ENGLISH EXTENTION II

MAJOR WORK

2001

English Extension 2 – *Major Work*

"The Course of true love never did run smooth;
But either it was different in blood…
Or else misgraffèd in respect of years…
Or else it stood upon the choice of friends –"
- Lysander

"In the end the love we take
is equal to the love we make."
- John Lennon

"It is only with the Heart that one can see rightly:
What is essential is invisible to the eye."
- Antoine de Saint Exupery

"…if ever thou shalt love,
In the sweet pangs of it remember me;
For such as I am all true lovers are,
Unstaid and skittish in all motions else,
Save in the constain image of the creature
That is beloved."
- Duke Orsino

UNDER THE INFLUENCE:
PERCEPTIONS OF THE NOTIONS OF LOVE PRESENTED IN SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES:
A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, & TWELFTH NIGHT

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Human emotions and the experiences involved provide the building blocks for our reality and are a weighted factor amongst the interplay of thought and action in ones life. Love is an emotional cornerstone of this individual reality. It is a fundamental element of our existence yet its myriad complexities mean that everyone from time immemorial has wondered at the meaning of love. They have recognised that "being in love", means that we see ourselves, the one we love, and the world in which we love in a completely different light than when we are "out of love". The things we do each day will be different in the presence of love. To speak words of love and hear them echoed by one's partner is love's lovely requital yet these words will change our perspective of our world and of ourselves. Often love will guide us. Subtle love. Sometimes it may push us. Impatient love. Occasionally it will pick us up and carry us wherever we wish to go. Passionate love.

Love is the most dynamic and intoxicating of human emotions and writers of every ilk have something to say about it. Fay Weldon (1984 p.11) when speaking of various writers' abilities to capture the essence of human life and emotion speaks of "a literary city" and of the castle Shakespeare that dominates this "city of invention". Thus an examination of what Shakespeare tells us about the vagaries of love is also a most telling comment about the richness of life. The premise here, is to follow Susan Sontags' suggestion, that "all art draws its audience into a circle of complicity with the thing represented" (quoted in Sydney Morning Herald 7th Feb. 2001) and so an examination of the various experiences of love in three of Shakespeare's plays makes our awareness of the kinds of love more John 'Lennonish' after all, "all you need is love". The very nature

of love underpins why the Shakespearean plays A Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night continue to contain relevance and meaning hundreds of years after their initial creation. When speaking of Shakespearean comedies, A. P. Riemer (1980) believes that they "begin in adversity and end in great felicity". This is certainly a factor amongst the plays, but also enlightening with regard to the course that love will take within them.

In all three plays the nature of love provides for the suspension of reason and rationality. It is Duke Theseus who in A Midsummer Night's Dream says that "The lunatic, the lover and the poet\Are of imagination all compact" (V. i. 8-9); their mental states lead to all kinds of transformed visions whereby they see the world differently from how one sees it when in a "rational" state of mind. When Hermia and Egeus look at Lysander, they see two different people, for she sees with the eyes of love, he with the eyes of cankerous old age, without a memory of young love and obsessed with his own authority. When affected by the immensity of love one battles a world of emotion, full of confusion and hampered communication, laden with arduous obstacles and clever deception. Hermia's deeply felt, yet confused comment to her father and the Duke "I know not by what power I am made bold" (I. i. 63) suggests that love is a force bearing down all normal authority, arming the lover with the strength to meet the hostility of the world around them – all under the sovereignty of the heart. It gives Hermia the courage to defy her father and the Duke in open court, and to accept the pains and trials love must often bear. When talking of this type of love Brown states:

> "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."

(Brown p. 85)

The person not in love lacks the ability to understand its nuances and wonderful irrationality.

A Midsummer Night's Dream presents a world consisting of the court of Athens, with its obligations and rules of conduct necessary for an ordered society; the countryside that lies outside the world of fathers, rules and ultimatums; and the realm of fairyland wound between the two. The woods are where the lovers make pilgrimage away from the structure and constriction of urban Athens. The specific notion of love that Shakespeare presents in the "Dream" cannot be imprisoned by the confines of order nor operate amongst the attempts to suppress it. The law of Athens is black and white and treats the lovers with legal objectivity. But love does not conform to the law of any era or place, in fact it could be said that love follows no canon aside from fate – the fate of the lover and the destiny of the beloved. The woods are a place where love runs free of subjugation and attempts to control and harness it, providing a perfect milieu for love in which to unravel itself. It is when the realm of fairyland and the countryside combine that the spell of love is at work, and both the human and the magical residents will be profoundly influenced by it.

The first image of love demonstrated in A Midsummer Night's Dream is that of Duke Theseus and Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. Once enemies in war, now allies in love

the two convey a strange duality: seriousness coupled with ardour. The Duke is in love, his "nuptial hour/Draws on apace" (I. i. 1-2) yet his love for Hippolyta is portrayed as an amalgamation of passion and simple military conquest:

> I woo'd thee with my sword,
> And won thy love, doing thee injuries.
>
> (I. i. 17-18)

The pragmatism of rule and militarism provide an enlightening contrast to the convolution of love. Theseus is sentencing the lovers, and their love, to a dreadful end via the old law which Egeus has invoked, "the ancient privilege of Athens" (I. i. 44), which enables him to dispose of his daughter (and her affections) as he sees fit. The Duke, by accepting the old law, deprives himself of any empathy for the young lovers, Hermia and Lysander:

> Either to die the death or to abjure
> For ever the society of men.
> Therefore, fair Hermia…
> …examine well your blood,
> Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
> You can endure the livery of a nun.
>
> (I. i. 69-74)

What is enlightening is the contrast between Theseus the lover and Theseus the pragmatic ruler. The ultimatum, death or a convent, sets the scene for the contradictions, human foibles, and complications soon to follow in both the dramatic and theatrical "dream",

where magic confuses partners and shows loves ability to prevent one from having a reasoned vision of the world.

The tragic possibilities suggested by Lysanders comment that "the course of true love never did run smooth" (I. i. 140), warns the audience that this love will be tested further than a Dukes ultimatum. In fact we have a variation on the "love triangle". Demetrius' love for Hermia is not reciprocated yet his pursuit of her love fails to weaken until the latter half of the play, when his favour is turned magically to Helena. This is due to one of the many by-products that loves intoxicating spirit generates – fortitude. For Demetrius, Hermia and even Titania the comedy arises from the fact that love imposes its own peculiar kind of vision, which renders any other opinion – including that of common sense – irrelevant. In love, the mere sight of the beloved acquires an importance that by any normal standards would be absurd.

The central events of the play take place around these four lovers, presenting variations of romantic love, and in doing so the delusion, folly and irrationality of the four young lovers are exposed for they are excessive in their love, allowing us to smile at the wonderfully extravagant pattern of love which emerges in the wood. Here we find "two men to one woman and the other woman alone, then for a brief space a circular movement, each one pursuing and pursued, then a return to the first figure with the position of the women reversed, then a cross-movement, man quarrelling with man and woman with woman, and then, as a finale, a general setting to partners, including not only lovers but Fairies and royal personages as well." (Welsford 1927 quoted in Lerner

1967 p. 105). All of this is possible because Shakespeare creates, through combining the woods with the realm of magic, a world in which anything can happen and where normal values are suspended. This notion of witchery in love, suggested by the intercession of the fairies, has already been introduced by Egeus:

> This (man) hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child:
> Thou hast by moonlight…
> With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughters
> heart.
>
> (I. i. 28-40)

The lovers of course deny this, as Hermia says:

> I would my father look'd but with my eyes.
>
> (I. i. 60)

It is not that any other power besides love has intervened in Hermia's life, but rather that Egeus is "out of love" and Hermia "in love" and what he sees as irrational, and consequently seeks cause for, is to Hermia totally rational. She is following her heart and not her fathers word. Hermia later swears by Cupid and Venus to meet and elope with Lysander. Ironically she swears by "all the vows that ever men have broke." (I. i. 177) and in the wood she will learn how fickle men in love can be. It will be by their denial of love for Hermia that the men will show that their hearts and minds are bewitched!

Bottom and Titania are distanced from these central activities and display a form of dislocated quasi-love, never meant to be and never meant to last. It is an impossibility

illustrated by the coming together of a fairy and a mortal. Titania is queen of the fairies and bottom is an amiable innocent. Together they present a striking image; a pairing of disparate beings whose contact only emphasizes the difference between them. Instead of a fusion of worlds we are given a series of neat comic contrasts. The two are good evidence for an argument that love is truly blind, a necessity that, if not filled, will push a lover to reach out to the nearest and most convenient person. When they first meet the audience is presented with a fairy confronting a mortal, and finding him more delightful than he finds her. Each one's assessment of the other is amusingly wrong. For example Titania's "Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful" (III. i. 148) is hardly a correct judgement of Bottom. Bottom and Titania, caught up in a genuinely fantastic situation, accept the moment without bewilderment, Titania moving to gratify her love at once, and Bottom accepting his new role with cheerful equanimity – the keynote being innocence. Here the love potion that Titania has received is used as a mechanism to convey the way love grips the beholder with a perception altering adoration, or perhaps a metaphorical blindfold for ones passion.

After Titania has been released from her spell, and the four lovers paired we are presented with a play within a play, designed to counteract the ending of the play within which it exists. Shakespeare was well aware of the convention of felicity mentioned by Riemer (op.cit.), but also understood that this assured 'happy ending' did not ring the truths of the real world. Pyramus and Thisbe represent the potential for tragedy; that passionate, honest love can be thwarted by fate. Therefore Shakespeare's audience sees a

burlesque, which is yet a tragedy. Young love does not find the light of day in the arms of the beloved rather death and woe are the end result of physical and familial barriers:

> Thou wall, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
> That stand'st between her father's ground and
> mine!
>
> (V. i. 171 – 172)

As an audience we see the potential for tragedy rather than "felicity" (Riemer op.cit.) and recognise that what Theseus, Hippolyta and the four lovers have is an experience of love that satisfies but does not dismiss all of the possibilities that life holds out to us. They are lucky in their love, and the pains endured during the course to its fulfilment were not terminal, rather the result of obstacles, that, by the conclusion of the play, have been hurdled.

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"*Much Ado* is, above all, a highly formal comedy working through strict conventions and a progressive interplay of situations which are revealed in their true nature through mutual contrast and which, in the process of this revelation, illuminate various facets of truth and illusion in the central reality of love."

(Traversi p.264)

The interplay of situations that provide the disparity that Traversi talks about, centre around the characters of Claudio and Hero, and Benedick and Beatrice. Each couple contrasts the other in the manner and expression of their love as each of the two pairs are themselves at different poles in the world of love. Beatrice and Benedick, for all that they deny love, were once in love with each other:

> Don Pedro. Come, lady, come, you have lost the heart of Signor Benedick.
> Beatrice. Indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile, and I gave Him use for it, a double heart for his single one. Marry, once before he won it of me with false dice, Therefore your Grace may well say I have lost it.
>
> (II. i. 259-264)

Such a past relationship may explain any bitter disposition in Beatrice. She seems to mean that he professed for a while that his heart was hers; when she returned him double affection he proved false, his love was "false dice".

The whole notion of Beatrice and Benedick being gulled into declaring their love is more akin to the fantastical forest elements of A Midsummer Night's Dream than the

melancholic nature of love we see later in Illyria. Claudio and Hero, however, convey a conventional kind of love story showing the potential for tragedy in love, and tend to lend themselves to the despondent nature of love we see in Twelfth Night. The first attempt by Don John to collapse the love between Claudio and Hero fails, but in its midst Claudio realises that:

> Friendship is constant in all other things
> Save for the office and affairs of love:
> Therefore all hearts in love use their own tongues;
> Let every eye negotiate for itself,
> And trust no agent; for beauty is a witch
> Against whose charms faith melteth into blood.
> This is an accident of hourly proof,
> Which I mistrusted not. Farewell, therefore, Hero!
>
> (II. i. 163 – 170)

Although Claudio has misjudged this moment, love has the power to countermand friendship. In asking Don Pedro to woo Hero for himself, Claudio allows Don John to interfere with his thoughts and, because he is in love, with his reason. This is what allows him to believe that his friend has stolen his love. But Don Pedro has not taken Hero away from Claudio, he has "wooed in thy name, and fair Hero is won" (II. i. 280). The pursuit by Don Pedro, on behalf of Claudio, of Hero begins with a series of formal manoeuvres, dance steps, which are used to highlight the conversation. Such formalities are scarcely seen in A Midsummer Night's Dream and here end in prospective disaster.

The ability of lovers to pair unequivocally and with little knowledge of the object with which they are besotted is seen at the end of both A Midsummer Night's Dream and Twelfth Night, but in Much Ado About Nothing Claudio actually addresses this type of

love, which rests on slender foundations of knowledge. When he is left alone with Don Pedro he declares himself in a way which suggests that his recent feelings toward Hero are not derived from any great prior familiarity with her:

> I looked upon her with a solder's eye
> That liked, but had a rougher task at hand
> Than to drive liking into the name of love:
> But now I am return'd and that war-thoughts
> Have left their places vacant, in their rooms
> Come thronging soft and delicate desires,
> All prompting me how fair young Hero is,
> Saying, I liked her ere I went to wars.
>
> (I. I. 278 – 285)

This speech by Claudio pointing out the notion of love as a changeable thing parallels Orsino's attitude in Twelfth Night. One moment Claudio looks at Hero and is not in love, not having the liberty to "drive liking into the name of love". The next moment he looks at her, after returning from war and he is in love, "soft and delicate desires" have replaced his previous thoughts.

Initially within the play there are two types of lovers, the "sweet" and the "bitter". As Claudio's feelings towards Hero change, so does the pair of lovers that fall under each heading. The "sweet" kind of love that is originally shown existing between Hero and Claudio changes so that the "bitter" lovers, Beatrice and Benedick, now become the "sweet" lovers and the originally "sweet" lovers become the "bitter". For Beatrice and Benedick this reversal is due to their gulling by their friends, but for Claudio and Hero it is due to the unwanted intervention of Don John, Don Pedro's malevolent brother. He takes something of the role of Oberon and Puck who confuse, either intentionally or

unintentionally the various "lovers", and consequently end up interfering with the course of love. Here Don John is resolute about disturbing the match of Hero and Claudio:

> …it must not be denied but I am a
> plain-dealing villain.
>
> (I. iii. 29-30)

His actions, unlike that of Oberon and Puck, are performed with evil intent and knowledge of what they are going to result in. Don John is one obstacle to the direction of love, providing alterations to its course but not to its destination. Shakespeare's further interest in the possible direction of love is with what exists between Beatrice and Benedick "showing us what they themselves scarcely know: the wit in each desires the other, but neither trusts either the other or marriage" (Bloom 1999). Their relationship is a treatment of one question: what is the definition of love in Much Ado About Nothing? Our answer is found in their antics; it is really much ado about very little. Both Beatrice and Benedick know one another so their gulling by their friends is easily acceptable. "Love me? Why, it must be requited," (II. iii. 215-216) says Benedick, while Beatrice sees, in a more profound manner, her acceptance of Benedicks love, as she says:

> …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 holy band…
>
> (III. i. 111-114)

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Beatrice and Benedick's "nothing" balances that "nothing" of Claudio and Hero. Here love initially looks to have died, but Claudio learns to see the truth about Hero and accepts his fate:

> Which is the lady I must seize upon?
>
> (V. iv. 52)

Their new union at the end of the comedy is an indication by Shakespeare, much like the ending of the lovers in the forest of Arden, that "adversity" ends in "felicity" (Riemer op.cit.). Their love does not contain the wit of the Beatrice and Benedick relationship. It is rather a love that reflects on their special qualities, on the vitality of that emotion experienced by the witty other lovers. Shakespeare combined this potential for disaster in love with the comic possibilities of gulling in a more sombre treatment of the notion of love in Twelfth Night.

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Twelfth Night is a play about love influenced to varying degrees by disguise, confusion and pathos. Shakespeare at this stage of his writing, had progressed from the fantastical portrayal of love found in A Midsummer Night's Dream, through Much Ado About Nothing, which harbours elements of this exquisite form of affection, whilst also introducing to us the melancholic notion of love found in Twelfth Night. Dorothy Tutin, a critic and Shakespearean actress, when speaking of love in Twelfth Night said:

> "It deals with the pains, foolish fantasies and excesses of love…Shakespeare shows all the paradoxes and dangers of love. He illustrates the heartache of truth that must be denied and the dangers of extreme and passionate feelings."
>
> (quoted in Dash 1981)

Such excessive love can be found in A Midsummer Night's Dream, both plays sharing similar statements about loves effect on ones self, although through disparate projections of the type of love the characters have. No matter what type of love we have, whether it is young, excessive or misguided, the effect it has on us remains very much the same. The paradoxes mentioned by Tutin involve the way love can control ones life and subsequently create a need to be in love, and be loved, yet deny that person of itself for any length of time. Unlike a Midsummer Night's Dream and Much Ado About Nothing, which both illustrate an overall high-spirited conception of love, Twelfth Night portrays a more downhearted perception of love, allowing for an examination of love at its pinnacle of passionate expressions and consequently at its most dangerous level. The three major characters are themselves involved in a precarious triangle of mistaken passions with Viola in love with Orsino who fails to recognise it because he is ignorant of the fact that she is a woman, but also because he is infatuated with the notion of loving Olivia. While Olivia rebuffs Orsino's advances, because she too is infatuated with the idea of mourning

the death of love, that is her father and brother, only to fall for Viola, but she too is ignorant of the fact that she is a woman. As an audience we anticipate how soon it will be before the mistake is discovered while also being aware that the lovers themselves are the obstacles to their fulfilment. Part of the reason the characters are themselves obstacles in the course of their love is their reliance on words. The foibles of the characters are shown through the way they misuse words, and are trapped by words. Orsino turns everything into verbal fantasies, to feed his desire for sensation. Even an invitation to a healthy activity produces a pun:

> Curio: Will you go hunt, my lord?
> Orsino: What, Curio?
> Curio: The Hart.
> Orsino: Why, so I do, the noblest that I have.
>
> (I. i. 16-19)

Instead of hunting, he develops an elaborate conceit of himself as Actaeon. For Orsino, all activities (including love itself) are swallowed up by the language that expresses them, and the result is a life of words alone, with little hope of action. For the characters of Twelfth Night language is not a means of escaping outward from the private self, and making contact with others; it is rather a means of defining the self and confirming its privateness – one more barrier erected against the realities of the world outside. The solitude of the lovers results from their experience of unrequited love, an experience that leaves them frustrated and restless. Our first impression of Orsino is of a character in search of an attitude, full of emotion but with no satisfactory outlet for that emotion, nothing around which to shape it. His unrequited love for Olivia may appear to be the centre of his life, but even in the first scene his attitude to that love shifts uneasily:

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> O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou!
> That, notwithstanding thy capacity
> Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there,
> Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
> But falls into abatement and low price
> Even in a Minute
>
> (I. i. 9-14)

Here Orsino's ideas of love are held in his mind not in balance, but in confusion. His attitude is undecided, shown by his movement, when describing love, from "quick and fresh" to something of "abatement and low price". Orsino is obsessed with the idea of being enamoured. He is fascinated by the suffering, the poetry and the techniques of courtship. He opens the play presenting love, conventionally enough, as a kind of sickness (Wells 1994 p.178):

> If music be the food of love, play on,
> Give me excess of it; that surfeiting
> The appetite may sicken, and so die.
>
> (I, i, 1-3)

But after hearing strands of the same tune being played in the background, Orsino commands "Enough, no more,/ 'tis not so sweet now as it was before" (I, i, 7-8). In the play, Orsino is irrational in his pursuit of the lovely Olivia, but he cedes her readily to Sebastian and then falls instantly in love with "Cesario" when he reveals himself to be Viola. Love is powerful, but in Twelfth Night, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream and Much Ado About Nothing, Shakespeare's concern is for its constancy, which is certainly in question. In Act two, Scene four, the Duke says to Cesario, "For women are as roses, whose fair flow'r/Being once diplay'd, doth fall that very hour" (38 – 39). Love at first sight is rampant in Shakespeare's Illyria, but he will not vouchsafe its permanence. When

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Orsino actually encounters Olivia in Act five, Scene one, he learns that his "sovereign cruelty" is engaged to another man. His game of love is suddenly over. His passion thwarted, he threatens to kill Cesario, a real danger in such passion as his, but when he learns that Cesario is really a woman, Viola, he marries her without delay. Such a complete volte-face only emphasises and makes more comic the absurdity of his extreme male ardour. Like all of the illusions in the play, Orsino's false love rapidly crumbles to be replaced by true love.

Tousled amongst these games of adoration is Viola, or Cesario if disguised in her dual role as a man. She, dressed as Cesario, acts as messenger for both the Duke, and the Countess. At the end of Act three Scene two, after learning of Olivia's love for Cesario, the masquerading Viola says to the countess:

> I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth,
> And that no women has, nor never none
> Shall mistress be of it, save I alone.
> And so adieu, good madam, never more
> Will I my master's tears to you deplore.
>
> (III, I, 158-162)

This speech is, of course, ironic, since the speaker is, in fact, a woman. But above this, Viola's response to Olivia's overture highlights the primary subject of the play, romantic love. In her coupling of "one heart, one bosom, and one truth," Viola gives expression to an idealized conception of "true" love as being an all-consuming passion for a single "authentic" lover that will overcome any and all obstacles. Twelfth Night validates this idea of love, but with some disconcerting qualifications. Love is true in Twelfth Night,

but it is also irrational, fickle and excessive; it wanes over time, as does its chief cause, physical beauty.

Also part of Twelfth Night is loves constant association with madness. After seeing Cesario for the first time, the love struck Olivia says at the end of Act one, "Mine eye (is) too great a flatterer for my mind" (I, v, 309). Love is a form of insanity, in which one's senses deceive and overcome one's reason. In Act 4, Scene three, Sebastian waxes about his instantaneous love for Olivia:

> This is the air, that is the glorious sun,
> This pearl she gave to me, I do feel't and see't,
> And though 'tis wonder that entrapts me thus,
> Yet 'tis not madness…
>
> (IV, iii, 1-4)

Sebastian's denial that his love for Olivia is madness only underscores the connection between unbounded passion and an unbalanced mind. Shortly thereafter, Sebastian says that because of his love for Olivia, he is willing to "distrust (his) eyes" and "wrangle with (his) reason" (IV, iii, 13-14). In a play in which many references are made to being possessed, similar to A Midsummer Night's Dream, love is of necessity equated with being mad. The absurdity of the love felt by Titania and Bottom is a clear example of the way love, with a little help from Cupid, shelves reason and rationality. Unlike Sebastian, the two lovers are content to accept their position, until it is changed by those who created it, the immortal.

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There is one character for whom love, co-mingled with self-infatuation, is madness, the steward Malvolio whose professions of love to Olivia lead to his being restrained as a lunatic. Malvolio is the victim of conspiracy directed at his self-conceit and ambition. Olivia's rebuke to him early in the play portrays love, once again as a sickness:

> "O you are sick of self-love, Malvolio,
> and taste with a distempered appetite…"
>
> (I. v. 85 – 86)

Malvolio "treats love more as an affair of the imagination than of the heart" according to A. W. Schlegal (1811, quoted in King 1968). Consequently his love for Olivia is driven by a want "To be Count Malvolio" (II. V. 35); his imagination dwells on himself causing him to have no consideration, including that of love, for others. He has a gross vision of what love could be like as his interests would appear to lie in money and power first, and in Olivia's person second. He is not in love with Olivia, but rather in love with what she can provide for him. Twelfth Night was one of Shakespeare's last comedies and to draw to an end on such a note, with a play inclusive of characters such as Malvolio, says a lot about where he arrived on his journey of understanding about love.

Shakespeare's growing maturity as a playwright enabled him to move from an awareness of young love with its infatuation, passion and the associated comic moments towards a more mature, worldly and wise treatment of this amazing human emotion. These three plays, composed in 1595, 1598 and 1601 respectively, show this treatment and enable us to recognise that being "in" love means different things at different times to different

people in different situations. Minds are altered, eyes deceived and hearts harmonized by loves enigmatic abilities, yet in the end, despite the words of Feste's song, really:

"All you need is love!"

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REFLECTION STATEMENT

MAJOR WORK – *Reflection Statement*

"Where do I begin?" is the opening line to the theme song from a movie called "Love Story", a film my parents remember fondly and with which I feel a strange affinity since not only is this composition a story about love but when I look at the demands of a Reflection Statement I have to ask myself the same question:

"Where do I begin?"

This work was initially designed to help me come to grips with the concept of love. What was it? How was one suddenly "in" love and seemingly just as suddenly "out" of love? Why did it affect people so deeply? So suddenly? And if it was at all possible to come to grips with these questions then what could one say about love that was new (no references to moon, June and swoon) and interesting. Although tempted I never seriously considered the notion of music as an approach to dealing with the concept of love but rather looked for something that had a more solid foundation. In fact something already established and respected, preferably from the past, which could be examined and interpreted and found to be relevant in the present, in 2001 A.D.

William Shakespeare is a force in the educational lives of today's senior students just as he continues to be a force in the wider world of international and national theatre. One needs only to look at last years Sydney Olympic Festival and note the production of Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida or how many of his plays become important productions in the theatrical world of various cities and large country centres. The coast to coast touring of the Bell Shakespeare Company in 2000/2001 is just another example of the continued relevance and popularity of 'the Bard'.

MAJOR WORK – *Reflection Statement*

My experiences with my sister, coupled with my study of Romeo and Juliet in Year 11 and my reading of Weldon's analogy lead me to believe that I wanted to look at some link in my research between Shakespeare and the concept of love. In looking at the way comedy shaped aspects of the Elizabethan stage I knew that it was the area of comedy that I would have to look at in depth to see what it was that was said in Shakespeare's time about this emotion that would still have relevance to the young people in today's senior schools and tertiary institutions.

My intention in this composing process has been to examine the concept of love as it developed in Shakespeare's 'comic' works. By reading about the development of style and content, I hoped to arrive at an understanding, limited though I knew that would be, of how Shakespeare's comedies progressed from a stage where all facets of innocent celebratory love were dissected and seen from 'magical' angles to a later treatment of a more mature love, that while still beginning in "adversity" and ending in "felicity" looked at the more realistic aspects of worldly love. This I feel was possible because what Shakespeare did was to create a different kind of 'brew'. He took the love that we all like to imagine exists in a perfect world but then added the foibles, weaknesses and idiosyncrasies of human nature and showed us what could happen to people in love when that magic moment was diluted or threatened. In these cases the world of the stage became the real world, the arena in which this love story would be played out often with amazing results.

MAJOR WORK – *Reflection Statement*

My intended audience in this particular critical study is that age group, much like myself, who see and hear so much about "LUV" that we expect it to be an easy hurdle to jump over in our race toward maturity. The reality, of course, couldn't be more different. Our movement in this direction is more often than not one step forward and two steps back, and of course our particular generation's understanding of exactly what love is can be warped by the pressures and influences of the modern world. My interest has been to see how one of the greatest literary influences on our time has presented this 'race', this struggle to know what love is!

Strangely, at the start of my examination and my writing I wondered if I would be able to take my interests and find enough relevant material for my discussion. Perhaps I should look at more than a half dozen comedies but of course I was very quickly led to a quite amazing repository of Shakespearian critical works and multiple treatments on the nature of love. I think now I have begun to comprehend why so much can be written about love and yet why one finds very little "sameness". This is because an individual brings with him or her numerous influences –physical, emotional and spiritual – and consequently we respond to romantic stimulus in specifically singular ways. Therefore I have had to base my discussion of the development of aspects of love in Shakespeare on just three comedies and more specifically on what I have felt, what I have responded to and what I have understood in my reading. Could I have hoped to offer an all-encompassing comment on love? No! Rather, I see now that all I could do was recognise that by reading, viewing and interpreting some of Shakespeare's comedies I would be offering a

personal insight into these ageless works. Ageless? Most definitely, because I feel that what they say about love is relevant in 2001 as it was in 1901, 1801 and 1701.

Lennon and McCartney may well have summed up one aspect of life when they paired love and living down to the bone:

All you need is love,
All you need is love…
…Love is all you need.

It seems to me, through my study for this topic, that Shakespeare, while accepting the need to see things simply and no doubt having a belief in what became the Lennon premise also wished to show us that, with our world and lives in a state of flux, the notion of love needed to be examined in a multitude of situations. In time that "rich golden shaft" which Duke Orsino speaks of will pierce us all. Until then we must simply accept that it will happen at the strangest of times and in the most unusual of places.