries. Olivia fervently states: "Let thy fair wisdom, not thy passion sway / Go with me to my house..." (4.1). Olivia, out of passion, mistakes Sebastian for Cesario, another problem that Viola's disguise has created. Viola, after adopting the disguise, favors her brother prodigiously, and the similarities in appearance are what deceive Olivia. Sebastian, obviously enjoying the affections that Olivia presents, exclaims: "What relish is in this? How runs the stream? / Or I am mad, or else this is a dream / If it be thus to dream, still let me sleep" (4.1). Upon entering this city, Sebastian realizes that he is somehow known to the citizens, especially to Olivia as they end up marrying. Sebastian's function is to serve as a male substitute for his sister. He enters the play at a moment when he is needed most. Sebastian is needed to relieve Viola of the disguise, as well as un-create the confusion that the disguise has caused. He calls himself "mad" because of his confusion. Olivia, a woman he has never met, has confessed love to him. Shakespeare is commenting on the connection between madness and disguise. Through disguise, madness can occur. It causes people to act in ways that they normally would not. Olivia is beside herself with joy because she feels that she is marrying Cesario, the "man of her dreams." Not only does disguise create gender confusion and homoeroticism, it causes madness among the characters.

Osborne continues in her analysis by giving a brief explanation of the wedding between Olivia and Sebastian. Olivia continues to believe that Sebastian is truly Cesario, and because of this belief, engages a priest to marry them (4.3). Thus, the relationship between Antonio and Sebastian comes to an end (Osborne

112). Olivia's marriage frees her from any bond that may have connected them before (112-113).

Although Sebastian's arrival presents a solution to the problem, it is ultimately marriage that provides the most stabilizing force for the play. In the book William Shakespeare, New Historicist Terry Eagleton explains that marriage helps to solve any sexual issues that arise during the course of the play. Desire forms into a stable state, and that stability is found in marriage. Marriage is when eroticism and public institutions harmoniously interlock. The finality of Twelfth Night is only acceptable because marriage is stable, and stability is what the characters desperately need (21-22).

It is in Act V that the play comes to its close. Sebastian and Viola come face to face, and Viola's goal has been successfully achieved. To Viola, Sebastian comments

Do I stand there? I never had a brother;
Nor can there be that deity in my nature...
I had a sister, whom the blind waves and surges have
Devour'd (5.1).

Sebastian is amazed at the likeness between himself and Cesario, and begins to ask about his parentage. He, as stated above, notes the disguise and perceives it as real, commenting on the storm that "consumed" his sister (5.1). He is awe-stricken, and during his interrogation, has hope that this look-alike has answers concerning his sister's whereabouts.

Viola's replies: "If nothing lets to make us happy both / But this my masculine usurpt attire / I am Viola" (5.1). The disguise has now been removed;

the goal is complete. Viola continues to explain how she took service in Orsino's court: "I was preserved to serve this noble count / All the occurrence of my fortune since / Hath been between this lady [Olivia] and this lord" (5.1).

Then, Orsino reminds Viola: "Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand time / Thou never shouldst love a woman like to me" (5.1). Orsino understands the extent of Viola's disguise. Now, he wants to see her in her "woman's weeds." Lisa Jardine, author of Reading Shakespeare Historically, follows a New Historicist reading of Twelfth Night, and argues that in the end, sexual identities swap between the characters (76). Viola, earlier the "commander" becomes the subservient individual. She is a "commander" because she has been able to successfully deceive the male characters by wearing a male costume (77). Sebastian becomes the "commander," switching from the subservient male that he was earlier (76). He is a "commander" at the end of the play because he is now a husband, and controls the dialogue during the last moments of the play (77). It is he that breaks the deception of the play. Becoming the subservient one, Viola couples with Orsino, donning her "woman's weeds" so that Elizabethan values can be satisfied (77-78).

Jan Veenstra is one critic who disagrees with homo-eroticism in the play. A New Historicist Shakespearean critic of the late 1990s, she rejects the view of Twelfth Night as a homo-erotic text. She feels that homosexuality would not have been an issue in the imaginative realm of the play, as well as in the actual audience's reception of the play. It was her article, "The Historicism: On Poetics of Culture and the Interpretation of Shakespeare" that brought the idea of Renaissance Heat Theory into public view. This theory claims that all fetuses are

female, beginning with the same sexual template, which, as scientists have discovered, is actually true. This theory also held that it was the presence of "erotic heat" during intercourse that determined whether the genitals would protrude, producing a male, or stay inverted resulting in a female. The only difference between the sexes is that the males were the result of a more heated sexual union (182).

Veenstra's idea is a legitimate claim; but, if the sexes are the same, where is the comedy? The differentiation between the sexes causes the audience to find humor in Viola's disguise, yet Veenstra claims that the sexes would have been equal without the disguise. Perhaps she is commenting that Viola becomes unequal by wearing a man's costume. If Viola had been equal sexually with the men in Illyria, dressing in costume would have been absurd. But it is because of her personal well-being that she dresses as a man.

Sexuality is a definite issue in *Twelfth Night*, as the characters seem to be confused as to the roles that they are supposed to fill. Elam Keir, a New Historicist of the IQQO'S, also feels that sexuality is not a problem in the text, but for reasons not explicated by Veenstra. Keir feels that Viola's sexuality is canceled because she takes on the role of a eunuch, detailing this idea in his article "The Fertile Eunuch: *Twelfth Night*, Early Modern Intercourse, and the Fruits of Castration" (18). He states that because of the disguise as a eunuch, Viola has no sexual identity, but gives sexuality to the play. Her disguise creates a barrier for her, but shapes the heterosexual desires of Olivia (19-20).

With this disguise, Viola creates an atmosphere of sexual tension. Keir's analysis is on target, probing the significance of Viola's disguise. Initially, it was

to be used as an "identity-aversion" to distract others from noticing her femininity. Now, her disguise has created sexual confusion.

Elaine Showalter, a feminist critic from the 1980s, offers a striking view of the coupling of Orsino and Viola. In her article "Ophelia: The Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism," Showalter mentions that both Orsino and Viola have mastered the masculine identity (79). Will there be a separation of sexual roles once a marriage is consummated? Or, will there be a clash of identity within the Duke's home? Showalter seems to feel that someone will have to step down, and that someone will more than likely be Viola. In order to keep with the traditions of the day, Viola will have to become a feminine character once again so the conservative views will be satisfied (80). She does frown upon such a decision, but, according to her view, once the disguise is removed, so is the role. While in disguise, any role could have been fulfilled; but, now that she is no longer masked, she must return to the former feminine role that she held (82-83).

Olivia's coupling with Sebastian can be considered as "settlement" more than a pairing of contentment. New Historicist Marjorie Garber states that during the Renaissance, women were insincere in their passions. "Women usually married out of convenience; a marriage of love would have been almost non-existent" (356). Garber's essay, "The Insincerity of Women" was the first article by a female to offer negative feelings concerning women in *Twelfth Night*. Garber, however, is not a feminist critic and feels that Olivia, unlike Viola, did not gain any liberation through her experience with Cesario (356). Olivia chooses to marry the man that she thinks is Cesario; yet, when it is discovered that she did not marry Cesario, she is content with her situation. "Olivia becomes insincere in

her love, as it changes from person to person, in the case of Cesario and Sebastian" (357). Insincerity was noticeable in the beginning regarding Orsino's affections, and now, it is apparent that Olivia's love is transparent. With a willingness to change love interests, Olivia becomes the ideal woman on the Renaissance stage (357). She is willing to change her love to satisfy the other characters in the play.

This analysis is misguided in its attempt to define Olivia's relationship with Sebastian. Although Olivia's affections do change at the end of the play, it is because Viola's deception has caused Olivia to think she married Cesario. Viola's goal-setting created a problem of mistaken identities and Olivia married Sebastian instead of Cesario. Obviously, something was present besides the deception that caused Olivia to be attracted to Sebastian. Garber's interpretation denies that Olivia's love for Sebastian is authentic. Had disguise not been an issue, I would more readily agree with Garber's analysis; however, disguise does play an important role as it causes Olivia to mistake Sebastian for Cesario.

In the end of *Twelfth Night*, Olivia, Orsino and Viola find happiness. Viola's goal was to find her brother, and her disguise was successful in helping her obtain that goal. The other characters were able to find happiness as well, once the "masks" had been removed, and the falsities had been acknowledged. Alexander Leggatt sums the issue of love and gender confusion in *Twelfth Night* by stating that the characters are only "misguided because they have not found true love. No relief or satisfaction can abide in their souls until their love-matches are found" (661-662). New Historicist Yu Ko comments on Leggatt's findings: "The characters may have been misguided, but they seem to have found

true love. Regardless of the level of satisfaction, the characters received what they wanted. Olivia married a man that reminded her of Cesario, Orsino was able to cure his love-sickness, and Viola marries Orsino" (168).

Viola fulfills the goal of finding her brother, and also gains happiness. Olivia learns that she can live contentedly with Sebastian. Orsino realizes that he may have loved Viola all along, even though she was not in her "woman's weeds." The characters find satisfaction in the end, and are able to live harmoniously.

Overall, disguise does create confusion; but, is there an instance when it could create something good? Through his play, Shakespeare remarks that disguise does have its good moments, but there is also a negative side. Viola, dressed as a man, affects the lives of Orsino and Olivia. The good comes when Olivia's passions are opened, and she comes out of her state of mourning because she "falls in love" with Cesario; and, Orsino bears his innermost feelings to Cesario. Negativity appears when gender confusion arises. I believe that Shakespeare inspires his audience to think about the nature of disguise and the consequences that it can have. Disguise can be wicked, or it can have the success that one may intend it to have. Viola does fulfill her goal, but Shakespeare's play causes me to wonder if the fulfillment of the goal is the focus, or if the confusion created is the focus. I feel that the confusion is the focus. Viola's literal disguise must be removed in order to break the confusion, and she does this. Viola is not aware of the problems the disguise will create and this is why she is so abrupt to wear it. Shakespeare inspires me with this final thought: wear a disguise if it is fully necessary; but, always be aware of the consequences because there will be some, and they will have to be dealt with in time.

Works Cited Barber, C.L. "Celebration in

Shakespeare." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32.2(1971):

185-210. Bloom, Harold. Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human. New York: Penguin

Press, 1998. Brown, John Russell. "Shakespeare Survey." *The Review of English Studies* 12.3

(1955): 148-160. Champion, Larry. The Evolution of Shakespeare's Comedies. Cambridge:

Harvard UP, 1970. Eagleton, Terry. Rereading Literature: William Shakespeare. Oxford: Oxford

UP, 1986. Eastman, Arthur. "Shakespearean Criticism." William Shakespeare: His World,

His Influence. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985. Fischer, Susan. "Some are Born Great...Comic Resolution in Twelfth Night."

Hispania 72.1 (1989): 78-86. Frye, Northrop. "The Argument of Comedy." Anatomy of Criticism. Princeton:

Princeton UP, 1957. —. Northrop Frye on Shakespeare. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1962. Garber, Marjorie. "The Insincerity of

Women." Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture. Grazia, Quilligan, and Stallybrass, eds. Cambridge:

Cambridge UP, 1996. Greenblatt, Stephen. "Fiction and Friction." Shakespearean Negotiations.

Berkeley: UC Press, 1988. —. "Invisible Bullets." Shakespearean Negotiations. Berkeley: UC Press, 1988.

- Jardine, Lisa. Reading Shakespeare Historically. Routledge: New York, 1996.
- Keir, Elam. "The Fertile Eunuch: Twelfth Night, Early Modern Intercourse, and the Fruits of Castration." Shakespeare Quarterly 47.1 (1996): 1-36.
- Kimbrough, Robert. "Androgyny seen through Shakespeare's Disguise." Shakespearean Quarterly 33.1 (1982): 17-33. Ko, YuJin. "Comic Close of Twelfth Night." Shakespeare Quarterly 48.4(1997): 167-76. Leggatt, Alexander. "Comedy in Twelfth Night and As You Like It." Shakespearean Criticism Eds. Jackson and Bloom. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974. Markels, Julian. "Shakespeare's Comedy." Twentieth Century Interpretations Of Twelfth Night. Walter King, ed. Prentice-Hall: Englewood, 1968.
- Neely, Carol. "Shakespeare's Cressida: A Kind of Self." The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare. Eds. Neely, Green, and Lenz. Chicago: Illinois UP, 1980. Osborne, Laurie. "Antonio's Pardon." Shakespeare Quarterly 45.1 (1994): 108-
- Salingar, L.G. "The Design of Twelfth Night." Twentieth Century Interpretations Of Twelfth Night. Walter King, ed. Prentice-Hall: Englewood, 1968.
- Showalter, Elaine. "Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism." Shakespeare and the Question of Theory. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman, eds. London: Methuen, 1985.

Stallybrass, Peter. "Worn Worlds: Clothes and Identity on the Renaissance Stage." Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture. Eds. Grazia, Quilligan, and Stallybrass. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.

Summers, Joseph. "The Masks of Twelfth Night." Twentieth Century Interpretations of Twelfth Night. Walter King, ed. Englewood: Prentice-Hall, 1968.

Veenstra, Jan. "The New Historicism: On Poetics of Culture and the Interpretation of Shakespeare." History and Theory 34.3 (1995): 174-98.

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. Related Themes from Other Texts. Compare and contrast themes from other texts to this theme. Find Related Themes. Gender and Sexual Identity ThemeTracker. The ThemeTracker below shows where, and to what degree, the theme of Gender and Sexual Identity appears in each scene of Twelfth Night. Click on STARS Citation Lee, Amanda, "Gender Performance in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night" (2019). Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019. 6367. <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd/6367>. Gender performance in shakespeare's twelfth night. I focused my class work on Twelfth Night for those six months and did a good amount of writing before we started our first rehearsal. This was the part of my process in which I felt both the most confident and the most intimidated. Academics have always been my strong suit. That said, they clearly believed in two genders. Gendered language and roles are a dominant part of the Early Modern social system. Jean E. Howard writes in "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern." 8. The themes of gender roles and gender relations frequently appear in William Shakespeare's plays and are readily apparent in Twelfth Night. The character Viola learns firsthand how gender identity plays a crucial role in how one is treated by other men and women when she assumes the identity of a man named Cesario. During the Elizabethan era, roles for men and women were predetermined, and women had many more limitations than did men. In Twelfth Night, Viola is able to circumvent these limitations placed upon her by society by dressing in male attire and taking on the role of a male in order to Study guide for Twelfth Night by Shakespeare, with plot summary, character analysis, and literary analysis. Summary of Twelfth Night. The play opens with Orsino madly in love with Lady Olivia, who does not love him back. Duke Orsino convinces himself that he loves Olivia and that is enough. Gender Identity: The confusion about identity, specifically, related to gender, emerges when Viola becomes a man, Cesario, who attracts the attention of Duke Orsino, despite disguising a male. On the other hand, she makes Olivia fall in love with her, though, by the end she reveals her identity. Deception: Deception in the play has been shown through the character of Viola who deceives the duke. Many of the problems and confusions in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" are the result of gender bending episodes, many of which involve disguise and deceit of one form or another. In the most prominent examples of disguise and appearance versus reality in Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare, appearances hide an important reality and sometimes actually hinder a character from developing or attaining his or her desire. Certainly, Viola in "Twelfth Night" by Shakespeare is the clearest example since her love for Orsino must go unrecognized until the appearance is exchanged for reality. Furthermore,