

Shakespeare's twelfth night: treatment of malvolio in the first assignment

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Depending on how the character is developed and acts throughout the play, the audience have varying reactions to his personal storyline; there is often opposing opinions as to whether the treatment of Malvolio is cruel, or comical, In the first scenes in which we meet Malvolio, depending on how his part is erected, it could be seen that he is merely doing his job, for example when he tells Sir Toby to ' take leave of Olivia if he doesn't stop acting inappropriately.

However, being disrespectful to characters is not part of his job yet we see him label Feste a barren fool'. It would appear that Malvolio possibly sees himself as of higher importance than Other servants Of the house, thus placing him on a pedestal that establishes the arrogance that is found in many productions of this play: we see this arrogance at its peak when he finds the letter, supposedly from Olivia. He asks him to ' be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants' yet he thinks nothing of the possibility that the letter is not legitimate, despite its absurd nature. It could be argued that, whilst the idea of the joke is funny, the fact that the other characters are toying with Malvolio's emotions, especially an emotion as serious as love, is cruel. However in this play love is not treated all that seriously, it is hinted at that Rosalind is possibly more interested in the idea of love than Olivia herself.

In the scene where Malvolio reads the letter there is a similar idea where it would appear that Malvolio is in fact more attracted to the idea of gaining power than the love to Olivia as we don't see him show any interest towards her, above his duties, earlier in the play. Malvolio is seen to have a very large ego, and he perhaps needs to be slightly more humble, We see this when his ego and arrogance grow dramatically whilst reading the letter as there were <https://assignbuster.com/shakespeares-twelfth-night-treatment-of-malvolio-in-the-first-assignment/>

only hints that it was about him, for example 'MOAN', whilst being a rather unsubtle hint, bears no concrete evidence for

Million to make his assumption that he was the subject of the letter. In this scene his ego is shown to be even greater than before, this self-elevation makes his fall from grace that shortly follows even greater. It could be argued that this makes his demise seem more deserved and therefore more comical rather than cruel as the trick wouldn't have favored if it weren't for his arrogance. After reading the letter, we see him act completely out of character. He abandons his puritan attitude entirely and behaves wildly inappropriately towards his lady.

It could be argued that, although he is simply following up on requests that had been made to him - although it was never made explicitly clear to him that he was the individual described in the letter, his desertion of the customs that he had followed until this point has left him with no dignity. It is possible that the audience would no longer respect Million as a character, which is quite possibly the intention of the director as it makes his treatment seem comical rather than cruel.

Whilst it is clear that the way in which the character is played has an influence on the way the audience react to his treatment, it is arguable that there are some aspects of his behavior that make his downfall more deserved and therefore comical. However if his arrogance is exaggerated, makes the trick more easily accepted as humorous rather than cruel.

Disagree with the statement as his treatment in the first two acts always appears to be somewhat deserved, but this idea can be exaggerated or

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understated depending on the directors and actor's dramatic approach to the character.