

"Clothes Don't Make the Man...or woman"

While role reversal is a rather glaringly obvious theme in Twelfth Night, there is more than the occasional clothing swap that exposes the blurred, and the distinct lines between gender roles. In a dialogue between Olivia and Viola one witnesses how it is one's character, not just clothing, that paints them as masculine or feminine.

As soon as Olivia meets Viola (Cesario) she brazenly pursues his (her) love. She is forthright and inquires "tell me what thou think'st of me (1796)" Viola responds, "that you do think you are not what you are." Olivia later tells Viola, "Would you were as I would have you be." In a twist of irony, it is Olivia who is taking on masculine airs. She uses the informal "thou" and demands a direct question of someone she thinks is a man, so the response, that she is not what she think she is, does not simply mean she is mad, as Greenblatt implies, but that Viola is tactfully telling her that she acting more ^{intends} as a man with her bold conduct. When Olivia wishes

that Viola would be what she wants her to be, the reader is reminded of Orsino. He wants Olivia to be his "lady on a pedestal" so to speak; he only sees her as his idealized wife and only wants her to be that. Once again, Olivia shows the manly trait of domination despite Viola's appearance as the man.

good

One can also explore Viola's response of "I am not what I am" in this manner; instead of Viola implying she is a woman, not a man, she could be telling Olivia, who for all intents & purposes sees Viola as male, that by pursuing her so boldly she is making an object, thus a woman, out of the "man" Cesario. Olivia is making Cesario not what he is.

excellent

This issue of confused gender roles is prominent in Twelfth Night. Since the young men who played feminine roles were so well trained as women that they elicited feminine qualities more than masculines it is possible that there was confusion from the Elizabethan audience; were these boys men or women? Also, Elizabeth ruled on a man's throne, even referred to herself as a man at

times; could Shakespeare have been expressing that despite the trappings of a woman/man, gender is more relative to personality and action than body and birth? The final point that drives this home is Orsino's seeming recognition of Viola as a woman through her disguise. She shines as a woman through the veneer of masculinity. In reverse, if Olivia acts in a masculine manner, then it stands to reason that she would marry Sebastian, who exhibits feminine, possibly homosexual, qualities. Essentially, there is more at stake in the realm of gender swapping than crossdressing!

"The All-knowing King"

The most remarkable aspect of Macbeth in Macbeth is his sensitivity to the depth and breadth of his actions. He does not commit his crimes believing that murder and usurpation will create a perfect life, rather, he shows marked foresight into the later events of the play.

As soon as King Duncan's body is discovered, Macbeth states these lines; "Had I but died before

this chance... From this instant there's nothing serious in mortality... the mere lees is left this vault to brag of." Now, on the brink of his kingship, why does he wish he had died before his rise to power? The most important, and most obvious, factor that Macbeth has this seeming foresight of is his never-secure kingship. He realizes that his claim to the throne is corrupt and, as if he sees Malcolm + Macduff's rebellion, he knows his throne will never be secure.

When Macbeth states that "renown and grace is dead" in this same passage he is showing both a recognition and understanding of both past and future events. Renown comes not only from kingly deed, but also from passing ones name to future generations. He sees the fulfillment of the Weyard Sisters prophecy in himself and in that moment realizes the implications this has for Banquo; if Macbeth has become king, as foretold, then it is Banquo that will reap renown with his foretold progeny. Macbeth also shows his sensitivity to future events with this line. Later in the play,

it is stated that Macbeth will only be remembered as a tyrant and a murderer. Before Macbeth kills the king he is renowned as a bold and valorous man. His murderous act, then, is indeed the death of renown in that it is the only thing he can ever hope to be remembered by; any past or future deed is eclipsed by this one, and this is a shameful act to have as the last left in the world to brag of.

Why does Macbeth, of all tragic villains, have such a deep understanding of the extent of his plight? Most likely, it has its roots in what King James would have liked to see in a play. The usurper never enjoys his reign, suffers sleeplessness and dread, and loses all hope of good renown. Since James was terrified of assassination and usurpation, it appears that Shakespeare sends this message (on behalf of the king that gave his acting troupe a promotion!) to any would-be "Macbeths": don't do it, the guilt and ruin will overwhelm you.

Shakespeare
didn't serve
anybody