

Act 4, Scene 1 (4.1)

This lecture now treats Acts 4 and 5 of *Twelfth Night*, scene by scene. (It's recommended to read the scene after this lecture treats it.) Act 4, scene 1 begins with Feste speaking with Sebastian, who Feste mistakenly thinks is Cesario. Toby and Andrew, enter and also mistake Sebastian for Cesario. (Sebastian thinks they're all crazy.) Believing Cesario is a coward, Toby has Andrew start a fight, but Sebastian beats him up. Sebastian takes Andrew's sword, Toby also gets a sword, and they begin to dual when Olivia enters and stops the dual.

Olivia also thinks that Sebastian is Cesario, who previously rejected her. When Sebastian sees how beautiful and powerful Countess Olivia is, he is swept off his feet by her. Sebastian thinks he's dreaming: Not only did Feste, Toby and Andrew act weird, but also a beautiful powerful Countess behaves as if she loves him. She asks Sebastian if he will be "ruled" by her. He says he will, thinking that this is a wonderful dream (not even caring that she calls him "Cesario," a name he hasn't heard before).

Olivia is the powerful one in this relationship, which raises fascinating issues about relationships. Men usually have cultural power but in this relationship, Countess Olivia has the power to "rule," as she puts it. Let's watch a video clip of most of 4.1.

Act 4, Scene 2 (4.2)

Previously, when Malvolio came to Olivia dressed oddly (in yellow stockings and cross-gartered) and acting weird (smiling a lot), Olivia thought he was crazy. She instructed Toby to take care of Malvolio, not realizing that they were enemies. To continue his revenge (or mean practical joke), Toby has Malvolio locked up in a dark room (or house).

In Act 4, scene 2, Toby has Feste disguise himself as a priest, Sir Topas (the parson in the local church), to make fun of Malvolio. Feste pretends that he thinks that Malvolio is mad (*crazy*) and that the dark room is instead filled with light from large “bay windows.” The following video clip has part of this scene, but it does not include the end, when Malvolio gets Feste (disguised as a priest) to take a letter for Olivia. At the end of the play, Feste will give this letter to Olivia, who will only then learn that a mean practical joke has been played on Malvolio. The play seems to ask us both to enjoy the joke on Malvolio and to have some sympathy for him. How do you feel about this practical joke? Now watch part of Act 4, scene 2, to decide.

Act 4, Scene 3 (4.3)

Act 4, scene 3 is a short scene. We have seen that in Act 4, scene 1 (slides 3 and 4 above), Sebastian was swept off his feet by Olivia. At the end of that scene, when Olivia asked Sebastian (whom she thinks is Cesario) if he will be “ruled by” her, Sebastian says he will. In Act 4, Scene 3, they get married privately. The wedding is witnessed and blessed by a priest, the local parson Sir Topas (whom Feste had just pretended to be when he spoke to Malvolio). But this is not a valid marriage, because Olivia thinks she is marrying Cesario, not the identical Sebastian (who does not inform Olivia that she is mistaken). This is not very realistic (though perhaps Sebastian was dazed by being swept off his feet by Olivia -- and, anyway, he did want to marry her). At the end of the play when the siblings reveal their identities, Olivia plans another wedding in which she and Sebastian will be married, legally this time. (It will be a double wedding, since Orsino will marry Viola, as we shall see.)



With a priest present, Olivia marrying a man she thinks is Cesario but who is really Sebastian (from a stage production)