

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Twelfth Night

FULLY ANNOTATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY BURTON RAYES

WITH AN ESSAY BY HAROLD BLOOM

THE ANNOTATED SHAKESPEARE

Twelfth Night, or, What You Will



William Shakespeare

Edited, fully annotated, and introduced by Burton Raffel

With an essay by Harold Bloom

THE ANNOTATED SHAKESPEARE

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For Carolyn Yalkut

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ABOUT THIS BOOK



Orsino's famous soliloquy, which opens the play, reads as follows:

If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it, that surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again, it had a dying fall.
O it came o'er my ear, like the sweet sound
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odor. Enough, no more,
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou,
That notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute. So full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high fantastical.

This was perfectly understandable, we must assume, to the mostly very average persons who paid to watch Elizabethan plays. But

though much remains clear, who today can make full or entirely comfortable sense of the soliloquy? In this very fully annotated edition, I therefore present this passage, not in the bare form quoted above, but thoroughly supported by bottom-of-the-page notes:

If music be the food of love, play on,
 Give me excess of it, that surfeiting,¹
 The appetite² may sicken, and so die.
 That strain³ again, it had a dying fall.⁴
 O it came o'er⁵ my ear, like the sweet sound
 That breathes⁶ upon a bank⁷ of violets,
 Stealing⁸ and giving⁹ odor. Enough, no more,
 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
 O spirit¹⁰ of love, how quick and fresh¹¹ art thou,
 That notwithstanding¹² thy capacity
 Receiveth¹³ as the sea,¹⁴ nought enters there,
 Of what validity and pitch¹⁵ soe'er,

1 that surfeiting = so that having had more than enough

2 desire

3 melody, tune

4 dying fall = languishing descent/sinking/cascading movement

5 came o'er = descended upon, passed over

6 exhales/blows softly

7 slope, bed

8 taking away ("gaining") from the flowers

9 bringing odor with it, as breezes do

10 (1) essential substance/principle/nature, (2) breath, movement of air, wind,
 (3) melody, music

11 quick and fresh = lively and refreshing/pure*

12 that notwithstanding = so that even though

13 capacity receiveth = ability to take things in absorbs such things

14 "Sea refuseth no water": *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Proverbs*, ed. G. L. Apperson (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1993), 555a

15 validity and pitch = strength/force and from what height/how/at what angle thrown (n.b.: "pitch" as a musical term was also used in Shakespeare's time)

But falls into abatement and low price,¹⁶
Even in a minute. So full of shapes is fancy¹⁷
That it alone is high fantastical.¹⁸

Without full explanation of words that have over the years shifted in meaning, and usages that have been altered, neither the modern reader nor the modern listener is likely to be equipped for anything like full comprehension.

I believe annotations of this sort create the necessary bridges, from Shakespeare's four-centuries-old English across to ours. Some readers, to be sure, will be able to comprehend unusual, historically different meanings without any glosses. Those not familiar with the modern meaning of particular words will easily find clear, simple definitions in any modern dictionary. But most readers are not likely to understand Shakespeare's intended meaning, absent such glosses as I here offer.

My annotation practices have followed the same principles used in *The Annotated Milton*, published in 1999, and in my annotated editions of *Hamlet*, published (as the initial volume in this series) in 2003, *Romeo and Juliet* (published in 2004), and subsequent volumes in this series. Classroom experience has validated these editions. Classes of mixed upper-level undergraduates and graduate students have more quickly and thoroughly transcended language barriers than ever before. This allows the teacher, or a general reader without a teacher, to move more promptly and confidently to the nonlinguistic matters that have made Shakespeare and Milton great and important poets.

It is the inevitable forces of linguistic change, operant in all liv-

16 abatement and low price = diminishing and reduced worth/value

17 shapes is fancy=images/pictures is the imagination*

18 high fantastical = strongly/greatly/richly amorous inclination, love

ing tongues, which have inevitably created such wide degrees of obstacles to ready comprehension—not only sharply different meanings, but subtle, partial shifts in meaning which allow us to think we understand when, alas, we do not. Speakers of related languages like Dutch and German also experience this shifting of the linguistic ground. Like early Modern English (ca. 1600) and the Modern English now current, those languages are too close for those who know only one language, and not the other, to be readily able always to recognize what they correctly understand and what they do not. When, e.g., a speaker of Dutch says “Men kofer is kapot,” a speaker of German will know that something belonging to the Dutchman is broken (kapot = “kaputt” in German, and men = “mein”). But without more linguistic awareness than the average person is apt to have, the German speaker will not identify “kofer” (“trunk” in Dutch) with “Körper”—a modern German word which means “physique, build, body.” The closest word to “kofer” in modern German, indeed, is “Scrankkoffer,” which is too large a leap for ready comprehension. Speakers of different Romance languages (French, Spanish, Italian), and all other related but not identical tongues, all experience these difficulties, as well as the difficulty of understanding a text written in their own language five, or six, or seven hundred years earlier. Shakespeare’s English is not yet so old that it requires, like many historical texts in French and German, or like Old English texts—e.g., *Beowulf*—a modern translation. Much poetry evaporates in translation: language is immensely particular. The sheer *sound* of Dante in thirteenth-century Italian is profoundly worth preserving. So too is the sound of Shakespeare.

I have annotated prosody (metrics) only when it seemed truly necessary or particularly helpful. Readers should have no prob-

lem with the silent “e” in past participles (loved, returned, missed). Except in the few instances where modern usage syllabifies the “e,” whenever an “e” in Shakespeare is *not* silent, it is marked “è.” The notation used for prosody, which is also used in the explanation of Elizabethan pronunciation, follows the extremely simple form of my *From Stress to Stress: An Autobiography of English Prosody* (see “Further Reading,” near the end of this book). Syllables with metrical stress are capitalized; all other syllables are in lowercase letters. I have managed to employ normalized Elizabethan spellings, in most indications of pronunciation, but I have sometimes been obliged to deviate, in the higher interest of being understood.

I have annotated, as well, a limited number of such other matters, sometimes of interpretation, sometimes of general or historical relevance, as have seemed to me seriously worthy of inclusion. These annotations have been most carefully restricted: this is not intended to be a book of literary commentary. It is for that reason that the glossing of metaphors has been severely restricted. There is almost literally no end to discussion and/or analysis of metaphor, especially in Shakespeare. To yield to temptation might well be to double or triple the size of this book—and would also change it from a historically oriented language guide to a work of an unsteadily mixed nature. In the process, I believe, neither language nor literature would be well or clearly served.

Where it seemed useful, and not obstructive of important textual matters, I have modernized spelling, including capitalization. Spelling is not on the whole a basic issue, but punctuation and lineation must be given high respect. The Folio uses few exclamation marks or semicolons, which is to be sure a matter of the conventions of a very different era. Still, our modern preferences can-

not be lightly substituted for what is, after a fashion, the closest thing to a Shakespeare manuscript we are likely ever to have. We do not know whether these particular seventeenth-century printers, like most of that time, were responsible for question marks, commas, periods, and, especially, all-purpose colons, or whether these particular printers tried to follow their handwritten sources. Nor do we know if those sources, or what part thereof, might have been in Shakespeare's own hand. But in spite of these equivocations and uncertainties, it remains true that, to a very considerable extent, punctuation tends to result from just how the mind responsible for that punctuating *hears* the text. And twenty-first-century minds have no business, in such matters, overruling seventeenth-century ones. Whoever the compositors were, they were more or less Shakespeare's contemporaries, and we are not.

Accordingly, when the original printed text uses a comma, we are being signaled that *they* (whoever "they" were) heard the text, not coming to a syntactic stop, but continuing to some later stopping point. To replace commas with editorial periods is thus risky and on the whole an undesirable practice. (The play's dramatic action, to be sure, may require us, for twenty-first-century readers, to highlight what four-hundred-year-old punctuation standards may not make clear—and may even, at times, misrepresent.)

When the printed text has a colon, what we are being signaled is that *they* heard a syntactic stop—though not necessarily or even usually the particular kind of syntactic stop we associate, today, with the colon. It is therefore inappropriate to substitute editorial commas for original colons. It is also inappropriate to employ editorial colons when *their* syntactic usage of colons does not match ours. In general, the closest thing to *their* syntactic sense of the colon is our (and their) period.

The printed interrogation (question) marks, too, merit extremely respectful handling. In particular, editorial exclamation marks should very rarely be substituted for interrogation marks.

It follows from these considerations that the movement and sometimes the meaning of what we must take to be Shakespeare's play will at times be different, depending on whose punctuation we follow, *theirs* or our own. I have tried, here, to use the seventeenth-century text as a guide to both *hearing* and *understanding* what Shakespeare wrote.

Since the original printed texts (there not being, as there never are for Shakespeare, any surviving manuscripts) are frequently careless as well as self-contradictory, I have been relatively free with the wording of stage directions—and in some cases have added brief directions, to indicate who is speaking to whom. I have made no emendations; I have necessarily been obliged to make choices. Textual decisions have been annotated when the differences between or among the original printed texts seem either marked or of unusual interest.

In the interests of compactness and brevity, I have employed in my annotations (as consistently as I am able) a number of stylistic and typographical devices:

- The annotation of a single word does not repeat that word
- The annotation of more than one word repeats the words being annotated, which are followed by an equals sign and then by the annotation; the footnote number in the text is placed after the last of the words being annotated
- In annotations of a single word, alternative meanings are usually separated by commas; if there are distinctly different ranges of meaning, the annotations are separated by arabic numerals inside parentheses—(1), (2), and so on; in more

complexly worded annotations, alternative meanings expressed by a single word are linked by a forward slash, or solidus: /

- Explanations of textual meaning are not in parentheses; comments about textual meaning are
- Except for proper nouns, the word at the beginning of all annotations is in lower case
- Uncertainties are followed by a question mark, set in parentheses: (?)
- When particularly relevant, “translations” into twenty-first-century English have been added, in parentheses
- Annotations of repeated words are *not* repeated. Explanations of the *first* instance of such common words are followed by the sign ★. Readers may easily track down the first annotation, using the brief Finding List at the back of the book. Words with entirely separate meanings are annotated *only* for meanings no longer current in Modern English.

The most important typographical device here employed is the sign ★ placed after the first (and only) annotation of words and phrases occurring more than once. There is an alphabetically arranged listing of such words and phrases in the Finding List at the back of the book. The Finding List contains no annotations but simply gives the words or phrases themselves and the numbers of the relevant act, the scene within that act, and the footnote number within that scene for the word’s first occurrence.

INTRODUCTION



Those in search of entertainment usually prefer to know, more or less in advance, what sort of entertainment they have chosen and for which they are paying. Those who attend a performance of *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* neither expect nor would probably readily accept a song-and-dance farce. Similarly, a performance of *The Comical History of the Merchant of Venice, or Otherwise Called the Jew of Venice* is not likely to be “lamentable tragedy,” though the unusually long and remarkably detailed title suggests that this “comical history,” too, is not of the song-and-dance variety.

Shakespeare’s plays have been in constant performance for four hundred years and more; we commonly shorten their familiar and well-understood titles. *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice* are all we have come to need. But *Twelfth Night* comes to us (uniquely, for Shakespeare) along with a second, alternative title. This alternative, *What You Will*, may well have been the original title and could have been changed (we do not know) in order to avoid conflict with John Marston’s play by that name. Though it was written about 1600, just before *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night* first appeared in print in the 1623 Folio, with the alternative title at-

tached, and there it has remained. We assume that Shakespeare so intended, though there is no evidence, just as there is none to contradict the assumption.

The paired titles are particularly important in determining three major issues: (1) the probable date of composition, (2) the probable date and place of first performance, and (3) authorial intent—that is, since we have only the text, and not a shred of external information as to what Shakespeare intended, the *play's* intentions. *Twelfth Night* clearly alludes to the Twelfth Day of Christmas, the sixth day of January (also known as Epiphany). This an important day in the Christian year, deeply grounded in English as well as European history. Indeed, the Elizabethans' perception of the calendar was governed by such religious observances rather than by mere days of the month: the eighth day of January, for example, was more likely to be referred to as "two days after Epiphany."

But all attempts to link the religious aspects of the holiday to Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* have failed. Even apart from the plainly secular nature of the text, this is because the Twelfth Day of Christmas had become a universally joyous and sometimes a riotously liberated celebration, just as Christmas itself (historically of pagan origin) had "continued to be a great secular feast as well as a religious one."¹ So, too, purported links between court observance of the holiday and the play's first performance have been unconvincing in the extreme. Leslie Hotson's study (cited in "Further Reading") is a gold mine of widely assorted cultural and historical data, most interestingly recorded. However, it does not establish any linkage between its fascinating data and Shakespeare's play. It is demonstrably true that, in 1594, "Twelfth Night was celebrated at Court by dancing which continued till 1

o'clock after midnight, the Queen [Elizabeth] being seated on a high throne, and next to her chair the Earl of Essex with whom she often devised [conversed] in sweet and favorable manner."² But such evidence is linked only to the holiday and not to our play.

Still, although festive comedy is not all the play is concerned with, the nature of Twelfth Night celebrations is indeed very like the festive comedy of *Twelfth Night*. For example, in the universities of Europe, "Only on Twelfth-night were mummers [mimes] allowed within the sacred precincts of the college."³ "The Feast of Epiphany, or Twelfth Night, was the most important masquing [masquerading] night, commemorating the recognition of Christ's birth by the Three Magi."⁴ When John Milton attacked King Charles's distinctly heroic calm, as displayed on the scaffold prior to his execution, he described the king's actions as a performance, "a masking scene . . . [with] quaint emblems and devices, begged from the old pageantry of some Twelfthnight's entertainment at Whitehall [the court]."⁵

It is no accident, accordingly, that *Twelfth Night's* important "clown" role is assigned to a character named Feste. Nor is it accidental that the social role of children was much enlarged on Twelfth Night, "probably the greatest festival of the year. . . . A miniature [painted at the end of the fifteenth century] depicts the first episode of the festival . . . [and] record[s] the moment when, in accordance with tradition, it was a child who shared out the Twelfth-cake. . . . The playing of this part by the child implies his presence in the midst of the adults during the long hours of the Twelfth Night vigil."⁶ All the same, the Twelfth day of Christmas is neither mentioned nor in any direct way involved in the play.

The alternative title, *What You Will*, makes no specific refer-

ence to any external event. Here, too, linkages have been asserted, but never successfully maintained. Yet the less allusive second title throws perhaps as much light on the play as does the first title. To better understand the significance of *What You Will*, it may help to consider the following list of twenty dramatic titles, presented in strictly alphabetical order:

1. *All's Well That Ends Well*
2. *Anything Goes*
3. *As You Like It*
4. *The Comedy of Errors*
5. *A Dangerous Maid*
6. *Everybody's Doing It*
7. *I'd Rather Be Right*
8. *Let's Face It*
9. *Merrie England*
10. *Much Ado about Nothing*
11. *A Night Out*
12. *Nymph Errant*
13. *Oh I Say*
14. *On Your Toes*
15. *Out of This World*
16. *Sigh No More*
17. *Tell Me More*
18. *Wake Up and Dream*
19. *Yeomen of the Guard*
20. *You Never Know*

Of these twenty more or less similar titles, only numbers 1, 3, 4, and 10 are by Shakespeare. The others are all what we call "musical comedy."⁷

Yet as this list of titles illustrates, musical comedy tends to be based on much the same spirit as that in which most of Shakespeare's comedies were written, though the literary level is generally a good deal reduced. The text of *Twelfth Night* makes it plain that Shakespeare had other things than sheer "comedy" on his mind. Splendid though Cole Porter's work may be, no one would argue that he was capable of (or interested in) writing anything even remotely like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, or *Othello*.⁸ After all, there are three hundred and some years between the theater that gave birth to the non-Shakespearean plays on this list and the theater of Elizabethan England. But the gaiety and abandon of fifteen of the other sixteen plays remains both remarkably similar and distinctly significant. (William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan's *Yeomen of the Guard* is not particularly cheerful; neither is Shakespeare, at times, even in so-called comedies.) The spirit of *What You Will* needs and will support, I think, no further underlining than this.

Twelfth Night is an extraordinarily bold play, ambitious in ways that Shakespeare's earlier comedies cannot fully match. I have been stressing the comedic sides of the play, which are not hard to find. *Twelfth Night* is indeed brilliantly merry, and its poetry is unmatched. The soliloquy beginning "If music be the food of love, play on," words that introduce the play, is justly and universally celebrated. But there are a good many pointed, rather "darker" sides to *Twelfth Night*. Having been delinquent in his duties, Feste is warned that his mistress, Olivia, "will hang thee for thy absence." "Let her hang me," he replies, and immediately adds, "He that is well hanged in this world needs to fear no colors" (I.5.4–5). Some footnoting may clarify the keen pointedness of Feste's remarks. For a man to be "well hung" then meant exactly what it

means today—that is, to be genitally well endowed. This is forceful, though hardly subversive. But “colors” meant a number of things, some innocuous, some not: (1) enemies, (2) those who wear collars (“authority”), or those who have the “colors/appearances” of authority, and (3) the hangman’s noose, which was understood (and freely employed) as the ultimate enforcer of authority. Authority was then a good deal more important, and more strenuously insisted upon, than it usually is today; those who in any way resisted authority (also referred to as “order”) were seen as dangerously evil. To be “disorderly” was not a trivial offense and was frequently a mortal one. A few lines farther along, Feste notes that “Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage” (1.5.17). Again, this has a sexual thrust, but it is also an extension of the antisocial coloration just noted. Clowns had social license, up to a point; Feste’s bluntness approaches long-standing and profoundly respected boundaries.

Nor is Feste the only character to voice doubts about the fabric of society. Feste is a clown and therefore off (or outside) the social scale. Doubts about society, from such a character, are of less weight, and less surprising, than such doubts emanating from people notably higher in rank. (Everyone in Elizabethan England had a ranking; it was a profoundly hierarchical world.) Maria is a “gentlewoman,” the now-obsolete female counterpart of “gentleman”; neither designation was a casual affair, and both designations opened a wide variety of social doors. We do not think of literacy as one such door, but most Elizabethans, and especially the great majority who worked for a living, were not literate. Maria is so manifestly literate that she can quite successfully ape her mistress’s handwriting, not to mention her literary style. Maria is her lady’s chambermaid, and though a gentlewoman is considerably lower on the social scale than a “lady,” the personal

servant of a woman of Olivia's wealth (which is considerable) and standing (Olivia is a countess) is not an ordinary "servant." Even the much-despised Malvolio, who in truth works hard at earning others' dislike, is a gentleman: neither he nor Maria could think of "marrying up," as both do think (and one of whom successfully does), if either were at the nether end of the personal-service scale.

Yet Maria (in the best Shakespearean tradition) has her eyes open and can observe that Malvolio is "villainously" yellow-stockinged and cross-gartered, "like a pedant that keeps a school" (3.2.66–67). There were then no state-supported schools; church-based education formed a significant part of what schooling was available. The church itself was of such social importance that people were obliged by law to attend services and were subject to punishment for failing to do so. "Pedant" was then, as it is today, a negatively flavored term, so Maria is plainly not speaking Feste-like heresies. But she has a consistently direct tongue: as she says of Malvolio, he is not a Puritan "but a time-pleaser" and, to boot, "an affectioned ass" (2.3.137). These are the sorts of spices that properly season so ripe a Shakespearean brew.

We might not expect a rowdy, carousing knight to voice sentiments sharply aimed at the social fabric, and Sir Toby does not do so. But neither does he accept all of society's values. When Maria scolds him, observing that "you must confine yourself within the modest limits of order," he assures her that he will "confine [as he here uses the word, it means "clothe"] myself no finer than I am. These clothes are good enough to drink in, and so be these boots too" (1.3.9–11). Like virtually everyone else in the play, Sir Toby deals bluntly with Malvolio: "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" (2.3.108–9).

Most of *Twelfth Night's* spice, however, comes to us from Viola.

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