

المحاضرة الثامنة Analysis: Act III, scenes i–iii

Once again we meet Feste the clown, and once again we notice that beneath his nonsense, he is obviously intelligent. In fact, Viola is inspired to comment on this after her conversation with Feste: “This fellow is wise enough to play the fool, / And to do that well, craves a kind of wit,” she notes. She realizes that a good clown must be able to judge the personalities and moods of all the people with whom he interacts, and to know when to talk, what to say, and when to keep quiet. Her remark that “[t]his is a practice / As full of labour as a wise man’s art” reminds us of Feste’s earlier comments about his own professionalism: “Well, God give them wisdom that have it; and those that are fools, let them use their talents”. There is an irony here—Feste is skilled as a fool, yet he is also one of the play’s most intelligent characters.

Olivia’s character, meanwhile, has undergone a startling shift. When we first meet her, she is deep in mourning, dismissive of romantic love, and somewhat close in spirit to the dour Malvolio. Indeed, her early grief seems as self-indulgent as Orsino’s lovesickness. But Viola has won Olivia over; she has replaced her grief with infatuation, and Olivia now willingly gives herself over to the zany shamelessness that fills the play. She behaves in a remarkably forward fashion in these scenes: when they are speaking alone, for instance, she takes Cesario’s hand—a very

unusual action for a noblewoman to perform. By the end of the scene, Olivia is reduced to begging Cesario to come back again, saying that perhaps she will change her mind about Orsino after all. Passion has conquered dignity and order, at least in Olivia's heart.

Of course, while Viola has broken the spell of grief and has convinced Olivia to give herself over to romantic desire, she herself cannot fulfill Olivia's yearnings. She can only reply "I pity you" to the noblewoman's pleadings, and offer vague explanations for her rejection of Olivia—"I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth, / And that no woman has, nor never none / Shall mistress be of it save I alone". Her reliance on rather abstract terms ("one heart," "one truth") reflects the emotional distance that she maintains from Olivia. Antonio's love for Sebastian, meanwhile, remains as strong as ever, as he

risks his life to pursue Sebastian. His remark that he follows Sebastian out of his "desire, / More sharp than filed steel" has the same violently passionate twinge as his earlier comparison of separation from Sebastian with "murder". He seeks also to protect Sebastian, owing to his "jealousy"

Antonio's attachment to Sebastian comprises not only concern for his safety but also a willingness to spend money on him (he even entrusts his purse to him). "[Y]our store / I think is not for idle markets, sir," Antonio tells Sebastian, a statement with a double meaning. The more apparent

meaning is that Sebastian doesn't have enough money to spend on trivial things, but the words also suggest that Sebastian is too good to spend time with just anyone and deserves the best. Once again, Antonio's passion for his male friend—and the words he uses, like “jealousy” and “desire”—strongly suggest that he feels an erotic attraction to Sebastian. Olivia, who sent a servant after the departing Cesario to persuade him to return, tries to figure out how to woo him to love her. Feeling suddenly melancholy, Olivia sends for Malvolio because she wants someone solemn and sad to help with her strategy.

But when Malvolio appears, he behaves very strangely. He wears crossed garters and yellow stockings, smiles foolishly, and continually quotes strange phrases that Olivia does not recognize. Malvolio, we quickly realize, is quoting passages from the letter that he believes Olivia wrote to him. He suddenly exclaims things like “Remember who commended thy yellow stockings . . . And wished to see thee cross-gartered” . Olivia, of course, knows nothing about the letter and thinks Malvolio has gone mad.