

PERSPECTIVES

Gender and Behavior

Twelfth Night is one of several of Shakespeare's plays to feature a heroine who dresses as a man. At the beginning of his career, Shakespeare included a cross-dressing heroine in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: Julia dresses as a pageboy to follow her boyfriend to another city. She reveals herself at the end to stop him from marrying another woman. Julia's disguise is a plot convenience, allowing her to travel and to observe Proteus without suspicion. Later plays push that plot device further, creating the cross-dressed woman as an object of desire. In *As You Like It*, written two or three years before *Twelfth Night*, Rosalind dresses as a boy named Ganymede to travel into the forest; when she runs into her crush, Orlando, she offers, as Ganymede, to pretend to be Rosalind so that Orlando can practice wooing. She also finds herself the object of desire of a shepherdess named Phebe. In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare presses the mismatched desire even further, having a primary character, Olivia, and making that desire a central point of conflict in the play, rather than a side joke. This creates a double-play of suggested homoeroticism; Olivia is in love with Cesario, who is actually another woman, while Orsino thinks he's falling for a boy, who is actually a woman, who is still played by a male actor.

Gender issues could prompt quite a bit of social anxiety in early modern England. Many of the anti-theatrical polemics leveled at the playing companies lamented the presentation of boys as women, particularly in romantic roles. Conversely, the idea of women usurping men's roles suggested an upending of convention. Though a female monarch had ruled England for over forty years – and for all of Shakespeare's lifetime – women were still considered subordinate to men, legally, socially, and religiously; even Queen Elizabeth spent much of her life pressured by her councilors to find a man to share her throne. Many pamphlets published in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries sought to instruct women on their "proper" place – suggesting that a great many of them had stepped outside the proscribed bounds and entered spheres typically dominated by males. Only two or three years before *Twelfth Night*, in *As You Like It*, Shakespeare has Rosalind reappear in women's garb at the end of the play, which some scholars have suggested was a deliberate method of allaying social anxiety about her ability to resume her feminine role. Viola in *Twelfth Night*, like Julia in the earlier *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, never reappears in her "women's weeds," remaining in a state of gender ambiguity through the end of the play.

Today, the definition of gender roles remains a hot-button issue. Political debates continue to challenge ideas about balance between the sexes, both socially and financially. In many ways, however, the conversation has changed from determining what one gender or the other can or can't do to debating the very meaning of gender itself. As the 21st-century begins, advocates for gay, lesbian, and transgender rights continue to push at the boundaries of the binary gender system. In 2010, a British expatriate living in Australia became the world's officially and legally neuter person, though some cultures of the Indian subcontinent and of Southeast Asia have long recognized the existence of a "third gender." More recently, transgender advocates such as Laverne Cox, of *Orange is the New Black* fame, have raised the profile of the transgender population – which has, in turn, led to political debates over bathroom use and legally protected classes. The ongoing gender debate suggests the existence of gray areas between male and female and in the spectrum of sexual attraction – the very sort of grey area that Viola-as-Cesario inhabits.

Twelfth Night, along with the other gender-bending comedies featuring cross-dressing heroines, suggests that, in the view of society, at least, a person's role in life is more defined by what they wear and how they behave than it is by anatomy. How does Viola challenge or affirm the idea of strictly defined roles for genders? How convincing is her disguise? Several characters tell her during the course of the play that she behaves in a way unbecoming a man, particularly when she does such stereotypically feminine things as fainting at the sight of blood. How does Viola give herself away? How much double-speak does she engage in, allowing the audience to appreciate her duality without explicitly telling other characters about it?

In the following activity, your students will explore some of the gender dynamics at play in *Twelfth Night*.

Activity 1: Comparing the Cross-dressers

- Brainstorm (and record on the board) the factors in presentation and behavior that, at least stereotypically, separate men from women.
 - Suggestions for discussion:
 - Clothing.
 - Examine the costume sketches on page 178. How different was male from female dress in Shakespeare's time? What similarities are there? Do your students think that, given this style of clothing, it would be easy for a girl to pass as a boy, or a boy as a girl?
 - Consider how this is different for us than it is for the Elizabethans. Women wear pants now, but what differences in clothing still exist to differentiate the genders? How could a modern-dress production of *Twelfth Night* present Viola convincingly? Do modern clothing standards make it easier or more difficult to pass as another gender?
 - Consider how these clothing conditions may have influenced how Shakespeare wrote his plays. In *As You Like It*, Rosalind does reappear as a woman – and Shakespeare gives her 75 prose lines (about five minutes of stage time) to change. In *Twelfth Night*, Viola remains dressed as a boy. What practical considerations might have gone into this choice?
 - Position of hips and shoulders while standing at rest.
 - Stride while walking.
 - Length of hair (Productions will often have a long-haired heroine stuff her hair up under a cap to "hide" it, allowing for an easy reveal at the end of the play).
 - Vocal pitch.
 - Eye contact.
- Have your students stand at their desks and “try on,” as a group, some of the things you listed together.
- Give your students **Handouts #5A-D: Suit Me Like a Man**. This handout provides the text of the scenes from four other Shakespeare plays where the heroine makes the decision to dress as a man.
- Either in read-arounds (page 20) or by acting the scenes out with volunteers (page 20), explore these variant depictions of female-to-male cross-dressing.
- Compare these four scenes to Viola's decision in the **First 100 Lines** (page 24).

- Discuss:
 - What do Shakespeare's cross-dressing heroines point to as the markers of masculinity versus femininity?
 - What information does Shakespeare convey about how his (male) actors playing female characters will present masculinity?
 - All of these heroines have help in assuming their disguises. Julia and Portia ask their waiting-women; Rosalind has Celia for a comrade; Viola asks the sea captain; Imogen takes the suggestion from Pisanio.
 - How do these relationships pertain to the social anxiety surrounding cross-dressing?
 - Is it different for Viola, who asks a man for help?
 - For Imogen, the only one among the five who does not have the idea herself, and cross-dresses at a man's suggestion?
 - **Further Exploration:** Look at Shakespeare's sonnets for more commentary on the comparison and confusion of gender (particularly Sonnet #20). What continuing relevance do these poems and the gender-bending heroines in the plays have in the modern world, as we begin to consider more frequently ideas of gender identity, gender fluidity, and the sliding scale of human sexuality? How is the social anxiety expressed in the plays and poems like or unlike modern social anxiety around the same topics?

Activity 2: Orsino's Awareness

Much of the emotional conflict in *Twelfth Night* centers around Viola's charade as Cesario and the perception Orsino has of her. In performance, this can play as humorous or as deeply affecting, depending on the choices that the actors make.

- Set up your classroom according to the **Elizabethan Classroom** guidelines, found on page 32 of this study guide. This will allow your students who are not participating as actors to serve as the audience. Remind your non-acting students that the audience members are still a part of the play – at any moment, an actor may pick them out to play with them.
- Give your students **Handout #6: Orsino's Awareness**.
- Choose actors from your class:
 - One boy for Orsino
 - One girl for Viola
- Stage the scene the first time as though Viola's guise never slips and Orsino never supposes that she is anything other than what she presents herself to be:
 - What story does it tell if Viola remains in control of herself, despite the revealing nature of the conversation?
 - Can your Orsino still be interested in Cesario, even with no suspicion that he is, in fact, a she? How could this demonstration of attraction affect the gender relations in the play?
- Have your actors do the scene again, this time with a Viola barely keeping up the pretense of masculinity, and Orsino starting to suspect something.
 - Have your Viola choose a reason – or try out more than one – for Viola's disguise slipping. Is she frustrated with Orsino and forgetting to pretend? Is she trying to call attention to herself in a sideways manner?

- Try the scene a third time, with an overtly feminine Viola (similar to version 2) and an utterly oblivious Orsino (similar to version 1).
 - How does this change the dynamic between them?
 - How does this change the audience's perception of Orsino? Of Viola?
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each interpretation. How does each version tell a slightly different story?
 - **Further Exploration:** Consider that Orsino's object of desire at the beginning of the play is adamantly unattainable. Look at the language he uses to describe Olivia early on. Is it sexual, sensual, or chaste? How would your students characterize his reaction to Viola when she reveals herself as a woman? Could a production choose to portray Orsino as someone not actually interested in women, choosing unavailable targets to avoid the issue?
- When Shakespeare wrote this play, he was writing Viola for a young male actor.
 - Try at least one of the above interpretations again, this time with a male student playing Viola.
 - What changes when a boy, in boy's clothing, plays a female character (in boy's clothing)?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

- Divide the class into small teams and assign each a section of the text (an act, a scene, or their own Line Assignments) for exploration.
- Give each a large sheet of paper and a marker.
- Teams are to find instances, throughout the text, when a character comments on Viola's/Cesario's presentation of gender. (This may include Viola commenting on herself).
 - Suggestions:
 - 1.4.28-41
 - 1.5.123-145
 - 1.5.226-268
 - 2.2.15-39
 - 2.4.14-40
 - 3.1.114-155
 - 3.4.243-276
 - 3.4.330-349
 - 5.1.101-167
 - 5.1.208-270
 - 5.1.309-315
 - 5.1.369-375
- Answer the following:
 - What aspect of Viola-Cesario is the character commenting on?
 - Is it described as a typically masculine or typically feminine trait?
 - Does the character speaking seem aware of any contradiction or gender ambiguity?
- Have each team stage one of their moments in at least two different ways, underscoring the characters' awareness of or oblivion to Viola's dual nature.

Student Handout #5A - Suit Me Like a Man

The Two Gentlemen of Verona, 2.7, 1591

JULIA

Counsel, Lucetta; gentle girl, assist me;
And even in kind love I do conjure thee,
Who art the table wherein all my thoughts
Are visibly character'd and engraved,
To lesson me and tell me some good mean 5
How, with my honour, I may undertake
A journey to my loving Proteus. [...]

LUCETTA

Better forbear till Proteus make return. [...]

JULIA

Didst thou but know the inly touch of love,
Thou wouldst as soon go kindle fire with snow 10
As seek to quench the fire of love with words.

LUCETTA

I do not seek to quench your love's hot fire,
But qualify the fire's extreme rage,
Lest it should burn above the bounds of reason.

JULIA

The more thou damm'st it up, the more it burns. 15
The current that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopp'd, impatiently doth rage;
But when his fair course is not hindered,
He makes sweet music with the enamell'ed stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge 20
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage,
And so by many winding nooks he strays
With willing sport to the wild ocean.
Then let me go and hinder not my course
I'll be as patient as a gentle stream 25
And make a pastime of each weary step,
Till the last step have brought me to my love;
And there I'll rest, as after much turmoil
A blessed soul doth in Elysium.

LUCETTA

But in what habit will you go along? 30

JULIA

Not like a woman; for I would prevent
The loose encounters of lascivious men.
Gentle Lucetta, fit me with such weeds
As may beseem some well-reputed page.

LUCETTA

Why, then, your ladyship must cut your hair. 35

JULIA

No, girl, I'll knit it up in silken strings
With twenty odd-conceited true-love knots.
To be fantastic may become a youth
Of greater time than I shall show to be.

LUCETTA

What fashion, madam, shall I make your breeches?

JULIA

That fits as well as 'Tell me, good my lord,
What compass will you wear your farthingale?'
Why even what fashion thou best likest, Lucetta.

LUCETTA

You must needs have them with a codpiece,
madam.

JULIA

Out, out, Lucetta, that would be ill-favour'd. 45

LUCETTA

A round hose, madam, now's not worth a pin,
Unless you have a codpiece to stick pins on.

JULIA

Lucetta, as thou lovest me, let me have
What thou thinkest meet, and is most mannerly.
But tell me, wench, how will the world repute me 50
For undertaking so unstaidd a journey?
I fear me, it will make me scandalized.

LUCETTA

If you think so, then stay at home and go not.

Student Handout #5B - Suit Me Like a Man

***As You Like It*, 1.3, 1599**

ROSALIND

Alas, what danger will it be to us,
Maids as we are, to travel forth so far?
Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.

CELIA

I'll put myself in poor and mean attire
And with a kind of umber smirch my face; 5
The like do you: so shall we pass along
And never stir assailants.

ROSALIND

Were it not better,
Because that I am more than common tall,
That I did suit me all points like a man?
A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh, 10
A boar-spear in my hand; and--in my heart
Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will--
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,
As many other mannish cowards have
That do outface it with their semblances. 15

CELIA

What shall I call thee when thou art a man?

ROSALIND

I'll have no worse a name than Jove's own page;
And therefore look you call me Ganymede.
But what will you be call'd?

CELIA

Something that hath a reference to my state
No longer Celia, but *Aliena*. 20

ROSALIND

But, cousin, what if we assay'd to steal
The clownish fool out of your father's court?
Would he not be a comfort to our travel?

CELIA

He'll go along o'er the wide world with me;
Leave me alone to woo him. Let's away, 25
And get our jewels and our wealth together,
Devise the fittest time and safest way
To hide us from pursuit that will be made
After my flight. Now go we in content
To liberty and not to banishment.

Student Handout #5C - Suit Me Like a Man

The Merchant of Venice, 3.4, 1597

PORTIA

Come on, Nerissa; I have work in hand
That you yet know not of: we'll see our husbands
Before they think of us.

NERISSA

Shall they see us?

PORTIA

They shall, Nerissa; but in such a habit,
That they shall think we are accomplished
With that we lack. I'll hold thee any wager,
When we are both accoutred like young men,
I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,
And wear my dagger with the braver grace,
And speak between the change of man and boy
With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps
Into a manly stride, and speak of frays
Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies,
How honourable ladies sought my love,
Which I denying, they fell sick and died;
I could not do withal; then I'll repent,
And wish for all that, that I had not killed them;
And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell,
That men shall swear I have discontinued school
Above a twelvemonth. I have within my mind
A thousand raw tricks of these bragging Jacks,
Which I will practise.

NERISSA

Why, shall we turn to men?

PORTIA

Fie, what a question's that,
If thou wert near a lewd interpreter?
But come, I'll tell thee all my whole device
When I am in my coach, which stays for us
At the park gate; and therefore haste away,
For we must measure twenty miles to-day.

Exeunt

Student Handout #5D - Suit Me Like a Man

***Cymbeline*, 3.4, 1609**

PISANIO

I am most glad
You think of other place. The ambassador,
Lucius the Roman, comes to Milford-Haven
To-morrow: now, if you could wear a mind
Dark as your fortune is, and but disguise
That which, to appear itself, must not yet be
But by self-danger, you should tread a course
Pretty and full of view; yea, haply, near
The residence of Posthumus; so nigh at least
That though his actions were not visible, yet
Report should render him hourly to your ear
As truly as he moves.

IMOGEN

O, for such means;
Though peril to my modesty, not death on't,
I would adventure.

PISANIO

Well, then, here's the point:
You must forget to be a woman; change
Command into obedience: fear and niceness--
The handmaids of all women, or, more truly,
Woman its pretty self--into a waggish courage:
Ready in gibes, quick-answer'd, saucy and
As quarrelous as the weasel; nay, you must
Forget that rarest treasure of your cheek,
Exposing it--but, O, the harder heart,
Alack, no remedy--to the greedy touch
Of common-kissing Titan, and forget
Your laboursome and dainty trims, wherein
You made great Juno angry.

IMOGEN

Nay, be brief
I see into thy end, and am almost
A man already.

PISANIO

First, make yourself but like one.
Fore-thinking this, I have already fit--
'Tis in my cloak-bag--doublet, hat, hose, all
That answer to them: would you in their serving,
And with what imitation you can borrow
From youth of such a season, 'fore noble Lucius
Present yourself, desire his service, tell him
Wherein you're happy,--which you'll make him
know,
If that his head have ear in music,--doubtless
With joy he will embrace you, for he's honourable
And doubling that, most holy. Your means abroad,
You have me, rich; and I will never fail
Beginning nor supplyment.

IMOGEN

Thou art all the comfort
The gods will diet me with. Prithee, away:
There's more to be consider'd; but we'll even
All that good time will give us: this attempt
I am soldier to, and will abide it with
A prince's courage. Away, I prithee.

Teacher's Guide – Suit Me Like a Man

The Two Gentlemen of Verona, 2.7, 1591

JULIA

Counsel, Lucetta; gentle girl, assist me;
And even in kind love I do conjure thee,
Who art the table wherein all my thoughts
Are visibly character'd and engraved,
To lesson me and tell me some good mean 5
How, with my honour, I may undertake
A journey to my loving Proteus. [...]



Julia asks her attendant Lucetta for assistance. What in her language indicates the intimacy of their relationship?



Julia's concern is that her honor may be damaged by going forth to follow Proteus. Ask your students what that really means she's afraid of – That her reputation will be damaged? That she may be assaulted on the road? Something else?

LUCETTA

Better forbear till Proteus make return. [...]

JULIA

Didst thou but know the inly touch of love,
Thou wouldst as soon go kindle fire with snow 10
As seek to quench the fire of love with words.

LUCETTA

I do not seek to quench your love's hot fire,
But qualify the fire's extreme rage,
Lest it should burn above the bounds of reason.

JULIA

The more thou damm'st it up, the more it burns. 15
The current that with gentle murmur glides,
Thou know'st, being stopp'd, impatiently doth rage;
But when his fair course is not hindered,
He makes sweet music with the enamell'ed stones,
Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge 20
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage,
And so by many winding nooks he strays
With willing sport to the wild ocean.
Then let me go and hinder not my course
I'll be as patient as a gentle stream 25
And make a pastime of each weary step,
Till the last step have brought me to my love;
And there I'll rest, as after much turmoil
A blessed soul doth in Elysium.



Julia seems to be anticipating "weary steps", but ask your students if they think she has any real idea of what her journey will entail. How much of her desire is realistic and how much is idealized?



Notice Lucetta's practical consideration following Julia's effusive, emotional, imagery-filled speech. What information might this contrast provide about each character's physicality and vocal choices?

LUCETTA

But in what habit will you go along? 30

JULIA
Not like a woman; for I would prevent
The loose encounters of lascivious men.
Gentle Lucetta, fit me with such weeds
As may beseem some well-reputed page.



Here, Julia voices her concern: she worries about encountering sexual menace while traveling.

LUCETTA
Why, then, your ladyship must cut your hair. 35



Julia chooses a social status that would afford some protection. If she is assumed to be someone's page, or servant, she might be less likely to be bothered. At the same time, she would be too junior to be thought to have much wealth on her.

JULIA
No, girl, I'll knit it up in silken strings
With twenty odd-conceited true-love knots.
To be fantastic may become a youth
Of greater time than I shall show to be.



Why does Julia reject the idea of cutting her hair? Might the character reasons be different from the practical staging reasons? (You may wish to look at the final scene of the play, 5.4, to see how Julia's real identity is revealed).



What sort of man is Julia intending to emulate?

LUCETTA
What fashion, madam, shall I make your breeches?



The farthingale is the hooped skirt that gives Elizabethan women their iconic bell-shaped silhouette (see the costumes on page 178). Julia's comment indicates that she has not spent much time considering the fashion of men's breeches, any more than they consider the shape of her skirt.

JULIA
That fits as well as "Tell me, good my lord,
What compass will you wear your farthingale?"
Why even what fashion thou best likest, Lucetta.



Codpieces (an oft-ornamented and sometimes stuffed piece of fabric covering the jointure between a man's hose or pant legs, sometimes overtly phallic in nature) were actually falling out of fashion by the 1590s. Is Lucetta's suggestion serious? Is she trying to get a rise out of Julia? Might this be an indication of how in- or out- of fashion Julia's disguise is likely to be?

LUCETTA
You must needs have them with a codpiece, madam.

JULIA
Out, out, Lucetta, that would be ill-favour'd. 45

LUCETTA
A round hose, madam, now's not worth a pin,
Unless you have a codpiece to stick pins on.

JULIA
Lucetta, as thou lovest me, let me have
What thou thinkest meet, and is most mannerly.
But tell me, wench, how will the world repute me 50
For undertaking so unstaidd a journey?
I fear me, it will make me scandalized.



Ask your students how "meet and mannerly" might translate to modern dress for a man. If your students were costuming this play for a modern setting, what might they have Julia wear?



What seems to be more scandalous: that Julia is journeying alone, or that she is doing so in men's clothing?

LUCETTA
If you think so, then stay at home and go not.

As You Like It, 1.3, 1599

ROSALIND

Alas, what danger will it be to us,
Maids as we are, to travel forth so far?
Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold.



Rosalind explicitly states that her fear is of theft.

CELIA

I'll put myself in poor and mean attire
And with a kind of umber smirch my face; 5
The like do you: so shall we pass along
And never stir assailants.



Celia does not seem to be worried about sexual assault, as Julia was, since she thinks looking poor and dirty will keep them from harm.

ROSALIND

Were it not better,
Because that I am more than common tall,
That I did suit me all points like a man?
A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh, 10
A boar-spear in my hand; and--in my heart
Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will--
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,
As many other mannish cowards have
That do outface it with their semblances. 15



An embedded stage direction for the casting director – Rosalind, it seems, needs to be uncommonly tall for a woman. What if she is not? Do these lines need to be cut? Or can an actor find a way to turn them into a plausible excuse?



Axes and boar-spears were not commonly carried weapons in the 1590s. Young men were more likely to have daggers and perhaps rapiers, if they were wealthy enough. What sort of man is Rosalind intending to emulate? How is it different from the kind of man Julia disguised herself as?

CELIA

What shall I call thee when thou art a man?

ROSALIND

I'll have no worse a name than Jove's own page;
And therefore look you call me Ganymede.
But what will you be call'd?



Rosalind manages to pick a name that would not only be extremely uncommon (the vast majority of Elizabethan men had one of six names: Henry, William, John, Thomas, Edward, or Richard), but has a homosexual connotation. What might this tell you about Rosalind's character? Her education? Her awareness of the world outside the court?

CELIA

Something that hath a reference to my state
No longer Celia, but Aliena. 20



Celia, meanwhile, chooses a joke that only plays if you understand Latin ("aliena" meaning "stranger"). How confident are your students in Rosalind and Celia's capability to hold up their disguises?

ROSALIND

But, cousin, what if we assay'd to steal
The clownish fool out of your father's court?
Would he not be a comfort to our travel?



Unlike other cross-dressing heroines, Rosalind decides to take a man along with her for protection – and she chooses the court jester. How does this choice affect your students' perception of her plan?

CELIA

He'll go along o'er the wide world with me;
Leave me alone to woo him. Let's away, 25
And get our jewels and our wealth together,

Devise the fittest time and safest way
 To hide us from pursuit that will be made
 After my flight. Now go we in content
 To liberty and not to banishment.

The Merchant of Venice, 3.4, 1597

PORTIA

Come on, Nerissa; I have work in hand
 That you yet know not of: we'll see our husbands
 Before they think of us.



Portia's disguise is for a different purpose and meant to be of much shorter duration. How might this affect the costuming choices?

NERISSA

Shall they see us?

PORTIA

They shall, Nerissa; but in such a habit,
 That they shall think we are accomplished
 With that we lack. I'll hold thee any wager,
 When we are both accoutred like young men,
 I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,
 And wear my dagger with the braver grace,
 And speak between the change of man and boy
 With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps
 Into a manly stride, and speak of frays
 Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies,
 How honourable ladies sought my love,
 Which I denying, they fell sick and died;
 I could not do withal; then I'll repent,
 And wish for all that, that I had not killed them;
 And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell,
 That men shall swear I have discontinued school
 Above a twelvemonth. I have within my mind
 A thousand raw tricks of these bragging Jacks,
 Which I will practise.



"Accomplished with that we lack" may well be a sexual joke, referring to their genitals. Can your Portia play it innocently? If so, should Nerissa hear the double entendre anyway?



How does Nerissa respond to this assertion? Is being "prettier" advantageous to Portia's disguise?



What information does Portia provide about the kind of man she intends to portray? Is it more like Rosalind's or like Julia's?



Why does Portia give such an extended description of her behavior (behavior which we will never see on stage)? Is this an opportunity to engage the audience? Remember that young men known as "gallants" would have been sitting on the stage, finely dressed, perhaps with swords on, prominently placed so that others could see and admire them.

NERISSA

Why, shall we turn to men?



Is Nerissa really this slow on the uptake? Or is she (like Lucetta) calling attention to Portia's wordiness with her brevity? Or, is it a sexual joke of some kind? (Consider Portia's response).

PORTIA

Fie, what a question's that,
 If thou wert near a lewd interpreter?
 But come, I'll tell thee all my whole device
 When I am in my coach, which stays for us

At the park gate; and therefore haste away,
For we must measure twenty miles to-day.

Exeunt

Cymbeline, 3.4, 1609

PISANIO

I am most glad
You think of other place. The ambassador,
Lucius the Roman, comes to Milford-Haven
To-morrow: now, if you could wear a mind
Dark as your fortune is, and but disguise
That which, to appear itself, must not yet be
But by self-danger, you should tread a course
Pretty and full of view; yea, haply, near
The residence of Posthumus; so nigh at least
That though his actions were not visible, yet
Report should render him hourly to your ear
As truly as he moves.



Pisanio seems to be speaking around the issue rather than coming right out and saying what he means. Why might this be? Does Imogen pick up on his meaning at first?

IMOGEN

O, for such means;
Though peril to my modesty, not death on't,
I would adventure.



Imogen states that she is willing to risk though not sacrifice her modesty. What does she seem to fear?

PISANIO

Well, then, here's the point:
You must forget to be a woman; change
Command into obedience: fear and niceness--
The handmaids of all women, or, more truly,
Woman its pretty self--into a waggish courage:
Ready in gibes, quick-answer'd, saucy and
As quarrelous as the weasel; nay, you must
Forget that rarest treasure of your cheek,
Exposing it--but, O, the harder heart,
Alack, no remedy--to the greedy touch
Of common-kissing Titan, and forget
Your laboursome and dainty trims, wherein
You made great Juno angry.



Here, Pisanio finally makes the suggestion outright. How does Imogen react? Notice that there is a caesura following his statement; what space for reaction might that provide?



Pisanio speaks not only of what makes someone manly but of what makes them womanly. What are the differences he names? Are those still relevant in modern culture?



This is, though oblique, a reference to her clothing. Pisanio seems to feel that elaborate dress is for women and simpler dress for men. Has that view been universal in these scenes so far?

IMOGEN

Nay, be brief

I see into thy end, and am almost

A man already.

PISANIO

First, make yourself but like one.

Fore-thinking this, I have already fit--

'Tis in my cloak-bag--doublet, hat, hose, all

That answer to them: would you in their serving,

And with what imitation you can borrow

From youth of such a season, 'fore noble Lucius

Present yourself, desire his service, tell him

Wherein you're happy,--which you'll make him know,

If that his head have ear in music,--doubtless

With joy he will embrace you, for he's honourable

And doubling that, most holy. Your means abroad,

You have me, rich; and I will never fail

Beginning nor supplyment.



Pisanio names the garments a man would wear and which the audience will later see Imogen in.

IMOGEN

Thou art all the comfort

The gods will diet me with. Prithee, away:

There's more to be consider'd; but we'll even

All that good time will give us: this attempt

I am soldier to, and will abide it with

A prince's courage. Away, I prithee.



In early modern English, "prince" could apply to either gender. Is Imogen using it here to seem manly? Or she speaking of her status and rank? Try it both ways.

Student Handout #6 - Orsino's Awareness

DUKE ORSINO

Let all the rest give place: 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;
The parts that fortune hath bestow'd upon her, 5
Tell her, I hold as giddily as fortune;
But 'tis that miracle and queen of gems
That nature pranks her in attracts my soul.

VIOLA

But if she cannot love you, sir?

DUKE ORSINO

It cannot be so answer'd.

VIOLA

Sooth, but you must. 10
Say that some lady, as perhaps there is,
Hath for your love a great a pang of heart
As you have for Olivia: you cannot love her;
You tell her so; must she not then be answer'd?

DUKE ORSINO

There is no woman's sides 15
Can bide the beating of so strong a passion
As love doth give my heart; no woman's heart
So big, to hold so much; they lack retention
Alas, their love may be call'd appetite,
No motion of the liver, but the palate, 20
That suffer surfeit, cloyment and revolt;
But mine is all as hungry as the sea,
And can digest as much: make no compare
Between that love a woman can bear me
And that I owe Olivia. 25

VIOLA

Ay, but I know--

DUKE ORSINO

What dost thou know?

VIOLA

Too well what love women to men may owe:
In faith, they are as true of heart as we.
My father had a daughter loved a man,
As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman, 30
I should your lordship.

DUKE ORSINO

And what's her history?

VIOLA

A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy 35
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?
We men may say more, swear more: but indeed
Our shows are more than will; for still we prove
Much in our vows, but little in our love. 40

DUKE ORSINO

But died thy sister of her love, my boy?

VIOLA

I am all the daughters of my father's house,
And all the brothers too: and yet I know not.
Sir, shall I to this lady?

DUKE ORSINO

Ay, that's the theme.
To her in haste; give her this jewel; say, 45
My love can give no place, bide no deny.

Exeunt

Teacher's Guide - Orsino's Awareness

DUKE ORSINO
 Let all the rest give place: 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;
 The parts that fortune hath bestow'd upon her, 5
 Tell her, I hold as giddily as fortune;
 But 'tis that miracle and queen of gems
 That nature pranks her in attracts my soul.



Orsino dismisses some attendants. Do they leave the stage, or are do they remain on but distant? How might their presence or absence affect the rest of the scene?



Orsino gives Cesario/Viola instructions regarding Olivia. How does Viola respond to them physically? Should passing-masculine Cesario react differently than the overtly-feminine version?

VIOLA
 But if she cannot love you, sir?



Is this hopeful? Savvy? Or part of Viola's perceived masculinity?

DUKE ORSINO
 It cannot be so answer'd.

VIOLA
 Sooth, but you must. 10
 Say that some lady, as perhaps there is,
 Hath for your love a great a pang of heart
 As you have for Olivia: you cannot love her;
 You tell her so; must she not then be answer'd?



Many of Viola's lines contain potentially revelatory nuggets in them, such as the "as perhaps there is" in line 11. In each version of the scene, make sure your Viola makes a decision about how much to play up or to play down these moments. Can she take them to the audience? How much of what Viola says does Orsino actually hear?

DUKE ORSINO
 There is no woman's sides 15
 Can bide the beating of so strong a passion
 As love doth give my heart; no woman's heart
 So big, to hold so much; they lack retention
 Alas, their love may be call'd appetite,
 No motion of the liver, but the palate, 20
 That suffer surfeit, cloyment and revolt;
 But mine is all as hungry as the sea,
 And can digest as much: make no compare
 Between that love a woman can bear me
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Orsino's speech here gives Viola a lot to work with in each version of the scene. Is she anguished? Angry? Exasperated? Enjoying the intellectual challenge? What emotional choice works best for each version, and how can your actor express that choice?



Further Exploration: Dramaturgy: Orsino takes many of his ideas from early modern concepts about the differences between the genders, particularly with regards to medicine. Women were considered to have a different balance of the humours – the four substances governing the human body – than men, which supposedly made them more fickle, less constant, and less capable of forming strong emotional bonds. As an extra enrichment project, have your students research the basis for Orsino's arguments in Galen, Aristotle, Montaigne, Erasmus, or other ancient or early modern authors whose work Shakespeare would have known.

VIOLA
 Ay, but I know--

DUKE ORSINO
 What dost thou know?



These three lines are short but not perfectly shared. How quickly should they follow on each other? Is there any potential for them to overlap? Or is there somewhere to place a pause?

VIOLA

Too well what love women to men may owe:
In faith, they are as true of heart as we.
My father had a daughter loved a man,
As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman,
I should your lordship.

30



Consider how your different versions of Viola could play these lines. Does she reveal too much, then catch herself and backtrack? Is she making a solid intellectual argument? How does each choice affect the overall scene?

DUKE ORSINO

And what's her history?

VIOLA

A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?

35



Viola is, in a way, speaking in both the past and future tenses, not only stating what she has (or has not) done, but with the implication that she never will reveal herself.



Notice the vivid description of suffering from melancholy. How does this relate to Orsino's woes elsewhere in the play? Is there any gendered difference between how men and women experience melancholy?

We men may say more, swear more: but indeed
Our shows are more than will; for still we prove
Much in our vows, but little in our love.

40



How accusatory might this be? How despairing? How strongly is Viola including her Cesario-self in on the "we", and how strongly is she aiming it at Orsino?

DUKE ORSINO

But died thy sister of her love, my boy?

VIOLA

I am all the daughters of my father's house,
And all the brothers too: and yet I know not.
Sir, shall I to this lady?



Notice that normal iambic pentameter will stress "am" in this line. How does that affect the emotional delivery of the line? The rest of the line does not scan normally; is this permission to move the stress off of "am" and to scan the line trochaically? What might that change about how much Viola reveals or conceals of herself?

DUKE ORSINO

Ay, that's the theme.
To her in haste; give her this jewel; say,
My love can give no place, bide no deny.

45



What is it that prompts Viola to stop arguing with Orsino and change the topic back to Olivia? Does she run out of steam? Does she feel she's given too much away and needs to change the subject? Does something physical happen between them? Explore different possible reasons for this sudden shift.

Exeunt



How do different reasons for the shift affect Orsino's delivery of line 44?



Notice both the embedded need for a prop (the jewel), and the sudden brevity of Orsino's sentences. What clue does this departure from his usual florid speech give an actor?