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**Language in William Shakespeare's
*Twelfth Night***

A Paper

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Dedication

I dedicate this humble work, first of all, to my Lord Allah the Most Merciful, my strong pillar, my source of inspiration, wisdom and knowledge who has never ceased to shower me with his blessings and favors. I certainly would not forget the light of my life, my beloveds prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Ahlulbayt (A.S) who have always been my source of strength.

I also dedicate this work to four beloved people who have meant and continue to mean the world to me: to the source of safety, affection, pride and power_ my dear father and mother; to my number one supporter, best friend and soulmate_ my sister, Farah; to our source of happiness and my family's one and only piece of Paradise _Janna.

My dear family, without your existence, I would never be what I am today. You have always believed in me, spent countless sleepless nights for my sake, provided me with endless support and encouragement, and prayed for me day and night. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

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Abstract

This research paper sets out to review the linguistic theories and philosophies that influenced Shakespeare, examining the author's use of language in his *Twelfth Night* and drawing interpretations of his own viewpoints on language as implied in the comedy. The paper opens with an illustration of the most influential Classical, Medieval and Renaissance theoretical debates concerning the issue of language. It explores how and why the medium has endured much criticism and debate. The genre of comedy is briefly mentioned with details concerning its popularity and importance for the purpose of elucidating Shakespeare's choice of writing in this genre to tackle philosophical and sophisticated ideas. The paper, then, moves to explicate the language of *Twelfth Night* shedding light on the most prominent philosophical passages and speeches that imply the notion of duality. Through exploring the dual aspects in forms, social states and language, Shakespeare uses language to logicalize, analyze, reflect reality and draw attention to social and conceptual issues, as well as to highlight the dual aspects of language. The paper concludes with Shakespeare's illustration of the negative side of language in order to emphasize the alternative creative positive use of the medium. Thus, the play can be interpreted as a challenge directed at all language critics, as Shakespeare defends the medium of his art by creatively revealing the expressive, argumentative, analytical, communicative, and socially-bonding functions of language.

Keywords: William Shakespeare; *Twelfth Night*; Language

Section One: Introduction

Jean Aitchison in her book *Linguistics* distinguishes between two forms of language. One of these forms is the everyday language which is the standard medium used by ordinary people in their everyday life. The other form is the highly valued literary language which is mainly used by authors. These two forms are different from each other, as the latter is characterized by having distinctive features and by involving the use of special techniques and tropes. A very simple example of such difference is provided by the author as she states that a poem about the wind highly differs from an ordinary chat about the weather (Aitchison, 2000: 139-141).

Studying literary language in any literary work has always proved to be enlightening, as it serves to shed the light on many aspects. It helps to record the development and evolution of language. It also gives insight to historical events, problems and different issues, as well as principles and philosophies that prevail in different periods of time. Through studying this unique form of language, one can discover how authors employ language, showing in the process their creativity and unique styles. For these reasons, literary language has always been a rich field for studies and theorization.

Among the most studied literary works are those of Shakespeare who is regarded as one of the greatest authors of the English language. One of the characteristics that make Shakespeare's works remarkably exceptional is his language. Due to many factors such as Shakespeare's creativity, and the prevailing theories of language of the time, the author's language is characterized by having “extraordinary power, vitality, and richness “ (Joseph, 2005: 3).

One of Shakespeare's famous comedies is *Twelfth Night* which is said to be his “finest and maturest comedy” (Elam, 2008: 2). The play wraps its audience, readers, and spectators in its imaginative world of wonder and its fantastic riddling language. However, it does not detach them from the real world, as it raises the issues of gender, excessive ambition, social disorder and division among other issues that are found in society. Thus, the play never fails to evoke emotions and different viewpoints. Shakespeare, the author, turns himself into a philosopher and a critic. In a series of comic episodes forming the spectacle of *Twelfth Night*, the brilliant writer displays his accumulated knowledge of Classical and Medieval theories of language and employs a striking combination of sense and nonsense to impressively debate those exact theories. He also applies his theatrical creativity to provide entertainment and teachings, proving the importance of art and theatre.

Section Two:

Theories of Language in the Renaissance

Renaissance was a period in the history of Europe that is celebrated for great achievements in all the fields of knowledge. It gains its name from the French word *rebirth*, and as this word suggests, the Renaissance revolved around the rebirth of the classical learning which had been concealed in the darkness of the tumultuous Middle Ages. The reinterest and study of classical materials was accompanied by the invention of printing press and the successful exploration journeys to other undiscovered parts of the world, and the latter played a role in sharing new different cultures, customs, views of life and knowledge. This eventually led to remarkable scientific, literary, and artistic developments (Britannica, 2022).

Although the Renaissance is generally believed to be dating from the (14th-17th) centuries, it is suggested that it begins much earlier. In the 12th century, many Europeans attempted to reach the Spanish Peninsula in which they found extraordinarily rich books and texts. Some of these were originally written in Arabic and others were translated from Greek to Arabic. The Europeans spent great efforts in working on the philosophical, mathematic, and astrological texts that belonged to Aristotle and other thinkers. They translated them from Arabic to Latin in order to convey the knowledge to their people. They also translated the holy book of Qura'n to Latin (Bauer, 2013: 46).

Latin became the standard medium and classical antiquity was taught everywhere in Europe. In England, where Shakespeare and a number of the very well-known men of literature resided, grammar

schools sought to bring up students that were capable of reading, writing, and speaking in Latin. The method was teaching them the three arts of language: grammar, logic and rhetoric. These schools also enriched the students with the classics of Greek and Rome. The students were trained in literary composition as well through examining the classical authors' use of figures of speech, vocabulary, and diction (Joseph, 2005: 8-9).

Having recognized the significant influence of Classical and Medieval heritage in the literary language of the Renaissance era, it is necessary to return back in time and display some theories of classical and medieval thinkers. It should be noted that these theories have touched all areas of life; however, concentration will be on specific theories whose relevance and reflection can be traced in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and its language.

Naturalism and conventionalism are two linguistic theories whose origin dates back to the assumptions of pre-Socratic Greek thinkers in the late sixth to the mid-fifth centuries B.C. One primary issue to those thinkers was the appearance-reality distinction. They presumed that there was a great difference between how we perceive the world using our senses and how the real world is. For instance, Parmenides states that what seems to us as real is not actually is. There is only one true being appearing in numerous illusory forms. He develops two philosophical ways which will be discussed in relation to the philosophies of *Twelfth Night* in this section: the Way of Being which leads to truth, and the Way of Seeming revolving around appearances. Parmenides thinks that change is an illusion and that different forms perceived by senses are but just one changeless true reality. Since we use language to refer to the different forms of things which are mere illusions, we are being deluded. According to Parmenides and the pre-Socratic philosophers, language is

associated with appearance. It is unreliable, deceiving, and does not lead to truth and knowledge. Thus, there is an opposition between language and reality resulting from the opposition and distinction between appearance and reality (Graeser, 1977: 362). This distinction is considered by Rachel Barney to be the origin of Sophists' differentiation between nature and convention (Barney, 2009: 84).

The Sophists, another group of Greek thinkers of fifth-century B.C, paid much interest in language. They studied literary criticism and rhetoric among other linguistic aspects (Barney, 2009: 90). Barney mentions Gorgias and his most significant sophistic text on language *On Not Being*. In this text, Gorgias states that there is a gap between objects and how we think of them. He exemplifies stating that thinking of a flying person does not actually represent such a case in reality. Using language to express this thought also does not refer to the reality of the matter. Thus, thoughts and language are mental and verbal representations that create forms which differ from the actual real objects. This leads to a conclusion about language similar to that of the pre-Socratic thinkers: language does not communicate the truth (Barney, 2009: 93-94).

Plato in the *Cratylus* mentions the debate regarding the issue of naming things in the world. Whether names (words) naturally come to existence or they are imposed is a heated topic for Greek philosophers. The first opinion suggests that words describe the nature of things or are derived from their natural properties. The most crucial point here is that words or names are constant and of natural existence. Thus, words presumably are truthful tools to identify things and objects. The second opinion, on the other hand, suggest that words are conventionally found and used. This conventionality of words makes them flux, unstable, and

changing as they would vary with the diversity of individuals. For this reason, words of a language may draw away from referring to the true nature of things and become unreliable representative tools (Barney, 2009: 116).

Joannes Goropius Becanus's support of the naturalist theory of naming is referred to, as the linguist draws the attention towards the biblical tale of the first man, Adam, who gave all things their names in Paradise. Adam marked these things with names that represented their true nature (Barney, 2009: 116). This view of Becanus lead us to examine the pursuit made by thinkers in the Medieval and Renaissance times who strived to re-create a perfect truthful language.

The most remarkable feature of the philosophy in Medieval and Renaissance eras is its Aristotelianism orientation. In his essay “The Effect of Language upon Thinking”, (2011) Michael Marlowe mentions two of Aristotle’s works, *Organon* and *On Sophistical Refutations*, in which the Greek philosopher discusses some language problems of ambiguities and fallacies. Aristotle states that “even in his inward thoughts a man is liable to be deceived, when he examines a matter on the basis of words”. He also remarks the ambiguity in words or phrases which results in six types of fallacies. Marlowe cites E.P. Barrows and mentions instances of “a concern for precision of language in all the ancient and medieval philosophers.” He reveals that “in every field of learning there has always been a gradual development of technical vocabulary which diverges from the ordinary vernacular language of the time. The learned books of Antiquity and of the Middle Ages are full of words that almost no one used in ordinary speech. Indeed, nearly all of the literature of the Middle Ages is written in a language which was not used at all in ordinary conversation, and so it may be said that for a

thousand years the idea that ordinary language would be sufficient to express philosophical or theological ideas was never even entertained.” (Marlowe, 2011: n.p.)

Alan R. Perreiah, in his book *Renaissance Truths: Humanism, Scholasticism and the Search for the Perfect Language*, (2014) mentions the diversity in language throughout the Middle Ages and focuses on the two conflicting forms of Latin: the humanists' literary Latin which is classical, Roman-based and the scholastics' formalized Latin. The former of the two Latinate forms has a tremendous influence on the intellectuality of the Renaissance. He cites Ann Moss and mentions her statement that these two forms of Latin “produced not only ‘two Latin speech communities that talked past one another.’ It created ‘two different mind-sets.’ It brought about ‘two linguistic universes’ and ‘two orders of truth-values.’” (Perreiah, 2014: 3)

This diversity in language forms was criticized at the time for affecting and misleading thoughts, in addition to causing ambiguity and much fallacy. It was the reason behind the efforts of many thinkers in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to retract the original language of Adam. Perreiah asserts this fact giving the justification that Adam's language was deemed “clear, unambiguous and, most importantly, capable of expressing truth. ... (and) the nature of things.” (Perreiah, 2014 : 3-11)

A serious historical issue concerning English language needs to be outlined, the inkhorn controversy. Keith Johnson (2016, 193) mentions the “inkhorn terms” describing them as awkward and ambiguous words which scholars frequently employed. He implies the probable shock Elizabethans must have felt when they witnessed the invasion of a huge

amount of new unheard words and terminologies from other languages. Anne Curzan describes the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as “a time of increasing self-consciousness about language” (2014, 95). She marks the fervent linguistic conflict concerning the words that were mostly borrowed from Latin and Greek among other languages. Curzan also notes the creativity of Shakespeare during this period, and Joseph asserts this creativity mentioning the condition of language in England in the sixteenth century. She notes what she calls “the linguistic license of the century” which enabled poets to be experimental, and to be the creators of language and words. Shakespearean English is the clearest example of this linguistic freedom (Joseph, 2005: 49-50). (This issue will be further discussed in section two, as the researcher explores Shakespeare’s perspective regarding “inkhornism” and how he creatively exploited the linguistic situation of the century in *Twelfth Night*.)

The linguistic conflict in the sixteenth century drew the attention towards man's usage of language. Man was criticized for using ambiguous bombastic words that do not achieve communication. However, to the contrary of the sixteenth century views which lay the blame on man's defects and his misusing of language, the seventeenth century attacks language itself. Margreta De Grazia asserts that “in all areas of thought, seventeenth-century writers find language wanting.” (1978: 379) She mentions several writers who think that language destabilizes political order, disturbs the harmony of religion, causes doctrinal disputes, obscures “accurate chemical classifications by imposing superficial and arbitrary distinctions”, introduces morally confusing words, and is “hopelessly flawed” (1978: 380).

The assumed reason behind language deficiency and imperfection is the scattering of human kind and the disintegration of their unified

original perfect language. As mentioned above, the perfect language which man originally used is believed to be the language of Adam. The cause of this scattering and disintegration was assumed, in the Middle Ages, to be the destruction of Babylon in the 6th century BC. However, it became a point of disagreement to thinkers in the seventeenth century who thought that the cause might have occurred after the destruction of the tower of Babel without being related to it, or it was due to the Flood of Noah which had occurred way before the Babylonian historic event. Regardless of the reasons, the defect in language caused mainly ambiguity and misunderstanding among other problems. For this reason, there was a demand for a solution which is “the fashioning of a new language” that is “artificial” and “philosophical” (De Grazia, 1978: 381).

De Grazia notes that the pessimistic views about language in the seventeenth century can be found in Shakespeare's works. She mentions many critics who ascribe the deficiency in Shakespearian characters to their inadequate language. However, she states with examples that “Shakespeare's works contain no indictment of language as such, no complaints about the inability of language to match Coriolanus' deeds, Lear's agony, and Will's romantic involvement. In each case, defects in the speaker corrupt language, just as at Babel.” (1978: 380-383)

The philosophy of language was not the only heritage of ancient ages that has influenced Shakespeare and his writing. The greatest dramatist and poet “was trained in the heroic age of grammar school rhetoric in England, and he shows knowledge of the complete system, in its most heroic proportions” (Joseph, 2005: 12). The Latin textbooks that were used in these schools were the source from which Shakespeare got the inspiration to write many of his works and they were behind his incredible techniques (Joseph, 2005: 13). Charles and Michelle

Martindale observe some of Shakespeare's plays stating that they "are set in the ancient world, and he has constant recourse to classical mythology and history, and to classical ideas." (2005: vii) Shakespeare used in his composition the materials and models which he had learned at school. He had much exposition to many great classic literary figures. This is evident from Härter's statement in her thesis, and in which she mentions that "Roman poets were held as standards for Elizabethan playwrights. Seneca was considered the master of tragedy as Plautus and Terence were seen as unmatched in composing comedy." (Härter, 2022: 24)

Comedy was greatly enjoyed by citizens in Antiquity. It was reportedly found in "Dionysian festivals, banquets, public speeches, and in literature." (Härter, 2022: 29) Humour has received attention from most thinkers in Antiquity, Middle Ages and the Renaissance as well. Controlled laughter was acknowledged as a "powerful device" by rhetoricians. They thought that using laughter in specific situations could bring victory over others. This is evident from Aristotle's statement in his *Rhetoric*, as he mentions Gorgias, who "rightly said that one should spoil the opponents' seriousness with laughter and their laughter with seriousness" (Härter, 2022: 28). Cicero in his *De oratore* notes humour as one of the main skills which assist an orator in his orations, especially when he satirizes his opponent. Härter (2022) remarks a certain type of humour that was preferred by classical thinkers, *dicacitas*, which included using brief and specific presentation of wit. Such verbal type is definitely preferred to the physical one in literature and in interaction. Medieval and Renaissance thinkers, similar to those in Antiquity, distinguished positive humorous performances which are seen as helpful and intelligent, from negative ones that are deemed sinful for being pointless, unrestrained, and noisy. Pia Katharina Härter goes further to

shed light on the communicative function of comedy in Antiquity. She implies that comedy serves to communicate topics and ideas which cannot be approached or conveyed in a serious manner. While watching a comedy, the audience can break free from conventional pressures and become more accessible. They reflexively and unconsciously enter a world of imagination and illusion that lie out of the control of authorities. This communicative function of comedy seems to carry on in both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. People participated in *festa stultorum* and enjoyed entertaining laughs in private and in public. They let loose as they witnessed comedy approaching taboos and parodying biblical figures (Härter, 2022: 28-37).

To sum up, we can realize the great influence that classical and medieval philosophers had on Shakespeare. The author had impacted from the philosophies of Parmenides, Plato and Aristotle, among others, that revolved around the validity of language as a medium which either truthfully represents both reality and thought or misleads. Shakespeare also was influenced by the linguistic controversies and theories that prevailed at the time, mainly the inkhorn controversy. Inspecting the crucial effect that language had in social stability and harmony, the dramatist had set out to add his input into the matter and to deal with the linguistic situation by employing his creativity as well as his knowledge in language and art. In the following section of this research paper, the researcher intends to discuss Shakespeare's views on language as expressed in his comedy *Twelfth Night*.

Section Three:

Shakespeare's Views on Language in *Twelfth Night*

Twelfth Night or What You Will, one of Shakespeare's mature comedies, discusses the victorious love relations just like its preceding plays. The comedy, having been written immediately before the writing of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, reflects a turning point in the dramatist's composition as it maintains a precise complexity. Despite its romantic plot, it has subtle implications that are to be uncovered. These layered meanings and implications reflect the author's determination to dive deeper into human mind and soul (Boyce, 2005: 604).

Twelfth Night involves an “elusive philosophical vision ... a way of thinking that 'capable of being in uncertainties without any irritable reaching after fact and reason'” (Hall, 2017: vii). In his “Shakespeare's Genius”, Colin McGinn comments on the poet-philosopher and his literary talent stating that Shakespeare interrelates both philosophical and dramatic ideas in an exceptional powerful way (2006: 200). Shakespeare mediates his thoughts and philosophies through his characters' words, employing all the knowledge he learned and using a logical, grammatical and rhetorical language.

Shakespeare's learning of logic, among the other two arts of language, has greatly enriched him in writing his dramatic works. Logic is seen as the “instrument for the discovery of truth. ... every question has two sides, and ... the acutest minds would habitually see both sides, ... Shakespeare, the acutest of Renaissance thinkers, has ... an ability to see both sides of a question, and a sympathy with all sorts and conditions of

men.” (Joseph, 2005: 15-16) This ability to recognize the dual nature of a thing and to see its both sides can be seen in *Twelfth Night*.

The notion of duality dominates this play and its language. This duality involves many different aspects, proving to be a challenge for interpretation and perception. It can be observed in the duality of physical forms, states of language, social communities and worlds. This section will examine the fascinating way in which the language of *Twelfth Night* tackle these dualities respectively, starting with the duality of forms which has a pre-Socratic origin in the philosophy of Parmenides.

Parmenides distinguished between the world of actual reality and the world of appearances perceived by sensory faculties of mortals. He declares the existence of a sole true “Being” that appears in diverse illusory forms (Graeser, 1977: 362). The Greek philosopher develops two philosophical ways to account for the difference between appearance and reality, and Shakespeare touches this philosophical dimension in numerous ways in his plays. Walter N. King, in his essay “Shakespeare and Parmenides: the Metaphysics of *Twelfth Night*”, (1968) draws the attention to the fact that the play is full of “metaphysical statements” which reflect the “confusions generated by self-deception, physical and psychological disguise, and mistaken identity – confusions that gradually become worse confounded until the shrewder characters begin to make sharp distinctions between ‘*what is*’ and ‘*what appears to be*’” (King, 1968: 289).

The distinction between appearance and reality is symbolically observed through the disguise of the characters who conceal their real identities, taking new appearances and references. Viola, the heroine of the play, hides her real maiden identity and cross-dresses as a young boy

with the name “Cesario”. Feste, the licensed clown, is another character who disguises as “Sir Topas” in his attempt to play a trick on Malvolio (Elam, 2008: 46). The symbolic distinction is also found in Olivia's veil which is “a typical Shakespearian symbol of appearance masking reality.” (King, 1968: 295-296)

However, what strikes spectators much more than these symbolic representations is the language used to express the distinction. *Twelfth Night* includes specific statements that encompass remarkable philosophical content. Walter N. King (1968) reveals interesting parallelism between many speeches by Feste and fragmental statements of Parmenides's poem, *On Nature*. In this poem, the Greek philosopher states two ways to perceive things, both of which can be concluded from the following quoted statement in the poem:

Come now and I will tell thee_listen and lay my word to heart_ the only ways of inquiry that are to be thought of: one, that *{That which is} is, and it is impossible for it not to be*, is the Way of Persuasion, for Persuasion attends on Truth.

Another, that *It is not, and must needs not be*_this I tell thee is a path that is utterly undiscernible: for thou couldst not know that which is not_for that is impossible_nor utter it.

For it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be.

What can be spoken of and thought must be: for it is possible for it to be, but it is not possible for “nothing” to be. These things I bid thee ponder; for this is the first Way of inquiry from which I hold thee back. ... the Way whereon mortals who know nothing wander, two headed. (King, 1968: 287 - 288).

The first philosophical way is the Way of Truth which can only be logically perceived by human mind. F. M. Cornford's explanation of the second way is mentioned : “I have called this second way of untruth the 'Way of Seeming' ... 'What seems to mortals' ... includes (a) what *seems real* or appears to the senses; (b) what *seems true*, what all men, misled by the senses believe and the dogmas taught by philosophers and poets on the same basis; and (c) what has *seemed right* to men, ... the decision they have 'laid down' to recognize appearances and the beliefs founded on them in the conventional institution of language....” (King, 1968: 288-289)

We find the reflection of these philosophical statements in selected passages belonging to Feste. The first passage is when the clown disguises taking a new appearance and creating the new identity of “Sir Topas”:

Feste _[as Sir Topas] Bonos dies, Sir Toby. For as the old hermit of Prague, that never saw pen and ink, very wittily said to a niece of King Gorboduc, ‘*That that is is*’; so I being Master Parson am Master Parson, for what is ‘that’ but ‘that’ and ‘is’ but ‘is’ ?

(TN, 4.2. 12-16)

The second passage belongs to Feste when he questions Sebastian's identity, mistaking him for “Cesario”:

Feste _Well held out, i’ faith! *No*, I do *not* know you, *nor* I am *not* sent to you by my lady to bid you come speak with her, *nor* your name is *not* Master Cesario,

*nor this is not my nose neither. Nothing that is so is
so.* (TN, 4.1. 5-8)

Meanwhile, the third passage occurs in the interaction between Viola and Feste:

Viola _I warrant thou art a merry fellow, and car'st for *nothing*.

Feste _Not so, sir, I do care for *something*; but in my conscience, sir, I do not care for *you*. If that be to care for *nothing*, sir, I would it would make you invisible.

(TN, 3.1. 25-29)

In these passages, Feste draws the same distinction as Parmenides between what *is* genuinely real and what, in fact, *is not* real but *appears* to be so. When saying “‘That that is is’... what is ‘that’ but ‘that’ and ‘is’ but ‘is’?”, “ Feste uses the logical ‘axiom of affirming’ in which “a thing is saide to bee or not to be” (Elam, 2008: 307). This contradicts Feste’s ‘Nothing that is so is so’ entailing the ‘axiom of denying’ (Elam, 2008: 307). Grammar intertwines with logic here as Feste underlines the deceptive force of appearances. He uses multiple negatives to emphasize the confusing situation in the play in which “nothing is what it appears to be” (Elam, 2008: 307). This emphasis presumably aims to uncover the complicated meanings behind the confusion.

The confusion between what “is” and what “is not” continuous throughout the play till it reaches its climatic point in Orsino’s exclamation at the coappearance of both Viola and Sebastian in one form: “Orsino One face, one voice, one habit and two persons:/ A natural perspective, that *is* and *is not*.” (TN, 5.1. 12-13) The dual forms merge in one scene and in one speech, so do the way of being “that is” and the way

of seeming “that is not” overlap creating one spectacular scene (King, 1968: 298).

However, the grammar itself which Feste uses is confusing. This leads us to the observation of the dual aspect of language which Shakespeare highly stresses in *Twelfth Night*. Just as language is a clear medium to communicate truth, convey knowledge and give insight, it is a decisive and a misleading instrument.

Shakespeare elucidates language ambiguity in numerous instances in the play. One of which is the use of the verb “to be”; the same verb used to convey a major Parmenidean philosophy *is* an unreliable tool. This is due to the fact that it maintains three grammatical meanings which cause perplexity :

The first meaning is “identification”: Feste has a name and thus, he can be identified; the second is “existential”: Feste 'is' and has a being. According to Parmenides he really exists; the third meaning is “copulative”: Feste equals himself. Feste is the same as Feste and nothing else (King, 1968: 291).

To analyze this point, we need to consider the moment at which Feste mistakes Sebastian for Cesario in the previously mentioned passage. Feste's senses fail him to recognize the reality of the matter; thus, he relies on the conventional medium of language and its arts to perceive the cognitively challenging situation. Yet, the several grammatical meanings of verb “to be” do not offer him any help. Feste tells Cesario that he is indeed Cesario because the latter can be named so: “*nor* your name is *not* Master Cesario” (*TN*, 4.1. 7) using the identification verb “to be”. Feste relies on the existential verb “to be” to reach a logical convincing conclusion that the one in front of him is

Cesario. However, this grammar-based conclusion is unreliable because, as we recall, Feste cares only for “something” that, though unidentified, has an existence and thus can be thought of, named and expressed by words (King, 1968: 291). He does not care for Cesario implying in the same speech that he is “nothing”: “I do not care for *you*. If that be to care for *nothing*,” (TN, 3.1. 28-29) and Cesario is indeed an illusion as there is no real existence for such a person. Hence, he is not supposed to be identified and named. This counters Parmenides's denial of “nothing” to be (King, 1968: 291).

Another instance of the decisiveness of language is seen in Feste and Viola's interaction when the latter enters disguised as Cesario and finds Feste playing with a tabor:

Viola _Save thee, friend, and thy music. Dost thou live *by*
thy tabor?

Feste _No, sir, I live *by* the church.

Viola _Art thou a churchman?

Feste _No such matter, sir. I do live by the church, for I
do live at my house, and my house doth stand by
the church.

Viola _So thou mayst say the king lies by a beggar if a
beggar dwell near him, or the church stands *by* thy
tabor if thy tabor stand *by* the church.

(TN, 3.1. 1-10)

Viola initiates a conversation with Feste asking him about his profession using the preposition “by” meaning “making a living by playing...”. However, Feste intentionally uses a pun to reply providing information of locality as an answer to another meaning of the same

preposition, i.e. “live next to”. In return, Viola provides another phrase “to stand by” in which the same preposition “by” has another spacial meaning of “to be maintained by”. This series of puns on a single word from both characters do not only offer verbal comedy and entice laughter, it also reveals the unstable state of language whose every single word does not necessarily have a single corresponding meaning. A word may have more than one meaning and such multiplicity and variety may bring with it challenges in communication and interpretation. Härter asserts that “both dialogue partners toy with language's instability” (2022: 297). Feste continues further to remarkably state the issue “much debated in Shakespeare's day, of the relationship between linguistic sign and referent (or words and things), and thus the reliability of language as a representation of truth” (Elam, 2008: 251).

Feste _You have said, sir. To see this age! *A sentence is but a cheverel glove to a good wit: how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward.* (TN, 3.1. 11-13)

A sentence, a unit representing language, is compared to a flexible loose item that can be stretched or shaped easily according to the intentions or whims of its users. We find that, on the one hand, the advantages of using the flexibility of a language in a sound creative manner to achieve certain purposes are exposed by Shakespeare, advantages such as producing laughter and marking striking philosophical points, just as the language of our play succeeds to accomplish. On the other hand, language is criticized for its instability, as it can be misused by its users. “Language that becomes malleable, being– as this comedy demonstrates – all too readily subverted” (Elam, 2008: 251). In this case, the negative effect of language is easily exploited, and the value of words are diminished. This is clearly indicated by Viola's statement:

Viola _Nay, that's certain. *They that dally nicely with words may quickly make them wanton.*

Feste _I would therefore my sister had had no name, sir.

Viola _Why, man?

Feste _Why, sir, her name's a *word*, and to dally with that word might make my sister wanton. But indeed words are very rascals, since bonds disgraced them.

Viola _Thy reason, man?

Feste _Troth sir, I can yield you none without words, and *words are grown so false I am loath to prove reason with them.* (TN, 3.1. 14-24)

Härter comments on this passage saying that misuse of language extends “any misuse of words as with oaths between lovers, gentlemen, in business or politics. The passage reads as an example for the unreliability of language and the danger in taking words literally—a topic that can be encountered elsewhere in the play” (2022: 297). This exchange between Viola and Feste also serves as a proof to argue that the defect does not lie only in language, as the linguistic conflict in the seventeenth century entails, or only in its misusers themselves, as the views in the sixteenth century suggest: it lies, in fact, in both language and its users. On the one hand, the conventionality of a language makes it flexible and changeable according to the various intentions of different individuals (Barney, 2009: 116). On the other hand, users may misuse the medium causing its words to lose their value and to have the obligation to be registered in written forms in contracts and documents as Feste states. However, even in a written form, language loses its credibility. This is implied in Malvolio’s whimsical interpretation of the letter from whom

he compulsively and desperately concludes to be written by Olivia. It is proclaimed that “the desire to disclose illuminating secret meanings, is of course Malvolio’s catastrophic attempt to decode ‘Olivia’s’ billet-doux with its notorious conundrums: ‘*M.O.A.I. doth sway my life. . . . what should that alphabetical position portend?*’ (*TN*, 2.5. 106–117)” (Elam, 2008: 15). The riddling alphabet is described as a semantic trap that perfectly suits Malvolio's self-love. He tries desperately to “make that resemble something in me” (*TN*, 2.5. 117–118) and he eventually finds the “supposed” resemblance: ““M.” Malvolio. “M” – why, that begins my name!” (*TN*, 2.5. 123–124). This doing of Malvolio resembles that of those who deceive themselves and others by using language to force their opinions and wills. They create apparent logics, conclusions and dogmas that deviate from reality. Thus, language is made a decisive device and is rendered as unreliable and misleading instead of logical and truthful.

A similar case is criticized by Shakespeare in this comedy, that is of inkhornists who use inkhorn words and expressions. The inkhorn language is characterized by being overflowed with ambiguous unheard words that are mostly burrowed from other languages such as Latin and Greek (Johnson, 2016: 193). Common English people do not normally use these words or cannot even understand them. Inkhornists use this ambiguous pretentious language to create learned scholarly appearances for themselves. Shakespeare adds his input in the linguistic conflict of his age by employing one of the vices of language, cacozelia, to criticize inkhornism. This satirization is evident from the following passage in which Sir Andrew Aguacheek, yearning to learn high-sounding superficial words, pays close attention to Cesario's words and determines to memorize them (Joseph, 2005: 72):

Cesario {to Olivia} -Most excellent accomplished lady, the heavens
rain *odors* on you! ... My matter hath no voice, lady, but to
your own most *pregnant* and *vouchsafed* ear.

Sir Andrew (aside) - “*Odors*, “ “*pregnant*, “ and “*vouchsafed*” __
I’ll get 'em all three all ready. (TN, 3.1. 82-89)

The invasion of foreign words was problematic as it created two conflicting language communities: the neologizers who supported the borrowing of classical words, and the purists who refused to accept these intruding expressions (Gibert, 2017: 20). The debate added to the already instable state of language, and led to the free and haphazard creation of words. Shakespeare’s English is considered the most obvious proof of the linguistic freedom of the age (Joseph, 2005. 49-50). Shakespeare creatively exploited the situation by merging the two forms of language, i.e., English and foreign. “Shakespeare’s delight in a general ambience of English language and inspiration. The dominant contrast is not between Art and Nature, but between the classical and the ‘native’” as stated by Charles and Michelle Martindale (2005: 1).

When inspecting the characters in the play and their backgrounds, we find that Shakespeare creates two social communities. This duality is evident from the language he assigns to its speakers. The dramatist chooses classical-romantic language for Duke Orsino's household. We find that the beloved is described as “cloistress,” with “eye-offending brine” tears and her servant is referred to as a “handmaid”. Orsino, the lover, compares himself to Actaeon, a mythological classical figure, who suffers from the “fell and cruel hounds” of his impulses. He wishes that the “rich golden shaft” of the love-god Cupid injures the one he loves so that her “sovereign thrones” will overflow with passion for him, as he claims himself to be her “one

self king”. Meanwhile, the language Shakespeare sets for the household of Olivia, the beloved, is quite different. It is full of “ducats,” “substractors,” cups of “canary,” “shrews,” “viol-de-gamboys,” “wenches,” “buttery bars,” “jigs,” “kickshawses,” and “galliards”. The estate represents an ordinary English community with the portrayal of drinking, foolish pursuers, clever and witty servants, and self-loved butlers. This ordinary community is affected by Viola’s numerous visits and her love-filled language; love as “divinity,” and “loyal cantons of contemnèd love,” songs are to take place in this prosaic community. The dual communities are joined and unified in one place, Illyria (Mowat and Werstine, 2004: xvi).

The union of characters and communities are represented as well in the union of words. Shakespeare's words are mixes from Latin and vernacular Saxon languages. He invents new words that reflect his new ideas and enhance the play. The following is a list of new invented words that are used in *Twelfth Night*: “Consanguineous,” “Dexterously,” “Lustrous,” “negotiate,” “Obscene,” “Fancy,” “Pestilence,” “Brine,” “Sovereign,” “Provident,” “Prattle,” “Virtuous,” “Eununch,” “Prodigal,” “Quarreler,” “Accost,” “Strife,” “Syllogism,” “Transgress,” and “Amends” (Molugu, 2018: 5-6).

In a brief summarization of this section, we can discern the philosophical implications in *Twelfth Night*. Moreover, we can interpret Shakespeare's views on language, as he stresses the notion of duality. In an indirect reference to the duality of language, the dramatist explores the real form and the deceptive one, using philosophical statements that parallelize Parmenides's statements. However, Shakespeare directly refers to the positive and negative sides of language through revealing its inconsistency and vulnerability, yet using it to reason, entice laughter and

to unite diverse aspects. In addition, the dramatist stresses the confusion in the play to reflect the social confusion and disorder that is caused by the misuse of language. Just as language can be used in a decisive way, it can be employed as a creative powerful tool to give insight, communicate truth, connect people, entertain and logicalize.

Conclusion

Language has been a heated topic of debate and argumentation for centuries. A mistrustful view towards language has prevailed. The medium has been deemed an imperfect, instable and a misleading tool that misguides and deludes man. In its vulnerable state and inconsistent quality, language is an easy tool for all individuals to exploit as they use it to lure people into believing imaginary illusory things, unrealistic thoughts, as well as imposed views and dogmas. It is important to note that language use has been the reason behind the disintegration in society, as it led people to fall into conflicting parties.

However, Shakespeare through his comedy *Twelfth Night* denotes his own views regarding the issue of language. He uses the same language, that has been a topic of debate, to debate other issues. The language of *Twelfth Night* gives a strong implication to the notion of duality, discussing the duality of forms as real truthful ones and illusory confusing appearances. The medium also sheds light on serious social-linguistic issue concerning the inkhorn controversy. It reflects the dual social state in the dramatist's own society, referring to the conflicting communities of neologizers and purists. This can also be interpreted as an indirect exploration of the dual aspect of language.

Language is a double-edged sword. Shakespeare clearly displays the truth of this statement by showing the positive and negative use of the medium. Shakespeare refers to the ambiguities and the inconsistent qualities of language as well as the fallacies caused by its misuse. However, he also shows the flexibility of this medium and gives insight into the creative successful way of using it. The dramatist creates comic episodes out of linguistic fallacies and ambiguities, highlighting the

creative power of language. He also forms new words by uniting different rooted words, and he implies this as a symbol of unifying two conflicting language communities. This illuminates the crucial reforming, communicative, and socially-bonding functions of language. Furthermore, he employs a philosophical and a logical language to refute rigid views and conceptions about the medium, emphasizing the argumentative and analytical functions of language.

Shakespeare acts as a philosopher employing his outstanding logical, rhetorical and grammatical linguistic abilities in *Twelfth Night* to defend this artistic tool of his, language, and to reveal his own philosophies and perspectives. The dramatist's creative use of language in this comedy can be interpreted as a challenge directed towards all the philosophers and language specialists who criticized the medium.

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