[In the essay that follows, Eagleton contends that the language of *Twelfth Night* melds with its reality and, through the central subject love, collapses and confuses the social roles of the characters.]

At the opening of *Twelfth Night*, Orsino describes his love for Olivia in terms which directly recall some of the paradoxes of language and illusion in other Shakespearian plays:

O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou!  
That, notwithstanding thy capacity  
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,  
Of what validity and pitch soe'er,  
But falls into abatement and low price  
Even in a minute.  
(1, 1)

Orsino's love has the destructively creative quality of the language of Richard II and the *Macbeth* witches, and the illusions of Puck: it absorbs and transforms reality into its own image, levelling its values to its own standard and thus rendering all experience arbitrary and interchangeable. The free-ranging, ocean-like quality of excessive love is the ground of its own negation: its capacity to receive all experience is equally its inability to discriminate between the intrinsic values of particular items. Excessive love, like disembodied or elaborate language, is a self-generating subjectivity detached from physical reality and therefore illusory; like the illusions of Oberon and Richard II it dominates reality, shaping it to its own form and granting it validity only within these terms, negating the experiences from which it draws positive substance. Unrequited, melancholic love intensifies this process: it is self-consuming, as Orsino is pursued and consumed by his own desires. When love, like language and created illusion, ceases to be closely structured by the physical situations which render it intelligible, its relation to these situations becomes paradoxically both parasitic and imperialist: it feeds off a real condition which it simultaneously creates, and can then be seen as an embodied contradiction, a self-cancelling encounter of negative and positive life.

The complex relations of language and reality is a common theme in *Twelfth Night*. Language in the play, as in Gaunt's use of metaphor in *Richard II*, can shape reality creatively, disclosing through linguistic connection a previously obscure truth:

*Viola* And what should I do in Illyria?
My brother he is in Elysium.
Perchance he is not drown'd—what think you, sailors?

*Captain* It is perchance that you yourself were saved.
*Viola* O my poor brother! and so perchance may he be.

(1, 2)

The Captain catches up Viola's use of `perchance' and gives it a slightly different emphasis, which Viola then takes up with a sense of new insight, using the word a second time with both her own original emphasis and the Captain's new meaning in mind.

This creative-exploratory use of language can be contrasted with the verbal fencing of Sir Toby Belch and his companions. In these exchanges language constantly overrides reality, ceaselessly spawning new meanings which grow, not from the substance of an argument, but from previous verbal resonances themselves unrooted in reality. Language detaches itself from reality and takes flight as a self-creating force, controlling rather than articulating the course of a conversation until reality comes to exist almost wholly at a verbal level, only tenuously connected to actual experience:

*Sir Andrew* Fair lady, do you think you have fools in hand?
*Maria* Sir, I have not you by th' hand.
*Sir Andrew* Marry, but you shall have; and here's my hand.
*Maria* Now, sir, thought is free. I pray you, bring your hand to the butt'ry bar and let it drink.
*Sir Andrew* Wherefore, sweetheart? What's your metaphor?
*Maria* It's dry, sir.
*Sir Andrew* Why, I think so; I am not such an ass but I can keep my hand dry. But what's your jest?
*Maria* A dry jest, sir.
*Sir Andrew* Are you full of them?
*Maria* Ay, sir, I have them at my fingers ' ends; marry, now I let go of your hand, I am barren.

(1, 3)

The progress of this exchange is shaped wholly by verbal resonances, each giving rise to another. The puns and allusions collide, counter-cross and interact rapidly, and one significant element in the word-play is the quick, confusing switches from physical fact to metaphor. Maria converts Aguecheek's metaphor of `hand' into fact, then unifies fact and metaphor in the image of the hand drinking at the buttery-bar; Aguecheek latches onto the metaphor and is then further confused by Maria's ambivalent use of `dry' to apply both to her own language and Aguecheek's hand; when Augecheek settles on the first meaning at Maria's instigation, Maria reverts to applying the term to physical fact—his hand—but in a metaphorical way. Maria's language absorbs and appropriates reality for its own purpose, without ever submitting to the contours of fact itself: her speech is an area of free, fluid existence (`thought is free') beyond the rigidities of stable definition, an area within which elements of experience can be endlessly interchanged, combined and devalued to create fresh absurdities and arbitrary connections.

Metaphor, then, can operate creatively or destructively: by breaking down the limits of settled definition it can extend one reality into illuminating connection with another; it can also break down defined reality into a purely negative freedom, disclosing insights and relations held at a
sheerly verbal level beyond the boundaries of actuality and therefore incapable of interacting
with known reality to reveal fresh truth. The breakdown of creative connection at the level of
normal discourse is a corollary of this mode of communication:

Sir Toby He's as tall a man as any's in Illyria.
Maria What's that to th' purpose?
Sir Toby Why, he has three thousand ducats a year.

Verbal dexterity is effective only at the level of its own self-generated illusion: brute reality can
expose it for what it is, as an elaborate nothing, a substanceless patter:

Sir Toby. Approach, Sir Andrew. Not to be abed after midnight is to be up betimes; and `diluculo
surgere' thou know'st—
Sir Andrew Nay, by my troth, I know not; but
I know to be up late is to be up late.
Sir Toby A false conclusion! I hate it as an
unfill'd can ...

For Belch, reality consists in proving contradiction and illusion, and Aguecheek's simple-minded
assertion of the self-evident offends his sensibility. Yet Aguecheek's mode of discourse is
paradoxically similar to Belch's: to affirm that things are what they are, to resist elaboration, is a
tautology equivalent in its own realm to the contradictions which Sir Toby discerns. A tautology
is as self-contained and self-created as Belch's own language: reality itself shares the quality of
illusion.

The issue of language and reality emerges directly in Viola's conversation with the Clown in Act
3 Scene 1. The Clown acknowledges himself as a `corrupter of words':

To see this age! A sentence is but a chev'ril glove to a good wit. How quickly the wrong side
may be turn'd outward! ... I can yield you (no reason) without words, and words are grown so
false I am loath to prove reason with them.

Reason—reality—can be expressed only in language and yet is falsified by language; without
language there can be no reason yet with language there can be none either —to speak or keep
silent is equally illusory. The Clown is aware that language and experience are so intertwined
that to manipulate words is to distort reality:

Viola ... they that dally nicely with words may quickly make them wanton.
Clown I would, therefore, my sister had had no name, sir.
Viola Why, man?
Clown Why, sir, her name's a word; and to dally with that word might make my sister wanton.

Yet the power of language to shape reality to itself, a power which involves the absorption of
reality into speech, highlights paradoxically the distance of language from reality:
... 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. (3. 1)

Language draws real substance into itself and becomes a self-contained, substitute reality confronting a nothing—the vacuum left by the reality it has assimilated. Because it confronts nothing, and nothing cannot be changed, it is impotent to affect it: the Clown's rejection of Viola as nothing cannot in fact make her invisible.

Before the Clown leaves Viola he manages to extract from her two coins, and the connection of money and language is significant. The Clown's response to Viola's first coin is to ask for another:

Clown Would not a pair of these have bred, sir?
Viola Yes, being kept together and put to use.
Clown I would play Lord Pandarus of Phrygia, sir, to bring a Cressida to this Troilus.

The Clown personifies the coins, endowing them with real, generative life, reducing himself simultaneously to a neutral go-between, a mediating element. The relation of money (symbol) to human life (reality) is inverted, as it is in Richard II: the coins, like language, 'breed' by their own independent life, becoming the controlling masters of a human reality which exists as a parasite upon them. Human life is objectivised and inanimate life subjectivised in a single movement, as language, inanimate symbol, sucks life from real human existence and reduces it to a corpse, an inanimate nothing. In both cases, money and language control, and yet cannot control, reality: they dominate and determine it as a superior power, yet since their mode of domination is to absorb reality into themselves, they are merely regulating themselves.²

The duping of Malvolio is a similar instance of the controlling power of language. Malvolio is driven to false and illusory action which he believes real by a language-created illusion—the letter written by Toby and his friends—which has all the force of reality. Malvolio's laborious tracing out of letters, words and meanings is an image of a man falling under the false power of language, viewing language as a completely adequate motivation to action. His behaviour before Viola is purely linguistic and therefore illusory, with no ground in fact: the letter determines and controls his physical existence, as in the text of the letter itself Viola is presented as saying that 'M.O.A.I. doth sway my life', shown as under the power of inanimate strokes of the pen. As a result of the illusion, Malvolio the servant overreaches his role to become a self-created master, as language itself, the servant of human life, becomes its tyrant. The letter which Belch later presses Aguecheek to write, challenging Antonio to a duel, reveals a similar confusion of language and reality:

Taunt him with the license of ink; if thou thou'st him some thrice, it shall not be amiss; and as many lies as will lie in thy sheet of paper, although the sheet were big enough for the bed of Ware in England, set 'em down; go about it. Let there be gall enough in thy ink, though thou write with a goose-pen, no matter. About it. (3, 2)

The interchange here of symbol and reality is parallel to the similar interchange in Maria's puns. The physical yet symbolic act of writing becomes itself a substitute for physical activity, so that
metaphor constantly blurs into fact: the greater the physical size of the paper the greater the insults will be, the gall is almost literally in the pen despite the physical fact that the pen may be a goose-pen. 

The illusory, interchangeable quality of language in the play, its capacity to absorb and regulate the substance of human reality, has a direct parallel in the action of the drama itself: in the illusions, switchings and mistakes involved in the adoption of human roles. Throughout the play, roles adopted as conscious illusions backfire and begin to control reality itself, to a point where the frontier of reality and illusion is dangerously obscured. Olivia and Orsino are both 'actors', self-consciously fostering roles of lover and beloved which are objectively false but seen by the actors themselves as real; the roles, like language, actually regulate their owners' physical behaviour, providing them, as in a play, with strictly delimited 'texts', given functions and attitudes, from which their personal action must never deviate. Each character's role depends on the role of the other, in an act of collaborative illusion: Orsino's identity as a rejected lover feeds off Olivia's identity as the cold beloved, and vice versa, in a reciprocal movement of negative and positive creation. Viola is then drawn within this illusion, through her adoption of an illusion of disguise to further her real aim of serving Orsino; she is made to act the part of one actor (Orsino) to another actor (Olivia) in a way which conflicts with her own genuine identity (her love of Orsino). Viola, like the Clown with his coins, is reduced from real human existence to the status of a neutral mediator between two illusions: in the scene where she presents Orsino's claims to Olivia she operates merely as an embodied verbal message, a metaphor connecting two separate realities. Her role in this scene is to live at a sheerly linguistic level, eliminating her own authentic desires; she is an actor who must confine herself to a given text, with no reality beyond this:

Olivia Whence came you, sir?
Viola I can say little more than I have studied, and that question's out of my part.
(1, 5)

When Viola asks to see Olivia's face she is told that she is 'now out of (her) text'; the face which is then shown is equally a defined and static illusion, a 'picture' which can be itemised in mechanical detail, as Viola's set speeches are a similar categorisation of elements.

The consequence of Viola's entering the reciprocal illusion of Orsino and Olivia is the creation in Olivia of a reality—her love for Viola—which breaks beyond the illusion and yet is similarly illusory—she does not know that Viola is a woman. Both Viola and Olivia define themselves and each other in roles which contradict their personal reality, weaving a network of illusion which neither dare break: their conversation is false for each, yet each considers it real for the other. Viola's enforced role as mediator for Orsino is a kind of self-cancellation: she is placed in a 'double-bind' situation where to secure Orsino's love is to further his love for Olivia and therefore destroy his love for herself. Either way she will come to nothing: her original, conscious adoption of the illusion of disguise to win Orsino's love is turned against itself, controlling rather than nourishing her real aims. Viola's own substance of identity is at odds with her role as linguistic mediator in precisely the way that language, in the play, falsifies human reality. Olivia is placed in a similarly impossible position: in rejecting Viola at the level of linguistic mediator she must harm herself by rejecting her also as the 'man' she loves. Since
Viola has fully assimilated this personal reality into her assumed role when she confronts Olivia, the language and substance cannot be separated out.

The story of Malvolio brings together similar themes and images into a significant pattern. Malvolio, like Macbeth, overreaches a defined social role at the instigation of inauthentic language and becomes himself inauthentic, illusory: his bid for a higher freedom is a self-enslavement, leading to physical imprisonment in a suffocatingly narrow dungeon which is at once materially cramping and, because pitch dark, a kind of nothingness, an absence of all material experience. By confining himself so strictly to the false role which Sir Toby creates for him, in order finally to overreach and negate it (he obeys "every point of the letter", as Viola talks precisely within her text), he plunges himself into a prison which is a cynically apt image of his real condition: a space so narrow and enclosed that it is at once positively limiting and, in its darkness, a negation which allows his imagination free and impotent range beyond it. The prison, that is, is simply a grotesque intensification of Malvolio's previous existence, disclosing its deepest reality: his positive and pedantic self-confinement to a narrow social role—brought out in the solid, laborious quality of his language—and the self-negating, overreaching ambition which paradoxically accompanied it, are pressed in prison into caricatures of themselves, and the essential relation of these positive and negative aspects exposed within a single condition. Malvolio falls both below and above the level of true identity: he restricts himself inhumanly to a rigid social role, and simultaneously allows his imagination free and ludicrous range beyond it.

The scene where Sir Toby and the Clown visit Malvolio in his prison brings the confusions of illusion and reality to their highest peak. The Clown disguises himself as a curate, and in doing so exposes four levels of illusion: he is a Clown (and thus, as we shall see later, a kind of illusion) disguised in the illusion of a curate, a role itself often illusory ("I would I were the first that ever dissembled in such a gown"), visiting Malvolio in a prison whose darkness—itself a nothingness—renders the disguise superfluous, doubly unreal. This particular interaction of illusion and reality discloses the nature of the whole situation: Belch and his companions trap Malvolio in a created illusion aimed to reveal the reality of his character (a reality itself defined by illusory ambition), and then treat the illusion as real, bringing rational criteria to bear on it to torment Malvolio into a further sense of unreality. The Clown refuses to treat Malvolio's answers to his questions as "real", attributing them to a devil inside the illusory facade of Malvolio's personality, treating Malvolio's physical reality as a disguise for a diabolic (and therefore illusory) reality behind it. Because Sir Toby and the Clown have themselves set, and can control, the terms of the illusory game in which Malvolio is trapped, they can turn any of his answers against him as proofs of his madness, offering a question or remark which he grasps as real and then withdrawing it as illusory:

*Clown* What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl? *Malvolio* That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird. *Clown* What think'st thou of his opinion? *Malvolio* I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion. *Clown* Fare thee well. Remain thou still in darkness: thou shalt hold th' opinion of Pythagoras ere I will allow of thy wits. (4, 2)

Malvolio cannot win: whatever answers he advances will be absorbed, neutralised and turned against themselves by the rules of the illusion. It is his word against the Clown's, and because the Clown controls the conventions of the game Malvolio will always lose:
Malvolio I am not mad, Sir Topas. I say to you this house is dark.
Clown Madman, thou errest. I say there is no darkness but ignorance; in which thou art more puzzled than the Egyptians in their fog.
Malvolio I say this house is as dark as ignorance, though ignorance were as dark as hell ...

Within the framework of an illusion which has carefully excluded real fact, truth is a matter of who can destroy the other linguistically. The Clown frames his questions to create 'double-bind' situations for Malvolio, blocking off certain aspects of reality and loading his language to produce the replies he wants:⁴

But tell me true, are you not mad indeed, or do you but counterfeit?

The possibility that Malvolio is neither mad nor counterfeiting but sane and ill-treated is carefully excluded from the question; whatever Malvolio replies can then be used to his detriment. When Malvolio attempts to prove his sanity by comparison with the Clown's—'I am as well in my wits, fool, as thou art'—the Clown, by exploiting the ambiguity of 'fool', as both a social title and a character-description, denies his own sanity and therefore Malvolio's: 'Then you are mad indeed, if you be no better in your wits than a fool'.

Illusion, then, both defines a man falsely and negates as false any criterion beyond itself to which appeal can be made: it is a kind of language which, by collapsing and controlling reality within itself, can adjust it endlessly for its own purposes. Illusion and language create a structure whose roles operate to control, not only the experience within the structure, but any possible experience outside it. By setting up the language and the illusion in a particular way, all experience is controllable and any assault on the structure can be deflected, as Malvolio's answers are deflected and distorted. Language, money, illusion, are only parts of reality, but parts which can encompass and regulate the whole.

Just as, in A Midsummer Night's Dream, Titania, herself an illusion, is trapped by Oberon into the further illusion of loving Bottom, so in this play Andrew Aguecheek, who helps Belch to ensnare Malvolio, becomes himself the victim of a Belch-created illusion, when he is induced to duel with Viola. Belch's manipulation of the duel is a striking instance of illusion creating reality: by mediating illusory information about each other to Viola and Aguecheek, Belch creates a situation in which each of the duellers thinks himself unwilling and the other willing to fight. The supposed mediator is in fact the creator and controller of the event: by deluding each character about the other, Belch can make something from nothing, fashioning a positive—a fight—from two negatives.⁵ By falsely defining each character to the other, Belch induces each to fight under the sway of this false image; by pretending to take his own created illusion as a real drama in which he is a minor participant, he produces a positive quarrel which is also a negation, one without cause or substance. In Viola's case, the illusion of the duel is simply a further illusion into which her original illusion of disguise has led her: it interlocks with the illusion brought about by the confusion of her with her brother Sebastian. In Aguecheek's case, the duel serves to expose the disparity evident throughout the play between his language and action, his real condition and his illusions about it:
... besides that he's a fool, he's a great quarreller; and but that he hath the gift of a coward to allay the gusts he hath in quarrelling, 'tis thought among the prudent he would quickly have the gift of a grave. (1, 3)

Aguecheek's language and action are mutually cancelling: he is a contradictory embodiment of language and action, and the point of the duel is to bring him to recognition of this reality. Sir Toby persuades him first that language is an adequate substitute for reality:

... so soon as ever thou seest him, draw; and as thou draw'st, swear horrible; for it comes to pass oft that a terrible oath, with a swaggering accent sharply twang'd off, gives manhood more approbation than ever proof itself would have earn'd him. (3, 4)

By creating this illusion, he can draw Aguecheek into the further falsity of the duel, a real action which reveals his negativity.

The positions of Belch and the Clown in this general confusion of reality and illusion, false role and language, are especially significant. Belch refuses all limit, all definition:

Maria ... you must confine yourself within the modest limits of order.
Sir Toby Confine! I'll confine myself no finer than I am.
(1, 3)

His rejection of definition is a refusal of external limit, of imposed convention; in a play where false versions of identity are being continually offered, he escapes relatively unscathed, defining others rather than suffering definition. Yet his rejection of restraint is not made in terms of an absolute freedom to become all, to appropriate all roles and experiences; it is made simply in terms of a freedom to be himself, to live within his own limits, confining himself to precisely what he is. His presentation in terms of physical sensuality, of the body, underlines this fact: like Falstaff, his overriding of social order springs from an achieved stasis, a bodily fullness which breaks order not by reaching beyond it but by ignoring it in favour of a stolid self-containment, by falling below rather than above it.

The Clown is in some senses the opposite of Belch, in some ways a parallel figure: they are positively related as polarities. The Clown, like Puck, is roleless, a negative, disembodied presence within and yet beyond the conventions of human community, all-licensed and thus a limitless nothing, a merely linguistic mode of existence, fast-talking but inactive. He is beyond community-rules because he questions all codes, all definitions, dissolving them into the paradox and contradiction of his free, fluid speech; yet he is also within the community because this negativity is sanctioned by the social role of Clown. Like Puck, his role is to be roleless; his positive and defined function in society is to criticise all function, all positivity. Olivia's rebuke to Malvolio, whom the Clown's wit offends, suggests the degree to which the fooling is sanctioned:

There is no slander in an allow'd fool, though he do nothing but rail; nor no railing in a known discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove. (1, 5).
The emphasis here is on `allow'dR' and `known': once it is recognised that the fool's formal function is to rail—that he draws positive identity from this negativity—he can be tolerated: his social role both lends him defined reality and, by containing his wit, neutralises it to the level of play, of illusion. The Clown is himself aware of this process, as his ambivalent use of the word `fool' signifies. As we have seen already in his taunting of Malvolio, the Clown creates paradox by using the word in two senses, as professional occupation and character-judgement:

Olivia Take the fool away.
Clown Do you not hear, fellows? Take away the lady ... The lady bade take away the fool; therefore, I say again, take her away.

(1, 5)

The Clown goes on to justify `fool' as a judgement on Olivia, thus validating his reversal of her command. He dissolves the defined status of `fool'—the social meaning—into the reality of human foolishness, thus showing the social status to be illusory—he, the Fool, has wisely revealed foolishness in what seemed reality—and therefore ironically exposing his own (illusory) role as more real than reality itself.

The truth implicit in his word-play is that to be a Clown is to be simultaneously real and illusory, positive and negative. The Clown is a `corrupter of words' and as such the supreme focus of society's unreality, reflecting it back to them: he is thus both more real than others, disclosing what is ultimately true of them, and less real, since his own foolery is the function of an arbitrary social role before it is a genuine personal characteristic. He exists in so far as he is `allow'd', as Fool, by society, given a social function which, because the negation of all function, is self-canceling and illusory. Yet he is more real than others because consciously a fool, adopting this negative role with grim and positive realism:

Those wits that think they have (wit) do very oft prove fools; and I that am sure I lack thee may pass for a wise man. (1, 5)

Viola recognises this truth also:

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool;
And to do that well craves a kind of wit ...
This is a practice
As full of labour as a wise man's art;
For folly that he wisely shows is fit;
But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit.
(3, 1)

The Clown is therefore more real than Orsino and Olivia, who are fools without knowing it; he is a good actor who, like Viola herself, consciously adopts an illusory role and remains undeceived by his own acting. The Fool is thus wiser than the fool: the more of a fool he is, the better Fool he makes and thus the less foolish he becomes, the more he fulfils a particular, settled definition without overreaching it into absurdity. The greater his clowning, and thus his illusion, the more real a man he becomes. The Clown, unlike Macbeth and Malvolio, can combine a complete
social definition with complete freedom: total linguistic liberty is the constitutive element of his sanctioned role. He fuses the self-containment of Olivia and Orsino with the self-squandering liberty of Sir Toby Belch, achieving that synthesis which is implicit in the ideal (rather than, in this play, the reality) of the steward, who preserves and dispenses in careful balance. The Clown's sanity—his reality—springs from the fact that he fulfils a settled role consistently, and it is the lack of such consistency in the play as a whole which suggests that illusion and insanity are general conditions. Consistent role-playing allows conjunction and communication, a reciprocal confirmation of identity and thus of sanity; inconsistent role-playing creates insanity, unreality, as the general confusion of identities at the end of the play suggests. In this situation, the Clown's ironic self-awareness, his insight into the confusion, is a negative mode of sanity.

In the whole action of the play, then, illusion, role and language connect into a single pattern. The switching and interchange of human roles is a kind of living pun and metaphor, a blurring of the symbols through which reality is expressed in a way which casts radical doubt on the consistency of that reality. Hamlet's advice to the Players, to suit the action to the word and the word to the action, cannot be sustained: language overwhelms and manipulates action, draining reality until it finds itself in danger of collapsing into nothing under the weight of its own excess. If language is in this sense articulate unreality, social role shares the same quality: they, too, define reality falsely, detaching themselves from the real purposes they were fashioned to sustain into a self-contained realm of illusion where they set up relations between themselves in isolation from real experience, thwarting and obscuring it. The final irony, as in A Midsummer Night's Dream, is that this whole process occurs within a play which is itself, as the subtitle suggests, a kind of illusion, a momentary sport; when Fabian remarks that he would condemn Malvolio's behaviour as `an improbable fiction' if he were to see it on stage, the play pauses to reflect on its own illusory nature, becoming for a moment less real than the characters it presents. When Viola confronts Olivia with Orsino's love, the effect, once the illusion of the whole play is held in mind, is one of an overlapping series of unrealities: Viola, an actor playing an actor playing an actor, presents the case of one actor playing an actor to another actor playing an actor. The relations of illusion and reality touch a peak of complexity which is equalled only later, in some of the mature tragedies.

Notes

1. c.f. Falstaff in Henry IV Part II: `A good wit will make use of anything. I will turn diseases to commodity.' (1, 22).

2. c.f. the Clown's own connection between language and money when he remarks that words have been disgraced by bonds. C.f. also the quarrel between Antonio and Sebastian in Act 3 Scene 4, which is created and controlled by money: the purse which Antonio gave to Sebastian as a symbol of trust and friendship becomes humanly divisive, as (from Antonio's mistaken viewpoint) the `purse-bearer', the servant, becomes the master, overstepping his role.

3. This interchange of animate and inanimate occurs in several minor images in the play. Physical objects are themselves symbolic—they have meaning, like signs, only in terms of what they do—but can be endowed with a constant human existence: Belch wishes that his boots
should 'hang themselves in their own straps' (1, 3), Malvolio, at the moment he is endowing the symbolic shapes of written language with life, begs leave of the wax of the letter for breaking it.

4. c.f. also the exchange between Fabian and the Clown, Act 5 Scene 1:

_Fabian_ Now, as thou olov'st me, let me see his letter.
_Clown_ Good Master Fabian, grant me another request.
_Fabian_ Anything.
_Clown_ Do not desire to see this letter.
_Fabian_ This is to give a dog, and in recompense desire my dog again.

The Clown frames his remark so that Fabian cancels out his own request: Fabian's generosity is turned against itself, by the Clown's verbal dexterity.

5. c.f. the Clown, Act 5 Scene 1: 'Marry, sir, (my friends) praise me and make an ass of me. Now my foes tell me plainly I am an ass; so that by my foes, sir, I profit in the knowledge of myself, and by my friends I am abused; so that, conclusions to be as kisses, if your four negatives make your two affirmatives, why then, (I am) the worse for my friends and the better for my foes.' Negative criticism induces by negation positive self-awareness.

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