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What You Will: Double Predestination and the Plot of Twelfth Night

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ABSTRACT

What awaits Malvolio after the conclusion of William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night is a contentious topic in scholarship. Some scholars, such as Marjorie Garber, contend that he is the sole character excluded from the comedy's joyous ending, while others, such as Alastair Fowler, contend that the play suggests an ultimate reconciliation. This essay will contend that Shakespeare deliberately leaves Malvolio's destiny ambiguous and undecidable. Drawing from historical texts such as John Calvin's works and the Geneva Bible, it will argue that Twelfth Night attacks the Puritans, who themselves often attacked the institution of the theatre and opposed such festal occasions as Epiphany, which the play celebrates. The comedy accomplishes this attack by subverting a key Puritan doctrine: double predestination. Malvolio's potential exclusion or inclusion at the concluding wedding feast, following biblical imagery, becomes symbolic of reprobation and election. As Malvolio's character is left thoroughly ambiguous throughout the play, and as the play ends with Olivia's offer of reconciliation to Malvolio—which is neither accepted nor rejected within the play itself—the emphasis is placed upon Malvolio's free will to determine his future, and, by extension, his eschatological state. Hence, the cost of the Puritan's symbolic redemption is his very Puritanism.

KEYWORDS: *Shakespeare, Calvinism, Puritanism, Malvolio*

AUTORE

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Twelfth Night, or What You Will is a play that satirizes Puritanism through its portrayal of Malvolio, and the play can further be interpreted as satirizing Puritanism by playing with one of Calvinism's central tenets: double predestination. Historically, it must be noted that certain developments of Calvinism emphasize double predestination more emphatically than John Calvin himself had.[1] Nonetheless, the root of the doctrine would likely be familiar in Shakespeare's context as it was expounded by Calvin himself in his major work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. The twenty-first chapter of its third book is titled *Of the eternall Election, whereby God hath predestinate some to salvation, and other some to destruction*. The text was available to Shakespeare's contemporaries in Calvin's own Latin and French, as well as in Thomas Norton's translation:

> Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, wherby he had it determined with himselfe what he willed to become of every man. For al are not created to like estate: but to some, eternall life, and to some, eternall damnation is foreappointed. Therefore as every man is created to one or the other ende, so we say that he is predestinate either to life or to death.[2]

This doctrine, in its most extreme form, states that God, for reasons mysterious beyond that he wills it, eternally and actively predestines the elect to salvation and the reprobates to hell. The characters who partake in the gulling of Malvolio—Maria, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Feste, and Fabian—can be understood as seeing Malvolio as a kind of reprobate, insofar as they see him as incorrigibly puritanical, and seek to exile him from Olivia's household. Malvolio, on the other hand, seems certain of his divine election, and, as J.L. Simmons argues, this assurance flows into his sense of superiority.[3] In the plot, his sense of election by God becomes related to his readiness to believe that Olivia wishes to marry him. The marriage feast at the play's end, following biblical imagery, becomes an emblem of heaven, and exclusion from this feast becomes an emblem of hell. As the play ends with Olivia's offer of reconciliation to Malvolio—which is neither accepted nor rejected within the body of the play—

[1] R.T. KENDALL, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Press, 2006). Kendall persuasively argues that there is some disparity between Calvin and later English Calvinist tradition on this score. David Anonby drew my attention to this shift in Calvinist thought after reading a draft of this article.

[2] JOHN CALVIN, *The Institution of Christian Religion*, trans. by Thomas Norton, (London: 1578), 382; 3.21.5, *Internet Archive*, archive.org/details/institvtionofchr00calv/page/n4/mode/1up.

[3] J. L. SIMMONS, «A Source for Shakespeare's Malvolio: The Elizabethan Controversy with the Puritans,» *Huntington Library Quarterly* 36, no.3 (1973): 189, doi: 10.2307/3816599.

the emphasis is placed upon Malvolio's free will to determine his future, and, by extension, his eschatological state. Hence, Malvolio is not predestined but involved in his salvation in a proto-Arminian fashion. While this Puritan may be saved, it is at the expense of the doctrine of double predestination and, by extension, his Puritanism.

To begin, it will be useful to briefly glance at the state of double predestinarian thought during Shakespeare's time. R.T. Kendall argues that the decisive shift emphasizing double predestinarian thought in English Calvinism came about in 1589.[4] The prominence of double predestination in theological discourse in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean England makes it contemporaneous with the writing and production of *Twelfth Night*. As James P. Bednarx notes, «[S]cholars are in broad agreement that the Lord Chamberlain's Men first acted it sometime between 6 January 1601 and 2 February 1602».[5] As the debates concerning double predestination would have been going on for about a decade at this point, the discourse would have had ample time to seep into the public consciousness and to enter into Shakespeare's intellectual milieu.

Given that questions concerning double predestination were important in Shakespeare's time, the question remains, why would Shakespeare himself engage in these contentious debates in any way? Shakespeare's interest, in all likelihood, was less-overtly theological than dramatic.[6] Moreover, his interest was probably less in opposition to Calvinism in general than to Puritanism, its extreme form, specifically. The possible reasons for Shakespeare's opposition to Puritans in general, and his possible reasons for satirizing Puritanism in this play in particular, have

[4] Kendall's work particularly highlights the influence of the William Perkins' writings. According to Kendall, Perkins' 1589 work *A Treatise tending unto a declaration whether a man be in the estate of damnation or in the estate of grace* «inaugurate a new era in English theology» emphasizing «soteriology» over «ecclesiology» (1). Kendall writes, «The most obvious feature of [Perkins' 1591 treatise] *A Golden Chaine* is the centrality of the doctrine of double predestination. Perkins argues over the order of the decrees; his is a supralapsarian system. *A Golden Chaine* carries the *ordo salutis* from the eternal decrees to the final consummation of all things, with the unfolding of the execution of those decrees concerning the elect and the reprobate placed in between. . . Perkins claims to defend '(as they call it) the Calvinists doctrine'» (55).

[5] JAMES P. BEDNARZ, «Suspect Evidence for the Late Dating of *Twelfth Night*,» *Notes and Queries* 62, no.4 (2015): 563, doi: 10.1093/notesj/gjv137.

[6] This essay suggests that Shakespeare does, to some degree, have theological motivations, which at least amount to a dissatisfaction with the Calvinist doctrine of double predestination. This essay's emphasis, however, is in the role of ambiguity in Shakespeare's thought, leaving futures undetermined. Its argument is consonant with the character of Shakespeare given by Stephen Greenblatt in the biography *Will in the World*. Greenblatt suggests that Shakespeare's mother was Catholic and that there was «a split within his father» between Protestantism and Catholicism (102). According to Greenblatt, Shakespeare's own mature faith «seems at once Catholic, Protestant, and skeptical of both» (103). STEPHEN GREENBLATT, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, (New York, W. W. Norton, 2016).

been well-documented. Marjorie Garber writes, «Puritans in this period were vociferous in their criticism of the theatre and of all 'popish' holidays and practices, like Christmas».[7] Furthermore, Alastair Fowler, among others, argues judiciously for the occasionality of *Twelfth Night* and its relationship to the Christmastide Feast of the Epiphany.[8] As such, Puritans not only attacked the institution of the theatre but the festal occasion of *Twelfth Night* itself. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is apt for *Twelfth Night* to attack Puritanism.

Shakespeare's attack centers on a rather unfavourable characterization of the puritanical Malvolio, whom Shakespeare would not have his audience laugh with but laugh at. Though his character traits are comedically exaggerated, it must be recognized that there is a kernel of truth behind this caricatured image of a radically Calvinist Puritan. Some of Malvolio's fun-spoiling tones are borrowed from Calvin himself. In a sermon on Micah delivered on 6 January 1551, the traditional twelfth night of Christmas on which the Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated, John Calvin preached,

> Even though we see this festival serves only to mock God and even though we see that the Papists revere this holiday simply because it gives them a convenient excuse to be wanton and intemperate, to get drunk and stuff themselves with food, if you asked a hundred, if you asked a thousand people in Geneva today if they thought we should observe this holiday, they would surely say, 'why not?'[9]

Save for Malvolio, and perhaps Olivia in her most dour moments, every character in *Twelfth Night* would surely agree with Calvin's hundred or thousand Genevans. One could even imagine such a Genevan answering Calvin with the very words with which Sir Toby answers Malvolio: «Dost thou think because thou art virtuous that there shall be no more cakes and ale?».[10] Though the characters may justify their abuse of Malvolio to themselves by pointing to his various spiritual vices, their true

[7] MARJORIE GARBER, «*Twelfth Night*,» *Shakespeare After All*, (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 512. See also Alison Shell, «Puritanism and Anti-Theatricalism,» *Shakespeare and Religion*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), pp. 31-36.
[8] ALASTAIR FOWLER, «*Twelfth Night* and Epiphany.» *Remembered Words: Essays on Genre, Realism, and Emblems*, Oxford University Press, 2021, pp. 92-104.
[9] JOHN CALVIN, *Sermons on Micah*, trans. by Blair Reynolds, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 387, *Internet Archive,* archive.org/details/sermonsonmicah0000calv/page/n479/mode/2up.
[10] WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*. Edited by Roger Warren and Stanley Wells, Oxford University Press, 2008, act 2, scene 3, lines 107-8. Subsequent citations will be given parenthetically in the text; e.g., (2.3.107-8).

spur to action is that he puts an end to their gorging and quaffing (which they do at Olivia's expense) and that he silences their revels.

The revellers, uncharitably, are quick to attribute Malvolio's fun-killing nature to the worst possible motives: after the encounter that arouses Sir Toby's rebuke concerning cakes and ale, Maria condemns him as «a time-pleaser,» «an affectioned ass,» a man «crammed, as he thinks, with excellencies,» and as one who presumes that «all that look on him love him» (2.3.137-141). They attribute to Malvolio pride, the sin often attributed to Satan as the cause of his fall, and indeed, Maria almost conflates the devil and the Puritan, saying, «The dev'l a puritan that he is» (2.3.136). Pride, admittedly, is among Malvolio's vices, but when he rebukes the gluttonous rioters, he may simply be, or he may believe himself to be, following one of Calvin's tenderer points. In the *Institution of Christian Religion*, Calvin approvingly quotes Augustine as exhorting «that because we know not who belongeth or not belongeth to the number of the predestinate, we ought to be affectioned that we woulde all men to be saved», and so, «for our part, we must apply holsome & sharp rebuking to all men like a medicine, that they perish not».[11] Such a benevolent motive would not justify Malvolio's intolerance, but it would alleviate its severity, making Malvolio a more ambiguous character—it leaves him pendant between symbolic redemption and reprobation.

Even given these caveats, one cannot fail to see Malvolio's pride, but his pride, such as it is, is not the chief cause of his downfall. Maria and the others presumably think that their plot would gull Malvolio into foolishness by his desire for social advancement. There would be something in him akin to satanic pride were this steward to disrupt the Great Chain of Being by marrying his mistress merely to become a count. Admittedly, after Maria suggests to him that Olivia «did affect» him, he does exclaim in a daydream, «To be Count Malvolio!» (2.5.22; 32). But this man, named for his «Bad-Will,»[12] does not fall for pride, but for love. Before receiving the suggestion from others, nothing seems further from Malvolio's mind than romance. And who can blame Malvolio for being gulled by the letter? As A.D. Nuttall observes, the letter is «written in passable imitation of Olivia's hand» and «is all about the social gulf that lies between them», urging Malvolio «not to be frightened by this [social gulf]».[13] Nuttall locates a «subtle pathos» in the fact that this loathed, unromantic man is utterly surprised by the prospect of being loved, and although loving is something beyond Malvolio's experience and utterly foreign to his temperament, he is

[11] CALVIN, *Institution*, 399; 3.23.14.
[12] SIMMONS, 182.
[13] ANTHONY D. NUTTALL, «*Twelfth Night*: The Unsociable Man,» *Shakespeare the Thinker*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 243.

willing to appear foolish to reciprocate this intimated love.[14] New lovers are often foolish, and Malvolio has come to love late.

Critics have noted the connection between Malvolio's conviction that Olivia loves him and his conviction concerning his divine election: J.L. Simmons argues that the «security of Malvolio's conviction associates him with the absolute and rigorous predestination of high Calvinism», citing Malvolio's various grateful invocations of Jove as support for his position.[15] These invocations are exemplified in the line, «Well Jove, not I, is the doer of this, and he is to be thanked» (3.4.79-80). Simmons further notes that this «heavily emphasized gratitude clashes oddly with Malvolio's conceit». but it may be that Malvolio is somewhat less conceited than it is generally supposed.[16] That this demure, sombre Puritan is willing to go about in yellow stockings, cross-gartered, and smiling, suggests no pride on his part but rather pride's opposite—humility. As Calvin states in his *Institution of Christian Religion*, the doctrine that election arises from «the mere liberalitie of God» is «the very roote of humilitie».[17] Malvolio's silliness is not the response of over-weening pride, but of one who is well-aware that his potential advancement would not be for his merits but would arise *sola gratia*—from Olivia's mere liberality.

Malvolio suffers the nadir of his abuse when he is falsely imprisoned for insanity and encounters Feste, who is disguised as Sir Topaz the curate. Feste treats Malvolio as a demoniac, pretending to attempt a failed exorcism, exclaiming, «Out hyperbolical fiend, how vexest thou this man!» (4.2.26). Feste questions Malvolio's sanity by pretending that his dark prison is brightly lit, and that the only darkness is the metaphorical darkness of Malvolio's ignorance (4.2.30-47). Considering the extremity of his abuse, Malvolio keeps his wits and maintains his temper nobly in this scene.

Feste's use of the word «hyperbolical» merits special attention: it echoes the word diabolical while it suggests excess. Hyperbole also represents the rhetorical analogue for what Feste and others see as his reaching beyond his station. As Sir Toby declares Malvolio to be «an overweening rogue!» in seeing his response to the letter (2.5.27), so George Puttenham, in his 1589 work *The Art of English Poesy*, calls hyperbole «the Overreacher» for «his immoderate excess».[18] Were Feste a stupid character, one could argue that his substitution of hyperbolical for diabolical is simply a malapropism, but he is arguably (as is so-often the case with Shakespeare's

[14] NUTTALL, 243.
[15] SIMMONS, 189.
[16] SIMMONS, 189.
[17] CALVIN, *Institution*, 380; 3.21.1.
[18] GEORGE PUTTENHAM, *The Art of English Poesy: A Critical Edition*, edited by Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 276.

fools) the most intelligent character in the play. One could argue more persuasively that Feste is shrewdly playing the stupid character of Sir Topaz, and what is a pun from the fool's perspective is a malapropism from that of the fool's curatical persona. The stupid Sir Topaz, who would be exorcizing Malvolio, means to call him diabolical, believing him to be possessed by a fiend; the shrewd Feste, playing Sir Topaz, knows, or thinks that he knows, that Malvolio's true vice is his excessive pride and his hypocrisy.

The fool further condemns Malvolio as «more puzzled than the Egyptians in their fog» (4.2.44-45). Editors Roger Warren and Stanley Wells identify this allusion to «one of the biblical plagues of Egypt» (194; Exodus 10.21-3). This plague also appears in the apocryphal Wisdome of Salomon, included in the *Geneva Bible* of 1560, which portrays the darkness as a reproach for the Egyptian's hypocritical «boasting of their knowledge»: «For they that promised to drive away feare and trouble from the sicke persone, were sicke for deare, & worthie to be laughed at» (17.7-8). As the boastful Egyptians were mocked by divine retribution, so the hypocritical Puritan is now mocked by a fool in a curate's clothing, and as Malvolio calls his prison as «dark as hell», so the apocryphal work describes the Egyptian night as coming «out of the dungeon of hell» (4.2.46; 17.13). Moreover, as Malvolio is willfully the singular figure of darkness among the characters' epiphanic revels, so the Egyptians are portrayed as the only ones upon whom this darkness fell: «For all the worlde shined with clere light, and no man was hindred in his labour. Onely upon them there fel an heavie night. . . [Y]ea, they were unto themselves more grievous then darknes» (17.19-20). Eventually Malvolio will be released from the darkness of his prison to the light of the world: the question is whether the interior darkness of his puritanical nature will be illumined.

Malvolio subsequently seeks to prove his sanity via a «trial» by «any constant question» (4.2.49). In response, Feste asks, «What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wildfowl?» (4.2.50-51). The question is unfair, for while Pythagorean thought was popular at the time, as S.K. Heninger explores at length in his study *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics*, [19] Feste's question concerns biology, which was not part of Pythagoreanism's central, or at least popular, tenets. Demonstrating unexpected wit, even for a sane man, and knowledge of esoteric (even if then-popular) thought, Malvolio shifts the question from biology to metaphysical psychology, answering, «That the soul of our grandam might haply inherit a bird» (4.2.52-53). The Pythagorean doctrine that souls go through a series of incarnations, rising or declining through the Great Chain of Being

[19] S. K. HENINGER, *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics*, (Tacoma: Angelico Press, 2013).

in accordance to one's persistence in virtue or wickedness, «[p]robably the best-known tenet of the Pythagorean school», was rejected by «the formulators of Church dogma».[20] Feste subsequently questions whether Malvolio approves of the doctrine, and when the Puritan piously denies it, Feste, still in the guise of a curate, rebukes him: «Remain thou still in darkness. Thou shalt hold th'opinion of Pythagoras ere I will allow of thy wits» (4.2.57-58). Elizabethan playgoers may well have remembered that this very doctrine of «Pythagoras' metempsychosis» was invoked by the titular, and seemingly reprobate, scholar of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* for solace moments before a legion of devils drags him into hell.[21] Malvolio refrains from this Faustian blaspheming, but this pious restraint is used as a pretext to keep him locked in his hellish confines.

Darren Dyck argues that, «ironically», Malvolio is *Twelfth Night*'s «most straightforward example of an infected imagination».[22] Dyck suggests that the delusive force of Malvolio's imagination is shown in the prison scene where he first addresses Feste disguised as Sir Topaz and then as Feste without recognizing that they are truly one and the same person. Dyck continues, «In each of these instances, Malvolio's insistence paired with his glaring references to the 'dark' of his prison cell invites skepticism».[23] Dyck further finds Malvolio's «perpetually immobile state» to be «evinced by his stay in prison in Act 4».[24] While Dyck argues his case strongly, the text, as it is so often with Shakespeare, is amenable to multiple readings.

One suspects that Malvolio is the type of Puritan who would avoid the theatre as an immoral pastime, and so it is likely that he is not accustomed to trying to distinguish between actors and characters, persons and personas. Ironically, his imagination is overactive as a result of being unexercised. He is not used to performing «that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment», which, according to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, «constitutes poetic faith».[25] As Shakespeare's older contemporary Sir Philip Sidney recognizes, the poet «nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth».[26] In Malvolio's restricted worldview, there is no intermediate position suspended between truth and lies in which fiction may abide. Consequently, when his

[20] HENINGER, 267.
[21] CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, *Doctor Faustus*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Major Authors*, Vol. 1, edited by Stephen Greenblatt et al., (New York: W.W. Norton, 2019), 13.97.
[22] DARREN DYCK, "*Twelfth Night*," *Will & Love: Shakespeare and the Motions of the Soul*, (Eugene: Cascade, 2023), 219.
[23] DYCK, 219.
[24] DYCK, 219.
[25] SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, *Biographia Literaria*, volume 2, edited by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 6.
[26] SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Prose and Poetry*, edited by Robert Kimbrough, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 136.

fancy takes hold of him, he falls victim to lies which he believes to be true. He is the foil to Feste, who, being a fool accustomed to feigning, slips in and out of his character as Sir Topaz while maintaining the stability of his own person. Malvolio's turn from a demure puritan to a lovelorn fool is not so much an image of immobility as it is of instability, and while he may be imprisoned in Act 4, he is also released in Act 5.

Malvolio only re-enters the comedy's main plot with its ending, and it ends with eschatological overtones. The anticipation of the weddings of Viola with Orsino, of Sebastian with Olivia, and of Maria with Sir Toby provides these overtones, for Christ himself establishes wedding feasts as being emblematic of heaven and the exclusion therefrom as being images of damnation (Matt. 22.1-14; Luke 14.15-24). Though such a symbolically fluid reading may strike a late modern hermeneut as far-fetched, it would not appear so to Shakespeare's contemporaryes; as Fowler notes, «renaissance comedy, even Shakespeare's, was still close to the Moralities».[27] In the penultimate paragraph of his study of Shakespearean comedy and romance, Northrop Frye remarks, «What the wedding masque presents is the meeting of earth and heaven under the rainbow, the symbol of Noah's new-washed world, after the tempest and flood had receded, and when it was promised that springtime and harvest would not cease. . . [O]ut of the cycle of time in ordinary nature we have reached a paradise».[28] Frye's remarks suit *Twelfth Night* quite well: the twins separated by storm and shipwreck are reunited, disguises are removed, and lovers are paired fittingly. Orsino, characteristically a romantic, looks forward to a «golden time» when a «solemn combination shall be made of our dear souls» (5.1.372-3). In Shakespeare's syncretistic imagination, these intimations take on colourings both biblical and classical, with imagery from Isaiah and Revelation, as well as from Virgil and Ovid. Tangibly, this scene is shot through with intimations of an apocalyptic return to the Golden Age or, better yet, to a paradise that is at once a new Eden and a new Jerusalem.[29]

It is in this nigh-apocalyptic context that Malvolio makes his dramatic final appearance. Understandably, he is enraged at his abuse. Those involved with the plot seem to think their game was no worse than Malvolio's previous hostility: Fabian finds «the injuries. . . justly weighed / That have on both sides passed», and Feste remarks, «[T]hus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges» (5.1.358-9; 366-7).

[27] FOWLER, 99.
[28] NORTHROP FRYE, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 158.
[29] Editors Roger Warren and Stanley Wells note the allusion to the classical Golden Age, as well as the many valences that the adjective "golden" has in Shakespeare's writings (220).

While they find the *lex talionis* satisfied, Malvolio finds himself wronged, and so he exits with the dark utterance, «I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you» (5.1.368). Indeed, were this the final statement in the play concerning Malvolio, it would not be tenuous to say that the darkness of the Egyptian plague has become the Parable of the Great Banquet's «utter darknes» with «weping and gnasshing of teeth» (Matt. 22:13). However, the play is not quite over, and Malvolio is not damned yet.

Critics, such as Garber, who see Malvolio as irredeemable are as mistaken as those critics, such as Fowler, who find the ending of the play to suggest a «reconciliation» with Malvolio, «project[ing] cosmic peace and harmonious closure».[30] The latter critics bolster their view with the fact that the last word on Malvolio's fate, uttered by Orsino, the highest-ranking figure in the play, is «entreat him to a peace» (5.1.370). Yet, the emphasis here is on the offered entreaty, and whether or not Malvolio accepts it is highly questionable. Ironically, in this scene with eschatological overtones, the emphasis is placed on the Calvinist Malvolio's free will to receive or reject grace. Shakespeare's kindness towards Malvolio is that he is not the reprobate Maria, Toby, Andrew, Feste, and Fabian would have him be. Shakespeare's generosity to his Puritan character, however, is at the cost of a central doctrine of this Puritan's Puritanism: double predestination.

In short, throughout this play, and particularly in its ending, Malvolio inhabits a space of spiritual ambiguity. He may rebuke the others out of pride, or for the sake of remedial benevolence: the truth is probably a mixture both. He may be so gullible because he is vain and desires to climb the social ladder, or he may be so gullible because he yearns to be loved: again, the truth is probably a mixture of both. He may be like the hypocritical Egyptians plagued by exterior darkness and a profounder interior darkness, but this is a play created for the occasion of the Epiphany, during which the faithful celebrate the advent of «the true light, which lighteth everie man» (John 1.9). Malvolio, more hyperbolical than diabolical, is truly convicted by his beliefs, restraining himself from blaspheming even though it would hasten his release. Garber finds that the play's second title, *What You Will*, speaks to the Epiphany's «customary season of topsy-turvy revelry», which Puritans were opposed to, as well as to «the space of fantasy and wish-fulfilment that was the early modern playhouse», which Puritans were also opposed to.[31] (506). One might add to Garber that the play's title speaks to the choice offered to the puritanical Malvolio at the play's end to accept or to reject the reconciliation offered to him, and to maintain or to

[30] GARBER, 534; FOWLER, 104.
[31] GARBER, 506.

renounce his puritanical character. Malvolio, finally, is not predestined, but has his destiny in his own hands.[32]

[32] A draft of this essay was presented at the London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research's conference «Narratives of Temporality: Continuities, Discontinuities, Ruptures» on 30 July 2023.