

It does have a much more serious dramatic purpose, however, because Leonato is not playing a game but trying to explain, and thus explain away, Claudio's 'No', which he—quite literally—will not take for an answer. This is, of course, an indication of his impatience to get through the ceremony, as revealed in his opening speech in this scene, but, more significantly, it is the result of his overweening confidence, which is expressed in his attempt to explain away Claudio's 'No' by the quibble, and which reaches its climax when he even presumes to answer for Claudio that he does not know of any inward impediment to the marriage. And this in turn builds up the emotional tension of the scene, because the audience knows, in general, that overconfidence, like its close relative pride, always comes before a fall, and also, in particular, that Claudio has seen what looked like an assignation between Hero and Borachio and therefore intends to 'shame her' publicly at the altar (III.ii.123–5), so that his 'No' here really does mean 'No', and does not depend on any quibble because he has not come hither either to marry Hero or to be married to her.

Another interesting feature that these two aborted marriages have in common is that they both come very close to reproducing the actual wording of small portions of the official marriage service appointed to be followed in churches. Presumably we are not supposed to ask how the liturgy of the Church of England travelled to the French forest of Arden and the Sicilian city of Messina, but this does raise a question about the relationship of these episodes to the Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Service in the Church, passed in 1559, that prohibited the presentation of 'anything in the derogation' of the Book of Common Prayer 'or any part thereof' in 'any interludes [or] plays'.<sup>5</sup> It is usually assumed that this is the reason (along with the need for artistic economy) that weddings and other religious rites, including baptisms, funerals, and coronations, are not shown on the early modern English stage but are placed between the scenes or after the end of the play, or else are represented by processions going

to or coming from them.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the two marriage ceremonies discussed here are the only ones I have found in the drama of this period that are presented on the stage and even include some of the words of the church service.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps it was felt that they did not violate the statute because the words that are spoken in them by the participants have no explicit religious content, which may also help to explain why they can travel so well across the Channel, and could give us another reason that Leonato tells Friar Francis to 'be brief' and pass over the preliminary part of the service, since that would include, not only the Friar's recounting of the 'particular duties' of husband and wife (where he tells them, as Jaques puts it, 'what marriage is'), but also his religious invocation that is prohibited by the Act of Uniformity.

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<sup>6</sup> See the entries under 'ceremony', 'funeral', and 'wedding' in Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580–1642* (Cambridge, 1999), and my 'Shakespeare's Weddings (and Other Rites)', *Shakespeare Newsletter*, 52 (2002), 63–4, and 'Revisiting Religious Rites in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries', *Shakespeare Newsletter*, 58 (2008), 3–4, 8, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Each of these plays also presents another aborted marriage—of Touchstone to Audrey in *As You Like It*, III.iii.64–71, and of Claudio to Hero's supposed cousin in *Much Ado*, V.iv.53–9—but both of them are broken off before the actual ceremony begins. All the completed marriage ceremonies in *As You Like It* (four) and *Much Ado* (two) take place after the end of the play.

### ROUSING THE NIGHT OWL: MALVOLIO, *TWELFTH NIGHT*, AND ANTI-PURITAN SATIRE

IN *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare relies upon his 'audience's recognition of a widespread caricature of Puritanical character traits', of the sort circulated in broadside ballads, jestbooks, and on stage, to identify Malvolio as a comic Puritan figure.<sup>1</sup> While scholars have pointed

<sup>5</sup> The text is given in E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1923), IV, 263.

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Hunt, *Shakespeare's Religious Allusiveness: Its Play and Tolerance* (Aldershot, 2004), 91 (n. 1).

to a number of Puritan and anti-Puritan motifs in the play,<sup>2</sup> the reference to Malvolio as a 'night-owl' (II.iii.57) has been hitherto overlooked.<sup>3</sup> During their increasingly rowdy latenight merriments, Sir Toby comments that Feste's voice

To hear by the nose... is dulcet in contagion. But shall we make the welkin dance indeed? Shall we rouse the night-owl in a catch that will draw three souls out of one weaver?

(II.iii.55–58)

Editors of the play usually focus on the other parts of this passage in their glosses. Bevington notes that to 'make the welkin dance' is to 'drink till the sky seems to turn around', and that the 'three souls' is either a reference to 'the threefold nature of the soul', 'to the three singers of the three-part catch', or that the phrase is 'just a comic exaggeration'.<sup>4</sup> Donno's edition of the play for the New Cambridge Shakespeare similarly glosses the 'welkin dance' as to 'make (the stars) in the sky dance', with the added suggestion that the catch / weaver line alludes to the number of weavers that were 'refugees from the Low Countries, and frequently Calvinists', who would therefore be 'more accustomed to singing psalms, not catches'.<sup>5</sup> The Oxford edition agrees, noting that 'weavers were traditionally addicted to psalm-singing, so to move them

with popular catches would be a great triumph'.<sup>6</sup> In all of these representative instances, the 'owl' is never glossed, and the purpose of the catch / weaver reference is never explained.

Both weavers and owls were associated with Puritans in early modern England, and these references would have assisted Shakespeare's audience, like Maria, in recognising Malvolio as 'a kind of puritan' (II.iii.135). Since the profession was in large part made up of Calvinist refugees from Flanders who brought the wool industry with them, 'weaver' and 'Puritan' became synonymous: for example, a man in Puritan garb is derided as a '*Geneva Weaver*' in Jasper Mayne's comedy *The City Match*, and George Chapman's *Monsieur D'Olive* includes a sketch of a Puritan 'weauer' that has become 'purblind' from reading the small print of the Geneva Bible.<sup>7</sup>

Squinting to read the fine print, as well as being blind to common sense and their own hypocrisy—Malvolio is, after all, 'anything constantly but a time-pleaser' (II.iii.141–42)—Puritans were often symbolically associated with owls. Their later identification as 'Roundheads', a derogatory term derived from the distinctive haircut worn by the Puritan faction of parliament, strengthened the association: unlike other birds, owls are unique in that their eyes are in the front of their heads, which are round. This biological novelty was not lost on Humphrey Crouch, who published a broadside ballad entitled, *My Bird is a Round-head*, playfully juxtaposing two Roundheads, one political and one ornithological, against each other.<sup>8</sup> As expected, the feathered Roundhead proves more desirable.

Malvolio aside, another instance of a Puritan slighted as a weaver and as an owl is found in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Owles*. Presented to Prince Charles at Kenilworth in 1624, the 'masque' has the ghost of Captain Cox present a series of six 'owles', the third of which is

A pure native Bird  
This, and though his hue

<sup>2</sup> Representative studies include: Patrick Collinson, 'Ecclesiastical Vitriol: Religious Satire in the 1590s and the Invention of Puritanism', in *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade*, ed. John Guy (Cambridge, 1995), 150–70; Donna B. Hamilton, *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England* (Lexington, 1992), 93–106; William P. Holden, *Anti-Puritan Satire, 1572–1642* (New Haven, 1954), 101–41; Hunt, *Shakespeare's Religious Allusiveness*, 73–96; Eric Mallin, *Inscribing the Time: Shakespeare and the End of Elizabethan England* (Berkeley, 1995), 167–94; Steven J. Masello, 'Shakespeare's Comic Revenge in *Twelfth Night*', *Shakespeare Yearbook*, ii (1991), 68–76; Paul Siegel, 'Malvolio: Comic Puritan Automaton', in *Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. Maurice Charney (New York, 1980), 217–30; J. L. Simmons, 'A Source for Shakespeare's Malvolio: The Elizabethan Controversy with the Puritans', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, xxxvi (1972–73), 181–201.

<sup>3</sup> All references to Shakespeare are from *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (New York, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> David Bevington (ed.), *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 5th edn (New York, c.2004).

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Story Donno (ed.), *Twelfth Night*, New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge, 1985).

<sup>6</sup> Roger Warren and Stanley Wells (ed.), *Twelfth Night*, The Oxford Shakespeare (New York, 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Jasper Mayne, *The City Match* (Oxford, 1639; STC 17750), sig. PR; George Chapman, *Monsieur D'Olive* (London, 1606; STC 4983), sig. D3R.

<sup>8</sup> Humphrey Crouch, *My Bird is a Round-head* (London, 1642; Wing C7285B).

Be not *Coventrie*-blue,  
 Yet he is undone  
 By the thred he has spunne,  
 For since the wise towne  
 Has let the sports downe  
 Of May-games, and Morris,  
 For which he right sorry is.<sup>9</sup>

This 'Owle third' is a Puritan weaver from Coventry (presumably 'his hue' is a more godly black than the blue thread he sells) whose zeal in tearing down Maypoles and stamping out traditional festivities has backfired and left him bankrupt. With no more 'dancings, and Wakes' at which to wear the 'Napkins, and poses' and other decorative attire for which his thread was once bought, the Puritan's religious fervour has brought about his financial demise. Having 'neither wit, nor lands', he has literally nothing else to do with his thread but hang himself.

Read in light of these examples, Sir Toby's proposal in *Twelfth Night* that the trio shall 'rouse the night-owl' by singing a 'catch' can be understood as his anticipation that their late-night antics will provoke the play's Puritan figure, Malvolio, the owlish killjoy who swiftly rebukes the drunken revellers for their lack of 'respect' for neither 'place, persons, nor time' (II.iii.88). Such a reading supports Bevington's gloss that the reference to drawing 'three souls out of one weaver' is a comic exaggeration, since to 'rouse' three souls out of a Puritan spoilsport is surely a difficult, if not impossible, task. As Alan Brissenden suggests, the passage is ultimately ironic: the result of Sir Toby's desire to have a 'rousing chorus' loud enough to 'make the welkin dance', is not to make 'the planets and the spheres moving together in a harmony which would be mirrored on the earth beneath', but instead 'to bring immediate hostility, disorder, and confusion'.<sup>10</sup> The 'weaver' will be 'drawn out' with a 'catch', just as the 'night-owl' will be 'roused', only to have his feathers ruffled later.

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### HAMLET IN MELANCHTHON'S WITTENBERG

DURING Hamlet's first appearance on stage, Shakespeare introduces two of his most salient innovations to the variants of the *Hamlet* story available to him in the late sixteenth century. The first is that, unlike his sources, Shakespeare makes the prince a student. The second, a corollary to the first, is that he associates the totality of Hamlet's earlier life experience with the University of Wittenberg. That Hamlet, at thirty years of age, has remained in school vibrates in the play as a motif which, while not precisely discordant, surprises. A fraction of the male nobility in early modern Europe attended university in the first place. For Shakespeare to prolong Hamlet's studies into manhood renders what was already unusual even more so, although archives indicate that the presence of an adult foreign student, especially a Dane, was less extraordinary in the lecture halls of German universities such as those at Wittenberg and Erfurt than of English institutions.<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare pointedly directs our attention to this particular university, moreover, alluding to Wittenberg four times in Act I, Scene ii. Should the audience miss Hamlet's initial question to his 'fellow student' and friend, 'And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?' the playwright has him repeat it: 'But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?' (I.ii.164–8).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Shakespeare carefully conveys, early in the play, a cardinal datum: the prince, recently arrived from the University of Wittenberg, seeks permission

<sup>1</sup> Ronald B. McKerrow (ed.), 'Supplication to the Devil', *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (Oxford, 1966), 178–9, which ridicules the Danes for sending their sons to university years later than the English. See also Cay Dollerup, *Denmark, Hamlet, and Shakespeare* (Salzburg, 1975), 127–30.

<sup>2</sup> All quotations of *Hamlet* are from the Yale edition: Tucker Brooke and Jack Randal Crawford (eds), *The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark* (New Haven, CT and London, 1966).

<sup>9</sup> Jonson's *Masque of Owles* was first printed in the Second Folio (London, 1641; STC 14754), 125–8, where it is erroneously dated 1626.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance* (London, 1981), 60.