Sometime early in the seventeenth century, William Shakespeare wrote a play about a young aristocrat who indulges in ostentatious grief over the death of a dearly beloved family member despite well-reasoned objections from kindred and friends. Ultimately, a visit by an unnatural specter alters the course of that mournful career and leads the protagonist to an unexpected but generically predictable end. Around the same time, Shakespeare also wrote a play called *Hamlet*.

The parallels between Olivia and the Prince of Denmark at the outsets of *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet* can, as the previous paragraph demonstrates, be described in terms facile enough to belie their precision. However, as Thomas L. Berger has put it, “the best essay on *Hamlet* is *Twelfth Night*,” and the plays’ presumed sequential chronology make the connections the more intriguing. If not identical, the plays are, at least fraternally, twinned mediations upon our responsibilities to the dead and the management of insistent memory.

Most immediately relevant to the focus of this collection, *Twelfth Night* and, specifically, the part of Viola also represent the potentially most immediate, literal “afterlife of Ophelia” for the boy actor who originally assayed both characters on stage. Furthermore, however many plays may have intervened between *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* in the repertory of the Chamberlain’s players, a regular audience at the Globe may have encountered, in Viola, the first Shakespearean part for the boy actor last seen gabbling musically, but madly, in the latter stretches of *Hamlet*. Considering the
proximities of the two plays, it is possible to say that Ophelia goes under in *Hamlet* only to wash up upon the shore in *Twelfth Night*.

To say so is to make two discrete but connected statements about the materials and methods of characterization upon the Renaissance stage. First, the technologies of actor preparation were unique to the historical period, as much recent work on “parts” has demonstrated. As Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern note, parts have “a physical economy that facilitates not only intra-play but also inter-play references. If all these fragments had a unity of appearance, then we might need to reconsider the notion of the separateness of one play-text from another.”

Second, these particular materials enabled, I will argue, methods of characterization that extended embodied, fictional presences across multiple plays, creating surprising connections among seemingly discrete roles. It is, therefore, the purpose of this chapter to explore homologies between the two parts of Ophelia and Viola—materially, thematically, generically—to offer several arguments about the extension of Ophelia’s character in the immediate aftermath of *Hamlet*. I will argue that Ophelia’s resuscitation upon the shoals of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* resolves Shakespeare’s most famously dissolved—though not dissolute—character. Ultimately, via the fictive extension of Ophelia through the trajectory of Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare romances Ophelia’s tragic end and, in so doing, takes an early step in what can retrospectively look like his career-long sentimental journey towards the recuperative comforts of Romance.

*Acting and the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

Repertory playing by more or less stable companies inevitably exposes audiences to “ghosted” characters as they experience, for instance, a Burbage as Vindice hard upon his Hamlet or an Armin as Lear’s Fool haunted by his Feste. This sort of “ghosting” is familiar to us even within modern regimes of film, where celebrity actors might inhabit a relatively restricted range of characters across a number of projects. (Celebrity is like another character on stage or on screen and presents problematics beyond the scope of this essay.) Characters, like ghosts, survive the death of their progenitors, and characters, like ghosts, exist only so long as we believe in them. But their aura can hover over actors in surprising, or even productively distracting ways—to cite an example Scott McMillin has tried out, “Did the Venetian wife who cannot bring herself to say ‘whore’ spend the previous evening playing Dol Common? Or was she Dame Pliant? In either case, a certain aura from *The Alchemist* attends Desdemona, and vice-versa, but we cannot tell which aura it is.”

McMillin’s diagnosis of the indecipherability of auras rightly,