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- suggestions for further reading.

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*Sonia Massai* is a lecturer at King’s College London. She has published widely on Shakespeare and drama and has edited several original plays and a collection of essays on *World-Wide Shakespeares* (Routledge, 2005). She is also the author of *Shakespeare and the Rise of the Editor* (2007).
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Annotation is a key feature of this series. Both the original notes from reprinted texts and new annotations by the editor appear at the bottom of the relevant page. The reprinted notes are prefaced by the author’s name in square brackets, e.g., [Robinson’s note].

Author’s note

Some of the extracts in the Contemporary Documents section are drawn from recent modernised editions, while others are drawn from the original editions and they retain early modern spelling and punctuation (please note that ‘u’ and ‘v’, and ‘i’ and ‘y’, are often used interchangeably, ‘i’ stands for ‘i’ or ‘j’, ‘w’ stands for ‘w’ or ‘u’, and that words are sometimes abbreviated through the omission of consonants signalled by wavy or straight accents placed over the preceding vowels – for, example, ‘womā’ for ‘woman’ or ‘wâton’ for ‘wanton’). Extracts from texts originally written in foreign languages – for example, Petrarch’s sonnets – are drawn from modern English translations. The extracts from early modern editions are annotated to help readers with unusual words and spellings.

Line numbers for all Shakespearean quotations and for the extracts from Twelfth Night included in the Key Passages section are keyed to Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, with John Jowett and William Montgomery (eds), The Complete Works (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Liz Thompson, Polly Dodson, the anonymous readers and the production team at Routledge. Their help and support have been invaluable at every stage of this project.

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Extracts from Lorna Hutson, ‘On Not Being Deceived: Rhetoric and the Body in Twelfth Night’, from Texas Studies in Literature and Language 38 (2), pp. 140–74. Copyright © 1996 by the University of Texas. All rights reserved.


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This study guide to William Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* combines a selection of modernised and annotated key passages drawn from the play with two types of extracts, called ‘Contexts’ and ‘Interpretations’. The ‘Contexts’ section gathers documents that influenced Shakespeare’s presentation of the fictive world of the play, including its dramatic and narrative sources, contemporary pamphlets that focus on some of the central issues explored in the play, and earlier literary texts that had a tangible impact on Shakespeare’s style. The ‘Interpretations’ section includes some of the most influential responses to *Twelfth Night* on page (critical studies), on the stage (theatrical productions) and on screen (cinematic adaptations).

The different sections into which this book is arranged are not necessarily meant to be read sequentially. Individual extracts in each section are cross-referenced to other parts of the book in order to enable readers to study specific aspects of the play and to find out how they have been interpreted by early readers, recent critics and directors. This introduction, for example, gives a preliminary overview of the play, its main characters, genre and early performance history and reception, and reflects on the relevance of the title to the events that unfold in its main plot and sub-plot. Each of these topics is cross-referenced to a wide range of documents and extracts, which are in turn prefaced by explicatory introductions and commentary notes.

One central document for readers interested in the performance history of the play is a short entry in John Manningham’s *Diary* (see Contextual Overview, p. 7). Manningham was a law student at the Middle Temple when *Twelfth Night* was performed in its great hall on 2 February 1602. His diary entry represents an invaluable and rare contemporary eyewitness account of a Shakespearean production in the Elizabethan period. Also worth noting is that Manningham singled out the steward Malvolio, a character in the sub-plot, and his downfall, as the most enjoyable and memorable features of the play as a whole. Recent critics and audiences tend to regard Malvolio as a sympathetic, or even as a potentially tragic, character (see Interpretations, p. 43 and The Work in Performance,

1 The Middle Temple is one of the four Inns of Court which have traditionally served as centres of legal and collegiate activities for London barristers and law students.
2 A plot summary is provided in the Key Passages Section, pp. 135–7.
However, the stratagems through which Malvolio’s feelings for his mistress, the Lady Olivia, are exposed and ridiculed are undoubtedly funny. Unsurprisingly, then, when *Twelfth Night* was printed as part of the first collected Folio edition of Shakespeare’s dramatic works in 1623, it was grouped with other plays described as ‘Comedies’. If the sub-plot, with Malvolio’s deception at its centre, can best be described as satirical, or even farcical, the main plot features all the main elements which distinguish Shakespeare’s ‘romantic comedy’ from other types of comedy. The main plot revolves around the incidents generated by the Orsino–Viola–Olivia love triangle: Orsino is in love with Olivia, who spurns him and falls in love with Viola disguised as Cesario, who, in turn, falls in love for her master Orsino. Viola decides to conceal her identity when, after surviving a shipwreck, she is cast ashore in a foreign land, called Illyria. She therefore fashions a new identity for herself, by imitating the looks and mannerisms of her twin brother Sebastian, who was travelling with her at the time of the shipwreck and who is now believed to have perished at sea. Sebastian, like Viola, has in fact survived the shipwreck and will also arrive in Illyria in Act 3, thus providing a resolution to the emotional impasse generated by Olivia’s unrequited feelings for Viola, by Orsino’s unrequited feelings for Olivia and by Orsino’s growing attachment to Viola.

*Twelfth Night* is also commonly described as one of Shakespeare’s ‘mature’ comedies, both because it was written and performed towards the end of Elizabeth’s reign, when Shakespeare was already an established and successful playwright, and because it departs from the pre-eminently farcical quality of some of his early comedies, including *The Comedy of Errors* and the sub-plot in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Shakespeare’s ‘mature’ or ‘romantic’ comedies, which include, besides *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, are also radically different from other plays generally described as ‘problem plays’, or ‘dark comedies’, such as *Measure for Measure*, *All’s Well that Ends Well* and *Troilus and Cressida*. In these plays potentially tragic situations remain unresolved and undermine the sense of resolution typically associated with the ending of a comedy. However, *Twelfth Night* is not wholly devoid of darker tones. In fact, despite the successful matching of the lovers and Sir Toby and Maria’s wedding, the ending is tarnished by Malvolio’s pledge to be revenged on his persecutors, by the presence of disappointed suitors, like Sir Andrew, and by unfulfilled passions, including the deep attachment which the sea captain Antonio develops for Sebastian after rescuing him at sea. Overall, *Twelfth Night* represents one of Shakespeare’s most complex comedies, because it skilfully re-employs the satirical elements of earlier comedies while anticipating the darkness and melancholy associated with the later comedies and the great tragedies of the early Jacobean period.

Besides blending satirical and romantic elements with light touches of discomfort, unease and sadness, *Twelfth Night* also draws on another dramatic form and tradition, as suggested by its title. *Twelfth Night* is the only play in the Shakespearian canon which refers explicitly to one of the main holidays in the Christian calendar, the twelfth night after Christmas, otherwise known as the Epiphany. Its title has, therefore, led some scholars to regard *Twelfth Night* as a ‘festive comedy’, that is, as a play directly associated with real-life holidays and popular festivals, which were celebrated by over indulging in drink, dance, music
and fun. *Twelfth Night* does indeed usher the audience into a world shaped by the pursuit of pleasure and the fulfilment of gastronomic and sexual appetites. However, the relation between *Twelfth Night*, traditionally celebrated on 6 January, and Shakespeare’s play is far from straightforward and uncontroversial, as suggested by the enigmatic subtitle, *What You Will*. Samuel Pepys, the late-seventeenth-century diarist who recorded a visit to the theatre to see *Twelfth Night* on 6 January 1663, famously described it as ‘a silly play and not relating at all to the name or day’. Conversely, mid-twentieth-century critic Leslie Hotson argued that Shakespeare chose this title because *Twelfth Night* was the play performed before the Queen and one of her notable guests, the Count Don Virginio Orsino, at Whitehall, on the night of 6 January 1601. Hotson’s theory has been refuted by scholars who believe that *Twelfth Night* was in fact written towards the end of 1601, but is still valuable because it draws attention to the fact that the fictive world of the play resembles in many ways Queen Elizabeth’s court. All the main characters in the plot and sub-plot are members of the aristocracy, and Olivia’s undisputed rule over her large household has been read as an oblique reference to the Queen’s role at Court. Queen Elizabeth was also renowned for the lavish entertainments that she commissioned to celebrate Twelfth Night, and the title could therefore be interpreted as a tribute that Shakespeare paid to the Queen for a play that he may have written with her court in mind just before the Christmas period of 1601–2. One may wonder, though, whether the Queen would have been flattered by being associated with an aristocratic young woman who, after resisting Duke Orsino’s advances, is overwhelmed by her infatuation for a stranger, who is, at least apparently, a mere servant.

The connection between the play and *Twelfth Night* is ultimately intriguing and worth keeping in mind, and not only in relation to Elizabeth’s court, but also in relation to its significance as a Christian holiday. As mentioned above, the twelfth night after Christmas is also known in religious terms as the Epiphany. Etymologically, the word ‘epiphany’ comes from the Greek and suggests the act of becoming manifest, of shining forth. In Christian theology, it describes the revelation of God to mankind through the birth of his son Jesus Christ and, more specifically, the arrival of the Wise Men in Bethlehem. Viola and Sebastian’s reunion at the end of the play does indeed conjure a sense of wonder. Orsino’s line, ‘One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons’ in the last scene conveys a sense of quasi-religious mystery. The lengthy recognition sequence (see Key Passages, pp. 181–3), where Viola and Sebastian realise that they are both alive, reinforces the other-worldly quality of the final scene. Even at plot level, the association between this play and the twelfth night after Christmas, which officially brings the Christmas period to an end, seems in keeping with the somber register of the final lines, which follow the recognition sequence. Malvolio, Sir Andrew and Antonio are left empty-handed and feeling betrayed and disappointed, while the audience return to a world where, as Feste’s song reminds them, desires may not always be fulfilled, ‘For the rain it raineth every day’ (see Key Passages, pp. 184–5).

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