

## A. (Twelfth Night)

2. (2.2.23-30)

This passage by Viola (dressed as Cesario) reveals her frustration and her feelings of helplessness at the love triangle that has developed between her, Orsino, and Olivia because of her disguise. More importantly, however, the passage reveals how Viola has internalized the misogyny of her patriarchal society - she mourns the fact that Olivia has fallen in love with her as Cesario, but she does not see the situation as a strong woman exercising her will against the expectations society places on her, as Viola might well think. Instead, she sees the "frailty" of women - "How easy 'tis for the proper false / In women's waken hearts to set their forms!" (27-28). Viola believes Olivia, being a frail woman, impressionable

yes  
emotionally, simply couldn't help falling for  
Cesario, even though Viola thinks it was not  
correct of her to. Even so, it is interesting to  
wonder what Viola ~~des~~ think Olivia should  
do. Viola is in love with Orsino, so it seems as  
if it is a better fate ~~that~~ in Viola's eyes that  
Olivia love Cesario rather than Orsino.

fascinating  
This passage also raises the issue of Viola's  
own attitude toward her male alter ego.  
It is clear that she finds Olivia's "frailty" to  
be problematic. One wonders if Viola ~~enjoys~~ enjoys her  
disguise to some how be free of the so-called  
"weaknesses" of femininity. Indeed, the tone of  
the passage indicates that Viola is critiquing  
Olivia's womanhood from a perceived distance - as  
if she were no longer a woman at all. The  
disguise seems to be so complete that Viola is  
losing her identity in it - or perhaps only

the assigned identity based on gender she once knew. The passage begins with Viola's statement that "I am the man" (2.2.23).

Perhaps Viola's discontentment with her disguise in this passage ("Disguise, I see thou art wickedness") comes not as much from the Puritan conviction that cross-dressing ~~was~~ was inherently wicked as it does from the upsetting of once-clear gender divisions. Her disguise leads to attracting, especially in the case of Olivia, that cannot be fulfilled in the framework of the play's culture nor in its format: A comedy must end in marriages, and homosexual union was not even a concept at this time. Thus, Olivia does not seize this opportunity to explore the meaning of sexuality and gender because she can hardly conceive of those things. She has been so instructed in heterosexual monoculture that she

very good

cannot seriously consider Olivia's desires for her as Cesario: "Poor lady, she were better love a dream" (2.2.24).

An added dimension of complexity comes when considering that the original production the play was written for would have cast ~~Posta~~ a teenage boy as Viola-playing-Cesario.

This added layer of gender confusion was a well-accepted device, but audiences may have still been aware of its significance.

¶ This understanding emphasizes the homoerotic crosscurrents between Orsino and Cesario. Viola, playing Cesario, is "truly" a woman, but the actor is "truly" a boy.

The third level of sexual confusion brings a sense that no matter what happens in this love triangle, gender will never be clear, and the gender ~~is~~ raised goes deeper than the play's highly optimistic ending.

Super - excellent analysis that explains these related, different levels and issues clearly and in probing, provocative ways.

## B. (Macbeth)

### 5. "What Man Dare, I dare" (3.4.98)

This short line, spoken by ~~the~~ Macbeth, reveals much about Macbeth's mentality and also his attitudes toward the society in which he lives. This is a very bold line, spoken at a time when his mental stability is collapsing, and he sees apparitions of ~~Macbeth~~<sup>Banquo</sup> haunting him.

It is a ~~bold~~ bold line which contrasts with his earlier hesitancy, when Lady Macbeth must insult his manhood in order to get him to go through with the murder of Duncan. Perhaps Macbeth is attempting to assert his masculinity in this passage as a sort of defense mechanism, preventing him from examining his own guilt or his emotional instability. Perhaps he regrets the

way in which Lady Macbeth convinces him to commit the murder, and this reassertion of his masculinity and the positive manly quality of "daring" is intended to convince himself, once again, that what he did was somehow noble or respectable.

The line concentrates many of the play's themes - among them, the ~~quest~~ exploration of what masculinity or manliness is as well as the problems of ~~the related~~ feudal warrior-societies, where the values of military prowess, valor, and domination butted heads with the feudal expected reverence for Kings. The social system seems similar in many ways to social relations between packs of wolves or dogs. In such a system, an "Alpha Male" leader emerges, but usually through ~~success~~ emerging victorious in ~~a~~ bouts with ~~a~~ fellow pack members.

In a way, then, Macbeth's confusion is understandable. He expects to be honored, his masculinity and strength reaffirmed, by usurping his leader's position through killing him. He expects to become the "Alpha Male," and so has difficulty understanding opposition to his rule. This line, "What Man dare, I dare," is an attempt to re-establish himself as "head of the pack."

Macbeth's line also seems to be a struggle against his own growing instability and perhaps insanity. The line seems to be addressed toward the "ghost of Banquo" who may or may not exist only within Macbeth's head, as he is the only person who witnesses it. Lady Macbeth says Macbeth's ~~not~~ insanity, or disconnect with reality, has come in bouts since childhood. She may be trying to explain away his current behavior, but if Macbeth has been struggling with visual

fall  
into

hallucinations, etc. - possibly the beginnings  
of Schizophrenia - "What was done, I done"  
may be an attempt by Macbeth to deny that  
his "condition" really compromises his abilities or  
his masculinity.

What, then, does?  
a woman "done"?

