

Malvolio

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Twelfth night character: Malvolio

William Shakespeare created the play twelfth night character Malvolio. Malvolio does not take kindly to those of the lower class; this is demonstrated by the way he treats Feste close to the beginning of the play. In the middle of the play, Malvolio scolds those who are above them in class for being loud and obnoxious; this shows that Malvolio he is a tendency to follow only his lady Olivia as opposed to anyone above him, meaning that he dislikes being lower class than those he views an inferior. Finally, at the very end of the play, Malvolio swear revenge on the entire group who made him seem mad; even though the members of the group (Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria) are all higher class than Malvolio. Malvolio is very classist; therefore, one can assume that he very much wants to become part of ruling class and order those he views as inferior.

When Malvolio scolds the fool Olivia becomes unfriendly with Malvolio and comments on Malvolio's narcissism "O, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste with distempered appetite" (Shakespeare 47). Olivia is saying that Malvolio, is to concerned with himself to realize that the joy the Feste provides to those within Olivia's court. Basically, Olivia is telling Malvolio to loosen up. This is ironic because in the minds of most readers, it is often the servant who wishes the monarch would loosen up. However, this is not the case, as Malvolio is the serious one. Because of Malvolio's serious, stuck up, and condescending attitude, this leads the reader to believe that

Malvolio believes he is above his class. He, it would seem thinks he should be considered better than just a servant.

This attribute is evident toward the middle of the play. Malvolio humiliates Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Feste and to a lesser extent Maria (Shakespeare 89). Malvolio does this by entering the room Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria and Feste have congregated in and openly threatens Sir Toby. Malvolio does this by telling Sir Toby that while he is related to Olivia, Olivia will not support his drunkenness and may kick Sir Toby out. This blatant disregard for authority puts Sir Toby and the others in an awkward position causing them to plan a prank on Malvolio. While Malvolio highly respects Olivia, he does not respect those who are above him in class, but he believes they are below him in intellect.

Furthermore, it can be said that Malvolio is loyal only to Olivia and not to her agents; this proves that Malvolio wishes to become an aristocrat able to lead those who he deems inferior

In the last scene, Malvolio is released from his cell and confronts Olivia about the letter written by Maria. Olivia recognises that the letter was indeed written by Maria and tells Malvolio that “Thou shalt be both plaintiff and the judge of thine own cause,”(Shakespeare 233). This statement by Olivia means that when Sir Toby, Maria, Sir Andrew are found responsible, Malvolio will be able to charge them with whatever pains he endured, and inflict what punishment he deems fit against the trio. Later in the same scene, Malvolio says “I’ll be revenged on the whole pack of you”(Shakespeare 233). Clearly, Malvolio believes that he has been mistreated and will thus have revenge for what has befallen him. Revenge is a universal tool, utilized by all classes. However, the degree of vengeance is usually interpreted by the class it is being administered by.

Therefore, because of Malvolios conceited mind set, it is fair to make inferences into what kind of revenge he will have upon the unlucky trio. Whatever the revenge may be, it will portray Malvolio as the hand of justice in an aristocratic society and Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria will be seen as the perpetrators of the demeaning crime.

Thus Malvolio is indeed a strong supporter of an aristocratic system. Malvolio is scolded by Olivia because of his treatment of Feste, who is of a lower social class than Malvolio. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Feste and Maria are embarrassed by Malvolio who yells at them for being too loud, even when they are technically of a higher class than Malvolio. Finally Malvolio swears revenge on the entire group who put him into the cell regardless of their reasoning or order. In conclusion, Malvolio tries to achieve a place higher in the pecking order within the court of Olivia.

Works Cited

Shakespeare, W. *Twelfth Night*. Toronto: Harcourt, 2000.