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' An experience of pleasurable merry-making and social inversion (Stott) How far does this seem to be true in the play so far? In Twelfth Night, Stott's statement seems to be true in parts. The former part of the statement- ' an experience of pleasurable merry-making'- is something that I, in parts, take an exception to. Although it is obvious that Shakespeare wishes the play to be light-hearted- which is shown, for instance, when Viola quickly brushes over the (apparent) death of her brother, friends, and shipwreck that she has just braved through, in the line: ' O my poor brother! And perchance may he be [saved]'. Although this dismissal of big news could simply be interpreted as foreshadowing the return of Sebastian (her brother) later in the play, it seems dark if not discovered retrospectively, through the brevity of her musing. For C. L. Barber (whose ideas Stott is describing) this ' pleasurable merrymaking' is ' neither satirical nor political'. However, I would argue that Shakespeare is making many satirical points in the play, and that the social inversion is, undoubtedly, a political point. With a woman playing a man in order to gain power, is Shakespeare not satirising the patriarchal government of that time? And, yes, Viola seems to make this decision very quickly, in the line ' Conceal me what I am, and be my aid/ for such disguise as haply become/ the form of my intent'. The short first clause (' conceal me what I am') mirrors the ' get rich quick' idea of many Greek comedies, and is therefore a source of humour. However, is this not satirising the dominant-male power structure of the period? Alternatively, Shakespeare could simply introduce this theme so as to make people continually find humour in the idea that a woman should find a position of power, toting Shakespeare as a bit of a misogynist. I would also argue that a great satire is made on the idea

of love in the first scene, with Orsino used as a vehicle to satirise the boundaries between love and infatuation. Although, this is done whimsically, with Orsino being a carrier of much of the humour: all of his words in his long speeches seem to be about himself, and not Olivia; the 'desired' one- it seems to me that Shakespeare has a deeper political message, possibly chiding the notion of an autocratic government (echoing Britain's monarchical government at the time, as closely as Illyria echoes England). Orsino's love seems to represent the autocracy at the time; with his love for Olivia (perhaps representing the common people) really centring around his own love for himself, and it is simply an infatuation with power. This is mirrored in the text, as Olivia's name is not mentioned until line 19, and Orsino rambles on about love for her for 17 of those lines. Orsino's infatuation with power and solipsistic tendencies is also shown in line 6, with ' Enough; no more./ ' Tis not so sweet now as it was before'. This complete juxtaposition to the long, flowery sentences of before shows us our first impression of Orsino's real motives, and further alienates us from his character. The quick change of tone emphasise this, as the audience isn't expecting Orsino to be so commanding. Orsino's language is also especially bombastic, and so over the top that it cannot be taken seriously. Such complicated metaphors like ' If music be the food of love, play on; give me excess of it, that surfeiting/ The appetite may sicken and so die'. This ridiculous metaphor, filled with pomposity and pretence, is a bit rubbish, and also very graphic. Shakespeare uses this to set up Orsino as a negative character, and allows the audience to laugh at him for a jolly bout of merrymaking. The asteismus found within Curio's ' Will you go hunt my

lord... the hart', followed by Orsino's ' I was turned into a hart', humours the audience because it shows how Orsino can make something completely irrelevant to Olivia completely relevant. It also brings the conversation back to his desires, and more importantly, him. Curio's line simply serves as an injection of reality, and ruining Orsino's fantasy. For Barber (and Stott), this is where the merry-making is found, as Orsino's narcissism is emphasised by the short hiatus of it. However, it does have deeper (aforementioned) undertones, in my opinion. To conclude, although some characters in Twelfth Night may seem fairly innocent at first- just comical characters- they are, upon closer inspection, metaphors (or more aptly, fit the mould for many different metaphors) for satires upon love, power, and social hierarchy.