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Rebecca Feuer April 15, 2015

The "Ocular Proof":
An Exploration of Sight, Love, and Society on the Shakespearean Stage

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Abstract

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Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, all end with impending marriages between mainly two different kinds of romantic couples: those that develop a strong foundation for their relationships and those that develop very weak foundations for their relationships. Couples that develop strong foundations, including Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Viola and Orsino in *Twelfth Night*, excel in using language, and other senses besides sight, to create successful romantic relationships that exhibit signs of true love. In contrast, couples that develop weak foundations, such as Hero and Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing,* and Olivia and Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*, rely too much on sight, the most noble of senses as believed in early modern England, to help them create relationships that show no indication of true love, but instead, only indicate a socially acceptable match. Romantic relationships in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* straddle the two categories, as pairings such as Demetrius and Helena, cannot be easily classified as a success or a failure, as true or false. In all of these comedies, sight either helps or hinders the progress of these relationships and shows itself to be connected to other major themes in these plays, including transformation, desire, and dreams.

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I. Introduction

In Shakespeare's tragedy, *Othello*, the protagonist grows anxious and weary as his evil and conniving ensign, Iago, attempts to convince the solider of his wife, Desdemona's, infidelity: "Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,/Be sure of it, give me the ocular proof" (*Othello* 3.3.363-364). And Iago does, by showing Othello that Cassio, the supposed "other man," is in possession of Desdemona's handkerchief, which was Othello's first gift to his wife. So outraged by his wife's betrayal of their love, Othello smothers her to death on their own bed. Unfortunately for Othello, what he believes he sees with Iago is a complete falsehood, constructed by the villain, who planted the handkerchief on the innocent Cassio. While Iago's actions are clearly culpable, Othello's reaction to the situation is also very questionable, if not also condemning. Othello makes the choice to believe the suspicious and slimy Iago, instead of maintaining trust in Desdemona, the woman he supposedly loves and to whom he is married. Othello's reliance on the "ocular proof" is a fault, a downfall, which breaks the romantic foundation between him and Desdemona, resulting in a tragic and unjust death.

Othello insists on "ocular proof," something his eyes can visually capture and convince his mind and heart to be true. The process Othello goes through to persuade himself of his wife's infidelity is a rather common one supported by beliefs and opinions about sight in Renaissance Europe. Stuart Clark's, *Vanities of the Eye*, provides an overwhelming amount of evidence suggesting Renaissance culture worshipped the eyes: "the general opinion was that the eyes provided the most direct knowledge of things, based on the most distinctions and the widest range…they were organ of power, liveliness, speed, and accuracy" (10). He cites Ambroise Paré, a "French anatomist" as finding sight to be the "most excellent sense...we perceive and know the magnitude, figure, number, proportion, site, motion and rest of all bodyes" (10). Clark also notes

"the eyes were associated with the internal image-making processes that were deemed crucial for all thought" (10). This combination of the "internal image-making" process and man's thoughts is what creates his perception, and dictates his future actions. With Othello, the external image of Cassio with Desdamona's handkerchief, combined with Iago's slanderous words, causes his "internal image-making" process to produce false images of a cheating Desdamona. These false images stick in Othello's mind and enrage him enough to become a killer. With this tragedy, Shakespeare asks his audience to question their own beliefs in and reliance on sight, and how trustworthy that "ocular proof" is.

In a completely different genre, *The Winter's Tale*, an adultery play typically termed a romance or tragicomedy, Shakespeare again asks his audience to consider their levels of faith, and whether that faith can surpass the illogical aspects of magic in support of true love. Leontes, one of the play's protagonists visits Paulina, the friend of his late wife, Hermione, who died because Leontes wrongfully believed she was having an affair with his friend, Polixenes. Paulina creates a lifelike statue of the late Hermione, which Leontes begs to see, hoping he can somehow find signs of life in the representation of the woman he loved, but so wrongfully killed. Before she draws the curtain, Paulina encourages Leontes to view the statue as if it was really Hermione posing before him: "It is required you do awake your faith" (*The Winter's Tale* 5.3.94-95). Paulina gives Leontes the key to his happiness. In order for a miracle to happen, his mind must be "fully open" (*TWT* 343). She implies if he keeps an open mind, he will see with truly open eyes. Leontes, who proves his true love for his wife with his many years of guilt and regret, chooses to take a leap of "faith," and watches Hermione come to life before him. Alive and well, she is reunited with her husband after years of misery between them.

Leontes shows himself to experience true love using a process opposite to that of sight. Instead of taking in his external surroundings and convincing himself of a false image that he constructs from mentally extrapolating on that first image, he *first* convinces himself to be open to all perceptions when taking in his external surroundings. In this way, Leontes does not assume the worst, but, instead, assumes the best, creating an impenetrable faith in the love he has for Hermione. Carl Dennis finds that romantic love succeeds when a couple demonstrates a "willingness to lay down their wits and approach the world through faith, through irrational belief" ("Wit and Wisdom in *Much Ado About Nothing"* 223). Leontes does not ask for an explanation when Hermione comes back to life, he does not attempt to make logical sense of what he sees, and he most certainly does not choose to question his eyes. In the end, Leontes is rewarded with his wife and a second chance at happiness and true love.

This friction between sight and love is something Shakespeare returns to constantly in many of his play, including his comedies. Though the comedies often end with the prospect of marriages between protagonists and their supposedly true loves, the journeys these couples take to get to their weddings raise questions about whether the couples are truly in love or settling for a socially acceptable match. Lovers in *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, use sight, or do not use sight, in combination with transformation, desire, or dreams as they navigate the trials and tribulations of Renaissance romance. In the end, some romantic couples build strong foundations that illustrate the true love they have for one another and that rare form of faith, as exhibited by Leontes, while others build weak foundations that show no signs of genuine love, but simply a marriage for social acceptance. In addition to this exploration of the connection between sight and love, I also touch on more serious issues Shakespeare chooses to address in his seemingly light comedies. These issues, including the

political decisions of Queen Elizabeth I, gender representation, and homosexual desires, are deeply embedded in Renaissance culture, and Shakespeare uses his plays as mirrors for his audiences to observe and reflect on the culture present in their everyday lives.

"Adolescent Sight and Social Language in *Much Ado About Nothing"* evaluates the success rate of romantic couple that either use sight or language as a base for their budding romantic relationships. Claudio and Hero, employ the use of sight and develop an emphasis on their appearances to create the foundation for their romantic relationship, while Beatrice and Benedick, rely on exchanging words to create their own platform for, initially a rivalry, but eventually their marriage. I argue Claudio's dependence on sight puts him at a great disadvantage in his attempt to court Hero. As a result of his young age and inexperience, Claudio develops social anxiety, which results in false perceptions creating great confusion between the two. Hero, who also suffers from being young and inexperienced, also encounters great social anxiety, and believes, like Claudio, that a socially acceptable marriage will have them become more mature and socially experienced. In the end, they plan to marry, but their marriage is merely a way to create the perfect social image, instead of finding true love. On the other hand, Beatrice and Benedick, who are older and more experienced in their social world, use their words and witty banter to actually get to know each other beyond their physical appearances and social identities. The audience, in the end, is left with no doubts about whether Beatrice and Benedick have married for true love.

"Self-Love and the Desire for Power in *Twelfth Night,*" explores the relationship between desire and sight, as sight's unexplainable power aids various characters in taking steps to reach their unique desires, but at a substantial cost. I focus primarily on the queen-like character, Olivia, as her sight causes her to pursue her desire for her own self, threatening her unique and

fragile role as the lady of the house, and in control of her finances. Unlike Queen Elizabeth I, who never married or produced an heir, Olivia does want to produce an heir, but as a way to view a copy of her beautiful face, which she is so taken with. Olivia's interest in doubleness affects her romantic status as she finds herself suddenly taken with Duke Orsino's new messenger boy, Ceasario, who is really a young woman, Viola, in disguise. Olivia ends up accidentally marrying Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, yet Olivia is unfazed, as this marriage brings her one step closer to reproducing a child, a copy. However, she looses her unique power as the lady of the house when she marries Sebastian. Shakespeare uses Olivia to illustrate the anxiety throughout early modern England over Elizabeth's decision to not wed or conceive an heir. Shakespeare also uses this play to address the representation of gender and the fluidity of sexual desire both on the stage and in early modern society. Before the four main lovers reach their final heterosexual pairings, I find that Olivia and Viola and Sebastian and Antonio have budding homosexual relationships with strong foundations.

"Seeing with the Imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,*" looks at how the eyes represent the bridge between two overlapping domains: dreams and reality. In the play Oberon, the fairy king, places a charm in the form of a pansy's juice on the eyes of various characters, creating dreams that influence their imaginations, and ultimately their eyesight and perception. Depending on the classification of the dream, it can produce true or false images that alter the romantic relationships between characters, either temporarily or permanently. For example, Demetrius is intentional given the pansy juice, which causes him to fall in love with Helena, who he originally despises. Lysander, in contrast, is never meant to receive the pansy juice, and it, too, causes him to fall in love with Helena and turn away from his bride-to-be, Hermia.

However, when the charm is removed from most of their eyes, they wake up in confusion, unsure if they experienced reality or a truly bizarre dream.

II. Adolescent Sight and Social Language in *Much Ado About Nothing*

Claudio and Hero's marriage at the end of *Much Ado About Nothing* is questionable, to say the very least. After being deceptively wooed by Claudio's close companion, Don Pedro, Hero agrees to marry Claudio, despite barely knowing him. Claudio then humiliates Hero in the middle of their wedding ceremony, accusing her of disloyal behavior towards him. Yet, even with the harsh social embarrassment she had to endure, Hero is still willing to marry Claudio at the end of the play. Despite the turmoil they experience, Claudio and Hero's marriage is seen as a socially acceptable match in Renaissance England. Shakespeare sets up a very normal social situation on his stage, yet one cannot help but feel strange about it. How can Hero love Claudio after such an episode? Shakespeare asks his readers and audience to measure just how much true love can be found in the two prominent romantic pairings in this comedy, and what the significance is in the differences between the two foundations each couple establishes. Claudio and Hero create a foundation for their relationship based on appearances, while Beatrice and Benedick create a foundation for their relationship based on wit and intelligence. Claudio and Hero use their senses, especially sight, to navigate their love, and Beatrice and Benedick use their words. Claudio and Hero's intended marriage appears to be just for show. In contrast, Beatrice and Benedick also intend to be married, but there is a greater indication of a deeper and truer relationship, as they have taken the time to get to know each other. In this chapter, I will explore the ideas of sight in the Renaissance, the theme of transformation, and the trouble with age in my attempt to understand why Shakespeare calls into questions those relationships that form via a "love at first sight" mentality.

Whether it be the swift transmission of false information or the transportation of villains from one place to another in Messina, movement is critical for character change in *Much Ado*

About Nothing. Carl Dennis finds Beatrice and Benedick's success as a romantic couple to be a result of a kind of movement, in which they "lay down their wits and approach the world through faith, through irrational belief" ("Wit and Wisdom in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 224). In *Shakespeare After All*, Marjorie Garber finds that Benedick undergoes a "conversion" into a proper lover once he shaves off his beard (376). Both critics suggest that Benedick experiences a kind of change or movement towards a state that eventually softens him into a lover that lands him in his rightful place next to Beatrice. Dennis notes that Claudio also experiences movement, though it is quite different from Benedick's: "Claudio…moves from love to hate because his initial commitment to Hero is never deep enough to make appearances irrelevant" ("Wit and Wisdom in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 223). While I agree with Dennis that Claudio's apparent love for Hero is shallow and based on "appearances," I do not think he moves from "love to hate." In fact, I do not think Claudio "moves" much at all. Claudio attempts to move or to convert into a man with greater maturity, experience, and social stature. However, Claudio, due to his youth and inexperience, cannot surpass his own age and, instead, perfectly illustrates the very weaknesses of adolescence.

Claudio, believes his eyes will correctly help him navigate love in his attempt to woo and obtain Leonato's beautiful daughter, Hero. Many critics, including Marjorie Garber, Sheldon P. Zitner, and Carl Dennis, all attempt to give Count Claudio the benefit of the doubt in regards to his many mistakes made in *Much Ado About Nothing*. They note Beatrice and Benedick, as an "older, more experienced" couple, in contrast to Claudio and Hero (Zitner 28). They also remind readers of Claudio's "inexperience" and youth, which contributes to the great uncertainty he appears to have when judging Hero's character. ("Wit and Wisdom in *Much Ado About Nothing* 232). I, too, think Claudio's young age is significant, but find him, not so much "uncertain," but

too certain of what he perceives through his senses, especially his sight. Like a true adolescent, Claudio is inexperienced, self-conscious, and socially awkward. With nothing else to rely on, Claudio overcompensates, and puts on a true front of confidence in his senses, including his eyes and ears. This is logical, as the senses take in and react to external events. This is especially logical for Claudio since he is a soldier, and war hero, fresh from battle, and likely relied on his senses to make critical decisions. With his eyes and ears, Claudio makes decisions that will affect his place in the social world but will also prevent him from undergoing this conversion needed to become Hero's true love.

Claudio makes his adolescent qualities quite known as soon as he lays eyes on Hero. As Leonato shows his guests around the estate, Claudio stops Benedick to further discuss Hero:

> Claudio: Benedick, dist thou note the daughter of Signor Leonato?
>
> Benedick: I noted her not, but I looked on her.
>
> Claudio: Is she not a modest young lady? (*Much Ado About Nothing* 1.1.154-157)

With these two simple questions Claudio reveals a desire to be acknowledged socially and hints at a subtle uncertainty about Hero. Claudio directs his questions towards Benedick, who is the "older, more experienced" male. It is as if Claudio is looking to Benedick for elderly advice or approval, as if he were Claudio's parent. Claudio's questions can be interpreted as rhetorical, suggesting that he is completely certain of Hero's beauty. However, his questions can also be read as legitimate, ones that he wants Benedick to answer so he can conclude whether a match with Hero is socially acceptable before making a firm decision about his feelings for her. A cranky Benedick "noted her not," and argues with Claudio that Hero is nothing special (*MAAN* 1.1.156). Claudio responds to Benedick as if his comrade is not telling him the truth: "I pray

thee, speak in sober judgment…tell me truly how thou lik'st her" (*MAAN* 1.1. 162, 168-169). Claudio presses Benedick, like a stubborn adolescent, until Don Pedro gives Claudio the answer he has been longing to hear: "Amen, if you love her, for the lady is very well worthy" (*MAAN* 1.1.207-208). Yet, despite Don Pedro's affirmative view of Hero, Claudio still voices doubt: "You speak this to fetch me in, my lord" (*MAAN* 1.1.209). Claudio's response to Don Pedro further illustrates his self-consciousness and reliance on other peoples' opinions to shape and affirm his own feelings.

The tone of Claudio's language towards both Benedick and Don Pedro is also an indication of both his immaturity, but also his hope to *move* towards a greater level of maturity. Maurice Hunt discusses the various kinds of speech characters use to amplify a specific image of themselves that they hope to portray to others. In the given moment above between Claudio and Benedick, Hunt argues that Benedick has "two kinds of speech – an honest, simple discourse, rarely spoken, and a customary caustic, witty idiom that…is dishonest and false…Benedick has…the reputation of being a tyrant to women in order to enhance his stature…primarily among his male friends" ("The Reclamation of Language in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 272). Claudio, on the other hand, appears to only have one kind of speech, the "honest, simple discourse," that Benedick rarely uses. This comes as no surprise. Benedick, unlike, Claudio, has age and experience that gives him the tools to develop this "witty" dialect to use so he can be perceived as jaded. Benedick's quick and cutting responses give him a sense of authority and masculinity that Claudio seems to long for.

After receiving confirmation from his social superiors in regards to Hero being a proper marital match, Claudio is still not confident enough to woo the woman himself. Before the masquerade, he hopes Don Pedro will help him: "My liege, your highness now may do me good"

(*MAAN* 1.1.271). Once again, Claudio reveals his lack of experience and his nervousness about his social standing, turning to someone with a "highness," a better social standing, and more experience to use his own language to help Claudio make his next move in their social world. Claudio also reveals, what Hunt argues is, the conflict between language and power in this comedy: "…the seekers after power in the play often cannot manage problematic language or rule their own tongues" ("The Reclamation of Language in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 271). In this moment, Claudio believes he cannot "rule [his] own tongue," to produce the "customary" and convincing language he thinks he needs to woo Hero. However, when Claudio learns that he will marry Hero, he fails to step up to develop a wittier kind of language that would please Hero. Instead, he continues to show more signs of social anxiety, completely speechless when told of the successful match between him and Hero and needing to be prompted by Beatrice: "Speak, Count, 'tis your cue" (*MAAN* 2.1.280). As Claudio fails to speak, he also fails to heighten his maturity and masculinity levels. Therefore, it is no surprise that Claudio runs into trouble in the days leading up to his wedding; with a lack of experience and no drive to gain any experience, Claudio will never be able to fulfill the role as Hero's true love.

Aware of his lack of experience in the romantic and social practices, Claudio turns to his senses, especially sight, to be his chief advisors when making his next social decisions. It is at this point that Claudio shifts from the "uncertain" to the *too* certain. Like a true adolescent he becomes overly confident in something he thinks he has control over, and, like a true adolescent, he wants to show his elder peers that he, too, can compose himself and independently function in their social world. Yet, when Claudio relies too heavily on his senses he continuously misinterprets the actions of the people around him. After overhearing information that Don Pedro

wooed Hero for himself instead of his friend, Claudio quickly concludes he cannot trust his close friend's words and turns to his eyes instead:

> But hear these ill news with the ears of Claudio.
>
> 'Tis certain so; the prince wooes for himself.
>
> Friendship is constant in all other things
>
> Save in the office and affairs of love:
>
> Therefore, all hearts in love use their own tongues;
>
> Let every eye negotiate for itself
>
> And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch
>
> Against whose charms faith melteth into blood. (2. 1. 557-564)

Claudio implies what we already know: love can change a man. It impairs one's judgment; it causes one to make rash decisions, and shift what he knows almost instantly. Yet, I do not believe Claudio to be changed by love in this instant. Instead, Claudio shows no change, but only the rashness and immaturity of an adolescent. He immediately, and foolishly, doubts his well-established friendship with Don Pedro, giving greater weight to the words spoken by Don John, a man Claudio barely knows. Claudio finds those in love "use their own tongues," as if love has a separate language that can trick others or not be understood by those not in the same state. Moreover, Claudio appears to not be in a state of love, for if he was he would refer to himself as one of those "hearts in love" that uses his "own tongue." Yet, Claudio maintains a difficult time making sense of the many words that come his way. Harkening back to Maurice Hunt's analysis, Claudio cannot "manage problematic language" that Don John presents him with. Since Claudio

is uncomfortable with his own words, he is not likely to be comfortable with anyone else's, including Don Pedro's, hence his reliance on his senses.

While Claudio may not be right to completely distrust the words of his friends, he may be right to be, at least skeptical, of the tongue. In *The Body In Parts*, Carla Mazzio's chapter, "Sins of the Tongue," exhibits evidence that suggest the tongue was seen as quite a problematic body part: "Discussions about the uses and abuses of speech in the period…drew on anatomical models, and the tongue was frequently singled out as a peculiarly unstable organ" (56). The tongue seems "unstable" due to its double function, taking in food one way and putting out speech in the other way. Early modern England believed that to mean that the tongue was "the most vulnerable member" of a man (Mazzio 53). While this may be true in some cases, I find in the case of this play that the eyes are still the most "unruly" and "most vulnerable" part of these characters, especially in Claudio's character (Mazzio 54). Like the tongue, the eyes also have a double function as they take in information one way but also project the owner's feelings about that information after a mental process of reflection and consideration. Though false gossip is a constant in this play, it is the false tongue that so easily manipulates Claudio's eyes and perception to see the evil he thinks he hears and quickly chooses to believe.

Despite the many false tongues in this play, Don Pedro's words ring true – he *does* successfully woo Hero for the young soldier, and not himself. Instead, Claudio's hearing fails him and causes him to automatically accept information given to him by Don John, someone Claudio has no strong relationship with. The unfortunate result for power seekers, who struggle with others' language, is they "become the verbal and literal victims of someone else's power stratagems" ("The Reclamation of Language in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 271). Claudio, a power seeker, believes he is being tricked by his own friend, but really it is Don John's false

language that is tricking him, turning him into a victim in Don John's attempt to overpower his brother by spreading misery. Claudio says he is "certain" of Don John's information, and suggests the same certainty in his sight, which will back up his ears: "let every eye negotiate for itself…for beauty is a witch/Against whose charms faith melteth into blood" (*MAAN* 2.1.564). Despite his faith in his sight, Claudio appears to be setting up his sight to fail him as well. Claudio wants to trust what his eyes see, a beautiful and fair Hero, yet he plans to interpret her physical beauty as that of a "witch": ugly, corrupt, and deceitful. Claudio speaks of "charms," which can refer to the "chanting or recitation of a verse supposed to possess magical power," which links back to this idea of a witch (Oxford English Dictionary). However, "charms" on the Shakespearean stage could also refer to a "quality, attribute, trait, [or] feature…which exerts a fascinating or attractive influence, exciting love or admiration" (OED). Both meanings of the word suggest a kind of power; either a supernatural power he cannot control or a woman's power over a man. Once again, Claudio's incorrect interpretations of the information his senses take in, result in him causing turmoil within his relationship with Hero.

Dennis finds this moment to be Claudio's most telling, as it is a moment that shows he will not successful undergo the necessary change to be the gentle lover that Benedick becomes. Before Don John tells Claudio the lies about Don Pedro, he asks Claudio if he is Signor Benedick. Since Claudio is in a mask he answers, "You know me well. I am he" (*MAAN* 2.1.147). Claudio pretends to be Benedick, because he wants to be *like* Benedick. Claudio longs for the age, the experience, the maturity, and the social awareness. However, Claudio's nervousness and lack of this wanted maturity result in him setting himself up for a romantic disaster. After hearing the false news about Don Pedro's hope to win Hero for himself, Claudio's reaction is illogical, rash, and without faith towards the woman he thinks he loves, as well

towards a good friend and man. Dennis rightly notes that Claudio uses his eyes, but is "blind to the fact that faith lies at the very center of love's power of perception; and this blindness prepares the way for his great blunder, his mistrust in Hero" ("Wit and Wisdom in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 232). By setting his faith aside so early on in the play, it seems highly unlikely Claudio will be able to successfully convert into that true lover, or even an adult, while Benedick undergoes a successful conversion.

Claudio's trust in his eyes echoes a common belief about sight in the Renaissance, but it seems one who holds this belief will find it difficult to grapple with the idea of love. The widely held view of sight at the time included a more certain and permanent view of "objects," tangible and visible things (Clark 15). Love, however, is a concept, not an object. Claudio believes the eye must "negotiate" these "affairs of love," but there is no one uniform visible representation of love. Instead, Claudio assigns love a visible element that his eyes can constantly return to and reevaluate throughout the play: the face, Hero's face in particular. When Claudio asks Benedick if he "note[d] the daughter of Signor Leonato," he wants to know if Benedick noticed her beauty. Hero never speaks or acts in Claudio's presence in their first encounter on stage, so we can only assume Claudio is taken by her physical beauty – her face. Soon afterwards, Claudio blatantly states his attraction to her beauty: "In mine eye, she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on," and in his next line he says he would consider becoming a husband if "Hero would be [his] wife" (*MAAN* 1.1.177-178, 185). For a brief moment, Claudio appears to be ready to move towards maturity and social experience. However, his process of perception shows Claudio to be shallow, as he mistakes physical desirability for love. He takes in Hero's face with his eyes and turns his attraction to her into the feeling of love that is so strong he is immediately ready to marry her. Though Claudio is, at first, successful in using his eyes, by finding Hero to be a strong candidate

for his wife, they eventually fail him as he begins to make incorrect assumptions about Hero's loyalty to him.

Despite Claudio's confidence in and seeming control over his eyes, he begins to incorrectly perceive what he sees, causing great emotional damage to his relationship with Hero. Don Pedro's bitter half-brother, Don John, wants to bring misery to Claudio, so he tells the count Hero is being unfaithful to him, and can prove it at her window that night. Upset and confused, Claudio agrees to let Don John prove Hero's unfaithfulness to him: "If I see anything tonight why I should not marry her, tomorrow in the congregation where I should wed, there will I shame her" (*MAAN* 3.3.111-113). Claudio's decision to "shame" Hero publicly, and his eventual execution of that decision, further illustrates his great immaturity as well as his social anxiety, both products of his adolescence. Hero's apparent actions would negatively affect Claudio's social position since she would no longer be seen as an acceptable match. Claudio, as a result, feels that he must react to this situation in a way that will preserve his pride and current social standing.

At his marriage altar, Claudio hopes to appear more mature and socially aware by "rightfully" shaming Hero for her apparently slanderous actions. This is the first time Claudio does not turn to one of his elders for help or advice. He has his words ready for his bride, and once again, points to Hero's face, more specifically the blush on her face, as not-so-solid proof of her infidelity:

> Give not this rotten orange to your friend;
>
> She's but the sign and semblance of her honour.
>
> Behold how like a maid she blushes here!

O, what authority and show of truth

Can cunning sin cover itself withal! (*MAAN* 4.1.30-34).

Though Claudio feels certain of Hero's infidelity, he also makes a case suggesting otherwise. He compares Hero to a "rotten orange," indicating that she is unappealing and unwanted, but also indicates what is inside cannot be assumed from what is outside. A "rotten orange" has a deceptively normal peel hiding the overripe flesh on the inside, and Claudio feels that Hero's blushing face is like a maiden peel disguising her apparently "rotten" insides. The count stands firm in his argument, but the ambiguities he presents suggest the situation is not as clear-cut as he has interpreted it to be. Claudio continues his shaming with a question: "Comes not that blood as modest evidence to witness simple virtue?" (*MAAN* 4.1.35-36). In Claudio's defense, his thought process has come full circle. Much earlier in the play, Claudio speaks of a woman's "charms" turning a man's "faith" into "blood," suggesting that a woman's beauty is so dangerous it can overpower man, and he can be overcome with lust, carnage, or "blood." Now, in the midst of his public shaming, Claudio finds Hero's blush to be just as dangerous, thinking it almost tricked him into marrying an unchaste woman who would have no "modest evidence" of "blood" to support her "virtue." Claudio is hurt and embarrassed, so he concludes Hero's blush to be one of "guiltiness, not modesty" (*MAAN* 4.1.40). Hunt suggests in addition to misconstruing language in the play, "even body language is seized upon and misconstrued" as well ("The Reclamation of Language in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 280). Claudio is definitely guilty of constructing a false reason for Hero's blush. He limits the scope and his understanding of this entire event to the limits of his vision. Moreover, Claudio's biggest flub in this play may be his oversimplification of love and emotions. By assigning Hero's face as a visual symbol of love, Claudio eliminates the many emotional nuances Hero expresses on her face, which leads him to

the incorrect conclusions and to cause a serious break in their already weak foundation as a romantic pair.

Claudio and Hero's romantic pairing ends up being based on a weak foundation that places a greater weight on sight and appearance than it does on words and wit, a combination that Beatrice and Benedick use to create the solid basis for their romantic pairing. While Claudio is uncomfortable with his words, Hero speaks very few of them. Diana E. Henderson also notes Hero to seldom speak: "…it is Hero's virtue that makes her easy to overlook: she rarely speaks in public, seeming to epitomize the feminine 'chaste, silent, and obedient' ideal" ("Mind the Gaps: The Ear, the Eye, and the Senses of a Woman in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 193). Throughout the play, Hero and Claudio exchange very few words, and almost never without the company of others. One could say that the couple exchanges the most words at the masquerade; however the couple is not actually Hero and Claudio, but Hero and Don Pedro, who is disguised as Claudio. Since words are never exchanged between the two during the courting stage, it is no surprise that they are at a loss for words at the news of their engagement. In terms of using the senses, Hero, like Claudio, also relies on her sight and hearing to help her navigate her social world. As the masked Don Pedro approaches her and asks her to walk with him, she says she will, but only if he agrees to "walk softly, and look sweetly, and say nothing" (*MAAN* 2.1.78). Hero desires her suitor to maintain a pleasant outward appearance, and though they continue their conversation, she suggests conversing is not necessary for him to win her affection. Similar to Claudio, Hero is quite young, inexperienced, and wants to succeed socially, which involves a socially acceptable marriage. She, too, focuses on appearances, just as Claudio does, in order to remain afloat in their social environment. Therefore, when Hero learns she will be married to Claudio after being wooed by Don Pedro, who says he will "unclasp [his] heart" for her, she

does not seem to flinch (*MAAN* 1.1.304). Don Pedro also says he will "take her hearing prisoner" to tell her his "amorous tale" (*MAAN* 1.1.305.306). Don Pedro plans to take full control of Hero's senses, and she uses them to fall in love with the man she believes to be Claudio. There is a disconnect between Claudio's appearance and Don Pedro's personality, yet Hero, like Claudio, is okay with the eventual match since it is a socially acceptable one. The strange string of events produces a new romantic match that is logical in Renaissance England, but not deep enough to suggest true love.

Hero is just as young and inexperienced as Claudio, and she, too, attempts to seem more mature and more powerful within their social world. Henderson cites the above command as a moment in which Hero successfully presents herself as experienced and authoritative in the process of wooing: "She starts by invoking the cultural norms of proper behavior she has so far upheld, only to invert power relations so that it is now the man…who must 'walk softly, and look sweetly, and say nothing' to gain her company" ("Mind the Gaps: The Ear, the Eye, and the Senses of a Woman in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 194-195). Hero experiences a momentary shift from " 'silent, and obedient'" to daring and outspoken. Hero's command to Don Pedro is quick, charming, and sly. She demonstrates language similar to that of Benedick's second kind of language, that "customary, caustic, witty idiom," which Maurice Hunt refers to. Hero's confident flirtatiousness is a response to Don Pedro's own charming words. As mentioned before, there is a disconnect between Claudio's appearance and Don Pedro's personality. Hero's most confident language in the play is directed at Don Pedro, not towards Claudio. This brief moment suggests a strong personality match between Hero and Don Pedro, forcing auidences to wonder if they would be a better romantic pairing.

In contrast, Beatrice and Benedick's romantic relationship blossoms from a "merry war," a seemingly endless battle of wit, from which the pair actually gets to know each other (*MAAN* 1.1.58). Each conversation is a competition to prove one's intelligence and any regard to the rest of their social world is ignored. Rarely does the couple discuss appearance, and if it is noted it is never a top priority. Early on in the play, Benedick contemplates his ideal romantic partner: "One woman is fair, yet I am well. Another is wise, yet I am well. Another virtuous, yet I am well. But till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace" (*MAAN* 2.3.25-28). Benedick cannot love a woman based on appearances alone. Instead, she must be well-rounded, a quality Beatrice possesses. Most importantly, Beatrice and Benedick learn of each other's love through overheard conversations – overheard words. Yes, they rely on their aural sense and uncontrollable tongues to ingest these accurate words, but Beatrice and Benedick differ from Claudio and Hero. As many critics have suggested, Beatrice and Benedick are the "older, more experienced" pair, with greater control of their senses and a better understanding of what they can be confident in and not confident in (Zitner 28). They use their ears to find out that one loves the other, but this information is something their conversations suggest they already know.

Though sight does not play a large role in Beatrice and Benedick's relationship, it holds an element that would ring true to those who held the popular Renaissance view of sight. Beatrice and Benedick's words are mostly spoken aloud, only to quickly dissipate into the air and never to be seen. At the end of the play the couple has their final "war" on stage, attempting to convince the others, and themselves that they only agreed to love one another as a courtesy. However, Claudio and Hero both come forward to assure everyone that Beatrice and Benedick do, in fact, love each other. Claudio takes from Benedick a "paper written in his hand, a halting

sonnet of his own pure brain fashioned to Beatrice" (*MAAN* 5.4.86-88). Following en suite, Hero snatches away Beatrice's own sonnet "writ in my cousin's hand…containing her affection unto Benedick" (*MAAN* 5.4.89-90). For the first time, Beatrice and Benedick's words are written down on a piece of paper, their visual proof of their love that even Claudio can correctly comprehend with his problematic eyes. In this moment, the two pairs are happy and giddy with the prospect of two weddings.

In the midst of this happy ending, Claudio still fails to undergo a serious change in character, while Benedick successfully does undergo a change that turns him into a less cynical and less skeptical lover to Beatrice. In his effort to prove to others that he can be an adult, Claudio shames Hero to her apparent death, but then ends up in his worst social scandal yet when he finds out she did not betray him. Whether or not he feels genuinely bad for falsely accusing Hero, Claudio knows he must make amends with Leonato, from a moral and social standpoint. Claudio agrees to marry Leonato's other niece and assures Claudio that he will "hold [his] mind were she an Ethiope" (*MAAN* 5.4.38). Though Claudio means well by telling Leonato he will not take his niece's appearance into account, he still brings it up, suggesting it is on his mind. In *Things of Darkness*, Kim F. Hall compares the views of blackness and whiteness found in early modern literature. Hall finds the literature to reveal, "whiteness…established as a valued goal" (66). This would mean that blackness is frowned upon. Hall even quotes the play, citing a moment in which Beatrice views herself as damaged goods: "Thus goes everyone to the world but I, and I am sunburnt" (*MAAN* 2.1.292-293). She calls herself "sunburnt," alluding to dark skin, an unwanted feature, and applies it to her life as an unwanted maid. Therefore, Claudio's reference to an "Ethiope" shows that he is still concerned with physical appearance. As he assures Leonato he will keep his promise, Claudio is likely thinking of the social consequences

he will have to suffer as a result. Claudio undergoes no significant change and does not move to a state in which he is more experienced or mature.

Benedick, however, successfully crosses the bridge between cynic and romantic and skeptic and faith. Earlier, Beatrice briefly mentions her aversion to beards, which Benedick sported at that moment. After tricking Benedick into thinking Beatrice loves him, Don Pedro, Claudio, and Leonato notice a physical change in Benedick's appearance: "he looks younger than he did, by the loss of a beard./Nay, a' rub himself with civet…Yeah, or to paint himself?" (*MAAN* 3. 2. 1243-1244, 1249). While Benedick says, earlier, he cannot love a woman that is only beautiful, he still goes out of his way to appear more beautiful to Beatrice, who also prefers an intellectual partner over a purely beautiful one. Benedick's physical transformation is an indication of the beginnings of an "inner vision of faith" that Carl Dennis believes the couple possesses by the end of the play ("Wit and Wisdom in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 230). Benedick has always been one to live by his own rules, feelings, and beliefs, yet in this moment he sets aside his personal feelings to grab at the chance to attract Beatrice.

A commonly cited example of this faith is found in response to Beatrice's rather outrageous and dark request for Benedick to help her seek revenge on behalf of Hero: "Kill Claudio" (*MAAN* 4.1.288). Dennis notes that Beatrice, unlike Claudio, "requires no factual evidence for her conviction, relying rather on an act of subjective trust" ("Wit and Wisdom in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 229-230). Benedick, at first, rejects Beatrice's command: "Ha, not for the wide world" (*MAAN* 4.1.289). Benedick reacts as Claudio *should* react on many occasions. He questions Beatrice's tongue, and places more trust in the one that was his friend first, Claudio. However, Beatrice is quick to change Benedick's mind with her passion for Hero: "Sweet Hero! She is wronged, she is slandered, she is undone.…O that I were a man for his

sake! Or that I had any friend would be a man for my sake!" (*MAAN* 4.1.310-311, 315-316). Benedick is taken by Beatrice's blind faith in her cousin, and then puts his own blind faith in Beatrice: "Enough, I am engaged. I will challenge him" (*MAAN* 4.1.328). Like Beatrice, Benedick asks for no ocular proof. The couple knows each other so well at this point, they are most comfortable relying on each other's words, no sensory evidence necessary. In the case of Beatrice and Benedick, their perception of each other is solid, and this, according to Dennis, is where that "irrational," but nevertheless, strong faith lies ("Wit and Wisdom in *Much Ado About Nothing*" 223).

III. Self-Love and the Desire for Power in *Twelfth Night*

Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is a play of many desires and misunderstandings. Various character *desire* to win the love of another, yet in the process they tend to make incorrect assumptions about who these characters really are – Viola being the most mistaken for. Sight is the connection between these desires and misunderstandings. Strong desire lights a fire under sight so it becomes the dominant sense and mode of perception for many of these characters. Olivia's desire to produce offspring causes her to quickly fall in love with a disguised Viola, while Sebastian's desire for Olivia results in him willingly setting aside his reason and marrying her almost immediately upon seeing her. As in *Much Ado About Nothing*, sight's rather uncontrollable power results in misperceptions along with illogical and rash decisions. This rash decision, being the marriage between Olivia and Sebastian, mirrors the marriage between Claudio and Hero by having a very unstable foundation supporting their romance. However, as in the previous play, there is also the more successful romantic couple, Viola and Orsino that relies less on their sight, and develops a romance through both their words and their ears. In this chapter I continue to tease out sight's complex relationship with love, but I also evaluate sight and love in connection to specific aspects of Renaissance England culture, including the unique power of Queen Elizabeth I and the ambiguities found in gender representation and sexual desires on the stage and within early modern English society.

As mentioned earlier, sight, in Renaissance England, was considered to be the superior sense and one that gave individuals clear and "direct knowledge" of what they were seeing (Clark 12). To reiterate Clark's words, the eyes were the noblest parts of the body: "sight was the sovereign sense" (12). If we are to follow that logic, does that mean Queen Elizabeth I had the most important pair of eyes during her time as monarch? Again to reiterate Clark's words, people

in Renaissance England believed the eyes could be "organs of power, liveliness, speed, and accuracy" (10). If we, again, apply this logic to the Queen's sight, this suggests her eyes would have been the most "powerful," and the most accurate, indicating that the Queen had the most precise perception, and could therefore make the best decisions. Elizabeth did make a distinct decision to never marry or produce an heir during her lifetime, and Shakespeare utilizes his character Olivia, in *Twelfth Night,* to challenge this very decision.

During her reign over England from 1558 to her death in 1603, Queen Elizabeth I never married. As Susan Doran shows in her biography, *Queen Elizabeth I*, Elizabeth had a number of suitors coming to her with marriage proposals, especially in the first three years of her reign, yet she declined them all (72). Doran notes the great anxiety within parliament and amongst Elizabeth's subjects for their queen to get married, and to an Englishman. Ruling over two predominant religious groups, Protestants and Catholics, she was expected by each side to marry so as to avoid a power vacuum that would lead to political, economic, social, and religious turmoil (Doran 70). Despite the internal and external pressures she felt, Elizabeth remained single, and seemingly proud of it. In a response to Parliament's request for her to be married, Elizabeth reminds her government why she is Queen of England: "And in the end this shall be for me sufficient, that a marble stone shall declare that a Queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin" (Doran 72). Elizabeth understood the rare position of power she held and how quickly it could be taken away from her if she were to marry. Elizabeth saw herself as a unique individual and a unique leader. Producing an heir, another version of herself, would tarnish that uniqueness she seemed to care for very dearly. Though any internal anxieties about these matters are unknown to us, Elizabeth shows herself to be considerate, strong willed, and utterly fierce.

Elizabeth also employed the power of physical appearance as a tool to help her establish authority. In order to leave a unique legacy behind in history, Elizabeth had to leave a very distinct picture of herself to be remembered by. Patricia Phillippy's, *Painting Women*, suggests there is evidence of Elizabeth's "generous use of cosmetics…apothecary's records, inventories of mirrors, and surviving mortars and pestles, used to grind and mix makeup – suggest the queen's interest in physical comfort and cosmetic self-creation (135). Farrah Karim-Cooper cites evidence for Elizabeth's heavy use of cosmetics in, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama*: "she was painted in order to fashion herself into the quasi-divine icon she is now perceived to have been, or her cosmetic practice was simply to preserve her youth motivated by a fear of the effects ageing would have on her ability to command" (34). Elizabeth's desire to control reproductions of her image directly relates back to her apparent desire to remain a unique individual. Her reproduced image on a canvas was less threatening than a physical reproduction of her in the form of a child. Whatever the reason, Elizabeth appeared to be motivated by power and had a true desire to maintain authority and control over Renaissance England.

In his book *The Twelfth Night of Shakespeare's Audience*, John W. Draper makes an unpopular argument in favor of Olivia's own fierceness: "Olivia's conversation shows her candid and forthright and yet tactful, widely but not deeply learned, capable of epigram and wit, but also capable of holding all her capabilities in check and bending them to her chief purpose" (173-174). While Draper urges reconsideration of Olivia's abilities to be sharp, diplomatic, and cunning, Marjorie Garber holds onto the widely held belief that "Countess Olivia, the lady of the house and Feste's [the fool] employer, is the biggest fool of all" (507). I lay in the middle of their polar opinions. Shakespeare characterizes Olivia in a way that suggests she shares many qualities associated with Queen Elizabeth I, including her quick tongue, her stubbornness towards her

suitor, Duke Orsino, and her distinct and majestic appearance. However, like Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing,* Olivia "sees and yet does not see" the world around her (Garber 525). Olivia's sight proves to be inaccurate and unclear. Her eyes fail her numerous times throughout the comedy and cause her to make important decisions that directly impact her love life, and land her in a questionable marriage with Sebastian, a man she hardly knows.

Olivia's character and environment illustrate her as an independent queen-like figure. First, Olivia sees herself as being in a superior position in her home environment. When asked if she is the lady of the house she responds," If I do not usurp myself, I am" (*Twelfth Night* 1.5.181). Her home environment consists of elements that Queen Elizabeth I would have in her own court. When Olivia's enters the stage for the first time, she asks that her entertainment, Feste the jester, be removed from her sight: "Go to, you're a dry fool, I'll no more of you. Besides, you grow dishonest" (*TN* 1.5.37-38). Olivia has her own set of advisors to express their opinions for her consideration. She turns to Malvolio, for example, to hear his thoughts of Feste's views about Olivia's own foolishness: "What do you think of this fool, Malvolio, doth he not mend?" (*TN* 1.5.69-70). However, like a true monarch, she maintains her sense of superiority by allowing herself the final word. Directly after asking Malvolio for his opinion, Olivia reminds him of his lower status by harshly remarking on his personality: "O, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distempered appetite" (*TN* 1.5.86-87).

As Draper observes, Olivia, can also be quite charming and witty, especially around Viola. When Olivia learns Duke Orsino has sent yet another messenger boy to convey his deep love for her, she tells Maria, "we'll once more hear Orsino's embassy" (*TN* 1.5.162). Though she has already made up her mind to reject Orsino's words, she remains diplomatic, allowing a representative from Orsino's own environment, or "embassy," to come make his case. When she

finally meets Viola, she encourages the messenger to, "speak [his] office" (*TN* 1.5.201). She acts like any respectable ruler would if another country's diplomat asked for an audience. Later in the scene, as Olivia and Viola's conversation progresses, Olivia shows herself to be socially aware and quick with her words, keeping Viola on her toes:

> Olivia: Now sir what is your text?
>
> Viola: Most sweet lady—
>
> Olivia: A comfortable doctrine, and much may be said of it. Where lies your text?
>
> Viola: In Orsino's bosom.
>
> Olivia: In his bosom? In what chapter of his bosom?
>
> Viola: …in the first of his heart.
>
> Olivia: O, I have read it, it is heresy. Have you no more to say? (*TN* 1.5.214-222).

Olivia's responses to Viola show her to be charming yet forceful. Her references to religious aspects, including "doctrine" and "heresy," suggest she and Orsino share different principles. Her specific language also harkens back to anxiety over Elizabeth's possible spouse and the religious turmoil her marriage could potentially cause. Draper is not wrong to point out these positive attributes however, Olivia's fascination with her own appearance and the idea of creating a copy of herself overpowers these strengths and leads her to make quick and rash decisions to pursue romantic relationships. As a result, Olivia places her unique position as the "lady of the house," with economic and social power, at high risk.

In the supposedly similar fashion of Queen Elizabeth, Olivia strongly believes in the creation and preservation of her image, and appears to use cosmetics, like Elizabeth, to do so. During her first conversation with Viola, who is disguised as Cesario, Viola insists that Olivia

remove her veil to reveal her face. Olivia finally acquiesces and tells Viola that she will "draw the curtain and show you [Viola] the picture" (*TN* 1.5.226). Olivia calls her face a "picture," indicating that it is constructed and maybe even painted, unlike a more natural scene in nature. She develops this idea even further when she asks Viola, "is't not well done?" (*TN* 1.5.228). Olivia's implied tone suggests she is the creator or the artist behind the "picture." This idea that Olivia is taking her appearance into her own hands and going beyond God's hand through artificial means, is intimidating and powerful – almost queen-like. Karim-Cooper cites Stephen Greenblatt, who finds the "charismatic authority of the king, like that of the stage, depend upon falsification" (34). As suggested earlier, Elizabeth utilized cosmetics, a form of "falsification," to distinguish herself, to provide a consistent visual representation of power to her subjects. Similarly, Olivia provides her audience, and in this moment Viola, with a painted face as a "falsification" to hide her mourning. We know that she has just lost her brother, but she shows herself to mourn her brother by wearing a veil. At this point in time in the scene, Olivia has removed her veil, yet there is still a mask. Currently, Olivia is in a unique position of economic power now that both her father and brother are gone. It is fair to suggest that Olivia also mourns the loss of that power that will eventually come for her at the end of the play. The "picture" on her face is a distraction that is both beneficial and problematic. Olivia's distinguished beauty gives her power and control over her suitors, but it also commands suitors to pursue her, continuously threatening her newfound economic power. Therefore, it makes sense for Olivia to resist Orsino's many attempts to woo her. Olivia mirrors Elizabeth in putting up a strong resistance to suitors who would take away her special authority. However, as soon as Olivia meets Viola, she quickly falls under the disguised woman's unknown spell, creating a sharp divide between Olivia and Elizabeth's paths.

As Olivia and Viola's conversation continues, we note Olivia's deviation from her likeness to Queen Elizabeth I in regards to wanting to reproduce. Viola sternly tells Olivia that she is the "cruell'st" if she "lead these graces to the grave and leave the world no copy" (*TN* 1.5.233-235). However, Olivia quickly assures Viola that she will share her beauty before she is gone:

O sir, I will not be so hard-hearted. I will give out diverse schedules of my beauty. It shall be inventoried, and every particle and utensil labeled to my will, as, item, two lips, indifferent red; item, tow grey eyes, with lids to them; item, one nick, one chin and so forth (*TN* 1.5.236-239)

Editors Roger Warren and Stanley Wells address Olivia's response in their introduction for the Oxford Shakespeare edition of the play: "Olivia wittily plays upon the word 'copy'…mockingly reducing the various aspects of her beauty to a list of items" (31, 32). Yet, if Olivia mocked her own beauty, she would be taking away from the power that beauty gives her. In contrast, David Hillman find the listing of individual body parts to be a product of the Renaissance culture, in their book *The Body in Parts*. They find the Renaissance to be "a period marked by the rise of the individual," and, therefore, "a period marked by the rise of the individual part" (Hillman xiv). Olivia picks and chooses her physical strengths to create her individual, unique identity. However, her desire to have them "inventoried" is rather contradictory. Inventories imply later use, and this image, combined with her desire to reproduce, shatters the idea of Olivia creating an individual identity for herself. It is in this way that Olivia's desires deviate from Queen Elizabeth I's desires.

While Olivia's beauty successfully impresses others, she also appears to fall for her own looks, as well. Her response to Viola indicates the love she has for herself and her appearance. She creates an inventory of her distinct physical features, stockpiling them for safe keeping once she is gone. Additionally, we can see just how important appearance is to Olivia, because her list only includes physical features. Olivia fails to mention any sort of redeeming quality, such as the wit she has demonstrated in this conversation, that she would like to take from herself and store in her "inventory" for her future offspring. This desire to pass on her physical beauty shows her to be different from Elizabeth, since Elizabeth never had any offspring of her own. While Elizabeth clearly wanted to contain her power, including her appearance and physical qualities, to her own self, Olivia wants to spread her power by creating another version of herself – a double of sorts. If Olivia desires to create another self, it is no wonder she is content with marrying Sebastian, though she barely knows him. First, her new marriage brings her a step closer to reproducing. Moreover, Viola models her disguise after her brother's looks, so Olivia ends up seeing double. Olivia and Claudio share this affinity for a striking physical appearance, especially the look of one's face, and, as a result, they have a shallowness to them that makes them unappealing characters, almost antagonistic.

Comparison of the romantic relationships formed in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*, suggests that sight can both aid but also hinder in the progression of a romantic relationship. Viola and Olivia's doomed relationship actually has a promising start compared to Hero and Claudio's relationship. Viola and Olivia have more and longer conversations on stage than does the other couple. In fact, Viola and Olivia's first conversation is quite witty as Viola playfully suggests to Olivia numerous times that she is not who she pretends to be. However,

once Viola leaves, Olivia shows us her true colors as she reflects on these newly formed feelings for the Duke's messenger:

> I'll be sworn though art –
>
> Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions and sprit…
>
> …Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
>
> With an invisible and subtle stealth
>
> To creep in at mine eyes. Well, let it be (*TN* 1.5.283-284,288-290)

Olivia's analysis of Viola is, at first, promising for her character. She lists the qualities she is attracted to, and Viola's tongue, suggesting her words, is the first aspect listed. This idea that Viola's words are attractive to Olivia is encouraging, and their conversation is greater in length and richer with words than any conversation Claudio and Hero have ever had. This relationship, though technically "wrong" in this play and in this social setting, is promising for just a moment since Olivia and Viola's banter is playful and flirtatious. However, that glimmer of hope quickly fades when Olivia finds that these "perfections" of Viola's "creep in at [Olivia's] eyes," suggesting that the visual realization of it is key to Olivia falling in love with Viola. Here, Olivia's character mirrors Claudio's character. They both use the visual and the tangible in order to transform the concept of love into a material form that makes more sense to them and that they can detect with their eyes. It is also important to point out that Olivia listed Cesario's words as her "tongue." Though it is likely that the "tongue" refers to words, Olivia classifies them as a body part, one that can be seen and not heard.

The audience is not alone in detecting Olivia's flawed analysis of the Duke's new messenger boy; Viola picks up on it too. After Malvolio thrusts Olivia's ring into Viola's hands,

she stands puzzled over it. However, Viola is quickly able to conclude that Olivia is, indeed, in love with her: "She made good view of me, indeed so much/That methought her eyes had lost her tongue" (2.2.19-20). Viola's observation harkens back to the general Renaissance view of the eyes – they are the most superior sense and part of the body. Sight overtakes speech and paralyzes it. It is indicative of Olivia's character, in that appearance and image are extremely important to her, since she can only respond with a gaze. This image of Olivia being at a loss for words also indicates a shift in their once promising relationship. The words stop and so does the potential for genuine love for one another.

Not only is Olivia and Viola's budding romantic relationship significant in its strength compared to other budding relationships, but it draws attention to the many ambiguities that came with the representation of gender and sexual desires on stage. In *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*, by Stephen Orgel, the author conducts research to find that women did grace the Elizabethan stage from time to time, however English women were never seen on the professional stage as it was "not appropriate for the English, and women on display became increasingly associated with Roman Catholicism", which, at the time, was not practiced by England's monarch (11). So, men took on the women's parts in Shakespeare's plays. This proved to be a solution to keep English women from presenting themselves in a suggestive manner that could harm them, socially. Orgel finds this method to cross over to the sphere of romance and wooing: "the dangers of women in erotic situations…can be disarmed by having the women play men, just as in the theatre the dangers of women on the stage…can be disarmed by having men play the women" (18). In *Twelfth Night*, a male actor would take on the role of Viola, who attempts to pass as a man in disguise. While Viola unintentionally woos Olivia, she is also intentionally bold toward her master, Orsino.

Viola's cover as a messenger boy is what allows her character to remain so bold as she quickly falls in love with Orsino. The disguise "disarms" Viola of her capability to talk of love with her superior. In the end, both a man and a woman fall in love with Viola and her male counterpart, Ceasario. This "interchangeability of the sexes" and the demonstration of both heterosexual and homosexual desires, appeared to already be familiar to Renaissance England.

When tackling the differences in sexuality Orgel covers many theories produced to explain the male and female anatomy, including one that suggested women and man had the same genital structures, but carried them differently: "the female genitals were simply the male genitals inverted, and carried internally rather than externally" (20). Other theories suggest that men develop "out and away from femininity" or that women are "incomplete men…their dull and sluggish heat is not sufficient to thrust [the genitals] out" (20, 21). Hence, from a biological perspective, it would be no surprise for a young boy, likely in the earlier stages of puberty, to become a convincing woman on Shakespeare's stage, as he already shares anatomical similarities and he would still be in the process of developing into his "masculinity" and "away from [his] femininity" (Orgel 20). However, as convincing as a young man can be playing a woman on the stage, the romantic match between Olivia and Sebastian is not a convincing case of true love.

While Olivia and Viola's relationship had the potential to be true and grounded upon their witty words, it is really Olivia and Sebastian's romantic relationship that remains a mystery in its foundation. Though these characters are married at the end of the play, they have spent the least time with each other. Olivia and Sebastian have between two and three very brief conversations on stage, while Olivia has two lengthy and two brief conversations with Viola on stage. Olivia and Sebastian say very few words directly to each other, harkening back to Hero

and Claudio's own situation. Olivia gets Sir Toby to stop fighting, and she asks Sebastian to return to the house with her. Sebastian responds: "What relish is in this?" (*TN* 4.1.59) Sebastian attempts to detect the strangeness in the situation. The image of "relish" suggests he is using his senses, more specifically his taste, to tease out the illogical feelings Sebastian believes Olivia to have, since they do not know each other. Sebastian distinguishes himself from his romantic equal, Claudio, by not looking to his sight right away to make sense of the situation.

Nevertheless, sight seems to possess some unknown power that gets these lovers to believe in its abilities. Sebastian is no exception. In that same train of thought he has working out Olivia's words, Sebastian wonders if he is "mad or else this is a dream," and if it is one to "let [him] sleep" (*TN* 4.2.60,62). He also asks that "fancy still [his] sense" so as to not look too deep into the absurdity of the situation (*TN* 4.1.61). In this case, the term "fancy" can refer to one's imagination or desire, which distract his senses from detecting the problems with Olivia's words (OED). In *Vanities of the Eye*, Clark addresses a widely held Renaissance view about the imagination as key to experiencing dreams: "The imagination was the main faculty involved…[it was] more or less free from the controlling influence of reason" (301, 302). With that in mind, Sebastian asks for his imagination to take over his reason and alter his sight. True to his word, when Sebastian next comes on stage, his sight has become the superior sense with which he chooses to marry Olivia. He waits for Olivia to bring over the priest, and, up to this point, Sebastian's interactions with his bride-to-be have involved minimal words. Before Olivia enters the stage with the priest, Sebastian reflects on the nonsensicalness of the situation. He believes he is truly lucky and wants to continue his lucky streak at the expense of his rationality: "I am ready to distrust mine eyes/And wrangle with my reason" (4.3.13-14). Sebastian exclaims he will throw all caution to the wind and marry this woman despite the absurdity of it. He indicates that

his sight is capable of showing him the truth, however he would rather be more like Olivia or Claudio, and choose to see "and yet…not see" (Garber 525). By wanting his imagination to block out his other senses and reasoning, and take over control of his eyes, Sebastian puts on rose-colored glasses, placing himself in a dream-like state in which he commits himself to a woman he hardly knows. While Sebastian's choice is not unusual to a playhouse full of Renaissance England society, it is hardly a persuasive case for true love. However, I cannot help but note the similarities between Olivia and Sebastian when they talk about love. They both have a desire for their eyes to show them something they create. Olivia lets her eyes see what she considers to be Viola's "perfections" and Sebastian lets his eyes see a woman that he can commit to despite not knowing her name. While it may not be true love, it may be a very good match. This is significant because, it suggests love's complexities and indicates that a match such as Olivia and Sebastian's can still be seen as a success.

Allowing Olivia to get married at the end of the play, Shakespeare creates a different version of the Queen, one that he is in control of. Louis Montrose finds the Shakespearean comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, to be a product of Elizabethan culture, demonstrating the "interplay between representations of gender and power in a stratified society in which authority is everywhere invested in men – everywhere, that is, except at the top" ("Shaping Fantasies: Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture" 61). With this point in mind, Montrose presents research suggesting male members of Elizabethan society having a kind of fantasy, in which they simultaneously dominate, usually physically, a woman of higher social standing, quite similar to Elizabeth I, while she dominates the male in a motherly fashion. Weaving in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Montrose finds Titania's relationship with Bottom to reflect this kind of "Elizabethan psyche" ("Shaping Fantasies: Figurations of Gender and Power in

Elizabethan Culture" 63). Yet, I find Montrose's idea can be applied to Sebastian and Olivia's relationship in the play.

Though their encounters with each other are brief, Olivia and Sebastian both have their dominant roles that mirror the "Elizabethan psyche." When they first meet, Olivia asks Sebastian to accompany her back to her house: "come, I prithee, would thou'dst be ruled by me" (*TN* 4. 1. 63). Olivia clearly indicates a desire to have control over whom she believes to be Cesario, and Sebastian agrees: "Madam, I will" indicating that he accepts being dominated by this Elizabethan-like figure (*TN* 4.1.64). When Olivia brings a priest to Sebastian so they can be married, she apologizes for her hurried manner: "Blame not this haste of mine" (*TN* 4.3.23). Olivia's hurried state suggests she wants the priest to complete the transaction and make permanent her decision regarding her own marriage. By choosing who she wants to marry, despite the fact she believes she is marrying a servant boy, which is an improper social match, Olivia exerts her independence in an Elizabethan way. If we consider Doran's study of Elizabeth I, she finds not only did Elizabeth not get married, but she also turned down everyone that Parliament thought to be an acceptable match. Though Olivia appears to be showing off her economic power and independence by choosing a man she believes she is truly in love with, she is still giving up this power by marrying him. Once Sebastian and Olivia marry, he then becomes in control of her body and her finances, the true essence of her original power. In this way, Shakespeare gives us insight into his possible views of Elizabeth's decision to not marry or produce an heir. It seems that Olivia was created to tell Renaissance England their queen may have failed as a ruler to her kingdom to not leave them with an heir. Yet, despite the turmoil Shakespeare ignites in his playhouse with the rather foolish Olivia, he also provides his audience with another romantic relationship that exhibits signs of true love.

Like Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing,* Viola and Orsino represent a contrasting couple to Olivia and Sebastian, as their romantic relationship rests on a more solid foundation. As Viola attempts to ward off Olivia's efforts to woo her as Cesario, she also tries to further strengthen her relationship with Orsino, though he, too, believes Viola to be a man. Viola and Orsino's romantic match at the end of the play is more plausible. We can establish a connection between them even before they lay eyes on each other. Stating the very first line in the comedy, Duke Orsino pronounces, "If music be the food of love, play on" (*TN* 1. 1. 1). Orsino finds music to be necessary and substantive and uses it to feed the feelings of love he has for Olivia. He shows himself to be different from Olivia, and even from Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*, by choosing not the face as a point of reference for love, but rather music, which uses a different sense-part, the ear. Warren and Wells find Duke Orsino to be "in love with love" as they consider the different kinds of love that appear in *Twelfth Night* (25). If this is the case, the Duke's love does not match up with Olivia's love, as she loves herself, not the idea of love. The duke's inclination towards the music suggests a more compatible relationship with Viola, not Olivia. Shortly after the Duke's first scene, Viola states that she has an excellent voice that will charm the Duke in an instant: "I can sing/ and speak to him in many sorts of music/ that will allow me very worth his service" (*TN* 1.2.106-108). Olivia, on the other hand, avoids sources of music, such as Feste, the clown. When she first lays eyes on Feste, she demands that Malvolio, "take the fool away" (*TN* 1. 5. 330). It would seem Orsino and Viola are a better fit given their musical connection. Additionally, Orsino compares love to the wondrous and unpredictable ocean: "O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou/That, notwithstanding thy capacity/Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there" (*TN*.1.1.9-11). Orsino finds love to be exciting one moment and then agonizing the next, just like the "sea." His romantic connection

with Viola continues to strengthen as she came to Orsino from a shipwreck. His independent view of love brings the two together as if it were fate. Orsino and Viola quickly become close, first with Orsino, who has "unclasp'd/ to thee [Viola] the book even of my [Orsino's] secret soul" (*TN* 1. 4. 259-260). Warren and Wells find that moment to be a "direct contrast to the language [Orsino] used to describe his love for Olivia" (30). The editors elaborate, and come to a similar conclusion that Viola and Orsino's "relationship, and the foundation of their ultimate marriage, based not on wooing from afar but on getting to know one another, is established in a mere two lines" (Warren & Wells 30). They continuously discuss ways to win over Olivia, but their dialogue only seems to bring *them* closer. Finally, when Viola reveals she is a woman, Orsino seems to be unfazed by her disguise: "Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand times/ Thou never shouldst love woman like to me" (*TN* 5. 1. 2469-2470). Orsino still refers to Viola as "Boy," indicating his indifference to her sex and physical appearance. This suggests their relationship is built on a strong foundation of their meaningful words, not their looks. It is also an example of the variety of sexual desires expressed by various characters in this play.

Though these couples are sorted into their proper pairings by the end of the play, one cannot help but find the outcome to be rather unsettling. Olivia and Viola's relationship had a rather strong foundation to it, yet Olivia is perfectly content with marrying Viola's twin brother. Duke Orsino does seem to love Viola, yet he agrees to marry her while she is still in male clothing. Cross-dressing, to represent another gender, and mixed sexual desires take on a significant role in this comedy, as Shakespeare takes away the audience's rather "easy" ending in which all of the social norms and practices line up with those of the world outside of the theater. Though he is given very few words in the play, Sebastian's very last line, in which he assures Olivia her marriage is socially acceptable, is one of the most important lines in the entire play:

"You are betrothed to both a maid and man" (*TN*.5.1.259). In his book, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Stephen Greenblatt summarizes the popular interpretation of this line. Sebastian makes clear that he is a "man" by his physical features, including his genitals, but he also refers to his "virgin youth," which allows him the title of "maiden" (Greenblatt 71). Whether Sebastian is only referring to himself, I find his line can also be applied to his double, Viola. Orsino, at that moment, plans to be "betrothed to both a maid and man." Viola is a "maid," in terms of her physical structure and virgin status, but she is also a "man," as she is still dressed in a man's clothing when she exits the stage for the last time. I agree with Penny Gay in her own introduction to the play when she makes the claim that this moment in the final scene of the comedy illustrates a "fluidity of gender" (25). Moreover, this "fluidity" is illustrated by the many moments in which characters' eyes confuse Viola for Ceasario, a woman for a man. I believe there is also a kind of "fluidity" in sexual desire as there are instances in which women and men in the play have stronger connections to those of their own sex.

In *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Greenblatt argues that characters in *Twelfth Night* "swerve" throughout the comedy in order to reach the romantic "pairings for which they are destined" (68). This "swerving" happens along a "bent" line of nature in order to be brought to their final, heterosexual partners (Greenblatt 68). Therefore, this "swerving," according to Greenblatt, is a principle that links individual characters endowed with their own "private motivations to the larger social order" (68). Greenblatt is correct to note the characters' "private motivations," because the homosexual relationships that show promising beginnings, before they are terminated by the looming need to end the play with social alignment, appear to be just as strong and successful, if not more so, than the eventual heterosexual pairings that develop at the end of the play.

Alan Bray explores the main overlaps between the role of the male friend and the role of the sodomite in Renaissance England. Bray's research reveals while homosexuality was a concept Elizabethan society knew of, it was not one society welcomed with open arms. Bray cites a pamphlet written by minister, Thomas Shepard, in which Shepard condemns "sodomy" and finds these unnatural sexual feelings to be like "a nest of snakes in an old hedge. Although they break not out into thy life, they lie lurking in thy heart" ("Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England" 2). Yet, Bray rightfully notes the many similarities sodomy shares with the masculine friend, something so "necessary to social life" that it was seen as "far removed from the 'uncivil' image of the sodomite" ("Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England" 4). Bray cites a variety of letters between male friends in the Renaissance, which suggest both an intellectual closeness, but also a desire to be physically close or connected, which sound familiar to the foundation of sodomy. Examples of this shared role are found in both, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*.

In the midst of Claudio's accusation of Hero, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benedick asks Beatrice if she can confirm Hero's whereabouts in the middle of the previous night: "No, truly no; although, until last night, I have this twelvemonth been her bedfellow" (*MAAN* 4.1.148-149). In Renaissance England, having a "bedfellow" was a natural practice: "most people slept with someone else…the rooms of a house led casually one into the other and servants mingled with their masters" (Bray 4). Bray notes the potential these sleeping arrangements have to become rather intimate relationships, "for beds are not only places where people sleep: they are also places where people talk" (4). In the case of Beatrice and Hero, their sharing of a bed brings them closer together emotionally. This role shares overlaps with sodomy, as a deep intellectual and emotional connection is likely lead to a physical one. This complicated role is played out

directly between Beatrice and Hero since their characters are played by men on the stage. Their relationship must be framed as such in order to maintain the support of the playgoers, who are already familiar with this social practice.

However, Shakespeare also subtly pushes the limits of this ambiguous role, but continues to appease his audience by eventually defining Antonio in *Twelfth Night* as both a murder and a sodomite. Antonio, the sea captain who saves Sebastian and brings him to Illyria, appears to have loving feelings for his new friend. When they first emerge on stage, Sebastian believes he is troubling the sea captain, who continues to follow him around. Later, when Antonio searches for Sebastian on the streets of Illyria, Sir Toby asks Antonio to identify himself:

Sir Toby: You, sir? Why, what are you?

Antonio: One, sir, that for his love dares yet do more than you have heard him brag to you he will (*TN* 3.4.310-312)

Antonio is a wanted man in Illyria for killing a man at an earlier time. He threatens Sir Toby with swordsmanship, but also with the strength of his love. He tells the knight he will do what he must "for his love," to be with the love he is searching for – Sebastian. However, the following moment is a turning point in the play. It marks the end of Sebastian's "swerve" and the beginning of the play's plot aligning itself with the real Elizabethan society watching the play. As guards come to arrest Antonio for his previous murder, he turns to Viola, who he mistakes for Sebastian, to bid farewell: "This comes with seeking you. But there's no remedy; I shall answer it" (*TN* 3.4.329-330). Antonio words suggest he is also being arrested for his sexual desires. He knows they do not align with societal norms but he also knows there is no "remedy," or fix to this situation. He will have to "answer" society, his audience, for his feelings. While the officers

arrest him as a murder, Bray's distinction between a best friend and a sodomite sounds very similar: "The picture they draw is of a man who was not only a sodomite but also an enemy of society: a traitor and a man given to lawless violence against his enemies" ("Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England" 3). Shakespeare assures his audience that Antonio's feelings will not be tolerated in the world of the play, just as they would not be tolerated in the world outside of the theater. It is a subtle, but rather tragic moment in the play. While these characters "deflect" in order to eventually end up with a heterosexual partner, it is not without its consequences (Greenblatt 68). It ruins the apparently real love Antonio has for Sebastian and it breaks a potentially deep connection between Olivia and Viola.

Though Shakespeare provides a means for his audience to escape their own discomfort, that escape also doubles as a mirror for his audience to reflect in. In a society where relationships and marriages are calculated and formed with appearance and societal rank as the major factors, I think Shakespeare is using this comedy to ask the audience to take a look at their own matchmaking processes, and to understand that the process merely scratches the surface of love. Love appears to be more complicated than any character in *Twelfth Night* could ever begin to understand.

IV. Seeing with the Imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

The title of the final comedy I discuss, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is misleading for it implies there is only dream in the play. Instead, there are six dreams, if not more. Dreaming is essential both to the progression of various characters as they navigate their love lives within the mysterious forest just outside of Athens. Before they enter the forest, the four Athenian youths, Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius, and Helena, feel certain of their feelings towards each other. However, their feelings are called into question when the Fairy King, Oberon, and his assistant, Puck, place a powerful charm on the youths with a wild English Pansy, known as "love in idleness" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 2.1.168). As certain characters become exposed to the "juice" of this pansy, they all experience various changes in their character, feelings, and emotions (*MAN* 2.1.170). Titania and Lysander find themselves enamored with someone who is not their original lover, while Demetrius comes to love a woman he initially loathes. In this chapter, I draw on early modern writings to classify the kinds of dreams associated with Shakespeare's characters, and with those classifications, explain how Shakespeare suggests that sight is affected by the imagination, which is stimulated by these dreams. Ultimately, I argue Shakespeare's play shows his audience just how complicated human perception of others, of the world, and of love truly is. In the end, there is no one path or one correct way to find true love; each case is unique, harkening back to one of the main characteristics of Renaissance England.

In *Vanities of the Eye*, Stuart Clark presents evidence for the important role dreams played in early modern Europe, providing his readers with a number of different ways in which dreams were discussed and analyzed. Clark describes early modern dreams as being formed by the "traces of the species left behind in the internal senses…by the external ones…such 'impressions' were still…'objects of perception'" (301). Clark defines "species" as the "sensible

qualities…which radiated out from…objects…into the surrounding medium…transmitting images of the qualities physically…through the medium of the eye" (15). He suggests while dreams and reality are two separate spheres, they constantly overlap and leave behind residue that affects the other sphere. In what proved to be a popular argument, French philosopher, Michel de Montaigne, maintained that dreaming is not too different from experiencing reality: "Those who have compared our life to a dream were perhaps more right than they thought. When we dream, our soul lives, acts, exercises all her faculties, neither more nor less than when she is awake" (Clark 300). A "Hertfordshire preacher," Philip Goodwin, found similar overlaps: "dream thoughts, like waking ones, had their visual 'representation'; dreams were only 'the thought-works of the waking mind, in the sleeping-man'" (Clark 302). Since dreams and reality were believed to share similar thoughts and processes, it makes sense that they also shared the tools used to view each of these states: "sight was the sense in which dream experiences were must frequently said to be experienced and it was therefore at the centre of the argument" (Clark 301). With the eyes as the shared access point, the intertwined relationship between the dream and reality remained relevant throughout the Renaissance as the discussion moved towards consideration of a dream's origin and meaning.

Dream classifications took on a few forms in early modern Europe, and certain characteristics were given more consideration than others. Major questions included whether dreams accurately predicted the future and what was considered to be a true dream or a false dream. Earlier classifications of dreams were rather straightforward: "dreams…were true because they *came* true" while others were "false and deceptive because they did not [come true]" (Clark 304). Christianity was more concerned with what that true or false meant: "True dreams were good dreams that came from God (or angels) and were spiritually improving, even

revelatory…false dreams were evil ones sent by the devil to tempt and corrupt" (Clark 304). *A Midsummer Night's Dream* utilizes these classifications to demonstrate how human sight and perception can easily be manipulated, leaving that person without any real control over this sense.

Oberon chooses to kickstart dreams and charm many pairs of eyes with the English pansy. With Puck by his side, he reminisces on the day he found the unique flower that had been accidentally hit by one of Cupid's arrows. He recalls seeing Cupid with his "fiery shaft/Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon" (*MND* 161-162). While Cupid's main purpose is to strike man with his arrow to produce love, Oberon's language suggests that Cupid also intends to produce lust. The arrow is a "fiery shaft," ready to be launched at someone else. Oberon also notes how the arrow is completely "quench'd," or engulfed by the moon's light. The moon's white light hints at a woman's purity. This powerful and sexual image translates to the power Cupid placed in this pansy when his arrow accidentally hit it. When Oberon first sees the flower, he realizes the color has changed: "before milk-white, now purple with love's wound:/And maidens call it 'love-in-idleness'" (*MND* 2.1.167-168). This image parallels his previous image of Cupid's arrow being consumed by the moon's light. This "wound" is a result of the lusty arrow hitting the pure flower, as if the arrow produced blood, a sign of lost purity. The flower now possesses the great power to bring about love and lust in a person. When Oberon and Puck apply the juice the different sets of eyes, characters either experience a feeling of love or lust, which is supported by the kinds of dreams they end up having.

As the source of this powerful charm, Oberon takes on either a positive or negative role to produce either a "true" or "false" dream. Oberon takes on the negative role of a witch or a "damned spirit" when applying the juice to Titania's eyes, hoping she will experience a true

nightmare. David Bevington argues that Oberon and Puck, though master and servant, differ completely, as Oberon attempts to "refute Puck's association of the fairies with ghosts and damned spirits" (25). Bevington finds Oberon to be the voice of reason while Puck "brings before our eyes a more threatening vision of fairydom" (26). Certainly, Puck shows himself to be more than a little "mischievous," and dangerous, especially when he makes his own decision to place a donkey's head on Bottom's body. However, Oberon comes off as less than perfect, and also shows himself to be just as dangerous when one of his darkest acts is aimed at the woman he is supposed to love the most. After Titania refuses to give Oberon her changeling boy, the king swears he will "torment [her] for this injury" (*MND* 2.1.147). Explaining his plan to Puck, Oberon says he will use the "liquor" to "streak her eyes,/and make her full of hateful fantasies" (*MND* 2.1.178, 257). Oberon's desire to "torment" Titania with "hateful fantasies" makes it difficult to separate him from the darker "damned spirits," as Bevington suggests. Instead, Oberon becomes one of those "damned spirits" in this instant. Oberon's reference to the juice as a "liquor" creates the image of it being a witch's potion. He then calls the juice a "charm," or something that possesses a "magical power" (OED). In other words, Oberon's own words depict himself as a kind of witch or demon with the ability to control the eye. Clark notes the serious dangers that were believed to exist if demons successfully controlled another's eyes: "Beyond the eye lay the internal senses and the faculties of the soul, and, of necessity, a yet further layer of demonic intervention in the mechanics of cognition" (133). There was a reason to fear "demonic intervention" as it is does affect Titania's cognition. As he applies the juice to Titania's eyes as she sleeps, Oberon's words ring of a witch's chant or spell: "What thou seest when thou dost wake,/Do it for they true love take;/…Wake when some vile thing is near" (*MND* 2.2.26-27, 33). This floral "charm" and chant do negatively affect Titania's sight and cognition

when she opens her eyes and finds herself in love with Bottom, who recently had his own head replaced with an "ass-head" (*MND* 3.1.111).

As shown by characters in the other plays I have discussed, Titania relies on her sight to develop, what she believes to be, feelings of love towards Bottom. In Titania's case, Oberon's pansy lives up to the common nickname, "love-in-idleness," as the fairy queen only needs to passively wake up to fall in love with Bottom. There is no effort required, nor does she take any time to get to know Bottom as a person (or in this case, a donkey). As Bottom wakes her up with his hideous singing, Titania finds her senses to be completely overwhelmed with adoration and desire for Bottom: "I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:/Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;/So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape" (*MND* 3.1.132-134). Like Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Titania is using her senses to perceive and respond to her external surroundings. However, given the circumstances, Titania's senses, especially her eyes, completely fail her as she cannot logically register that Bottom's human body holds the head of a donkey. On the other hand, Bottom's response is rather familiar to that of Sebastian's in *Twelfth Night* when Olivia discusses their potential marriage just minutes after meeting her. Like Sebastian, Bottom immediately questions the plausibility of the situation at hand: "Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet…reason and love keep little company together nowadays" (*MND*.3.1.137-139). Bottom uses logic, not his external senses, to understand Titania's exclamation, but just like Sebastian and Olivia, Bottom will eventually succumb to Titania's beauty, power, and unearthliness. However, Bottom is correct about the great distance between "reason and love," yet it does not completely apply to this specific situation since Titania is in a state in which her reason is completely altered or maybe even impaired.

While sight and perception have always been intertwined, with dreams, imagination must enter the equation. In the *Twaynes New Introduction to Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream*, James L. Calderwood, also agrees that Titania's eyes have been "charmed": "The marvelous powers of the pansy, coupled with Oberon's verbal charm, have afflicted her with love's trick of seeing not with the eyes…but with a mind of bereft judgment" (42). Claderwood's analysis relates directly back to Clark's remarks on the consequences of demonic intervention in the eye. Titania's eyes were tampered with and that tampering moved all the way to her cognition. This suggests that Titania, along with the other characters, Lysander and Demetrius, who are subject to the pansy's power, is in a dream. In *Vanities of the Eye*, the eyes are not the only essential component to dreaming, but imagination is also essential:

> The imagination was the main faculty involved…In essence, dreams were explained in terms of a change in the balance of power among the facilities and senses; the imagination, more or less free from the controlling influence of reason, was able to present images to the 'common sense', which, unoccupied with any impressions from the outside world, had no option but to 'see' them (301-302)

The imagination is what Oberon, in his demonic, witch-like role, is getting to when he applies the "love-in-idleness" to Titania's eyes. R.W. Dent finds love's effect on the imagination quite strong: "love…influenced the imagination so as to have it misreport what it saw, thereby heightening the passion…the imagination" ("Imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream"* 116). This lover, however, is not real, but fabricated by Oberon's flower and charm. Therefore, when this false love affects the imagination, the imagination brings false images to her eyes.

Moreover, I agree there is a "heightening" of passion. Titania's words are less cold and her tone towards Bottom suggests great fervor as well as anxiety to keep him near her. Her language is more decorative as she lists the many exotic and enticing foods Bottom can be fed in the forest. Quickly and freely, Titania offers Bottom "fairies to attend on thee…jewels from the deep" and beds of "pressed flowers" (*MND* 3.1.150-152). At the end of the scene, it is clear Oberon's charms have worked on Titania. Before her fairies tend to Bottom, Titania notes that the moon "looks with a watery eye," repeating the same language Oberon used to describe the relationship between Cupid's arrow and the moon (*MND* 3.1.191). Though not pure and virtuous like the moon, she is, after all, married to Oberon, Titania suggests her own "watery" desire for Bottom's "fiery shaft." It would seem Titania is not in love, but in lust. She has been given a bad dream, delivered from a demon-like Oberon, to "tempt" her with a ridiculous lust. This "dream," however, proves to be false, as Oberon allows his wife to "wake up" and return to him with happiness.

Once Oberon receives the changeling child from Titania, he believes he has fulfilled his witch-like role and has had his fill of "pleasure taunt[ing] her" (*MND* 4.1.56). Oberon removes the "hateful imperfection of her eyes," with another "charm" and Titania awakens anxious and confused. She tells her husband, "What visions have I seen," hinting at the familiar way in which dreams and reality overlap in the Renaissance (*MND* 4.1.75). Titania speaks of visions, suggesting what she saw was not real, but she says she has "seen" them with her own eyes, which is shared between dream and reality. The general confusion she feels, not knowing how she ended up next to the pairs of mortal lovers, including one with a donkey's head, is a reflection of the general haziness one feels after such a bizarre dream: "Methought I was enamour'd of an ass," says Titania, and Oberon points to Bottom as proof (*MND* 4.1.76). She

could then rationalize her dream using Clark's method. Bottom's image left "traces of species" behind with her "internal senses" once she fell asleep, so those species were still perceived by her imagination and brought into her dream. However, we can still classify Titania's dream as false, for she does not continue to love Bottom once she is awake: "O how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!" (*MND* 4.1.78).

In contrast to Oberon's intentional meddling with Titania's eyes and perception, Lysander becomes an innocent victim, mistaken for Demetrius and accidentally exposed to the pansy's power, turning him against his true love, Hermia. Before the potion is placed onto his eyelids, Lysander shows himself to be quite passionate towards Hermia. After being told by both Hermia's father, Egeus, and Theseus, the Duke of Athens, they will not allow him to marry Hermia, Lysander reacts with hope in contrast to Hermia's rage: "Ay me! For aught that I could ever read,/Could ever hear by tale or history,/The course of true love never did run smooth;" (*MND* 1.1.132-134). Lysander places his relationship with Hermia into the grand scheme of history, noting they are not the first, nor the last, to face obstacles in order to remain together. In this way, Lysander assures Hermia that their love is very much real, and not a simple or "smooth" love story. He continues on to explore the idea of love's fragility and instability as a way of building up to his proposal to elope. Lysander finds love to be as "momentary as a sound,/swift as a shadow, short as any dream" (*MND* 1.1.143-144). Unaware of what is yet to come, Lysander predicts the elements that will test the strength and stability of his love for Hermia and her love for him. He notes the "swift...shadow," which can refer to Oberon or Puck, along with the "dream" he is about to accidentally experience.

The dream Lysander eventually can be classified as "false," since it is unintentionally produced and did not come true in the end. Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius as he spots

"the man/by the Athenian garments he hath on", and will "throw/all the power this charm doth owe" onto the lover's eyes (*MND* 2.1.263, 264, 2.2.77-78). Oberon assigns Puck the task with a positive intent as he hopes to please Helena, the "sweet Athenian lady" by changing Demetrius' perception of her (*MND* 2.1.260). Puck chooses to "throw" the juice instead of "anoint" it on the mortal's eyelids as Oberon instructed. Throwing is messier and more aggressive work than anointing. The change in words suggests an unintentional change in roles by Puck. Puck's accidental interference on Lysander's sight and cognition places Puck in the role of a daemon's helper, and not a positive light. Like Oberon, Puck recites a chant to complement the juice and hopes the power of the pansy will create a love so strong that it "forbid/sleep" (*MND* 2.2.79). Ironically, with the application of the juice, Puck lets Lysander fall into an even deeper sleep, in which his imagination, and then sight, is wrongfully tampered with to create an ugly, false image of his beloved Hermia. At the same time, Helen will appear more beautiful than ever to Lysander, who will lust after her. Yet his words towards Helena do not express the same passion he has for Hermia.

As observed with Titania, the pansy's power works on Lysander as "love-in-idleness." Yes, Lysander pursues the first woman he lays eyes on, but Helena's physical appearance, tall and fair, falls in line with the ideal Renaissance woman. Farrah Karim-Cooper makes note of Helena's play on the word "fair," as she degrades her own beauty: "to be 'fair' is to be white and glistening, and to be thus is to be beautiful…according to Elizabethan convention" (140). From a physical standpoint, Helena is the easy choice, compared to Hermia's more unique, dark features. When he first speaks to Helena after waking, Lysander explains that his love has shifted from a "raven" to a "dove," indicating his preference for Helena's fairness over Hermia's darker

complexion (*MND* 2.2.113). Then, instead of successfully wooing Helena, as Demetrius does, Lysander actually presents Helena with a dull rant about reasoning and his change of heart:

> The will of man is by his reason sway'd,
>
> And reason says you are the worthier maid…
>
> …And touching now the point of human skill,
>
> Reason becomes the marshal to my will (*MND* 2.2.114-115, 118-119).

The obvious problem with Lysander's speech is his "reason" is nowhere to be found in the dream state he currently inhabits. Like with Titania, Lysander's mind is "bereft of judgment," so he does not think twice before acting so foolishly towards Helena, who is confused and offended by his uncharacteristic forwardness towards her.

As Lysander's experience with the pansy's juice has him betray his true love and offend another, Oberon steps in as a God-like figure to save the Athenian from this demon-like dream. He gives Puck another charm and tells him to "crush this herb into Lysander's eye,/Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,/…And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight" (*MND* 3.2.366-367, 369). Oberon believes when the lovers next wake, "all this derision/shall seem a dream and fruitless vision" (*MND* 3.2.370-371). The fairy king goes above and beyond, not just to correct Lysander's sight and judgment to prevent further emotional harm, but to make them all believe they have just had a "dream," which they will not be able to fully remember or explain. This idea of a "fruitless vision," in a play that discusses marriage and fruitfulness, seems to represent a kind of escape that Shakespeare provides his audiences to remind them that the theater is not completely representative of real life. Like with Antonio's arrest in *Twelfth Night*, Oberon's assurance that the human couples will think back on their experiences in the forest as merely

fantasy, is a way for Shakespeare to restore a sense of normality within his theater to ease audiences as their play going experience comes to an end. When Theseus asks how they came into the wood, Lysander is the first to answer: "Half sleep, half waking; but as yet, I swear,/I cannot truly say how I came here" (*MND* 4.1.146-147). It is as if Lysander cannot recollect how cruel he was to his beloved Hermia. Lysander's dream is false since he does not remain cruel towards Hermia, but instead wakes up with renewed affection for her.

Demetrius also experiences a dream ignited by Oberon's pansy however, unlike Titania, he appears to fall into a dream that is true, as he does end up marrying Helena at the end of the play. Before the juice is applied to his eyes, Demetrius' language towards Helena is quite straightforwardly violent, making him seem almost as demonic as Oberon is towards Titania. Demetrius threatens to abandon Helena in the forest and leave her to "the mercy of wild beasts" (*MND* 2.1.228). Helena remains persistent and Demetrius threatens her again: "if thou follow me, do not believe/But I shall do thee mischief in the wood" (*MND* 2.1.235-236). In addition to his view of Puck, Bevington also finds Demetrius to be rather demonic. As Helena follows Demetrius in the woods, he tells her how foolish she is to "leave the city and commit youself/Into the hands of one that loves you not/…With the rich worth of your virginity" (*MND* 2.1.215-216, 219). Bevington correctly points out "Demetrius recognizes the opportunity for a loveless rape and briefly recognizes his own potential for such sexual violence" ("Imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream"* 29). With this observation in mind, the change in Demetrius after the juice is applied to his eyes, is quite noticeable. Despite his threatening demeanor, Demetrius' language is plain and lacks passion, even the passion to express hate towards Helena. After Oberon overhears Demetrius' fight with Helena, he plans to change the young man's view of the maiden: "A sweet Athenian lady is in love/With a disdainful youth; anoint his eyes" (*MND*

2.1.260-261). In this situation, Oberon is not demonic, but, instead, genuinely caring. While he plans to "streak" Titania's eyes with the juice, he wants to "anoint" Demetrius' eyes. Though anointing was understood to mean, "smearing", the word itself is cleaner than "throw" (OED). The difference in application suggests a difference in intent. Oberon wants Demetrius to love Helena, not merely lust after her. As with Titania, Oberon also recites a verbal charm as he squeezes the juice onto Demetrius' eyelids. Again, Oberon's language changes for his charm. It is not slanderous, but uplifting, not spiteful, but hopeful: "When his love he doth espy,/Let her shine as gloriously/As the Venus of the sky" (*MND* 3.2.105-107). Oberon is creating, what can be classified as a true dream, since Demetrius chooses to marry Helena once Theseus finds them in the woods.

Unlike with Titania and Lysander, in which the flower worked as "love-in-idleness," this marked pansy lives up to its other nickname, "heartsease," or heart's ease as it works its magic on Demetrius (OED). Once Demetrius wakes and lays eyes on Helena, his language, and the passion behind it, is hugely enhanced: "O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!/To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?" (*MND* 3.2.137-138). Here, Demetrius' language is just as passionate as Lysander's language is towards Hermia. He compares her lips to "kissing cherries" and describes her as the "princess of pure white," emphasizing his preference for her fair skin and virtue (*MND* 140,144). Demetrius' language has shifted into a more decorative and passionate vocabulary, which at first confuses and frustrates Helena, but eventually wins her over. Demetrius' passion continues to grow as he challenges Lysander to a duel to prove to Helena who loves her more, and he and Lysander physically chase each other around the stage. While Demetrius speaks many words to Helena, this is the first time he takes physical action to express his love for her.

The textual evidence suggests Demetriuis' dream to be similar to a "true" dream, sent from "God…and [was] spiritually improving, even revelatory" (Clark 304). The experience does appear to improve Demetrius, especially since he no longer expresses violence towards Helena, as he did at the beginning of the play. When Demetrius, along with the other lovers, wake up to Theseus's voice, he continues to love Helena. He immediately refers to her as "fair," something he never did prior to his exposure to the pansy, and continues to demonstrate his newfound passion to his king: "the virtue of my heart,/The object and the pleasure of mine eye,/Is only Helena" (*MND* 4.1.168-170). In his attempt to explain his change of heart, Demetrius admits he cannot provide an exact answer:

> But my good lord, I wot not by what power –
>
> But by some power it is – my love to Hermia,
>
> Melted as the snow, seems to me now
>
> As the remembrance of an idle gaud
>
> Which in my childhood I did dote upon (*MND* 4.1.163-167)

Demetrius' feelings for Hermia suddenly feel hazy, like a childhood memory. His tone suggests he is working through some muddled thoughts, as if he had just awoken from a strange dream and could no longer recall it. Moreover, Demetrius also cannot explain his reasoning for those feelings transferring over to Helena, a woman he despised at the beginning of the play. Nor can he explain his dissipating feelings for Hermia. Demetrius feels as if those feelings are distant and "idle," which suggests Helena really is his true love, since he is no longer "idle" towards her. If Demetrius' dream was to be classified as "true," his love for Helena can be the "revelatory"

outcome or the result of "spiritual improvement" as he has become a gentler, more passionate man towards Helena. Just as a revelation cannot be completely articulated or explained, neither can Demetrius' change of heart. Instead, it is possible to interpret Demetrius' change in heart as his acceptance of the nonsensical aspect of it. Indeed, to make sense of Demetrius' experience we might recall the *Much Ado About Nothing* emphasizes the necessity to embrace what Carl Dennis refers to as "inner…faith" and "irrationality as an essential part of life" since there is a "fundamental irrationality" in love ("Wit and Wisdom in *Much Ado About Nothing"* 230, 231). With this "true" dream, Demetrius learns to accept the strangeness of his shift in feelings and to be happy, regardless, by the outcome; his loving feelings for Helena.

Though Shakespeare suggests that Demetrius has a true dream, the play also presents the case that Demetrius is, in fact, still dreaming, even after he wakes up with the rest of the lovers. Demetrius' experience with Oberon's pansy differs from both Titania and Lysander's experiences with the flower. While the other two are both exposed to another herb that released them from the pansy's charm, Demetrius is not given the same remedy before he wakes up in the forest. The four lovers make note of their grogginess and confusion about the events that possibly took place the night before, but Demetrius seems the most unsure: "Are you sure that we are awake? It seems to me/That yet we sleep, we dream" (*MND* 4.1.191-192). Demetrius refers to the common early modern belief that dreaming feels just as real as living in reality. If it feels the same, then who can tell if one is awake or asleep? If Demetrius is still dreaming, does that call into question the genuineness of his love for Helena in the sphere of reality? Since neither Oberon nor Puck took away Demetrius' charm, he continues to be under its influence. As we saw with Titania, dreams affect the imagination and sight. With his imagination overwhelmed by the pansy's juice, Demetrius' sight remains unreliable. He finds he has no

logical reason for his sudden shift of feelings from Hermia to Helena, but in dreams imagination is "free from the controlling influence of reason" or logic (Clark 302). Therefore, if Demetrius is seeing false images, it is possible he is looking at Helena falsely and producing feelings of false love as a result.

The ambiguousness of the end, or continuation, of Demetrius' dream calls into question the beginnings of dreams for Hermia and Helena. Earlier, Oberon assures Puck and the audience that "When they next wake, all this derision/Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision" (*MND* 3.2.370-371). The fairy king mentions, "they," which I assume to be the two pairs of lovers and Bottom. However, that second herb is only applied to Lysander's eyes. Therefore, it would make sense to believe that Helena and Hermia should wake up furious with Demetrius and Lysander. However, when the couples wake up, neither woman mentions the cruel ways in which their lovers treated them, or how terribly they treated each other. Instead, Hermia struggles to get a hold of her sight: "Methinks I see these things with parted eye,/When everything seems double" (*MND* 188-189). Her eyes are "parted" or divided, suggesting she is in a state between dream and reality. Helena also expresses confusion: "And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,/Mine own, and not mine own" (*MND* 190-191). Like Hermia, Helena also senses a kind of divide in her feelings in regards to Demetrius' change of heart. As noted in Arden's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Helena's comparison of Demetrius to a "jewel," indicates that his new self is "like a precious thing found, and therefore of uncertain ownership" (*MND* 98). The couples' confusion illustrates the complexities of dreaming, and moreover, the complexities of love. Shakespeare shows that finding and navigating true love is just as difficult as trying to remember a bizarre dream. The playwright also suggests, that, to an extent these components, sight, love, imagination, and dreaming, can be just out of our reach.

Bottom, now with his normal human head, is the last to wake up in the forest. Like the others, he too believes he has had the "most rare vision…past the wit of man to say what dream it was" (*MND* 204-205). Again, Shakespeare's characters recognize that something as complex as a dream is beyond the grasp of man's intelligence. However, among those affected in this play, Bottom appears to be the most awake: Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream…The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was (*MND* 4.1.205, 209-212). In his reflection, Bottom appears to better understand man's relationship to the senses, to the mind, and to the world. He assigns senses with incorrect functions, suggesting just how unfaithful they are even though they are an integral part of man. In *Knowing Shakespeare*, Lowell Gallagher and Shankar Raman find Bottom's confusion to be a kind of "synesthetic perception" that involves a shift in the "center of gravity of experience" (6). With that shift we "unlearn how to see, hear, and…feeling, in order to deduce…what we are to see, hear and feel" (Gallagher & Raman 6). This mirrors Bottom's situation as he feels he has undergone a kind of renewal of the senses, which can produce the "Romantic sublime," which seems like true love (Gallagher & Raman 6). In this way, Bottom suggests that man will never be able to see the world for what it actually is, but instead what man, and the state of his senses, allow him to see. At the same time, Bottom says we should not fight this reality. He finds man to be foolish if he attempts to "expound" or logically explain what he experiences. Bottom understands that not everything is in his control, and therefore, not everything can be explained. He appears to embrace Dennis' idea of approaching "the world through faith, through irrational belief" ("Wit and Wisdom in *Much Ado About Nothing"* 224). This may be Bottom's most humorous moment, as he appears to be the only character in the play in the correct mindset to find true love.

V. Conclusion

Shakespeare shows the relationship between sight and love to be complex and quite fragile. As demonstrated in *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sight can help or hurt the formations of romantic relationships, or at the very least, complicates them. Used by various characters, sight results in changes in a character's perception, changes in their desires, and even changes in characters' emotions and feelings towards others. In the end, a variety of different romantic relationships form, including relationships with foundations of true love, as demonstrated by Beatrice and Benedick, relationships with weak foundations that show no indication of true love, as exhibited by Claudio and Hero or Olivia and Sebastian, as well as relationships with foundations that still cannot be determined as strong or weak, as exhibited by Demetrius and Helena.

In the end, these three comedies reveal the many layers to sight, love, desire, sexuality, dreams, cognition, and magic. Though these plays end in seemingly simple marriages, the paths to those marriages are full of ambiguities that reveal many other grey areas in the given aspects I chose to address in this thesis. Sight is not always wrong, words are not always right, and true love will not always be found in socially acceptable couples. Shakespeare states the obvious in a not so obvious way: humans are not consistent, and neither are the aspects of human nature. Nevertheless, Shakespeare has created characters that embody the spirit of the Renaissance – the "rise of the individual," just as he embodies its spirit too.

These three comedies, in addition to many of his other works, are important to study, because they are observations and representations of the finest and most tragic aspects of the human race. In her book *Shakespeare and Elizabeth: The Meeting of Two Myths,* author Helen Hackett

presents the image of Shakespeare as everlasting: “Shakespeare as a writer for the people, for all of us, is essentially the same Shakespeare who has long been praised for his broad and inclusive humanity and his timeless insight into human nature” (123). Hackett is correct as Shakespeare’s works show him to be a man of his time, addressing familiar aspects of culture in early modern England, giving his audience members a key to enter his world and sit comfortably. However, he was also a man ahead of his time, shedding light on the ignored, negative, or slightly uncomfortable aspects of their culture, including gender representation, homosexual desires, and emphasis on one’s appearance in their social world. Shakespeare was clearly not afraid to isolate his own world in his plays and use his works to have them reevaluate the more rigid and nonsensical aspects of their well established culture.

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