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SHAKESPEARE'S TWIST: THE TRAGIC WITHIN SOME COMEDIES

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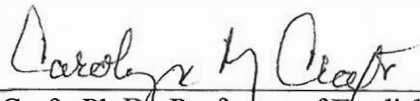
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SHAKESPEARE'S TWIST: THE TRAGIC WITHIN SOME COMEDIES

A thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
a Master of Arts in English degree from
Longwood University

by Susan Dettweiler Wilhide



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Introduction

It is apparent many of William Shakespeare's comedies have tragic motifs intertwined throughout the plays. My study of four Shakespearean comedies revealed the connections between the comic and tragic aspects. Four comedies, The Comedy of Errors, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing, and Twelfth Night, illustrate this interrelationship. In each of these comedies, Shakespeare has interwoven both tragic and comic aspects that are important in the development and outcome of these plays.

The Comedy of Errors begins with a tragic event: Egeon, a Syracusan, is condemned to death for traveling to Ephesus to search for his lost son. As the play continues, so do the tragic occurrences: Antipholus of Syracuse, Antipholus of Ephesus and their twin servants, Dromio of Syracuse and Dromio of Ephesus, are continually mistaken for one another. These mistaken identities create many events that could prove tragic. The mistaken identities lead to problems within the marriage of Adriana and Antipholus of Ephesus. Adriana believes her *husband* has gone mad and orders him arrested. Adriana's *real* husband, Antipholus of Ephesus, has now pressed charges against his wife. Families deal with the tragic separation from one another. The Dromio twins face beatings from their masters. There is much violence and disorder within Ephesus. Not able to explain all the errors occurring this day in Ephesus, several of the characters assume the town is overtaken with witchcraft. Antipholus of Syracuse deals with the tragic emotions of being psychologically incomplete.

Each of these occurrences stems from the characters' lack of knowledge about the identity of both sets of twins. None of the characters expected that both sets of twins

would be in the same city on this day, so the comedy has been doubled due to these doubled errors. Comedy is interwoven throughout the tragic occurrences this day within Ephesus. While the residents of Ephesus seem to know Antipholus of Syracuse, he begins to question his own identity. It is humorous when Antipholus of Syracuse falls in love with Luciana as she believes he is her brother-in-law. Dromio of Syracuse's reaction to and description of Nell is hilarious. The Comedy of Errors ends happily, as comedies do, reuniting both sets of twins and their families when Aemilia, lost wife of Egeon, brings out the sets of twins and reveals their true identities. Once the mistaken identities are revealed, all is well and the ending is happy for everyone.

A Midsummer Night's Dream begins with a tragic situation, when Egeus asks Theseus to have his daughter, Hermia, put to death because she refuses to comply with his wish that she marry Demetrius. This event is only the beginning of many tragic nightmares that occur throughout this comedy. Hermia, Lysander, Helena, and Demetrius are entangled within a love triangle. Hermia disregards her father's wish and attempts to escape Athens with Lysander so they can marry in a distant city. The friendship between Hermia and Helena has been dissolved due to jealousy. An argument between Oberon and Titania causes disorder within the land. Oberon and Puck execute deliberate pranks as they anoint the eyes of Titania, Lysander, and Demetrius, making them fall in love with individuals to whom they would not normally be attracted. These pranks cause confusion between the four young lovers. Helena has lost all her self-confidence and believes Lysander and Demetrius are expressing their love to her simply as a means of mocking her. In the play-within-the-play, Pyramus and Thisby tragically end their lives.

All of these nightmares which are tragic to the development of A Midsummer Night's Dream ultimately are reversed. Nothing lasting and devastating occurs, so the comedy is allowed to shine through each situation. Many comic moments result from these actions. Puck places the magical flower juice into the eyes of the "wrong" lovers and unknowingly creates a comic situation when he confuses the lovers, Hermia and Lysander, and Helena and Demetrius. Titania falls in love with Bottom, who has been transformed in his sleep to have the head of an ass. In the play-within-the-play, Bottom is bubbling over with excitement about the various parts and desires to play every character. Bottom's attempts to explain the prologue and to personify Moonshine and Wall, as well as his blundering and embellishing lines, add much comedy to this portion of the play. The ending brings three couples together in marriage and leaves the audience with the assumption that all will live happily ever after.

The potential tragedy in Much Ado about Nothing is that many of the characters are deceptive when expressing their love. These deceptive façades lead to potentially tragic situations within this comedy. Beatrice continues to publicly belittle and humiliate Benedick to disguise her true feelings of love for him. Benedick's disgraceful statement about Hero is an attempt to dishonor one who is indeed honorable. Don John and Don Pedro both plan deceptive schemes as they plot to make others believe lies. Beatrice and Benedick are both deceived into believing the other is secretly in love with them. Don John is jealous of his half brother, Don Pedro, and of the praises he is receiving from his victory in war. These feelings lead Don John to cause potentially tragic events throughout this comedy. Leonato believes a lie about his daughter, Hero, and says she has brought reproach on his name, and he wishes her to die. Hero's accusation brings

dishonor to the family, and Leonato feels the only way to clear his family name is to put Hero away, deceiving others to believe she is dead.

Comedy is apparent throughout this play between Beatrice and Benedick as well as the other characters that try to get them to confess their true feelings of love for one another. As Much Ado about Nothing unfolds, all are eventually aware that Don John falsely accused Hero in attempting to destroy happiness. It is comic to listen as Dogberry, Verges, and the two watchmen take their duties lightly and overlook the wrongs committed. Dogberry continuously uses words incorrectly and blunders statements, which adds to the humor. The true love that was initially hidden from others is displayed in the final act. This comedy ends with not only the marriage of Claudio and Hero, but also the marriage of Beatrice and Benedick. The audience is left with the impression that all façades have been uncovered and that the true love has been made known.

The opening scene of Twelfth Night describes the obsessive loves of Orsino and Olivia. These are only two of the individuals who express strong love for someone or something that is unobtainable. Orsino has a strong love for Olivia, who cannot return his love because of her vow to mourn her brother's death for seven years. Olivia begins to love Viola, who cannot return her love, because she is a young woman and only disguised as a man. Viola loves her lord, Orsino, who cannot return her love because he believes she is a male. Malvolio is infatuated with the dream he has of becoming noble through marriage to Olivia, which as her servant, is out of his realm. Sir Andrew and Sir Toby both love drinking and merrymaking and must learn to control their excessive drinking or to face being thrown out of Olivia's home. Maria loves causing discord

between Malvolio and Olivia. Antonio is in love with his friend, Sebastian, and in following after him, Antonio is led into the court of his enemy, Orsino. These intense loves for an individual or an action cause several potentially tragic events to occur.

However, comedy is combined with these potential tragedies throughout Twelfth Night. Comic irony is displayed with the love triangle of Orsino, Olivia, and Viola, as Orsino and Olivia are not aware of Viola's disguise. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew add humor to the plot as they thrive on demanding another drink and make excuses to stay up late at night. The pain Maria puts Malvolio through is comic to the audience, as he has been completely beguiled by her plot to mislead him. Comedy is also shown with the mistaken identities of Sebastian and Viola, as Sebastian arrives in Illyria and is mistaken for Viola. The conclusion of Twelfth Night allows those who initially had unrequited love to receive love in return. Olivia and Sebastian, Orsino and Viola, and Maria and Sir Toby are joined together in marriage. Viola and Sebastian have been happily reunited with the twin they thought was drowned.

Shakespeare creatively intermingled comic and tragic motifs throughout each comedy. In doing so, the audience remembers the joyous reunions and unions rather than the potential tragedies of these plays. However, the comic portions are dependent upon the tragic portions and vice versa. The audience understands the tragic situations the characters face, yet laughs at the comic motifs causing these occurrences. The audience also shares in the joy of the characters as everything works out positively in the end.

Doubling Errors Doubles the Fun

The Comedy of Errors is William Shakespeare's only play with the word *comedy* in the title. Although the majority of this play focuses on comic events, a great deal of tragic occurrences are interwoven throughout the play. The issues of an impending execution, mistaken identities, a troubled marriage, broken families, beating slaves, frequent violence, presumed witchcraft, and psychological incompleteness are some of the prominent elements that prove tragic for the characters. Often these tragic events for the characters are what provide the comic portion for the audience. Although these tragic issues are only touched on briefly before moving to happier, funnier subjects, they are important to the development and outcome. The tragic events eventually lead to a joyous celebration, which denotes this play as a comedy.

The Comedy of Errors opens with the shadow of death for Egeon, which suggests this play will be a tragedy in spite of its title. Norrie Epstein compares comedies and tragedies in her book The Friendly Shakespeare by pointing out "comedies begin as potential tragedies, but through the pluck of the heroine or the grace of the gods, disaster is always averted" (78). There is not a specific, definite heroine in The Comedy of Errors, but the mistaken identities are revealed, and the tragic events are kept from being overly destructive by good fortune. Epstein also makes the point that "comedies give a dual perspective: life can be menacing, but along with the danger there's also a sense that everything will be safely restored to normal" (79). Again, the dangerous or tragic issues in The Comedy of Errors are interwoven with the comedy.

The opening scene of this play begins as a potential tragedy. Egeon, a Syracusian, has traveled into the rival city of Ephesus in search of his family. Initially

Duke Solinus appears firm in upholding the death punishment: “To admit no traffic to our adverse towns: / . . . / Again if any Syracusian born / Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies” (1.1.15-19). With this statement from the Duke, Egeon’s execution appears certain. Egeon, recalling the many disappointments he has suffered through his life, leads Duke Solinus to be sympathetic to him: “Nay, forward, old man, do not break off so, / For we may pity, though not pardon thee” (1.1. 96-97). Egeon’s family has encountered several unfortunate situations tearing his family apart. The only family member Egeon had remaining after the shipwreck has now gone to search for his mother and brother. Egeon feels spurned by the son he has raised:

My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,
At eighteen years became inquisitive
After his brother; and importun’d me
That his attendant—so his case was like,
Reft of his brother, but retain’d his name—
Might bear him company in the quest of him:
Whom whilst I labored of a love to see,
I hazarded the loss of whom I lov’d. (1.1.124-131)

Hearing these ill-fated situations makes not only the audience, but the Duke sympathetic to Egeon’s desire to travel to Ephesus in search of his lost family: “My soul should sue as advocate for thee: / . . . / Yet will I favor thee in what I can” (1.1.145-149). Duke Solinus grants Egeon one day to raise the needed money to avoid execution: “Try all the friends thou hast in Ephesus; / Beg thou, or borrow, to make up the sum, / And live: if no, then thou are doom’d to die” (1.1.152-154). Despite the fact he has one day to raise the

needed money, Egeon acknowledges the fact he is doomed to die: “Hopeless and helpless doth Egeon wend, / But to procrastinate his liveless end” (1.1.157-158). At this point the play shifts the focus on other tragic issues, yet the possibility of Egeon’s execution remains an underlying concern until the final act.

Interestingly, Shakespeare used the tragic incidence of Egeon’s pending execution as a sub-plot for The Comedy of Errors. In doing this, the most tragic situation becomes less tragic during the course of the play. Egeon’s twin sons, Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus, along with their twin servants, Dromio of Syracuse and Dromio of Ephesus, are introduced and are mistaken time and time again for one another. At this point the mistaken identity becomes the main plot, with comedy and potential tragedy interwoven throughout the various situations each twin faces.

In order for the comedy in this play to be effective, the characters have to face some rather tragic situations. The identical twins are not aware they are in the same city and are constantly mistaken for one another. These mistaken identities result in the characters’ encountering tragic events. Anne Barton describes Shakespeare’s intention of creating tragic events through the use of twins as follows: “Shakespeare asks his audience to accept without question the fact that the Sicilian Antipholus and Dromio each manage to disembark at Ephesus in Asia Minor wearing clothes indistinguishable from those that the native Antipholus and Dromio happen to have put on that morning” (111). While the comedy depends on the audience’s accepting these two as twins, it is highly unlikely the actors playing these parts were two sets of identical twins. More likely, the “twins” are not identical, only similar, and the actors are asked to overlook their differences to provide the tragic motifs in the play. This creates comedy for the audience, while

causing the twins to experience tragic events. The twins are constantly mistaken for one another, and it is these mistakes that provide dramatic irony throughout the play.

Early in the second scene of Act One, comic and tragic motifs are interwoven through the various mistakes made, as the characters do not realize which twin they are addressing. The mistaken identities are based on the outward appearances of the twin characters. What is comic to the audience, the characters are unaware of, thus proving potentially tragic for them. Due to the mistaken identity between Dromio of Ephesus and Antipholus of Syracuse, Antipholus of Syracuse questions Dromio of Ephesus about the money he gave to him: "Tell me, and dally not, where is the money?" (1.2.59).

Antipholus of Syracuse believes he is questioning his servant, Dromio of Syracuse, and his servant is joking about not having the money. This causes Antipholus of Syracuse to become very upset with Dromio of Ephesus, still believing he is Dromio of Syracuse.

Comedy is again intermingled with potential tragedy when Dromio of Ephesus returns to Adriana. Dromio of Ephesus, thinking he has just spoken to his master, Antipholus of Ephesus, tells Adriana of the conversation they had: "I mean not cuckold-mad—but sure he is stark mad: / When I desir'd him to come home to dinner, / He ask'd me for a [thousand] marks in gold" (2.1.59-61). Because Dromio of Ephesus is not aware he has just spoken with Antipholus of Syracuse, he believes his master, Antipholus of Ephesus, is utterly mad and acting irrationally. These are serious situations for the characters, yet humorous for the audience. The characters do not realize they are talking to their master's twin and the servant's twin; however, the audience is aware of this confusion and sees the comedy within this mistaken identity.

The situations of the mistaken identities lead to a troubled marriage. Feelings of jealousy often become tragic when they overcome individuals, and Adriana allows these jealous feelings to overtake her in The Comedy of Errors. The mistaken identity causes Adriana to believe her husband, Antipholus of Ephesus, has no desire to return home to her; she becomes angry and begins to portray her husband as unfaithful. Her feelings have been hurt, and she perceives herself as her husband's laughingstock: "But, too unruly deer, he breaks the pale, / And feeds from home; poor I am but his stale" (2.1.100-101). Dromio of Ephesus quotes to Adriana what Antipholus of Syracuse stated to him: "I know . . . no house, no wife, no mistress" (2.1.71). Adriana believes Dromio's remark to be her husband's and thus interprets his comments to indicate he has been unfaithful to her. According to Luciana these thoughts are filled with "self-harming jealousy" (2.1.102). The immediate suspicion that overtakes Adriana is that her husband has not returned for dinner because he has a lover: "His company must do his minions grace, / Whilst I at home starve for a merry look" (2.1.87-88). She continues to visualize what she believes her husband is guilty of: "Unfeeling fools can with such wrongs dispense: / I know his eye doth homage elsewhere, / Or else what lets it but he would be here?" (2.1.103-105). Adriana's interpretation of what she has heard is shared publicly: "Since that my beauty cannot please his eye, / I'll weep what's left away, and weeping die" (2.1.114-115). Based on Dromio's remark, she assumes there is trouble in her marriage and has already deemed herself dead.

Through dramatic irony, the tragic situations the characters face provide comedy for the audience. It is extremely funny when Adriana has Dromio of Ephesus lock her husband, Antipholus of Ephesus, out of his house while she entertains Antipholus of

Syracuse for dinner. Antipholus of Ephesus is shocked when he realizes he is forbidden to enter his home: “But soft, my door is lock’d; go bid them let us in” (3.1.30). Then he questions his servant, Dromio, “What art thou that keep’st me out from the house I owe?” (3.1.42). John Dover Wilson comments on this scene of mistaken identity, noting its comic effectiveness:

Furthermore one of Shakespeare’s most hilarious scenes is that in which Antipholus of Ephesus is shut out of his house while Antipholus of Syracuse is being entertained at dinner by the Ephesian wife who takes him for her husband, while Dromio of Syracuse who has gone in with his master jeers at Dromio of Ephesus through the hatch of the bolted door, and Luce, the kitchen maid, joins in the raillery from a gallery above. (39)

While the audience laughs at this scene, Antipholus of Ephesus is understandably quite angry and cannot fathom why he has been locked out of his home.

Dramatic irony is shown with the manner in which Luciana and her sister, Adriana, react to all the confusion around them. While this madness is tragic to Adriana as it consumes her, the audience is aware of the cause for this madness and sees the comedy within the situation. Luciana remains sane in the midst of the madness between Adriana and Antipholus of Ephesus, not allowing their marriage “problems” to affect her, which provides comedy for the audience. Luciana counters the possessiveness and jealous frenzy of Adriana with generosity and patience. At the same time, she is aware of the “troubles of the marriage-bed” and indicates this as the reason she has never married (2.1.27). Looking on this marriage relationship, Luciana envisions the tragic events that happen when husbands are unfaithful to their wives.

A tragic motif is displayed for two families as they face the struggles of becoming broken families. Whenever a family is separated, it is difficult for the family members to cope. Egeon is greatly disturbed with the fact that he has been apart from his wife and one son; “Thus have you heard me sever’d from my bliss,” he explains, as he sadly recalls the shipwreck that broke apart his family many years ago (1.1.118). This separation occurred more than twenty years prior, and the time apart has not made the separation any easier:

I hazarded the loss of whom I lov’d.

Five summers have I spent in farthest Greece, . . .

Hopeless to find, yet loath to leave unsought

But here must end the story of my life,

And happy were I in my timely death,

Could all my travels warrant me they live. (1.1.131-139)

Egeon’s grief is severe, yet he feels he could die content as long as he knows the rest of his family is alive.

The other family that has dealt with a broken home environment is the Dromio family. The Dromio twins were taken away from their birth parents to serve as servants to the Antipholus’ twins: “Those for their parents were exceeding poor, / I bought, and brought up to attend my sons” (1.1.56-57). Dramatic irony is displayed by the way the audience views the selling of the Dromio twins. This normally tragic situation is made comic by its context in the comedy and by the parents’ motive. Watching The Comedy of Errors the audience tends to look at this situation positively; the parents sold their twin boys because they could not financially support them or to give them more opportunity.

However, had this play been a tragedy, the audience may have assumed the worst; the parents sold their boys so they could benefit financially.

The separation of family members is tragic, especially if the separation leads to out of sight, out of mind, which appears to be the case with the Dromio twins. It seems Dromio of Ephesus does not yet believe this is his twin when he remarks, "Methinks you are my glass, and not my brother" (5.1.418). The audience views this scene as comic because the brothers who seemed to have forgotten one another are together once again. Dromio of Ephesus concludes this play reinforcing their relationship: "We came into the world like brother and brother; / And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another" (5.1.425-426). After many years of being separated, they have been reunited and close the play with this joyous reunion.

A servant/master relationship was formed when Egeon brought the Dromio twins into his family to serve as servants for his twin sons. This relationship leads to beating the servants when their masters feel they have failed to comply with their demands. Time and time again, Dromio of Ephesus recalls the beatings he received from Antipholus of Syracuse: "Nay, he strook so plainly, I could too / well feel his blows" (2.1.52-53); "For in conclusion, he did beat me there" (2.1.74). Dromio of Ephesus is hesitant to return to *his* master as Adriana asks him to do, afraid that he will be beaten again: "And he will bless that cross with other beating: / Between you and I shall have a holy head" (2.1.79-80). Dromio of Ephesus is so concerned about Antipholus of Syracuse beating him again that he asks Adriana to send someone else to bring her husband home: "Go back again, and be new beaten home? / For God's sake send some other messenger" (2.1.76-77). Finally convinced he must go fetch Adriana's husband, Dromio of Ephesus leaves with

these words: “You spurn me hence, and he will spurn me hither: / If I last in this service, you must case me in leather” (2.1.84-85). This quotation indicates Dromio of Ephesus believes he might not survive the beatings if he remains a servant to Antipholus of Ephesus, so he may leave this master to serve another. Both of which indicate how tragic these beatings are to the one receiving them. Since the audience is aware the cause of these beatings lies with the mistaken identity, these beatings are viewed as comic, almost slapstick, to the audience. Once again this situation shows dramatic irony within The Comedy of Errors.

Mistaken identity leads to more confusion and tragic events within the play. Dromio of Ephesus is not aware he has gone to the “wrong” Antipholus in requesting that he come home to dinner with his wife. Dromio is confused about why he is beaten when he has only done what was asked of him: “But pray sir, why am I beaten?” (2.2.39). They continue to go back and forth about the misunderstanding due to the other Dromio twin and his involvement in carrying out Antipholus of Syracuse’s requests. While this is tragic to Dromio of Ephesus, the audience finds great humor in his pain because the audience is aware of these twins being mistaken for one another. Both sets of twins are completely oblivious that their brother is in the same city, which causes the tragic confusion.

The only way the characters can explain what is happening in Ephesus is to blame these strange situations on witchcraft. The characters are confused and frightened to the point of accusing the town of being overtaken with witchcraft, which indicates they are seeing these events as tragic. The audience can look on this accusation and view it as comic, because it knows it is not really witchcraft that has caused this confusion.

Antipholus of Syracuse describes Ephesus as a nightmare country which none but witches do inhabit:

They say this town is full of cozenage:
 As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,
 Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
 Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
 Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks,
 And many such-like liberties of sin. (1.2.97-102)

Antipholus of Syracuse cannot understand why everyone in Ephesus seems to know all about him when he has only been in this city for a few hours. He wonders, “Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell? / Sleeping or waking, mad or well-advis’d? / Known unto these, and to myself disguis’d?” (2.2.212-214). It has not occurred to him that he is in the same city as his twin brother, and that this is the reason the citizens of Ephesus appear to know so much about him. Instead of realizing what appears to be obvious, Antipholus of Syracuse believes Ephesus is bewitched, adding to the comedy for the audience. However, had Antipholus of Syracuse’s accusation that Ephesus is actually bewitched been proven true, this witchcraft would create a real tragic outcome for not only the characters but the audience as well.

The confusion this day in Ephesus has led to so many unexplainable situations and abnormal happenings that even the Duke is bewildered. In attempting to make sense of what has occurred, Duke Solinus states, “I think you all have drunk of Circe’s cup” (5.1.271). This statement indicates just how confusing Ephesus has become since Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse arrived in the city. The characters are quick to

blame the confusion on witchcraft and madness, which adds to the humor. This is another example of comic irony, as the audience clearly knows these mistakes are not due to witchcraft but to the mistaken identities.

Antipholus of Syracuse is pleased with the tragic situations he faces, as he gets everything he ever wished for without even wishing for it, making this portion of the play comic. Enjoying all the attention and gifts bestowed upon him, Antipholus of Syracuse benefits from the pain he experiences while in Ephesus. He debates with himself in a soliloquy about leaving the city of Ephesus, and recalls the positive aspects of being in Ephesus. He has been recognized and greeted by so many, has been given a gold chain, and has enjoyed dinner with another man's wife. In his eyes the positive aspects of being in Ephesus outweigh the tragic encounters:

There's none but witches do inhabit here
And therefore 'tis high time that I were hence.
She that doth call me husband, even my soul
Doth for a wife abhor. But her fair sister,
Possess'd with such a gentle sovereign grace,
Of such enchanting presence and discourse,
Hath almost made me traitor to myself;
But lest myself be guilty to self-wrong,
I'll stop mine ears against the mermaid's song. (3.2.156-164)

Comedy is shown with Dromio being wiser than his master. It is Dromio who realizes the importance of them leaving this "inhabited" city. While the master does not realize these things he has received in error could be taken from him, it is the servant who

understands the potential tragedy his master may face for accepting what is not rightfully his. Maurice Charney explains in his book All of Shakespeare why Dromio is concerned for his master's safety: "[. . .] all the gifts he [Antipholus of Syracuse] receives by error could easily be taken away from him and he could at once be made to suffer for his fortuitous good fortune" (9). Dromio of Syracuse warns his master what may happen to them if they do not leave:

This is the fairy land. O spite of spites!

We talk with goblins, owls, and sprites;

If we obey them not, this will ensue:

They'll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue. (2.2.189-192)

The threat of witchcraft would have been very credible to Shakespeare's audience. In Themes and Structure in *The Comedy of Errors*, Harold Brooks describes the distress that both Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse feel about being in a city they believe to be full of witchcraft: "And tension rises again with his [Antipholus of Syracuse] anxiety; but still more with the profoundly disturbing fears into which it merges, of worse perils than the law's in Ephesus, suggested by its reputé as a place of illusions and shape-shifting, of jugglers that deceive the eye, of mountebanks and disguised cheaters" (15). The audience is aware these errors are due to both sets of twins being confused for their twin brothers. Because of this comic irony, the audience laughs at the expense of the characters and in relief that this is what it is, and not witchcraft.

Antipholus of Syracuse's quest of finding his mother and brother is tragic because in order to find them, he risks losing everything, including his father. However, the feeling of being psychologically incomplete was severe enough that Antipholus of

Syracuse felt this risk was worth taking. Because of this feeling, he felt he needed to leave his father, the one person who has been a constant figure throughout his life, to find his mother and twin brother whom he has not seen for more than twenty years. Brooks speaks of the emotional struggle Antipholus of Syracuse has while seeking to find his mother and brother: “‘I will go lose myself,’ he [Antipholus] said, and was commended by the Merchant to his ‘own content.’ This is the phrase which prompts his soliloquy, when he laments that what would content him is precisely what he cannot get” (14). Antipholus of Syracuse’s soliloquy indicates his feeling of being psychologically incomplete:

He that commends me to mine own content,
Commends me to the thing I cannot get:
I to the world am like a drop of water,
That in the ocean seeks another drop,
Who, falling there to find his fellow forth
(Unseen, inquisitive), confounds himself.
So I, to find a mother and a brother,
In quest of them (unhappy), ah, lose myself. (1.2.33-40)

Believing his efforts will continue to be unsuccessful, he feels even more incomplete in not obtaining what he has sought for so long. For this reason, Antipholus of Syracuse feels like a very small part (“a drop of water”) of a vast world that may be too overwhelming for him (1.2.35). Brooks describes why it is so important for Antipholus of Syracuse to resolve this situation: “To seek reunion with the lost members of the family, Antipholus is risking his identity; yet he must do so, for only if the full

relationship is restored can he find content” (14). The audience can assume Antipholus of Syracuse has found contentment when, at the end of the play, he tells Dromio of Syracuse, “Embrace thy brother there, rejoice with him” and then walks off with his own twin brother (5.1.414). What was once a tragic situation has become joyous.

Tragic and comic motifs are displayed when Antipholus of Syracuse finds it hard to remain sure of his identity. Antipholus of Syracuse begins to wonder if he has gone mad, as he is badgered about inexplicable rings and chains of gold. He is not sure why he is being questioned, has no recollection of these things, and begins to wonder about his sanity, which is tragic for him. Watching him go “mad” is comic to the audience.

Antipholus of Syracuse questions his own sanity:

Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?

Sleeping or waking, mad or well-advis'd?

Known unto these, and to myself disguis'd?

I'll say as they say, and persevere so,

And in this mist at all adventures go. (2.2.212-216)

Antipholus of Syracuse does not understand why everyone in Ephesus knows him, and he does not know anyone. This concerns him since he has been in Ephesus for only two hours: “In Ephesus I am but two hours old / As strange unto your town as to your talk” (2.2.148-149). The reason for this mistake is evident to the audience, yet what is obvious to the audience does not even occur to Antipholus of Syracuse. He does not believe he will be able to find his brother. He is oblivious to the signs around him, especially his being greeted by people whom he does not know, indicating he has indeed happened into the same city where his twin is living. Charney describes Antipholus of Syracuse's

ignorance of the possibility of being mistaken for his twin and how this contributes to the comedy in the play: “There is an element of obtuseness built into the play because Antipholus never once suspects that the errors of the play have anything to do with his earnest quest for his twin brother” (9-10). As will later be discussed, Antipholus of Syracuse is unaware of the fact he is being mistaken for his brother. This incident provides comedy for the audience, as the audience is aware of what Antipholus of Syracuse fails to discern.

Shakespeare often uses puns to lighten a tragic mood or situation. Antipholus of Syracuse’s self-confidence has been badly shaken, which is tragic for him. He feels so low that he asks Luciana to “create me new” (3.2.39). Antipholus of Syracuse is confused because Luciana knows much about him, yet he does not even know her name. Luciana asks if he is mad, and he replies with a pun, “not mad, but mated—how, I do not know” (3.2.54). Since everyone keeps referring to his wife, he begins to believe that maybe he is indeed married. Adriana treats him as her husband, and this confuses him even more. He wonders aloud what has caused all this confusion:

What, was I married to her in my dream?

Or sleep I now and think I hear all this?

What error drives our eyes and ears amiss?

Until I know this sure uncertainty,

I’ll entertain the [offer’d] fallacy. (2.2.182-186)

Even though Antipholus of Syracuse is sure he was never married, he is willing to go along with this mistake until it is proven otherwise.

Comic irony is displayed with Antipholus of Syracuse's comment that he is losing himself. Antipholus of Syracuse is discontented and uneasy, saying he will lose himself in the streets of Ephesus, which he does but not as he anticipated. Brooks describes the dilemma facing Antipholus of Syracuse: "No sooner has he expressed it, than, with the entry of his brother's Dromio, he begins to be the victim of the successive mistakes of identity to which his words are designed by Shakespeare as a prelude, and in the course of which he will come to wonder whether he is beside himself, and has lost himself indeed" (14).

The characters are both comically and tragically unaware of their mistaken identities. While these errors cause tragic situations for the characters, they at the same time provide comedy for the audience. The audience is aware of the reason for the errors that is causing all the confusion in Ephesus. Charney's definition of error as it is used in this play is ". . . error is much closer to the Latin sense of *errare*, to wander, stray, rove, or roam, especially if one thinks of the wanderings of the mind" (6). With this definition in mind, Charney describes the events in The Comedy of Errors: "Everything that is happening is essentially incomprehensible; it is the product of error or illusion. The answer in this play is, of course, not tragic. One doesn't do battle with error by considering it in its psychological manifestation of the double, the buried self, or the secret sharer. Instead, one accepts it joyously in celebration of all the good things that error is offering" (6). This is especially true with Antipholus of Syracuse, as he is the recipient of several good things. Antipholus of Syracuse is enjoying the blessings that have been showered on him:

But this I think, there's no man is so vain

That would refuse so fair an offer'd chain.

I see a man here needs not live by shifts,

When in the streets he meets such golden gifts. (3.2.180-184)

The audience realizes that which the characters do not: these errors are due to the twin brothers' being in the same city and continuing to be recognized as the other twin.

These serious and potentially tragic events are interwoven with lighthearted comedy throughout the play. Antipholus of Syracuse is falling in love with Luciana, and she is appalled because she thinks he is her brother-in-law. Antipholus of Ephesus did not pay for the gold chain he ordered because he never received it, and he is arrested for this debt. Adriana sees her husband's behavior, believes he has gone mad, and orders that he be bound and held in a cellar room. Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse decide to leave Ephesus as they believe the city and all its citizens are enchanted, but Adriana and the debt officer capture Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse and place them in the priory. As soon as these men are placed in this convent, Adriana begs the Duke to remove her "husband" from the abbey. At this point her real husband, Antipholus of Ephesus, breaks loose and comes to the Duke to press charges against his wife, Adriana.

Another situation where comedy is intermingled with potential tragedy is when Dromio of Syracuse describes his reaction to Nell, the kitchen wench. Nell shows an interest in Dromio of Syracuse, but he is disgusted by the thought of her love interest. Dromio tells his master that she has claimed him: ". . . not that, / I being a beast, she would have me, but that she, being / a very beastly creature, lays claim to me" (3.2.86-88). Dromio continues to describe her as dirty: ". . . but her face nothing / like so clean kept: for why? she sweats, a man may / go over shoes in the grime of it" (3.2.102-104).

He describes her as fat, saying, “. . . three quarters, . . . will not measure her from hip to hip” (3.2.109-111) and “No longer from head to foot than from / hip to hip: she is spherical, like a globe; I could find / out countries in her” (3.2.113-115). He reinforces his feelings against becoming involved with her, stating: “As from a bear a man would run for life, / So fly I from her that would be my wife” (3.2.154-155). Dromio of Syracuse is so disgusted at the thought of Nell’s liking him that his description of her provides much laughter for the audience.

The many potential tragedies throughout the play have all been explained and resolved at the end, so that what the audience remembers is not the tragic situations, but the comedy within them. Wilson describes the turn of events Shakespeare has created within this play: “. . . [Shakespeare] begins his play with a highly unclassical picture of a pathetic old man condemned to death for seeking a long lost son in an enemy country, and rounds the play off with a tender and equally unclassical picture of family reunion and reconciliation” (40). Aemilia, lost wife of Egeon, suggests everyone forget all the problems each has faced this day and celebrate with one another. By the final scene, the audience has forgotten the pain and tragic occurrences and rejoices with the characters in their happy reunion at the end.

After all the mistakes and confusion, the theme of love triumphing over all is shown with both sets of twins. These twins debate who is the eldest, then agree that it really does not matter: “Nay then thus: / We came into the world like brother and brother; / And now let’s go hand in hand, not one before another” (5.1.424-426). Antipholus of Syracuse realizes he and his twin brother have been mistaken for one another:

This purse of ducats I receiv’d from you,

And Dromio my man did bring them me.

I see we still did meet each other's man,

And I was ta'en for him, and he for me,

And thereupon these errors are arose. (5.1.385-389)

After all the errors each character faces, the potential tragedy is overcome by comedy; and comedy is the outcome with a happy ending:

And all that are assembled in this place,

That by this sympathized one day's error

Have suffered wrong, go, keep us company,

And we shall make full satisfaction. (5.1.397-400)

Throughout the play, the characters have been threatened and even tortured due to the great misunderstanding and the ambiguous situations they faced. However, by the conclusion of Act Five, all the misunderstandings and confusion has cleared in Ephesus, and the play ends with a happy reunion for all involved. Charney explains the effect such a conclusion has on the audience: "the final scene in the play is both a restoration and a recognition scene in that everyone gets back what he or she has lost" (10). Shakespeare uses the unity of time for comic reasons. Because all the events of this play take place within one day in Ephesus, the audience sees the tragic occurrences that each character faced are not as serious as if they had occurred over a longer period of time.

The comedy within this play depends not on any one character's virtue, but on serendipity, the unexpected discoveries made by accident at the conclusion of Act Five. None of the characters expected mistaken identities as the reason for the many errors that

occurred throughout the day. In surprise, the Duke puts the pieces of the puzzle together at the close of the day:

These two Antipholus', these two so like,
 And these two Dromios, one in semblance—
 Besides her urging of her wrack at sea—
 These are the parents to these children,
 Which accidentally are met together. (5.1.358-362)

These errors become clear to Antipholus of Syracuse: “I see we still did meet each other’s man, / And I was ta’en for him, and he for me, / And thereupon these errors are arose” (5.1.387-389). This was certainly an unexpected discovery, not only for the Antipholus and Dromio twins, but for each of the other characters as well.

John Russell Brown describes Shakespeare’s goal in writing comedies: “We have already noticed that Shakespeare does not strive to provoke our reproof for evildoers; it must also be acknowledged that he does not seem to draw any moral from the evils themselves; destruction is averted by some fortunate chance and the final emphasis is upon the joy of those who are made happy” (19). This quotation confirms the statement made by Larry S. Champion: “By analogy, comic structure normally begins with an anti-comic drive, which the action of the comedy evades or overcomes” (4). These statements describe the course of the comic and tragic events interwoven throughout The Comedy of Errors. The death sentence of Egeon was the potential tragedy, yet this disaster was averted by the grace of the gods. As the play concludes, the joy of being reunited is shared among all characters and the audience.

The Comedy of Errors, as befits comedies, ends with happiness and joyous celebrations. Everything that threatens the laughter throughout the play is eliminated at the end. Characters' confusions are revealed, the *errors* are explained and realized, and the darker/unpleasant issues are settled. Once the mistaken identities are made known as the cause of these errors, it is certain that things will not return to the state of confusion experienced this day in Ephesus. Duke Solinus who begins the play described as being "unbending" ends as a forgiving father figure. Husband and wife fall into one another's arms, as if time and distance had not intervened. Broken halves of Egeon's family which were separated more than twenty years ago are now put back together. The marriage of Antipholus of Ephesus and Adriana, once threatened by mutual jealousy, is resolved. The poor, abused slaves forget their beatings and bruises and embrace one another. The audience readily accepts this happy ending because a comic ending has been anticipated from the beginning, even the title of the play. With all these resolutions at the end, the central theme that love and felicity will triumph over all itself emerges victorious over the tragic threats.

Nightmares in a Dream World

William Shakespeare creates many situations in A Midsummer Night's Dream which could be considered nightmares rather than dreams. These nightmares threaten important decisions and events the characters face, and in some circumstances lives are put in danger. Some of the "nightmares" include a death sentence, stubborn attitudes, a love triangle, young runaways, jealous friends, arguing spirits, deliberate pranks, lover confusion, lack of self-confidence, and the cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby. These potential tragedies are found with the characters, the setting, and the plot and are creatively combined with the comedy within this play. The conclusion of A Midsummer Night's Dream brings the lovers together in marriages and leaves the audience with a reminder, if anything has offended anyone, to consider it all a dream.

Shakespeare introduces both a comic and a tragic event in the beginning of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Theseus and Hippolyta are anxiously awaiting their upcoming wedding: "Four happy days bring in / Another moon; but O, methinks, how slow / This old moon [waned]!" (1.1.2-4). This joyous conversation quickly ends when the audience is introduced to the first nightmare the characters face. Egeus enters Theseus's palace with his daughter, Hermia, and the two young men, Lysander and Demetrius, who are in love with her. Egeus boldly announces his anger with Hermia: "Full of vexation come I, with complaint / Against my child, my daughter Hermia (1.1.22-23). Egeus is furious that his daughter has defied his wishes and desires to marry Lysander rather than Demetrius, the man her father wants her to marry. In fact Egeus is so irate he asks Duke Theseus to uphold the death punishment if Hermia will not marry

Demetrius: "As she is mine, I may dispose of her; / Which shall be either to this gentleman, / Or to her death, according to our law" (1.1.42-44).

Altering the Athenian law based on individual circumstances is a tragic offense. Duke Theseus's response during this litigation raises concern as to whether the Duke is quoting the law correctly. As Egeus states, his daughter obeys his commands or dies. When Hermia asks Duke Theseus, "But I beseech your Grace that I may know / The worst that may befall me in this case, / If I refuse to wed Demetrius" (1.1.62-64), Theseus gives Hermia the choice between being put to death or living the life of a nun if she does not follow her father's commands: "Either to die the death, or to abjure / For ever the society of men" (1.1.65-66). Perhaps Duke Theseus believes living the life of a nun would be a "living death" for Hermia, so he can justify amending the law in this situation, or perhaps Egeus quotes only part of the law. With this explanation, death appears certain to Hermia. If she chooses not to marry Demetrius, she will die, either physically or emotionally. Living the life of a nun would in a sense be a life in prison or a living death.

No matter what decision Hermia makes, a tragic outcome will be the result. In her eyes she has four choices; marry Demetrius, live the life of a nun, be put to death, or flee Athens. By choosing not to comply with her father's wishes, Hermia contemplates the tragic outcomes as she envisions them. Lysander has made it known Demetrius "made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena," which suggests Demetrius might not be loyal to Hermia if they did marry (1.1.107). Living the life of a nun would not only keep Hermia from Demetrius but also keep her from Lysander, the man she loves. Hermia believes it to be less tragic to face the Athenian law than to be married to a man she

dislikes and who might be unfaithful to her. Making sure Hermia realizes the importance of the choice she makes, Theseus reinforces what kind of life she will lead: “You can endure the livery of a nun, / For aye to be in shady cloister mew’d, / To live a barren sister all your life” (1.1.70-72). Hermia appears ready to face the tragic consequence of disobeying her father’s commands as she repeats her desire to disobey: “Unto his lordship, whose unwished yoke / My soul consents not to give sovereignty” (1.1.81-82). Duke Theseus, unwilling to allow Hermia to make a hasty decision that may prove tragic, advises Hermia to think about her choice and then on his wedding day “. . . prepare to die / For disobedience to your father’s will, / Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would” (1.1.86-88). Choosing to die is certainly tragic, yet Hermia believes it is no worse than being forced to marry against her will.

It is tragic for Hermia to marry a man she cannot trust, as it is tragic for Duke Theseus to ignore the accusations stated about Demetrius. Lysander informs Duke Theseus that Demetrius “Made love to Nedar’s daughter, Helena” and refers to him as a “spotted and inconstant man” (1.1.107,110). Duke Theseus appears to ignore Lysander’s accusations, perhaps as a means to support Egeus’s wishes, and once again reminds Hermia what will happen if she disobeys her father’s command and does not marry Demetrius:

For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
 To fit your fancies to your father’s will;
 Or else the law of Athens yields you up . . .
 To death, or to a vow of single life. (1.1.117-121)

This tragic event overpowers the early comedy of the upcoming wedding, and the audience is left with the death sentence of a young girl as the overwhelming opening scene.

The act of stubbornness in disobeying the demands made by one's father frequently proved more tragic during the sixteenth century than it does today, as is shown in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Hermia is stubborn when it comes to complying with her father's wish--even in front of Duke Theseus, the one in authority. Egeus blames Hermia's stubbornness on Lysander: "With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart, / Turn'd her obedience (which was due to me) / To stubborn harshness" (1.1.36-38). Hermia clearly knows her father wants her to marry Demetrius and she has made it clear she wants to marry Lysander. Hermia cannot understand why her father does not see things her way: "I would my father look'd but with my eyes" (1.1.56). In support of her father, Duke Theseus replies: "Rather your eyes must with his judgement look" (1.1.57). Everyone at this point is tragically unaware of the other point of view. Since Hermia is not willing to see things her father's way, the result of her stubbornness could prove tragic for her.

There are both comic and tragic motifs in the love triangle between Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius. Both of the men are attempting to win Hermia's favor, yet she loves Lysander and wants nothing to do with Demetrius. The audience sees the comedy in both men's making their claim for Hermia. However, this is tragic for those involved, as they all believe they will not get what they want. Egeus is angry because he believes Lysander has "bewitch'd" Hermia by singing love songs at her window, giving her love tokens, and using these things to make Hermia fall in love with him (1.1.27). Egeus

claims that these actions of Lysander have turned his daughter's loyalties away from her father to a man he does not find suitable for his daughter. These accusations are tragic to the relationship Hermia wants to develop with Lysander. Believing he has done nothing wrong, Lysander feels he must convince Duke Theseus to ignore Egeus's statements by asserting his equality with Demetrius:

I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,
 As well possess'd; my love is more than his;
 My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd
 (If not with vantage) as Demetrius';
 And (which is more than all these boasts can be)
 I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia. (1.1.99-104)

It is comic to observe how forcefully Lysander makes his claim for Hermia, yet Demetrius is satisfied with allowing Egeus to claim Hermia for him. Egeus refers to Demetrius as "My noble lord," then reinforces his desire to see Hermia and Demetrius married, by saying, "And what is mine, my love shall render him. / And she is mine, and all my right of her / I do estate unto Demetrius" (1.1.24, 96-98). In fact, Demetrius only speaks once during the first scene of Act One, asking Lysander to relinquish his claim on Hermia so he can have her as his wife: "Relent, sweet Hermia, and Lysander, yield / Thy crazed title to my certain right" (1.1.91-92). Demetrius is already relying on Egeus's request that Egeus's daughter marry him.

It is comic for the audience to observe these two men "fighting" over Hermia and having no desire of being associated with Helena. While Hermia is disgusted with the thought of Demetrius expressing his love for her, Helena loves Demetrius and will go to

any length necessary to win his affections and his heart. This causes a tragic issue for Helena as well; she so desperately wants Demetrius to love her instead of loving Hermia. While it is painful to Hermia, Helena, and Demetrius to experience these feelings when they are not mutual, the audience views this situation as a comic aspect of A Midsummer Night's Dream. The audience is aware that these feelings are induced by the love juice and therefore believes them to be less tragic than the characters believe them to be, since the characters are not aware of the power of the love juice.

Comedy is shown in the conversation these two young girls have about Demetrius. Helena asks Hermia what she has done to capture Demetrius' attention and love: "O, teach me how you look, and with what art / You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart" (1.1.192-193). Hermia explains to Helena how she has won Demetrius' heart: "I frown upon him; yet he loves me still" and "I give him curses; yet he gives me love" (1.1.194, 196). This hurts Helena even more as she cannot fathom why Demetrius does not see what is so clear to her. In attempting to understand why Demetrius has forsaken his promises to her for his love of Hermia, Helena openly questions what is happening:

And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
 So I, admiring of his qualities.
 Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
 Love can transpose to form and dignity.
 Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind;
 And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.
 Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;
 Wings and no eyes, figure unheedy haste;

And therefore I Love said to be a child.

Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd. (1.1.230-239)

Helena is obviously upset because Demetrius has chosen Hermia rather than herself. It is difficult for Helena to understand why Demetrius continues to express his love for Hermia when Hermia has clearly made it known she does not like him and when he knows Helena is truly in love with him. This situation creates tragic irony, as Helena is doing to Demetrius exactly what Demetrius does to Hermia. The audience can certainly see this, but Helena seems unaware of this. Perhaps the reason Helena cannot see the similarity is because she is still holding on to the fact that Demetrius was once in love with her.

Receiving an ultimatum is often tragic, especially if it involves young people leaving their families, friends, and environment. Lysander encourages Hermia to leave not only her father but also Athens so they can be married. At this point, Lysander gives Hermia an ultimatum: "If thou lovest me, then / Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night" (1.1.163-164). Even though Hermia loves living in Athens, she agrees to this ultimatum: "Lysander and myself will fly this place" (1.1.203). Hermia refers to Athens as a "paradise," which shows how much she truly enjoyed the city she is about to leave (1.1.205). Lysander claims they will "seek new friends and [stranger companies]" (1.1.219). While the idea of meeting new friends and living in a different environment may at first sound appealing to young people, the initial thrill of being away from home will soon wear off, leaving Lysander and Hermia to realize just how negatively this decision has impacted their lives. The audience may be able to understand why Hermia has agreed to this ultimatum, since she is not willing to comply with her father's demands

to marry Demetrius. However, the audience also realizes what a tragic decision this is for a young girl to leave her family, friends, and community to follow a young lover into a distant city. Norrie Epstein describes the transformations that take place when the lovers leave the city: “The lovers . . . flee to the Athenian woods (and “wood” meant “mad” in Elizabethan English), a place of enchantment. But it’s also a labyrinth of confusion where they lose their way—and themselves—and where the line between sanity and madness, waking and sleep, is increasingly blurred” (79). These young lovers are being unrealistic, which is often tragic, as they have not yet thought about the practical details involved with running away from home. Lysander and Hermia are idealistic because they are only seeing the positive aspects of leaving Athens, which, as Epstein suggests, will ultimately become tragic for them.

Another tragic motif is the jealousy brought on by the love triangle between the one-time friends, Helena and Hermia. These girls once were so close in friendship that they confided in each other but are now bickering back and forth. Helena expresses the hurt she feels due to Demetrius’s being in love with Hermia rather than herself: “The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace. / Happy is Hermia, whereso’er she lies, / For she hath blessed and attractive eyes” (2.2.89-91). Helena believes herself to be unattractive: “No, no; I am as ugly as a bear; / For beasts that meet me run away for fear” (2.2.94-95). Yet she believes Hermia to be beautiful: “[Make] me compare with Hermia’s sphery eyne!” (2.2.99). Jealousy has sprouted, which leads Hermia and Helena to begin comparing themselves to one another. Helena calls Hermia a “puppet,” which causes Hermia to believe that Helena is making jests about Hermia’s shortness (3.2.288). This makes Hermia reply with the assumption Demetrius is in love with Helena because she is

tall: “And with her personage, her tall personage, / Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail’d with him / . . . / Because I am so dwarfish and so low?” (3.2.292-295). This comparison continues as Helena replies, “Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray; / My legs are longer though, to run away” (3.2.342-343). The serious tone of these statements and the constant jabs at each other make the audience very much aware of the jealous feelings that have sprung up as a result of the love triangle. This jealousy is hurting a friendship while at the same time providing comedy for the audience. The jealousy also moves the plot into the woods, the realm of enchantment and comedy.

Maurice Charney also has noted how the tragic events in A Midsummer Night’s Dream can be considered nightmares. In his book All of Shakespeare he states:

Recent productions of the play remind us that the dream may also have aspects of a nightmare, at least of an erupting nightmare that is finally and imperfectly contained. The world of the fairies and the folklore traditions of Midsummer Night are much more chaotic and disruptive than we would like to believe. However decorously Bottom behaves when he is transformed into an ass, Titania’s lust for a forbidden coupling with an animal is very real. There are all sorts of frightening aspects of the nocturnal forest The wood as a symbolic locale is definitely not benevolent . . . It is the place of the Id, the amoral, perturbations of the unconscious, darkness, lawlessness, and uncontrollable impulse. All these baleful assumptions lie behind Shakespeare’s seemingly placid

Midsummer Night’s Dream. (40)

Charney describes the potentially tragic events as an “erupting nightmare” which could have proven detrimental; however, Shakespeare creatively contained these problems in the fairy world. Within the fairy world, the young lovers are confused, the fairy queen falls in love with a mortal adorned with the head of an ass, there is quarreling between the former friends Helena and Hermia, as Lysander and Demetrius are fighting over Helena. But, as Duke Theseus states, everything will be restored to happiness as each of the lovers leave the fairy world and return to the city of Athens: “Fair lovers, you are fortunately met; / . . . / Away with us to Athens. Three and three, / We’ll hold a feast in great solemnity” (4.1.177-185).

Not only does A Midsummer Night’s Dream have potential tragedy in the characters and their relationships, but also it has potential tragedy in the setting. Another potentially tragic scene is the argument between the king and queen of the fairies, Oberon and Titania. Because they are at odds with one another, many nightmares occur. As Anne Barton states, “Shakespeare sees them [Oberon and Titania] as dangerous powers whose dissensions and quarrels can disorder the seasons and throw the natural world into chaos” (252). In the first scene of Act Two, Titania and Oberon are aware of and discuss the fogs, floods, destroyed crops, and diseased animals that have vexed the land due to their contention. Each of these problems caused tragic difficulties within the fairy world. Jealousy is cited as the cause for this dispute. Puck and Titania both refer to Oberon as “jealous” (2.1.24, 61). Because of this jealousy, Oberon and Titania are fighting, which causes many nightmares.

The tragic dispute between Oberon and Titania stems from Oberon’s wanting the young Indian boy whom Titania now has in her care. Oberon desires Titania to “render

up her page,” yet Titania feels obligated to the boy’s deceased mother to raise this changeling: “And for her sake do I rear up her boy; / And for her sake I will not part with him” (2.1.185, 136-137). Oberon, king of the fairies, devises the plan to “torment” Titania and “make her full of hateful fantasies” so she will give him the Indian boy (2.1.147, 258). Oberon tells of his plan, involving the magical flower juice:

Having once this juice,
I’ll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes;
The next thing then she waking looks upon . . .
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
And ere I take this charm from off her sight . . .
I’ll make her render up her page to me. (2.1.176-185)

As Oberon planned, Titania falls in love with the first thing she sees upon waking, which happens to be the transformed Bottom with the head of an ass. Bottom, always carefree and lighthearted, does not seem bothered by this transformation. Jack A. Vaughn’s Shakespeare’s Comedies describes the comedy of this transformation: “It is Bottom’s immunity to imagination that makes his transformation into an ass and subsequent encounter with the Queen of the Fairies so amusing” (70-71). As Bottom sings, Titania awakes and wonders aloud, “What angel wakes me from my flow’ry bed?” (3.1.129). Watching as Titania falls in love with Bottom provides comedy for the audience.

A fairy queen falling in love with a mortal adorned with the head of an ass could be considered a tragic nightmare; however, the audience finds humor with this odd couple. This situation which could be potentially tragic is mitigated because Bottom does

not seem to care that he has the head of an ass. Ernest Schanzer describes what Shakespeare has done by matching these two together: “Shakespeare next shows us the *reductio ad absurdum* of this love-madness in the Bottom-Titania love scenes. Here, in the infatuation of the Queen of fairies for a weaver metamorphosed into an ass, we have displayed the full absurdity of the kind of love which is engendered in the imagination only, uncorrected by judgment and the senses” (28). Queen Titania expresses the love she feels for Bottom:

Mine ear is much enamored of thy note;
 So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
 And thy fair virtue’s force (perforce) doth move me
 On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee. (3.1.137-141)

Titania and Bottom are a completely mismatched couple, yet, to each of them, their relationship is fulfilling. Titania has found someone “wise and beautiful” (3.1.148). She informs Bottom, “I’ll give thee fairies to attend on thee,” making sure he is comfortable at all times (3.1.157). Bottom enjoys all the attention the fairies are giving him in Act Three, scene one, and again in the first scene of Act Four. While under the charm of the magical flower juice Titania gives much attention and love to Bottom. Epstein comments on the effects of this juice: “Released from her spell, Titania shudders, half remembering, not quite certain of what she has done, or if what has happened is real or an illusion. Similarly, the lovers, their confusion dispelled by Puck and Oberon, fall into a deep sleep and wake never knowing if their experiences have been a vision or reality” (113). It is interesting to note the dominant one in each couple (Lysander, Demetrius, and Titania) is the one who receives the love juice. Perhaps Shakespeare felt if the

dominant one did not receive the juice, he or she may have been more aware that what was happening was chemically induced rather than emotionally felt, which would detract from the comedy of the situation. It is also comic to see the rationality and superiority of the dominant ones brought low. Each of the lovers is so overtaken by the effects of this juice that he or she does not fully understand what has transpired in the woods.

Plotting itself is subject to more potential tragedy as the plan to bring the young lovers together unfolds. Mass confusion is caused in the two young couples when this same magical flower juice is applied in a deliberate prank to Lysander's and Demetrius's eyes as they sleep in the woods. This confusion causes a series of nightmares for each character involved. Oberon asks Puck to take some of this flower juice and "anoint his [Demetrius'] eyes" so he will be in love with Helena, "But do it when the next thing he espies / May be the lady" (2.1.261-263). This is Oberon's plan to solve the love triangle between Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius--to have Demetrius fall in love with Helena instead of Hermia. Puck places the juice on Lysander's eyes rather than Demetrius's eyes, and this mistake causes a great deal of potential tragedy for the young lovers.

This juice causes a complete reversal in Lysander's and Hermia's relationship. Once desperately in love with Hermia, Lysander now expresses the love he feels as he awakes: "Not Hermia, but Helena I love" (2.2.113). He compares Hermia to a "raven" and Helena to a "dove" (2.2.114). Lysander tells Helena, "And reason says you are the worthier maid"; then he reinforces his affection: "And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook / Love's stories written in Love's richest book" (2.2.116, 121-122). Schanzer describes the love Lysander feels: "It is a love which has no basis in reality, which creates a phantom, a mere shadow of the beloved person; it is a dream. Though it is

entirely devoid of judgment the victim is, ironically, under the delusion that he is following reason in his choice” (28). Lysander is not aware of what has caused him to love the one he formerly despised.

Shakespeare takes this potentially tragic situation and uses a comic motif to resolve the issue. Oberon informs Puck he has anointed the eyes of the wrong Athenian, and in doing so “Some true love turn’d, and not a false turn’d true”; he has caused the confusion of love between Lysander and Helena (3.2.91). Currently both men are expressing their love for Helena and their dislike for Hermia, which is the complete opposite of the opening scene where both men loved Hermia and wanted nothing to do with Helena. In attempting to correct Puck’s mistake, Demetrius’s eyes are to be charmed so he will also fall in love with Helena. As Charney indicates: “It doesn’t make much difference whether love is chemically induced by the juice of the mythological love-in-idleness blossom or produced internally by strong passion” (34). The love Lysander and Demetrius now feel for Helena seems to be just as strong as what they both felt for Hermia during Act One, scene one.

Ultimately the success of this play depends on “love-madness,” a combination of both kinds of love. When love is internally felt, the result may lead to a tragic outcome. When love is chemically induced the result is a comic outcome. Schanzer explains why he believes “love-madness” is the central theme of A Midsummer-Night’s Dream: “It is this which ties together various sections of the play, from Demetrius’s transfer of affection from Helena to Hermia and then back to Helena, to Titania’s temporary love for Bottom” (27). The audience sees the comic results of this love-madness with the profound affection Lysander and Demetrius initially show Hermia and now show Helena

when possessed by the juice. This love-madness was also shown when Titania expressed her love for Bottom after her eyes were anointed with the magical flower juice.

There are tragic motifs with the distrust between Helena, Hermia, Lysander and Demetrius. Helena feels she cannot trust the affections of Lysander and Demetrius. Not only are the feelings of distrust tragic, these confessions of love for Helena cause nightmares for each of the other young lovers as well. As Lysander declares his love for Helena, she immediately suspects he is mocking her: "Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?" (2.2.123). Then Demetrius announces he loves Helena too, and she now believes both Lysander and Demetrius are making fun of her: "I see you all are bent / To set against me for your merriment" (3.2.145-146). Helena shows a lack of self-confidence when she states to Lysander and Demetrius: "I am sure you hate me with your hearts," as they both express their love to her (3.2.154). These expressions of love lead to jealous feelings and an argument between Helena and Hermia, as they make jests about each other's height, and call each other names such as shrew, canker-blossom, thief, and puppet in the second scene of Act Three.

Hermia felt she could confide in Helena as she shared with her the plans she and Lysander had made to flee Athens, only to have Helena defy this trust. This distrust is lightened with the comic expressions of love both Demetrius and Lysander express to Helena. Demetrius, once so in love with Hermia, has now, thanks to Puck's new application of love juice, given his trust and heart to Helena: "Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none. / If e'er I lov'd her, all that love is gone" (3.2.169-170). Lysander betrays the trust he once had with Hermia when he expresses his love for Helena: "Content with Hermia? No, I do repent / The tedious minutes I with her spent. / Not

Hermia, but Helena I love” (2.2.111-113). Lysander’s affection for Helena eventually leads Hermia and Helena to be friends again. Hermia, repeating to Helena that she has done nothing to break apart their friendship, and furthermore surprised that Helena is accusing her of doing so, tells Helena: “I am amazed at your [passionate] words. / I scorn you not” (3.2.220-221). During the final act Theseus makes it clear that these four young people are no longer holding grudges against each other: “Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth. / Joy, gentle friends, joy and fresh days of love / Accompany your hearts!” (5.1.28-30). This statement indicates what could have become tragic in tearing apart a friendship has ultimately been avoided and all are filled with joy and gladness and are indeed friends once again.

The intensity of the love both Lysander and Demetrius feel for Helena causes another potentially tragic nightmare. When Demetrius states he loves Helena more than Lysander loves her, Lysander asks Demetrius, “If you say so, withdraw, and prove it too” (3.2.255). Lysander and Demetrius are ready to fight for Helena: “Now follow, if thou dar’st, to try whose right, / Of thine or mine, is most in Helena” (3.2.336-337). Oberon and Puck, observing this argument between Lysander and Demetrius, realize how outrageous the situation has become with the lovers and make immediate plans “To take from thence all error with his might / . . . / When they next wake, all this derision / Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision” (3.2.368-371). John Russell Brown describes this erratic action in his book, Shakespeare and his Comedies. He states: “As the vagaries of love and enchantment had seemed perfectly reasonable to those who were involved, and unreasonable or ridiculous to those who had only observed, so the whole action in the wood, once the first sight of day has passed, will seem more real or more fantastic” (85).

This quotation supports what is observed with Lysander and Demetrius. Both young men now truly feel a strong passion for the once hated Helena, yet the audience is certainly aware of how ridiculous it is when both men fall deeply in love with her. This is another example of dramatic irony: what is tragic for the characters is comic for the audience, as the audience is aware of what has caused all this confusion and fighting.

Another nightmare is the cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby in the play-within-the-play. Pyramus, believing “lion vild hath here deflow’r’d my dear,” stabs himself (5.1.292). When Thisby enters and realizes Pyramus is dead, she also ends her life as she says, “Come trusty sword, / Come, blade, my breast imbrue!” (5.1.343-344). This scene is not as tragic to the audience as to the mechanicals because the players botch the performance. W. Gordon Zeeveld distinguishes how this scene adds tragic occurrences to the comedy: “What more appropriate contrast to the perfect union of Theseus and Hippolyta than the tragical mirth of Pyramus and Thisbe parted by the wall that parted their fathers?” (5). This statement reinforces the concept that the final scene of A Midsummer Night’s Dream contains both comic and tragic occurrences. Charney also notes how the death of Pyramus and Thisby combines tragic with the comic: “This is a grotesque and also poignant reminder that ‘The course of true love never did run smooth’ (1.1.134). In the light of the Pyramus and Thisby play, all three pairs of lovers are made aware of how fortunately things have turned out for them” (36). This tragic scene becomes comic for the audience due to the pretense within the play and due to the mechanicals’ inept acting. Shakespeare has creatively turned a tragic element into happiness rather than sorrow at the conclusion of the play.

The nightmares each of the characters face are intermingled with the comedy in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Comedy is shown in the love Helena expresses for Demetrius. Demetrius tries to convince Helena their feelings are not mutual by stating, "For I am sick when I do look on thee"; quick with a reply, Helena tells Demetrius: "And I am sick when I look not on you" (2.1213-214). Oberon uses his powers as he squeezes the juice of the flower on Titania's eyelids, and states, "Wake when some vile thing is near" (2.2.34). The audience laughs at the devotion Lysander suddenly has for Helena and laughs again when Demetrius is expressing his undying love to the once hated but also previously loved Helena. The quarrels between Hermia and Helena are serious to them, yet the audience finds humor in the rhetoric and the manner in which these young girls debate both the love and hatred Lysander and Demetrius are showing them. Puck looks on this argument and states, "As this their jangling I esteem a sport" (3.2.353). Puck, as well as the audience, knows the cause of what has led these girls to this point and sees the comedy in watching these girls quarrel.

Bottom, full of lightheartedness, adds comedy to A Midsummer Night's Dream with all his blunders and embellishments. Bottom is very excited about the play and desires to have all the parts, especially the lion: "I will roar that I will do any man's heart good to hear me" (1.2.70-71). When afraid he will not get to play the lion, Bottom states that he can roar "as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you and 'twere any nightingale'" (1.2.82-84). Bottom is very willing to accommodate any and all desires so he will be guaranteed a significant part of the play. The audience finds humor in Bottom's eagerness to make the mechanicals' play a success even though the play cannot be a success because it is so ridiculous. In Shakespeare's Comedies, Ralph Berry

describes how these scenes add to the comedy: “The Bottom scenes amount to a commanding demonstration of Shakespeare’s comic methods. . . . First, they are funny in themselves; second, they parody the principals, and their behavior, in the major action; third, they enable a matter of some intellectual substance to be analyzed” (101). It is humorous when Titania, queen of the fairies, falls in love with Bottom and continuously dotes on his wonderful qualities. The audience laughs at this scene because this “relationship” is the complete opposite of what one would expect. A fairy queen is superior to a mortal, especially a mortal with the head of an ass.

By the conclusion of the play, the nightmares which threatened the lovers have been resolved. John Dover Wilson describes how the lovers, once entangled and quarrelling in disagreement, have resolved their issues: “Here however the imbroglio that holds up the happy ending is the result not of confused identity arising from a family resemblance or an assumed disguise, but of supernatural intervention by Puck, who brings it about by the mistaken application of Cupid’s flower and in the end resolves it by means of its antidote, Dian’s bud” (185). All three pairs of lovers are aware of how fortunately things have turned out for them. Oberon expresses how the play will end: “There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be / Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity” (4.1.91-92). Oberon and Puck have caused many of the nightmares; hoping to resolve any negative feelings, Puck ends the play with these words:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumb’red here
While these visions did appear.

And this weak and idle theme,

No more yielding but a dream. (5.1.423-428)

Puck is bringing about the happy ending, so what the audience is left with is reality of the triple marriage and not simply another illusion. The reality at this point is necessary in order for this play to conclude with a truly happy or comic ending. Because Oberon and Titania are now reconciled, the nightmares which vexed the land due to their original contention have been resolved. Oberon describes these positive changes:

And the blots of Nature's hand

Shall not in their issue stand;

Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,

Nor mark prodigious, such as are

Despised in nativity,

Shall upon their children be. / . . . /

Through this palace, with sweet peace,

And the owner of it blest

Ever shall in safety rest. (5.1.409-420)

Oberon's and Titania's reconciliation creates a positive ending to a situation that was at one time a nightmare within the land.

Shakespeare began with Theseus and Hippolyta joyously anticipating their upcoming nuptials and ends with not only their wedding, but also the wedding celebrations of Hermia and Lysander as well as Helena and Demetrius. Epstein comments on this aspect: "Comedies thus end with beginnings, and so they express the cycle of life, in which winter and decay are inevitably followed by spring and renewal.

In comedies, mutability is seen as a larger part of life's continuity" (78). The characters faced inconsistency, which is a part of the course of life, but they end with "happily ever after" hopes.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a comedy even though there is a great deal of potential tragedy interwoven throughout the play. The comedy would not appear as humorous without the nightmares many of the characters faced. At the end of the play, these nightmares do not become as detrimental as they initially appeared to be within the play. It is often said that hindsight is 20/20, indicating that, if the ending had been known in advance, those involved would have acted differently from the beginning. Titania, Lysander and Demetrius believed the passion they felt was genuine; Bottom, Helena, and Hermia were unaware of their various loves being chemically induced. Bottom does not know, or simply does not care, that he has the head of an ass. These situations of not knowing the true conditions create the comedy within the play. Each of the lovers would not have allowed what transpired to disturb them had they only known they would be married to the one they truly loved by the conclusion of the play.

The joy, happiness, and love felt are overwhelming, as the three couples are about to be married. Duke Theseus states: "Fair lovers, you are fortunately met; / . . . / These couples shall eternally be knit / . . . / Away with us to Athens. Three and three, / We'll hold a feast in great solemnity (4.1.177-185). Duke Theseus tells Egeus, "I will overbear your will," indicating he has witnessed the true love between Hermia and Lysander and will allow them to be married against Egeus's initial command that she marry Demetrius. Adding to this positive outcome, it is important to note Demetrius has withdrawn his original suit to marry Hermia and has fallen in love with Helena. Hermia, Demetrius,

Helena, and Lysander all believe the solutions that have been developed in the fairy world are real solutions and will follow them into the real world of Athens. Thus, each of these characters affected by the love juice foresees happiness rather than more nightmares as each leaves the fairy world. This ending supports a characteristic of comedies; the tragedies have ultimately been avoided and the negative has turned positive. Love and good will triumphs over all else.

These nightmares are significant to the development and outcome of A Midsummer Night's Dream. The nightmares are what provided the tragic situations the characters faced while at the same time these nightmares provided the comic portions for the audience. Shakespeare creatively intermingles these aspects of tragedy with the comedy to create dramatic irony.

The Many Façades of Love

Many of the characters in William Shakespeare's Much Ado about Nothing don a deceptive front when expressing love. This deceptiveness leads to both comic and tragic motifs within this comedy. The genuine expressions of love are often displayed only after the characters have declared their complete lack of affection and trust. The conclusion depends upon revealing the true feelings of love the characters have at one time hidden from others. These deceptive fronts cause many potentially tragic situations. The characters have to face humiliation, disgrace, schemes, deception, jealousy, lies, dishonor, and an alleged murder before experiencing a joyous union. These tragic occurrences eventually become significant to the overall happy ending of Much Ado about Nothing.

Shakespeare combines an unpleasant mood with the pleasant opening atmosphere thus immediately joining a tragic motif with the comedy. Beatrice simply cannot rejoice with the soldiers as they arrive victoriously from battle. Instead, she finds this joyous occasion ideal for humiliating her long time rival, Benedick. Being unjustly publicly humiliated in the first scene of Act One is potentially tragic. Beatrice immediately begins slandering Benedick when she refers to him as a dummy: "he is no less than a stuff'd man;" she then indicates he has little intelligence: "if he have wit enough to keep himself warm" (1.1.58-59, 68). While others praise Benedick's success in war, Beatrice continues to humiliate him in every way she can.

Not only does Beatrice humiliate Benedick, she also humiliates the acquaintances he has chosen. When informed that Claudio is Benedick's companion, Beatrice replies, "God help the noble Claudio!" (1.1.88-89). No matter what Benedick has accomplished

or with whom he associates, Beatrice can only find words of humiliation, not words of praise for him. Rather than showing appreciation for the wars that Benedick has fought, Beatrice repeatedly belittles him publicly.

While the audience sees Beatrice's humiliation of Benedick as potentially tragic to him, Benedick, perhaps as a means to disguise his bruised ego, returns humiliating words to Beatrice. Benedick refers to Beatrice as "Lady Disdain" and sarcastically asks, "are you yet living?" (1.1.118-119). Beatrice expresses her great dislike for men, and, as if to confirm the idea men feel the same about her, Benedick states, "God keep your ladyship still in that mind! so some gentleman or other shall scape a predestinate scratch'd face" (1.1.133-135). The war of words has broken out among these two and continues throughout the entire play. While the words are humiliating to the couple, the tone is lighthearted, and the audience, as well as the other characters, realizes these two are engaging in a "merry war" and that there are feelings of love hidden in their remarks. Maurice Charney explains how this war of words keeps the interest strong between Beatrice and Benedick: "The witty war in the play turns on the conflict between powerful impulse and equally powerful commitment to gender pursuits" (60). It is this conflict that keeps the audience waiting to see who will give in to his or her true feelings first.

It is tragic for Hero, the other female protagonist, when she is openly disgraced. There are no indications that she is anything but virtuous, yet the first words the audience hears spoken about her are disgraceful. Benedick disgraces Hero when Claudio shows a love interest in her and Claudio asks, "Is she not a modest young lady?" (1.1.165). Benedick replies, "Why, [in] faith, methinks she's too low for a high praise, too brown for a fair praise, and too little for a great praise . . . and being no other but as she is, I do

not like her” (1.1.171-176). Even though Benedick has made it known how he feels about women--“truly I love none”--it is unfair and unjust to Hero when he disgraces her to Claudio (1.1.127). This disgrace may stem from the jealousy Benedick feels as he foresees Claudio may “turn husband” and as a result he would lose a companion (1.1.193). This false accusation may also be part of the reason Claudio is later convinced with the scheme Don John and Borachio plotted.

A great deal of scheming occurs throughout this play. The scheme devised by Don Pedro is one of fun, lighthearted matchmaking. The scheme devised by Don John, on the other hand, is full of malicious intention. There is potential tragedy within both of these schemes. If the former scheme does *not* work as planned, two individuals who are genuinely in love may never openly express their true feelings for one another. If the latter scheme *does* work as planned, a young, faithful maiden and her family name will be openly disgraced.

Believing Beatrice and Benedick are truly in love with one another, their friends feel it would be tragic if they never share these feelings openly. Don Pedro enlists the assistance of Leonato, Claudio, and Hero to carry out his scheme. To Hero, Don Pedro says: “I will teach you how to humor your cousin, that she shall fall in love with Benedick” (2.1.380-381). Then turning to Leonato and Claudio, he tells them: “with your two helps, will so practice on Benedick that, in despite of his quick wit and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice” (2.1.382-384). Don Pedro sees through the façades of Beatrice and Benedick as they claim their intense hatred for one another. Indicating they have also noted the hidden love Beatrice and Benedick have for one another, Claudio, Leonato, and Hero are quick in agreeing to assist with this scheme.

Don John is harboring bitter feelings of jealousy toward his half-brother, Don Pedro and his right-hand assistant, Claudio. Don John has malicious plans; it is his desire to destroy happiness and love. Don John's scheme involves deceiving Claudio so he will believe Hero has been unfaithful. Anxious to be the "plain-dealing villain" Don John boasts; he plots with Borachio to bring disgrace to Hero and her family name (1.3.32). Don John is so malicious he will risk all to ensure that his scheme is administered: "Only to despite them, I will endeavor any thing" (2.2.31-32). Harold C. Goddard explains how tragic this scheme is: "[This] deception [that Hero is unfaithful] is false in fact and false in purpose and intention. It is a lie in the fullest sense" (274). There are no good intentions motivating this scheme. As Borachio promised, this scheme brings "proof enough to misuse the Prince, to vex Claudio, to undo Hero, and kill Leonato" (2.2.28-29). If this scheme is successful, it will bring dishonor and disgrace. To be falsely accused of being unfaithful is tragic indeed—even more so when her marriage to Claudio depends on her virginity.

The audience is never shown what has led Don John to this point. Charney comments on the question that the audience ponders: "We never really know what Don John has against Claudio, other than his [Don John's] favor with Don Pedro, and we certainly never learn why Don John calumniates Hero so mercilessly" (62). The audience can only assume jealousy has led Don John to this point. Jack A. Vaughn describes how this tragic event is important in bringing the comic and tragic elements together in this play: "The slander of Hero is but the pivotal incident in a network of misunderstandings, mishearings, and misreportings that keep Much Ado about Nothing in motion" (109-110).

In order for the scheme to bring Beatrice and Benedick together, deception must occur. Outwardly, Beatrice and Benedick appear to hate one another. But, as Norrie Epstein states, these two are simply trying to protect their true feelings: “Coolness and witty detachment are the best defense against the confusions of the heart” (89). Others, looking on, believe that Beatrice and Benedick are being deceptive and that there are deeper feelings between these two than what they will admit. Don Pedro and his companions are willing to “undertake one of Hercules’ labors, which is, to bring Signior Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into a mountain of affection th’ one with th’ other” (2.1.364-367). Beatrice and Benedick each have to be deceived into believing that the other is secretly in love with him or her. In order to make Beatrice and Benedick believe there are hidden feelings of love between them, another deception must occur.

The characters devise a plan to trick Beatrice and Benedick into thinking that the couple is secretly listening to conversations; however, the ones talking are fully aware Beatrice and Benedick are listening. Don Pedro, Leonato, and Claudio discuss the supposed love Beatrice has for Benedick as he hides nearby and listens. As John Russell Brown indicates, this plan has been successful in its intention: “The eyes, understanding, and tongue of the ‘sensible’ Benedick are all affected; he no longer thinks that Beatrice is possessed of a fury but sees ‘marks of love’ in her manner and ‘double meanings’ in her curtest message (2.3.254-71)” (111).

Even though the audience is aware of the deception plotted to bring Benedick and Beatrice together, Benedick is not: he believes what he has just heard. This makes him declare, “This can be no trick” (2.3.228-229). Just as Don Pedro planned, Benedick begins to question, and then believes, what he has witnessed: “I should think this a gull,

but that the white-bearded fellow speaks it” (2.3.118-119). Benedick cannot believe Leonato would be part of any mischief, so what he has just heard must be factual. Charney describes how Benedick has fallen for Beatrice: “Like other reluctant males in Shakespearean comedy, Benedick is carried away against his conscious will to love Beatrice, and Beatrice too loves him in spite of herself” (60).

Beatrice must also be deceived in order for Don Pedro’s plan to be effective. Following the same fashion, Margaret advises Beatrice of Hero’s and Ursula’s walk in the garden, their discussion of Benedick’s great qualities, and the supposed love he has for Beatrice. Beatrice has been forewarned of this conversation; so, wanting “to listen our propose,” she hides and is deceived by their conversation (3.1.12). Beatrice has also taken “the false sweet bait” and begins to wonder if she is as disdainful and Benedick is as wise, noble, and rarely-featured as Hero and Ursula discuss (3.1.33). It appears Beatrice already has had loving feelings about Benedick, or she would not have been so willing to concede her heart to a man she openly appeared to despise. The audience is aware of what Larry S. Champion describes: “Benedick and Beatrice have clearly revealed that they have far more than a casual interest in one another but that their pride will never allow them to admit it” (70).

In her soliloquy, Beatrice wonders aloud what she has just heard concerning her accusation and Benedick’s feelings toward her:

Stand I condemn’d for pride and scorn so much?

Contempt, farewell, and maiden pride, adieu!

No glory lies behind the back of such.

And, Benedick, love on, I will requite thee,

Taming my wild heart to thy loving hand.
 If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee
 To bind our loves up in a holy band,
 For others say thou dost deserve, and I
 Believe it better than reportingly. (3.1.108-116)

Eavesdropping on Hero's and Ursula's conversation has caused Beatrice to think about the way others perceive her and to reconsider her honest feelings for Benedick. She believes the things she just heard about Benedick are true and declares she will accede to his love. With this declaration the other characters, as well as the audience, can see how Don Pedro's plan to deceive Beatrice and Benedick was successful in bringing these two together. Had this plan not worked, the shared love between Beatrice and Benedick may have never been openly expressed. These two finally admit their love, which keeps them from being deprived of the one all, characters and audience alike, know they love.

Friar Francis sees beyond the façade unjustly placed on Hero and believes she is innocent of these charges made against her. He seizes an opportunity to "change slander to remorse" by having her appear to be dead (4.1.211). This pretense turns a deceptive, tragic situation into a positive outcome for Hero, Claudio, and Leonato. 2Friar Francis's deception is voiced when he states his plan:

Pause awhile,
 And let my counsel sway you in this case.
 Your daughter here the [princes] left for dead.
 Let her awhile be secretly kept in,
 And publish it that she is dead indeed.

Maintain a mourning ostentation,
 And on your family's old monument
 Hang mournful epitaphs, and do all rites
 That appertain unto a burial. (4.1.200-208)

The Friar believes this deception is acceptable because it will benefit rather than hurt those involved. Ralph Berry notes the importance of the Friar's plan: "The true value here is provided by the Friar. He, like the others, has used his eyes But he relies not only on his senses, but on his experiences of life. His judgment is sounder; and better still, he has a sounder method, for the matter will need to be put to further tests" (161). While this façade initially appears tragic for Hero, the motivating factor is to see good overtake evil. Goddard describes how this deception is not as tragic as the deception plotted by Don John. He states this deception "is false in fact, but is imaginatively and symbolically true. The Hero whom Claudio maligned *is* dead, never to revive. Out of the illusion of her death a new Hero emerges not only in herself but also in Claudio's heart and imagination. And the illusion turns into the fact, and looking retrospectively we see there was no deception" (274). With this explanation the characters and the audience can understand the reason for this deception and therefore do not believe it was wrong for Friar Francis to deceive others in this situation.

Jealousy also leads Don John to devise a lie in attempting to cause trouble between Don Pedro and Claudio. Harboring resentment toward his half brother, Don Pedro, Don John seeks revenge at the masked ball. Don John's planned lie is to deceive Claudio into believing that Don Pedro is attempting to woo Hero for himself, rather than for Claudio as he promised. Don John tells Claudio (who is pretending to be Benedick)

that Don Pedro “is enamor’d on Hero” (2.1.164). This news saddens Claudio; he had felt Don Pedro was a trusted friend, but now he wonders about Don Pedro’s loyalties:

‘Tis certain so, the Prince woos for himself.

Friendship is constant in all other things

Save in the office and affairs of love; . . .

And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch

Against whose charms faith melteth into blood. (2.1.174-180)

Claudio begins doubting his friendship with Don Pedro and Benedick. Believing he could confide in them, Claudio told them of his affections for Hero; now according to Don John they have turned against him. This lie makes Claudio believe Don Pedro cannot be trusted: “This is an accident of hourly proof, / Which I mistrusted not” (2.1.181-182). In actuality, Claudio would not have been deceived by Don John had he (Claudio) also not been deceptive by donning the façade of Benedick.

The lie contrived by Don John and Borachio to dishonor Hero leads to tragic accusations for Hero and her family. Malignancy being the motive, Borachio states how his plan will be implemented: “Not honestly, my lord, but so covertly that no dishonesty shall appear in me” (2.2.9-10). This statement indicates Borachio is aware of how wrong it is to falsely accuse Hero. Doing his part to see the lie is carried out as planned, Don John tells Claudio: “I came hither to tell you, and circumstances short’ned . . . the lady is disloyal” (3.2.102-104). Claudio, disturbed with this news yet wanting to see for himself, begins to question Hero’s faithfulness: “If I see any thing to-night why I should not marry her, to-morrow in the congregation, where I should wed, there will I shame her” (3.2.123-125). The audience is asked to believe the evidence without actually seeing the alleged

infidelity take place on stage. Believing Claudio has proof of Hero's unfaithfulness, the audience may be sympathetic to Claudio's anger. Very hurt by what he saw at Hero's chamber window, Claudio publicly shames Hero during their wedding ceremony with these words: "She knows the heat of a luxurious bed; / Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty" (4.1.41-42). Don Pedro shows his loyalty to Claudio with his response: "I stand dishonor'd, that have gone about / To link my dear friend to a common stale" (4.1.64-65). These men have been tragically deceived by the façades of Borachio and Margaret.

These façades have also deceived Leonato. It is tragic when Leonato believes the accusation against his daughter and immediately wishes her to die: "O Fate! take not away thy heavy hand, / Death is the fairest cover for her shame / That may be wished for" (4.1.115-117). Leonato believes his daughter's actions have brought reproach and that the only way to clear the family name is for her to die:

Do not live, Hero, do not open thine eyes;
 For did I think thou wouldst not quickly die,
 Thought I thy spirits were stronger than thy shames,
 Myself would, on the rearward of reproaches,
 Strike at thy life. Griev'd I, I had but one? (4.1.123-127)

Hero is doubly shamed by two men whom she loves. Her intended husband, Claudio, falsely accuses her and because Leonato believes the accusation he wishes his daughter to die. Leonato's behavior adds to her intense tragic emotions. These false accusations occur at the altar on Hero's wedding day in front of her family and friends. Leonato is concerned about the reproach his "lewd" daughter has brought to his family name:

Valuing of her—why, she, O she is fall'n
 Into a pit of ink, that the wide sea
 Hath drops too few to wash her clean again,
 And salt too little which may season give
 To her foul tainted flesh! (4.1.139-143)

Leonato believes Hero's accusers before he believes his own daughter: "Would the two princes lie, and Claudio lie, / Who lov'd her so, that speaking of her foulness, / Wash'd it with tears? Hence from her, let her die" (4.1.152-154). This statement makes it appear that Leonato is credulous because he states that Claudio would not lie since he loves Hero. Leonato, who also loves his daughter, accepts as fact what Claudio accused Hero of without questioning her. Yet, Leonato gullibly and immediately believes Claudio's accusations against his daughter. As her father Leonato should know and love Hero even better than Claudio does, yet he is also willing quickly to cast her away.

Realizing his mistake of being too quick to believe the accusations made against Hero, Leonato begins to question who is telling the truth: "If they speak but truth of her, / These hands shall tear her; if they wrong her honor, / The proudest of them shall well hear of it" (4.1.190-192). Leonato now seems willing to uncover the façades and find out who is lying and who is telling the truth. Vaughn describes the importance of this scene:

It is dramatically necessary that Hero should be presumed dead by most of the play's characters after she swoons before the altar. Her reported death strengthens the bond between Beatrice and Benedick, motivates repentance and atonement in Claudio, and sets the stage for one of the

more joyous denouements in Shakespeare. The “resurrection” of a heroine presumed dead provides a powerfully dramatic moment. (112)

All of the unfortunate situations that have occurred within Much Ado about Nothing are kept from becoming full-blown tragedies by the comedy that is interwoven throughout these events. Comic elements combine with the tragic motifs throughout the entire play. The constant jabs Beatrice and Benedick say to each other display verbal comedy. Another comic scene includes plotting to get Beatrice and Benedick together. It is humorous to observe how they each professes their hatred for the other and how they vow to remain single throughout life, yet eventually each marries the one they allege to despise. Additionally, the scenes with Dogberry and his companions, to be discussed later, add to the lightheartedness of the play.

The opening scene allows the audience to be aware of the manner in which Beatrice and Benedick humiliate one another with their words. While these words could be detrimental, Shakespeare combines them with enough comedy so the audience never feels completely threatened by the couple. Rather than focusing on the tragic element which could come from the slandering and humiliating by Beatrice and Benedick, the audience is aware of the lightheartedness between these two characters. Once again, tragic and comic cannot be separated.

The other characters do not believe the vows Beatrice and Benedick have made to never marry, and the audience finds humor in these specious pledges. When Leonato expresses his desire that Beatrice be “one day fitted with a husband,” Beatrice’s response is curt: “Not till God make men of some other mettle than earth . . . No uncle, I’ll none” (2.1.57-63). Benedick also swears off the idea of ever being married: “I will do myself

the right to trust none; . . . I will live a bachelor” (1.1.242-246). Not only do Beatrice and Benedick promise to remain unmarried, but Benedick declares he will never marry Beatrice: “I would not marry her” (2.1.250-251). Making sure it is clear he does not want to associate with Beatrice, Benedick states, “I will go on the slightest errand now . . . rather than hold three words’ conference with this harpy” (2.1.264-271). Vaughn explains how this scene is consistent with what is known about comedy: “It is the nature of comedy, of course, that such vehement protestations of disaffection and such vows of celibacy lead in only one direction—the eventual coupling of the two protestors. The more they resist him, the more inevitable is Cupid’s victory” (107). The audience laughs at Beatrice’s and Benedick’s outward display of detestation with the underlying hope that these two will admit their love despite their façades.

Another comic scene between Benedick and Beatrice is their finally admitting their love to one another. Benedick asks Beatrice: “And I pray thee now tell me, for which of my bad parts didst thou first fall in love with me?” (5.2.59-61). After Beatrice’s catty reply; “For them all together, which maintain’d so politic a state of evil that they will not admit any good part to intermingle with them,” she in turn asks Benedick; “But for which of my good parts did you first suffer love for me?” (5.2.62-65). It is comic how these two simply will not let the other have the last word. After Beatrice and Benedick have spent so long denying their true feelings, Claudio and Hero announce they have papers written in Beatrice and Benedick’s own hands expressing their affection to one another. Still putting on a façade, Beatrice states, “A miracle! here’s our own hands against our hearts” (5.4.91-92).

Finally, Beatrice and Benedick, not able to hide their true feelings any longer, reluctantly confess their love to each other. Benedick states: “Come, I will have thee, but by this light, I take thee for pity” (5.4.92-93). Not to be outdone, Beatrice replies: “I would not deny you, but by this good day, I yield upon great persuasion, and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption” (5.4.94-97). Even after proof is given of their love, Beatrice and Benedick have a difficult time admitting they love one another. The reasons they give for admitting their love are humorous, as Charney states: “Despite the fact that they love each other ‘no more than reason’ (5.4.74), they will marry—Benedick ‘for pity’ (93) and Beatrice ‘to save your life’ (95-96)” (Charney 62). As much as Beatrice and Benedick attempt to deny their love, their true affection is displayed when Benedick tells Beatrice, “Come, bid me do any thing for thee” and her response is, “Kill Claudio” (4.1.288-289). Beatrice is asking Benedick to deny his friendship for her love. Vaughn describes these scenes:

The way Shakespeare brings this [Beatrice and Benedick putting aside their customary masquerade of mutual disdain] about is a testimony to his particular genius, for the Beatrice-Benedick confession of love is made to grow directly out of the quasi-tragic renunciation and pretended death of Hero after the wedding scene. Thus, the love between Beatrice and Benedick, born in scenes of witty raillery and comic trickery, is brought to full maturity in the play’s darkest moment, through Beatrice’s great need to see her slandered cousin avenged. (107-108)

Thus Vaughn supports Shakespeare’s use of tragic motifs to support the comedy within Much Ado about Nothing. The tragic aspect of Hero’s accusation has been combined

with the comic occurrence of bringing Beatrice and Benedick together as well as leading into the actual marriage of Hero and Claudio. Had the false accusations made against Hero not have occurred, these two couples may have never admitted their true feelings of love and each would have remained single. In Renaissance England remaining single would have been viewed as tragic for the woman. It was Beatrice's idea that Benedick take tragic revenge on Claudio for the wrong he has done and the shame he has caused Hero and her family. Benedick originally is not willing to take this revenge and kill Claudio, but he quickly changes his mind when Beatrice tells him, "I am gone, through I am here; there is no love in you" (4.1.293-294). Beatrice finally convinces Benedick to get revenge on Claudio, as Benedick states: "Enough, I am engag'd, I will challenge him By this hand, Claudio shall render me a dear account" (4.1.331-333). The planned tragic revenge of killing Claudio does not happen because Dogberry enters the scene and reveals the truth of the false accusations made against Hero. Dogberry comically recounts the events of the evening in question, again showing how Shakespeare intermingles comic aspects with a tragic situation.

The other characters and the audience see through the façades of Beatrice and Benedick and know they really love each other. The scheme to bring them together is successful. A tragic outcome is avoided, as these two openly express their love for one another. A. P. Rossiter explains how this deception works on Beatrice and Benedick: "Because the mind of each runs on the other, they can both be simply gulled by hearsay" (51).

Comedy is shown in the scenes with Dogberry, Verges, and the two watchmen. These men continually blunder and use words incorrectly. Dogberry's blunders are

indeed humorous. Dogberry constantly mistakes one word for another, often words that are opposite in meaning such as “dissembly” for “assembly,” “redemption” for “damnation,” “suspect” for “respect,” and “piety” for “impiety.” It adds to the comedy when Dogberry seems completely unaware of his blunders and of how ridiculous it is that he wants to be remembered as an ass. As Charney notes: “The mere benevolent presence of Dogberry, Verges, and the Watch undercuts the comic villainy of *Much Ado* and renders it harmless” (65).

After being referred to as an ass, Dogberry continually asks to “be written down as an ass,” as if to be called an ass is a good thing. “O that he were here to write me down as ass! But, masters, remember that I am an ass; thought it be not written down, yet forget not that I am an ass. . . . O that I had been writ down as ass!” (4.2.75-87). Charney comments on how Dogberry adds to the comedy of *Much Ado about Nothing*: “Dogberry is always earnest and sincere and never overtly comic, which is the secret of his success” (64). Vaughn confirms Dogberry’s successful comic additions to the play: “Dogberry is surely one of Shakespeare’s finest comic creations . . . he [Dogberry] is at once endearing and exasperating as he bumbles through his constabulary duties, leaving a trail of hilarious malapropisms and absurd pronouncements in his wake” (108-109).

The audience also laughs at Dogberry when he replies to Don Pedro’s inquiry as to the offence Conrade and Borachio have committed. Dogberry’s reply is confused and confusingly redundant: “Marry, sir, they have committed false report; moreover they have spoken untruths; secondarily, they are slanders; sixt and lastly, they have belied a lady; thirdly, they have verified unjust things; and to conclude, they are lying knaves”

(5.1.215-219). Charney describes how Shakespeare used Dogberry and his associates to add humor to Much Ado about Nothing:

Most obviously, the villainy in *Much Ado* is set in a comic context of the bumbling watch, incomparably played by Dogberry, Verges, and their officers. As Borachio confesses to Don Pedro, 'What your wisdoms could not discover, these shallow fools have brought to light' (5.1.231-233).

Shakespeare takes great delight in the spoonerisms of Dogberry, who is a lower-class counterpart to the educated and allusive wit of Beatrice and Benedick. (64).

The comedy of this scene shows the way Shakespeare combines the tragic and comic elements. Dogberry and his companions are to watch that no wrong is committed, yet they overlook all evil, doing so humorously.

Despite the misunderstanding, miscommunication, misleading, and mistrust, these potentially tragic occurrences have led to a joyous conclusion in Much Ado about Nothing. Shakespeare ends this play with not only Hero and Claudio's wedding, but also Beatrice and Benedick's nuptials. As Vaughn states:

The play depends more than any other Shakespeare comedy upon the transmitting of misinformation. Moreover, while the audience is always fully aware that the information is false, the characters never are. There is no omniscient character. . . to share knowledge and awareness with the spectator. The play is a fine example of the skillful employment of dramatic irony; the audience is always superior to the characters in its knowledge of the truth. (110)

The audience is aware of all the misinformation that causes the tragic elements throughout Much Ado about Nothing. The dramatic irony is that the characters are never aware of what has caused all these problems.

By the conclusion of Act Five, all the façades have been removed, and, just as the title indicates, all the “tragic” situations have amounted to nothing. Vaughn makes this point in his book Shakespeare’s Comedies: “The title of Much Ado about Nothing suggests that whatever complications and dire events of plot we are asked to suffer through will prove in the end to have been of no consequence, and that is indeed the case with this delightful comedy” (102).

The humiliation between Beatrice and Benedick was only another façade to hide their true feelings of love. The schemes provided tragic occurrences that ultimately led to two marriages. The deceptions provided the means to bring lovers together, and the lies have been brought to nothing. When the truth was made known, there was no dishonor brought to the family name and no actual death to mourn. Shakespeare has once again displayed how peace and happiness can result from dishonor, disgrace, and deceptiveness.

Unreciprocated Love

Many of the characters in William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night are so deeply in love that adverse reactions occur from these strong emotional ties. While love for the right person or object is a powerful, positive emotion, several characters find themselves in love with an obsession or someone who cannot, or will not, return these same emotions and are therefore left pining away in their own misery. These obsessions cause tragic situations throughout this comedy. Orsino, Olivia, Viola/Cesario, Malvolio, Sir Andrew, Sir Toby, Maria, and Antonio all express a deep love for someone or something that results in distress and is potentially tragic either for themselves or for those around them. Shakespeare intermingles the tragic and comic motifs within Twelfth Night and concludes with a happy ending, in that the newly founded love becomes mutual for the ones it involves.

The opening scene displays a situation that could be viewed as tragic for Orsino. Orsino is suffering from intense longing for a love that is not reciprocated:

O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first,
 Methought she purg'd the air of pestilence!
 That instant was I turn'd into a hart,
 And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
 E'er since pursue me. (1.1.18-22)

Knowing Olivia will not return his affections because of the strong emotional bond she has for her deceased brother, Orsino feels sorry for himself and turns to music to fill the void of this unrequited love. Orsino's first words, "If music be the food of love, play on, / Give me the excess of it; that surfeiting, / The appetite may sicken, and so die," indicate

he has turned to music to ease the disappointment of Olivia's not returning his love (1.1.1-3). Believing the music is therapeutic to his lovesick soul, Orsino claims "That old and antique song we heard last night; / Methought it did relieve my passion much" (2.4.3-4). Several times Orsino asks to hear music and songs hoping to soothe his heartache: "O fellow, come, the song we had last night" and "Ay, prithee sing" (2.4.42, 50). John Dover Wilson elucidates the reason Orsino has turned to music: "He does not value music for itself but as the temporary food for his love" (170). Duke Orsino uses music to soothe the tragic emotions he experiences from Olivia's not returning his love. Shakespeare's audience would have noticed this as being overblown and therefore comic. Wilson's statement supports the opinion of many other critics as well. Maurice Charney notes: "Almost all critics have pointed out that the Duke Orsino is in love with love, which makes the opening scene of the play comic because it sounds like a parody of amorous discourse. The Duke is in love not so much with love itself but with himself in love and the kinds of lyrical, musical, and melancholy speeches that lovers are supposed to make" (79). Comic irony is displayed within this opening scene. Charney describes the audience's view of the opening scene as comic; however, having unrequited feelings of love is tragic in the eyes of Duke Orsino.

The audience, as well as the other characters, is aware of Orsino's self-indulgence and of how this negatively affects the Duke. The clown, Feste, reminds Duke Orsino that others can see through his changes in mood and his self-indulgence: "Now the melancholy god protect thee, and the tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffata, for thy mind is very opal" (2.4.73-75). Jack A. Vaughn supports Feste's statement:

“Orsino’s love for the unapproachable Olivia is self-indulgent and excessive; he is in love with love. He himself admits that his passion is a kind of ‘fancy’ . . . ” (131).

Wilson describes how Orsino’s fascination with being in love negatively affects him throughout Twelfth Night:

Orsino is the sentimentalist in love with Love. He has steeped himself, we may imagine, in Petrarch; he prefers worshipping at a distance, and wooing by proxy; he likes to stab himself with the thought of the cruelty of his adored. It is not Olivia’s person he desires—he readily makes shift with Viola at the end, when Olivia proves to be the bride of another. It is the dream of her that fills him with melancholy satisfaction. (169)

This statement makes the audience wonder if Orsino has simply chosen someone to love whom he knows will not return his love because doing so allows him to continue in his melancholy mood.

Olivia faces a tragic situation because she is in love with individuals who cannot return love to her. Olivia uses the excuse of the love she has for her deceased brother as the reason she cannot love another man. Within the first scene of Act One, the audience is made aware of what appears to be Olivia’s deep love for the brother she has lost; the audience learns of this love through the news Valentine brings to his lord, Orsino:

The element itself, till seven years’ heat,
Shall not behold her face at ample view;
But like a cloistress she will veiled walk, . . .
A brother’s dead love, which she would keep fresh
And lasting in her sad remembrance. (1.1.25-31)

With this report about Olivia, it is obvious to all that the death of her brother was tragic to her. Although Olivia states, "I know his soul is in heaven," she believes it is appropriate to mourn his death (1.5.69). It takes the fool to tell Olivia the truth about her mourning. Feste, the clown, attempts to show Olivia how preposterous her vow is: "The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul, being in heaven" (1.5.70-71). Olivia believes she is showing her love for her brother through her vow to mourn his death for seven years, yet her brother is not able to return love to her, and her mourning does not benefit him.

Olivia claims she cannot love Duke Orsino because of this vow. As the audience is eventually aware, Olivia's mourning is merely an outward show of her love for one who cannot love her in return. It appears she is in love with the fascination of mourning and perhaps the attention she receives from it. As Charney indicates, the vow to mourn may simply be Olivia's way of showing self-love: "Love is the enemy of self-love, and Olivia is shaken out of her sterile preoccupation with herself by falling so swiftly in love with Viola / Cesario" (80). Just as Charney stated, Olivia eventually forsakes her promise and falls in love with Cesario, who also cannot love her.

When Olivia abandons this vow and begins to love someone else, she faces another potentially tragic heartbreak. John Russell Brown explains the inner turmoil Olivia is fighting with her vow to mourn and a newfound love she desires to express: "Olivia has to appear disinterested, but she cannot maintain the part and at last declares her passion for Cesario" (169). Olivia immediately falls in love with Viola, disguised as Cesario, coming to woo Olivia for Duke Orsino. Olivia has fallen in love with his page, all the while claiming she cannot love Orsino because of the vow she made to mourn for

seven years. Realizing Olivia is falling in love with her, Viola is unable to love her in return, because she is disguised as a young man. Viola realizes the potentially tragic impact this love has for both Olivia and herself: “Poor lady, she were better love a dream. / Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness / Wherein the pregnant enemy does much”

(2.2.26-28). Wilson indicates that Olivia seems content in her grieving:

Olivia is as fond of grief as of her brother, [. . .] in her extravagant vow of seven years’ seclusion, and her abjuring ‘the company and sight of men’. . . . Such vows, with which men bind themselves in their self-conceit, and in defiance of nature, cannot last, and hers endures no longer than theirs. No sooner does a young man (as she takes Viola to be) appear before her than she falls head over ears in love, and it is with delicate irony that Shakespeare makes her plight her troth with Viola’s twin in the very chantry that she had erected to her brother’s memory. (171-172)

This statement indicates Olivia is content to grieve as long as it is to her benefit.

However, when she foresees a possible love interest, she puts her grieving aside to pursue the one she believes she can love. As Norrie Epstein points out: “Olivia’s sorrow doesn’t stop her from becoming quickly infatuated with Cesario, nor can Viola’s disguise prevent her from loving the Duke. It is fitting that Olivia should initially fall for a woman—albeit a disguised one—since she is capable only of loving an image of herself” (136).

Orsino and Olivia have no desire to associate with the outside world and have locked themselves up in their sorrows and remain in their homes and in their misery. Orsino’s love brings grief, as he does not receive love in return, and Olivia’s grief brings love, as she falls for Cesario during her grieving. Epstein notices another similarity

between Orsino and Olivia: “Orsino and Olivia isolate themselves by indulging in extremes of emotion: he is fixated on love; she, on sorrow” (136). As indicated, Orsino’s fixation on love brings with it sadness and heartache. Additionally, Vaughn notes a likeness with these two: “Both Orsino and Olivia, then, are victims of their own fancy, rather than true lovers. It is not surprising, therefore, that both are able, in the final scene, swiftly to switch their affections to more fitting objects” (132). Epstein explains how the emotions Orsino and Olivia have are shared by Viola, yet Viola deals with them differently: “For Orsino, love is grief; for Olivia, grief is love. Viola, however, despite her overwhelming love for Orsino and her grief over Sebastian, responds to life’s vicissitudes with resiliency and courage” (136). Viola seems to be mature in handling her emotions.

Viola becomes interested in a love that could have tragic effects as well. Viola is also falling in love, but not with Olivia; Viola is in love with Orsino: “And I (poor monster) fond as much on him”(2.2.34). The love Viola has for Orsino has potential tragedy because Orsino believes Viola to be a young man. Viola’s love for Orsino completes the love triangle; Orsino loves Olivia, Olivia loves Viola, and Viola loves Orsino. Initially, the love expressed with each of these “couples” cannot, or will not, be returned by the one each loves.

The tragic element for Viola is that Orsino believes she is Cesario, his male page. Because she has been disguised as a male, she cannot openly express her true feelings of love for Orsino. Viola realizes the negative aspects of this disguise:

What will become of this? As I am man,

My state is desperate for my master’s love; . . .

As I am woman (now alas the day!), . . .

O time, thou must untangle this, not I,

It is too hard a knot for me t' untie. (2.2.36-41)

Complicating matters, and adding to the tragic motifs, Cesario must deliver love messages to Olivia from the man she loves. Vaughn explains how Viola's love is different from the love the other characters express: "Viola is the comedy's voice of true love, functioning as a corrective for the misdirected affections of both Orsino and Olivia. Her feeling for Orsino is genuine, not mere fancy, and her inability to express it accounts for much of the melancholy of the comedy" (132). The audience sympathizes with the tragic inner turmoil Viola feels when faced with delivering messages of love from the one she loves to another woman. All the while Viola knows that she cannot express her true feelings to the man she genuinely loves.

Viola also loves her brother, Sebastian, whom she believes was drowned after their shipwreck and therefore cannot return her love. She envisions Sebastian is in heaven: "My brother he is in Elysium" (1.2.4). Once rescued from the sea, Viola continues with her life, yet she also thinks about and continues to love her brother. Viola does not have much hope of ever seeing him again: "So went he suited to his watery tomb" (5.1.234). Viola's love for Sebastian is real, yet she does not allow this unrequited love to overtake and control her life, as Orsino and Olivia have allowed their unreciprocated love to do.

Malvolio, because of his allusions that Olivia loves him, faces tragic occurrences because of the love he has expressed. Malvolio loves Olivia, but more earnestly he loves the idea of becoming noble. Both of these loves are out of this servant's reach and are

therefore just a fantasy for him. Malvolio also suffers from self-love, as he is shown continually praising himself.

Malvolio fantasizes about Olivia's love for him: "'Tis but fortune, all is fortune. Maria once told me she [Olivia] did affect me, and I have heard herself come thus near, that should she fancy, it should be one of my complexion. Besides, she uses me with a more exalted respect than any one else that follows her" (2.5.23-27). Of course this is all part of Malvolio's imagination. Olivia claims she cannot return Malvolio's love as she is mourning her brother's death, and Malvolio is her servant; a lady of higher birth would not succumb to a man of lower birth. Ironically, Olivia drops this pretense and falls in love with Cesario, Duke Orsino's servant. Malvolio and Cesario are quite different, and it is this difference that allows Olivia to love Cesario and keeps her from loving Malvolio. Cesario is of relatively high-birth, just posing as a servant, while his/her gentility shines through the servant's disguise. Cesario addresses Olivia eloquently: "Most radiant, exquisite, and unmatchable beauty" (1.5.170-171). Malvolio, on the other hand, is truly a servant and is ridiculous and base in his actions. Convinced Olivia has a love interest in him, Malvolio approaches her smiling, answering her call with; "Sweet lady, ho, ho" (3.4.17). Wilson describes how important social standing was at the time Twelfth Night was written: "Differences of rank meant so much to the men of that time—so incalculably much more than they do to us—that the dreams of Malvolio would have seemed to them preposterous to a degree which we are unable to appreciate" (173). With this statement, it appears to the audience that Malvolio is not so much in love with Olivia, but in love with moving up on the social ladder, and she is a means to that end.

As Malvolio dreams of becoming Olivia's husband, he envisions all the power and prestige associated with this higher rank. Already putting himself in that station, he refers to himself as "Count Malvolio" and imagines "sitting in my state" (2.5.35, 45). He can think on nothing else but "Calling my officers about me, in my branc'd velvet gown" (2.5.47-48). In Shakespeare's Comedies, Ralph Berry explains the danger of Malvolio's dream: "Malvolio, for all his undoubted intelligence and ability, has a dangerous fantasy. His error is a conceited and subjective interpretation of data, which confirms instead of challenging his fantasy" (201). Maria, Sir Toby, and Sir Andrew, servant and parasites to Olivia, consort together to deceive Malvolio. They trick Malvolio with a letter he believes is written by Olivia to him, and they lock him in a dark room, making him believe he has gone mad. These instances lead Epstein to believe that "Malvolio is a potentially tragic figure trapped in a comic world" (138). Comic irony is displayed with these scenes, as the audience sees humor in situations that are tragic for Malvolio.

It is clear to the other characters that Malvolio is tragically suffering from thinking too highly of himself. Olivia tells Malvolio: "O, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with a distemper'd appetite" (1.5.90-91). According to Wilson, Olivia's statement not only describes Malvolio, but also Olivia and Orsino: "And when Olivia tells Malvolio that he is 'sick of self-love', she puts her finger on one of the roots of her own sickness and of Orsino's. They are all three egoists, though they wear their egoism with a difference" (173). Olivia's ego will not allow her to fall in love with Orsino, while Orsino's ego will not allow him to be turned down by Olivia. Malvolio's ego raises his hopes and desires that one day he will become noble.

Sir Andrew has two loves that could be tragic for him. Sir Andrew is in love with Olivia and preoccupied with the excess of drinking and reveling. Again, Olivia cannot return his love for the two reasons previously stated; she is playing at being in mourning, and she would not lower her status to marry him. Feeling sorry for himself that Olivia will not return his love interest, Sir Andrew states: “Your niece will not be seen, or if she be, it’s four to one she’ll none of me” (1.3.106-107). Sir Andrew is obviously upset that Olivia has not paid much attention to him: “Marry, I saw your niece do more favors to the Count’s servingman than ever she bestow’d upon me” (3.2.5-7). At this point, having unrequited love for Olivia could become tragic for Sir Andrew, as he challenges Cesario to a fight. Reassuring Sir Andrew that winning a fight against Cesario will win him Olivia’s heart, Sir Toby states: “. . . and assure thyself, there is no love-broker in the world can more prevail in man’s commendation with woman than report of valor” (3.2.36-38). This gives Sir Andrew false confidence that he is doing what he needs to do in order to win Olivia’s heart.

Sir Andrew is in love with drinking and reveling. This behavior is not viewed fondly by Olivia, the woman he is trying to win. Sir Andrew is described as “a foolish knight,” and “a very fool and a prodigal” (1.3.15-16, 24). Maria tells Olivia, “he’s drunk nightly in your company” (1.3.36-37). When asked if his life consists of the four elements, Sir Andrew replies, “Faith, so they say, but I think it rather consists of eating and drinking” (2.11-12). Making excuses for his excessive drinking, Sir Andrew states, “‘Twere as good a deed as to drink when a man’s a-hungry” (2.3.126-127). Sir Andrew is viewed as a follower of Sir Toby, which could prove tragic as Sir Toby constantly

looks for any occasion to drink and stay up late, of which his niece, Olivia, does not approve.

Sir Toby seems to live by the opinion that it is always too early to go to bed at night and never too early to get drunk in the morning. Because Sir Toby seems to think only on these things, his time living at Olivia's house may soon come to a tragic halt. Not seeing anything wrong with his excess of drinking, Sir Toby says, "I'll drink to her [Olivia] as long as there is a passage in my throat, and drink in Illyria" (1.3.38-40). Sir Toby encourages Maria to support his excess of drinking: "let us therefore eat and drink. Marian, I say, a stoup of wine!" (2.3.13-14). Many times Sir Toby asks for "A stope of wine, Maria!" (2.3.120). Intentionally staying up late drinking and merrymaking, Sir Toby uses his late-night carousing as an excuse to continue in this behavior: "Come, come, I'll go burn some sack, 'tis too late to go to bed now" (2.3.190-191).

Sir Toby's attitude causes problems for him, as his niece, Olivia, does not approve of his continual drinking. Maria warns Sir Toby to control his drinking: "By my troth, Sir Toby, you must come in earlier a' nights. Your cousin, my lady, takes great exceptions to your ill hours" (1.3.4-6). Maria warns Sir Toby that his habits must change: "Ay, but you must confine yourself within the modest limits of order" (1.3.8-9). Brown explains the potential tragedy Sir Toby's attitude may cause:

In Twelfth Night, as in Shakespeare's other comedies, 'barbarous' disorder may always threaten the ordered peace of society. Maria tells Sir Toby, "That quaffing and drinking will undo you. I heard my lady talk of it yesterday; and of a foolish knight that you brought in one night here to

be her wooer” (1.3.14-17). So Sir Toby’s indulgent roistering is liable to disturb the ‘peace’ of Olivia’s household. (173)

Malvolio also warns Sir Toby that Olivia will not continue to tolerate his drinking:

Sir Toby, I must be round with you. My lady bade me tell you, that she harbors you as her kinsman, she’s nothing allied to your disorders. If you can separate yourself and your misdemeanors, you are welcome to the house; if not, and it would please you to take leave of her, she is very willing to bid you farewell. (2.3.95-101)

The other characters realize the danger Sir Toby faces if he continues in these same habits. However, Sir Toby lives for the “here and now” and does not seem too bothered by the threats he receives about being thrown out of his niece’s house.

Maria takes great delight in causing problems for Malvolio. While Maria’s actions are not tragic to her, they could prove tragic for Malvolio. Maria seizes the opportunity to take advantage of Malvolio’s self love. She describes him as “the best persuaded of himself, so cramm’d (as he thinks) with excellencies, that it is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him; and on that vice in him will my revenge find notable cause to work” (2.3.150-153). Harold C. Goddard describes why Maria has singled out Malvolio: “Her vitality and intelligence (to call it that) have, in her servile position, made her ambitious and envious, especially so of the steward whose merits her mistress prizes so highly. It is important to realize that it is not just because he is Malvolio that she hates him. She would have resented anyone in his place” (298). Because of these negative feelings toward Malvolio, Maria plots against him.

Maria's plan is to cause discord between Malvolio and Olivia: "Observe him, for the love of mockery; for I know this letter [written by Maria but purporting to be by Olivia] will make a contemplative idiot of him" (2.5.18-20). Maria takes pride in convincing Malvolio that Olivia is in love with him: "Most villainously . . . I have dogg'd him like his murderer. He does obey every point of the letter that I dropp'd to betray him" (3.2.75-78). Maria enjoys the anguish she has caused Malvolio when he is placed in a dark room and told he is mad: "If you desire the spleen, and will laugh yourselves into stitches, follow me. Yond gull Malvolio is turn'd heathen, a very renegado" (3.2.68-70). Maria encourages Sir Toby and Fabian, a servant to Olivia, to laugh at the expense of Malvolio's antics.

Antonio has friendly affections for Sebastian; these affections lead to potential tragedy because Sebastian is only interested in Antonio as a friend, and, in following after Sebastian, Antonio must face his enemy, Orsino. Antonio desires to travel with Sebastian, "Will you stay no longer? nor will you not that I go with you?" (2.1.1-2). Willing to risk his life in order to spend more time with Sebastian, Antonio decides to follow Sebastian into Duke Orsino's court:

The gentleness of all the gods go with thee!
I have many enemies in Orsino's court,
Else would I very shortly see thee there.
But come what may, I do adore thee so
That danger shall seem sport, and I will go. (2.1.44-48)

Antonio reinforces the love he feels for Sebastian:

I could not stay behind you. My desire

(More sharp than filed steel) did spur me forth,
 And not all love to see you (though so much
 As might have drawn one to a longer voyage). (3.3.4-7)

Another potential tragedy for Antonio is when he mistakes Viola for Sebastian and has to answer to Duke Orsino concerning his encounter with Viola. Duke Orsino calls Antonio a “Notable pirate” and “salt-water thief” (5.1.69). Reinforcing his anger with Antonio, Orsino asks: “What foolish boldness brought thee to their mercies / Whom thou in terms so bloody and so dear / Hast made thine enemies?” (5.1.70-72). Antonio explains:

His life I gave him, and did thereto add
 My love, without retention or restraint,
 All his in dedication. For his sake
 Did I expose myself (pure of his love). (5.1.80-83)

With these words Antonio once again expresses his love for Sebastian.

Each of the aforementioned characters in Twelfth Night express love that has potential tragedy for him or her. However, along with the potential tragedy, there is also comedy. Charney describes how the tragic and comic motifs are intertwined in this comedy: “It seems important to Shakespeare to establish the fact that there are some noncomic characters [Jaques, Shylock, Caliban, and Malvolio] who don’t share in the prevailing optimistic mood of the play. This sense of a noncomic Other helps to define comic values by contrast” (76). While the noncomic characters are important to the development of Twelfth Night, the tragic issues they face are eventually avoided and love prevails as one of the main subjects of this play. Vaughn describes the many types of

love displayed throughout this comedy: “The subject of the play is love—not only romantic love (Viola-Orsino-Olivia) but also sibling love (Viola-Sebastian), love of friend (Sebastian-Antonio), carnal love (Sir Toby-Maria), mercenary love (Sir Andrew-Olivia), and self-love (Malvolio)” (131). Adding to Vaughn’s love themes, there is also sibling love between Olivia and her deceased brother and a would be mercenary love of Malvolio for Olivia. Additionally there is another type of love which Vaughn did not mention, the love of excesses. Sir Andrew and Sir Toby are in love with the excess of drinking and merrymaking. Maria appears to be in love with the excess of causing discord, as she thrives on the pranks she initiates toward Malvolio. Malvolio is the Other, the noncomic threat to the world of Maria and Sir Toby.

The comedy is interwoven throughout the various tragic issues presented. Epstein describes how Shakespeare has intermingled the comic and tragic motifs: “Twelfth Night is about love and grief, their pains and their pleasures, and how the two emotions are often indistinguishable” (135). The issues of love, and the grief and pain it causes when love is not reciprocated, have been explored in the play. Because Twelfth Night is a comedy, there is comic irony and moments of pleasure throughout, and especially during the concluding scene of the last act.

There is comic irony with the love triangle among Orsino, Olivia, and Viola. This unrequited love is humorous to the audience because the audience is aware of the reasons why each of these “couples” cannot be together, yet these individuals cannot understand why the relationship they desire cannot become a reality. The audience finds humor in Orsino’s outrageous quest for love and his unwillingness to accept Olivia’s denial: “My love can give no place, bide no denay [sic.]” (2.4.125). When Viola questions Orsino

what he will do if Olivia cannot love him, Orsino's responds matter-of-factly, "[I] cannot be so answer'd" (2.4.88). Olivia's quest for Cesario is humorous to the audience, as the audience is aware of that which Olivia is not: Olivia has fallen in love with another woman, who is only disguised as a man. It is comic to realize Olivia does not desire to be courted by a man: "They say, she hath abjur'd the [company] / And [sight] of men" (1.2.40-41). As the audience is aware, Olivia's desire has come true. Cesario is in fact, Viola, a woman, so Olivia has kept her vow of not admitting a man into her court to woo her. Viola's love for Orsino cannot be returned, as she cannot let him know she is really a woman: "Yet a barful strife! / Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife" (1.4.41-42). Adding to the humor, Viola hints to Orsino that she is in love with someone "by your favor," "of your complexion," and "about your years" in Act Two, scene four (2.4.25, 26, 28).

It is humorous to see the excesses of Sir Toby's and Sir Andrew's drinking and merrymaking and of Maria's practical jokes. While these excesses could cause potential tragedy for them, the audience views Maria's antics as adding to the comedy of Twelfth Night. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew find any occasion to drink and do not seem concerned that their drinking may cause them to be thrown out of Olivia's house. When cautioned about their foolish behavior, Sir Toby replies: "With drinking healths to my niece He's a coward and a coystroll that will not drink to my niece" (1.3.38-41). Sir Toby makes a joke when Malvolio tells him Olivia is "very willing to bid you farewell" (2.3.100-101). Sir Toby sings, "Farewell, dear heart, since I must needs be gone" (2.3.102-103). Sir Toby is not at all concerned about having to leave Olivia's house; it is more important to him that he continues in his drinking and merrymaking.

Maria has completely convinced Malvolio the letter she has written is from Olivia, adding comedy to a tragic situation for him. Being chastised and potentially cut off by Olivia, and being punished by Maria, Sir Toby, and Feste the clown brings the near tragic result of being confined as a madman. Certain the letter is “my lady’s hand,” Malvolio is gulled and immediately begins envisioning the benefits of his new life (2.5.86). It is humorous to listen as Malvolio describes all the positive changes he believes are coming his way now that he has “greatness thrust upon ’em” (2.5.146). Just as Maria states, each member of the audience “will laugh [them]selves into stitches” when Malvolio enters Olivia’s court dressed in yellow stockings and cross garters (3.2.68-69). These actions lead Olivia to believe Malvolio is mad. Because there is no sane way to explain Malvolio’s actions, he is locked in a dark room and further tormented. The clown, disguised as Sir Topas, plays off Maria’s prank, eventually making Malvolio believe he is indeed mad. Malvolio claims, “Fool, there was never man so notoriously abus’d; I am as well in my wits, fool, as thou art” (4.2.87-88).

It is humorous when Sebastian enters Illyria and is mistaken for Cesario. Sebastian cannot understand why everyone seems to know him and is even more amazed at Olivia’s reaction, as she wants to marry him. Sebastian questions if he is mad, then surmises: “Or else the lady’s mad” (4.3.16). After some thought, Sebastian concludes that Olivia could not rule her house, command her servants, and take care of her business if she is indeed mad. Therefore, he accepts her marriage proposal. Sebastian’s “mad” perplexity ironically mirrors the Malvolio situation, adding further comic parody.

Comedy is shown when Sir Andrew and Malvolio are interested in pursuing Olivia as a wife. Malvolio believes Olivia is interested in him, and no matter what she

does he perceives her actions as her way of letting him know she is in love with him. Everyone else knows the truth of the matter: that Maria was the one who wrote the letter, and Olivia is not interested in Malvolio in the least.

Twelfth Night ends with one joyous reunion: Sebastian and Viola; and three happy unions: Olivia and Sebastian, Orsino and Viola, and Maria and Sir Toby. Sebastian is overjoyed at knowing his twin sister is alive: "I should my tears let fall upon your cheek, / And say, 'Thrice welcome, drowned Viola!'" (5.1.240-241). Viola tells Sebastian, "If nothing lets to make us happy both" (5.1.249). Sebastian agrees to marry Olivia: "I'll follow this good man [Priest], and go with you, / And having sworn truth, ever will be true" (4.3.32-33). Realizing Viola is a woman, Orsino says: "Here is my hand—you shall from this time be / Your master's mistress" (5.1.325-326). Fabian brings the word that Maria and Sir Toby have married: "Maria writ / The letter at Sir Toby's great importance, / In recompense whereof he hath married her" (5.1.362-364). As Brown describes, the joyous reunion and unions are enough to bring joy to the ending of this comedy: "There is no communal feast, music, or dance to close this play—that must wait until 'golden time convents' (1.391); but as the lovers leave the stage together we know that their generosity and desire for harmony can, after the realization of their own follies and disorders, reach to one who has 'had but justice', and that but a kind of wild justice" (182). The characters are aware of their almost tragic former loves, and motivations behind these loves, and now appear to have accepted a new love that does not seem to be as tragic for them.

Even though the conclusion of Twelfth Night is a joyous one, Viola is the only one who was in love with someone who eventually returned love to her. Orsino and

Olivia have in a sense settled for the love of another. Malvolio and Sir Andrew do not end up with Olivia, and Malvolio appears to be distraught with what Olivia has allowed to happen to him: "Madam, you have done me wrong, / Notorious wrong" (5.1.327-328). He then exits with these words: "I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you" (5.1.378). Sir Andrew is overtaken with anger that Sebastian "H'as broke my head across, and has given Sir Toby a bloody coxcomb too. For the love of God, your help! I had rather than forty pound I were at home" (5.1.175-178). As Sir Toby and Sir Andrew leave together, the audience has every reason to believe they will continue in their drinking and merrymaking, and that Olivia will continue to tolerate their actions. However, the union of Sir Toby and Maria leaves the audience with the confidence that this marriage will cause each to tone down; Sir Toby with his carousing and Maria with her practical joking. Feste's final song answers the potentially sobering effect of maturation with a comic tone.

As Shakespeare brings Twelfth Night to a close, he leaves the audience with the impression that all the formerly tragic unrequited loves have been rectified and that currently the characters are in love with someone who can, and does, return that love. Additionally, the audience realizes the once potentially tragic loves, plots, disguises, and excesses have added comic situations throughout this play. Since the characters are now able to openly express love for one who shares their love, the audience believes each couple will continually share its mutual love.

Conclusion

The preceding chapters indicate the manner in which William Shakespeare intertwined comic and tragic motifs within his comedies The Comedy of Errors, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado about Nothing, and Twelfth Night. Each of these comedies begins with a potentially tragic event in the opening scene. As the plots unfold, more tragic occurrences are added, and comic situations are intermingled within these potentially tragic events.

As the potentially tragic issues are doubled in The Comedy of Errors, so are the comic portions of this early Shakespearean comedy. It is the tragic event of Egeon's death sentence that opens the play. Egeon's execution is avoided because Duke Solinus is sympathetic with the unfortunate events leading up to this point in Egeon's life and grants him one day to raise the needed money for his freedom. It is this day that leads to both the comic and tragic events in the remaining scenes.

The majority of the potentially tragic situations stem from the mistaken identities of the Antipholus and Dromio twins. The characters are unaware that mistaken identities are the cause of the tragic occurrences from which they are suffering. The audience, on the other hand, is fully aware the cause of these errors is that each twin is mistaken for his brother. Because of this dramatic irony, these errors are causing tragic situations for the characters while providing comedy for the audience.

The audience laughs at the numerous times Antipholus of Syracuse is mistaken for his twin brother, Antipholus of Ephesus, and Dromio of Syracuse is mistaken for his twin brother, Dromio of Ephesus, yet the times they are mistaken for one another are potentially tragic to both sets of twins. Not aware they are questioning the wrong person

about the gold chain, the money, and dinner at home, the twins face potentially tragic threats. The audience, on the other hand, is aware of the mistaken identities and laughs in spite of the pain each twin is experiencing. The Dromio twins are made to endure beatings from their masters. These beatings are tragic for the ones receiving them, yet the audience finds humor in this confusion, as the audience is aware mistaken identity is the cause of these beatings.

Adriana experiences a potentially tragic situation when she believes her husband has been unfaithful; all the while he is locked outside their house, as Adriana entertains another man for dinner. It is humorous when Adriana orders that her husband is bound and held in a cellar room, which is tragic to him, as he has not committed any wrong. This situation is humorous to the audience, as the audience knows Antipholus of Ephesus is innocent of any wrongdoing. In each set of twins' case, the audience's awareness of the mistaken identity mitigates the perception of potentially tragic occurrences.

Many years prior to this day in Ephesus, two families suffered from tragic separations. These tragic separations lead to comedy within this play. It is comic to watch as Antipholus of Syracuse continues to search for his mother and brother even though he has unknowingly found them. It is humorous when Antipholus of Syracuse begins to question his own identity, as the audience is aware of the pain he must feel, yet also knows that he is not literally losing his mind. Antipholus of Syracuse gets angry because he feels he has not been successful in finding his mother and brother; however, he is in the same city as his brother and furthermore has been mistaken for him time and time again.

It is comic when the characters blame all the errors on witchcraft, as they cannot explain these tragic occurrences any other way. Doing so indicates just how frightened the characters are about all the confusion in Ephesus.

The emotion of love also brings potential tragedy within this play. Antipholus of Syracuse is falling in love with Luciana, which she views as tragic, because she believes him to be her sister's husband. The audience laughs at this because they know it is mistaken identity that has again caused this error. Dromio of Syracuse is appalled at the thought of Nell's love interest in him; however, it is comic to listen as he describes Nell.

The many potential tragedies throughout The Comedy of Errors have all been explained and resolved at the end, so that what the audience remembers is not the tragic situations, but the comedy within them. After all the mistakes are understood, and the confusion in Ephesus has cleared, love triumphs over all, and the play concludes with a truly happy ending as the family members are reunited.

A Midsummer Night's Dream also begins with a tragic event. Egeus asks Duke Theseus to have his daughter, Hermia, put to death because she will not comply with her father's demand that she marry Demetrius. This is only the beginning of many situations that are potentially tragic. These tragic issues seem to be part of a nightmare, rather than a dream, yet these same issues provide comedy for the audience as the characters face the tragic occurrences.

If Hermia follows her heart, and marries Lysander, she faces the death sentence; if she does not follow her heart, and marries Demetrius, she fears a tragic life ahead of her. At this point comedy is shown as the audience listens to Lysander and Demetrius claim to be the best husband for Hermia. The tragic death sentence of Hermia leads her to flee

Athens with Lysander, camping out in the woods, where the plot unfolds and the tragic and comic motifs are intertwined.

The love triangle between Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius is further complicated with the addition of Helena. Hermia loves Lysander, Lysander loves Hermia, Demetrius loves Hermia, and Helena loves Demetrius. This love triangle causes tragic nightmares for each of these young lovers. No one seems willing to relinquish their claim on the one they love. This adds comedy for the audience as the audience listens to Hermia and Helena “compare notes” about Demetrius. The love triangle leads to jealousy between Hermia and Helena. Jealousy is tragic for them as it breaks up their long time friendship. Again, what is tragic to the characters is comic to the audience, as the audience laughs at the silly cat fighting going on between these two young girls.

The argument between Oberon and Titania leads to tragedies within the land. The argument also leads to comic situations as Titania falls in love with and continuously dotes on a mortal adorned with the head of an ass. The application of love juice to the eyes of Lysander and Demetrius also causes tragic nightmares for these men and the young women they love, Hermia and Helena. Since the young lovers are not aware this new passion is chemically induced, they suffer while the audience, knowing the cause of the sudden change in affections, laughs.

The play-within-the-play has a tragic ending, as Pyramus and Thisby quickly end their lives. However, it is this play that adds more lighthearted comedy for the audience. Bottom is so excited about the parts of the play that he can hardly contain his emotions. He adds much humor as he blunders and embellishes his lines. It is during this play when the audience is reminded not to be offended by anything, signifying all ends happily.

There are many façades used throughout Much Ado about Nothing, which attempt to hide true feelings of love. These façades are what cause the potentially tragic situations, as well as the comedy, within this play. Beatrice is the first to don a deceptive front as she publicly humiliates Benedick, the man she actually loves. Benedick, as well as the audience, initially takes offense at Beatrice's words of humiliation, yet all soon realize these words are Beatrice's way of hiding her true feelings of love. Knowing Beatrice's true emotions allows the comedy of her words and actions to shine through her façade. Beatrice and Benedick continue to humiliate one another and argue throughout the entirety of this comedy. The other characters and the audience are aware of their true emotions, making their words and actions lighthearted in tone and adding to the comedy.

Don Pedro devises a scheme, forcing Beatrice and Benedick into admitting their true love for each other. Don Pedro's plan has potential tragedy because Beatrice and Benedick, being stubborn, may never openly admit their love, which would cause Don Pedro's plan to fail. This plan adds much comedy as the other characters and the audience watch as Beatrice and Benedick each are convinced the other is secretly in love with him or her. Both Beatrice and Benedick believe they are eavesdropping on a secret conversation, yet everyone, except the two of them, knows this is all part of the plan. It takes a tragic occurrence to get Beatrice and Benedick to finally admit their love.

The tragic occurrence bringing Beatrice and Benedick together is the presumed death of Hero. Don John tragically plotted against Hero, making it appear she was unfaithful to Claudio. In attempting to make good out of the bad committed against Hero, Friar Francis deceives the characters into believing Hero is dead. Initially, this deception appears tragic; however, it is because of this "tragic" deception that the truth is

made known and Hero's faithfulness is proclaimed. As the truth of this situation is revealed, Hero's name is cleared and Benedick shows his true love for Beatrice, creating a happy ending from a tragic deception. Adding to this tragic scene is a powerfully dramatic and happy moment as Hero is "resurrected" during the final scene.

More comedy is shown with Dogberry, Verges, and the two watchmen. These men take their serious job lightheartedly and overlook potential tragedies, just so they do not have to face any opposition from those committing wrongs. Dogberry continues to mistake words for one another that are opposite in meaning; he asks to be remembered as "an ass," and he confuses the reports he provides about the tragic offence committed by Conrade and Borachio. Each of these actions adds to the comedy in this play.

All the tragic confusion and façades are eventually dissipated so that the conclusion of Much Ado about Nothing contains the joyous unions of Hero and Claudio and Beatrice and Benedick. Each of the potentially tragic situations has been resolved as the characters realize the potentially tragic events proved literally to be "much ado about nothing."

The feelings of unrequited love provide potentially tragic situations for many of the characters in Twelfth Night. These potentially tragic situations are creatively combined with the comic motifs within this play. The opening scene displays Orsino grieving over a love that is not returned. It is humorous to observe Orsino to be so overtaken by Olivia that he announces he will not accept her denial and turns to music to fill this void. This is comic to the audience, as Orsino's distress becomes overblown to the point that his actions appear foolish. Orsino is quite distraught and simply cannot

continue with a normal routine of life, knowing Olivia does not love him in return. He chooses to sit around and feel sorry for himself, listening to love songs.

The potential tragedy for Olivia is that she is dealing with the death of her brother, and has announced she will be in mourning for seven years. It is comic as the fool realizes the absurdity of mourning for one who is in heaven. Olivia wants no part of the fool's analogy. This vow seems obsessive, even to Olivia, as she quickly abandons this vow when she meets and falls in love with Cesario. Falling in love with Cesario adds comedy, as Cesario is actually a female, disguised as a male.

Viola faces a potentially tragic situation, as she has fallen in love with Orsino. This is comic because Orsino believes Viola to be Cesario, his male page. As Viola has to deal with sorting out her emotions, she also has to find a way to hide her true feelings while she delivers love messages to the one who loves her from the one she loves. It is humorous to listen as Viola hints to Orsino that she is in love with him. This love triangle between Orsino, Olivia, and Viola is potentially tragic, as it appears no one is willing to bend on whom they love, even when they realize their love is not being returned. There is comic irony within this love triangle, as the audience is aware of why two of these couples cannot be together; however, Orsino cannot understand why Olivia will not return his love, and Olivia does not know why Cesario cannot love her. This love triangle eventually has a comic (happy) ending in that each of these individuals is paired with someone who loves him or her in return.

The separation of Viola and Sebastian after their shipwreck is tragic for these twins, each believing the other drowned. As these two settle in Illyria, comedy is interwoven with this once tragic event. Sebastian is mistaken for Viola, and Viola is

mistaken for Sebastian. Sebastian faces tragic situations as he embarks in Illyria, but there are comic motifs as well. It is comic when Olivia immediately asks Sebastian to marry her. Each twin faces tragic situations, yet Viola eventually begins to realize the reason she is mistaken is that her brother is alive. This is a joyous discovery for Viola.

Malvolio faces several situations that are tragic to him yet provide comedy for the audience. While Maria beguiles Malvolio into believing Olivia is in love with him, he is so overtaken by this thought that he begins acting the part of Olivia's love interest. Malvolio interprets Olivia's potentially tragic reactions to him as Olivia's way of showing her love for him. It is also humorous to the audience when Malvolio enters dressed in yellow stockings and cross garters in attempting to win Olivia's love. Malvolio is locked in a dark room, eventually leading Malvolio to question whether or not he has gone mad. This is tragic for Malvolio, while the audience laughs at his expense.

Sir Andrew's love for Olivia is tragic, as he fights Viola for Olivia. This is humorous to the audience, because the audience is aware that Viola is not a suitable match for Olivia. However, Sir Andrew believes if he is able to win this fight, he will gain Olivia's favor. Sir Andrew's potentially tragic actions of drinking and staying up late are humorous to the audience, as he follows right along with Sir Toby in his bad and excessive habits.

Sir Toby's love of the excess of drinking has potential tragedy for him, as he is threatened with being thrown out of Olivia's home. This is comic, because Sir Toby is not at all concerned about having to leave his niece's home. He seems more concerned about the negative effects of not being able to drink and stay up late at night. It is comic

to hear Sir Toby ask for another drink, knowing his drinking may be the reason he is asked to leave the place he knows as home, but his union with Maria at the end seems to assure the audience of his place in the household.

Maria takes a risk in devising the potentially tragic plot to convince Malvolio into believing Olivia is in love with him. Maria could face detrimental consequences for this scheme, but she is willing to take that risk knowing the comedy it adds to the environment.

As each of these comedies end, the audience is left with the impression all the tragic situations have been avoided and good has overcome evil. Each play concludes with the union of marriages or reunions of family members. The characters are joyous and the audience shares in their joy.

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