Osaka University Knowledge Archive

Title	The Inclination toward Death : A Study of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night
Author(s)	Miura, Yoshika
Citation	待兼山論叢. 文学篇. 1999, 33, p. 13-26
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://hdl.handle.net/11094/47904
rights	
Note	

Osaka University Knowledge Archive : OUKA

https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/

Osaka University

The Inclination toward Death: A Study of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*

Yoshika MIURA

Twelfth Night (*TN*) seems to be a happy comedy which ends with two marriages. But, in this paper, I would like to make it clear that under the surface of the happy ending the characters are fascinated by death. Evidence of it can be derived from the way to deal in the bodies. Though *TN* has often been compared to *As You Like It*, I think that how bodies are related to death in *TN* can be explained by analyzing *Measure for Measure* (*MM*). In both *TN* and *MM*, various bodies are exchanged for another. So I would like to consider what the exchange of the bodies means in *MM* in order to establish a framework upon which to examine *TN* in the second chapter.

I

A device which *MM* makes use of is the bed trick. Isabella, who refuses Angelo wooing her, sends another woman to him under cover of darkness. Angelo, who believes that the substitutive woman is Isabella, goes to bed with her. Some audiences might think it is unnatural that the man cannot distinguish the woman he loves from another. The sole dear woman for the man becomes a body that is homogeneous to and can be changed for another. I would like to define such bodies as 'exchangeable sexual bodies.' That the two bodies which should be different are exchangeable makes some audiences uncomfortable. This chapter will show what source of this discomfort is.

It is not only in the bed trick scene that a body is changed for another. Angelo, who governs Vienna as a deputy by the

Duke's order while the Duke is away from Vienna, restores penalties which have not been executed for a long time. By that, Claudio is sentenced to death on the grounds that his fiancée is expecting his child. His sister Isabella asks Angelo for Claudio's life:

If he[Claudio] had been as you, and you as he,
You would have slipp'd like him. . . . (2.2.64-65)

. . . Go to your bosom,
Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know
That's like my brother's fault. If it confess
A natural guiltiness, such as is his,
Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue
Against my brother's life. (2.2.137-42)[1)]

Thus she tries to reflect the image of her brother on Angelo as if she wanted to say both men had the same "fault" and therefore could be exchanged for each other. As though Angelo were stimulated by her words, he begins to have a sexual desire for her. Angelo demands Isabella's body in exchange for Claudio's life. The reason why she is disgusted at his demand is not only that she is a nun and values chastity. Because she has already reflected the image of her brother on Angelo, she feels as if her brother wooed her when Angelo woos her. To Isabella, Angelo becomes a sexually fearful body which cannot be distinguished from her brother's and can be exchanged for it. Evidence that she is conscious of Angelo as an 'exchangeable sexual body' can been seen in her words by which she insults Claudio in anger because he tells her to obey Angelo's demand:

Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?
Is't not a kind of incest, to take life
From thine own sister's shame? (3.1.136-39)

Because she is conscious of Angelo as a man with a body which is exchangeable for her brother's, she feels helping her brother by giving her body to Angelo to be incest.

The Duke, who in the disguise of a friar observes Angelo's government, appears before Isabella at a loss. He offers to assist her and approaches her with the idea of the bed trick. He persuades her to pretend to accept Angelo's demand and plans to make Mariana (who was abandoned by Angelo) pose as Isabella under cover of darkness and go to bed with Angelo. The Duke is sometimes called "father" because of the disguise of a friar. In "Bed Tricks: On Marriage as the End of Comedy in *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*" Janet Adelman points out that "he protects Isabella from sexuality" "as a nonsexual father protector."[2] We can see evidence that the Duke functions as a "father" who protects and teaches his children in the fact that it is he who makes Angelo admit his fault in public and saves Isabella from him in the last scene. However, the Duke who should be "a nonsexual father protector" demands marriage with her and therefore has a sexual desire for her like Angelo.[3] The Duke's body becomes exchangeable for Angelo's. Isabella's keeping silent to his proposal shows that she fears the Duke as an 'exchangeable sexual body.' It is not only Isabella that is reluctant to marry. Lucio is ordered to marry the woman he has gone to bed with, but he abhors this: "Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death, / Whipping, and hanging" (5.1.520-21). When the play ends, no couples are delighted with their marriage. So fear for the 'exchangeable sexual body' remains strong.

Why is the 'exchangeable sexual body' feared? In order to find out the answer to this, let us examine the following scenes. Though Angelo hurries up Claudio's capital punishment, the Duke instructs the provost to execute another prisoner Barnardine and send his head as Claudio's to Angelo:

> Provost. Angelo hath seen them both, and will discover the favour.
> Duke. O, death's a great disguiser. . . . (4.2.172-74)

Though this attempt is interrupted by Barnardine's resistance to execution, they instead send the head of the prisoner Ragozine who died from a fever:

Prov. . . . Ragozine, a most notorious pirate,
A man of Claudio's years; his beard and head
Just of his colour. What if we do omit
This reprobate [Barnardine] till he were well inclin'd,
And satisfy the deputy with the visage
Of Ragozine, more like to Claudio? (4.3.70-75)

In "False Immortality in *Measure for Measure*: Comic Means, Tragic Ends" Robert N. Watson states that by emphasizing that Claudio's head can be exchanged with various other heads it is shown that "in decay all human bodies reveal their horrible sameness" as in " the *transi* figure of medieval tomb sculpture."[4] That is to say, all bodies become homogeneous and exchangeable by death. The fear of becoming an 'exchangeable body' by death is expressed in the Duke's words:

. . . yet death we fear
That makes these odds all even. (3.1.40-41)

Watson connects exchanging the heads with exchanging the women's bodies in the bed trick. According to him, "just as these two women's bodies may be . . . virtually indistinguishable, so are" all the bodies when people are dead:

> More subtly disturbing is the renewed recognition that . . . indifference makes perfect sense. Any body will do. The widely expressed critical discomfort with these two substitutions—the bed-trick as immoral, the head-trick as implausible—may cover a symptomatic resistance to this recognition of indifference.[5]

The 'exchangeable sexual body' is feared because it is connected to the 'exchangeable body' which is made by death.

II

In this chapter I would like to consider *Twelfth Night* (*TN*) by applying the idea of the 'exchangeable sexual body' analyzed in the first chapter. We will begin by tracing the plot of the play. The twins Viola and Sebastian are shipwrecked and are separated from each other. Viola, in man's clothing and by the name of

Cesario, serves Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, who suffers from one-sided love with Olivia. Orsino chooses Viola as a messenger to tell his love to her. Though Viola loves Orsino secretly, she goes to Olivia and serves as a messenger. Olivia, who doesn't know Viola is female, falls in love with her. Then, Sebastian reaches Illyria too, so the characters get into confusion by mistaking the twins for each other. Toby and Andrew, mistaking Sebastian for Viola, fight a duel with him. Olivia believes that Sebastian is Viola and marries him. Orsino believes that Viola has betrayed him and married Olivia, so he becomes infuriated. But at last the confusion is resolved because it is revealed that Viola and Sebastian are different people and Viola is female. Orsino marries Viola and Olivia marries Sebastian.

One of the scenes which has been controversial is the final one. Orsino, who devoted all his love to Olivia, marries Viola as soon as she proves to be female, and Olivia briskly turns her love from Viola to Sebastian who has the same face as Viola but has a totally different personality from hers. The twins' bodies which should be different are exchanged for each other. They become 'exchangeable sexual bodies.' In *MM* the 'exchangeable sexual body' is feared because it is associated with death which makes 'exchangeable bodies.' Words which shows the association between death and the 'exchangeable body' are in *TN* too.

> Maria. Nay, either tell me where thou hast been, or I
> will not open my lips so wide as a bristle may
> enter, in way of thy excuse: my lady will hang
> thee for thy absence.
> Clown. Let her hang me: he that is well hanged in this
> world needs to fear no colours. (1.5.1-6)[6]

Here "colours" means 'ensigns.' Once one has died, one no longer needs to fear enemies. Any enemy becomes indifferent and can be changed for another.

It is not only bodies that are changed for another. Malvolio, Olivia's steward, believes that Olivia loves him by the false love

letter made up by Maria. Andrew, Toby's friend, goes this way and that in confusion by Toby's puns. He ends up having to fight a duel with Viola due to the false information given by Toby. They are all involved in the confusion which the language has brought about. In the play of language, a signifier changes a signified for another signified and makes for the confusion. Terry Eagleton points out:

> Shakespeare draws a close parallel between desire, language and money, both in their 'natural' errancy and in their homogenizing effect, the way they level out distinctive values and merge them into one amorphous mass of debased, near-identical objects. . . .[7]

The confusion in the play is brought about not only by 'exchangeable sexual bodies' but also by language which makes anything exchangeable. As shown by Eagleton, this characteristic of language is explained in the conversation between the clown and Viola:[8]

> Clown. You have said, sir. To see this age! A sentence
> is but a chev'ril glove to a good wit—how quickly
> the wrong side may be turned outward!
> Viola. Nay, that's certain: they that dally nicely with
> words may quickly make them wanton. (3.1.11-15)

In the play the exchangeability which language brings about is associated with death in the same way that the 'exchangeable sexual body' is. This is done by positioning the scene, Act 1 Scene 3, where language brings about the exchangeability next to the scenes, Act 1 Scene 1 and 2, where death is talked about. Jean E. Howard points out that the effect of positioning the third scene where long wordplays are done by Toby, Maria and Andrew next to the second scene where the brisk and businesslike conversation is had between Viola and the captain, is to "focus audience attention . . . upon tonal and kinetic contrasts that illuminate some of the differing attitudes toward life and some of the different ways in which energy is expended in Illyria."[9] However, I think that there is another effect in this. First, in Act 1 Scene 1,

Valentine, a gentleman attending on Orsino, reports that Olivia mourns over her brother's death. In Act 1 Scene 2 Viola and the captain talk about Sebastian's supposed death. In addition to the topic of his death, words which are associated with lacking are often used in the scene. For example, such a word can be seen in Viola's lines: "I'll serve this duke; / Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him" (1.2.55-56). Viola asks the captain to introduce her as a man lacking in penis.

There are other words in the captain's lines which have the image of lacking: "Be you his eunuch, and your mute I'll be: / When my tongue blabs, then let mine eyes not see" (1.2.62-63). Here "mute" and "let mine eyes not see" have the image of lacking. It evokes a dead body to repeat the image of a body whose functions don't operate. In this short scene which has only about 70 lines, the topic of death and words about lacking are contained. Next, in Act 1 Scene 3, Toby and Maria play a joke on Andrew:

Sir Andrew. Fair lady, do you think
you have fools in hand ?
Maria. Sir, I have not you by th' hand.
Sir And. Marry, but you shall have, and here's my
hand.
Maria. Now, sir, thought is free. I pray you bring
your hand to th' buttery bar and let it drink.
Sir And. Wherefore, sweetheart? What's your metaphor?
Maria. It's dry, sir.
Sir And. Why, I think so: I am not such an ass but I can
keep my hand dry. But what's your jest ?
Maria. A dry jest, sir.
Sir And. Are you full of them?
Maria. Ay, sir, I have them at my fingers' ends: marry,
now I let go your hand, I am barren. (1.3.63-78)

Andrew accepts "I have not you by th' hand" which means 'I don't manipulate you' as the literal meaning 'I am not holding your

hands,' so says "here's my hand." Maria says the lines 68-69 to refuse to take Andrew's hand. In reply to Andrew's question about what the words mean, she replies "It's dry, sir." This means not only 'your hand is not moist' but also 'you are lacking in the sexual competence because of age.' But Andrew understands only the meaning 'your hand is not moist.' Next Maria uses "dry" as the meaning 'boring.' Eagleton analyzes this conversation: "Maria's speech is giddyingly free of fact ('thought is free'), hostile to the self-identity of things, an open space in which any bit of the world may combine kaleidoscopically with any other."[10] Maria's words exchange any piece for another. By positioning the third scene, where language changes anything for another, next to the first and second scene which are full of the image of death, the exchangeability made by language is connected with the image of death.

Thus exchangeability is connected with death in *TN* as in *MM*. But in *TN* the 'exchangeable sexual body' is accepted, while in *MM* the 'exchangeable sexual body' is feared and resisted. Sebastian whom Olivia changes to from Viola, accepts Olivia with pleasure. Viola for whom Orsino changes Olivia accepts him with pleasure. They accept their own exchangeability. In *MM* it is the desiring person that is considered as the 'exchangeable sexual body.' In *TN* it is the desired person that is considered as the 'exchangeable sexual body.' But this difference doesn't decide whether exchangeability of bodies is accepted or not. For example, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*MND*) Lysander, who loved Hermia, comes to love Helena and Demetrius, who loved Hermia, comes to love Helena by the power of magic. Though it is the desired persons that are considered as 'exchangeable sexual bodies' in *MND* as in *TN*, the exchangeability is denied by the desired persons in *MND*.

If we can say that *MM* which resists the exchangeability of bodies fears death, we can say that *TN* which accepts the exchangeability of bodies is fascinated by death. When Sebastian

has realized that he was mistaken for Viola, he says: "[To Olivia] So comes it, lady, you have been mistook. / But nature to her bias drew in that" (5.1.257-58). Olivia turns back from the possible homosexual world to the heterosexual world by turning her love from Viola to Sebastian. What making offspring in the heterosexual world means can be supposed from Viola's words:

> Viola. Lady, you are the cruell'st she alive
> If you will lead these graces to the grave
> And leave the world no copy. (1.5.244-46)

Human beings, by leaving their own copies in this world, "men and women avenge themselves upon their enemy death," as stated by Stephen Jay Greenblatt.[11] Therefore, Olivia's turning back to the heterosexual world by choosing Sebastian seems to resist death. However, to exchange Viola for Sebastian as a means to turn back to the heterosexual world is to admit that a man and woman whom they want to distinguish from each other have no differences and can be exchanged for each other, and Greenblatt argues: "At that play's end, Viola is still Cesario . . . I would suggest that *Twelfth Night* may not finally bring home to us the fundamental distinction between men and women."[12] So the way to the homosexual world still remains. From the point of view of the heterosexual world, the homosexual world makes reproduction impossible, so it leads to death.

But being delighted in the achievement of love, the lovers have not noticed their inclination toward death lying behind accepting the exchangeability of bodies. It is the song the clown sings as a epilogue that warns the lovers who are unconsciously fascinated by death. How does the song warn them? Let us begin by analyzing Act 2 Scene 3. In the scene, the clown, Toby and Andrew have revels. They begin to sing a catch "Hold thy peace." In this catch three men just repeat the words "Hold thy peace, thou knave."[13] By repeating the same words which never go ahead, homogeneous and exchangeable words are generated one after another. Here language itself comes to have the

characteristic of exchangeability. Also the music comes to assume it in a catch where some voices repeat the same melody. This procedure is repeated in this scene. Drunk Toby begins to sing fragments of ballads well known in Shakespearean times one after another:

Sir. Toby. My lady's a Cataian, we are politicians, Malvolio's a Peg-a-Ramsey, and *Three merry men be we.* Am not I consanguineous ? Am I not of her blood ? Tilly-vally! 'Lady!' *There dwelt a man in Babylon, Lady, Lady.*

Clown. Beshrew me, the knight's in admirable fooling.

Sir Andrew. Ay, he does well enough, if he be disposed, and so do I too: he does it with a better grace, but I do it more natural.

Sir. Toby. *O' the twelfth day of December—*

Maria. For the love o' God, peace! (emphasis added) (2.3.76-86)

Each italicized part is from different ballads. Singing fragments of different ballads one after another out of context makes the meanings of the ballads invalid and exchangeable. Next, the clown and Toby play a joke on Malvolio, who is angry at their revels, by singing a parody. The original was well known to the contemporary audience and is in Robert Jones's *First Book of Songes and Ayres* (1600).[14] The following is the original text:

Farewel dear love since thou wilt needs be gon,
Mine eies do shew my life is almost done,
Nay I will never die,
So long as I can spie,
Ther by many mo
Though that she do go
There be many mo I feare not,
Why then let her goe I care not
. . . . . .
Shall I did her goe,
What and if I doe?

Shall I did her go and spare not,
Oh no no no no I dare not. . . .[15] (emphasis added)

The italicized part is used by the clown and Toby. The following is the parody by the clown and Toby:

Sir. To. *Farewell, dear heart, since* I *must needs be gone.*
Maria. Nay, good Sir Toby.
Clown. *His eyes do show* his *days are almost done,*
Malvolio. Is't even so ?
Sir To. *But I will never die.*
Clown. *Sir Toby, there you lie.*
Mal. This is much credit to you.
Sir To. *Shall I bid* him *go ?*
Clown. *What and if* you *do ?*
Sir To. *Shall I bid* him *go, and spare not ?*
Clown. *Oh no, no, no, no,* you *dare not.*
Sir To. Out o' time, sir? ye lie! (emphasis added) (2.3.103-13)

The italicized part is sung by Sir Toby and the clown, and in the parts emphasized by the dotted lines the original pronouns are changed. They change the different pronouns of the original ("thou" at line 1 in the first stanza and "I" at line 2 in the first stanza) to the same "I" (in line 103 and line 107). They insert "Sir Toby, there you lie" which is not in the original. They change the pronoun "her" to "him." Thus they twist the meaning of the original. Moreover, though this parody was supposed to have been sung to attack Malvolio, its target changed to Toby before he knew it, so Toby gets angry: "Out o' time, sir? ye lie!" The text, the singers and the aim of the song are changed one after another, and the song loses its way.

Thus the music comes to have the characteristic of exchangeability by the words. Once such music is showered on Malvolio, he is transformed into a man who exchanges reality for what he wants it to be; for example, he interprets the false love letter from Olivia made up by Maria as he wants to in Act 2 Scene 5. He has been caught in a trap which music and language have

set together. After the characteristic of the exchangeability of the music has been established, the clown sings a song as an epilogue in Act 5 Scene 1:

When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came, alas, to wive,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
With toss-pots still 'had drunken heads,
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day. (5.1.388-407)

Here, language not only plays the role of conveying the unequivocal meaning of a man's life toward death but also charges music with the characteristic of exchangeability through repeating the same words "With hey, ho, the wind and the rain" and "For the rain it raineth every day. "By tying the message of 'death' which language conveys with the music having the characteristic of exchangeability, the clown's song warns the lovers' unconscious

inclination toward death hiding behind the idea of accepting their bodies' exchangeability. His song is a warning against the choice of the lovers which seems to bring a happy ending. Though Viola says in Act 1 Scene 2, "I can sing, / And speak to him in many sorts of music" (1.2.57-58), it is not Viola but the clown that sings in Act 2 Scene 4, in spite of the Orsino's demanding her to sing (2.4.1-7). She has no opportunity to sing in the play. It is only the clown that appears in all the scenes where music is performed. This shows that only the clown notices the lovers' unconscious inclination toward death.

Notes

1) William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, ed. J. W. Lever (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1965; London and New York: Routledge, 1994). All references in the text are to this edition.
2) Janet Adelman, "Bed Tricks: On Marriage as the End of Comedy in *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*." *Shakespeare's Personality*, ed. Norman N. Holland, Sidney Homan, and Bernard J. Paris. (California: University of California Press, 1989) 171.
3) Adelman 171.
4) Robert N. Watson, "False Immortality in *Measure for Measure*: Comic Means, Tragic Ends." *Shakespeare Quarterly* Winter (1990): 429.
5) Watson 429.
6) William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, ed. J. M. Lothian and T. W. Craik (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1975; London and New York: Routledge, 1988). All references in the text are to this edition.
7) Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) 20.
8) Eagleton 28.
9) Jean E. Howard, "The Orchestration of *Twelfth Night*: The Rhythm of Restraint and Release." *William Shakespeare's* Twelfth Night, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 90.

10) Eagleton 27.

11) Stephen Jay Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction." *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) 83.

12) Greenblatt 72.

13) Jill Vlasto, "An Elizabethan Anthology of Rounds," *Musical Quarterly* 40 (1954): 228-231.

14) Peter J. Seng, *The Vocal Songs in the Plays of Shakespeare: A Critical History* (Cambridge: Mass., 1967) 106.

15) Robert Jones, *First Book of Songs and Airs* (1600) D4^{v}-E1.

(Graduate Student)