

MOULDING MALVOLIO INTO MODERN ADAPTATIONS OF *TWELFTH NIGHT*

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ABSTRACT. *This paper explores how target-audience expectations and generic limitations on modern, mass-culture adaptations of Shakespeare's comedy Twelfth Night mould the characterization of his officious steward Malvolio, and dictate the degree of centrality that his subplot holds in each different version. A trans-generic application of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's work on characterization will expose how the character of Malvolio is constructed and presented, first in the original play and then in three modern adaptations of Twelfth Night into different popular genres. The works selected for contrastive analysis with the original play each represent different generic fields found on today's mass-culture market – romance fiction, teen cinema and the web-comic. Respectively, they are: The Madness of Love, a contemporary romance novel by Katharine Davies, published in 2005; She's the Man, a Hollywood teen film directed by Andy Fickman in 2006; and a web-comic retelling of Twelfth Night by Mya Lixian Gosling, which was published on her website Good Tickle-Brain Shakespeare in 2014.*

Keywords: Malvolio, characterization, popular culture, adaptations, audience expectation, *Twelfth Night*.

MOLDEANDO A MALVOLIO EN LAS ADAPTACIONES MODERNAS DE NOCHE DE REYES

RESUMEN. Este trabajo explora cómo las expectativas del público y las limitaciones genéricas de las adaptaciones modernas de la obra shakesperiana *Noche de Reyes*, en el marco de la cultura de masas, moldean la caracterización del oficioso sirviente Malvolio, y dictan el grado de centralidad del argumento secundario que protagoniza en cada versión. La aplicación trans-genérica de la teoría de Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan sobre caracterización mostrará cómo se construye y presenta el personaje de Malvolio, tanto en la obra original, como en las tres adaptaciones modernas a diferentes géneros populares. Cada una de las tres obras seleccionadas para este análisis contrastivo con la obra original representa un campo genérico diferente, todas típicas del mercado de la cultura de masas de hoy en día – ficción romántica, cine para adolescentes y el web-comic. Respectivamente, son: *The Madness of Love*, una novela romántica contemporánea escrita por Katharine Davies, y publicada en 2005; *She's the Man*, una película hollywoodiense para adolescentes, dirigida por Andy Fickman en 2006; y un web-comic que reelabora la historia de *Noche de Reyes*, creado por Mya Lixian Gosling, y publicado en su página web *Good Tickle-Brain Shakespeare* en 2014.

Palabras clave: Malvolio, caracterización, cultura popular, adaptaciones, expectativa del público, *Twelfth Night*.

Received 15 February 2018

Revised version accepted 29 April 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

Just over four hundred years separate us from the first performances of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, and there is no question that our collective psyche has changed enormously in that time. Our social structures as well as individual notions of what one can expect from life bear little relation to those of Elizabethan times, and this shift influences how modern adaptations of the play deal with the character and subplot of the steward Malvolio in order to meet the expectations of their modern audiences and the requirements of their chosen genre. In my exploration of this idea, I first provide a brief analysis of the Shakespearean version of the character and subplot, before discussing three different adaptations of the play – a contemporary romance novel, *The Madness of Love* (Davies 2005); a Hollywood teen film *She's the Man* (Fickman 2006); and a web-comic retelling of the play found on *Good Tickle-Brain Shakespeare* (Gosling 2017) – to reveal the repercussions that audience expectations and generic conventions have on the construction of Malvolio's character and the centrality of his subplot in each.

The foundation of my analysis of Malvolio will be a trans-generic application of Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's narratological work on character as set forth in her authoritative book *Narrative Fiction*, where she defines a number of "character-indicators" (2003: 59) which, although only applied to narrative fiction in her book, lend themselves to transposition and so serve well in the analysis of character in other genres. These indicators include direct definition, or the "naming of a character's qualities [by] the most authoritative voice in the text" (60), and "indirect presentation" (61) which includes displaying character traits through action, speech, external appearance and environment. A third technique she mentions is "reinforcement by analogy" (67) which refers to how names, landscapes and comparison to other characters can serve to strengthen characterization by emphasizing "the similarity or the contrast between the two elements compared" (68).

My exploration of the differing degrees of centrality of the subplot draws on a wide range of previous *Twelfth Night* scholarship as I discuss the role of the gulling of Malvolio in the original play; and on more recent, genre-specific theoretical work from several scholars to compare how the subplot is rendered in each of the modern adaptations, focusing specifically on how the creators of the adaptation "make [the subplot] 'fit' for new cultural contexts" (Sanders 2006: 46).

2. MOULDING THE ORIGINAL MALVOLIO

Direct definitions of Malvolio's personality traits are provided by other characters in Shakespeare's own *Twelfth Night*. Maria refers to him as "some kind of Puritan" (2.3.136), Sir Toby as "an overweening rogue" (2.5.27), and Olivia as a man "sick of self-love" (1.5.73). However, their "personal involvement, ... problematic value-scheme" and, in the case of Olivia, "limited knowledge" (Rimmon-Kenan 2003: 101) render their opinions unreliable. In contrast, the authoritative voice of the playwright, which is never directly heard, depends for characterization on indirect presentation, and it is Malvolio's actions and speech that define his main traits of pomposity, vanity and sobriety as he sneers at the foolery of Feste, condemns the carousing of Sir Toby and Andrew Aguecheek, sneers again at Viola/Cesario in returning the ring to her, and famously believes himself worthy of becoming the object of Olivia's love, despite his more lowly social position, which is marked by his speaking in prose rather than verse. Malvolio's role as steward in Olivia's household stands as an example of what Rimmon-Kenan calls "trait-connoting metonymies" (2003: 66), and in Elizabethan times audiences would have drawn on their real-world knowledge and contemporary typing of domestic staff to complete their understanding of the character of the onstage steward. Shakespeare

also uses analogy to help in his characterization of Malvolio, firstly through the semantic associations that are triggered by his name, which stems from the Italian *mal* (bad, or ill-advised) and *voglio* (want, or desire), hinting at his illicit desires for Olivia and social position; and secondly through a reciprocal analogy with Orsino, who is also enamoured of Olivia. As Rimmon-Kenan notes “[w]hen two characters are presented in similar circumstances, the similarity or contrast between their behaviour emphasizes traits characteristic of both” (2003: 70), and the contrasts between Malvolio’s histrionic, yellow-stockinged, cross-gartered, grotesquely grinning declaration of love for Olivia, and Orsino’s melancholy, poetic pining serves to highlight the steward’s ridiculous vanity, and position him as a social upstart.

John Draper notes that the Elizabethans “regarded the structure of society as divinely ordained and so immutable” (1950: 94). For them, Malvolio’s hankering after the socially superior Olivia would have been transgressive enough to garner audience approval of the humiliating practical joke played upon him. His pompous vanity and officious sobriety would only have added to the disdain his social ambition provoked, since these traits were loosely associated, both within the play and at large, with Puritanism – a religious movement that besides questioning the foundational religious beliefs of conformist England, also sought to close down the playhouses which afforded such popular entertainment and relief from everyday life for a large portion of Elizabethan society (Draper 1950: 87-9). Contemporary audiences would have revelled in the downfall of Malvolio, and the character’s “historically well-founded candidacy as protagonist” (Shakespeare and Elam 2008: 381) is testament to the importance of the social commentary Shakespeare loosely disguises in the character and subplot of Malvolio.

However, the subplot also plays an important dramatic role, providing an “alternative to comedy that makes us value the comic all the more” (Fineman, qtd. in Cahill 1996: 62) and, given the lack of socio-political commentary in the selected modern adaptations, it is this “alternative” – the quasi-tragic elements of Malvolio’s story – that I will be focusing on in my analysis here. Audience complicity with the gulling of Malvolio is paramount to the success of the subplot as comedy, because if we find ourselves unwittingly and unwillingly participating in what we believe to be an act of disproportionate cruelty, the bitterness of Malvolio’s humiliation can outweigh any comedic elements and, as Becky Kemper notes, “so sour the final moments of the play that they ultimately rob the audience of a satisfying conclusion” (2007: 42). As I will show, the generic conventions of the adaptations analysed in this paper and the expectations they create in their target audiences have a significant influence on how the creators of modern adaptations and appropriations construct the character of Malvolio and deal with his downfall.

3. MOULDING MALVOLIO IN A CONTEMPORARY ROMANCE NOVEL: *THE MADNESS OF LOVE*

Douglas Lanier writes that “most Shakespop adaptations jettison Shakespeare’s language, instead fastening on some facet of Shakespearian action, character or iconography and drawing it into the realm of popular culture” (2002: 88). This is the case of Katharine Davies’s romantic novel, which can be considered Shakespearean primarily in that it borrows the plotline of *Twelfth Night*, and draws some of the original characters into a contemporary environment. However, Davies also ensures that associations with the play will be activated even by readers unfamiliar with Shakespeare’s work by including both paratextual and textual references to *Twelfth Night*, the former on the back cover blurb which reads “From *Twelfth Night* to midsummer madness, a glittering tragi-comedy of unrequited love and misunderstandings”; and the latter, in the inclusion of a high-school production of the play, complete with lines quoted verbatim in her description of the rehearsals, which constitutes an example of what Julie Sanders calls “embedded texts” (2006: 27).

Set in modern England, the novel tells the story of Valentina, a young writer whose twin brother Jonathan has left on a voyage of self-discovery to their native Sri Lanka, and who finds herself at a personal crossroads at his sudden departure. Wanting adventure for herself, she chops off her long hair, walks out of her steady job in a bookshop and takes up residence as head gardener – a position she secures by lying about her experience and qualifications – at a large estate in the locality of Illerwick, owned by musician and composer Leo Spring. Valentina falls in love with Spring, who, in turn, is in love with local headmistress Melody Vye. Melody, in mourning after her brother Gabriel’s suicide, is not, however, in love with Leo Spring, but finds herself drawn to Valentina, who Leo asks to act as a go-between to press his suit with Melody. Meanwhile, a rather traumatic run-in with the dour Deputy Headmaster Mr Boase during Melody’s leave of absence, leaves schoolboy Fitch at a loose end as he decides not to return to school until the headmistress does. He takes up piano lessons with Leo, and helps Valentina in the garden, eventually becoming embroiled in the love triangle between the three adults. Influenced by the character Maria, who she plays in the school production of *Twelfth Night*, Fitch’s friend Suzy hatches a plan to humiliate Boase, whose bullying, narcissistic, hypocritical behaviour has become intolerable to the children. When Jonathan returns unexpectedly from Sri Lanka he meets and falls in love with Melody, who reciprocates his affection, and the novel comes to its climax at a garden party thrown by Leo Spring, and attended by all of the main characters.

Shakespeare’s Malvolio is brought into this modern story-world in the figure of Mr Boase, and as per the conventions of her genre, Davies eschews social

commentary to concentrate instead on the character's pomposity and vanity, using several techniques of direct and indirect characterization to set the Deputy Head up for an audience-approved humiliation. We first encounter Mr Boase in a chapter in which the narrative is focalized through Fitch, whose schoolboy crush on his teacher Melody provokes feelings of intense jealousy at the apparent familiarity between the colleagues – “Mr Boase put his arm briefly around her shoulder. Fitch hated him” (Davies 2004: 5) –. This immediately calls to mind the tension apparent between Feste and Malvolio in Act one, Scene five of *Twelfth Night* but, even without knowledge of the source play, readers are alerted by Fitch's disapproval that Mr Boase is to be the Proppian villain in this romance and, as such, is worthy of punishment or derision. However, Davies also uses other techniques of characterization to begin to guide her readers to a position that will make the trick played on Boase seem acceptable to them. In this first short glimpse of the man, the author's choice of furtive verbs of movement – he “edged into the classroom”, and “sidled to the front” (2004: 5) – are the earliest intimations we have that he may not be a particularly loveable character, a suspicion that is confirmed in our next encounter with him, after which he seems doomed to suffer a modernised version of the Shakespearean gulling of Malvolio with our tacit approval.

This second contact with Boase comes in a chapter focalized through the man himself, and in it we learn of his unrequited desires for Melody Vye. Having taken over her classes while she is on compassionate leave, he finds himself sat at her desk with the children gone home for the day, and indulges in a sexual reverie about her, accompanied by fetishist actions such as licking her diary and smelling a used handkerchief found in the back of her drawer. Davies manages to elicit a healthy degree of repulsion in her readers throughout this scene, building from a direct description of “his few tufts of hair where the [chalk] dust had mingled with Brylcreem into a kind of stickiness”, to a report of his violent response to what he sees as Fitch's “obtuseness” – a response that places him in direct conflict with readers, who have previously been made aware of Fitch's learning difficulties, and so would expect a teacher to show understanding and patience, rather than “throw the board rubber” (2004: 45-6) at the boy in anger. Finally, we come to the moment in which Boase, sexually excited by his fantasies, begins to masturbate in the classroom without realising that Fitch has crept in to retrieve a textbook and is witnessing the entire episode.

Like Shakespeare, Davies also reinforces her characterization of Boase with analogies of name, environment and character. “Boase” is one letter away from “boast”, which is clearly suggestive of the character's vanity and inflated sense of self-worth; his position as Deputy Headmaster, like Malvolio's as steward, places Boase on a lower hierarchical rung than his love-object Melody, and also provides

scope for him to abuse the power he holds over the children; and the comparisons between his lustful fantasies and Leo's over-romanticised yearning for Melody reinforce the traits of each, and so strengthen our rejection of Boase. In addition to all this, Davies cements his nefarious reputation and has Mr Boase slide further into ignominy by letting him fall off the proverbial wagon and resume the habits of an alcoholic "after twenty-five years" of "lecturing ... on the evils of alcohol" (2004: 49, 149), and his character degenerates chapter by chapter into a hypocritical, pub-crawling drunk who "takes out his hangover on the smallest children" (79) at school, neglects his duties as a teacher, vomits, punishes his students "for laughing" (138) and bullies them, both physically and verbally – "Board rubber', [Pete] said. 'Poor reflexes. And he [Boase] called me a lump of lard'" (161).

Malvolio's narcissism and social ambition pale in comparison to Boase's crimes, but then having social ambition and an inflated ego in today's society no longer justifies even the slightest censure, and readers are not likely to condone the public humiliation required by the plot of the source text without due cause. Therefore, Davies needs to endow her character with traits that are considered morally reprehensible to a modern audience, such as child abuse, alcoholism, and indulging in fetishist, onanistic sexual practices in a school room. Thus, Boase – a thoroughly modern Malvolio – transgresses the accepted social norms to such an extent that he loses any vestige of reader sympathy and, it would seem, can be subjected not only to his later humiliation at the hands of his students, but also to a subsequent exile into rehabilitation – "Mr Boase will be away for a while" (Davies 2004: 279) – with audience approval.

However, as Keir Elam notes, "[i]n many performances [of *Twelfth Night*] ... it is the 'dark room' scene (4.2), with its literal imprisoning of the 'mad' steward, that causes the audience to reconsider its complicity in the events and to change its allegiances" (Shakespeare and Elam 2008: 8). In her novel, Davies has managed to recreate this shift in feeling. The "dark room" scene sees Boase shut himself up in his house with the blinds drawn, after his humiliation at the party. Despite his apparent relegation to a position in readers' estimation from which it appears impossible he be redeemed, Davies manages to manipulate audience opinion and awaken some sympathy for the man in her readers. Fitch, having realised the extent of Mr Boase's suffering, feels certain regret at his part in the plot against the teacher, and visits Boase's house, in what appears to be an act of contrition. Yet it is not simply Fitch's realisation that "they have done something terrible" (Davies 2004: 266) that causes readers to modify their opinion. The closing mention of Mr Boase comes in a chapter focalized through an adult – Melody – and we become aware that up until this point, our own view of the Deputy has primarily been coloured by the juvenile perspective of Fitch and his friends. In fact, of the

fourteen chapters that deal with Mr Boase, six are focalized through the character himself, while eight come to us from the perspective of Fitch. Because we have been guided to reject Boase and sympathise with Fitch, we tend to reject the perspective of the former as unreliable, and accept Fitch's views as authoritative. Melody's sharp disapproval of the children's practical joke – she “could hardly bear to look at the three pained faces in front of her desk...[t]hey had been so stupid” (Davies 2004: 279) – and the children's own apparent regret and worry at the consequences of their actions, make us realise that our allegiance may have been misplaced, and our condemnation of Boase too harsh. Just as in *Twelfth Night*, we feel a jolt of sympathy that, in the words of Ralph Berry “make[s] the audience ashamed of itself” (qtd. in Shakespeare and Elam 2008: 10).

In *The Madness of Love*, Boase and his subplot play as important a narrative role as Malvolio does in the play, fulfilling the generic requirements for a villainous character who in some way threatens the heroine's happiness and is eventually punished for his transgressions. To fit the adaptation to contemporary cultural and generic expectations, Davies has had to mould Malvolio into the darker and more tragic Boase, and provide a definitive closure with his exile into rehabilitation and the promise of forgiveness and a better future upon his return, something that is not afforded to Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*.

4. MOULDING MALVOLIO IN A HOLLYWOOD TEEN FILM: *SHE'S THE MAN*

In an essay entitled “Realising Shakespeare on Film”, Jack Jorgens notes that “in a sense *all* Shakespeare films are translations” and that we “study a translation ... as a creative attempt to recast and reimagine a work conceived in a different language and for a different culture” (1998: 24, original emphasis). Although he was speaking figuratively here of the transposition from theatre to cinema, with their accompanying meta-languages and generic “cultures”, we can also apply his theory quite literally to Andy Fickman's 2006 comedy film, which claims to have been “inspired by the play ‘Twelfth Night’ by William Shakespeare” in its opening credits. Douglas Lanier, writing about screen adaptations of Shakespearean comedies, states that besides musicals, “the other dominant model for Shakespearean comedies in the 1990s and after has been the teen comedy” (2018: 475), and includes *She's the Man* as a paradigm of this trend. He goes on to note that “these films situate Shakespearean comedy within the dynamics of high school social strata, addressing adolescent crises of romance and sexuality, often with an emphasis on young women's empowerment” (475), which is true of this particular adaptation.

The film centres on Viola Hastings, a typical American teenager whose ambition as a talented soccer player is thwarted when her female school team is cut, and

she is refused the opportunity to play on the boy's team. Viola decides to disguise herself as her twin brother Sebastian, who has disappeared off to London for two weeks, present herself at his new boarding school (Illyria) and get a spot on the soccer team there. Needless to say, she falls for her brother's roommate Duke Orsino, who is in love with school sweetheart Olivia Lennox, and much hilarity ensues. This generic "translation" from classical theatre to Hollywood teen flick, has necessitated both a linguistic translation from Elizabethan verse into a twenty-first-century American teenage sociolect, and a cultural translation from canonised "high" culture into a mass-culture product, designed for consumption by the modern American teenager.

Neither the genre nor target audience allow for the type of social commentary Shakespeare indulged in. As Ecaterina Hanțiu has noted in her critique of the film, "it is entertainment and not serious considerations about life and its problems that come first" (2012: 112), and there is certainly no room in *She's the Man* for any hint of the tragic, so it is little wonder that the Malvolio subplot has been all but entirely erased from the script. We still have a Toby, an Andrew, and a Maria, but they are minor characters with few lines and almost no influence on the development of the narrative, except perhaps in the case of Maria, who at one point urges Olivia to flirt with Duke to make Sebastian (Viola) jealous. In contrast to previous critical work on this adaptation which reduces the figure of Malvolio to that of a pet spider, with no active role in the story,¹ I believe that although his subplot disappears from the film, the character of Malvolio is more fully expressed than this, and that while the issues of social mobility and nonconformist religion are not addressed at all, the steward's characteristic pomposity and vanity are. However, rather than creating a single character to represent Malvolio, the writers have splintered him, and shared his defining traits between two characters: the teenage students Malcolm and Monique. These two characters form a tactical alliance at one point in the film and, in doing so, recreate a dualized counterpart for the steward. This not only provides an additional point of contact between the source play and the film, but also allows for the inclusion of two genre-specific character types – the officious prep, and the difficult ex-girlfriend.

As with theatre, characterization in a film relies mainly on the speech and action of the character in question. *She's the Man* challenges viewers who are familiar with the play to identify just who is playing the role of the steward in this adaptation, and it is characterization that provides the answer. While it is true that the name of Malvolio is

¹ For example, in their respective papers discussing *She's the Man* and *Twelfth Night*, Laurie Osborne refers to "Malvolio' the tarantula" (2008: 18); Ecaterina Hanțiu claims that "Malvolio simply becomes Malcolm Feste's pet" (2012: 112); and Divya Walia posits that "though we don't have [...] Malvolio, [...] we don't miss his presence since he is there in the movie as Malcolm's Tarantula" (2017: 5).

given to a pet tarantula, owned by Malcolm Festes, it is Malcolm himself who manifests some of Malvolio's characteristics and so becomes one part of the amalgamated steward character. His human environment, like that of Malvolio and Boase, helps construct his character. He holds a position of menial authority as "dorm director" and officiously reprimands Viola for forgetting to wear shower shoes in the bathroom. Malcolm also has a crush on Olivia Lennox and indulges in a degree of self-pitying lamentation at her unattainability, complaining to his pet tarantula "It just isn't fair, Malvolio. I wait three years for Olivia, and then some transfer student [Viola/Sebastian] comes in and suddenly she's acting like some obsessed, love-struck teenager. I'm not going to take that lying down, Malvolio!" (Fickman 2006: 00:36:26 – 00:36:39).² His speech here, and his over-zealous exercise of authority are suggestive of an upstart teen, attempting to take on an adult role, which provides a genre-appropriate reflection of Malvolio's social pretensions, without straying into serious socio-political criticism. Malcolm's actions strengthen his characterization, and in a departure from the source plot, he nastily plans to ruin his rival, discovering that the transfer student "Sebastian" is actually Viola in disguise. Unfortunately for Malcolm, by the time he tries to unmask Viola at a big soccer match, the real Sebastian has returned from London, and when asked to prove his gender, he is able to do so, leading to a moment of mild embarrassment for Malcolm, who, in what one assumes is a deliberate homage to Malvolio, happens to be wearing yellow socks. Yet, to satisfy the requirements of the genre for happy endings all round, even such gentle humiliation of Malcolm is not allowed to stand. When Viola comes out with the truth of her masquerade he is allowed to redeem his pride by shouting over the megaphone "Ladies and gentlemen, I hate to say I told you so, but..." (Fickman 2006: 01:25:01 – 01:25:04), and the generic requirement for a feel-good ending for all is met.

If Malcolm is the reimagining of Malvolio's officiousness and pomposity, it is Sebastian's girlfriend Monique who portrays the narcissistic facet of the steward's personality. The beautiful-but-bitchy girlfriend is a common character in teen films, and Monique fulfils this type in *She's the Man*. She is characterized through her own speech – "Just remind your brother how lucky he is to be in my life" (Fickman 2006: 00:06:09 – 00:06:11), or "Girl's with asses like mine do not talk to boys with faces like yours" (00:30:10 – 00:30:14); through the direct comments of the authoritative Viola – "ugh, but she's so awful" (00:07:45); and through her mincing, über-feminine physical presence which contrasts intensely with that of the tomboyish Viola, in another example of analogy between characters. Monique, like Malcolm, is punished for her character faults in another gentle public humiliation, this time at the hands of Viola herself, who in the guise of Sebastian breaks up very loudly with Monique at a packed student hang-out called "Cesario's". Of course

² Quotations from the film are from my own transcription.

her humiliation is short-lived, and she is also granted a happy ending, pairing up with Viola's equally vain ex-boyfriend in the debutante ball finale.

Between them, Malcolm and Monique possess Malvolio's main personality traits and the plot of the film brings them together into a single force as they strive in tandem to unmask Viola. Generic requirements for an exclusively funny plot and specific character types have resulted in this adaptation splitting the steward into three characters (counting the spider) and completely doing away with the subplot, slight embarrassments aside.

5. MOULDING MALVOLIO IN A WEB-COMIC: *GOOD TICKLE BRAIN SHAKESPEARE*³

Unlike *The Madness of Love* and *She's the Man*, which both use *Twelfth Night* as a source of inspiration rather than attempting a faithful transposition, this final adaptation is the retelling of Shakespeare's original play in the format of a comic strip populated by stick figures, created by former library cataloguer Mya Lixian Gosling. It is quite difficult to determine Gosling's intended audience from her genre as comics are appreciated by people of all ages and social backgrounds. However, in a podcast interview with Austin Tichenor of the Reduced Shakespeare Company⁴, Gosling said

I try and tailor my work so it can be both accessible to people who really love Shakespeare and people who don't love Shakespeare or don't know Shakespeare. And I've got friends who don't like Shakespeare at all, who have started to get interested in Shakespeare because of the reading of my comics and that's really the most rewarding thing about it all. (2016: 00:08:36 – 00:08:50)

so we can assume that she is targeting a non-elite audience and will adapt her work, at least in part, to suit their needs. Furthermore, her minimalist style within the comic genre places limitations not only on how much text she can include, but also on how much information can be implied visually, making the retelling of any of Shakespeare's plays an interesting challenge, as I will show with the following analysis of how she approaches Malvolio in her version of *Twelfth Night*.

Browsing her website, viewers find the extremely bare-boned 3-Panel version of the play, along with a full scene-by-scene version. In the former, there is no mention of Malvolio at all, and her final "Everyone is happy" (see fig. 1),⁵ offers no hint of the subplot or its lack of closure.

³ Available at www.goodticklebrain.com/shakespeare-index/#/twelfth-night.

⁴ Available at www.reducedshakespeare.com/2016/05/episode-493-good-tickle-brain.

⁵ All extracts from the *Good Tickle Brain Shakespeare* website are copyright protected, and used here with kind permission from the artist.

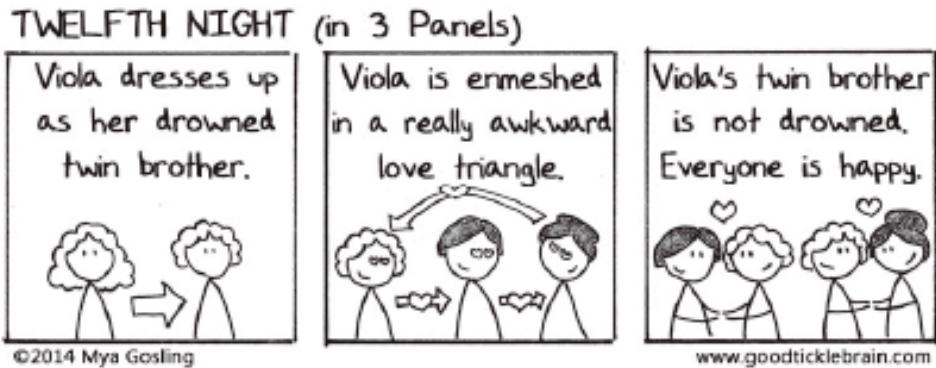


Figure 1. The three-panel summary of the entire play, with no mention of Malvolio.

However, her full version offers the play in its entirety, retold in mainly modern English. Gosling starts with a “Dramatis Personae” page, characterizing her players with a stick figure that shows an identifying hairstyle or other feature by which we will later recognise him or her in the comic, along with their name, and a bullet-point list of their most salient characteristics. Malvolio’s entry shows a slightly frowning, moustachioed fellow with a bobbed hairstyle (see fig. 2).



Figure 2. Malvolio on the Dramatis Personae page.

The implicit grooming that these hirsute features require hints at the steward’s vanity, and together with the brief description, this simple drawing provides information that audiences would usually glean from indirect techniques of characterization such as speech, movement and intonation of the actor playing Malvolio, all of which are clearly inaccessible for this stripped-back medium, whose alternative is a genre-specific type of direct characterization.

Also impossible to reproduce in this format is the full Shakespearean text, a major source of characterization in the play. Gosling prefers to translate most of

the play into modern English although she does include original text from time to time, notably “when a speech is too well known to be passed over in silence” (Perret 2004: 75) such as Viola’s “Patience on a monument” (2.4.114)⁶, Sir Toby’s “cakes and ale” (2.3.112) and Malvolio’s “be not afraid of greatness” (2.5.141). However, Gosling often uses Shakespeare’s text specifically for Malvolio, and this helps create an air of pomposity as his lofty tone is so clearly at odds with the rest of the colloquial, chatty speech in the comic.

One of Gosling’s adaptive techniques that plays an important role in both the characterization of Malvolio and the treatment of his subplot is paratextual authorial comment. Each play is initially posted in a series of weekly uploads and Gosling provides a pre-panel introduction and a post-panel comment on each week’s episode. The introduction to the subplot comes in her post for June 28, 2016:

Twelfth Night: Act 2, Scene 3 (part 1).

So, *Twelfth Night* has basically two plots. One has clearly emerged by now: Viola’s disguise as Cesario and the resulting love triangle between her, Orsino, and Olivia. The second one, which could be called the comedic subplot, is going to get underway in this week’s scenes.⁷

She immediately launches into the carousing scene and ends with the appearance of Malvolio, whose physical portrayal in the panel – fuming and frowning with his hands on his hips and bared teeth – are suggestive of his bossy, officious nature (see fig. 3).



Figure 3. In Act 2, Scene 3 (part 1) Malvolio enters the carousing scene.

⁶ To avoid confusion, references to the Arden Shakespeare *Twelfth Night* will follow this format, while those to Mya Gosling’s adaptation will be shown as “Act 1, Scene 4”.

⁷ www.goodticklebrain.com/home/2016/6/28/twelfth-night-act-2-scene-3-part-1.

Her authorial comment after the panels reads “He might throw good parties, but nothing will shake my conviction that Sir Toby is a jerk”, a claim she will reiterate throughout the play, and one which colours the Malvolio subplot to cater to modern audiences, as we will see in more detail a little further on.

As comics are static drawings, many of the physical actions that actors use to help transmit character are lost, yet Gosling manages to include a sense of movement in some key drawings, and even when the accompanying text which gave rise to a gesture in the first place has been edited out, or modernised beyond recognition, this provides visual echoes of the characterizing gestures. An example of this can be seen when Malvolio is threatening to report the revellers Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria, to Olivia saying she “shall know of it, by this hand” (2.3.121). In Elam’s commentary on this scene he notes that “[i]n Gielgud’s 1955 Stratford production Laurence Olivier raised his hand on this line, causing his pants to fall down from under his nightshirt” (Shakespeare and Elam 2008: 221). In the *Good Tickle Brain* version, Gosling pays homage to the Shakespearean text and Olivier’s theatrical gesture, though both are necessarily changed. Malvolio’s speech bubble reads “My lady shall know of this! You’ll be sorry, you...barbarians!”, while the stick figure Malvolio has a raised hand with tiny movement lines that indicate his shaking fist, which visually cues Shakespeare’s original line (see fig. 4). The sense of frustrated impotence portrayed through this gesture, the textual ellipsis, and the composition of the frame, which places three united characters against the lone Malvolio, plants a seed of sympathy for the steward in readers’ minds, which Gosling’s commentary helps develop over the course of the play.



Figure 4. In Act 2, Scene 3 (part 2) Gosling’s drawing echoes the original text.

Condensation is an essential part of the transposition from play to comic, and as Perret notes, “in most comics pictures of actions speak louder than words” (2004: 75). Although this requires “comic-savvy readers” to “[unpack] the meaning and

resonance of images” (74), it also allows Shakespeare-savvy readers to recognise the underlying original text from a visual prompt, as we have just seen. However, soliloquies, which provide audiences with insight into the character’s personality and motives, present a special challenge for the comic strip medium. Gosling rises to that challenge in Act 3, Scene 4, part 1, where Malvolio’s eighteen-line soliloquy (3.4.62-80), which shows the degree of the steward’s self-delusion, is reduced to two panels containing almost no text. Malvolio’s wordy pondering is replaced by expressive eyebrows and a pensive hand-upon-chin gesture, while his verbose Shakespearean conclusion that “everything adheres together that no dram of a scruple, no scruple of a scruple, no obstacle, no incredulous or unsafe circumstance ... nothing that can be can come between me and the full prospect of my hopes” (3.4.75-79), is cut to a single three-word outburst accompanied by the jubilant flexing of his arms and joyful squinting of his eyes (see fig. 5). Ryuta Minami, in a discussion of Anime and Manga adaptations of Shakespeare, notes that “cute factors ... arouse moe, a feeling of love for a fictional character” (2016: 118), and while we may not come so far as to love Malvolio, reader sympathies are certainly awoken by the “cuteness” of these particular drawings. Our emotional response, or *moe*, serves to further colour the subplot.



Figure 5. In Act 3, Scene 4 (part 1) Malvolio’s eighteen-line soliloquy is represented in two panels.

As noted above, extradiegetic comment from the artist, who in effect becomes the narrator of the adaptation, plays a major role in manipulating reader response in Gosling’s retelling of *Twelfth Night*, and in the box-tree scene, the artist plays with audience sympathies, first seeming to side with Maria and then making us aware of her authorial feelings about Sir Toby and Malvolio, which immediately causes us to reassess our own reactions. In this scene, Malvolio finds the letter Maria has written to trick him into believing that Olivia is in love with him,

and Gosling starts with the following introduction: “In order to get revenge on Malvolio for being a stuck-up and pretentious jerk, Maria plans to drop a fake love letter from Olivia somewhere where he will find it...” (Act 2, Scene 5, part 1). While at first we might take this to be the artist’s own view on Malvolio, and so accept as fact that he is a “stuck-up and pretentious jerk”, it becomes apparent, upon reading her closing comments for the scene, that the narrating instance was actually focalized through Maria, and that the extradiegetic narrator’s own perspective is far more sympathetic towards the steward. The end-of-scene comment, marked as a reprehensible shouted utterance by its capitalization, reads “PUBLIC HUMILIATION IS SO MUCH FUN GUYS. ...GUYS?”, and intimates that whoever has enjoyed the humiliation of Malvolio has now been abandoned and marginalised by their less gauche peers. As we appear to be the addressees – the “GUYS” – we automatically check our own answer to the rhetorical question. If we say “yes”, we too will become social outcasts, therefore the correct answer must be “no, it is not fun”, a realisation that taints Sir Toby and Maria’s actions and leads us to wonder whether Malvolio is really such a bad egg, and deserving of such treatment.

Gosling further encourages us to find Sir Toby and Maria’s delight in the humiliation of Malvolio distasteful with her continuing comments on Sir Toby – “...from where I’m sitting it just looks like Sir Toby is a jerk” (Act 3, Scene 4, part 3), “...by Sir Toby, who is a jerk” (Act 4, Scene 1), “Did I mention that I think Sir Toby is a jerk?” (Act 4, Scene 2). These comments mould our view of the whole affair, and draw our sympathies more firmly towards Malvolio than Shakespeare did, reflecting modern cultural values that find social ambition and inflated egos acceptable, but are less tolerant of the jubilant *Schadenfreude* of the Sir Tobies of this world.

6. CONCLUSION

We have seen three very different interpretations of the Malvolio subplot in these popular adaptations of *Twelfth Night*. *The Madness of Love* (Davies 2004), as a romantic novel, favours the darker, more melancholic side of the story, turning a pompous, vain, but fundamentally comedic Malvolio into a drunken abusive pervert, whose downfall results not in his stalking off in a huff vowing revenge, but in his near suicide and exile into rehab, “his pale, bleary face, ... his fingers on the red stretcher blanket like sticks of chalk as they loaded him into the ambulance” (Davies 2004: 279).

In direct contrast, *She’s the Man* (Fickman 2006) removes all trace of tragedy by cutting the subplot out completely and reinventing Malvolio in the guise of

two teen-film character types who, for all their faults, enjoy as happy an ending as the rest of the cast of characters. Finally, *Good Tickle Brain* (2017) creator Mya Gosling manages to balance the comedic and tragic elements of the story but, with authorial intrusion, caters to modern tastes by guiding our sympathy towards the victim of the practical joke rather than its perpetrators.

Each of these adaptations has treated Malvolio and his subplot in different ways to suit the expectations of their respective intended audiences, which in turn are raised by the particular genre into which the play has been transposed. I believe that it is safe to say that the importance and characterization of Malvolio in modern popular adaptations of this comedy is dependent on the anticipated audience of the adaptation, and the varying degrees to which the chosen genres can tolerate tragedy.

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JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES (JES)
Editorial Policy, Guidelines for Contributions and Stylesheet

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1.1. Journal description. JES is the journal of the English Studies Division at the University of La Rioja. It accepts for publication, after favourable reports from two anonymous referees, original scholarly contributions in all research areas within the domain of English studies (linguistics, literature, literary theory, cultural studies, film studies, etc.). Proposals for publication may fall under one of the following three categories:

- A. Research papers involving empirical investigations and methodological or theoretical studies within the field of English Studies (min. 6,000 and max. 10,000 words in double-spaced pages, including bibliographical references, notes, appendixes, figures and tables).
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- Relevance of the theoretical implications of the study.
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In the case of multiple authorship, please state clearly which of the contributors will be in charge of the ensuing correspondence with JES.

Authors should also include here a brief biographical note of about 100 words.

The second document should include the full proposal to be sent off for

evaluation. Authors should be extremely careful to avoid any kind of information which might reveal their identity.

3.2. Artwork, tables, figures and images. These should be included in the text file. Tone art, or photographic images, should be saved as JPG or TIFF files with a resolution of 300 dpi at final size.

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4.1. Formatting. Minimum formatting should be used. Indentation, underlining and tabulation should be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

4.2. Document. All margins in the document should be of 2.54 cms. Paragraphs should be fully justified. The main text of the proposal should be written in 12-point Garamond. Quotations will be in 11-point Garamond when they appear in an independent paragraph. Abstracts, keywords, footnotes, superscript numbers, tables and figures will appear in 10-point Garamond.

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Abstracts will be followed by a list of six keywords, written in normal characters in the corresponding language, English or Spanish, so that contributions can be accurately classified by international reference indexes. The word Keywords/Palabras clave (in italics), followed by a semi-colon and a single space, will precede the keywords.

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Headings of subsections should be typed in italics, and separated with one space from both the previous and the following text. They must be numbered as in the example (e.g. 1.1., 1.2., etc.).

Headings of inferior levels of subsections should be avoided as much as possible. If they are included, they should also be numbered with Arabic numerals (e.g. 1.1.1., 1.1.2., etc.) and they will be typed in normal characters.

4.9. Asides. For asides other than parenthetical asides, dashes (and not hyphens) should be used, preceded and followed by a blank space. For compounds use hyphens. Notice the following example:

“Teaching in English – **as many subjects as possible** – seems to offer a **second-best** solution insofar as it entails much more exposure of the foreign language”.

4.10. Punctuation. Authors are requested to make their usage of punctuation as consistent as possible. Commas, full stops, colons and semi-colons will be placed after inverted commas (");).

Capital letters will keep their natural punctuation such as accents, etc. (e.g. PUNTUACIÓN, LINGÜÍSTICA, etc.).

Apostrophes (’), not accents (´), should be used for abbreviations and the saxon genitive.

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References to footnotes should be marked in the text with consecutive superscript Arabic numerals, which should be placed after all punctuation (including parenthesis and quotation marks).

4.12. Quotations. Quotations should normally appear in the body of the text, enclosed in double quotation marks. Single quotation marks will be used to locate a quotation within another quotation (e.g. “toward a unified policy that ‘natural’ English was altogether preferable”).

Quotations of four lines or longer should be set in a separate paragraph, without quotation marks, typed in 11-point Garamond and indented 1,5 cms. from the left-hand margin. They should be separated from both the previous and the following text with one blank line.

Omissions within quoted text should be indicated by means of suspension points in square brackets (e.g. [...]).

4.13. In-text citations. References must be made in the text and placed within parentheses. Parentheses should contain the author’s surname followed by a space before the date of publication which, should, in turn, be followed by a colon and a space before the page number(s). Example:

“Certainly, the conventional romance plot is a construction of the ideology of patriarchy” (Brush 1994: 238).

If the sentence includes the author’s name (example 1) or if it includes the date of publication (example 2), that information should not be repeated in the parentheses:

Example 1:

Johnson has drawn our attention to the fact that we are aware of our bodies as three-dimensional containers (1987: 21).

Example 2:

In appearance and aspirations he is culturally androgynous like Frankie. He is sexually ambivalent and “Light Skinned” (McCullers 1962: 155) and “could talk like a white school-teacher” (48).

If the quotation includes several pages, numbers will be provided in full, as in the example:

In the world she would create “there would be no separate coloured people [...] but all human beings would be light brown colour with blue eyes and black hair. There would be no coloured people and no white people to make coloured people feel cheap and sorry all through their lives” (McCullers 1962: 114-115).

If several authors are parenthetically cited at the same time, they should be arranged chronologically and separated with a semi-colon:

(Richards 1971: 210; Arabski 1979: 43; Selinker 1991: 16)

If there are two or more works by the same author published in the same year, a lower-case letter should be added to the year, as in the example:

(Montrose 1986a: 332) (Montrose 1986b: 9)

Parenthetical citations should be placed immediately after each quotation, both when the quoted passage is incorporated into the text and when the passage is longer than four lines and needs to be set in a separate paragraph. Put this parenthetical citation after the quotation marks but before the comma or period when the quotation is part of your text:

The readers being addressed are mainly white and anglophone, for, as Atwood said "survival was part of the English-Canadian cultural nationalism that peaked in about 1975" (1981: 387).

When the quotation is set off from the text in indented form, the parenthetical citation follows all punctuation:

Even Cranny-Francis points to the subversive potential of the romance plot:

Romance is often written into texts dominated by other genres, such as SF, utopian or detective fiction, where it may operate as one of the conventions of those genres. Feminist revisions of these genres also use romance and, in dialogue with other generic conventions, it has been used successfully to interrogate the construction of masculinity and femininity and of interpersonal relationships. (1990: 190)

4.14. Bibliographical references. All (and only those) books and articles quoted or referred to in the text (those quoted in the footnotes included) should appear in a final bibliographical list of references, which completes the information provided by the in-text citations provided in the text.

The heading for this list should be REFERENCES.

Hanging or reverse indentation (i.e. indentation of all lines of a paragraph except the first one, which is a full line) of 1 cm. from the left-hand margin should be used.

This list should be arranged in alphabetical order and chronologically, when two or more works by the same author are cited. The author's full name should be repeated in all cases. Example:

- Langacker, R. 1991. *Foundations of cognitive grammar 2: Descriptive application*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Wierzbicka, A. 1988. *The Semantics of Grammar*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Wierzbicka, A. 1992. *Semantics, Culture, and Cognition: Universal Human Concepts in Culture-Specific Configurations*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Books. References to books will include: author's surname and name; year of publication (first edition in parentheses, if different); title (in italics); place of publication; publisher's name. If the book is a translation, the name of the translator should be indicated at the end. Contributors are requested to pay special attention to punctuation in the following examples:

Taylor, J. R. 1995 (1989). *Linguistic Categorization: Prototypes in Linguistic Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Kristeva, J. 2000. *The Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt*. New York: Columbia University Press. Trans. Jeanine Herman.

Articles. Titles of articles should be given in inverted commas. Titles of journals should appear in italics. Volume, number (between parentheses) should follow. Then page numbers, separated by a colon:

Haiman, J. 1978. "Conditionals are topics". *Language* 54 (2): 564-589.

Frye, N. 1940. "The Resurgent". *Canadian Forum* 19: 357-61.

Books edited. Volumes edited by one or more authors should be referred to as follows (notice the use of abbreviations ed. and eds.):

Miller, N. C., ed. 1986. *The Poetics of Gender*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Richards, J. C. and D. Nunan, eds. 1990. *Second Language Teacher Education*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Articles in books. References to articles published in works edited by other authors or in conference proceedings should be cited as in the example:

Fowler, R. 1983. "Polyphony and Problematic in Hard Times". *The Changing World of Charles Dickens*. Ed. R. Giddings. London: Vision Press. 91-108.

Traugott, E. C. 1988. "Pragmatic strengthening and grammaticalization". *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*. Eds. S. Axmaker, A. Jaisser, and H. Singmaster. Berkeley, Ca.: Berkeley Linguistics Society. 406-416.

Several authors. A journal article with three authors:

Golberg, H., Paradis, J. and M. Crago. 2008. "Lexical acquisition over time in minority first language children learning English as a second language". *Applied Psycholinguistics* 29: 41-65.

Magazine article in a weekly or biweekly publication:

Allen, B. 1995. "Leaving Behind Daydreams for Nightmares". *Wall Street Journal*, 11 October, A12.

A **review** in a journal:

Judie Newman. 2007. "Fictions of America. Narratives of Global Empire", by P. Martín Salván. *Atlantis* 31 (1): 165-170.

An **unpublished dissertation**:

Arús, J. 2003. *Towards a Computational Specification of Transitivity in Spanish: A Contrastive Study with English*. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis. Universidad Complutense de Madrid: Spain.

An **on-line** publication:

Pierce, D. "Irish Studies round the world-2007: Introduction." <<http://www.estudiosirlandeses.org/Issue3/Issue3InternationalReviews/PdfIStudiesRoundtheWorldbyDPierce.pdf>>. (Accessed 7 May 2008)

For **films**, just consider them as directed pieces of work, with "dir." for "director" instead of "ed." for "editor," giving the country/ies of production for the place and the name of the production company/ies instead of the publishing house, e.g.:

Kubrick, S., dir. 1980. *The Shining*. USA and UK: Hawk Films Ltd., Peregrine, Producers Circle and Warner Bros.

JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES (JES)

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Antes de ser enviados a evaluar, la presentación de los originales ha de ajustarse a las siguientes normas.

3. INSTRUCCIONES PARA LOS AUTORES

3.1. Qué enviar. Los autores enviarán sus propuestas por correo electrónico, indicando el título del trabajo que se envía para evaluar de cara a su publicación en JES.