TEXT AND PERFORMANCE

General Editor: Michael Scott

The series is designed to introduce sixth-form and undergraduate students to the themes, continuing vitality and performance of major dramatic works. The attention given to production aspects is an element of special importance, responding to the invigoration given to literary study by the work of leading contemporary critics.

The prime aim is to present each play as a vital experience in the mind of the reader – achieved by analysis of the text in relation to its themes and theatricality. Emphasis is accordingly placed on the relevance of the work to the modern reader and the world of today. At the same time, traditional views are presented and appraised, forming the basis from which a creative response to the text can develop.

In each volume, Part One: *Text* discusses certain key themes or problems, the reader being encouraged to gain a stronger perception both of the inherent character of the work and also of variations in interpreting it. Part Two: *Performance* examines the ways in which these themes or problems have been handled in modern productions, and the approaches and techniques employed to enhance the play's accessibility to modern audiences.

A synopsis of the play is given and an outline of its major sources, and a concluding Reading List offers guidance to the student's independent study of the work.

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TWELFTH NIGHT

Text and Performance

LOIS POTTER

M
MACMILLAN

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Source details for the illustrations are given with the relevant captions to the plates.

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

For many years a mutual suspicion existed between the theatre director and the literary critic of drama. Although in the first half of the century there were important exceptions, such was the rule. A radical change of attitude, however, has taken place over the last thirty years. Critics and directors now increasingly recognise the significance of each other's work and acknowledge their growing awareness of interdependence. Both interpret the same text, but do so according to their different situations and functions. Without the director, the designer and the actor, a play's existence is only partial. They revitalise the text with action, enabling the drama to live fully at each performance. The academic critic investigates the script to elucidate its textual problems, understand its conventions and discover how it operates. He may also propose his view of the work, expounding what he considers to be its significance.

Dramatic texts belong therefore to theatre and to literature. The aim of the 'Text and Performance' series is to achieve a fuller recognition of how both enhance our enjoyment of the play. Each volume follows the same basic pattern. Part One provides a critical introduction to the play under discussion, using the techniques and criteria of the literary critic in examining the manner in which the work operates through language, imagery and action. Part Two takes the enquiry further into the play's theatricality by focusing on selected productions of recent times so as to illustrate points of contrast and comparison in the interpretation of different directors and actors, and to demonstrate how the drama has worked on the modern stage. In this way the series seeks to provide a lively and informative introduction to major plays in their text and performance.

MICHAEL SCOTT

PLOT SYNOPSIS AND SOURCES

Orsino, Duke of Illyria, is in love with the Countess Olivia, but she has vowed to spend seven years in seclusion, mourning her brother's recent death. Viola arrives on the coast of Illyria after a shipwreck in which she has lost her twin brother Sebastian. She disguises herself as a page named Cesario and takes service with the Duke. He sends her to Olivia's house. Unlike his other messengers, she succeeds in entering, but her efforts on Orsino's behalf result in Olivia's falling in love with the supposed page. Meanwhile, Viola herself has fallen in love with Orsino. Unknown to the other characters, Sebastian – in the company of Antonio, who saved him from drowning – has also come to Illyria.

Olivia's strict and humourless steward, Malvolio, has antagonised the rest of the household: her cousin Sir Toby Belch, the clown Feste, and her waiting woman Maria. In revenge, Maria forges a riddling love-letter to him, in Olivia's handwriting, inviting him to show that he returns her love by dressing and behaving in an absurd way. When he carries out these instructions, Olivia naturally thinks him a lunatic, which gives the conspirators an excuse for treating him like one.

Olivia's passion for Cesario has become obvious even to the foolish Sir Andrew Aguecheek, another of her suitors. Sir Toby eggs him on to challenge Cesario to a duel which neither of them wants. It is interrupted by Antonio, who thinks he is rescuing Sebastian again. When Antonio is arrested by Orsino's officers, Cesario denies all knowledge of him. The two knights pursue the page, but the person they meet is Sebastian, who gives as good as he gets. Olivia also meets Sebastian, and, for the first time, finds 'Cesario' responsive to her love.

Confusion is at its height – with Cesario accused of duplicity towards everyone – when Sebastian arrives and is reunited with his sister. Orsino recognises, and responds to, the love that Viola has shown him in her disguise; Olivia is happy to transfer her love to Sebastian. Malvolio learns of the trick that has been played on him and leaves, threatening revenge. Feste sings a farewell to the audience.

SOURCES

The ultimate source for *Twelfth Night* is Plautus's *Menaechmi*, already used by Shakespeare for *The Comedy of Errors*. The play inspired many Renaissance adaptations, including *Gl'Ingannati* (discussed in Section 2), which was translated into French and thence into a Latin version performed at Cambridge in 1595. The story is also told in prose romances. Barnaby

Riche's *Farewell to Militarie Profession* (1581) includes the tale of 'Apolonius and Silla', adapted from a French version by Belleforest, which is itself based on an Italian original by Bandello. There is no known source for the Malvolio plot, though it is sometimes suggested that the feuds and rivalries of the Elizabethan court may have borne some relation to those in Olivia's household.