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**Festivity and Malvolio in *Twelfth Night***

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**Lixian Huang**

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**Lixian Huang**

We, the thesis committee for the above candidate for the  
Master of Arts degree, hereby recommend  
acceptance of this thesis.

**Bente Videbaek**  
**Lecturer, Department of English**

**Clifford Huffman**  
**Professor, Department of English**

This thesis is accepted by the GraduateSchool

Charles Taber  
Dean of the GraduateSchool

Abstract of the Thesis

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*Twelfth Night* is a play full of merrymaking, wish fulfillment and laughter because of its close relation to festivity in Elizabethan times. In the overall jolly atmosphere in the *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio is the one character in this play that acts as an opponent to revelry. This essay aims to study the festival theme in *Twelfth Night*, and Malvolio's disruptive role in it. It includes a study of Malvolio's understanding of himself, his changes through the development of the play and how those work on the audience especially his unresolved ending. I argue that though Malvolio is positioned as the opponent of revelry, he is in fact the unwitting center of the *Twelfth Night* revelry. His problematic exit is a way to shift focus of the audience from his silliness to his potential revenge, and thus dissolve his shame temporarily. Shakespeare pushes the limits of comedy by creating possibility of danger, but finally comes back to the boundaries of comedy by giving Malvolio an exit from the stage.

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## Introduction

*Twelfth Night* is a play full of laughter, revelry, and love fulfillment, yet with a touch of pain attached to it. With its title *Twelfth Night Or What You Will*, a suggestion of the play's festive mood and jolly atmosphere is not unanticipated by the readers/ audience. The main plot of the twins reuniting with each other after the sea wreck, and having themselves committed to their loved ones is one of the classic ones in the Shakespearean comedies. The subplot which is involved with the hedonistic people like the manipulative Maria, the alcoholic Sir Toby, the firebrand Feste, and the gullible Malvolio, sets up the comic scenes in the play, making it apropos to the festive mood of the play. The charm is strengthened by the interaction of the two plots where the main plot establishes a foundation for the comic subplot which, in turn, adds a layer of realistic depth to the miraculous love fulfillment and reunion that happen in the main one. With regards to the less jolly element as contrast to the overall self-indulging revelry in the play, Malvolio shoulders most of the burden of laughter by acting unwittingly as the center of the revelry, and finally gets nothing but humiliation and torture at the end. He is the shred of alien bitter reality that makes the play a delicate work of art instead of an inordinate festival of release that is joyful to watch but lacks realistic rumination.

It is important to notice the literary genre that *Twelfth Night* is in if we need to understand the challenges Shakespeare takes up with regards to the limits of comedies. *Twelfth Night* is categorized as a Shakespearean comedy because of its ending of marriages promised to the main characters according to the literary traditions in Elizabethan time. It is an imitation of very different styles of life and attitudes, ranging from the mourning Viola to the professional clown, from the puritanical Malvolio to the self-indulgent Sir Toby, all of which make up a microcosm of the festive Elizabethan society. It is also a mirror of customs where the popular festival

tradition, the Lord of Misrule, is used in the subplot. Sir Toby who acts as the Lord of Misrule conspires with Maria to trick the outsider of their festival, Malvolio, for fun. The truth about life is revealed in Malvolio's last scene when he shouts that he will be revenged "on the whole pack of [them]" (5.1.411). Life is not only about revelry and wish fulfillment but also about disappointment, powerlessness and vulnerability. With the embodiment of festive practices in the play, *Twelfth Night* well demonstrates what comedy is in the Renaissance. However, apart from the anticipatory comic and jolly atmosphere because of the genre it is in, Shakespeare also brings in pain, frustration and disappointment to the play, which makes it a more complex comedy to viewers and readers.

In real life, we seldom fail to distinguish between a pair of twins who are of different genders; furthermore, we seldom witness a reunion of two survivors who happen to be twins from a terrible storm, and who happen to marry the person they both are newly acquainted with. Such coincidences, or "luck" for the characters highlights the unrealistic elements and authorial attempts in the construction of the play. As Salingar points out, Shakespearean critics contend the paradox of Shakespeare's use of artificial devices in theater, arguing that the "artificial situations, contrived marriages, elaborate happy ending" (6) that work in his plays distorts the reality. It is true that the events that take place in the play are usually not what happens in reality. However, in *Twelfth Night*, even though the plot is artificial, the theme is universal because Shakespeare engages us in a conversation of the advantages and disadvantages of the release and restraint of human energy, the importance of understanding one's real self, and the inevitability of encountering disappointments and illusions in life. *Twelfth Night* is a typical Shakespearean comedy that both imitates life, and offers rich textual guidance for a stunning performance of festivity to the audience. The trick performed on Malvolio is a representation of what the



mocking Lord in the Twelfth Night revelry would do to a killjoy in Elizabethan time. Malvolio's interpretation and response to their gimmicks make a hilarious performance for the audience. Furthermore, his downfall at the end not only dramatizes the play as a performance but also reaffirms the harshness of reality. The play shows the audience that there is not only drinking and dancing but also the necessity of restraint to life. While watching the play, we will admire the crafted tricks performed on Malvolio as well as reflecting on our own experience of festivity, encountering shame and self-illusion.

## Elizabethan Festivity

Since all forms of art are rooted in real life, *Twelfth Night* as a theater production that aims to cater to the taste of the audience in Elizabethan time will take the audience's familiarity with merrymaking into account. As Francois Laroque notices in his book *Shakespeare's Festive World*, "the Elizabethan age in England in particular were indissolubly linked with a notion of periodic celebration and rejoicing for which all and sundry prepared and in which all took part: the age was, in short, pervaded with the spirit of festivity" (4). To further understand the influence from festivity on Shakespeare's work, C. L. Barber in his book *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* traces the historical and cultural background of the holiday customs and entertainments in Elizabethan times, and produces a comprehensive anthropological map of the social holiday traditions at that time. Shakespeare clearly understands that festivity in a comedy can make people laugh and feel happy, because "coming up to London from a rich market town, growing up in the relatively unselfconscious 1570's and 80's and writing his festive plays in the decade of the 90's..., [he] was perfectly situated to express both a countryman's participation in holiday and a city man's consciousness of it" (17). Like Laroque, Barber also argues that holiday customs play a very important role in people's social life, and "festivals... [that] worked within the rhythm of an agricultural calendar" provide them with an occasion to release their energy and vitality (16). Shakespeare uses festivals to set the mood for *Twelfth Night* for two reasons: first, to win the audience over by creating an anticipation for them when they all have more or less experienced these social customs; and second, to dramatize the play by creating surprise when the audience find that the play is different from their expectation. The discrepancy between expectation and surprise is what *Twelfth Night* aims to achieve for its audience. Therefore, translating holiday customs to drama works well with audiences who trust their experience in the beginning, but

only to find out that in the world of art, reality is always represented but never duplicated.

In the beginning of Act II, Scene iii, the first line of Sir Toby is to persuade Andrew that staying up late at night is to be up early in the morning. Though his argument reads to us like sophistry since staying up late cannot equal getting up early except that people are awake in both situations. What fundamentally differentiates the two situations should lie in their motives to do so. In other words, Sir Toby stays up late to have more eating and drinking while, commonly speaking, people wake up early to work. A more drastic difference between staying up late and getting up early is in their attitudes towards employing human energy, the former of which is to push it to the maximum while the latter is to consume it for future uses. Therefore, as a supporter who upholds the legitimacy of releasing human vitality, Sir Toby is the embodiment of festive spirits, and the spokesman for the Elizabethan audience who are also huge supporters of holiday release. “Holiday, for the Elizabethan sensibility, implied a contrast with ‘everyday’,... and occasions like May Day and the Winter Revels, with the cult of natural vitality, were maintained within a civilization whose daily view of life focused on the mortality implicit in vitality” (Barber 10). The sharp contrast between daily mundane life and excessive revelry during holiday hours show that people in Elizabethan times are confronted with two modes of living—to restrain or release their human vitality. Though people realize that life is mortal and has obligations, holidays provide a venue for them to reveal their hidden vitality with a consciousness of their limits. In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Toby who stands for revelry represents the vital energy of human beings, while Malvolio serves as the spokesman for mundane ordinary life. The trapping of Malvolio is a combat between these two opposites of human nature, the unbounded release versus the consciousness of restraint. As an adept writer, Shakespeare has pinpointed the struggle in human nature, and expressed it through a play to remind his audience of their limits in life.

When we look deeper into the Elizabethan holiday traditions, we can find that Sir Toby's role is more than an ordinary revelry participant. He is the Lord of Misrule who mocks authority and the puritans who oppose festive practices. L. G. Salinger refers to the subplot in *Twelfth Night* as a "prolonged season of misrule ... with Sir Toby turning night into day; there are drinking, dancing, and singing, scenes of mock wooing, a mock sword fight, and the gulling of an unpopular member of the household" (25-26). Lord of Misrule is one of the major forms of festivities in the Elizabethan era where "rougher pleasures of defiance and mockery are uppermost" in Shakespeare's time (Barber 24). Barber quotes Holinshed's observation of this custom as "of old ordinary course, there is always one appointed to make sport in the court, called commonly lord of misrule: whose office is not unknown to such as have been brought up in noblemen's houses, and among great housekeepers which use liberal feasting in that season" (25). On such occasions, the master is mocked and made fun of by the Lord of Misrule, and festive abuse is widely used on that occasion. Though most people would enjoy this liberating custom, Barber argues that still there are people who are against it, in which case the "wanton mood would be abetted by encountering someone who, refusing to give homage to My Lord in return for his badges, declared himself a craven or a kill-joy," and that person will be "'mocked and flouted not a little'" (30). What Barber points out is exactly what happens between Malvolio and the other characters in the subplot. While the others are relishing in merrymaking, Malvolio, the kill-joy, not only defies their authority as the Lord of Misrule but also destroys their festive mood. When the subplot is viewed in the festive context, the gulling of Malvolio becomes a natural response from other characters to retain their authority, and their right to having fun. By giving the play the title of *Twelfth Night* when the Lord of Misrule is widely practiced in the holiday revelry in Elizabethan times, Shakespeare hints at a close relationship between the

content of the play and the social festivity featured by liberation of energy and festive abuse. Since Shakespeare is never tired of offering fun and reflection to the audience, the title and the subplot suggests that *Twelfth Night* is a comedy that deals with festive spirit, natural expression of human vitality, and the combating between release and restraint. As for the audience whose life mainly consists of daily routines, Twelfth Nights offers them an opportunity to experience revelry by watching a pseudo-authority fall down at the hands of the festive crowd.

## The Interpretation of Malvolio

### 1. The Character of Malvolio

In order to understand the role Malvolio plays in the festival in *Twelfth Night*, we have to trace the occupational descriptions of him as a steward in Shakespeare's time. Edward Cahill depicts what a steward is like in the sixteenth century in his article "The Problem of Malvolio," explaining that a steward is more than a servant, and demands great respect especially in a noblemen's household. He can have up to a hundred servants and dependents under his command, and his job is to keep order in the household. However, because of his responsibility and privilege, the steward is often the least popular person among other servants (64). Therefore, the role of Malvolio and his duty in *Twelfth Night* is based on the social custom at that time. As an important but not necessarily popular character in a household, steward Malvolio is the right person to intrigue clashes between lazy servants and him, which starts the subplot. In the garden scene, Maria exhorts Sir Toby to keep quiet, otherwise they will be turned out of doors "if [her] lady has called up her steward Malvolio" (2.3.83). Her advice implies that as a trustworthy man to Olivia, Malvolio often acts on behalf of her. His role not only involves keeping order in the household, but also dealing with matters outside the household for Olivia like delivering the ring to Cesario. Therefore, though he is unpopular with the other servants, he has power and privilege over them. However, to become the object of gulling, he is hated not for being a dutiful steward but for his superiority and arrogance as Sir Toby challenges him, "Because thou are virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" (2.3.114-115). His silliness comes from self-deception, and ironically the comedy begins right after he criticizes Sir Toby as being "mad" (2.3.86) but only finds out that he is the person with "midsummer madness"(3.4.58) in the revelry season.

As an order-keeper in the house, Malvolio's interruption in the garden is understandable due

to his responsibilities, though not necessarily pleasurable to the audience. Nevertheless, Shakespeare purposefully exaggerates the conflicting attitudes between Sir Toby and Malvolio towards festivity at night in order to foreshadow the gulling of him. Even though he is an unpopular character in the play, what really traps him and makes him a laughing stock for the audience is his partial understanding of himself which lead to his unrealistic ambition. The result of his self-deception does not only push Sir Toby and Maria to further torture him, but also creates a space for the audience to interpret the connection between his previous haughtiness and later furious anger in the last scene. Therefore, in order to examine the ways self-deception works in Malvolio's mind and its impacts on the play and the audience, the thesis will be an analysis of him from two gazes from two different directions-one is the internal gaze from Malvolio on himself; the other is the external gaze from other characters, mainly Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria, Feste and Fabian on him. These two gazes can reveal how Malvolio's identity is unfolded in the play, and how that influences the audience's reaction towards him.

In the gaze of the others, the most distinctive trait of Malvolio is puritanical, as Maria describes him, "the devil a puritan that he is, or anything constantly, but a time-pleaser" (2.3.146-147). From Maria's description of him, we can know that Malvolio is a time server who follows the current trends, and the rise of puritanism is one of them in the Elizabethan era. Puritans believe in moderation and they oppose excessive drinking and eating. Therefore, as a time-pleaser who observes the trends, Malvolio objects to excessive drinking and merrymaking as well. Because of a general understanding in Shakespeare's time that "puritans are notoriously hostile" to the festive seasons (Jones 23), Malvolio disrupts the festive moods in the late night garden and opposes Fabian's bear baiting, both of which are typical puritanical behaviors at that time. His puritanism is one of the causes of Sir Toby and Maria's trick on him because of the

tradition of puritan baiting in the Elizabethan times. Here Malvolio is presented as a variant of puritanism of on stage, which reproduces the abuse a puritan can receive in the Elizabethan era. G. P. Jones quotes a letter from John Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton describing how a puritan is abused and flouted in the Twelfth Night entertainment: “[In] that night they had a bal at Whitehall, and on the Twelfth Day were invited to the mask there, which was handsomely performed, but that there was a puritan brought in to be flowted and abused, which was somewhat unseemly and unreasonable” (23). The letter shows that puritans are not welcomed or respected among people who are in a festive mood, and they are only the counterexample of merrymaking that people make fun of. With the tradition of mocking puritans in Shakespeare’s time, Malvolio is designed to be a puritanical person who is the center of the railing because of his opposition to excessive drinking and eating. Like the Twelfth Night guests in the letter, Sir Toby and Maria decide to make a fool of him for pleasure.

However, though opposing hedonism is one of the traits of puritanism, we cannot confirm that Malvolio is a puritan, for he seems to be more interested in winning Olivia over than behaving as a puritan. Though he has shown little tolerance to excessive drinking and eating, which is one of the puritanical traits, most of the time in the Twelfth Night entertainment, he is actually “practicing behavior to his own shadow” (2.5.17). Since shadow is an inaccurate image of one’s body, when Malvolio is practicing the behavior of a noble lord, what he sees is an opaque presentation of himself. By doing so, he approximates the behaviors of a lord, but can never become a real one. However, since Malvolio is not aware of the difference between playing a lord and being a lord, he is actually anticipating a role that exceeds his ability. Whether it is with his puritanism or his desire to become a lord, the truth about him is that he never really knows who he is. He is not a puritan, but a person who behaves like a puritan to serve the time. He is



not a lord, but presents himself as if he will become nobility. With regards to his motivation in doing so, Alison P. Hobgood argues that Malvolio “merely acts the role of a puritan... and it is perhaps more un-puritanical than one might imagine” because he seems to concentrate more on his performances than his puritanical belief (4). The motivation for Malvolio in disciplining the loud crowd in the garden is to play the role of a virtuous steward instead of following the religious rules. The reason for depicting him as a puritanical character is to reflect on the current phenomenon of puritans’ opposition to festive activities. Furthermore, foreshadowing Malvolio’s puritanism can make it easier for the audience to relate him to their real life with the rise of puritanism at that time, and thus lessen the distance between drama and reality. However his puritanism is emphasized at the beginning; how he behaves later in the play proves him to be a vain and ambitious person who is not to be defined by religion.

Though he is firm in believing that he can be a lord when he reads the letter in the wood, it seems to be very difficult for him to succeed when he actually lacks the ability to fulfill that purpose. He is read by Maria as a daydreamer who “cons state without booke and utters it by great swaths; the best persuaded of himselfe: so crammed (as he thinks) with excellencies, that it is his grounds of faith, that all that look on him, love him” (2.3.162-165). Clearly, he is not a lovable character in the play in other people’s eyes. His pretended solemnity is seen through by Maria for he only cons state without really understanding what the state is. He plays the role of a knowledgeable person by persuading himself of his superiority. The play does not provide any reason for his superiority but “selfe-love” (1.5.91), which makes him think that he is loved by everyone who lays eye on him. The reason for his narcissism is partly due to his important role in Olivia’s household. Even though there are a number of other male characters in the play, none of them can compete with Malvolio in terms of their efficiency in work. When Olivia’s brother

dies, Malvolio takes up the role of a communicator between Olivia and the outside world in telling her of the visits from Cesario and also helping her deliver the ring to him. The awareness of his importance in Olivia's house implants self-love in his mind. As a result, it leads him to arrogance and conceit. At his first appearance when Olivia asks him to give his opinion on Feste, his arrogance is brought to a full scope by claiming that "infirmity, that decays the wise, doth ever make the better foole" (1.5.76-77), and "these wise men, that crow so at these set kinde of fools, no better than the fooles zanies" (1.5.89-90). In speaking these two lines, Malvolio expresses contempt for Feste's railing, and places himself in a superior position to those pretended wise men for he will not "crow so at these set kinde of fools" (1.5.89-90). As Olivia notices, Feste, the professional fool whose job is to rail should not be taken seriously for what he says. However, since Malvolio is too proud of himself, he cannot tolerate any even jesting railing towards him. The condescending tone in his remarks shows that he has always placed himself in a superior position to those people who like to have fun. In turn, his superiority is read to be narrow-mindedness that "taste with a distemper'd appetite" (1.5.91-92). Because he concentrates too much on behaving like a wise man who refuses railing for fun, he forgets that things like Feste's jokes should not be taken seriously, and the attitudes towards them cannot indicate the listeners' intelligence or social state. Though he does not realize it, his inability to play the role of a wise man leads to a biased understanding of himself, and the distance between his real and imaginative identity is what Shakespeare continues to explore in the next scene.

Clearly, there is a gap between what he sees himself and what other people see in him. And this gap is even enlarged in the wood scene where he is tricked by Maria's letter. His ambition of rising into a higher social hierarchy is obvious when he reads the letter, and his desire to become a lord comes from the drive of gaining power and control over others. When he is by himself in

the wood, he thinks aloud, asking himself how to react to Olivia's "exalted respect" (2.5.27-28); the primary solution for him is to marry her and "be Count Malvolio" (2.5.36). Though it is only a daydream, Malvolio already has a clear picture of his married life as a Count as to how he should behave, "calling officers about [him]" (2.5.48) after waking up, and to accept "a demure travaile of regard" (2.5.54) from the servants, and lecturing to them on proper behaviors according to their positions is what he wants to do in his married life. Malvolio's understanding of being a lord is about enjoying the rights that come with the title. His desire of marrying Olivia has very little to do with love and affection. It is a way for him to gain power over servants to highlight his superiority. Self-conceit makes him extremely eager to abandon his lowly status as a steward. What he imagines is to "wash off gross acquaintance" (2.5.169) like Sir Toby and Feste, and acts like a lord who "will be proud" (2.5.168-169) and "read politic authors" (2.5.169). His eagerness to cut off the relationship between gross acquaintance and him indicates his dissatisfaction with his current position, and his wish to transcend into a higher social hierarchy which he observes to be more suitable for him. However, the future picture that he draws for himself is a self-expanding one that exceeds his abilities. For the audience, the letter reading scene is not only a revelation of Maria and Sir Toby's trick on Malvolio, but also of his ambitious and vain nature. He is more than what he pretends to be. The puritanical role he decides to play is a cover for his ambitious nature. Underneath the austere and puritanical look, Malvolio is a narcissist who dreams to climb up the social hierarchy in order to have more power over others. His one-sided understanding of social hierarchy comes from indiscreet observation and unreliable imagination. As Maria says, what Malvolio sees is the shape of his shadow but not his real self. What other characters in the play and the audience see in him is a puritanical, vain and pretentious man who dreams big without taking reality into consideration.

Since Malvolio's identity is constructed not only through the gazes from the outside but also those from himself, we will analyze the inward gaze from two perspectives; one is a direct approach from his comment on himself, the other is an indirect one from his comment on other people and their behaviors in the play. The description of his self-portrait is evident in Act II, Scene V when he is gulled by Maria and Sir Toby to the wood. "Some are become great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em" (2.5.148-50). Malvolio pictures himself as the chosen man who is in favor of Fate, and will become great and "appear fresh" (2.5.154). He is easily entrapped by the letter because he thinks that he is the man with greatness thrust upon with.

His gullibility lies more in his urgent desire rather than the persuasiveness of the letter. The familiar C's, U's, T's and P's in the letter gulls him to believe the authenticity of it. Without any doubt to the situation, he hurries to read along. With the preconception of the authenticity of the letter, the first phrase of the letter reads in Olivia's style to him as well. So far, Malvolio judges the letter based on his past experience with Olivia. However, when the letter continues to unfold its content, Malvolio begins to read it the way he wishes to: "No man must know, if this should be thee Malvolio?" (2.5.101-102). Before the letter tells him who the man is, Malvolio makes presumptions based on his desire. Later when he finds that the M.O.A.I. does not match his name, he distorts it indiscreetly in order to cater to his will. Without looking for further evidence, he crushes it to "bow to [him]" since "every one of these letters are in [his] name" (2.5.143-144). Self-love makes him a strong believer in Olivia's affection for him regardless of the suspect evidence. Self-deception boosts the success of this trap because of Malvolio's narcissism. This scene reveals that he is vain and arrogant in nature, but he fails to recognize it with a false understanding of himself as virtuous and solemn.

His haughtiness is revealed in his remarks on others' behavior as well. In Act II, Scene III when the noisy crowd gathers in the garden in the middle of the night singing and drinking, Malvolio comes to them accusing them as "mad"(2.3.97) with "no wit, manners, nor honesty"(2.3.99), and categorize their behaviors as "disorder" (2.3.110)and "misdemeanors" (2.3.112). When making these criticisms, Malvolio poses himself on the opposite side of the "uncivil misrule" represented by Sir Toby and his crowd as someone who is civil and self-restrained in eating and drinking. In his mind, as a loyal servant to the Lady, his self-restraint renders him a better person than the festive crowd. And it is his realization of the superiority he has, and the duties he owes to Olivia, that make him discipline Sir Toby's festive activities. The fierce reaction he has towards Sir Toby and Feste shows his disapproval of their disorderly lifestyle and rejection to identify himself as one who shares the same social ranking with them. His unwillingness to mingle with the festive crowd reaches a climax when he shouts at Maria and Sir Toby, "You are idle shallow things, I am not of your element" (3.4.140-141). In refusing to refer himself as one of them, Malvolio cannot find his place in the world. In his heart, he feels superior to the festive people by seeking power to rule over them. Nevertheless, however strong his repulsion of recognizing his social status is, he still remains stuck as a steward who will never transcend his social rank. His inability to transcend the social hierarchy conflicts with his firm belief in his superiority to his peers in his mind, which makes him a vulnerable person who is unable to deal with railing or objection. His biased self-awareness renders him a narcissist while the false understanding of his identity leads him to be the prey of Maria's trick. Before he is caged in the dark cell, Malvolio never realizes the gap between what he imagines himself to be and what he really is.

## 2. The Audience and Malvolio

In seeing Malvolio's struggle on stage, the audience sees the discrepancy between what Malvolio's true identity is and what he makes himself believe in. And the difference between these two is what distinguishes between what is performed and what is shown. A performance is about the actor's interaction with the script, anticipating the audience's response to his interpretation. It is a process of enlivening the two-dimensional character into a three-dimensional person by the employment of actions and voices. However, the inward meaning of the character needs to be discovered by the audience's interpretation of the actors' performance, which is another process of translating from their sight to their thought. In other words, the audience do not only hear what they hear and see what they see on stage, they also hear what they do not hear and see what they do not see in the actors' performance. In the letter reading scene, what is performed is Malvolio's reading of the letter and his belief in the authenticity of it. However, for the audience, his vanity and desire for power is shown through his language and gestures. For the playgoers, what is performed and what is shown becomes a paradox; as John L. Styan states, "[A]n audience must see invisibility" (47). If the audience cannot see through Malvolio's hidden vain and ambitious nature but only reads him as a puritan who likes to oppose festivity, the play will become an attack towards puritanism and restrained living style. However, what Shakespeare presents in Malvolio is more than a detestable puritan who loves to destroy the happy atmosphere, but a person who fails to understand the limits of his ability. Puritan is a role that he plays, but not who he is. Furthermore, when the audience is watching Malvolio boasting of his grand postures in the future, they do not only see him as a fanciful person who likes to daydream, but also a pathetic fellow who thinks beyond his capabilities. Such an insight gives the audience a superior positioning to Malvolio, and they laugh at his overestimation of his

abilities. They feel safe in laughing at Malvolio's gullibility and folly in believing the letter because they know everything on stage with a know-all perspective. When they encounter a fool who does not know of his foolishness, laughter becomes their primary response. As a despicable and ridiculous character in the play, Malvolio shoulders the burden of laughter.

Apart from Malvolio's failure to understand his identity, the yellow stockings and cross-gartered fashion as signs of sexual impotence and marital betrayal are comical for the early modern playgoers. Loreen L. Giese notes that for early modern Londoners, "yellow stockings signal illicit sexuality and marital betrayal" (235). Early modern literary writers identify yellow stockings as signals of jealousy when the wife learns of her husband's extramarital affairs (239). John Astington views the cross gartering from a gender perspective, and reads it as a sign of "impotent sexuality" (240). For the modern audience, these interpretations of yellow stockings and cross gartering provide a cultural background in understanding the sexual and cultural implications in Malvolio's outfit. Whichever suggestion meets the interpretation of Shakespeare's audience, it is safe to conclude that the yellow stockings and cross gartering are opposite to Malvolio's constructed identity in the play. He seeks in no way to be a man with illicit sexuality or to express his sexual impotence. The cultural implications in his outfit and even his actions on stage make the audience laugh even harder for his unwitting revelation of follies. Positioned as a puritanical servant who does not even smile to others, Malvolio becomes the center of the revelry by behaving inappropriately in a funny outfit. The sharp contrast between his intent and his performance is what makes the audience laugh.

However, their laughter at Malvolio is not only derisive but also malicious. Since the audience go to the theater for entertainment, when they encounter a character in an adamant attitude against revelry and merrymaking, they can easily identify themselves with Sir Toby and

Sir Andrew. Especially in the context of *Twelfth Night* when drinking and eating are the main purposes of festivals, the audience go to the theatre with an expectation of witnessing a revelry of complete release and fun. Therefore, when Malvolio comes up to interrupt Sir Toby's merrymaking, his presence might remind them of similar experiences that they have in real life, and the audience can feel as irritated as the characters in the play. Their irritation grows more intense when Malvolio turns out to be an arrogant and pompous man whose puritanical behavior is only a cover for his ambition and vanity. Therefore, when they see him appear in a pair of yellow stockings and cross gartering, collective malicious pleasure occurs. Generally speaking, they enjoy the teasing of Malvolio in front of Olivia. Their malicious pleasure is an expression of their affinity to release and self-indulgence. Malvolio's name, "wishing him ill" (Cahill 63), suggests that he will be the despicable character in the play as his objection to merrymaking contradicts the purpose of watching a comedy. Therefore, not only the characters in the play but also the audience wish him ill as well. It is his ridiculous outfit and ludicrous action before Olivia that channel their dislike of him into laughter, which in a way releases the intensity of their displeasure towards him.

Even though Malvolio claims to be not of the same element as Sir Toby and hates to integrate himself into their festive spirit, he is actually the one who is refused by the environment and unwittingly becomes the climax of the festive revelry. Because of the know-all perspective that the audience have, they enjoy watching the collapsing of Malvolio's pretended solemnness, and the revelation of his vanity and arrogance. Laughter is a by-product of the audience's tolerance for folly when they are in a safe position, and are aware of everything happening on stage. Because of their privilege, they can tolerate Malvolio's discrepant understanding of himself and Olivia's affection for him; they can accept the dirty tricks that Sir Toby and Maria use on him;



and they even embrace the yellow stockings and cross gartering with sexual implications. Audience enjoy the dramatic conflicts between the two parties, and admire the wittiness in Sir Toby and Maria's tricks when they are faced with such a despicable opponent. Malvolio's arrogance makes him a derisive character for the audience who not only laugh at his absurd behavior but also mock him for his follies. While enjoying the privilege of knowing the tricks, the audience watch a self-important man making a fool of himself, and further torture by the festive crowd.

There is a double consciousness in the audience in which they are a part of the play, and at the same time outside the play with an awareness of the performance. In other words, they can feel as irritated as Sir Toby does when his festive mood is interrupted, and they feel satisfied when Malvolio falls into the trap, acting awkwardly in the yellow stockings, for they sympathize with Sir Toby and the other characters. However, at the same time, they are outside of the play because they cannot play tricks on Malvolio as the other characters do, and they know that what happens on stage is only a performance. The double consciousness makes them powerful as well as subjected to the performance. On the one hand, they know the back stories that Malvolio is completely unaware of; on the other hand, they are as anxious about what is to happen as the other characters are. With regards to Malvolio in the first three acts, the audience's dislike towards him has revealed their position as opposed to the one that Malvolio stands for. In watching Malvolio intercept Sir Toby and Feste's singing in the garden, the audience are invited to generate repulsion towards Malvolio through Sir Toby and Maria's discussion of him. Therefore, when the trick is brought up by Maria, they anticipate to Malvolio's foolish reaction to the trick. When they take the side with Sir Toby and Maria, they are actually participating in the tricks on Malvolio like they do in the play. Reversely, if they pity Malvolio for making a

spectacle of himself in the letter reading scene, they involuntarily take side with him, and become the object of Sir Toby and Maria's trick as well.

In witnessing Malvolio's follies, the audience can generate a corrective desire which spurs their anticipation of the character's fate. Firstly, their malicious pleasure enlightens them on the moral/ social positions they stand for, and then their realization fosters a sense of corrective tendency in viewing characters who are out of their element with them. When we know that Malvolio is so out of his element with other characters in the play, we would like to either see him corrected or further taunted. The scene with him wearing yellow stockings is another attempt to make fun of him while the dark room scene starts a new endeavor to make him realize his mistakes on viewing himself and the world. Therefore, the punishments he receives in the dark cell are what the audience look forward to. However, they cannot predict the intensity of his punishment. The play also changes its tone from comical to realistic, and in accordance, our response to Malvolio shifts from derision to fear and even sympathy for modern viewers.

The shift in tone from derisive to sympathetic in the play comes about in Act IV when Malvolio is locked in the dark room. The overall jolly tone in the first three acts ceases in Act IV when violence and torture reigns. In Act IV, Malvolio is physically and mentally tortured and humiliated by Feste. He is punished for his "madness" though in fact he is not mad, and the abuse that Feste and Sir Toby have done to him brings him great shame. To find out the root of such a drastic shift from tricks to violence, Becky Kemper traces the tradition of treating madness in Elizabethan times. She argues that madness is considered to be the behavior of someone who is possessed by sin, punishment and disease. And even though it is sometimes treated with religious instructions or herbal medicines, physical violence is the most frequently used method to cure it (46). Moreover, she continues to argue that the Elizabethans were used to

violence in both judicial and entertainment areas:

The government not only tortured perceived enemies of the state and publicly executed them, but also customized the method of death to the individual's crime, believing in the instructional opportunities of the symbolism of violence. Such ritualized and vicious punishments existed for all levels of crime.... Violence even permeated Elizabethan entertainment, which included bear baiting and cock fights as favorite pastimes. (46-47)

In such a social context, Malvolio's torture from Sir Toby and Feste meets the Elizabethan inclination to violence. Even though the shift of tone might seem unfamiliar to modern viewers, for playgoers in the Elizabethan era, Malvolio's torture can be entertaining because they are used to violence and bloody scenes like hanging in real life.

As a way to delude Malvolio, what Feste first does is to announce a false verdict on Malvolio by claiming that he is mad. Based on this pre-determined delusional conclusion, he purposefully distorts the facts by describing the dark room as a space with "windows transparent as baricadoes, and the clerestories toward the south north as lustrous as ebony" (4.2.37-39). By doing so, he aims to delude Malvolio into believing that he is actually mad, and cannot perceive the world as a normal person. However, Malvolio maintains his sanity by reiterating that the house is dark and he is not mad. Then the debate on who is the "mad person" between Feste and Malvolio begins in the dark room. However, the interrogation does not work out well because of Malvolio's persistent rejection of this accusation, claiming that the house is dark as hell and dark as ignorance. Since the audience know that it is a dark room, Malvolio's desperate but unfruitful refusal is entertaining to them as they want to see him punished. Here, the gaze on Malvolio from Feste and the festive crowd he represents differs from that in the first three acts. It has descended from depicting what they see in Malvolio to what they will him to be. If the vain and arrogant Malvolio is his true identity, then the mad Malvolio is a distorted picture created to satisfy their need for pastime, and even revenge. In contrast to Malvolio who pictures himself

beyond his real identity, Feste in this scene wills Malvolio to be someone below himself. In the interaction between Feste and Malvolio, Shakespeare plays with different levels of the understanding of one's true identity and his reaction to each of them. Malvolio remains in darkness because he does not admit to insanity. The previously constructed identity of the arrogant and vain Malvolio is forced by Feste to lower down to a falsely accused mad man. The discrepancy between who he really is and who he thinks himself to be is replaced by the discrepancy between who he really is and who others force him to be.

Because of the tit-for-tat counterattack between Malvolio and Feste, the audience have already immersed themselves in the dark scene wondering who the mad person is. However, the theatricality in this act does not only lie in the accusation and refusal but also the stage setting. There are two possibilities of stage settings for Malvolio in this scene: one is to place him in a trap under the stage in which he can thrust his head through and make his face seen by the audience. The other is to place him in a cage under the stage in which his face is shown to the audience. The first stage direction for Malvolio in the dark room is to place him in a trap set "that was used by spirits, devils, and other apparitions" (Richman 31) in the Elizabethan theaters. The actor can be positioned under the stage where he can open the trap and thrust his upper body out to talk back to Feste (31). Since he is in the cell below the stage, he can pop up his body every time when he needs to talk to Feste, which makes the scene more ridiculous. With the presence of Malvolio on stage, the audience can gain a better visual understanding of their dispute, and Malvolio's desperation in trying to defend himself. The second one is used in the 2012 production of Tim Carroll, starring Stephen Fry as Malvolio. The dark room is a cell under the stage, only showing Malvolio's face. Because of the bars and the walls of the small cell, Malvolio cannot actually see Feste when he talks to him from behind, which makes Feste's

disguise as Sir Topas more persuasive to Malvolio. When Malvolio is in a small cell like this, his actions are limited. Therefore, his performance is mainly presented by his voice, which lessens the comicality of the scene. What the audience see is more of his begging and desperate attitude instead of foolish insistence on defending himself. Whichever is used, the gist of the scene lies in Malvolio's counteraction to the false identity that Feste imposes upon him. Even though the audience might laugh at his futile attempt to vindicate his sanity and Feste's witty personation of the two characters, they have also witnessed the process of Malvolio being tortured and wronged.



(Stage photo of Stephen Fry playing Malvolio in the dark cell)<sup>1</sup>

At this point, even though the audience is still in the know-all position who knows everything on stage, their distance and superiority over Malvolio has lessened to a great extent since what they are faced with is no longer self-deception but self-justification. Shakespeare no longer focuses on Malvolio's vanity or arrogance, instead, he turns to his powerlessness in a misplaced world where sobriety is deemed madness. The laughter intrigued by a discrepant conception of

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<sup>1</sup>The photo is credited to Daily Mail online.

one's imaginative identity and real identity is gradually replaced by a sense of fear as to the extent of Malvolio's punishments as Sir Toby exclaims, "I am now so farre in offence with my Niece, that I cannot pursue with any safety this sport the uppeshot" (4.2.73-75). Though Sir Toby is the one who decides to put him in a dark room, there is a hesitation of pushing the punishment further for the fear of offending Olivia who trusts Malvolio. The reason for imprisoning Malvolio is to tease him "for [their] pleasure... til [their] very pastime tyred out of breath" (3.4.154-155). At this point, Sir Toby realizes that their pastime might have to end before Olivia gets angry. However riotous their revelry is, it is still a practice subjected to a higher authority who has power to the extent of their merrymaking. The boundary of the Twelfth Night festival is not controlled by the festive crowd, but in Olivia's hands.

For the Elizabethan audience, the harsh punishments of Malvolio can be interesting. However, for modern viewers who are less exposed to violent entertainments, the torture imposed on Malvolio can be difficult to deal with. Because of Malvolio's desperate call for help in the dark cell, modern audiences can feel sympathetic to his suffering. Despite his consistent yet unfruitful attempts to justify himself, Malvolio proves his sanity to the audience when he continuously asks for pen, paper and ink. Nothing substantial with regards to the development of the plot happens since the situation in which madness is imposed upon Malvolio remains a deadlock with Feste going away and Malvolio persisting on his sanity. However, the other side of Malvolio is revealed in his firm insistence on his righteousness. He is not to be pitied for being put in the dark room, but for being denied who he is. For the audience, Malvolio is no longer a proud steward who dreams unrealistic dreams, but someone who is persistent in truth. Moreover, the perspective Malvolio takes is different from the one in the previous acts where he always presumes himself to be in the higher position. Instead, he has turned from someone who wants to

transcend his environment through self-deception to someone who wants to go back to the previous world that he once despised. He does not want to be a count any more. All he wants is to be justified as a normal person who is as well in his wits as the Fool. The change in Malvolio's understanding of himself and his relationship with the world works on the audience. In witnessing his fall from the proud steward to the poor prisoner, the audience has experienced his helplessness as well. Therefore, the distance that is once largely set between Malvolio and the audience is shortened by his admittance of defeat. When he is no longer an opponent to the audience, the derisive or malicious laughter will be replaced by uneasiness and even sympathy to Malvolio's suffering especially for modern viewers.

The play reaches the climax in the last scene when Malvolio learns of the truth of the trick played on him. Even though he is greatly humiliated by Feste and Sir Toby in the dark house, what really destroys him is the public announcement of his folly in Act V, Scene ii. When someone is wronged for what he is not, he may be angry or desperate, but he is not ashamed. However, if someone is revealed to be the person he hates to admit, he feels shameful about himself. Stanley Cavell views shame as "the specific discomfort produced by the sense of being looked at; the avoidance of the sight of others is the reflex it produced... Under shame, what must be covered up is not your deed, but yourself" (Hobgood 4). In other words, shame is built on the revelation of one's folly in the public eye. Before his knowledge of Sir Toby's trick, Malvolio writes in his letter to Olivia exclaiming, "I have your owne letter, that induced me to the semblance I put on; with the which I doubt not, but to do myself much right, or you much shame" (5.1.329–331). Malvolio sees the exposure of Olivia's letter to the public as shame because her wooing Malvolio degrades her status. At this point, though Malvolio knows that he has been wrongly put in darkness, he does not feel ashamed of himself. He is humiliated by his

imprisonment but he has a right cause to justify himself since they have wronged him for what he is not. However, when Fabian begins to explain their “sportive malice” (5.1.365) to Olivia, his announcement becomes a public display of Malvolio’s hidden nature. It is at this point that he is shamed with the consciousness of his previous ridiculous behavior. His shame is constructed on two conditions; one is his silly deeds being looked at, and the other his vanity made known to the public. Positioned as a solemn figure at the beginning of the play, Malvolio is always wearing a mask, wishing his hidden identity can be kept unknown. However, with the revelation of Sir Toby and Maria’s tricks, his ambition to transcend his social status and his gullibility is shown in front of the public. The mask he used to wear is torn off against his will, and his true identity is exposed to everybody. With the abuses he suffers in the dark room, his dignity is swept away and his personhood is destroyed.

In response to the tremendous shame he faces in front of the crowd, he shouts out the angry line, “I’ll be reveng’d on the whole packe of you” (5.1.411) and then storms out of the room. After his exits from the stage, numerous questions remain with him as to where he will go to and how he will be revenged on them. Though he presents himself as an unthreatening character in the play, his angry exit causes some anxiety and trouble among the happy couples. Because of the comedy genre that *Twelfth Night* is in, its festive theme and jolly mood in the first three acts, the prisoner’s unresolved case drags the play only one step away from a complete correction of all the misplaced desires. Malvolio’s unresolved exit can be read as an attempt to dissolve his shame whereby the audience who have witnessed his folly will feel uneasy and guilty for his suffering. He is not only tortured in the dark room where he thought to have escaped the public eye, but also humiliated in the public eye for exposing his silliness and hidden dark nature. In order to dissolve his shame, he has to retaliate in a way that can combat the “sportive revenge,”



namely, refusing to complete the plot. With Olivia and Sebastian, Orsino and Viola, Sir Toby and Maria getting married, restoring Malvolio to his previous occupation as the loyal steward would have been the complete ending of this comedy. However, his exit signals his refusal to satisfy the consummation of the plot. The reason for his declining to join the majority is to shift the focus from his silliness to something else so that the audience can neglect his shame for the time being. And in such a short period of time when all the other characters are waiting for his response to the revelation of the tricks, the most instinctive response from Malvolio is to break out in anger so that his shame can be submerged temporally. As to whether he will conduct his revenge or not, Shakespeare does not continue to pursue any more. The exit of Malvolio is an unresolved move for the play, but for Malvolio, the storming out provides him with an outlet for the almost unbearable shame. As a character who appears as a self-restrained steward, the seemingly hostile remarks he throws to Olivia and the public give him excuse to escape. Put in a tortured and taunted position, the threatening claim of getting revenge on his opponents lifts Malvolio up to a potential proactive position in which he can take initiatives again. It is an unresolved ending for the play, but to a certain extent, it is a resolved ending of Malvolio as the unwittingly mocked character in the Twelfth Night revelry. Though he is ridiculous for his arrogance and ambition, he is never a malicious villain as Richard III is. He does not harbor any malicious intent towards anybody, and his pursuit of power is performed by merely acting like an authority, and daydreaming. He is a despicable character who deserves mocking, but torture and humiliation go too far in his suffering for such a simplistically proud creature. If his refusal to complete the plot can resolve his shame, he should be given the opportunity to gain back his dignity as a human being.

The audience who have witnessed Malvolio's angry escape from the overall happy

household are not by-standers who witness his fall but also participants in the dissolution of his shame. When Malvolio poignantly questions Olivia, “Why have you suffer’d me to be imprison’d” (5.1.370), his emotive forces have been transferred to the audience. As a witness of his folly in the first three acts, the audience involuntarily becomes a part of the *Twelfth Night* revelry in which Malvolio is the prey of the Lord of Misrule, Sir Toby. In laughing at Malvolio’s awkwardness in the yellow stocking scene, the audience enjoy the malicious pleasure at seeing him as a laughing stock on stage. His pride and narcissism translates to the audience as silliness, which makes them enjoy his ridiculous performance. Though Malvolio is unpopular with the audience, they involuntarily become the respondents to his foolish performance. Therefore, Malvolio has power over the audience’s emotions, be it recognized or not. When he is trapped in the dark cell, with Sir Toby’s hesitation of pushing the play further, Malvolio’s persistence in proving himself innocent imparts a different side of him to the audience. His unfruitful attempts even highlight his sanity, which makes the audience aware of the torture imposed upon him and his suffering psychological state. In the last scene when he shouts to Olivia, questioning her on what basis does he deserve such humiliation, the audience feels that his anger springs from the unjust torture to him. His question is not only directed to Olivia, but also the audience who have taken part in humiliating him. Apart from laughing at his consistent pride, the audience will have to ask themselves if Malvolio needs to be treated as cruelly as he is. However, Malvolio leaves little time for them to give an answer, but continues to defend himself. The audience begin to follow his train of thought and reevaluate the torture he suffers. Malvolio deserves the pranks because of his arrogance, which the audience will probably take pleasure in. However, when he, as the only person who is unaware of the tricks, is put in the dark room, he is not only proud but also desperate and pathetic. He does not know that the letter is a trap, let alone the sudden

decision of imprisoning him. It is not wise to speculate whether the audience will sympathize with Malvolio or not at the end, but we can know that the emotion they harbor towards Malvolio has become more complex than that in the beginning. His dissolution of shame, anger, and humiliation in the end causes the audience to reconsider his mentality in perceiving the unknown trick on him.

Like Olivia, when Malvolio tosses the threatening line of getting revenge on all of them, the audience are at a loss to his future plans as the characters do in the play. Losing their know-all ability, now they can only feel for Malvolio but not speculate on his behaviors or emotion after his exit. Finally, Malvolio escapes from a loop that is pre-designed for him where his reactions and emotions can be well predicted and observed. With the loss of their know-all perspective, the gap between the part that Malvolio sees and the whole picture that the audience sees disappears. Before Malvolio exits the stage, the audience is entertained by his partial understanding of himself, and his futile attempts to act like a lord. They are in a bird-view position where they are safe to laugh. With Malvolio stepping out of the stage, the audience descend to the same perspective that Malvolio takes, unable to predict what will happen next. With ease at the beginning, they laugh with hesitation at the end because of the unpredictability of Malvolio's exit.

The unresolved emotive force of Malvolio often leads critics to debate whether he is a tragic or a comic character. The argument starts with Lamb's review on *Twelfth Night* starring an 18<sup>th</sup>-century actor, Robert Bensley as Malvolio:

Malvolio is not essentially ludicrous. He becomes comic but by accident. He is cold, austere, repelling; but dignified, consistent, and for what appears, rather of an overstated morality.... Still his pride, or his gravity (call it which you will), is inherent, and native to the man, not mock or affected, which latter only are fit objects to excite laughter. His quality is at the best unlovely, but neither buffoon nor contemptible. (Barnet 57)

In response to the tragic tone in Lamb's review on Malvolio, Sylvan Barnet makes a definition between comic and tragic characters by arguing that "the subjects of mirth in art are, in real life, not necessarily amusing, but they are deviations from the norm.... He does not quite 'fit' in real life, and comedy capitalizes on his incompatibility" (61). However, for a tragic character, "the hero often is superior to his environment" (61). What we see from his own gazes and those from the other characters on him is his incompatibility with the environment and his self-love, which blinds him to seeing his real identity. By drawing a clear line between comic and tragic characters, Barnet views Malvolio as a character who cannot fit in the world of Illyria, but he is never a character of greatness in a superior position to his environment. He is not defeated by the uncontrollable power of fate, but instead is beaten by the ill match between his temperaments with the morale of the environment. In him, one does not see greatness, but awkwardness and inability to cope with his peers. Holding a similar opinion, Clifford Leech defines tragedy's implication as "a whole view of the universe, in which man's sureness of defeat is seen at odds with his magnitude of spirit" (71). He points out that however Malvolio is tortured, "he is not a symbol of human greatness" (71). However, there is tragic potentiality of Malvolio to become a tragic character if he changes his manner and attitude after he finds out about his inadequacies with the world since both the comic and tragic characters have to deal with "man's adaptation to his environment" (Barnet 56). For example, he can become a tragic character if he changes his proud attitudes after he realizes the conflicts between him and the other people, but still loses to fate because of uncontrollable forces like illness or accidents. However, from the beginning, he rejects the opportunity to readjust his relationship with the environment (Barnet 56). After the truth of Viola is revealed, she needs her women's clothes back which are in the hands of the sea captain who "upon some action is now in durance, at Malvolio's suite" (5.1.296–297). The final

restoration of Viola's real gender needs Malvolio's cooperation in telling them where the captain is. However, since he feels too ashamed to stay on the stage, he leaves with an unresolved problem of the whereabouts of the Captain to Olivia and Orsino, and they need to find out a solution for it as Orsino promises at the end, "Pursue him, and entreat him to a peace; he hath not told us of the Captaine yet" (5.1.413-414). He is never great, but proud and self-important. Reading him as a tragic character will mislead the audience into believing that there is inevitability in Malvolio's fall. In fact, his gulling is due to his pride and vanity instead of the power of fortune.

## **Conclusion**

Malvolio is no doubt at the locus of the comic subplot in *Twelfth Night* where the release of energy is welcomed. However, excessive revelry can be dangerous as Sir Toby realizes, “I am now so farre in offence with my Niece, that I cannot pursue with any safety this sport the uppeshot” (4.2.73-75). Excessively releasing one’s energy can incur unpredictable harm to Illyria. Worse results can happen to Malvolio if Sir Toby continues to imprison him in the dark cell. Therefore, the final exit of Malvolio is a reminder of the danger in Sir Toby and the other characters’ immoderate merrymaking. The necessity of returning to normality is brought up by Malvolio’s angry revenge line to remind people that one step further, unbridled release can cause many bitter consequences. With the song Feste sings at the end of the play, the high-spirited atmosphere is dissolved into daily routines that men have to face every day.

The self-discovery in the audience is important in order to understand the play (Logan 223). They go to a comedy for entertainment, however, at the end of the play, they are reminded of the danger in the excessive use of it. Though titled as *Twelfth Night*, the play is not only about revelry and release, but also about the necessity of restraint and withdrawal. While watching the pompous Malvolio indulging in self-love, the audience unconsciously ponder their own standpoint towards the *Twelfth Night* revelry by taking malicious pleasure in Malvolio’s entrapment in Maria’s tricks. Nevertheless, with the imprisonment of Malvolio, their emotion for him changes from enjoying Malvolio’s downfall to worrying about the danger that may occur, which makes them question the limits of revelry. By witnessing his angry accusation of the wrongs that have been done to him, the audience begin to realize that there is potential danger and consequences in the jolly self-indulgence. The song that Feste sings, “A great while ago the world begon, / hey ho, But that’s all one. / Our play is done” (5.1.440-443) further affirms their doubt about the longevity of revelry where the reveling release has a time limits and everything

has to return to normality. The growth and self-discovery in the audience is central in their experience with the play. Walking out of the theater, they do not only get what they expect before going to the play knowing that there is festivity in it, but also retain an awareness of the importance of balance between release and restraint.

*Twelfth Night* is the hallmark of Shakespeare's early comedies where happy solutions can be achieved by the revelation of false disguises and light magic. In his later comedies which are usually labeled as problem plays, "more radical characters and devices—omnipresent Dukes, magic, and resurrection" are required (Summers 23). In this play, we can notice Shakespeare's attempts to dissolve laughter into pain by pushing its limits to reach a potential tragic ending. However, evil never exists in Illyria. Even the locking up of Malvolio is termed as "sportful malice... [that] may rather plucke on laughter then revenge" (5.1.398-399). It is a play about revelry rather than the danger in it. When festivity and merrymaking are still in control under a higher authority, it can be bounded in a safe place. Therefore, *Twelfth Night* is a play that steps on the edge of replacing laughter with pain, but in the end comes back to the comic boundary where Malvolio does not die but escapes to the outside world.

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