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Character sketch of Orsino

Dr. Pratibha Yadav

In the realm of characterisation, Shakespeare is matchless. Orsino is the central and principal character of Shakespearean play 'Twelfth Night'. From the very outset of the play, Olivia is devoted to an ideal of love while mistaking the direction in which it sought he sought. This is true in case of the love affairs of Orsino and Olivia. Orsino who draws us from the start into the aura of his imagination is in some ways the most perfect of Shakespeare's romantic lovers simply because he is so much more. This is easily appreciated if we compare him with his early proto-type in the 'Two Gentle Men of Verona'. Combining a single figure those aspects of man's nature which in the earlier had been systematically contrasted and opposed.

Orsino was the duke of Illyria. He was in deep love with Olivia. She never responded to his love. Viola was another girl who was serving in his court in disguise. She was as Cesario. Soon, she became great favourite of the duke, Orsino. She was now sent as the duke's personal ~~secretary~~

messenger to Olivia to win her love for him. Thus, Orsino, content to win by proxy a woman who immutes herself in a seven years mourning for a dead brother may have the glamour of a knight of romance but he is not quite free from the risk of absurdity. He seems in love not so much with a woman as with his own idea of love. Orsino's repeated rejection by his mistress don't throw him into despair. Instead, he recognises, in her equally fantastic devotion, a nature of surprisingly 'Five Foam'. He reflects on how she will love when the throne of her heart shall find its king. How too will she love when his inexhaustible but as yet deluded fancy shall also find the true sovereign it seeks. This, of course, it does at the end of the play when he exchanges all his dreams of passion for the love of someone he has come to know. In the play's last line before the final song, he is able to greet Viola as Orsino's mistress and his fancy's queen.

The above estimate presents Orsino as a Platonic lover. He believes in the principle of love for love sake. His passion of love is quite unmistakable.