

**LAUGHTER AND THE POLITICS OF AFFECT
IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE, 1590-1610**

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation seeks to problematize the definition of laughter as an object of critical study using a variety of early modern affect theories. Given that prominent early modern scholars, such as Gail Kern Paster, Bruce R. Smith, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, have insisted that people living in the early modern period experienced emotions differently than people today and that subjective experience of the body varies in accord with cultural and environmental factors, it seems that we are pressed to recover a uniquely early modern experience of laughter circa 1590-1610. In place of this predominant assumption that there is such a thing as “laughter” – a stable object whose meaning can be excavated through historical research – this dissertation argues that we find competing affect theories as to what “laughter” is. Far from being a simple thing that we all know, laughter poses an immediate problem of definition that scrambles easy distinctions between physiology and psychology, individual and social group. Early modern writers proposed a variety of models for laughter. In humanist texts, laughter is often defined as a natural impulse of the body, which needs to be controlled and restrained with the help of reason. But in city comedies and cony-catching pamphlets, laughter instead appears as a form of taste and judgment, which shows one’s ability to distinguish between the refined and the vulgar. Shakespeare’s

comedies, in turn, define laughter as a form of passion that is superior to reason, insofar as it combines reason with a form of empathy.

In addition to this theoretical argument – that we do not know exactly what laughter is, of what it consists – this dissertation also makes a historical argument about shifting definitions of laughter in the period. I argue that the period between 1590 and 1610 witnessed a changing definition of laughter: the earlier texts define laughter in accord with the Galenic humoral framework, where laughter is understood as an excess of vitality that characterizes the bodies of young boys, lascivious women, and the bodies of other marginal members in the community. But as we move into the seventeenth century, the definition of laughter starts to change: thus, city comedies by Thomas Middleton and Ben Jonson, such as Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters* or pamphlets like Thomas Dekker's *The Gull's Hornbook* portray laughter not as an involuntary impulse of the body, but as a form of judgment that needs to be cultivated. In these later texts, laughter becomes linked to a mode of urban sociability and the figure of the gallant. The project thus seeks to unmoor laughter from a specific object or body and show how its meaning gets re-assigned to a different set of texts and practices in the early seventeenth century.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: EARLY MODERN WRITERS AS AFFECT THEORISTS

In Act 1, scene 2 of Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV*, Falstaff is unwillingly drawn into a conversation with Lord Chief Justice, who accuses Falstaff of living in "great infamy," to which Falstaff replies, "He that buckles in my belt cannot live in less" (*2 Henry IV*, 1.2.125-27).¹ Far from being just a simple witticism, Falstaff's foregrounding of his big body as the origin of his deviant lifestyle indicates how he thinks about laughter. Speaking to the Page earlier in the same scene, Falstaff explains that his large bodily size is not only responsible for his diseases, but more importantly, it is also the very origin of his brilliant wit, or remarkable capacity to laugh and evoke laughter in others. Using the high style of a biblical sermon, Falstaff highlights how important laughter is to his ability to dominate men and satisfy his own desires:

Men of all sorts take a pride to gird at me. The brain of this foolish-compounded clay, man, is not able to invent anything that tends to laughter more than I invent, or is invented on me. I am not only witty in

¹ All references to Shakespeare's plays in this chapter (*1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, *Othello*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) are based on Stephen Greenblatt et al., eds., *The Norton Shakespeare based on the Oxford edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008). Citations include act, scene, and line numbers.

myself, but the cause that wit is in other men. I do here walk before
thee like a sow that hath overwhelmed all her litter but one. (2 *Henry*
IV, 1.2.5-10)

Using laughter as the ultimate criterion of worth, Falstaff puts himself in a God-like position to which “the brain of this foolish-compounded clay” can never even aspire. But Falstaff’s hymn to laughter is surprisingly justified, for it is laughter that allows Falstaff to “turn diseases to commodity,” as Falstaff resolves at the end of his meeting with the Chief Justice (2 *Henry IV*, 1.3.228). Laughter pervades Falstaff’s interactions with others and seems to act as a decisive factor that transmutes the nature of his encounters from hostile to friendly, or from Falstaff’s position of inferiority to one where he is in a God-like position. The effectiveness of Falstaff’s laughter is illustrated by Poins, when he comments on Falstaff’s ability to “turn all to a merriment” in the face of any accusations the latter can face. Commenting on Falstaff in the context of Falstaff’s boastful promise to cudgel the Prince, Poins advises Harry to confront Falstaff right away and shame him for his words: “My lord, he will drive you out of your revenge and turn all to a merriment, if you take not the heat,” Poins warns Prince Harry (2 *Henry IV*, 2.4.270-71).

The ambiguous social value of Falstaff-inspired laughter is evident from Harry’s seeking out of these moments of laughter and merriment, on one hand, and the play’s constant warnings about the negative effects of Falstaff’s laughter in the voices of Henry IV and Lord Chief Justice, on the other. So, Harry goes to great lengths, from staging a fake robbery at Gadshill to robbing Falstaff’s pocket and

eavesdropping on his conversation, in order to hear Falstaff speak and turn it all into a hilarious joke. But *2 Henry IV* famously ends with Harry's rejection of Falstaff as "that vain man" whom Harry now exhorts to "Fall to thy prayers" (*2 Henry IV*, 5.5.42).

The conversation on Falstaff sits, I argue, at the intersection of two fields of discourse that I would like to bring together in this introduction and the dissertation as a whole: physiology and politics. By physiology I mean a critical conversation on the physical workings of Falstaff's laughter: How does it originate in his body? How does laughter spread? What is the nature of the physical interaction between Falstaff's laughter and the bodies of his listeners? Politics, on the other hand, signifies seemingly a whole other field of discourse, which concerns itself with laughter's relation to political power and the state of England as a whole: What is the political value of Falstaff's laughter? How does laughter impact the listeners' ability to start a rebellion or form an alternative political discourse? The contribution of this dissertation is to show how answering one question inevitably involves answering another: the project shows that the debate about the political value of Falstaff's laughter is also a debate about laughter's physiology.

This dissertation demonstrates that a given view about the physical nature of laughter – as contagious or easily contained, natural or artificial – is a *choice* that signals how a given writer thinks of the body's relationship to the environment, a relation that simultaneously political and physical. Thus, to say in the manner of Falstaff that laughter is contagious and that it produces laughter in others is on one

hand, to build on the theory of contagion available in the time: passions were believed to be contagious in humoral theory; contagion was discussed, albeit in a different manner, in the Paracelsian theory of disease; and contagion was experienced first-hand in times of plague epidemic, manifested in the city-wide avoidance of crowds and quarantine efforts.² In other words, there were enough theories and phenomenological experiences during the time period that the idea of contagion was thinkable, and we can easily relate Falstaff's celebration of the infectious nature of his laughter to this rich discourse on physical contagion. But to say, as the works of "historical recovery" often do, that because theories of contagion were widely available, and therefore, this is what Falstaff's laughter "shows" – as if his view simply transmits the popular historical views of the time – is incorrect. Falstaff's celebration of the infection of laughter is a political choice that signals how Falstaff relates to his environment: it is an "orientation," to borrow Sara Ahmed's term, which is as much physical as it is

² On the early modern Galenic theory of contagion as humoral imbalance, see Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). For a discussion of contagion as a form of occult "sympathy," see Mary Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2013). Finally, on Girolamo Fracastoro's and Paracelsian views of contagion as originating from miasma, or seeds of disease, see Vivian Nutton, "The Seeds of Disease," *Medical History*, 27.1 (1983): 1-34; and Walter Pagel, *Paracelsus, an introduction to philosophical medicine in the era of Renaissance* (New York: Karger, 1982). Leeds Barroll provides a general overview of plague theories in the period in his book, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: the Stuart Years* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991).

political.³ Contrary to the tendency of much early modern historical phenomenology to treat relation to one's body and the bodies of others as a neutral choice, this dissertation builds on queer affect theory to show how bodily relations are implicated in the most mundane of political choices. It traces how different institutional and social arrangements model different beliefs in the transmission of passion; how, in other words, political arrangements presume a specific mechanism for the distribution of emotions.

For instance, early modern monarchy as a political arrangement rewards the belief in the idea that passions could and should be restrained. Surely, it is rather inconvenient to have a physical theory of passion, where a subject's emotions give her access to truth or are believed to be irresistible by her fellow citizens. Accordingly, in period literature, the law is frequently thought of as a sort of harness or restraint on the naturally unruly passions, often identified with bodies of foreigners and women. For example, in Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago is eager to police Othello's passion for Desdemona and he thus invokes the authority of the law, which he conflates with the functioning of the reasonable faculty of the mind. He warns Othello:

Be assured of this:

That the magnifico [Brabantio] is much beloved,

And hath in his effect a voice potential

³ Sara Ahmed discusses "orientation" as both a philosophical concept and a form of affective "turning" towards an object one likes or desires in her book, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006).

As double as the Duke's. He will divorce you,
Or put upon you what restraint or grievance
The law, with all his might to enforce it on,
Will give him cause. (1.2.11-17)

Having converted Othello's passion for Desdemona into merely "lust" in the opening scene, Iago now imagines the law as a "restraint" that should curb the carnal desires of the Moor. In his speech, Iago converts the period framework on the physiology of passions – their natural unruliness and lack of government in the Galenic humoral discourse – into a political theory that explains why the union of Othello and Desdemona is incompatible with the authority of reason.

Using similar terms, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus conflates the authority of reason with the rule of the law, arguing that it is only reasonable for Hermia to forsake her passion for Lysander. He gives Hermia two carefully outlined choices: "Either to die the death, or to abjure / For ever the society of men" (1.1.65-66). Theseus's ultimatum makes it clear that Hermia's desire for intimacy that strays from the paternal will could not be translated into a valid political choice. Her desire for Lysander is not processed as a form of reasoning, but merely a stirring in the blood, which is evident from Theseus's advice to Hermia to "question your desires" and "examine well your blood" (1.1.68, 69). And this moment makes clear that the early modern ideal of humoral temperance and restraint is concomitant with the political / physical theory, which holds that individual passions are necessarily chaotic

and unreliable and it is only the central authority of reason / monarch / humanist teacher who can impose order and meaning on these passions.

But if monarchy rewards the belief that passions are not contagious or at least containable, my dissertation shows how marginal cultural institutions, specifically, the emerging printing press and the institution of theater rewarded theories of passion that privileged easy transmission of passions or which even postulated that passions, rather than reason, give us a more immediate access to truth. The end of the sixteenth century witnessed a waning of the humoral framework for passions and a greater acceptance of passions as at least in part beneficial and sociable without any recourse to reason or to God – a new physiological framework, I argue, which corresponded with the increasing importance of the city, the movement of people and capital in a more industrial and global state of England. The “softening” of the attitude to passions can be seen, for example, in the appearance of political cartoons and political drama in seventeenth-century England. In this respect, Christina Carlson has discussed the idea of “topicality” or the fact that drama written after around 1610 became more topical and there emerged a greater number of “topical” publications, such as cartoons on the issues of the day. Arguably, a more open public sphere is concomitant with a greater tolerance of passions as good in themselves or indicative of one’s refined humanity as opposed to one’s closeness to childishness and beastliness.⁴

⁴ Christina Carlson discusses the rise of political drama in “‘Free speaking Cartoons’: The rise of political prints and drama in seventeenth-century England,” PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008, ProQuest (330024). Together with the expansion of the

In its desire to tie the physical to the political, I follow the footsteps of queer re-theorization of desire in modern life. Queer theorists are the ones who most eloquently challenged the idea that bodily desires and experiences is something that is safely left to the domestic, or apolitical sphere. In the essay collection *Intimacy*, Lauren Berlant confronts the idea that intimacy and intimate relations are something that only characterizes the private sphere of a political subject. She argues that this is a myth propagated by heteronormative culture that would like to make the heterosexual ideal invisible, unnoticeable, and therefore normal. Berlant argues that “intimacy itself is publicly mediated, in several senses.”⁵ And she lists several ways in which the dominant culture makes intimacy disappear as a topic of political discussion:

First, its conventional spaces presuppose a structural differentiation of ‘personal life’ from work, politics, and the public sphere. Second, the normativity of heterosexual culture links intimacy only to the institutions of personal life, making them the privileged institutions of social reproduction, the accumulation and transfer of capital, and self-development. Third, by making sex seem irrelevant or merely personal, heteronormative conventions

public arena, what we witness is a modification in the kinds of passions that were tolerated or encouraged, such as a “softening” of the attitudes to the negative emotions expressed in political critique. Greater tolerance of negative passions is also evident in that the fact that the concept of “crime of passion” came into being in the early seventeenth century.

⁵ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” in *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 311-330. The quote is from p. 317.

of intimacy block the building of nonnormative or explicit public sexual cultures.”⁶

In these lines, Berlant critiques the idea by which the private life of a political subject is separated from economic and political sphere: she takes issue with the idea that everything that happens at home is pre-political and irrelevant to the larger political discourse. Throughout this essay by Berlant and Michael Warner, the writers show that the normalcy of heterosexual marriage is in fact predicated on the idea that intimacy should be absent from all other forms of public contact. Thus “intimacy” is something that properly belongs to the private life of a heterosexual couple, but cannot be thought to accrue in other places, such as the workplace, the voting room, or the public arena at large. In contrast to the ostensible absence of emotions from political theory, affect theorists like Lauren Berlant have demonstrated that current political arrangements are built on very clear ideas about how emotions spread, how they work, and what one should do about them. Instead of presuming that this discourse about emotions suits all, queer theorists demanded a conversation about them – hence the title of Berlant and Warner’s essay, “sex in public.” The narrowness of current ideas about emotion is evident, for example, from queer re-theorization of intimacy as formed by bodily proximity and not simply by the idea of psychological depth; the ambivalence of pleasure as formed in part by the experience of pain; or from Deborah Grayson’s discussion of “motherhood” as something that is not simply passed by

⁶ Ibid., 317.

genes, but also in part, by nurture and care one bestows on the child, or the surrogate mother's experience of birth.⁷

Unlike the critical rubric of historical phenomenology, which guided the discussion of early modern passions up to date, affect theory, I argue, makes us aware that we do not know what we talk about when we invoke, for example, carnal desires in early modern England, as Theseus paints her desires to Hermia, or about restraining one's blood, as Iago represents the Moor's wishes to the Moor. To an extent, these phrases are just normalizing terms because they seek to define, and give meaning to what, Berlant calls, "a kind of wild thing that is not necessarily organized that way, or any way."⁸ Recognizing physical theories as simply useful *mediations* of how emotions actually work enables us to ask questions about collective affect and the actual use of a physical theory in practice. If we move towards the *contextual* determination of emotion, rather than simply looking at abstract theories by Galen and Paracelsus, we can ask new questions about emotion that we were not able to ask

⁷ James Bromley provides an alternative definition of intimacy as an affective bond formed by physical proximity instead of psychological depth in *Intimacy and Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2011), esp. 1-29; Drew Daniel ventures on the idea of pleasure as informed by the experience of pain in "Let Me Have Judgment, and the Jew His Will," *The Melancholy Assemblage: Affect and Epistemology in the English Renaissance* (New York: Fordham UP, 2013), 92-119; and Deborah Grayson argues for a conception of motherhood as formed by nurture as much as by blood in "Mediating Intimacy: Black Mothers and the Law," *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004): 289-310.

⁸ Lauren Berlant, "Intimacy: A Special Issue," *Intimacy*, ed. Lauren Berlant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004): 1-8. The quote is from p. 4.

before: for example, what emotions does Galenic humoral theory privilege or encourage? What affective experiences are neglected or left out from the period vocabulary of emotional expressions and why? In other words, we can think about the way humoral theory *mediates* expressions of emotion instead of simply *describing* them. For instance, Benedict Robertson's research on the grammar and usage of the word "disgust" in the period has demonstrated that the word entered the English language around 1600. Although it is very likely that people have been disgusted by a variety of things before, the fact that the word entered the language in 1600s signifies that something happened to the popular understanding of emotions. The feeling of disgust acquired a new cultural prominence or required further naming. Robertson asserts that the history of the word also records a change in social sensibility and a new awareness of disgust that we did not see before. He writes:

My aim is to offer a history of emotion that carries something of the range of [Norbert] Elias's work, which links transformations in social relations and structures of feeling via a comprehensive historical psychosociology. But while Elias assumes the world of feeling as it is given to him in language, chronicling more or less quantitative shifts in the intensity or frequency with which feelings are felt and expressed, I argue that a key dimension of the

history of emotion lies in the constitution of the terms in which it is possible to speak about it at all.⁹

Following Robertson's assertion that words simply give us access to how people thought about emotions rather than to emotions themselves, I contend that period writers mean a multiplicity of things when they use the word "laughter."

Far from being a stable object under discussion, "laughter" is rather a collection of competing definitions, which variously interpret laughter's physicality (as beastly or a force beyond and above rationality), disagree about the physical origin of laughter (does it originate in the brain or in the heart?), and the physical mode of its transmission (is laughter physically contagious?). Answering any of the questions about the physical nature of laughter immediately translates into a different statement on the social and political value of laughter. For instance, the debate on whether laughter originates in the heart or in the brain is so heated in the period because locating laughter in the brain means associating laughter with the reasonable faculty of the human being – alternatively, if laughter originates in the heart, as most early modern writers held, then it is one of the "lower," beastly passions that signifies lust and appetite, not a form of reasoning.

Laurent Joubert, a prominent French doctor and the author of *Treatise on Laughter* (1560) devotes five chapters to the question whether laughter originates in

⁹ Benedict Robertson, "Disgust c. 1600," *English Literary History* 81.2 (Summer 2014): 553-583. The quote is from page 556 of this article.

the brain or in the heart, before finally concluding that the brain has a role in laughter, but its role is minimal and it is mostly a movement of the heart: “For the matter of the passions flows through the instruments of the brain only as through conduits, and penetrates so quickly into the heart that the brain can be ignorant of it, and unaware of it before the emotion and the stirring of the heart have begun.”¹⁰ This opinion on the physical nature of laughter (its origin in the heart) is simultaneously a political stance, which denigrates the political value of laughter and imagines it instead as a natural impulse of the body that should be restrained and controlled. Reading early modern physical theories through the prism of affect theory enables us to recognize how alternative or socially marginal definitions of what laughter is reveal not simply a different understanding of the body, but a competing social vision that is misrecognized or mislabeled in the period. The project reveals the political stakes of physiological theories by paying attention how the predominant Galenic theory of the humours gets rewritten or resisted by period writers who envision alternative routes for the transmission of passions.

In contrast to scholars of historical phenomenology who often take period physiology as a given – something to be recovered and then usefully applied to re-read period literature – I re-read affective routes as themselves a form of politics. In other

¹⁰ Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter*, trans. and ed. Gregory Rocher (Tuscaloosa, AL: Alabama UP, 1980), 37. Joubert devotes chapters v-ix to the location of laughter, pp. 27-38 in Rocher. On the publication history of this treatise, see Gregory Rocher, “Introduction,” *Treatise on Laughter*, ix-xiv.

words, even though scholars often take the Galenic theory of the four humors as *the* explanation of how early modern writers understood the relation between passions and materiality, I show that the Galenic equation between interiority and materiality is itself a political move and that period texts do not always subscribe to this view, or as in the case of *1 Henry IV*, contain multiple, contradictory theories of what laughter is and how it works. Before moving into a discussion of how characters within *1* and *2 Henry IV* theorize laughter differently, I outline below both my debt to early modern historical phenomenology and my attempt to depart from it by turning to current affect theory by Lauren Berlant, Brian Massumi, and others.

Early Modern Historical Phenomenology and Affect Theory:

What is laughter now and what was it around the year 1600? Early modern historical phenomenology is premised on the idea that people living in earlier periods understood emotions differently and had a vastly different account of human physiology than we do now. Thus, the work of Gail Kern Paster, Bruce R. Smith, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, among others, has focused on recovering historically alien conceptions of embodiment from the early modern period, particularly the Galenic theory of the four humours, which provided the dominant physiological explanation for how passions and the human body work.¹¹ What was left unrecognized, however,

¹¹ For some foundational works in early modern historical phenomenology, see the following: See Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1993); Gail

is that there is no such thing as “laughter” in the sense of a stable object against which physiological accounts from the period can be read. Instead of assuming that there is a natural thing, laughter, which is available to us all, and which is simply coded differently in each historical period, my dissertation proceeds on the assumption that we do not know what laughter is, or rather, that we mean different things when we use the term. Laughter could be a relation between bodies, a property of the body or even a property of an object, among other things – current affect theories multiplied both the origin and the nature of affect, or what we used to call “emotion,” and made us question whether we know anything certain about affects. It is not a coincidence that one of the most quoted statements by Baruch Spinoza, the seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher who is at the origin of much of modern affect theory, is “Nobody knows what a body can do.”¹² Laughter, like other aspects of the bodily-social interaction, is hard to pin down.

Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, eds., *Reading the Early Moderns Passions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-factor* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999). For two excellent essays reviewing historical phenomenology as a whole, see the introductions to the following special journal issues: Kevin Curran and James Kearney, eds., “Shakespeare and Phenomenology,” *Criticism* 54.3 (2012) and David McInnis and Brett Hirsch, eds., “Embodying Shakespeare,” *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 19 (2009) <<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-19/si-19toc.htm>>.

¹² Michael Hardt praises Spinoza for introducing openness and indeterminacy into the definition of affect. Hardt claims, “We do not know in advance what a body can do, what a mind can think... Spinoza thus gives us a new ontology of the human or, rather, an ontology of the human that is constantly open and renewed.” See Hardt,

The origin of historical phenomenology is often traced to Bruce Smith's article, "Premodern Sexualities," published in *PMLA* in May 2000. In this article Smith surveys the most common approaches to the topic of sexuality – from cultural materialism, to feminism, and deconstruction – and notes one common gap in all the methods: they are all "concerned primarily with nouns, with names, and classification of things." Smith explains, but "to name something is to turn it into an object, to position the analyst here and *it* over there so that it can be seen, known, and mastered," and he adds, "Eros resists such kind of objectification."¹³ What Smith objects to is the separation of subject and object, in which "sexuality" or any other corporeal phenomena is studied as if it exists separately from the bodies of people who experienced it and as if it has no intimate, bodily connection to the very bodies of critics. Instead, Smith's article makes a revolutionary proposition that sensory phenomena, like sexuality, smell, taste, emotion, and the like exist on the border between inner and outer, in-between the subject and the outer world, and that they should be studied as such. Referring to Michel Serres, Smith claims that "the syntactic unit that best describes the situation of the knowing subject" is not a noun or a verb, but a preposition, such as "before and after," "behind and before," "between and beyond," because prepositions best capture the situatedness of the human subject

"Foreword: What Affects are Good For," *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, eds. Patricia Clough with Jean Halley (Durham: Duke UP, 2007), x.

¹³ Bruce Smith, "Premodern Sexualities," *PMLA* 115.3 (May 2000): 318-329. The quote is on page 325.

among other bodies and things, and that indeed no strict line can be drawn between where subject begins and object ends.¹⁴

However, notwithstanding this queer origin of early modern historical phenomenology, an origin that promised to look for emotions in the in-between spaces between subject and object and not in any particular *thing*, the afterlife of historical phenomenology proved to be decidedly much more material and oriented towards particular objects, rather than to modalities and the movement of affect in the in-between spaces. Many scholars, including Smith himself, have increasingly treated objects *not* as mediating passion and sexuality, but as really representing them. Thus, in an otherwise fascinating article, “The Smell of Macbeth,” Jonathan Gil Harris refers to “this new critical movement that Bruce R. Smith has termed ‘historical phenomenology’” and then proceeds to explicate how the smell of gunpowder, used in early modern productions of *Macbeth*, would have evoked complex associations for contemporary playgoers.¹⁵ Thus, Harris argues that the smell of gunpowder would have reminded playgoers of the contemporary Gunpowder plot, very much the talk of the day; that it would have evoked associations with the Devil and Doomsday, both of which had “sulfurous” associations, and the festive tradition of medieval theater; and finally, the smell of gunpowder might have evoked longing and nostalgia for the world

¹⁴ Ibid., 325.

¹⁵ Jonathan Gil Harris, “The Smell of Macbeth,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58.4 (Winter 2007), 465-486. The quote is from page 467.

of the Catholic ritual, in which pleasant smell was a substance of God and the Devil actually reeked of sulfur and other poisonous matter. Harris's essay usefully departs from the New Historicist exclusive preoccupation with language / rationality by giving an extraordinary agency to smell, showing how it can disrupt linear time and bring memories and associations in excess of anything that can be deduced from the language of the play text. But the essay also seems to default on the promise of treating emotion relationally insofar as it limits emotion to something knowable and recoverable – something that we might know as opposed to Smith's earlier idea of emotion as something that is always in excess of writing, on the borders between object and subject.

Similarly, in *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture*, another foray into early modern conceptions of embodiment, Elizabeth Harvey challenges us to re-conceptualize affect from an early modern point of view. She writes that the goal of the essay collection is to challenge the “dominance of the visual” and the accompanying privileging of rationality in Western culture. In its focus on touch, the collection aims to “reactivate the body's material, and often gendered, relation to the world.”¹⁶ Like Harris's re-assertion of smell, this essay collection enumerates a variety of ways in which touch was seen as fundamental to early modern identity, in contradistinction to the modern Western obsession with the rational subject and the

¹⁶ Elizabeth Harvey, ed. *Sensible Flesh: On Touch in Early Modern Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 2-3.

importance of the visual. Citing a long tradition of critics, from Plato to Descartes and to modern science, Harvey traces how the tactile, the emotional, and the bodily were often seen as inferior sources of knowledge in contrast to the rational, intellectual, and predominantly visual. The essay collection *Sensible Flesh* attempts in part to reverse this tradition by bringing us to the past, when things were arguably different and touch was seen as meaningful and essential to any discussion of human subjectivity.

In contrast to Smith and Harvey's focus on recovery, arguably the most exciting use of early modern historical phenomenology has been not when it successfully recovered something, but when it showed us that we still do not know what we talk about when we talk about affect. Early modern historical phenomenology is congenial to affect studies insofar as it presents historically alien ways to think about affect – showing a multiplicity of possibilities, from the Catholic positioning of smell as incarnate to Harris's own provocative reading of smell as folding in time to Harvey's portrayal of touch as fundamental to human subjectivity. Overall, there is a pervasive sense in early modern studies that sixteenth and seventeenth century writers were much better at theorizing affect, despite the apparent anachronism of most of their concepts. If we take a look at the types of recovery accomplished by works of early modern historical phenomenology, we will see that the centrality of materiality in defining of emotions and the humoral idea of the permeable body have had the most attraction for modern scholars. Seeking to import some of the past Galenic framework into the modern discourse of emotions, scholars have endlessly focused on the early modern idea of "contagion" as in some ways a better and more appropriate paradigm

for how emotions should be understood. So, Michael Schoenfeldt discloses his fascination with an outdated physiological framework: “when reading these earlier descriptions... I have been struck by the fact that this language yields an account of what it feels like to experience certain corporeal phenomena. Indeed, the lexicon of Galenic medicine has survived the demise of its intellectual framework in part because of its cogent experimental basis and its profoundly sentient terminology.”¹⁷ Similarly, the underlying motive of Gail Kern Paster, Mary Floyd-Wilson’s, and Darryl Chalk’s inquiry into how early modern writers understood affect seems to be the promise of new beginnings – the idea that, so to speak, “they got it better than us and we would like to be like them.”¹⁸ In Smith’s more extensive work on the color green, *A Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture* (2008), he explains the key significance of the word “Renaissance” in his book title: “There is a fourth reason to

¹⁷ Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in early modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1999), 6.

¹⁸ Although Paster, Floyd-Wilson, and Chalk present their work as a form of recovery, there is a pervasive fascination with the early modern period, which is typically seen as more enchanted than our own. Paster, *Humoring the Body*; Mary Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender*; and Darryl Chalk, “‘To creep in at mine eyes’: Theatre and Secret Contagion in *Twelfth Night*,” *Rapt in Secret Studies*, eds. Darryl Chalk and Laurie Johnson (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010): 171-195, and Darryl Chalk, “‘A nature but infected: Plague and Embodied Transformation in *Timon of Athens*,” *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 19 (2009): 9.1-28.

‘Renaissance’: my conviction that a rebirth is possible in our own time.”¹⁹ He unambiguously positions the “early modern” perception of green as a model for our own time: “To experience green, you need time, space, and a human body, but not necessarily words....Green invites us to engage the culture of Renaissance and early modern England in terms not limited to black marks on white paper and, in the process, reconfigure our thinking in the present.”²⁰

Relying on current work in affect theory, my dissertation invites us to dispense with the assumption that affect is something historical -- located in a particular historical period and describing how people actually felt -- and instead see affect as something that is always in excess of description and which a given historical description only seeks to capture and normalize in a certain way. (This latter idea is, I think, more in tune with Smith’s original proposition to think of sexuality as a bodily phenomenon that exceeds words and which words only mediate.) The task is then not to recover a historical view of emotion, but to see which affects a given early modern theory amplifies, which it dampens, which it qualifies as existing, and which, on the contrary, it disappears from view. Understood this way, the early modern idea of passions as materially contagious is not “better” in the sense that it is more accurate, but in that it gives prominence to interactions and intimacies, which are by contrast

¹⁹ Bruce Smith, “About Green,” *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

neglected or even unnamed in our modern vocabulary of emotions. In tune with the idea of affect as something always exceeding description, we can think of affect theories as scripts that make one emotion, such as contagion, a key character, while downplaying others (for instance, humoral theory has relatively little to say about the state of being “bored,” a word that did not originate at least until the nineteenth century).²¹

Towards Affect Theory:

Most of the foundational works on the history of early modern emotion are framed in ostensibly apolitical terms as a project of “recovery” as if it is possible to “recover” affect the way it is possible to recover a lost vase or an old map. Instead, my project invites us to discover laughter in all its multiple ambiguity and potentiality. What is laughter indeed? Any attempt to answer the question with “science” runs into the ground because as cognitive scientists have found out, all experiences of emotion are first-person and narrative in nature, despite measurable physiological reactions that tend to occur with the experience of emotions, such as fear or joy.²² Against the

²¹ "bored, adj.2". OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/21649?rskey=MQqWKk&result=2&isAdvanced=false> (accessed May 03, 2015). Boredom has long been linked to the experience of modernity. See, for instance, Elizabeth Goodstein, *Experience without qualities: boredom and modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 2005).

²² In cognitive science, the research has focused on negative emotions, such as fear or anxiety, both because they are more measurable (stronger in terms of clear physiological component) and also because they are often perceived as the source of

classic argument of those behavior scientists, who would reduce all emotions to a response to a certain stimuli, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank oppose, for instance, Tomkins' understanding of emotion of "stimuli" as an incredibly complex phenomenon: something that "already itself reflects the complex interleaving of endogenous and exogenous, perceptual, proprioceptive, and interpretive – causes, effects, feedbacks, motives, long-term states such as moods and theories, along with distinct transitory physical or verbal events."²³ Giving the classic behavioral example of administering electric shock to evoke aversion, Tomkins demonstrates "the difficulty of evoking one and only one effect by the use of what seems an appropriate stimulus" and he lists a bewildering range of feelings and responses that the experiment provoked: "A hundred years ago you'd be sort of a criminal, wouldn't you?" "If you want a terrorizing pattern you've got it." "This isn't fair." "Oh, you rat, cut it out; it's maddening." "I am not getting much out of this – I hope you are." "This experiment is stupid" and so on.²⁴ Affect theorists like Frank and Sedgwick brought

problems and therefore socially more important to study. Doing any search in science databases or journals yields many more results for the term "fear" or "anxiety" than for "joy" or "contentment." The 2015 Shakespeare Association of American seminar "Positive Affect," directed by Cora Fox addressed the lack of research into positive emotions in cognitive science.

²³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*, eds. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), 1-28. The quote is on page 11.

²⁴ Silvan Tomkins qtd. in Frank and Sedgwick, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins," *Shame and Its Sisters*, 11.

our attention to the depth of our ignorance when it comes to emotion and to the frequent moral shame that accompanies any attempt to discuss emotional reactions that seem improper, wrong, mixed, or for which there is yet no name. Recent research in the field of “embodied cognition” emphasizes not the hard-wiring of emotional responses, but a complex pattern of interaction between social context, body, and mind.

Parallel to the work of historical phenomenology runs the research in cognitive science, which likewise attempts to navigate the complex interleaving of body, mind, and context that we simply name by “laughter,” “trust,” or “fear,” for example. Thus, cognitive psychologists Edward T. Higgins and John A. Bargh first comprehensively described the concept of conceptual “priming,” or the idea that coming into contact with certain stimuli from the environment automatically activates previous associations linked to these stimuli and makes us more or less likely to act in a specific way.²⁵ Psychologists have described, for instance, how the behavior we associate with trustworthiness, such as a calm smile, makes us more likely to trust this person and respond back favorably.²⁶ In another example, researchers such as George Lakoff

²⁵ See Edward T. Higgins and John A. Bargh, “Social Perception and Social Cognition,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 38 (1987): 369-425.

²⁶ Lawrence W. Barsalou, W. Kyle Simmons, Aaron K. Barbey, and Christine D. Wilson, “Grounding Conceptual Knowledge in Modality-Specific Systems,” *Trends in Cognitive Science* 7.2 (2003): 84-91. For a collection of essays in the field of “embodied cognition,” see also Gün R. Semin and Eliot R. Smith, eds., *Embodied Grounding* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008).

have argued that our perception of metaphors, such as the presence of “warmth” in such phrases as “warm smile” and “warm up to others,” are grounded in our experience of physical warmth, and that the experience of one is likely to induce the experience of another.²⁷ These cognitive theories of the embodied mind have transformed the way we approach “reading” or interpretation. Thus, in her article “Warmth and Affect in *1 Henry IV*,” Emma Firestone has argued that we are automatically primed to like Falstaff because of the associations of physical and psychological warmth that surround this character: Firestone contrasts Falstaff’s images of fatness, abundance, and social liberality with Prince Hal’s associations with “lean” body and the practice of psychological thrift.²⁸ Similarly, F. Elizabeth Hart has re-read *The Merchant of Venice* as a sort of semantic / conceptual machine, which engages our physical understanding of balance and proportion.²⁹ Meanwhile, Evelyn Tribble made a compelling argument for treating early modern physical stage practices

²⁷ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); and Lawrence E. Williams, Julie Y. Huang, and John A. Bargh, “The Scaffolded Mind: Higher Mental Processes are Grounded in Early Experience of the Physical World,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 39 (2009): 1257-1267.

²⁸ Emma Firestone applies the research from cognitive psychology to re-read *1 Henry IV*. See Firestone, “Warmth and Affection in *1 Henry IV*,” *Embodied Cognition and Shakespeare’s Theatre*, eds. Laurie Johnson, John Sutton, and Evelyn Tribble (New York: Routledge, 2014): 47-66.

²⁹ F. Elizabeth Hart, “A Paltry ‘Hoop of Gold’: Semantics and Systematicity in Early Modern Studies,” *The Return of Theory in Early Modern English Studies*, eds. Paul Cefalu and Brian Reynolds (New York: Palgrave, 2011): 21-47.

(use of doors, playbooks, plots, etc.) as part of actors' distributed cognitive network, which helped actors remember their lines and make sense of the imaginative demands of each play.³⁰

The most compelling insight we can take from all this work in cognitive science is that we do not know what “laughter” is or how it works, “laughter” being simply a catch-all word for a complex interaction between mind, body, and the environment. One of the compelling arguments about laughter is that it is above all a form of sociality rather than primarily a response to a comic clue. Robert Provine, one of the leading neuroscientists on laughter, attempted to understand the role of laughter by tracking what provokes most laughter in a social group. According to his results, the statements that provoked most laughter were far from being the funniest – in her summary of Provine’s research, Indira Ghose states, “Provine establishes that most laughter in a community takes place *before* a joke is made, as a sign that all members of the group are willing to enter into the play frame.”³¹ Since laughter is a form of relation among members of the group, the statements that provoked laughter might not be very funny apart from the social situation in which they existed. Ghose gives examples of comic hits: “Poor boy looks just like his father” and “He tried to blow his

³⁰ Evelyn Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe* (New York: Palgrave, 2011).

³¹ Indira Ghose provides an overview of Robert Provine’s research in Ghose, *Shakespeare and Laughter* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2011): 5-6. The quote is from p. 6.

nose but he missed.”³² While these are not the greatest comic hits, what matters equally in the evocation of laughter (in addition to the comic element) is the distribution of roles and relations in a given situation. Laughter signals one’s relation to a social group and an attempt to manage or respond to these relations in some way.

Following the lead of queer theorists and cognitive theorists, who in the last few decades, have destabilized commonly accepted theories of what emotion is and how it works, my project seeks to complicate the ascription of materially potent passions to the early modern period. Instead of the term “passions,” which, from its currency in the work of historical phenomenology, has gained the connotation of something necessarily physical and material, I want to introduce the more capacious term “affect,” which simply implies that there is a correspondence between the physical and the psychological in early modern discussions of emotion, without specifying what this correspondence is. This definition of “affect” is based on the fundamental assumption of affect theory: that there are a variety of ways to think about the relationship between body and mind, and hence, there is no ready answer to the question, what is laughter?³³

³² Ibid., 6.

³³ This definition of affect pervades practically all work that allies itself to “affect theory” or “affect studies” and it is built on Baruch Spinoza’s re-theorization of emotion as “affect”. See Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. and ed. G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), esp. Part 3, 163-225. For some foundational works in affect theory, see Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds. *Shame and its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995); Lauren Berlant, ed. *Intimacy* (Chicago:

The flexibility of the term “affect” is that it posits a necessary relationship between the body and the mind, without trying to decide in advance what this relationship might look like. Writing in the introduction to one of the landmark books in affect theory studies, *The Affective Turn*, Michael Hardt explains “affect” as something that “straddles this relationship [between body and mind] insofar as it indicates at once the current state of the mind and the body.”³⁴ Instead of postulating a binary between past accounts of emotion, which are seen as anachronistic and scientifically wrong, and the present account of emotion, which is usually perceived as based on pure science, the turn to “affect” enables us to read these discourses in parallel as articulating or giving prominence to different aspects of “affect.” So, if early modern humoral theory emphasizes the ability of laughter to re-vitalize the body, contemporary theories of laughter often stress laughter’s ability to form social communities. Both perspectives may be valid insofar as they capture or emphasize different aspects of the complex experience we term “laughter.”

In my approach to laughter, I stress laughter’s elusiveness and its constant ability to become something else. In the course of the sixteenth century we encounter

University of Chicago Press, 2004); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003); Patricia Clough with Jean Halley, eds. *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (Durham: Duke UP, 2007); Sara Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004) and *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006); Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth, eds. *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010).

³⁴ Michael Hardt, “Foreword: What Affects Are Good For,” *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, eds. Patricia Clough (Durham: Duke UP, 2007), x.

several terms that are allied to laughter or that function as occasional synonyms, among them “wit,” “buffoonery,” “hot blood,” “jest,” and others. A different vocabulary for “laughter” also indicates a different understanding of its physical nature: thus, the term “wit,” often used in city comedies, allies laughter with taste, judgment, and sociability, whereas discussing laughter in terms of “buffoonery” clearly degrades laughter into something merely physical and unrefined. Discussing laughter in terms of “affect,” rather than early modern passion, shifts the field of vision insofar as it presumes that embodiment and physicality are key and that language constitutes a separate register that incompletely and differentially intersects with our experiences on the physical level.

Erin Hurley and Sara Warner cogently describe the critical stakes of affect studies thus: ‘This paradigm shift [the turn to affect] represents the desire to carve out some conceptual space for aspects of human motivation and behavior that are not tethered to consciousness, cognitive processes, and rationality, to validate physical and social dynamics that are inchoate and unpredictable, and to explore impulses and responses that social conventions shape but do not circumscribe.’³⁵ “Rationality” in this context is simply another manifestation of the complex relation between body and mind. In this context, the philosophy of Silvan Tomkins, an American psychologist (1911-1991) popularized by queer theorists Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank

³⁵ Erin Hurley and Sarah Warner, “Special Section: ‘*Affect/Performance/Politics*,’” *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 26.2 (Spring 2012): 99-107.

is especially relevant because it helps articulate a philosophy of affect. Writing in the context of the debate on how to build a human-like automaton, Tomkins provocatively postulated that affect is fundamental to any form of human judgment or reasoning: “The achievement of cognitive power and precision require a motivational system no less plastic and bold. Cognitive strides are limited by the motives which urge them. Cognitive error, which is essential to cognitive learning, can be made only by one capable of committing motivational error, i. e., being wrong about his own wishes, their causes and outcomes.”³⁶ Tomkins’ theory has proved attractive for queer theorists because it took into account the phenomenology of queer experience, or more precisely, simply opened the possibility that different bodily experience is foundational to the difference in the way people vote or perceive their political and economic choices. With affect theory in mind, I turn then to an example from the early modern period, Shakespeare’s *1 Henry IV*, which illustrates the idea of laughter as a space of possibility which can be thought and theorized differently.

Two Models of Laughter in *1 Henry IV*

How does Falstaff’s laughter work? The answer to this question is a political choice and to illustrate a range of possibilities this section will turn to *1 Henry IV*. The play, I argue, is a place of unresolved contradiction, where the belief in the intersubjective workings of emotion, conserved in Falstaff-Harry relation, is combined

³⁶ Tomkins qtd. in Sedgwick and Frank, eds., *Shame and its Sisters*, 39.

with King Henry IV's Galenic belief that emotions simply accumulate and gorge the bearer. So, Henry IV theorizes emotions, including laughter, as something that simply accumulates and eventually sickens the person with excess. Addressing Hal's mingling with Falstaff, Henry IV makes a favorable contrast between his own and Richard II's attitude to the common people. He says:

My presence like a robe pontifical –
Ne'er seen but wondered at – and so my state,
Seldom but sumptuous, showed like a feast,
...
The skipping King, he ambled up and down
With shallow jesters and rash bavin wits,
Soon kindled and soon burnt, carded his state,
Mingled his royalty with cap'ring fools [...] (*1 Henry IV*, 3.2.56-63).

What is notable in Henry IV's description of his own relationship with the people is a sense of distance: he was basically putting on a show, creating himself as a unique and striking spectacle, "ne'er seen but wondered at." Meanwhile, Richard II is described as a child, "skipping" and playing with "jesters" and "cap'ring fools," and exchanging intimacies with them. The former king "mingled his royalty" or interconnected himself with the people in such way that they, inevitably, started to "loathe" him (*1 Henry IV*, 3.2.72). Here, Henry IV imagines the crowd's liking to Richard II merely as a physical craving that is soon satisfied and that is based on nothing more durable than a physical appetite. He narrates how the crowds become "surfeited with honey

[Richard II]” and quickly lose interest in the object of their former desire: Richard II becomes “stale” to them (*1 Henry IV*, 3.2.71, 41).

Another proponent of authoritarian rule, Worcester, similarly theorizes affect as a process of being eaten and swallowed by the other party. In his defiant speech to King Henry IV, Worcester recounts how at first Henry IV was faithful to his associates, but as time passed, they increasingly grew apprehensive of being “swallowed” by him, a seemingly inevitable point in affective relations structured by the Galenic rhetoric of affect as simply accumulation of matter:

You took occasion to be quickly wooed
To gripe the general sway into your hand,
Forgot your oath to us at Doncaster,
And being fed by us, you used us so
As that ungentle gull, the cuckoo bird,
...
Grew by our feeding to so great a bulk
That even our love durst not come near your sight
For fear of swallowing. (*1 Henry IV*, 5.1.56-64).

Worcester accuses King Henry of breaking his “oath at Doncaster,” which he made to Worcester and his associates. His speech is exemplary in its underlying image of love as a form of feeding and near-swallowing: Worcester says that he and his friends “fed”

King Henry IV with their love and support, but he soon grew rebellious and desired to “swallow” them whole.³⁷

Worcester and King Henry IV deliver the same mini-lesson on the treachery and deceitfulness of emotions. Affect, we find, is something that makes powerful men vulnerable; oaths are short-lived; and thus the only way to navigate a political landscape is to do something like what Henry IV did in the absence of Richard II: seize the affective liking of the other party and manipulate it shrewdly. This physiological theory of how affect works is simultaneously a political stance, which justifies authoritarian rule and that has no place for mutual co-creation of the body (or the nation-state) that we see in Falstaff-Hal’s initial friendship.

Henry IV’s idea that affective relationships are constituted by the metaphor of eating, being full and gorged pervades early modern culture as a whole. It is a key feature of the Galenic humoral discourse, which conceptualized passions as physical entities that always threaten to overrun the bodily equilibrium. Writers like Thomas Wright and Edward Reynolds conventionally postulated that it is reason that marks people as truly human, while all affective encounters should be subject to the rule of reason and Christian morality.³⁸ The idea of “too much” pervades the Galenic

³⁷ For an important discussion of the body metaphor in politics, see Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998): 30-34. Harris explores how the religious metaphor of Christ as the head and Church as His holy body gets reformulated in the early modern political context.

³⁸ Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General*, ed. William Webster Newbould (New York: Garland, 1986); Edward Reynolds, *A Treatise of the Passions*

precepts about the moderation and restraint of emotions – an idea visually represented by the early modern emblems which depict passions as turbulent waves or unruly horses in need of a strong ruler.³⁹

This fear of emotions, reflected in Henry IV's critique of affect as something treacherous and uncontrollable, is also evident in the early modern attitude to popularity. In the introduction to *The Elizabethan Top Ten*, a statistical as well as cultural research project into early modern "bestsellers," Andy Kesson and Emma Smith argue that the early modern term "popularity" carried with itself negative associations of treason and betrayal. They write, "Popularity is suspicious and seditious, a mechanism for power on the part of the apparently powerless."⁴⁰

Explaining that the term was "equivalent with Elizabeth's reign, designating the views of the people, views which were intrinsically and paradoxically dangerous to people," Kesson and Smith cite the William Cornwallis's 1601 essay "On popularitie," which in the manner of Hal, invokes "mists" to describe the insidious power of affect:

the cunning of Popularitie, is like that of Iuglers, the cunningest of which can cast mists before mens eyes, but here is there neerest resemblance, Iuglers

and Faculties of the Soule of Man (London: 1640; repr. Gainesville, FL.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971).

³⁹ An emblem, which depicts passions as waves, appears in Henry Peacham, *Minerva Britannia* (London, 1612), and it is reprinted in Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 3.

⁴⁰ Andy Kesson and Emma Smith, *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2013), 4.

trickes goe most inuisibly by Candle light; men popular, with those heads that
come no neerer the strength of vnderstanding, then candle light the light of the
sunne[.]⁴¹

In these lines, Cornwallis compares the workings of popularity to a juggling trick performed stealthily at night: both, he states, “cast mists before mens eyes.” This “misty” power, which Kesson and Smith might call “popularity,” characterizes Falstaff’s ability to obviate social problems with jokes and turn “diseases to commodity.”

While Henry IV imagines Richard II’s “popularity” as a process of being “swallowed,” “surfeited” and “loathed” by the people, Falstaff and Hal have a radically different understanding of how emotions work. Instead of perceiving it as a defect, Falstaff portrays his surplus of emotions and his ability to generate emotions as a form of social power. The play amply illustrates this theory in practice. In one of his clever jokes, Falstaff gets out of his claim that Prince Hal owed him a thousand pounds by re-formulating the meaning of money. Egged on by the Hostess, Prince Harry inquires of Falstaff, “Sirrah, do I owe you a thousand pound?” to which Falstaff replies, “A thousand pound, Hal? A million! Thy love is worth a million; thou owest me my love” (*1 Henry IV*, 3.3.123-26). The “mist” of Falstaff consists in his ability to use language as a physical object which evokes affect. The joke transfers “a million”

⁴¹ William Cornwallis qtd in Kesson and Smith, 4. See previous footnote 40 for complete citation.

from the rhetoric of monetary exchange to the language of love (“thy love is worth a million”) and thus introduces “affect” into what should have been a neutral question, “How much money does Falstaff owe Hal?” Substituting relation between bodies instead of the relation between units of money, Falstaff bewilders the spectators by making it much harder to calculate how much Hal “owes” Falstaff or vice versa.

What is laughter? If you ask Falstaff, then it is not simply food, but a form of poison or intoxicating wine, which allows him to alter people’s perception of reality and diffuse hostilities simply with the power of his wit. If Henry IV believes that people eat up the affection of Richard II and he gets nothing in return, Falstaff touts his laughter-inducing wit as a form of social power. The exchange of jokes and laughter in Harry-Falstaff relations creates an intersubjective space that transmutes them both. Thus, in their first dialogue together in Act 1, scene 2, Falstaff replies to Hal’s offer of being a hangman with a profession of melancholy, which leads to a series of mutual similes on the nature of melancholy:

Falstaff: ... Sblood, I am as melancholy as a gib cat, or a lugged bear.

Prince Harry: Or an old lion, or a lover’s lute.

Falstaff: Yea, or the drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe.

Prince Harry: What sayst thou to a hare, or the melancholy of the Moor-ditch?

Falstaff: Thou has the most unsavoury similes, and indeed the most comparative, rascalliest sweet young Prince. But Hal, I prithee trouble me no more with vanity. (*I Henry IV*, 1.2.64-72).

In these lines, Hal plays along with Falstaff by extending the initial list of similes of “as a gib cat, or a lugged bear” with further examples. In Henry IV’s terms, Hal debases himself by supplying “vain comparatives” to Falstaff’s body – an objection Falstaff anticipates by referring to their affect-laden exchange as “vanity.”

Notwithstanding their actual topic of conversation – the nature of melancholy – the most important thing that happens through this dialogue is the mutual constitution of Falstaff’s melancholy through Hal and Falstaff’s remarks. Falstaff is made partly by Harry, just like Harry later offers Falstaff to help him act as a dutiful son in the presence of King Henry IV.

Referring to the passage about melancholy in her book *Humoring the Body*, Gail Kern Paster argues that it “offers a limit to the world-making capacities” of Hal and Falstaff because it fixes them in the world of cosmological similes and correspondences, which were the staple of early modern humoral theory.⁴² So, “Falstaff’s comparison of his mood to a cat may be self-interested, but it is not sentimental. It serves less to project and objectify human melancholy outward through the familiar procedures of anthropomorphism than to introject the natural, God-given self-sameness of cat melancholy – expressed in flesh and fur and howling.”⁴³ Paster thoroughly explicates the system of natural analogies underlying this passage, but for a

⁴² Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 144.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 145.

moment she forgets that the passage is essentially not about melancholy – it is about laughter. Falstaff, of course, is not melancholy. He and Hal are exchanging a series of “vain comparatives” because they both enjoy it, and just like Richard II made himself familiar with “gibing boys,” Harry participates in affective exchanges with Falstaff. This process is subversive because as it contradicts humoral precepts for how passions work – unlike material substances that build up and gorge one with their presence, Hal and Falstaff’s passions blend into each other and transform Hal a little bit into Falstaff and Falstaff into Hal.

Crucially, Falstaff understands passions to work differently: unlike Henry IV, Falstaff’s hymns to laughter celebrate emotion as a space of possibility, where anything can happen. He shows that laughing changes people, instead of simply accumulating in their bodies. Instead of the metaphor of food, laughter, in Falstaff’s understanding, works more like poison. The idea that laughter works like poisonous mist or vapour is first theorized by Prince Hal, who refers to Falstaff and his associates as “the base contagious clouds” and “the foul and ugly mists / Of vapours that did seem to strangle him [the sun / Hal]” (1.2.176, 180). In these lines, Hal connects his merry tavern friends to infection and disease (such as plague, which was believed to be spread by poisonous vapors) and to darkness, traditionally associated with the devil and hell.

Hal’s metaphor of laughter as a poisonous vapor requires a different understanding of what emotions are. Writing about the epistemology of “poison” in early modern England, Miranda Wilson states that the rhetoric of poison was

especially associated with the marginal members of community, women, Jews, or the criminal. Interestingly, Wilson qualifies poison as “a way of being in the world”: “First, the weapon of poison has a special connection to women – it somehow suits their passions, their way of being in the world.”⁴⁴ Taking this set of terms from Wilson, it is possible to see Falstaff’s affective exchanges as a particular way of inhabiting the world. Taking language as itself a material object, Falstaff-Hal exchanges re-orient their audience to experience the world as saturated with affect, rather than consigning affect to children, women, and other marginal groups.

The “poisonous” effect of Falstaff’s body, its ability to spread and generate material effects, can be most clearly seen in the ways that Falstaff defends himself against accusations of villainy and prodigality. In the famous role-acting scene, when Prince Harry pretends to be the King and Falstaff his prodigal son, Harry makes a claim against Falstaff that resonates through the speeches of the real Henry IV and Lord Chief Justice: “There is a devil haunts thee [my son Harry] in the likeness of an old fat man; a tun of man is thy companion.... That villanous, abominable misleader of youth, Falstaff; that old white-bearded Satan” (*1 Henry IV*, 2.5.407-09; 2.5.421-22). Calling Falstaff “a devil” and characterizing him as “villanous,” Hal captures how the political leaders in the play characterize Falstaff. In the eyes of King Henry IV and the Lord Chief Justice, Falstaff is simply wicked or immoral. Falstaff, however,

⁴⁴Miranda Wilson, *Poison’s Dark Works in Renaissance England*, (Baltimore: Bucknell UP, 2014), xxxi.

complicates such moral judgments by transforming himself into a host of physical attributes: “If sack and sugar be a fault, God help the wicked. If to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host that I know is damned. If to be fat be to be hated, then Pharaoh’s lean kine are to be loved.” Here, Falstaff becomes a list of physical qualities – he refers to himself as “sack and sugar,” as “old and merry” and links himself “an old [merry] host.” The inexhaustability of Falstaff then translates into a whole paean to “sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant being, as he is, old Jack Falstaff” (*1 Henry IV*, 433-35). What is “Jack Falstaff” then? By highlighting himself as “sack and sugar” and merriment and “sweet[ness]” Falstaff renders himself into a kind of cookie that tastes good and therefore cannot be dismissed as bad. If affect is to be trusted, then Falstaff is surely good, or at least very complex and not reducible to simply abstract judgments.

This poetics of presence, if you will – “Falstaff” as a list of delicious, affectively stimulating attributes – is enjoyed and mirrored by the Prince, despite his statements to the contrary. Even while pretending to impersonate the enraged Henry IV, Harry continues to play games with Falstaff and indulge in base “comparatives.” Addressing himself to Falstaff, he composes a monstrous question:

Why dost thou converse with that trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness, that swollen parcel of dropsies, that huge bombard of sack, that stuffed cloak-bag of guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly, that reverend Vice, that grey Iniquity, that father Ruffian, that Vanity in Years? (*1 Henry IV*, 2.5.409-414)

Harry's question portrays Falstaff as a thing that defies description, monstrous like a biblical Leviathan, which evokes admiration despite his evil or good qualities. The style evokes the genre of an epic, with its long similes that compare an epic hero to a range of natural and mythical phenomena. Harry's descriptions range from "that trunk of humours, that bolting-hutch of beastliness" to imagining Falstaff as "a huge bombard of sack" or a festive dish "that roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly," which would be common at fairs like the famous Bartholomew Fair. Given this affectively laden description, surely Henry IV is right to compare Harry-Falstaff to the relationship of Richard II with the crowd: "[The crowd was] with his presence glutted, gorged and full. / And in that very line, Harry, standest thou; / For thou hast lost thy princely privilege with vile participation" (*1 Henry IV*, 3.2.84-87). By invoking Falstaff's body as the stuff of epics, Harry translates Falstaff's physical presence into a list of enigmatic physical attributes, which draw the Prince in and make him "participate" in the manifold entity that is Falstaff. If Falstaff's laughter works like a "poison," then by spinning new similes, Falstaff's word-play becomes also a physical manipulation of the body, a titillation that excites and that turns the spiritual or the abstract into just another manifestation of the physical.

Going back to the critical controversy that surrounds the nature of Falstaff's laughter, we see that the disagreement about the political value of Falstaff's laughter is also an expression of a specific physiological stance, and vice versa. Determining whether Falstaff's body is the source of laughter in others – whether his body is indeed generative/procreative or simply diseased and pathological – marks a fundamental

political choice on the part of audiences and readers (then and now) and not simply a matter of physiological opinion on the transmission of passion. Henry IV theorizes laughter as something that simply accumulates and eventually sickens the bearer, while Hal and Falstaff refer to each other's jokes as a form of poison, which transmutes both parties into other kinds of people.

The disagreement about the physiology and value of Falstaff's laughter is reflected not only in the opposing theories by Henry IV and Falstaff, but also in modern scholarship, which either credits Falstaff's laughter with revolutionary potential or simply dismisses it as trivial and immature. Thus, critics who follow Falstaff's model of physiology praise Falstaff for his bewildering, practically irresistible capacity of making audiences fall in love with him, even despite their will. Writing about associations of "warmth" and pleasure that accrue around Falstaff's jokes, Emma Firestone argues that the scene where Falstaff delivers his famous "coward upon instinct" line "never misses," in her words, in performance: "indeed, it affords the actor playing Falstaff as sure a triumph in the audience's eyes as the *Pyramus and Thisbe* performance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* affords the lucky actor playing Flute the Tinker."⁴⁵ Interpreting the play from the point of view of cognitive theory, Firestone shows how the "verbal matrix" surrounding Falstaff easily persuades audiences to associate his liberal personality with the experience of physical

⁴⁵ Emma Firestone, "Warmth and Affection in *1 Henry IV*," *Embodied Cognition and Shakespeare's Theatre*, eds. Laurie Johnson, John Sutton, and Evelyn Tribble (New York: Routledge, 2014), 60.

and psychological warmth.⁴⁶ She concludes that we are pre-consciously inclined to like Falstaff and his liberal, laughter-inducing personality.

Similarly, feminist and queer critics like Patricia Parker and Valerie Traub have sympathetically identified Falstaff with the feminine and the maternal, which retards the progress of time and delays Hal's progress towards victorious masculinity.⁴⁷ Thus, Patricia Parker identified Falstaff's figure with the genre of romance and the female body, both of which, she argues, were conventionally seen as disrupting heroic action and hindering the male protagonist from success on the battlefield.⁴⁸ By championing Falstaff, Parker is also proposing an alternative form of embodiment: her focus on the female body is more attune to Falstaff's poetics of presence than to Henry IV's valorization of heroic restraint. In another sympathetic reading, Jonathan Goldberg describes how Falstaff's love for Harry transforms the future king into a "queen" and thus enacts a more equitable, more fluid conception of

⁴⁶ Firestone uses the term "verbal matrix" in reference to *automatic*, not consciously processed responses evoked by certain words. *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴⁷ See Valerie Traub, "Prince Hal's Falstaff: Positioning Psychoanalysis and the Female Reproductive Body," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40.4 (1989); Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies* (New York: Methuen, 1987); Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin, "Gender and Nation: Anticipations of Modernity in the Second Tetralogy," *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997): 137-215.

⁴⁸ On Falstaff's relation to romance and embodiment, see also Garret Sullivan, *Sleep, Romance, and Human Embodiment* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012).

gender.⁴⁹ Envisioning “gender” as not a matter of biological difference, but as a boundary that can be easily crossed, Goldberg at once validates Falstaff’s body and its political value.

The opposing critical tradition, which finds Falstaff’s laughter immature and unwelcome, is, on the other hand, built on a radically different conception of physiology. Indeed, in his argument opposing this tradition, Goldberg goes as far as to say that “most critics have found it all but impossible to resist the attractions of the prince,” that is, the counter-fascination produced by the prince’s rejection of Falstaff in *2 Henry IV* and his self-declared path towards kingship.⁵⁰ In this vein, Harry has been read as steering a midway path between the passions of Hotspur and the calculation of Henry IV; as enacting a necessary path to personal maturity and rejection of “childish things”; and finally, as representing a proper model of a great Protestant king and an English leader.⁵¹ This alternative tradition takes Harry’s

⁴⁹ See Jonathan Goldberg, “Desiring Hal,” *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 1992).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁵¹ David Bevington theorizes Hal’s rejection of Falstaff as a necessary ritual of growth and maturation. See Bevington, ed., *The Oxford Shakespeare: Henry IV, Part I* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), 62. The quote about “putting away childish things” is originally from St. Paul’s *1 Corinthians* 13:11. See also E. M. Tillyard’s reading of the *Henriad* as confirming Harry’s identity as an ideal Protestant prince in Tillyard, *Shakespeare’s History Plays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1944; reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1962): 240-282; and Stephen Greenblatt’s classic New Historicist argument on subversion/containment dynamic in the play. Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets,” *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, eds. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985), 18-47.

rejection of Falstaff as the keystone of the prince's future political success and his ability to govern the country. These critics, together with Henry IV and later Harry himself, reject Falstaff's laughter as immature or even socially destructive.

Notwithstanding Firestone's argument that Falstaff's laughter is almost unconsciously attractive as it taps into pre-verbal associations of psychological and physiological warmth, critics like David Bevington believe that it is entirely possible to rid oneself of the pleasure evoked by Falstaff's jokes. So, how does Falstaff's laughter work?

This dissertation argues that the debate about the nature of Falstaff's laughter is not simply a debate about physiology, but a political choice that valorizes some sort of encounters, but not others and gives competing names to the sort of encounter generally summarized by the term "laughter." Assuming that the Galenic framework functioned as a collective script for all writers in the period, scholars of historical phenomenology often simply proceed to explicate what this framework entailed for an individual character. However, it is important that we look at various early modern texts as *competing* scripts for collective emotion. Patricia Clough clarifies the political potential in the turn to affect: "attending to the affective turn," she observes, "is necessary to theorizing the social."⁵² Explicating the imbrication of affect in the modern configuration of politics, economics, and technology, the essays collected in the Clough's volume show a variety of ways in which "affect" could be thought of as

⁵² Patricia Clough, "Introduction," *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, eds. Patricia Clough with Jean Halley (Durham: Duke UP, 2007), 2.

essential to any conception of social life. Similarly, Jane Bennett starts her imaginative exploration on the nature of affect with the following statement: “There will be no greening of the economy, no redistribution of wealth, no enforcement or extension of rights without human dispositions, moods, and cultural ensembles hospitable to these effects.”⁵³ By reading Falstaff’s laughter positively or negatively also involves making a judgment about what emotion is, how it works, and what its political value might be. The dissertation then shows how competing physiological theories of laughter also function as competing visions of social life.

Laughter and Theatrical Communities

Adding to ideological readings of early modern theater from L.C. Barber’s account of “festive” theater to Jean Howard’s inquiry into theater and the city, my dissertation continues the interest in political and social communities constructed in early modern theaters. But unlike New Historicist readings, which focus on the ideological impact of theater, I want to re-read theatrical communities as affective and bodily, constructing a specific response to one’s body and the environment. And unlike studies by historical phenomenologists, my project sees these affective communities not as cemented by the historical account of “passion” or the design of

⁵³ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke UP, 2010), xii.

early modern stage, but as various and open – always a choice and not simply a historical necessity.⁵⁴

Many authoritative studies of early modern theater have approached the topic of audience engagement predominantly from a socio-linguistic model. So, Steven Mullaney's *The Place of the Stage* (1988) relies on the spatial geography of London in order to identify the stage with its location in the "Liberties," suburbs of London outside of the city jurisdiction. Seeing a continuity between the place and the social role, Mullaney explores "the ways in which popular drama appropriated such license [of the Liberties] to achieve, for a relatively brief period of time, an ideological liberty of its own."⁵⁵ Writing about 20 years later, Jean Howard's *Theater of a City* (2007) diverges from Mullaney insofar as she does not ascribe a single social role (political/social subversion) to theater, but she still relies on the *social* meaning of plays as determinant of their meaning. Deferring a specific meaning to individual playwrights and their plays, Howard still sees plays as in some sense neutral entities, like a monument or a stone, which can be read for its meaning, but if not, it will just

⁵⁴ For a recent phenomenological account that uses the historical design of the early modern stage to argue for a specific affective role of theater, see Allison Hogbood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2014). Hogbood's inquiry into the affective potential of stage design is illuminating, but I disagree with her assumption that passion is something natural and historically recoverable. Other uses of stage design are obviously possible, if one has a different theory of what passion is and how it spreads.

⁵⁵ Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 9.

stay there, making no demands on its audience. In a move typical of New Historicist analysis of theater, Howard describes the interaction between the play and its audience in socio-political terms as a “highly ideological process and not merely a mapping of what ‘really’ happened within the London milieu.”⁵⁶ Similar appeal to theater’s “ideology” describe Paul Yachnin’s portrayal of theater as “powerless,” an entertainment industry that consciously cultivated its image of powerlessness in order to guarantee its social security and political survival, and Michael Bristol’s very different argument in *Carnival and Theater*, which describes theater’s function along the lines of Bakhtin’s dialogism and the ritual inversion of the Carnival.⁵⁷ While such readings of theater’s political potential are very valuable and informative, my project seeks to move away from the New Historicist exclusive focus on power and ideology and foreground the importance of theatrical affect as at once a physiological and political resource.

More interesting for my purposes is the kind of criticism that attends to the physicality of theater’s impact and the impossibility of separating the affective nature of encounter from the overall effect of what a play “means.” The kind of scholarship that is focused on audience engagement and modes of theatrical signification comes

⁵⁶ Jean Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 3.

⁵⁷ Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), and Michael Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York: Methuen, 1985).

from theological studies of early modern theater, performance studies with the focus on plays' earlier life as live pieces for early modern audiences, and from the recent interest in the animal/human divide and various theorizations of the post-human in the context of theater. What unifies these strands of criticism is their vision of theatrical impact as exceeding the level of discourse and touching theater audiences with emotion or transforming the body. A good example of theologically-informed reading of early modern theater is Anthony Dawson's contribution to *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England*. In the book structured as debate between a theological reading by Dawson and an economic/political one by Paul Yachnin, Dawson seeks to complicate Yachnin's portrayal of theater as a mere player in the socio-economic climate of the time by grounding his argument in the peculiarity of dramatic "personation process."⁵⁸ Dawson suggests that early modern theater evokes a doubleness of audience perception consonant with the Anglican attitude towards the "personation" of the Eucharist: on one hand, theatrical audiences are aware that actors are actors, people pretending to be someone they are not, but on the other hand, audiences are affectively invested in theatrical representation as if it were "real"—in Dawson's words, "we shed real tears on account of what we recognize as unreal feelings...."⁵⁹ Without going into Dawson's account any further, it is possible to

⁵⁸ Anthony Dawson, "Performance and Participation" in Anthony Dawson and Paul Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England: A Collaborative Debate* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2001), 11-37. The quote is from page 22.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

isolate similar claims about the “reality” of audience engagement in other theologically-informed readings of early modern theater. In *Reformations of the Body*, Jennifer Waldron argues that the human body retained its sacredness after the Reformation’s supposed disenchantment of the human body and materiality in general. Like Dawson, Waldron suggests that the “liveliness” of human bodies on stage exceeds the representational value of discourse, echoing instead the incarnational aesthetics of a theologically sacred body.⁶⁰ Dawson and Waldron make a link between theatrical and divine “personation,” connecting actor’s passion to Christ’s Passion and theatrical audience to the experience of a believer. This valuable move helps underscore the “magic,” or the reality of theatrical change and its undeniable impact on the body, both actorly and that of the audience. At the same time, however, the quasi-religious account of theatrical experience seems to naturalize the kind of changes evoked by theatrical experience - it obscures the contingency of theatrical change and its dependence on a historically specific vision of “affect” that we may or may not embrace today. As Joseph Roach has shown in his foundational book *The Player’s Passion*, acting styles, or what we consider as “natural” vs. “artificial” acting, are very much dependent on historically specific assumptions about the nature and value of emotion.⁶¹ Thus, while it might be satisfying and necessary for a deeply

⁶⁰ Jennifer Waldron, *Reformations of the Body: Idolatry, Sacrifice, and Early Modern Theater* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁶¹ Joseph Roach, *The Player’s Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1985).

Christian playwright to “touch” his audience with divine emotion, it might be troubling and disconcerting for someone like Bertolt Brecht whose plays famously sought to produce a level of alienation and so interrupt the emotional immediacy of theatrical performance. Similarly, early modern playwrights were sought to affect their audiences in a variety of ways – “to touch” with emotion is thus an imprecise term since emotional engagement can mean so many different things, from Henry IV’s idea of affect as food to Falstaff’s perception of affect as poison.

Below I give an overview of the project and its double plot, so to speak. On one hand, my project seeks to destabilize the current idea of what emotion is and provide a different theoretical framework – affect theory – to the way we think about emotions. On the other hand, my dissertation makes a historical argument about how the idea of emotions changed in the course of the sixteenth century. I argue that the period between 1590 and 1610 witnesses a changing definition of laughter: the earlier sixteenth-century texts define laughter in accord with the Galenic humoral framework, where laughter is understood as an excess of vitality that characterizes the bodies of young boys, lascivious women, and the bodies of other marginal members in the community. But as we move more towards the seventeenth century, the definition of laughter starts to change and begins to resemble Falstaff’s idea of laughter: thus, city comedy by Thomas Middleton and Ben Jonson, such as Middleton’s *A Mad World*, *My Masters* or pamphlets like Thomas Dekker’s *The Gull’s Hornbook* portray laughter not as an involuntary impulse of the body, but as a form of judgment and taste that needs to be nurtured and cultivated. In these latter texts, laughter becomes linked to a

mode of urban sociability and the figure of the gallant. The project thus seeks to unmoor laughter from a specific object or body and show how its meaning gets re-assigned to a different set of texts and practices in the early seventeenth century.

Structure of the Project

The dissertation includes four chapters, each of which demonstrates the conflation of political with affective frameworks in early modern writers' theorization of literature's role and its impact on the audience. Chapter 1 lays the foundation for all subsequent discussion by situating the passion of laughter in the Galenic humoral discourse, using the contemporary popularity of treatises on the passions, such as Thomas Walkington's *An optick glass of humours* (1607), Thomas Wright's *A Treatise of the Passions in General* (1604), or Juan Huarte's *An Examination of Men's Wits* (trans. into English and printed in 1594). I show that in the Galenic discourse, laughter was portrayed as a physical entity and a psychological feeling, which reaffirms one's bodily health and gives a sense of bodily vitality and pleasure. The unique challenge of laughter, in the Galenic framework, is that laughter's connection to bodily pleasure makes it particularly difficult to restrain laughter within the "proper" bounds of reason and moderation. I then link the humoral status of laughter to early modern debates on the role of theater, showing how laughter's re-affirmation of materiality and bodily pleasure gets positively re-evaluated in the context of theater's propensity for bodily display and affective pleasure. Using courtly defenses of poetry – such as Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* and George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy*, as well

statements by playwrights in dramatic prologues and pamphlets, such as Thomas Dekker's *The Gull's Hornbook* – the chapter argues that laughter's link to bodily pleasure becomes a symbol of theater's commercialism and a new type of ephemeral/superficial sociability, uniquely characteristic of the urban environment.

Chapter 2 shows how laughter's affective theory gets re-thought in the context of serial reproduction and ephemeral pleasures of the printing press. Focusing on Robert Greene's popular series of cony-catching pamphlets about con-men and criminals of London, I show that Greene's pamphlets get progressively more comedic and less oriented towards the humoral view of passions as naturally anarchic and degrading. Greene's pamphlets show an increasing desire to reproduce and extend the experience of laughter and bodily pleasure – thereby, I argue, Greene's affect theory tends to view passions themselves as reproducible, allied to the serial reproduction of the printing press and commercial print market. The chapter also links Greene's cony-catching pamphlets to Thomas Middleton's city comedy *A Mad World, My Masters* (1606). I choose to focus on Greene's pamphlets and Middleton's city comedy because they mark for me the burgeoning printing press and the popularity of city comedy at the time. Studying them together also demonstrates the convergence between the discourse of ephemeral laughter and degraded, ephemeral entertainment. Just as Greene's pamphlets re-think the workings of emotion in the context of "cheap" pamphleteering, Middleton's city comedy shows an alliance between the discourse of ephemeral entertainment and ephemeral, easily reproducible emotions. *A Mad World*

attends to the economic and social conditions of early modern theater, when it re-theorizes affect as a vendible commodity.

My last two chapters are devoted to two Shakespeare's comedies, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare's affect theory represents for me yet another way to re-think the prevalent Galenic view of passions in the context of theatrical entertainment. I argue that Shakespeare takes a facet of humoral theory – its insistence that passions are contagious and transgressive of bodily boundaries – and uses it to undo the social and political hierarchies humoral theory used to underwrite. In particular, Chapter 3 argues that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can be read as a meditation on the value of “imagination” for its ability to translate bodies from rude to noble (as in the Bottom's “translation” from a donkey-head to Titania's lover) and from tragedy to comedy (as in the lovers' beastly transformations in the magic forest). The chapter historicizes the faculty of imagination as it was positioned in the Galenic humoral discourse, showing that it meant not only one's ability to create new images or ideas, but also signaled a wider susceptibility of the body to outside impressions and corresponding bodily transformation. Overall, the main goal of the chapter is to demonstrate how Shakespeare positively revalues passionate contagion in the context of theater. In contrast to the Galenic fear of material, always near-excessive emotions (articulated in Chapter 1), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* proposes conceptualizes affect as a space of possibility and an agent of radical bodily change.

Chapter 4 moves to re-read *Twelfth Night* along the same lines of passionate contagion and bodily transformation. I argue that the double plot of *Twelfth Night* allows us to witness two widely different affect theories at work: the chapter casts the subplot focused on the humiliation of haughty Malvolio in the context of the humanist tradition of corrective comedy, while it approaches the romantic plot with criss-crossed lovers in the context of positive “contagion,” also articulated in *A Midsummer* and in *I Henry IV*. The chapter argues that *Twelfth Night* re-imagines affective “contagion” negatively theorized by humanist and Galenic writers as “poison” and treacherous “mist” into a positive form of mutual re-constitution. I especially focus on the moments of positive “contagion,” which *A Midsummer* and *Twelfth Night* also term “translation”: the translation of Bottom into a fairy lover and the Athenian lovers’ transformation under the effect of the love juice in *A Midsummer*, and Viola’s transformation into Cesario in *Twelfth Night*.

Overall, the chapters demonstrate a variety of ways to conceptualize passion in the period. Contrary to the assumption of early modern historical phenomenology that there is only one “historical” affect theory in the period, the dissertation demonstrates a variety of ways in which period writers theorized the relation between body, mind, and the environment. If we approach early modern “affect” as a conglomeration of lived experience / phenomenology and the period configuration of politics and economics, then we see that emotion was never a part of the body, but always a complex engagement between context-based body and its no-less complex

environment. So, when we read early modern literature, what we discover are political affect theories about how, once again, we might relate to our bodies and to others.

Chapter 2

LAUGHTER AT THE CROSSROADS: EARLY MODERN AFFECT THEORY GOES TO THEATER

This chapter responds to the following question: How did early modern theater reward or encourage a particular view of laughter? In *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England*, Tanya Pollard argues that period writers conceptualized theater to work as a drug: it not only affected the mind, but transformed the body whole, often in subtle, hard-to recognize ways.⁶² This chapter extends Pollard's view of theater as an agent of bodily transformation, but whereas Pollard sees theater as a neutral place to which the historical views about the contagiousness of passions can be applied, I see theater as sponsoring its own affect theory and its own mechanism for the distribution of passions, which competes with and even subverts the humoral framework. The particular "burden" of laughter was its materiality, its surplus of bodily pleasure, which was or was not amenable to the role of theater, as perceived by various writers. Thus, in contrast to Pollard's argument, my chapter does not find theater to work as a drug in all cases, but reveals various conceptions of the link between theater and the bodily. Specifically, insofar as theater itself was a form of material, bodily practice – a

⁶² Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005).

collection of actors' bodies and voices, a set of costumes and theatrical props— it affirmed the materiality of laughter and its connection to affective pleasure. Theater increasingly sponsored a different view of passions: passions as social and good in themselves, rather than natural and beastly, the way they appear in the humoral theory.

The Galenic humoral theory, with its emphasis on temperance and bodily self-restraint, is not simply a theory of physiology — it is also a form of politics that encourages and justifies hierarchy, order, and restraint, both within an individual body and in the nation at large. But early modern theater introduced a set of new challenges to the humoral theory, among them the mingling of people from different social classes, its commercialism, and its ability to turn something “negative,” such as the extremes of laughter, into a positive form of audience pleasure and theater support. When Hamlet worries about the clowns who are keen to make others laugh, “though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered,” he also worries about the ease with which theater rewarded negative behavior, the excess of passion, which the humoral theory typically labeled as beastly and degrading (3.2.37-38).⁶³

The challenge that theater presented to the humoral theory is evident from a number of early modern texts. In *The English gentleman* (1630), an educational treatise on the virtues required of a true gentleman, Richard Brathwaite, reveals how

⁶³ *Hamlet* in Stephen Greenblatt et al., eds., *The Norton Shakespeare based on the Oxford edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008): 1683-1784.

closely the pleasure of laughter and the art of “Stage-plays” were related. Discussing permissible forms of recreation for a gentleman, Brathwaite writes: “The third Objection [against stage plays] may probably ground it selfe upon the testimony of Saint Luke 6.24. ‘Woe unto those that laugh now, &c.’ Whence it may be gathered, that if the Scripture condemn laughter, then consequently Stage-plays also, whose special aim and intentment is to make men laugh.”⁶⁴ As a writer of plays himself, Brathwaite summarizes the common objections against play-going and then dutifully refutes them one by one. What is interesting in the lines above is that Brathwaite takes an argument about laughter to be an argument against going to theater, and he feels impelled to disagree. In this case, Brathwaite gets around the scriptural injunction against laughing by resorting to a common distinction between “modest” and “immodest” or “immoderate” laughter. He explains that gentleman should not indulge in “immoderate laughter” because recreation should not be an end itself, but moderate laughter is good and useful for “refreshing the mind, and enabling the body to perform such offices as are requisite to be performed.”⁶⁵ Brathwaite argues that this kind of moderate/useful laughter is typical for the stage and that the writers who object to play-going on the basis of biblical injunction against worldly vanity fail to see the

⁶⁴ Richard Brathwaite, *The English gentleman* (London, 1630), 185. *Early English Books Online*. STC (2nd ed. / 3563). Accessed May 2, 2015. http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99840369

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 172-733.

salutary effects of modest recreation. His argument shows a widespread desire to preserve the cultural emphasis on bodily temperance and restraint of material pleasure with the institution of theater which often rewards alternative scenarios. In Brathwaite's case, the biblical objection against excessive bodily pleasure is taken to be an argument against theater and Brathwaite is careful to separate the two. Like Hamlet's injunction to the players "that you you o'erstep not the modesty of nature," Brathwaite's emphasis on "modest" theater would like to write theater back into the humoral affect theory.

Similarly, Henry Peacham's *The compleat gentleman* (1622), a popular success and the model on which Brathwaite's later *The English gentleman* (1630) is built, demonstrates the difficulty of separating "modest" pleasure from "immodest" one and the extent to which theatrical entertainment is conflated with the experience of physical embodiment as such. Unlike Brathwaite, Peacham at once refers to stage-players as part of the "Mechanical arts and Artists." Peacham argues that virtue and "nobility," a concept he does not take lightly, are incompatible with "mechanical arts," among which he lists the following: "Painters, Stage-Players, Tumblers, Ordinary Fiddlers, Inne-Keepers, Fencers, Jugglers, Dancers, Mountenbanks, Bearwards, and the like."⁶⁶ In Peacham's definition, theater keeps company with a host of other popular

⁶⁶ Henry Peacham, *The compleat gentleman* (London, 1622), 12-13. *Early English Books Online*, STC (2nd ed.) / 19502. http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99849559 (accessed May 3, 2015)

entertainments, from “inn-Keepers” to “jugglers” and thus loses its prestige as a form of noble art, as defined in Philip Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* (where theater is still included, but with many reservations). Peacham explains that people engaged in mechanical work degrade their bodies with “labour and travaile” and thus cannot partake of gentlemanly nobility.⁶⁷ Generally, the term “mechanical” referred to the types of occupation “concerned with manual work,” but it also popularly served as a term of abuse for a class of people considered “artisanal” and thus “vulgar, coarse.”⁶⁸ Thus, Puck haughtily characterizes Bottom and his friends as “rude mechanicals” in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (3.2.9), while John Marston implies the unfitness of “mechanical slave” and “dunghill peasant” to serve as a judge of Marston’s intellectual labors.⁶⁹ Invested in the value of courtly learning, Peacham similarly associates manual labor with rudeness and sees actors as tainted with their

⁶⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁶⁸ “mechanical, adj. and n.”. A I.1 and I.3. OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/115544?redirectedFrom=mechanical> (accessed May 03, 2015). See also Patricia Parker’s brilliant discussion of the terms “rude” and “mechanical” in Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), Chapter 3.

⁶⁹ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in Stephen Greenblatt et al., eds., *The Norton Shakespeare based on the Oxford edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008): 839-896. John Marston, *The scourge of villanie, Corrected with the addition of newe satyres* (London, 1599), n. p. in *Early English Books Online*, STC (2nd ed.) / 17486. http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99854902 (accessed May 3, 2015).

proximity to the physical. He consequently dismisses any audience affect that could be produced by such an embodied, physical form of labor.

Echoing Peacham's categorization of theater as a form of manual labor, Henry Turner has persuasively written about early modern theater as a "mechanical" art in period discourse: he argued that early modern theater was part and parcel of the period interest in geometry and was itself understood as a kind of spatial laboratory or practical art.⁷⁰ Turner positively revalues theater's "mechanical" reputation, linking it to experiments in modern science, but he also looks at it from the point of view of modern affect theory, where emotions are not compromised by their proximity to the physical. In contrast, a variety of early modern sources show considerable anxiety about theater's status as labor and seek different ways to reconcile theater's reliance on physical labor with the humoral precepts about bodily restraint and moderation. Specifically, the "mechanical" nature of theater -- its basis in the manual labor of actors on stage, its reliance on props, costumes, and special effects -- seems especially consonant with the project of evoking the bodily pleasure of laughter. Thus, early modern writers most complain about laughter in the context of physical farce, stage dancing, use of spectacular props (such a clown jumping into a pie), and improvisational comedy, where an actor would go out of his role and engage in a direct conversation with the audience. Criticized as something merely material and

⁷⁰ Henry Turner, *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Poetics, and The Practical Spatial Arts, 1580-1630* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).

excessive – as a costume that a city gallant would put on to make a show – the physicality of laughter appears inextricable from the early modern discourse of theater as a mechanical art, entrenched in questions of labor, commercialism, and urban refinement.

When theoreticians of early modern theater like Philip Sidney and Thomas Heywood describe the goal of poetry to be the development of virtue and transformation of the audience's minds, laughter's physicality becomes a burden, something to do re-tool or do away with. A variety of Christian, courtly, and humoral precepts about temperance and restraint of passions have to be re-thought when applied to the context of theater. With its reliance on embodied action, its commercialism as a form of paid physical labor, and its catering to audience's pleasure, theater arguably sponsored an affective framework, which revalued emotions as positive and social, quite apart from their connection to virtue or reason. In the next section I outline the Galenic status of laughter as a pleasurable, but ultimately trivial bodily experience, and then demonstrate how theater presented a challenge to this affective framework.

Laughter and Early Modern Affect Theory

The main sources on the status of laughter in early modern England were threefold: writings on the body derived from Galen's theory of humors; discussions of laughter in classical philosophy and rhetoric, especially in Plato and Aristotle and the rhetorical guides of Cicero and Quintilian; and finally, laughter's status in Christian

writings, for example, laughter's association with folk celebrations and Catholic past as well as its place in the biblical injunctions regarding joy and sorrow. Contemporary texts such as Thomas Wright's *The passions of the mind in general* (1604), freely mixed medical opinion with philosophical thought and contemporary examples, thereby producing a theory of laughter that was thoroughly hybrid and at times contradictory, but nevertheless remarkably coherent and uniform across a large number of texts. The dominant perception of laughter was that, in moderation, it is a positive bodily experience which re-affirms one's vitality and physical health, while potentially endangering one's ability to reason and judge.

The end of sixteenth-beginning of seventeenth century was marked by a great number of works on the nature and utility of passions, most notably, Lemnius Levinus's *The touchstone of complexions* (1576), Thomas Walkington's *An optick glass of humours* (1607), Thomas Rogers's *A philosophicall discourse, entituled, The anatomie of the minde* (1576), Juan Huarte's *Examen de ingenios. = The examination of mens vvits* (translated into English in 1594), and Thomas Wright's *The passions of the mind in general* (1604), among others.⁷¹ A part of the more general trend to manage one's body and person, also evident in such books as Baldassarre Castiglione's *The Courtier* and Henry Peacham's *The compleat gentleman*, these treatises on the passions consolidated a specific vocabulary of emotional terms,

⁷¹ All these texts are available in *Early English Books Online* database. For Thomas Wright I have used the following edition: Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General*, ed. by William Webster Newbould (New York: Garland, 1986).

articulated the types of available passions, and organized a specific hierarchy among emotional expressions. In these treatises, the humoral theory of passions is the main framework for discussing passions as dependent on specific bodily liquids and particular bodily constitution, but it is not the only one, as other classical influences exist. For instance, Thomas Rogers, the author of *A philosophicall discourse, entituled, The anatomie of the minde* starts his discussion by noting his debt to the Stoics who “will not permit a man to be moved any whytt, for any thing” and the Aristotelian tradition, or “Peripatetions” who, in contrast, allow emotional experience, provided one “should keep himself within the bounds of modestie.”⁷² Although Stoicism, as Rogers points out, advocated complete freedom from all emotion, other traditions allowed emotional experiences, provided they are bound by what writers variously interpreted as “reason” or in the Christian context, the search for God or “virtue.”

Richard Strier emphasizes the confluence of traditions in the period, showing how the classical idea of useful passion, derived from Cicero and Plato, resonates with the Christian idea of emotions as natural “spurs” to Christian life. Quoting from Erasmus’ *Praise of Folly*, Strier argues that his statement absorbs the influence of the

⁷² Thomas Rogers, *A philosophicall discourse, entituled, The anatomie of the mind* (London, 1576), Chapter 1, B.i. *Early English Books Online*. STC (2nd ed.) / 21239. http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99851328 (accessed May 3, 2015). I abbreviate the title of Rogers’s work simply to *The anatomie of the mind* in subsequent references.

classical heritage with the early modern Reformation attitude to passions: “But actually the emotions not only function as guides to those who are hastening to the haven of wisdom, but also, in the whole range of virtuous action, they operate like spurs or goads, as it were, encouraging the performance of good deeds.”⁷³ In these lines, Erasmus is drawing on the tradition of Augustinian piety as he praises the natural operation of emotions as useful “spurs” to Christian life. Many early modern writers likewise believe that passions are naturally good, unless they are perverted by sin. However, the Christian idea of sin or perversion often gets folded into the classical (Aristotelian) idea of the golden mean and the Galenic precepts on the moderation and restraint of the naturally unruly humoral liquids. The result is that many early modern writers, such as Richard Brathwaite quoted above, conflate virtue itself with the idea of bodily restraint. For instance, in *A treatise of the passions* (1640), Edward Reynolds describes passions as natural elements that guide men to desire the good and reject the evil. Passions are “those motions of merely naturall Agents, which are guided to their general or particular ends, by the Wisdome and Power of Him that made them.”⁷⁴ He argues that only when passions are perverted

⁷³ Erasmus qtd. in Richard Strier, “Against the Rule of Reason,” *Reading the Early Modern Passions*, eds. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 23-42. The quote is from p. 28.

⁷⁴ Edward Reynolds, *A treatise of the passions and faculties of the soule of man* (London, 1640; repr. Gainesville, FL.: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1971), 33.

from their true natural course do they lead men in the wrong directions. The remedy against sinful perversion is, interestingly, moderation and temperance of emotions.

Conflating the Aristotelian discussion of the golden mean with the classical value of temperance, as well as the Galenic portrayal of emotions as boundless and overflowing, early modern writers I discuss below likewise portray emotions as useful in moderation, but dangerous in excess, or to reformulate in Christian terms, as naturally guiding human beings along the path to salvation, unless their emotions are perverted by sin. Laughter belongs to this same cultural territory as a bodily emotion that is naturally re-vitalizing and healthy, unless it overruns the course of reason and gets corrupted by sin. Laurent Joubert's *Treatise on Laughter* (*Traité Du Ris*) provides a useful snapshot of this view: it is the most comprehensive and in many ways representative work of period affect theory, especially as applied to laughter. Joubert's *Treatise on Laughter* was first published in Latin in France (1560), then translated into French (1579) and also circulated in England.⁷⁵ Although the work was known in England, its representative status lies less in its direct influence on English contemporaries than in the fact that it combines ideas on laughter strewn across a variety of English texts and articulates a common classical framework widely shared

⁷⁵ Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter*, trans. and ed. Gregory Rocher (Tuscaloosa, AL: Alabama UP, 1980). For the publication history, see Gregory Rocher's "Introduction" to this book, ix-1.

by his English contemporaries.⁷⁶ Joubert's view that laughter proceeds from ugliness even as it gives us pleasure is especially paradigmatic, since it essentially compresses the classical ideas of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Joubert writes,

For laughable matter gives us pleasure and sadness: pleasure in that we find it unworthy of pity, and that there is no harm done, nor evil that we consider of consequence. The heart therefore rejoices over it, and expands just as it does in real joy. There is also sadness, because all laughable matter comes from ugliness and impropriety: the heart, upset over such unseemliness, and as if feeling pain, shrinks and tightens.⁷⁷

We can observe several things from this modeling of laughter. First, Joubert's word-choice "the heart rejoices" or "the heart, upset over such unseemliness...shrinks" is not metaphorical, but as Paster and others have demonstrated is meant literally. Early modern writers frequently conceived of the body more as a set of organs than as a unified organism, and they tended to attribute agency, desire, and responsibility to individual bodily organs. Laughter, like most other passions, was widely believed to

⁷⁶ Timothie Bright, Joubert's English contemporary, directly refers to Joubert's treatise. See Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie* (London, 1586; New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 52. On the status of comic emotions in the classical period, see Indira Ghose, *Shakespeare and Laughter: A Cultural History* (New York: Manchester UP, 2008): 56-63; and Dana LaCourse Munteanu, "Comic Emotions: Shamelessness and Envy (Schadenfreude); Moderate Emotion" in *Emotion, Genre and Gender in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Dana LaCourse Munteanu (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011): 89-113.

⁷⁷Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter*, 44. Subsequent references to this work will be given in parenthesis as page numbers.

originate in the heart, the organ responsible for sensual desire and natural appetites, including passions.⁷⁸ In period physiology, passions occupied a subordinate position in relation to reason, but in the words of Gail Kern Paster, “the opposition [between reason and passions] was hardly equal. . . Reason—[.]—is forever on the defensive, forever seeking domestic peace through appeasement, at times yielding basely to the importunities of passion and sense.”⁷⁹ Edward Reynolds provides a classic view of passions as beneficial provided they are bound by reason and the logic of temperance: “*as long as they [passions] serve onely to drive forward, but not to drowne Vertue; as long as they keepe their dependence on Reason, and run onely in that Channell wherewith they are thereby bounded,*” they have a good effect on humanity.⁸⁰ In practice, however, passions were rarely thought to stay within the bounds of reason, and they are often identified with disease and judged essentially anarchic and unbound.

Second, although not all writers agreed with Joubert that laughter proceeds from the mixture of pleasure and pain— in fact, the view that laughter is the result of joy is more typical — Joubert’s definition captures the contradictory mechanism of

⁷⁸ On the origin of passions in the heart, see Joubert, *A Treatise on Laughter*, 36; and Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General*, ed. by William Webster Newbould (New York: Garland, 1986), 114.

⁷⁹ Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 11.

⁸⁰ Edward Reynolds, *A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man* (London: 1640; repr. Gainesville, FL.: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971), 60. Emphasis added.

laughter, which was widely accepted in the period. Most early modern writers believed that the primary function of laughter is salutary and beneficial – it brings us joy and pleasure and improves one’s health. On the other hand, it was also commonly accepted that the subject of laughter proceeds from representations of “ugliness and impropriety” on stage. Things that make us laugh are necessarily ridiculous and foolish, or in worse cases, profane and obscene. This ambivalent attitude to laughter as both a source of bodily health and an outlet to the improper permeates practically every early modern discussion of early modern laughter and structures how writers understood laughter’s purpose on stage. So, Nicholas Coeffeteau (1574-1623), a bishop of Dardania and a counselor to the French king Henry IV (whose *A Table of Humane Passions* was translated into English in 1621) underlines the pleasurable nature of laughter by contrasting it with the passion of sadness:

For sadness is an earthly Passion cold and dry, whereas joy is moist and hot.

And therefore, it is easily framed in the heart of children, of young men, and of those which of a good complexion: from this joy which makes the heart to spread and dilate itself unto a flower, grows laughter, which is no Passion, but an exterior effect of an interior Passion.⁸¹

⁸¹ Nicholas Coeffeteau, *A table of humane passions with their causes and effects* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1621), 298-99. *Early English Books Online*, STC (2nd ed. / 5473). http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99844102 (accessed May 4, 2015). Subsequent references to this work will be given in parenthesis as author’s last name and page number.

Like Joubert, Coeffeteau defines joy as a passion which “spread[s] and dilate[s]” the heart and results in laughter. He also sees laughter as resulting from an excess of bodily vitality -- in his interpretation, laughter is especially associated with “children, young men,” and those whose balance of humours in the body is especially productive of this light, pleasurable passion of joy.

However, just as Joubert’s earlier statement is marked by ambiguity – Joubert connects laughter to the ridiculous and the improper – Coeffeteau likewise qualifies his praise of laughter’s vitality by defining it as a passion that is by nature opposed to the pursuit of wisdom. Coeffeteau states, for example, that laughter partly proceeds from novelty (new things have greater potential to make us laugh) and that people more focused on wisdom than novelty are less likely to laugh: “And in like manner profound cogitations and meditations, hinder laughter: wherefore wise men do not laugh so easily as others, as well for that they have always their spirits busied and imployed about some serious meditations, which will not suffer them to regard such trivial things as commonly make the Vulgar to laugh...” (303). The key word that Coeffeteau introduces here is “trivial” – laughter comes from an excess of bodily life, but the cause of laughter is trivial and incompatible with true wisdom. We can compare Coeffeteau’s statement on laughter with Joubert’s similar admission that the “primary occasion of these effects [associated with laughter] is empty and light...But we find the act most enjoyable and desire it deeply on account of the pleasure it brings” (16).

The status of laughter is then paradoxical: the experience of laughter is deeply pleasurable and reaffirms one's bodily life, but the source of laughter is something ridiculous and improper and is actually incompatible with the true pursuit of wisdom and virtue. Even in the more positive evaluations of laughter, its joy is considered transitory and merely refreshing, or calculatingly strategic and really evoked for some other purposes, such as education or persuasion. For instance, in *The Art of Rhetoric* (1560), Thomas Wilson advises rhetoricians to use laughter strategically—in order to “quicken these heavy-loaded wits of ours, and much to cherish these our lumpish and unwieldy natures,” so that the audience would be better prepared for the finer points of rhetoric.⁸² Wilson's reference to the human body as a “heavy-load” for the wit, or intellect, as well as “lumpish” and “unwieldy” to move by reason, unless one uses laughter, discloses an early modern dialectic between the weight of the material body, refreshed and revitalized by laughter, and the higher demands of one's intellect, which is the real subject of rhetorical persuasion. Likewise, in the quote above Joubert describes the joy and sadness of laughter as in some sort false and unreal when contrasted to the emotions of real joy and real pain: during laughter the heart “expands *just as it does in real joy*” and “*as if feeling pain*, shrinks and tightens” (emphasis added). Joubert's qualification of laughter stems from his conviction that the subject of

⁸² Thomas Wilson, *The Art of Rhetoric*, ed. Peter Medine (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 47.

laughter is necessarily trivial - in other words, bodily pleasure and “serious” questions, such as morality and politics, could not be combined.

The humoral physiology of laughter’s process likewise reaffirms laughter’s status as a source of bodily pleasure, but one which is opposed to intellectual thought. In terms of humoral liquids, laughter was associated with hot blood and moist, fertile bodies, characteristics of young, but also immature kinds of people. Juan Huarte, the author of the popular physiological treatise *The Examination of Mens Wits* explains that “bloud is an humour, which provoketh a man to laugh... When the diseased become giddie and doting do laugh, they rest in more safetie, than if they were in toyle and agnuifh: for the former commeth of bloud, which is a most mild humour, and the second of mlancholie....”⁸³ Choosing between melancholy and laughter, Huarte thinks that laughter is a safer passion for the body because it is “a most mild humour.” However, in his later discussion of laughter’s correspondence with other desired characteristics, such as “great imagination” or “great understanding,” Huarte states the following:

The cause of laughter (in my judgment) is nought else, but an approving, which is made by the imagination, seeing or hearing somewhat done or said, which accordeth very well.... When the imagination is verie good, it contents

⁸³ Juan Huarte, *Examen de ingenios. = The examination of mens vvits... Translated out of the Spanish tongue by M. Camillo Camili. Englished out of his Italian, by R.C. Esquire* (London, 1594), 81. *Early English Books Online*, STC (2nd ed.) / 13890. http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99854010 (accessed May 4, 2015).

not itself with every speech....Hence it grows that men of great imagination
laugh verie seldom....⁸⁴

Like many other writers of the period, Huarte thinks that part of the cause of laughter is novelty and that people who laugh a lot are necessarily “defective in their imagination” because they cannot foresee the sudden and new juxtaposition of ideas, which is the cause of laughter. However, Huarte locates the source of laughter in the brain, a more intellectual organ than the heart, and he therefore comes to a somewhat paradoxical conclusion that “men of great understanding, are much given to laughter.” Singularly, Huarte sees laughter as an exercise of judgment, not a natural human propensity for pleasure and enjoyment; he separates “imagination” from “understanding” and concludes that people who laugh a lot are defective in imagination, but still possess “great understanding” in that they exercise their judgment with laughter (83). Most writers, however, locate the origin of laughter in the heart, the organ responsible for sensual appetites and desires, and thus see an abundance of laughter as the overindulgence of the agency of the body, at the expense of the more intellectual or spiritual concerns of the brain.

⁸⁴ Huarte, 81-82. Huarte’s treatise is especially concerned with making the brain the organ responsible for all kinds of human characteristics. Huarte wants to be able to deduce from the physical qualities of one’s brain (the size of the head, its shape, etc.) the person’s exact emotional and spiritual characteristics, and this motivation seems to influence his allocation of all agency to the brain. Subsequent references to Huarte’s treatise will be given in parenthesis as page numbers.

Laurent Joubert, Edward Reynolds, Thomas Wright, Thomas Rogers, among many writers on the passions, more typically locate the tendency to laughter in the person's excess of vitality and predisposition for pleasure, unqualified by the more mature direction of the brain. Thus, Thomas Rogers, the author of *The anatomie of the minde*, more commonly sees the dichotomy between passions, located in the heart, and understanding, located in the brain, rather intensified in the experience of pleasure. He writes that "This Oblectation [pleasure], except it be carefully restrained by the reins of reason, it so overcomes a man, that it makes him effeminate, and so spoils him of discretion..."⁸⁵ Rogers brings a typical Christian view to the discussion by warning his readers about the excess of passions and reminding them that God gave people the experience of pleasure for a specific purpose – so that they "may recreate the mind, and bear the uncommodities of this life, and the better go about our business" (5-6). In this framework, laughter is firmly a property of the heart and a passion which can easily lead a man or woman astray. Indeed, Rogers clarifies that unrestrained pleasure is most common to beasts and children who "can otherwise signify their delight and joyfulness, except either they immoderately laugh, or unreasonably leap for joy" (6). A treacherous compliment, laughter's connection to bodily vitality can easily become a characteristic of immature and otherwise marginal people: laborers, peasants, children and anyone who is seen as not refined and intellectual enough. Indulgence in

⁸⁵ Rogers, *The anatomie of the minde*, 5. Subsequent references to page numbers in this work will be given in parenthesis.

laughter is also seen as a characteristic quality of crowds. If Rogers mentions “beasts and children,” Coeffeteau includes children and crowds: “to whom all things seem new, as children, and the ignorant multitude, whom any sights provoke to laugh; whereas wise men are nothing moved.” (307). In Thomas Wright’s *The passions of the mind in general*, a treatise that gained much scholarly attention for its sustained treatment of a variety of passions, Wright likewise identifies “young men” and those lacking in judgment as those most given to pleasure and laughter. Again identifying laughter with the abundance of bodily heat and moisture, Wright explains:

Young men’s incontinency, boldness, and confidence proceeds of heat which abounds in them, and those whose complexions are hottest are most subject to these affections. They extremely affect pleasures because they spent as boys almost the time of growth in getting of habits alluring and haling to pleasure; for commonly we see all sorts of boys, till they come to the use of reason and discretion, most addicted to pastimes and plays.⁸⁶

Because of the abundance of natural heat, boys are drawn to entertainment and its accompaniment, laughter; they spend energy freely and tend to laugh a lot. Their tendency to laugh arises both from their natural constitution and from the fact that they have not come “to the use of reason and discretion,” which would alter their

⁸⁶ Thomas Wright, *The passions of the mind in general*, ed. William Webster Newbould (New York: Garland, 1986), 118.

natural bodily heat. In other words, laughter is acceptable in young men because their bodies are supposed to be energetic and strong, but it is not acceptable in old men, who, by their age, should have already exchanged excess heat for much colder passions associated with wisdom. Women and effeminate persons are another category of people especially prone to laughter. Women are usually considered to have less heat than men; however, they were also believed to have more moisture, which is conducive to laughter, and as children, they were believed to be less reasonable than men. Joubert says that “a soft, delicate, and agile heart is promptly overwhelmed by a great joy, to the point of fainting and even dying. The hard and stiff heart, on the other contrary, is more moved by a sad thing than by a joyful one...As for prudence, it is thought to be caused by dryness, just as moisture and softness make for foolishness. For because of this men are definitely wiser than women, and men of age wiser than children” (102). A dry and hard heart is more conducive to melancholy, but it also makes the person more prudent, rational, and wise. On the other hand, a soft and moist heart is more agitated by passions and makes the person both more joyful and more foolish. And because women and children are considered soft and moist, they were regarded as more prone to “light” passions, such as inconstancy, joy, laughter, and desire for pleasure.

Thus, the predominant theory of laughter in the period held that laughter is pleasurable without being intellectually important: it is a sort of a perfect “vacation passion” – in moderation and directed to the right objects, laughter refreshes

without overwhelming or steering the person off her proper course in life. Keeping in mind the seductive bodily pleasure of laughter, period writers often remind their readers that the passions associated with laughter should be carefully monitored, in order to remain “light” and equidistant both from pity and condemnation. For instance, Joubert draws the boundaries of laughter thus: “for all that is laughable is found in actions or in words, and is something ugly or improper, yet unworthy of pity or condemnation” (19).

The precept that laughable material should include only those subjects, which are “unworthy of pity or condemnation,” is an often-repeated classical idea, derived from the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, and transmitted through early modern humanist writings. So Aristotle postulated in *Nicomachean Ethics* that laughter should be bound by the concept of decorum⁸⁷; Cicero permits an orator to use laughter, but the orator must make sure not to “let his jesting become buffoonery or mere mimicking”⁸⁸; and Quintilian further rarifies the sphere of laughter by opposing coarse and vulgar laughter to what he terms urbane wit, which is a kind of witty language that “involves the total absence of all that is incongruous, coarse, unpolished and exotic whether in thought,

⁸⁷ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, The Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1994), Bk 4.8, pp. 245-49.

⁸⁸ Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1942), Vol. I, Bk 2.59.239.

language, voice, or gesture.”⁸⁹ In its connection to bodily life, the pleasure of laughter retains a dubious stigma of defining someone as young, perhaps effeminate or unrefined, and rhetoricians like Quintilian or in early modern context, Thomas Wilson, often worry about distinguishing between “coarse, unpolished and exotic” laughter and the more moderate and strategically conscious laughter. Thomas Wright’s opinion about the limits set on the bodily pleasure of laughter is probably paradigmatic of the majority of writers on the topic. In the section entitled “How Passions alter the body,” Wright advises:

Pleasure and Delight, if it be moderate, brings health, because the purer Spirits retire unto the heart (and they help marvelously the digestion of blood) so that thereby the heart engenders great abundance and most purified spirits... From good concoction, expulsion of superfluities, and abundance of spirits proceeds a good color, a clear countenance, and a universal health of the body. ⁹⁰

Wright’s statement reaffirms the positive effect of laughter as a conduit of health and pleasure, but his qualification, “if it be moderate,” reminds of the danger of physicality, its tendency to become excessive and unrestrained. Laughter occupies thus a liminal space in early modern discussions of physiology: like no other

⁸⁹ *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. H. E. Butler (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1966), Vol. 2, 6.3.107.

⁹⁰ Wright, 135.

passion, it contributes to one's bodily health and makes one feel younger and full of energy. On the other hand, laughter is dangerously connected with degradation, both because the pleasure of laughter is too pleasurably seductive and because the subject of laughter necessarily involves something improper, ugly and ridiculous. Wright, for instance, continues the above praise of pleasure with the following warning, "But if the Passion of pleasure be too vehement questionless it causes great infirmity." These "infirmity," the effects of too much laughter, include both physiological disease and social degradation: "remorse of mind, infamy, and poverty."⁹¹

When connected to the context of early modern theater, the effects of laughter predictably follow the same pattern of being good in moderation, but bad and degrading in excess. What is new, however, is the emerging positive evaluation of laughter as a marker of fashion, a characteristic of a *flâneur* or in early modern terms, gallant, as a man who combined courtly virtues with street credibility and a knowledge of his surroundings. Writing in relation to period rogue literature, Craig Dionne argued that the rhetorical eloquence and social adeptness of tricksters in cony-catching pamphlets represents a perversion of the humanist stress on education and the development of one's potential.⁹² The early

⁹¹ Wright, 135-36.

⁹² Craig Dionne, "Fashioning Outlaws: The Early Modern Rogue and Urban Culture," *Rogues and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz (Ann Arbor:

modern attitude to laughter in the context of theater is likewise marked by a similar “perversion” of seeing laughter as a fashionable accessory, something that belongs to the crowd and to the city. The next section discusses the status of laughter in the context of period theater and develops the idea of fashionable self-display via laughter. I show that many writers see laughter as a bodily pleasure that is intimately suited to the pleasure of theater and the urban environment. Thus, even though some writers, such as Ben Jonson and Thomas Heywood, still abide by the humoral theory of passions, urban writers like Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker readily embrace theater’s urban location and its status as a mechanical art, developing a new affect theory of laughter.

Laughter in Theater

Period writers rely on the humoral status of laughter as a trivial bodily pleasure in multiple, contradictory ways. On one hand, humanist writers such as Philip Sidney, Thomas Heywood, and Ben Jonson (though Jonson’s theory and practice diverge) follow the footsteps of physiological writers on the passions in advocating restraint and moderation of laughter. These writers want to keep laughter as a light, trivial recreation whose intensely bodily pleasure should be kept at bay. Thomas Heywood defends comedy on exactly the same grounds in his *Apology for Actors*. Assuming that

The University of Michigan Press, 2004): 33-61. For Dionne’s discussion of rogues as a form of humanist perversion, see especially pp. 54-56.

laughter in comedies is nothing but “harmless mirth,” Heywood proceeds to deduce its physiological consequences thus:

[The purpose of comedy is] to recreate such as of themselves are wholly devoted to melancholy, which corrupts the blood, or to refresh such weary spirits as are tired with labour or study, to moderate the cares and heaviness of the minde, that they may return to their trades and faculties with more zeale and earnestness, after some small, soft, and pleasant retirement.⁹³

Heywood’s understanding of theater’s purpose is couched in strikingly physiological terms, as he argues that comedy helps dispel melancholy, which “corrupts the blood,” and renew “weary spirits” which are tired after serious occupations. Denying any meaningful function to laughter per se, Heywood ties the pleasure of laughter to the educational goal of displaying minor vices of mankind, so that audiences “may reforme that simplicity in themselves which others make sport of.”⁹⁴ Philip Sidney, the author of the most impassioned defense of poetry in the period, likewise presents himself as the defender of the “right” kind of comedy, one that does not include loud or unnecessary laughter.

Condemning the period practice of “mingling kings and clowns” – a practice that seems to disrespect the hierarchy of classes and genres – Sidney presents his own

⁹³ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, ed. Richard H. Perkinson (New York: Scholars’ Facsimiles and Reprints, 1941), 54.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

theory of comedy, which largely follows the outlines of a humoral framework. Thus, Sidney differentiates between “laughter” and “delight,” arguing that “the whole tract of a comedy should be full of delight...But our comedians think there is no delight without laughter, which is very wrong, for though laughter may come with delight, yet comes it not of delight, as though delight should be the cause of laughter (but well may one thing breed both together).”⁹⁵ Although Sidney keeps “laughter” as an allowable emotional experience that may come with comedy, he clearly prefers “delight,” which for him means a superior experience that is touch with the proper values of life, such as virtue or good life. He contrasts the two experiences as following: “Delight has a joy in it either permanent or present; laughter has only a scornful tickling.”⁹⁶ As Heywood, Sidney follows in the footsteps of physiological writers on the passions, who praise the curative properties of laughter but also recommend restraint, moderation, and useful re-tooling of the pleasure of laughter to socially productive goals.

However, against the backdrop of the earlier framework of laughter as a moderate recreation designed to improve one’s health and allow for a temporary relaxation, what we see in period texts is a new awareness of laughter as a social resource. From being a natural impulse of the body, laughter transforms into a marker

⁹⁵ Philip Sidney, *Defense of Poesy* in *Sir Philip Sidney’s Defense of Poesy*, ed. Lewis Soens (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 49.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

of taste and a particular mode of sociability. Although some humanist writers, such as Ben Jonson, Thomas Heywood, and Philip Sidney, still routinely argue for an ideal comedy that refreshes audience's minds and teaches useful lessons, other texts increasingly conflate theatrical laughter with being a gallant or the ability to immerse oneself in the crowd and participate in common forms of recreation. In texts such as George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesie*, Thomas Dekker's *The Gull's Hornbook*, Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier*, Thomas Middleton's city comedies, not to laugh means not to be social and not aware of the material conditions of one's environment. In these texts, theater's connection to bodily laughter assumes a new significance in the context of theater's role as itself a fashionable accessory, a light entertainment that is to be savored precisely for its ephemerality. Thus, in Epistle to *The Roaring Girl*, a city comedy that builds on the scandalous reputation of contemporary woman Mary Frith, Thomas Middleton advertises the play as the latest fashion of the season. Addressed to "the comic play-readers," the Epistle wishes them "venery and laughter" and envisions the kind of theater that changes with the times:

The fashion of play-making I can properly compare to nothing so naturally as the alteration in apparel: for in the time of the great-crop double, your huge bombasted plays, quilted with might words to lean purpose, was only then in fashion; and as the doublet fell, neater inventions began to set up. Now in the time of spruceness, our plays follow the niceness of our garments: single plots, quaint conceits, lecherous jests dressed up in hanging sleeves; and those are fit

for the times and the termers. Such a kind of light-colour summer stuff,
mingled with diverse colours, you shall find this published comedy. (1-11)⁹⁷

In these lines, Middleton strikingly envisions his comedy as a kind of fashionable garment that would be gladly worn by a gallant. He remembers the period when “bombasted” plays, like Christopher Marlowe’s majestic tragedy *Tamburlaine* were in fashion, but then argues that his comedy is better and fitter for the times. He thus wishes his readers “venery and laughter” with the understanding that laughter functions as a kind of fashionable accessory, to be worn by his reader and appreciated precisely for its “light colour summer stuff,” its ephemerality and its connection to bodily pleasure. In contrast to the earlier unease with the triviality of laughter, expressed in humanist writings on comedy and physiological treatises on the humoral control of passions, in Middleton’s formulation, triviality is key. Middleton positions theatrical laughter together with such vain pursuits as playing dice and lechery, as he promises that the comedy is “good to keep you in an afternoon from dice, at home in your chambers; and for venery you shall find enough” (12-13).⁹⁸ Far from being a natural bodily impulse, theatrical laughter

⁹⁷ Thomas Middleton, “Epistle,” Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker, *The Roaring Girl; or, Moll Cutpurse*, ed. Coppélia Kahn, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford UP, 2007): 721-778.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

here figures as a form of urban sociability that is comparable to spending an afternoon playing dice or strolling around the city.

A similar sentiment in regard to theatrical pleasure is expressed by Richard Baker, a friend of John Donne, as he comments on Donne's time in London thus: "Mr. John Dunne, who leaving Oxford, lived at the Innes of Court, not dissolute, but very neat; a great visitor of Ladies, a great frequenter of Playes, a great writer of conceited Verses."⁹⁹ Baker joins socializing with ladies, play-going, and writing poetry as evidently idle, but not really harmful occupations. Both Middleton and Baker see a continuity between writing "conceited Verses" and the status of theater as a self-conscious fashion industry. Laughter in this definition becomes a mode of sociability, a way of partaking in the urban landscape of London and its multiplicity of people. In other words, the predominant affect theory of laughter gets reworked in the context of theater, as laughter's accentuation of embodiment (its pleasurable physicality) works in tandem with theater's status as an essential part of the urban landscape, a pleasure that is degraded but fashionable. In contrast to the frequent suspicion of laughter's link to near-excess vitality, writers like Middleton and Dekker see laughter as the very symptom of London's urban landscape and theater's sensual pleasures. Rather than simply being a negative

⁹⁹ Richard Baker qtd. in Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 38.

trait, laughter's connection to bodily pleasures thus acquires a new meaning as the hallmark of urban entertainment.

The intimate connection between laughter and urban pleasures is especially evident in the writings of anti-theatrical critics. Stephen Gosson, for instance, seems to be unable to separate laughter's bodily pleasure from his view of the urban crowd gathered in theater. Following Aristotle, Gosson inveighs against stage comedies which represent people "worse than they are," but then he transfers his disdain from stage characters to the kind of people who laugh at comedies: they are "the worste sort of people" who are "caried away with every rumor, and so easily corrupted, that in the Theaters they generally take up a wonderfull laughter, and shout altogether with one voice, when they see some notable cosenedge practiced, or some slie conveighance of bawdry brought out of Italy."¹⁰⁰ For Gosson, the critique of the "low" kinds of people represented in comedies – "cookes, queanes, knaves, baudes, parasites, courtezannes, lecherous olde men, amorous yong men" – easily slides into a condemnation of the theatrical crowd, where all sense of distinction and hierarchy is blurred through the audience's indulgence in laughter. Gosson suggests that theater's role as an overflowing mass of people joined haphazardly together, is realized through audience's degrading laughter, which likewise overflows boundaries and makes a

¹⁰⁰ Stephen Gosson, *Playes confuted in fiue Actions, The English Drama and Stage under the Tudor and Stuart Princes 1543-1664*, ed. W. C. Hazlitt (New York: Burt Franklin, 1869), 184.

crowd out of a collection of individuals. Using terminology remarkably similar to that used by writers on physiology like Thomas Wright and Laurent Joubert, Gosson focuses specifically on the crossover between laughter and social mingling: “Comedyes make our delight exceede, for at the many times we laugh so extreemely, that striuing to bridle our selues, wee cannot.”¹⁰¹ So in addition to objecting to the heterogeneous mass of people present in theaters, Gosson is able to identify the levelling work of passions associated with laughter.

Another anti-theatrical writer, William Prynne echoes Gosson’s stress on the excessive nature of early modern laughter in *Histrion-mastix*: “Theatricall laughter knowes neither bounds, no measure; men wholly resigne and let loose the reines of their hearts unto it, glutting, nay tiring their sides and spirits with it.”¹⁰² Although Gosson and Prynne are notoriously formulaic in their arguments against theater, what is remarkable in these statements is the conflation of the humoral knowledge about laughter with class-conscious critique of theatrical audience, its mimicry of the growing city, where all kinds of people mingled together. Theatrical affect seems to demand a different formulation from the rhetoric of excess and emotional moderation, which characterizes the predominant affect theory of laughter until at least the early seventeenth century.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 206.

¹⁰² William Prynne, *Histrion-mastix* qtd. in Matthew Steggle, *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2007), 65.

The concept of *flâneur*, formulated by Charles Baudelaire and later developed by Walter Benjamin, is helpful for theorizing the kind of affective behavior condemned by Gosson and actively molded by Middleton and Dekker in their plays and pamphlets. Although the concept of *flâneur* originated in the nineteenth-century theorizations of Paris life, it is useful for illuminating some of the central concerns in regard to early modern laughter, its connection to urban crowds and idle pleasure. In *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire described *flâneur* and his natural habitat, the crowd, thus:

The crowd is his element [that of a *flâneur*], as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define.... Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*, ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), 9.

What for Stephen Gosson is most objectionable and most distinct about laughter – its ability to form crowds and its tendency to thrive in urban environments – becomes a moment of praise for Baudelaire. The latter especially notes the crucial ability of a man-about-town to thrive in crowds: “it is an immense joy [for him] to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement.”¹⁰⁴ Echoing the physiological writers’ concern with novelty and immaturity in discussions of laughter, Baudelaire also underlines flâneur’s joy in his material surroundings and his child-like perception of the world as perpetually new and full of color. Instead of condemning flâneur’s child-like enjoyment of the world, Baudelaire praises it – and in doing so, he articulates an affect theory implicit in Middleton’s praise of the ever-changing fashions of the city and its ephemeral affective pleasures, one of them being theatrical laughter.

Of course, concerns of early modern London are markedly different than the theory imagined by a French poet centuries away from Gosson’s worries about the corruption in early modern playhouses and Middleton’s ironic offering of his play as yet another bawdy and exciting item of the fashionable city. And yet, the two worlds of nineteenth-century Paris and late sixteenth-century London might not be that far away. Scholars have increasingly seen early modern London as in many ways epitomizing modern urban problems and subjectivities. In *Cultural Capitals: Early Modern London and Paris*, Karen Newman finds signs of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 9.

modernity and urban consciousness in the two great early modern cities. Arguing against the historians and literary critics' tendency to see the origin of urban consciousness in nineteenth century Paris, Newman close-reads the everyday life of early modern London and Paris and shows how "already in early modern Europe, new configurations of time and urban space produced discursive figures of address and modes of subjectivity that have been exclusively claimed for modernity."¹⁰⁵ While Newman's study might seem as just another attempt to locate the origin of modernity earlier, in early modern period, Newman herself resists the critical tendency towards the "Great Divide" between modern and premodern societies and aligns herself instead with Bruno Latour and Michel de Certeau's efforts to see continuity between past and present and rethink the concept of "modernity" itself.¹⁰⁶

In the last decade or so, there has been an increasing critical interest in the place of early modern London, its city comedies and its distinctive modes of sociability and laughter. Critics of early modern city comedy – from Brian Gibbon's seminal book *Jacobean City Comedy* (1968) and to more recent treatments of the topic in Jean Howard's *Theater of a City* (2007) and Adam Zucker's *Places of Wit* (2011) – have long ago noticed the high premium placed

¹⁰⁵ Karen Newman, *Cultural Capitals: Early Modern London and Paris* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007), 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

on “wit” or refined forms of jesting and playful sociability in city comedies.¹⁰⁷ However, what has not been noticed is the contentious nature of early modern definitions of “wit” – the way different conceptions of laughter compete and vie for dominance in the context of early modern theater. The “gentleman wit” is a neighbor to the socially less privileged “gallant” and both can easily slide into the category of the “buffoon,” which figures as the lowest form of abjection in courtly manuals like Baldassarre Castiglione’s *The Courtier* and George Puttenham’s *The Art of the English Poesy*.

Currently, the term “wit” is probably the dominant way through which scholars conceptualize the operations of laughter in city comedies. Thus, Michelle O’Callaghan’s book *The English Wits* focuses on the elite forms of conviviality and the mode of learned play associated with the Inns of Court culture. Reading the Inns of Court as a miniature civic society shaped by humanist models of an ideal commonwealth and classic forms of male sociability, O’Callaghan argues that this humanist ideal of learned play comes under increasing attack in late 1590s. O’Callaghan particularly focuses on the 1597-98 Middle Temple revels and shows how the ideal of a gentleman lawyer is compromised under the pressure of the metropolis and modes of aggressive male sociability. O’Callaghan argues: “The

¹⁰⁷ See Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy: A Study of Satiric Plays by Jonson, Marston, and Middleton* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1968); Jean Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); and Adam Zucker, *The Places of Wit in Early Modern English Comedy* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2011).

second half of the sixteenth century sees the transition from the concept of London as a ‘capital,’ which resides in a ‘centered, civic identity,’ in Vanessa Harding’s words, to that of the ‘polyfocal’ and expansive metropolis, represented by its populous streets.”¹⁰⁸

The O’Callaghan’s book *The English Wits* spurred a renewed critical interest in the Inns of Court culture and the idea of “wit” as a form of refined play associated with the humanist tradition. Adam Zucker has recently foregrounded the way in which Ben Jonson and other writers of city comedy privilege the quality of social adeptness or “wit” that allows their characters to accumulate cultural capital and thus transcend traditional barriers associated with class and social status. Contrary to O’Callaghan’s tendency to conceptualize “wit” as predominantly an intellectual capacity, Zucker argues that to be witty is intimately connected to the ability to exist in and manipulate the material environment of London. Discussing Jonson’s *Epicene*, Zucker argues that in this comedy to be witty is “not simply to speak well or act well, but to exist in a privileged relation to the spaces and materials of a given environment, a relation that in its outward bearings often obscures the basic fact that mundane spaces and materials make wit possible in the first place.”¹⁰⁹ His book, *The Places of Wit in Early Modern*

¹⁰⁸ Michelle O’Callaghan, *The English Wits: Literature and Sociability in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2007), 29.

¹⁰⁹ Zucker, 3. (See note 46 for complete citation).

English Comedy, is therefore organized according to various places in London and the way different characters of period drama define themselves in relation to these places. Finally, Amanda Bailey and Roze Hentschell's essay collection *Masculinity and the Metropolis of Vice* takes a different critical term "vice," but defines it strikingly similar to Zucker's conception of "wit": in their explanation, vice is a form of social adeptness, but with the connotation of being socially degraded, rather than simply "evil" or "immoral." Bailey and Hentschell state: "While immorality and wickedness still operated in the register of Christian judgment, vicious conduct involved a range of behaviors that troubled civic authorities."¹¹⁰ Instead of being simply 'a fault, defect, failing,' vice came to connote "an 'indulgence in degrading pleasures or practices'" that were particularly associated with the city.¹¹¹

What we see in this brief survey of criticism on "wit" is how the older idea of "gentlemanly wit," discussed by O'Callaghan -- based on the humanist ideal of elite knowledge and classical education -- slowly gives way to a different kind of "wit," which the pressure of the city made possible together with the figure of the "gallant." As we move towards the beginning of the seventeenth century, "wit" as defined by Zucker and Bailey and Hentschell, starts to look more like "laughter":

¹¹⁰ Amanda Bailey and Rose Hentschell, eds., *Masculinity and the Metropolis of Vice, 1550-1650*, (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 3.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

wit gets linked to the idea of physical pleasure, the material surroundings of London, and a mode of urban sociability. As wit becomes more physical, urban, and social, the very idea of emotion – of what laughter is and how it works – starts to change too. The next section outlines three figures of the gentleman wit, the gallant, and the buffoon, which I argue epitomize the competition between the older and the newer concepts of embodiment.

The Gentleman Wit, the Gallant, and the Buffoon

The early modern distinction between gentleman wit, gallant, and buffoon can clarify the different ideals of laughter in the period – the way in which the same physiological characteristics of laughter, ephemerality, embodiment, and superficial pleasure were given a different valuation in the context of theater. Public theater, the institution which catered to all kinds of people and put prestigious cultural goods on display, increasingly threatened to confuse social categories. In the letter to his son, Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland, an aristocrat and by all standards, an elite member of society, defines the unstable category of “gallant,” the middle term between the elite gentleman and the abject category of a buffoon:

[...] they be gallants that are delighted with the pretty contenments of this town, as with love of pleasures, I will not say whorings; or gay clothes, I dare not say wastings of their estates; or merry society, I dare not say

bitterness and jests to get the name of a wit [...]; or to see plays, which must not be named idleness.¹¹²

Percy wittily defines gallants through a series of negations, both praising and ironically undermining gallant occupations. Like Middleton (in the earlier quoted Epistle to *The Roaring Girl*), Percy conflates fashionable clothes, lechery, and indulgence in laughter, both to provoke it “to get the name of a wit” and to enjoy it idly by attending plays. His statement simultaneously attempts to denigrate gallants as common and really unsophisticated and to elevate his own status as the real wit, the standard by which the pretensions of gallants can be measured. In the period city comedy and cony-catching pamphlets, a gallant is often defined as a prodigal and as someone who overdoes typical gentlemanly occupations by trying to look like a real gentleman. Jonson’s city comedies famously satirize the pretensions of the like of Jack Daw, a character in Jonson’s *Epicene*, who attempts to look fashionable by flaunting an excess of literary knowledge, but who is made to look like a clown and a buffoon by the more knowledgeable characters in the play.

The gallant, as defined by period literature, is a new sort of gentleman: he comes to plays to learn the latest jokes, wears fashionable clothes, spends prodigally, and is a *flâneur* of sorts. Cony-catching literature and city comedy

¹¹² Henry Percy qtd. in *Plotting Early Modern London*, eds. Angela Stock and Anne-Julia Zwierlein (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004), 1.

popularly labeled this figure a “cony” because it is proverbially easy to cash in on the gallant’s aspirations to nobility and cheat him both of money and the hope of status. That is how Robert Greene’s cony-catchers deceive multiple would-be gallants – by enticing them to play dice and teaching them new tricks, which the gallants foolishly hope to use later on their own acquaintances; and that is how a treacherous city merchant Quomodo in Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term* deceives a fresh, young gentleman Easy who is eager to be a gallant in the city. In the latter instance, Quomodo, who hopes to take possession of the gentleman’s lands, instructs his servant Shortyard to proceed with Easy thus:

Observe, take surely note of him, he’s fresh and free;

Shift thyself speedily into the shape of gallantry;

I’ll swell thy purse with angels.

Keep foot by foot with him, out-dare his expenses,

Flatter, dice, and brothel to him;

Give him a sweet taste of sensuality;

...

Drink drunk with him, creep into bed to him,

Kiss him and undo him, my sweet spirit. (1.2.122-131)¹¹³

¹¹³ Thomas Middleton, *Michaelmas Term*, ed. Theodore B. Leinwand, *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007): 334-372. All subsequent references to *Michaelmas Term* in this chapter are to this edition and appear in brackets. Citations include act, scene, and line numbers.

Since Easy himself hopes to be a gallant, Quomodo cleverly advises his servant Shortyard to “shift thyself into the shape of gallantry” and thus epitomize everything that Easy hopes to be. The list of gallant occupations is typical in the speech: prodigal spending, playing dice, visiting brothels, and a prestigious association with other city gallants, most prominently Shortyard who is instructed to be friends with Easy and “creed into bed to him.” The elite community of gentleman wits, discussed by O’Callaghan, takes a very different shape in this city comedy, which portrays a shadow of learned humanist friendship as it is reflected in the relationship of city gallants.

The important difference between humanist vision of laughter and gallant laughter is their different attitude to laughter’s sensuality. If in humanist discussions of laughter, laughter’s bodily pleasure is merely a useful topping with which to grace one’s learning and please one’s audience, in gallant’s hands, laughter’s sensuality is aligned with other wasteful vices of the city. So, Quomodo instructs Shortyard to train Easy to “every wasteful sin” and in the key scene, which records Easy’s loss of patrimony, Shortyard accordingly teaches Easy how to be a gallant and how to laugh. When Easy refuses to continue playing dice because he has no money, Shortyard instead directs him to care most about his “reputation” (1.3.42). He elaborates thus:

Master Easy, let a man bear himself portly, the whoresons will creep to him
o’their bellies, and their wives o’their backs; there’s a kind of bold grace
expected throughout all the parts of a gentleman. Then, for your

observances, a man must not so much as spit but within line and fashion.

(2.1.103-108)

Although Easy is by birth a landed gentleman, he must be re-trained into a city gallant and that is what Shortyard is trying to do in the scene – he advises Easy that a gentleman in the city “must not so much as spit but within line and fashion” and the same goes for laughter. After all the gallants, including Easy, lose their money to Lethe, an upstart gentleman, Shortyard instructs Easy to laugh at those gallants who bewail their financial losses. Rearage, one of the losers, complains: “Forgive me, my posterity yet ungotten!” and “Few know the sweets that the plain life allows; / Vild son that surfeits of his father’s brows!” In response, Shortyard commands Easy: “Laugh at him, Master Easy” and Easy replies with “Hah, hah, hah!” (2.1.137-142). Just as Shortyard asks Easy to redirect his bodily functions of spitting and pissing (II.i.93-95) in accord with the gallant’s concern with reputation, so he asks him to laugh only in socially opportune moments. Easy’s laughter is meant to signify his superiority over such mundane things as money lost in gambling, when in fact, Easy is of course really distressed and hurt by his losses. Easy’s laughter is that of a gallant because it is pure pretense, with no basis of learning, wealth, or community behind his laughter. Put differently, however, the figure of the gallant is comprised of a different affect theory than the one upheld by the cultural stress on temperance and moderation of emotions. Easy’s laughter is a form of judgment and taste, which separates the refined section of society from the more vulgar and unrefined members.

Even while city comedies like Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* ostensibly condemn gallants in the familiar terms as being prodigal and intemperate, their gallant figures testify to a growing cultural fascination with the idea that emotions can be instrumental and powerful in their own right, without any recourse to orthodox accounts of reason or virtue. Both the stage, with its clowns and buffoons, and the printing press, with its cheap pamphlets, made evident a striking paradox of early modern culture: even though excessive emotion or pleasure in the obscene and vulgar was widely condemned, these institutions provided positive reinforcement for evoking audience pleasure. The gallant figure is allied to the mechanisms of theatrical imposture and endless repetition, suggested by the printing press and the ease with which a gallant can "reproduce" coveted cultural behaviors. In this context, laughter becomes a socially polished skill, with which a gallant distinguishes himself from his inferiors and uses it as an instrument to mask his lack of learning or wealth.

If laughter becomes a form of learned behavior, then the gentleman wit is always haunted by the idea that he himself is a fake or could possibly degenerate into one. The thin boundary separating a true wit from a mere impostor is evident, for instance, from George Puttenham's advice to courtiers in his handbook on poetry *The Art of English Poesy* (1589). Puttenham's theory of poetry is generally governed by the idea of social decorum, as his aesthetic theory seamlessly blends into a discussion of what is proper and socially expected. So, in reference to using laughter, Puttenham believes that a courtier should generally refrain from evoking

laughter because the origin of all laughter ultimately consists in the breaking of decorum. Discussing “vicious manners of speech,” such as substituting one word for another or breaking the proper order of a sentence, Puttenham identifies these linguistic/social deviations as the origin of laughter: they are tolerable only when “the intent [is] to mooue laughter, and to make sport, or to giue it some prety strange grace.”¹¹⁴ Generally, however, a courtier should refrain from these linguistic vices, which draw their force from double meaning and involve bawdy implications:

this vice is called by the Greekes *Cacemphaton*, we call it the vnshamefast or figure of foule speech, which our courtly maker shall in any case shunne, least of a Poet he become a Buffon or rayling companion, the Latins called him *Scurra*.¹¹⁵

Puttenham warns the courtier that by violating the norms of decorum he may move laughter, but he also risks degenerating into a “Buffoon” or in its Latin etymology, *Scurra*. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines “buffoon,” quoting Samuel Johnson, as “a man whose profession is to make sport by low jests and antick

¹¹⁴ George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, Chapter 3.22, p. 212.
<http://web.archive.org/web/20081012044941/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PutPoes.html> (accessed May 4, 2015).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

postures,”¹¹⁶ but besides the professional “buffoon,” the word was popularly applied as a term of abuse to a whole class of people who acted like buffoons and degraded themselves with their attempts to evoke laughter from others. Thus, in this second sense, the OED gives the following examples: “Avoid the playing of the Buffone, and procuring of others laughter, (an excerpt from John Healey’s translation of *Epictetus manual*) and “Age was authoritie Against a buffon: and a man had, then, A certaine reuerence pai’d vnto his yeeres,” the lines in Ben Jonson’s comic satire, *Every Man in his Humor*.¹¹⁷ Tellingly, the two OED examples criticizing buffoons are from a piece of Stoic philosophy and a humanist comedy. George Puttenham’s above warning that a courtier should avoid degrading himself into “a Buffoon or rayling companion” is likewise based on classic humanist texts, especially Cicero and Quintilian who warned that an ideal orator should refrain from becoming a “buffoon.” And yet, after outlining his qualms about laughter in a courtly situation, Puttenham admits that sometimes a courtier is allowed to resort to vicious or obscene language: as “when some occasion is giuen by the hearer to induce such a pleasaunt speach, and in many other cases whereof no generall rule can be given.”¹¹⁸ The vagueness of

¹¹⁶ "buffoon, n.", 2.a. OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/24337?rskey=HfJA29&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed May 04, 2015).

¹¹⁷ Ibid., "buffoon, n.", 3.

¹¹⁸ Puttenham, Chapter 3.23, p. 224. For complete citation, see note 53 in this chapter.

Puttenham's rules – indeed, they degenerate into a list of examples – testifies to his exceptional sensitivity to social situation. A courtier is allowed to laugh in certain situations, when his laughter helps to diffuse social tension, present a courtier in favorable light, or when some other social ingredient transforms such buffoonish efforts into a sign of power and wit on courtier's behalf.

To summarize, a courtier's laughter is very similar to that of a gallant – it is also necessarily a form of social pretense, but whereas in the case of a gallant, superior laughter is all there is, for courtier, laughter is only a temporary deviation into the world of the ridiculous and indecent, as it is allowed by social circumstances. A gallant is a pretender and a man of the street; a courtier is supposedly a real gentleman and he seeks favor in the court. Finally, a clown or buffoon was the figure most connected to the production of laughter on early modern stage, but he was also often shunned precisely because of his emphatic connection to the body and the pleasure of laughter. Becoming a buffoon figures as one of the worst forms of degradation for a courtier, and writers hostile to the novelty of a "gallant" likewise conflate his gentlemanly pretensions in the city with stage clowning. Because much of clown's humor was non-verbal and improvisational (physical comedy, dancing, direct conversation with the audience), we often learn about stage clowns from their negative portrayals in the more privileged texts of the period. In a voice similar to Puttenham's, Baldassarre Castiglione warns his courtier that his jokes should not become too bodily or obscene and that he should avoid moments of physical comedy. He lists some of the "bad" clown-like routines that some courtiers would do in the hope of raising laughter:

they often push one another downstairs, deal each other blows with sticks and bricks, throw fistfuls of dust in one another's eyes, cause their horses to roll one on the other in ditches or downhill; then at table they throw soups, gravies, jellies, and every kind of thing in one another's face: and then they laugh.¹¹⁹

This kind of behavior—throwing pies, sexual jokes, and comic fighting and wrestling—were typical clown routines on the early modern stage. Evidently, they were very funny and had a great success among large audience. Both Ben Jonson and Philip Sidney inveigh against loud audience laughter in connection with physical/obscene comedy on stage. In the Prologue to *Volpone*, Jonson writes,

Yet thus much I can give you as a token
Of his play's worth, no eggs are broken.
No fierce cuftards with fierce teeth affrighted
Wherewith your rout are so delighted. (18-22)¹²⁰

Calling the audience “a rout,” a denigrating term for a crowd and for a pack of animals, Jonson imagines the physical pleasure of laughter turning the audience into a beast. He refers to breaking eggs and jumping into a pie – clown routines that for Jonson represent the descent into unmediated bodily pleasure and

¹¹⁹ Baldassarre Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. Daniel Javitch, trans. Charles Singleton (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2002), 97.

¹²⁰ Ben Jonson, Prologue to *Volpone, or the Fox*, *Ben Jonson's Plays and Masques*, ed. Richard Harp (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2000): 3-110.

characteristic of the most unrefined kind of audiences. Likewise, in *An Apology for Poetry*, Sidney specifically criticizes comedies that evoke laughter based on “wanton sinfulness and lustful love,” “scurrility unworthy of any chaste years” and an “extreme show of doltishness.”¹²¹ “Scurrility,” as Puttenham’s etymology demonstrates, is practically always linked to *Scurra* or buffoons and clowns on stage. Stage clowns Richard Tarlton (d. 1588) and William Kempe (1560-1603) gained nationwide popularity over the course of the sixteenth century. Laughter was clearly something that most early moderns valued and found a pleasure in. Characters in early modern plays still routinely resort to the common justification of laughter as a curative passion that helps dispel melancholy and revives one’s health. So in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, Graziano proclaims that he will rather laugh than be sad: “With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come, / And let my liver rather heat with wine / Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.” (1.1.83-86).¹²² However, in the period between, roughly 1590 and 1610, the bodily pleasure of laughter becomes increasingly connected to the pleasure of the streets and pervading commercialism. In this new context, laughter is justified not so much as a healthy recreation as a distinctly modern emotion: one needs to

¹²¹ Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*, 3rd ed., ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, rev. R. W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 112.

¹²² *The Merchant of Venice*, Stephen Greenblatt et al., eds., *The Norton Shakespeare based on the Oxford edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008): 1111-1176.

laugh and evoke laughter in others, if the person wants to advance in court, prove himself a gallant on the streets, or generally, show oneself acquainted with popular forms of sociability. Theater in this context often appears as a fashionable, though common, accessory; its laughter is idle, urban, and really unnecessary, but it could be usefully utilized in a number of settings. The three figures of the gentleman wit, the gallant, and the buffoon always threaten to collapse into each other, even as they still articulate competing theories of affect: Can evoking audience laughter be a sufficient goal onto itself? Even as the traditional answer to this question is negative, the success of gallant's impostures and buffoon's street popularity show how the affective framework governing laughter begins to loosen and new ideals of mind/body relation come into play.

Laughter in the “New” Globe

I would like to end this chapter with Thomas Dekker's mock-guide for gallants, *The Gull's Hornbook*, which in my view exemplifies the period's complex attitude to laughter as a concession to the times. Although written as a mock guide on how (not) to be a gallant, *The Gull's Hornbook* has a confusing variety of perspectives that both valorize the necessity of theatrical laughter and lament it as such. Contrary to its reputation as just a mock guide for gallants, one purpose of Dekker's book is to lament the current degradation and the falling away of the “old” London. Strikingly similar to the nostalgic sentiment in John Stowe's *Survey of London*, Dekker starts his guide with a scathing lament for the city that

is no more. In his section on the rich apparel and overly refined food that a mock-gallant is supposed to practice, Dekker perversely laments the necessity of his own advice:

What an excellent workman therefore were he, that would cast the Globe of it into a new mould: and not to make it look like a Mullineux his globe, with a round face sleeked and washed over with whites of eggs; but to have it *in plano*, as it was at first, with all the ancient circles, lines, parallels, and figures; representing indeed all the wrinkles, cracks, crevices, and flaws that... stuck upon it at the first creation and made it look more lovely: but now those furrows are filled up with ceruse and vermillion; yet all will not do, it appears more ugly.¹²³

In this striking passage, Dekker conflates the new cosmography represented in Emery Mollyneux's, or "Mullineux" globe, with newfound vices in London. Mollyneux was a period maker of terrestrial and celestial globes and other mathematical instruments; he became famous for making the first globe in England and he is mentioned in Richard Haklyut's *Principal Navigations*. Strikingly, in Dekker's lines above, Mollyneux's globe symbolizes both the new cosmography and the lavish degradation of the times. In contrast to "Mullineux his globe, with a round face sleeked and washed over with whites of eggs," Dekker evinces a desire for an old world,

¹²³ Thomas Dekker, *The Gull's Hornbook*, ed. R. B. McKerrow (London: De La More Press, 1904), 17.

emblemized in a flat old map, which preserves “all the wrinkles, cracks, crevices, and flaws.” The “Globe” in Dekker’s formulation is a reference to the world and to the “comic theater” in which he imagines himself writing. In her study of the supernatural cartography of early modern stage, Kristen Poole notes the double significance of the Globe as a terrestrial object and a cosmographic indicator: “To name a theater ‘The Globe’ ... is an act which deliberately locates the edifice within the sixteenth-century impulse to map.”¹²⁴ Indeed, in Dekker’s metonymic formulation, the round space of the theater *The Globe* becomes symbolic of Mollyneux’s new cosmography and the necessity of theatrical laughter. It becomes evident in the later pages of *The Gull’s Hornbook*, that Dekker perceives the bodily pleasure of laughter together with other pleasures, such as excessive culinary delights expressed in “a round face sleeked and washed over with whites of eggs,” artificial face paints such as “ceruse and vermillion,” sleeping until noon, parading new fashions in theater, and walking about the town. Dekker’s very act of writing the guide is an act of laughter in the new “Globe” and he perversely advises his gallant to laugh too because doing so is the only possible way of functioning in the new world. Like other writers from the period, Dekker identifies the new laughter with new modes of urban sociability, modes that are degrading, but are increasingly seen as necessary and fashionable.

¹²⁴ Kristen Poole, *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare’s England: Spaces of Demonism, Divinity, and Drama* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2.

Laughter is central to Dekker's vision of the new world, and he opens his mock guide to the new city with the defiant resolution, "I sing, like the cuckoo in June, to be laughed at."¹²⁵ Laughter in this case is less a preferred mode of writing than a necessity that is imposed by the times. Dekker explains that by adopting a comic mode he is playing right into the current mode of social pretension: being a clown in order to earn more social prestige. Addressing his hypothetical readers, Dekker instructs them thus:

I conjure you, as you come of the right goose-caps, stain not your house; but when at a new play you take up the twelvepenny room next the stage, because the lords and you may seem to be hail-fellow-well-met, there draw forth this book, read aloud, laugh aloud, and play the antics, that all the garlic-mouthed stinkards may cry out: 'Away with the fool!'¹²⁶

Dekker describes the new laughter in the same category as donning a new suit, so everybody in the theater will notice you, or sitting in the twelvepenny room in order to affiliate oneself with the lords. This put-on laughter is, however, more than a clever tactic, it is also a mode of self-degradation. On one hand, it allows the gallant to distance himself from the people of lower social class, emblematically remembered as "all the garlic-mouthed stinkards," but on the other, the act of laughter also foolishly transforms the gallant into a "Will Sommer" or a stage clown who resorts to laughter

¹²⁵ Dekker, 7. For complete citation, see note 124.

¹²⁶ Dekker, 9.

to make himself noted and liked. Similar to the way laughter works in Dekker's *Gull's Hornbook*, laughter in early modern theatres often signifies a particularly modern consciousness: being in tune with the times and partaking of its contemporary pleasures. Thus, towards the end of the sixteenth-century, laughter starts to lose the associations of vitality and bodily health that we find in the earlier texts as its meaning gets reassigned to the figure of the gallant and various modes of urban sociability.

Chapter 3

CHEAP LABOR AND EPHEMERAL EMOTION: ROBERT GREENE'S CONY-CATCHING PAMPHLETS AND THOMAS MIDDLETON'S *A MAD WORLD, MY MASTERS*

In *Foure Letters and certaine Sonnets* (1592), one of the installments in the pamphlet wars between the university wits – Gabriel Harvey, Robert Greene, and Thomas Nashe – Harvey seeks to besmear the memory of Thomas Greene (who died earlier that year) by heaping on him a list of insults:

who in London hath not heard of his dissolute, and licentious liuing; his fonde disguisinge of a Master of Arte with ruffianly haire, vnseemely apparell, and more vnseemelye company: his vainglorious and Thrasonick brauinge: his piperly Extemporizing, and Tarletonizing: his apish counterfeiting of euery ridiculous, and absurd toy: [...]; his impudent pamphletting, phantasticall interluding, and desperate libelling, when other coosening shifts failed[.]¹²⁷

In this display of railing rhetoric, Harvey accuses Greene by living a “dissolute” lifestyle and importantly, portrays his writing for the stage and the printing press

¹²⁷ Gabriel Harvey qtd. in Charles Crupi, *Robert Greene*, Twayne's English Authors Series (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 10-11.

(“impudent pamphletting, phantasticall interluding, and desperate libelling”) as a natural extension of Greene’s attempts to deceive and impress — a “coosening shift,” or a deceptive trick meant to impress and take advantage of the unwary public. In addition to his evocation of the image of a trickster or petty criminal, Harvey also portrays Greene as a popular clown. Greene’s self-degradation and his unashamed attempts to appeal to the popular taste remind Harvey of the practices of a stage clown — his extempore performance, his rustic pipe, and his wide popularity epitomized by the Elizabethan clown Richard Tarlton. Thus, Robert Greene, a popular playwright and a pamphleteer, is transformed into a clown and a cony-catcher.

Besides Harvey’s railing against Greene’s success as the first professional writer in England — popular and therefore despicable — the connection between degraded authorship and clowning is vividly dramatized in contemporary city comedy where the plays’ main protagonists appear both in the role of prodigal urban tricksters and beloved audience entertainers. For instance, between 1604 and 1606, the Paul’s boys performed a series of Thomas Middleton’s city comedies, *Michaelmas Term* (1604), *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1605-06), and *A Mad World, My Masters* (1606).¹²⁸ All three comedies tell stories of daring deceptions undertaken by enterprising “new” men and women on the more traditional members of society. A young nephew denied his inheritance, a sly greedy merchant, and an enterprising

¹²⁸ For editions of these plays, see *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford UP, 2007).

courtesan looking for a rich suitor – the characters of Middleton’s city comedies are remarkably similar to Robert Greene in Harvey’s earlier description. They are all cony-catchers, as early moderns would have understood this term: plotters and intriguers set out to catch a “cony,” literally, a rabbit, but more generally, a naïve or gullible person.¹²⁹ But more importantly, they are also comedians – people like Greene who entertain the public to their own discredit. The comic criminality in these city comedies often seems author-sponsored, so to speak, since the city comedy’s cony-catchers – Ben Jonson’s alchemist Subtle in *The Alchemist* or Mosca in *Volpone*, for instance – often assume disproportionate control of the play and seem both master-minds of their plots and audience’s chief entertainers.

This chapter explores the intersections of authorship with the comic and criminal in Robert Greene’s cony-catching pamphlets and Jacobean city comedy. Greene’s series of popular cony-catching pamphlets, published between 1591 and 1592, are often treated as a source for satiric city comedy, plays by Thomas Middleton, Ben Jonson, and John Marston, which likewise focus on daring deceptions of young, often marginal, members of society and present their crimes in comic light. Rather than viewing Greene’s popular pamphlets as a “source” for drama or a successful attempt on behalf of Greene to navigate the realities of print market, I see a

¹²⁹ On period understanding of cony-catching, see "coney-catch, v.". OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/40916?redirectedFrom=cony+catch> (accessed May 05, 2015).

common concern with “cony-catching” that emerges both in Greene’s authorial strategies and city comedy’s meta-theatrical moments. Greene’s adaptation of his authorial persona from his first cony-catching pamphlet, *A Notable Discovery* (1591), to his last, *The Black Bookes Messenger* (1592) provides, I argue, a unifying lens through which to view “degraded” authorship typical of writers of marginal forms of media. These marginal forms of media includes Robert Greene’s pamphleteering, but it also includes Thomas Middleton’s city comedy, stage clowns, and anyone whose “creative” endeavors ran the risk of being labeled a form of “cony-catching”: deception of the public in order to make a profit. From assuming the pose of a humanist educator revealing social evils in the first pamphlet, Robert Greene moved in the space of five pamphlets closer to the persona of a clown or a public entertainer whose self-presentation is a shared joke between the audience and the writer. “R. Greene, Maifter of Arts” (title page of the first pamphlet, *A Notable Discovery*), then “R. G.” (the next four pamphlets) and finally, named cony-catchers Ned Browne, Laurence, and Cuthbert Conny-Catcher – criminals whose names and biographies appear as organizing principles of Greene’s later pamphlets and compete with author’s waning identity.¹³⁰ The transformation of authorial persona, which I trace through

¹³⁰ For title pages of Greene’s pamphlets, see the following series, which contain facsimile reproductions of the original title pages: Robert Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage. The Second Part of Conny-Catching*, ed. G. B. Harrison, Elizabethan and Jacobean Quartos (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966); Greene, *The Thirde & Last Part of Conny-Catching. A dispytation betweene a hee conny-catcher and a shee conny-catcher*, ed. G. B. Harrison, Elizabethan and Jacobean Quartos (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966); Greene, *The Blacke Bookes Messenger. The Defense of*

Greene's series of cony-catching pamphlets, in many ways mimics the conflict between the "degraded" status of early modern theater as a commercial endeavor and the "noble" humanist ideals of theater as an educational, enlightening institution. Greene's cony-catching pamphlets thus show the affinity between the figure of the cony-catcher/clown and writers of the marginal/commercial forms of media.

My previous chapter argued that early modern laughter was considered an ephemeral, intensely physical form of pleasure that resonated with the physicality of early modern theater as a medium and posed a problem for period humoral, classical, and Christian ideals of bodily restraint and self-control. This chapter extends this argument by showing how laughter was not only ephemeral and physically contagious, but it was also consistently associated with commercialism and other uncontrollable forms of dissemination like the printing press and the "common" stage. An ephemeral and popular emotion, laughter was likewise linked to ephemeral and degraded forms of publication, pamphlet and popular performance, in which it most readily expressed itself. Just as early modern pamphlets were inextricably linked to humor and "low" entertainment (in Martin Marprelate pamphlets and in Robert Greene's cony-catching pamphlets, among others), so the stage was frequently seen as

Conny-catching, ed. G. B. Harrison, Elizabethan and Jacobean Quartos (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966). All references to Greene's pamphlets are to these editions. Subsequent references will be shortened and include only the title and the page number.

essentially a comic device – one that both degraded and made things laughable/common. In *The Gulls Hornbook*, a mock guide to being a gallant, Thomas Dekker calls the pamphlet “our comic theater” and defiantly declares that he writes/sings “like the cuckoo in June, to be laughed at.”¹³¹ This moment of comic defiance – “I write in order to be laughed at” – I argue, often structures the act of writing a pamphlet or a play in the period. There is, in other words, a convergence between the discourse of comic entertainment and that of degraded/marginal authorship. When Thomas Middleton, a popular playwright writing in early 1600s, adapted Greene’s very popular pamphlets about the underworld of London into his city comedies, he was undoubtedly cashing in on something popular and trying to extend the success of Greene’s stories by using them in one more media. However, Middleton’s act of adaptation shows more than the symbiotic relationship between early modern printing and performance — it also shows how the discourse of the comic helped writers understand their relationship to the audience and tap into emotional effects, such as laughter, that were considered merely marginal to the overall purpose of art.

Scholars like Richard Helgerson and Alexandra Halasz have explored the contradictions of authorship in the context of the anonymity of print and the lofty humanist ideals of the author as someone who serves as a public voice and a servant to

¹³¹ Thomas Dekker, *The Gull’s Hornbook*, ed. R. B. McKerrow (London: De La More Press, 1904), 7.

the state.¹³² Relying on Helgerson's analysis of university wits as "prodigal sons" in relation to the humanist idea of civic humanism, Katharine Wilson explored how career of Robert Greene is structured by the rhetoric of "repentance," a prodigal author re-considering his youthful folly and turning it into "profit" for the readers. Wilson warns, however, that Greene's repentance has less to do with his re-evaluation of moral ideals than with his re-evaluation of romance, a popular genre that is fueled partly by authorial "folly."¹³³ In her book, Wilson surveys different forms of "debut" authorship crafted by writers of popular fiction in their attempt to recruit more and different kind of readers and re-negotiate the terms by which their fiction is consumed. This chapter focuses on one of Wilson's assertions – the fact that the persona of a popular author is "always close to that of the fool" and that authorial "folly" is, in fact, one of the structuring moments in the new kind of authorial persona.¹³⁴ Although scholars have commented on the predicaments of writing a pamphlet or the competing cultural demands imposed on early modern theater, what has been less noted is the enduring link between these forms of media and the figure of the clown/cony-catcher as one image that condenses the media's tendencies to uncontrollable dissemination

¹³² See Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates: Spenser, Jonson, Milton and the Literary System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1997).

¹³³ Katharine Wilson, *Fictions of Authorship in Late Elizabethan Narratives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 13-15.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

and emotional trespass. Just like “jester” or “clown” were understood as debased terms in early modern culture, theater and pamphlets were often regarded as a form of debasement or prostitution, which caters to the popular and, as the comic, delivers an undue amount of audience pleasure. Despite or rather precisely because of their popularity, stage clowns like Richard Tarlton carried with them a negative association of being liked by many and perhaps too much.

In the first book to consider the common space between media and the structure of emotion, Maria Prendergast explored the rhetoric of “railing” as specifically characteristic of the genre of pamphlets and the medium of theater. She argues that both theater and pamphlet construct “third spaces,” spaces that are free to experiment with gender, sexuality, and social norms in a way that is not possible for other forms.¹³⁵ Prendergast continues that “once we see plays and pamphlets of this period as in some measure versions of each other,” with the same audiences buying a pamphlet and going to a play, it will be possible for us to understand why Martin Marprelate pamphlets first appeared in print and then easily transferred to stage, or why, in the case of this chapter, Thomas Greene’s cony-catching pamphlets were first “cheap print” and then city comedy.¹³⁶ Prendergast’s emphasis on “railing,” an especially elaborate, passionate form of personal insult, clarifies the emotional

¹³⁵ Maria Teresa Micaela Prendergast, *Railing, Reviling, and Invective in English Literary Culture, 1588-1617: The Anti-Poetics of Theater and Print* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 10.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

displays that were shunned in the more traditional – humanist, classical, and Christian - discourses of art, but easily attached themselves to the more ephemeral forms of publication like the pamphlet and the theater. What both pamphlet writers and playwrights understood was that contagious emotion “sells” and laughter, only a marginal passion in the early modern hierarchy of emotional effects, can be the key ingredient in publication and performance success.¹³⁷

Author as Clown in Greene’s pamphlets

In 1591-92, Robert Greene published a series of cony-catching pamphlets about London criminals cleverly outwitting naïve honest London citizens, but he framed his comic stories as moralistic “discoveries” of true crime and a patriotic service to the English nation. On his part, Thomas Middleton wrote a series of city comedies for Paul’s boys – *Michaelmas Term*, *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, and *A Mad World, My Masters* – that were in part based on Greene’s earlier pamphlets and likewise presented stories of daring London criminals devising elaborate schemes to deceive naïve London citizens. Neither Greene nor Middleton could legitimately advertise the fun to be derived from reading stories about especially notable

¹³⁷ See Reid Barbour book *Deciphering Elizabethan Fiction*, where he discusses Robert Greene’s strategies for managing narrative “*copia*” and Greene’s enjoyment in the extreme “dilation” of discourse. Reid Barbour, *Deciphering Elizabethan Fiction* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1993). Rephrasing Barbour’s terms, I would say that Greene’s “dilation” of discourse corresponds to his reframing of the pamphlets’ affective framework.

deceptions or clever and ingenuous ways to cony-catch others. What their texts show are various ways to re-position audience/writer relationship in view of the clear criminal identity of the stories and the increasing difficulty of defending the author's typical role as a guide and a teacher. The two writers replace the stability of humanists texts with the contagiousness of emotion, moving their readers both to emotional excess and profligate spending. The trend towards clowning is especially evident in Greene's series of cony-catching pamphlets because one can see a clear progression of the author figure from the first pamphlet, where the author is presented as a humanist teacher, and towards the last one, where the distinction between author and character-cony-catcher seems to merge.

Greene's cony-catching pamphlets were small cheap books, printed towards the end of sixteenth century that claimed to discover the art of rogues and other underworld villains to an unsuspecting and unwary public. In the period "to catch a cony" or "cony-catch" meant to deceive a gullible person or "cony"; as a term, "cony-catching" was first used by Greene in his very popular pamphlet, *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage* (1591) in which he narrated different ways that criminals use to deceive innocent people and swindle them of money. At the time of the first publication Greene used "Cunny catching" as an instance of a particular method of deception, "a deceit at Cardes,"¹³⁸ but by the time he published *A Second Part of Cony-Catching*

¹³⁸ Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage*, 9. For complete citation of this text, see note 4 in this chapter.

(1591), within a year of the first publication, he used the term “Conny-catching” more generally to include all kinds of deceit and manipulation practiced by the infamous criminals.¹³⁹ Generally, cony-catching pamphlets portray the cony-catchers as a highly specialized group of people with complex hierarchies of masters and apprentices that mirrors the structure of a guild; cony-catchers are also composed of secret organizations with a specialized vocabulary or “cant” and intimate bonds of fellowship that connect all members of the group to each other; finally, they are vagabonds and people without a specific occupation whose goal is to avoid “honest” labor and earn money by practicing their art of cony-catching, a complex set of tricks and devices, on the unsuspecting public. In the preface to *The Second Part*, Greene introduces cony-catchers in the fashion characteristic of the genre:

But gentlemen these Conny-catchers, these vultures, these fatall Harpies, that putrifie with their infections, this flourishing estate of England, as if they had their consciences sealed with a hot iron, & that as men deliuered up into a reprobate sence, grace were vtterly were exild from their harts; so with the deafe Adder they not only stop their eares against the voice of the charmer, but dissolutely without any sparke of remorse stand upon their brauados, and openly in words & actions maintain their palpable and manifest coosenages,

¹³⁹ The title page of Greene, *The Second and Last Part of Conny-catching*. (For complete citation of this text, see note 4 in this chapter.) Greene spells the word “cony-catching” in several different ways throughout the pamphlets. I preserve the original spelling in quotes, but I simply use the term “cony-catching” when referring to the practice myself.

swearing by no less than their enemies bloud, even by God him selfe, that they will make a massacre of his bones, and cut off my right hand for penning downe their abhominable practises.¹⁴⁰

Thanks to his sensational rhetoric and the abundance of invective, Greene is instrumental in promoting cony-catchers' legendary status as super-villains who are secret, highly organized, and always plotting to deceive the everyman. Greene's railing, like his comic, is very much preoccupied with the style of abuse and brings the writer's enjoyment in the language to the forefront. In her study of "railing" literature, Prendergast concludes, "The seductively scurrilous language seems to have absorbed late Elizabethan/early Jacobean cultural anxieties and turned them into a fascinating, sensationalist literature of pleasure."¹⁴¹ Insofar as Greene is using "railing" language to condemn the cony-catchers, he accomplishes a twofold goal: on one hand, he distances himself from their crimes and on the other, he intensifies the readers' enjoyment in the elaborate condemnation.

A typical cony-catching story, "A Tale of a Nip" from Greene's *Second Part of Cony-Catching* (1592) demonstrates the authorial difficulty in claiming the story as "educational," rather than a form of "cheap" entertainment with laughter as the main effect. The pamphlet, a sequel to the very popular *A Notable Discovery* (1591), opens with the author's truly epic condemnation of the cony-catchers, but then follows it

¹⁴⁰ Greene, *The Second Part*, 6.

¹⁴¹ Prendergast, 1.

with a joke. “A Tale of a Nip” tells “a pleasant tale of a most singuler experienced and approued Nip [cutpurse in cony-catchers’ jargon]” and the way he and his apprentice stole a purse from a rich priest during a funeral. Greene portrays these nips as masters of their art and says, for example, that the nip’s apprentice learned from his master so well that he commanded his knife as “barber of a razor” and “being of a prompt wit, knew his places, persons, and circumstances, as if he had been a moral philosopher.”¹⁴² After this praise, the story follows the pair’s theft and the subsequent dispute over the money. At first, the story builds an expectation that the master and the apprentice are going to quarrel or fight, but instead the story ends with a joke and reconciliation. In response to the master’s rage – “is not thy gettings my gaines?” he demands his apprentice – the apprentice says he can cancel his service to the master by getting himself caught and hanged at Tyburn.¹⁴³ At this, the master laughs and shares the spoils. Overall, the story is built as a joke about the master and his apprentice, with the punch line, the apprentice’s unexpected response, at the end. There is no clear moral, but there is a definite desire on the part of the author to impress the readers’ with the cony-catchers’ “art” and entertain them with a sense of the exotic and the fascinating. The adjectives such as “experienced” and “approued” validate the criminals’ skill and the authorial voice further advertises the fun to be derived from

¹⁴² Greene, *The Second Part of Conny-Catching*, 10.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

hearing what he calls “a merry Jigge” narrated.¹⁴⁴ Conflating the boundaries between a stage performance and a narrative exhibition, the narrator stresses the fun and wonder of getting know this “other” world of crime. Similar to the way exotic people and animals would be displayed on stage or in cabinets of curiosities, Greene delves close into the undercover mechanism of deception, showing how the pair of cutpurses expertly took the priest’s purse and then amiably shared the spoils. By showing that the master cutpurse shared in his spoils based on the apprentice’s clever joke, the narrative suggests that the laws of cleverness or “wit,” rather than profit, organize the cony-catchers’ world – their fellowship as “artists” prevails over their money-hungry motives of plunder and accumulation. The figure of the cony-catcher, I argue, is one that is close to Greene himself and that closeness is specifically related to the medium of the pamphlet.

Scholars have argued that Greene at least partly identifies with the figure of the cony-catcher, positioning the reader as the writer’s dupe. Writing in relation to Greene’s cony-catching pamphlets, Arthur F. Kinney argues that Greene is a “cony-catcher himself; and we are in turn teased into becoming conies by buying this book, tricked into thinking it was the exposé it proposed to be.”¹⁴⁵ Paul Yachnin makes a similar argument in relation to Thomas Middleton’s ‘cony-catching’ comedy *A Mad*

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴⁵ Arthur F. Kinney, *Rogues, Vagabonds & Sturdy Beggars* (Barre, Mass.: Imprint Society, 1973), 158.

World, My Masters (1606), where he writes that theatrical mirth is presented “as a confidence game in which the audience is the dupe.”¹⁴⁶ From a somewhat different angle, Linda Woodbridge sees comedy in cony-catching literature, such as Greene’s pamphlets (and we may add, Middleton’s city comedy), as a form of oppression: it presents marginal groups (that is, cony-catchers) in a comic light and turns their economic predicament into jokes about wily criminals and undeserving poor.¹⁴⁷ The glamorization of the cony-catchers’ life, Greene’s falsification of reality (no such secret group of criminals was found to exist, although tales of deceptions and theft exist), his conflicted attempt both to entertain and to educate have all been remarked, with scholars usually split on whether the writer has a subversive agenda and secretly sympathizes with the criminals, or aggravates serious social problems by writing about them in comic light. Thus, in *Becoming Criminal*, Bryan Reynolds seems captivated by what he calls the “transversal” potential of early modern criminals, which he argues, rubbed off on early modern theater and enabled its function as a conduit of transversal power, one that represents dissident views and ridicules traditional cultural norms.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Paul Yachnin, *Stage-Wrights: Shakespeare, Jonson, Middleton, and the Making of Theatrical Value* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 74.

¹⁴⁷ Linda Woodbridge, *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

¹⁴⁸ Bryan Reynolds, *Becoming Criminal: Transversal Performance and Cultural Dissidence in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002).

Moving away from the New Historicist emphasis on subversion vs. containment, a recent collection of criticism takes Woodbridge's assertion as a given (Greene's cony-catchers are imaginary constructions), but then moves on to focus less on the pamphlets' correspondence with historical reality and more on the way they represent powerful cultural fantasies of the period. For instance, Craig Dionne argues that the cony-catching characters facilitated the transition to capitalism for a class of English businessmen, while Steve Mentz sees the cony-catching pamphlets as guides for urban living that help their readers adapt to the complex environment of London. Thus Dionne emphasizes how "this image of outcast criminals" provided "a powerful fantasy for a group of businessmen and merchants" whose own economic practices were frequently regarded as suspect,¹⁴⁹ while Mentz explores how the cony-catching pamphlets allow "the addition of new tactics – including deception, disguise, and secret languages – to urban life."¹⁵⁰

Read differently, stories like the "Tale of a Nip," are not only broad representations of sixteenth-century global problems, but also the writer's attempt to re-fashion authorial persona and utilize different methods of emotional transmission than the ones traditionally advocated by early modern defenses of art. What Greene's

¹⁴⁹ Craig Dionne, "Fashioning Outlaws: The Early Modern Rogue and Urban Culture," *Rogues and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 40.

¹⁵⁰ Steve Mentz, "Magic Books: Cony-Catching and the Romance of Early Modern London," *Rogues and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 245-246.

narrator offers his readers is an education in cony-catching: he both makes the world of criminals seem fascinating and attractive and at the same time provides the “tools” (jargon, explanation of tricks) necessary to become one. The implicit education in the cony-catchers’ world is at the same time an extended re-making of the authorial persona. Although critics tend to discuss Greene’s pamphlets as one piece, what we witness from the first pamphlet to the last is a striking re-invention of the author from a railing martyr condemning social vices and towards an author-clown who, somewhat sadly, concludes, “By the way, (sith sorrow cannot help to saue me), let me tell you a mery ieast how once I crosse-bit a Maltman that would needes be wanton.”¹⁵¹ *The Blacke Bookes Messenger*, Greene’s last cony-catching pamphlet, from which the above quote is taken, is written from the point of view of Ned Browne, a famous criminal who supposedly decides to entertain his audiences with stories of his crimes after he had already been condemned to die. I see Greene’s cony-catching comedy as being specifically enabled by the marginal status of its media, the pamphlet, and the marginal people who fund its production – writers like Greene, a professional writer forced to sell his ware for a “groat.”¹⁵² Greene’s comedy, or more precisely, his new authorial persona as someone who takes open delight in cony-catching tricks, feeds the

¹⁵¹ Greene, *Blacke Bookes Messenger*, 7.

¹⁵² In *The Second Part of Conny-Catching*, Greene refers to his pamphlet being sold “for a groat” on p. 24.

production of his pamphlets and in effect, sponsors and patronizes further production of pamphlets.

“Comedy” is a very imprecise word to describe what Greene is doing in his pamphlets: a more accurate term would be “clowning” or “entertaining” because the latter terms do not pre-suppose that Greene makes the cony-catching stories purely funny. What Greene attempts to do both in his condemning prefaces and comic narratives is to present cony-catchers as super-villains who are both “wonderful” and “hellish,” and “wonderful” at least partly because they are so “hellish.” Greene’s preface to his third pamphlet illustrates this point: it is addressed “To all svch as have receiued either pleasure or profit by the two former published bookes of this Argument, and to all beside, that desire to know the wonderful slie deuises of this hellish crew of Cony-Catchers.”¹⁵³ Mixing “wonderful” with evil, what Greene intimates is that the criminal, underworld aspect of the cony-catchers identity is an essential part of their appeal. The end of this short address to the reader likewise ends with the writer’s promise that by reading this pamphlet the readers “shall see to what marueylous subtill pollicies these deceiuers haue atteyned, and how daylie they practise strange driftes for their purpose.”¹⁵⁴ Greene stresses “maruelous subtill policies” and “strange driftes” of his characters, clearly intending to inspire reader’s wonder at the exotic. Scholars conventionally oppose Greene’s didactic framework

¹⁵³ Greene, “The Epistle,” *The Thirde and Last Part of Conny-Catching*, 5.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

(the pretense of serving the country by “discovering” the crimes) to the entertainment implicit in his morally ambiguous stories of deception. But both parts work typically towards the same effect – that of presenting cony-catchers’ as wonderfully evil and *therefore* worthy of readers’ attention. The stress on wonderful and the exotic becomes more pronounced with further publications of Greene’s pamphlets. The second pamphlet makes huge advances over the first in that it adds an explicit stress on merriment on the title page: the second pamphlet advertises on its title page, “new additions containing many merry tales of all lawes worth the reading, becaufe they are worthy to be remembred.”¹⁵⁵ But lest we think that Greene’s “merry” refers to “funny,” the title promises the following, “Difcourfing fstrange cunning Coofnage, which if you reade wihout laughing, Ile giue you my cap for a Noble.” There are laughter, merriment, and we might say, comedy, but they stem from “strange cunning” – the author’s sleight of hand, which transforms stories of crime into tales to be wondered at.

The effect is strikingly similar to the “cony-catching” appeal of modern TV series like *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013), which describes a striking transformation of a high school chemistry teacher into a notorious drug dealer, or the movie *Catch Me if You Can* (2002), which glorifies a check forger and delves into the secrets of his art, adding in the end the F.B.I. actually hired the check forger to help them identify other

¹⁵⁵ Greene, *The Second and Last Part of Conny-Catching*, title page, n.p.

forgeries.¹⁵⁶ Just as these movies glorify the exceptional skill of modern criminals, Greene's pamphlets advertise the "subtiltie," the "strange driftes" and the wonderful "cunning" of his characters. The one important difference is Greene's inability to advertise his stories for their criminal allure. He therefore positions his stories as a work of "discovery" and education, a familiar humanist technique, which resists the context of his illicit subject. Thus, the opening of the first pamphlet has the didactic tone of a professor lecturing students on the nature of cony-catching: Greene writes, "There be requisit effectually to act the Art of Cony-catching thrée seuerall parties: the Setter, the Verser, and the Barnackle. The nature of the Setter, is to draw any person familiarly to drinke with him, which person they call the Conie, & their methode is according to the man they aime at [.]"¹⁵⁷ The narrator identifies the "parties," describes their "nature" and explains their "methode" of deception; the pamphlet also includes a list of criminal terms with the author's translation side by side, such as "High law" is "robbing by the highway side" and "sacking law" is the jargon for "lecherie."¹⁵⁸ But despite this seeming act of control over cony-catchers' practices, what Greene is doing is that he is partly trying to invent "cony-catchers" as such. Greene's readers are not burning with desire to have the cony-catchers revealed and

¹⁵⁶ *Catch Me if You Can* is a 2002 film directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Tom Hanks and Leonardo DiCaprio. *Breaking Bad* is a popular TV series that ran from 2008 to 2013, directed by Vince Gilligan and starring Bryan Cranston and Anna Gunn.

¹⁵⁷ Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage*, 17.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

executed (Greene claims, most are unaware that cony-catchers exist) – instead, readers have to be intimidated, seduced, and fascinated by cony-catchers as such. In short, readers have to be convinced that cony-catchers exist and Greene’s main challenge as a writer is not to reveal criminals’ true nature, but to give them an exciting and vibrant life.

Thus, the stress on the “comic” in Greene’s cony-catching pamphlets stems from the fact that the narrator wants to keep the readers’ fascination going – to spread it over more and more pamphlets, each time telling the readers that they are going to learn “new” and interesting things about cony-catchers which they did not know before. The collusion between “comedy” and serial publication is evident from the gigantic proportions the cony-catchers gradually assume in Greene’s pamphlets. They, the implicit patrons of his work, are fantastic and superhuman from the very beginning (*A Notable Discovery of Coosnage*), but as the pamphlets keep getting produced, the cony-catchers start to dominate the pamphlets and the stress on “pleasant,” “maruelous” and “wondrous” becomes more evident. If the first three pamphlets, *A Notable Discovery*, *The Second Part* and *The Thirde & Last Part*, are written with the narrator’s implicit praise of cony-catchers as super villains, the next three, *A Disputation between a Hee Conny-Catcher and a Shee Conny-Catcher*, *The Blacke Bookes Messenger* and *The Defence of Conny-Catching* are written from the point of

view of the cony-catchers themselves openly narrating their crimes.¹⁵⁹ The narrator's framework still exists (at least in *A Disputation* and *The Blacke Bookes Messenger*), but it is much weaker and less interesting, since the cony-catchers took away from Greene what he was trying to accomplish in other introductions: fascinate readers with cony-catchers as "wondrously" hellish. Evidently, the first three pamphlets were successful enough in giving cony-catchers' "life" that it only made sense to have them present their crimes from their own point of view in subsequent publications.

Most critics tend to discuss Greene's cony-catching pamphlets as one piece, but what we miss by skipping over the pamphlets' development is the radical innovation in pamphlets' emotional make-up that serialization/commercialization introduce. The stories themselves may be not strikingly original on their own terms (modern criticism asserted as much by not treating them as literature), but their originality lies in their accumulation – the fact of their repetition and the way they reveal a pronounced transformation of authorial persona under the pressure of publication and commercialism of the pamphlet market. They show that audience emotion is itself something mechanical and reproducible, more allied to the technology of the printing press than to the waves of the ocean and the currents of

¹⁵⁹ *The Defence of Conny-Catching* was published anonymously and it has not been established whether the pamphlet is by Greene. The title, however, responds to the preceding cony-catching pamphlets by Greene and it assumes the voice of a fictional character "Cuthbert cony-catcher" who responds to Greene's accusations in the earlier pamphlets. Even though framed as a rebuttal to Greene's writing, *The Defence* slyly testifies to the effectiveness and popularity of Greene's earlier pamphlets.

wind (the way passions are typically represented in emblem books). The reproduction of the pamphlets feeds the idea that emotions themselves are reproducible – a marked departure from emotions being a part of the body and intimately related to the stuff of the outside world.

The publication of the Greene's cony-catching pamphlets is both a story in commercial success and an education in a new affective framework. Greene published five pamphlets (six, if one counts the anonymous *Defence*) within the space of two years: *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage* (1591) is entered into Stationer's Register (S. R.) on 13 Dec 1591 and it now exists in four editions, with the date 1591 on all four. Given the number of editions, we can assume that the pamphlet was a popular success.¹⁶⁰ The sequel *The Second and Last Part of Conny-Catching* (S. R. on 13 December 1591) is actually entered on the same date as the first pamphlet and exists in two versions. Evidently, Greene originally intended to have only two pamphlets because the first 1591 edition is entitled *The Second and Last Part of Conny-Catching*, while the second 1592 edition drops the "last" and is simply called *The Second Part of Conny-Catching*. The other three pamphlets are all published within a year of the first publication: after Dec. 13 1591, we have *The Thirde & Last Part of Conny-Catching* (S. R. 7 Feb 1592), the anonymous *Defence of Conny-Catching* (S. R. 21 April 1592),

¹⁶⁰ The information in this paragraph – the dates of publication for Greene's pamphlets – is based on A. F. Allison, *Robert Greene, 1558-1592: A Bibliographical Catalogue of the Early Editions in English* (To 1640), (Folkestone, England: Dawson, 1975). Allison discusses Greene's titles in alphabetical order, so I did not provide page numbers for each title here.

A Disputation between a Hee Conny-Catcher and a Shee Conny-Catcher (published in 1592, but no S.R. exists before 1638), and finally, the last pamphlet published close to Greene's death, the *Black Bookes Messenger* (S. R. 21 August 1592). *The Black Book Messenger* actually advertises more pamphlets to come, *The Blacke Book* and *Repentance of a Conny-catcher*, but these were never published since Greene died within the same year. The authorship story does not end with Greene's death (3 September according to *Repentance*) as his name is transformed into a sort of brand name that sponsors further publications centered on his prodigal lifestyle: *Greenes, Groats-vvorth of witte bought with a million of repentance* (S.R. 20 September, earliest ed. 1592), *Repentance of Robert Greene* (S. R., 6 Oct., earliest ed. 1592) and *Greenes Vision vvritten at the instant of his death* (not in S. R. ; earliest ed. 1592), which all claim to have been written by Greene before his death; further publications simply re-use Greene's name: *Greenes Funeralls* by "R. B." (earliest ed. 1594) and *Greene in Conceipt: New raifed from his graue* by John Dickenson (earliest ed. 1598).

I am focusing on Greene's series of cony-catching pamphlets because the figure of the cony-catcher in many ways captures Greene's authorial persona as a pamphlet-writer and explains his authorial shift towards clowning and entertainment evident in the later pamphlets. Greene's merry stories, which turn crime into a source of illicit pleasure, in many ways summarize the predicament of the pamphlet-writer who confronted a commercial print market, but was still in many ways bound by the humanist idea of writer as educator. In their evolution from *A Notable Discovery* to *The Blacke Bookes Messenger*, the cony-catching pamphlets show how the pressure of

continuous publication and at the same time, the increasing stability of readership (its own form of authority) propel Greene to give away more authority to cony-catchers, presenting them as heroes and authors of his work. From a spy and an undercover agent for the government/society in *A Notable Discovery*, the narrator gradually transforms into cony-catchers Ned Browne in *Blackes Booke Messenger*, into “Hee Conny-catcher” and a “Shee Conny-natcher” in *A Disputation*, and into “Cuthbert Conny-Catcher” in the possibly apocryphal *The Defence of Conny-Catching*.¹⁶¹ Accordingly, while the first pamphlet has the author’s real name with his title “By R. Greene, Maifter of Arts” advertised on the title page, the subsequent pamphlets only feature Greene’s initials “R. G.,” while *The Defence* lacks authorial acknowledgement altogether – a move, which only shows the extent to which Greene, Master of Arts, has merged with the voice of the cony-catcher/clown by the end of this publishing endeavor.¹⁶²

From Greene’s first pamphlet, *A Notable Discovery* to *Blacke Bookes Messenger*, there is a marked progression from authorship marked by multiple, contradictory voices towards authorship that more openly advertises the narrator’s

¹⁶¹ Greene’s *A Disputation Betweene a Hee Conny-catcher and a Shee Conny-Catcher* is written as a debate between a male and a female cony-catcher on who among them is most harmful to society. The anonymous *Defence of Conny-Catching* is prefaced by an address to the readers by “Cuthbert cony-catcher” on page 10. See note 4 for complete citation of each of the pamphlets.

¹⁶² Each pamphlet is preceded by a facsimile of the title page in G. B. Harrison’s editions of Greene’s pamphlets. The title pages do not have a page number. See note 4 for complete citation of the pamphlets.

persona as a clown/entertainer for the public. Thus, on one hand, *A Notable Discovery* delves into the sensational mechanism of cony-catchers' deception, teaching readers, in effect, how to do the same, but this illicit/pornographic "discovery" is framed only as a gesture of control – the narrator concludes each story with the hope that his readers will now be able to avoid similar cony-catching traps. The preface is especially important in this regard. Following his self-advertisement as "Maifter of Arts" on the title page, Greene portrays the pamphlet as the fruit of his "wanton" youth and repudiates any claims of affinity with the cony-catchers.¹⁶³ To make himself more respectable, he cites classical models, Diogenes, Ovid, and Socrates, who, according to the narrator, likewise had a period of youthful folly followed by their reformation and works of virtue. According to Katharine Wilson, this move was a popular one among early modern fiction writers. She comments: "Notable prodigal authors offered literary ideas of careers which fiction writers were keen to exploit. One of the most frequently invoked models was that provided by the Roman poet Ovid, believed to have been exiled for getting involved in some murky sexual misdemeanor... Gascoigne and Lyly both compare their protagonists to David and Solomon."¹⁶⁴ In the first pamphlet Greene's narrator forges a curious relation of simultaneous attachment to and separation from his characters: he has an intimate

¹⁶³ Greene, *A Notable Discovery*, 7.

¹⁶⁴ Katharine Wilson, *Fictions of Authorship in Late Elizabethan Narratives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 14.

knowledge of cony-catchers' tricks and reprehensible morals and at the same time, he is a reliable, patriotic member of his country. Even though it is cony-catchers' "foreignness" that he wants to sell, Greene takes pains to present himself as thoroughly English, in contrast to the "foreign" practices of the devilish cony-catchers. Portraying his narrative as a voyage into the exotic and at the same time a repudiation of foreign lands, Greene explains his authorial position thus:

Fraunce, Germanie, Poland, Denmarke, I knowe them all, yet not affected to any in the fourme of my life; onelie I am English borne, and I haue English thoughts, not a deuill incarnate because I am Italianate, but hating the pride of Italie, because I know their peeuishnes: yet in all these Countreyes where I haue trauelled, I haue not seen more excesse of vanitie than wee Englishe men practice through vain glory [.]¹⁶⁵

Collapsing moral depravity with geographic "otherness," Greene imagines cony-catchers as in effect foreigners living among plain English folk. Although they may seem to be English, cony-catchers' characters are utterly foreign and alien to what it truly means to be English – it is then Greene's job to "discover" how cony-catchers may masquerade themselves as English and bring them to clear light. Greene's contradictory tactics of at once condemning cony-catchers and telling the readers how sly and accomplished they are cumulatively work to present the pamphlet as a source of illicit pleasure – simultaneously condemned and advertised by the narrator. After

¹⁶⁵ Greene, *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage*, 8.

narrating an instance of cony-catching deception, “the Barnardes Lawe,” the narrator underlines the supreme and unmatched evil of his characters to which only he, the narrator, is privy to: “Thus Gentlemen I haue glaunst at the Barnardes Lawe, which though you may perceue it to bee a preiudiciall insinuating coosenage, yet is the Art of Cunny-catching so farre beyond it in subtilitie, as the deuill is more honest than the holiest Angell [.]”¹⁶⁶ Brushing aside the readers’ potential dismissal of cony-catching as simply another petty crime, the narrator acts both as a public relations agent for the cony-catchers and as their ostensible denunciator. The result is a work that is thoroughly unstable in its design, asking readers to admire cony-catchers “subtilitie” and to abhor their practices. However, already here, in the first pamphlet, the narrator’s affinity with the cony-catchers becomes more pronounced. The key moment in the preface is the narrator’s acknowledgment of himself as a fictional character, someone with whom his characters can interact. Greene positions himself in relation to the cony-catchers as a potential victim of their abuse: “Yet Gentlemen am I sore threatned by the hacksters of that filthie facultie, that if I sette their practises in print, they will cut off that hande that writes the Pamphlet, but how I feare their braudoes, you shall l perceiue by my plaine painting out of them[.]”¹⁶⁷ This clever invention clearly aims to increase the drama of watching Greene write his pamphlets, but it also

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 13-14.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 14.

turns Greene, the narrator, into a character, a clown his readers can enjoy reading about.

The move towards simply clowning becomes especially evident by the end of the first pamphlet. The narrator's control over his material – expressed in condemnation, translation of cony-catchers' canting terms and the general desire to impose a sort of scientific method (discovery of laws and methods) on their chaotic, disorderly crimes – wanes remarkably by the end: *A Notable Discovery* ends like a jestbook, with a collection of merry jests in the section simply entitled "A Pleasant Discovery of the coosenage of Colliars."¹⁶⁸ The section title contrasts sharply with the earlier stress on discovery and revelation promised on the general title page as a work "Plainely laying open thofe pernicious fleights that hath brought many ignorant men to confusion[.]"¹⁶⁹ The jests at the end of the pamphlet seem just an appendage to the earlier work of revelation and denunciation. Moreover, the very last tale in the pamphlet is printed in another font compared with the rest of the stories and looks like the printer or writer's last-minute addition to the pamphlet.

The form of the pamphlet and its tone (the stress on novelty, excitement, the exotic) is partly dictated by the serial form in which it appears and the author's necessity to sell his work. The evident shift from the textbook-like revelation of crimes (ostensible position of authorial control) and towards the framework of the

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 51.

¹⁶⁹ Greene, title page to *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage*, n. p.

jestbook (a collection of merry tales told anonymously or by a clown) is perhaps inevitable given Greene's impulse to further publication and commercialization of his work. Just like the act of printing is mechanical and indifferent to the content, the stories themselves acquire a mechanicity that is geared towards further reproduction. There is an impetus to add one more story, to make the pamphlet longer, to add a second and third pamphlet – and while the “discovery” of crimes assumes a definite end, a state when the subject will be exhausted and covered in detail, the jestbook presupposes no such ending. The jestbook, as the addition of a random tale in the end of the first pamphlet demonstrates, can go on and on, entertaining the readers with more and more comic stories.

The Second and Laft Part of Conny-Catching (1592), published within a year of the first part continues the contradictory and illicit work of increasing (implicit) readers' interest in cony-catching and condemning cony-catchers as villains and criminals. It is as if there are two stories going on the same time in the pamphlets: one is a story of criminals finding new ways to deceive gullible citizens and another, a much more interesting and exciting story, is that of an author finding new ways to market his material within the constraints of his medium and the cultural demands of his period. While the content of the stories themselves remains remarkably similar to the ones in the first pamphlet (cony-catchers deceiving citizens through various sly devices), the way these stories are presented and marketed are not. Many of the stories' titles now actively direct the readers to enjoy them for their own sake, rather than focusing on “revelation” and “discovery.” These include “A pleasant storie of a

horse-stealer,” “A merrie tale, how a Miller had his purse cut in Newgat-market,” “a quaint conceit of a Cutler and a Cutpurse,” “of the subtiltie of a Courber in coosoning a Maid,” and “A true and merry tale of a Knight and a Tincker that was a Picklocke,” among others.¹⁷⁰ As the range of titles indicates, the stories present themselves as both wonderfully new/strange and pleasant. The title page also promotes the pamphlet as a self-consciously “new” and exotic creation: the word “SECOND [part of Conny-Catching]” written all in capital letters is the largest and most striking word on the page. The pamphlet announces itself as a sequel to the first bestseller, promising more of the same in effect, but it also strives to outdo its predecessor by being more explicitly entertaining. The phrase, “The SECOND / part and last part of Conny-Catching” is¹⁷¹ followed by a further promise of “new additions containing many merry tales of all lawes worth the reading because they are worthy to be remembred. / Discoursing strange cunning in Coofnage, which if you reade without laughing, Ile giue you my cap for a Noble.”¹⁷² From emphasis on “discovery” and revelation, the second pamphlet self-consciously moves into the realm of the “merry” and the exotic

¹⁷⁰The jests are located on the following page numbers: “A pleasant storie of a horse-stealer,” 16; “A merrie tale, how a Miller had his purse cut in Newgat-market,” 37; “A quaint conceit of a Cutler and a Cutpurse,” 42; “of the subtiltie of a Courber in coosoning a Maid,” 51; “A true and merry tale of a Knight and a Tincker that was a Picklocke,” 55. All these tales appear in Greene, *The Second Part of Conny-catching*.

¹⁷¹ “cap, n.1”. 4a. OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27343?rskey=MGjLnS&result=2&isAdvanced=false> (accessed May 05, 2015).

¹⁷² Greene, title page to *The Second Part of Conny-catching*, n. p.

("strange cunning"). The identity of the pamphlet is near collapsed into the identity of its stories, with the author acting as a clown: "Ile giue you my cap for a Noble," if "you reade without laughing," states the author.¹⁷³ His exchange of a "cap" for laughter evokes the association of a "fool's cap" while the word "cap" generally refers to any ordinary, simple/native head covering compared to a more prestigious/stylish covering suggested by the word "hat" in the period. Associating the narrator with the clown, the title page resists the narrator's re-framing of the pamphlet as a work of the humanist educator.

With the second cony-catching pamphlet, the figure of the author as someone who is separate and apart from the cony-catchers recedes even further in the background. Continuing an implied dialogue between himself and the cony-catchers started in the first pamphlet, Greene continues to fictionalize himself as an author. In the middle of the second pamphlet, he introduces an authorial digression, where he confides that the cony-catchers have been "dasht, and their trade greatly impouerished" by Greene's earlier revelation of their villanies in the first pamphlet and that cony-catchers now seek new ways to entice poor conies.¹⁷⁴ The narrator imagines how a country farmer, having read Greene's earlier pamphlet *A Notable Discovery*, resists cony-catchers' tricks and confidently replies, "I haue forsworne

¹⁷³ Greene, title page to *The Second Part of Conny-catching*, n. p.

¹⁷⁴ Greene, *The Second Part of Conny-catching*, 23.

cards euer since I read it [Greene's first pamphlet.]”¹⁷⁵ The narrator portrays himself as a persecuted hero, who continues his brave revelations despite the cony-catchers' threats: he confesses that “I shall be the next man he [cony-catcher] means to kil, for spoyling of his ocupation: but I laugh at his brauados[.]”¹⁷⁶ Although the narrator continues to condemn the cony-catchers, in fact, this move further inserts Greene into the narrative, portraying him as one of the fictional characters engaged in a dialogue with the cony-catchers. In effect, in *The Second Part*, the cony-catchers gained a more powerful voice: they threaten the author who responds with a pamphlet. From being a passive object of investigation and “discovery,” cony-catchers gradually transform into being productive agents: they have an exotic, self-consistent world, which feeds further production of pamphlets. On his part, the authorial persona becomes more of a fiction: it is a clown selling his collection of “merry” tales and a sensational, epic hero who fights the cony-catchers until his last breath. The two personas seem contradictory, but they actually point in the same direction: the effacement of the author, as he transforms into a character who actually competes with cony-catchers. In both cases, it is the figure of the cony-catcher who eclipses any alternative identity and clarifies the nature of the collection as an adventure into the exotic and criminally exciting. The trend is towards the anonymity of the real author and towards cony-catchers as superheroes of the collection.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 24.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 25.

It is then both appropriate and ironic that the title page of the third pamphlet features a clown in a fool's cap. While the first two pamphlets featured a picture of a rabbit or "cony" holding a deck of cards (*A Notable Discovery*) or rabbit picking the lock of a house (*The Second Part*), the third pamphlet hardly "mentions" the art of deception at all. Instead, we have a fool, a traditional symbol for entertainment, holding a well-dressed gentlewoman by the waist, who in turn, holds a small, dangling rabbit in her hand. The figure of the fool represents the "NEW DEVISED / knauifh Art of Foole-taking," according to the title, but it more accurately represents the new figure of the author who is completely transformed into that of an entertainer.¹⁷⁷ Running out of "exotic" material to sell, the author resorts to having a contest among the cony-catchers, where one of them will prove himself a superhero among the rest. The pamphlet now stresses the extraordinary among the already exotic and fascinating stories of deception: it tells, for instance, a story of a cony-catcher who "scorned the name of a Conny-Catcher, and woulde be needes be termed a Foole-taker, as master and beginner of that new found Arte."¹⁷⁸ According to the narrator the difference between cony-catching and fool-taking is the superiority of the "fool-taker" among his fellows. Thus, the story of the first "fool-taker" features a criminal who distinguishes himself among the rest thus, "I promise ye [he says to his companions], I disdaine these base and pettie paltries, . . . that I will accomplish a rare stratageme indeed, of

¹⁷⁷ Greene, title page to *The Thirde & Last Part of Conny-catching*, n. p.

¹⁷⁸ Greene, *The Thirde & Last Part of Conny-catching*, 21.

more value then forty of yours, and when it is done shal cary some credit with it.”¹⁷⁹

The “superhero cony-catcher” stories do not so much differ from the previous stories in content, as in the presentation – the pressure to have “new” stories of discovery in the second and third pamphlets makes Greene improvise and markedly amplify the nature of cony-catching crimes. What I refer to as “ephemeral emotions” in the chapter’s title – Greene’s tendency to promote readers’ fascination with the exotic and pleasure in the alluringly criminal – partly feeds on the ephemerality/serial reproduction of the medium itself. The pamphlets have to go on for Greene’s success as an author, but the necessity for continuous reproduction changes the tone of the pamphlets – makes them more “criminal” or more likely to indulge those emotions, which will make readers buy more and more pamphlets. The early modern term for these kind of emotions was “contagious” or “intemperate,” prompting readers to action without adequate thought and deliberation. The printing press colludes, in effect, with the intemperance of readers’ passions, feeding their desire for “new” and exotic experiences.

Greene’s two later pamphlets, *A Disputation between a Hee Conny-catcher and a Shee Conny-catcher* (1592) and *The Blacke Bookes Messenger* (1592) most evidently show Greene’s shift towards the entertaining value of his pamphlets. The authorial figure slides into that of a cony-catcher and a clown, as his villains openly set out on to entertain the public from their own point of view. The “superhero trend”

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 12.

evident in *The Thirde Part* assumes the form of an open contest in the fourth pamphlet – a “disputation” between a female cony-catcher and a male cony-catcher on “whether a Whore or a Theefe is most preiuditiall,” that is, most detrimental to the commonwealth.¹⁸⁰ The so-called disputation is simply a boasting contest that allows Greene to amplify the scale of the crimes and hope for a new level of readers’ awe and fascination with the cony-catchers’ art. It allows Greene to have a character, cony-catcher Laurence, praise and glorify his exotic occupation directly: “what Art is more excellent either to trie the ripenes of the wit, or the agilitie of the hand” than the one which challenges the thief’s eye to spy a purse and his “heart to dare to attempt it.”¹⁸¹ The female cony-catcher in turn responds with a list of heroic deeds of female criminals and argues her own “excellencie in villanie.”¹⁸² The second item in the pamphlet consists of an autobiography of an English courtesan, the form, which like the disputation, lets cony-catchers present their criminal exploits from first person point of view, with all the investment and detail of personal experience. Significantly, “Greene” as an authorial voice in the text becomes much less pronounced: *The Epistle* to the reader still routinely condemns the cony-catchers and the cony-catchers’ long tales end with the narrator’s brief moral, but overall, the narrator has nothing to add,

¹⁸⁰ Greene, *A Disputation Between a Hee Conny-Catcher, and a Shee Conny-Catcher*, 9.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 14.

except to re-state the events of the disputation or autobiography. Finally, the pamphlet ends with a jest by the narrator, where he situates himself among the cony-catchers: “But amongst all these blythe and merry Iestes [referring to the preceding stories] ... breathing my self by the bottle Ale-house, Ile tell you a merry Iest, how a Cony-catcher was vsed.”¹⁸³ Situating himself “by the bottle ale-house,” a fitting venue for his work, Greene portrays himself as one of the cony-catchers and ends their “blythe and merry Iests” with his own joke.

The ambiguity of the authorial position is intensified in the later pamphlets to the extent unprecedented in the earlier examples of the genre. Who is the author and who is the criminal? The series starts with Greene’s “confession” in the first pamphlet, *A Notable Discovery* (1591) that the work is actually a remembrance of his “wanton” youth, filtered through present-day “repentance” and a desire to “forewarn” others,¹⁸⁴ but by the last pamphlet, *The Blacke Bookes Messenger*, it develops into criminal autobiography of Ned Browne, where he boasts, “as I haue euer liued lewdly, so I meane to end my life as resolutely, and not by a cowardly confession to attempt the hope of a pardon.”¹⁸⁵ Ned Browne, the protagonist and narrator of the cony-catching autobiography, reframes Greene’s earlier confession by demanding audience “laughter.” Instead of writing a repentance narrative in the manner of Robert Greene,

¹⁸³ Ibid., 80.

¹⁸⁴ Greene, *A Notable Discovery*, 7-8.

¹⁸⁵ Greene, *The Blacke Bookes Messenger*, 5.

Ned Browne, Greene's new authorial persona, promises to tell his crimes "merrely": "which if you hear without laughing, then after my death call me base knaue, and neuer haue me in remembrance."¹⁸⁶ This is a curious transformation of authorial persona and it is clearly inspired partly by the medium of the pamphlet, an ephemeral, commercial publication that succeeds mostly by continuous, tireless reproduction. Greene's stress on novelty on the title pages —"new additions" (*The Second Part*), crimes "neuer before difcouered" (*The Thirde Part*) – gradually develops into a more open advertisement and amplification of the exotic in later pamphlets. The title of the fourth pamphlet *A Disputation* advertises itself as "DISCOVERING THE SECRET VILLA-/nies of alluring Strumpets," while *The Blacke Bookes Messenger* parades "Ned Browne one of the most notable Cutpurfes, Crosbiters, and Cony-catchers, that euer liued in England" and further promises to tell "such frange prancks and monftrous villainies... as the like was yet nuer heard in any of the former bookes of Conny-/catching[.]"¹⁸⁷ Many of the stories are actually interchangeable (they could easily be moved from one pamphlet to another), but their presentation and the way they are sold and advertised to the public moves more openly towards clowning and exotic/illicit entertainment. One factor in this transformation is a dialogic nature of

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸⁷ I refer to the title pages of the five pamphlets: *A Notable Discovery*, *The Second Part of Coosnage*, *The Third & Last Part of Conny-catching*, *A Disputation Betweene a Hee Conny-catcher and a Shee Conny-catcher*, and *The Blacke Bookes Messenger*. See note 4 for complete citation of each item.

pamphleteering – its ability to adjust with audience demand quickly – which encouraged Greene to lay more stress on audience pleasure in its many forms, “laughter,” but also awe, fascination, and a delight in the secret and forbidden, demonstrated by Greene’s oversize criminals and their utterly monstrous proportions. Another impetus is the commercial nature of pamphleteering and the author’s incentive to keep publishing more and more pamphlets: with the success of the first publication, the printing press promises seemingly no end to further publications. Greene is particularly successful in transforming himself into a fictional persona in his pamphlets. Although he started out as a conventional humanist persona decrying the evils of society in *A Notable Discovery of Coofenage*, he also introduced himself as a clown, one who is entertaining precisely because of his defiant attitude to cony-catchers, but one who can turn around and as in *A Disputation*, join the cony-catchers by the “alehouse” and tell a “merry Iest” himself. True to Gabriel Harvey’s opening quote, Robert Greene, the narrator, turns out to be just a pose, a mask that the narrator puts on to increase his readers’ interest more. Far from being an act of hypocrisy, as Nashe sees it, Greene, a merry cony-catcher as he emerges from his pamphlets, is its own survival strategy – a way of assuring readership and negotiating the demands of the commercial pamphlet market.

As Alexandra Halasz notes in her study of early modern pamphlets, the term “pamphlet” is not so much a technical term denoting the book’s format as it is a statement regarding the commodity status of the work: “If at one end of the continuum ‘pamphlet’ slides into bookishness, at the other it is potentially interchangeable with

the broadside ballad. Hence ‘pamphlet’ functions as a floating signifier in the heterogeneity that characterizes the opportunities made available by print.”¹⁸⁸ Using Halasz’s definition, it is possible to characterize Greene’s pamphlets as moving along this continuum: if Greene’s first pamphlet *A Notable Discovery of Coosnage* strives to the idea of the book, a permanent, valuable object delivering time-honored lessons and punishing the rogues through the mere fact of discovery and publication, Greene’s last pamphlet is a self-conscious performance, or at least, as close to it as you can get to it in a pamphlet. Sandra Clark notes the novelty of the form: “the pamphlet constitutes a new form of writing for a new audience.”¹⁸⁹ She further suggests that pamphlets were “the first kind of literature to cater on any wide scale for the new and increasing audience of middle class readers” and “that these pamphlets were addressed primarily to those who were literate but not highly educated or sophisticated in their tastes, who wanted something both lively and instructive... casual readers perhaps, but increasingly steadily in their numbers[.]”¹⁹⁰ One way to summarize Halasz and Clark’s definition is to say that Greene’s pamphlets were most emphatically commercial and designed to capture audience attention: while they were not the most popular form of printed matter (broadside ballads were), their concern with the

¹⁸⁸ Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1997), 3.

¹⁸⁹ Sandra Clark, *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers: Popular Moralistic Pamphlets, 1580-1640* (London: The Athlone Press, 1983), 23.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

newsworthy and the entertaining crystallized the writer's concern with selling his stories to the public. To this story of early modern pamphlets vis-à-vis Greene, I want to add an emphasis on ephemeral pleasure (lasting only as long as a pamphlet) as a type of audience-writer relationship that emerged partly due to the pressure of continuous publication. Greene's series of cony-catching pamphlets shows how Greene's authorial position *develops* with each subsequent pamphlet since the author wants his readers to keep on "laughing" and buying more pamphlets. What Greene's pamphlets cumulatively promote is ephemeral pleasure – the thirst for novelty and the hunger for exotic, strange and monstrous, as Greene invites his readers to "laugh" and enjoy the excitingly criminal world for its own sake. In this context, the position of the author transforms into a mediator/an anonymous writer, or a fun, entertaining clown who puts on his "vehement denunciator" hat only to entertain his public more. The transition from a humanist educator into a clown is complete.

Scholars like Derek Alwes, Arthur Kinney, and Lawrence Manley have discussed the ambiguity of the authorial position in Greene's series of cony-catching pamphlets. Alwes sees Greene's contradictory agenda (claim of public service, but also clowning) as explained by the different kind of readers Greene would like to recruit: "In the cony-catching pamphlets Greene seems to be maintaining his distance from his lower-class readers through a subtle and elaborate mockery which he surely

expected his more sophisticated readers to recognize and enjoy.”¹⁹¹ Alwes further explains that Greene’s real audience consisted of a “self-identified elite consisting of readers capable of penetrating the surface morality meant to trap the unwary and unsophisticated.”¹⁹² Instead of separating the didactic and the entertaining in Greene’s work, it is more helpful, I think, to imagine them as moving in the same direction, that of an author-clown. Greene uses railing language and “textbook instruction” tone partly in order to increase the readers’ enjoyment of the cony-catchers’ wondrous evil. Didacticism and entertainment need not be strictly separated since the land of the exotic to which Greene invites his readers combines repulsion with pleasure and fascination. On the other hand, it is also wrong, I think, to read Greene as purely a subversive writer who, in the words of Lawrence Manley, “empowered [himself] through pariahhood and orthodoxy[.]”¹⁹³ Greene’s series of cony-catching pamphlets show a definite desire to sell themselves to the public: the audience is addressed and coaxed many times into seeing the usefulness of the work and its many pleasures. The contradiction that scholars sense in Greene’s work is not between entertainment and didacticism or containment and subversion, but between the degraded medium in which Greene works and the difficulty of “catching” audience pleasure. Author as

¹⁹¹ Derek B. Alwes, *Sons and Authors in Elizabethan England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 133.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁹³ Lawrence Manley qtd. in Derek Alwes, *Sons and Authors in Elizabethan England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 133.

clown and cony-catcher is an authorial position that Greene most clearly develops, or rather, discovers, in his later pamphlets, encouraged by the success of publication and the stability of audience demand. On the other hand, his initial claim of public service is a conventional gesture of the humanist author that conforms to the traditional defenses of art, but belies the fleeting, ephemeral quality of Greene's work.

A Pamphleteer's Cultural Milieu

The figure of the writer as a "cony-catcher" of audience demand – a shape-shifter that assumes whatever form the audience finds most pleasing and entertaining – is a recurrent concern that unites not only various "cheap" pamphleteers working for the press, but also playwrights, jugglers, and all forms of commercial entertainment not accorded privileged status at the time. The 1597-98 Elizabethan Statute against "Rogues, Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars" unites masterless players, cony-catchers and anyone using "fubtile Crafte or unlawfull Games and Playes" as "Rogues, Vagabonde, and Sturdy Beggars" who shall be appropriately punished by the government.¹⁹⁴ Writers of cheap works like pamphlets often existed in the same category as players, ballad-peddlers, jugglers, alchemists, or petty criminals: they had to create deceptive illusions in order to sell their ware to the public, but along the way,

¹⁹⁴ W. C. Hazlitt, ed., "The Statute 39 Eliz. (1597-8) cap. 4, againft Common Players, &c. (Extract.)," *The English Drama and Stage under the Tudor and Stuart Princes 1543-1664* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1869), 37-38.

as Greene, they often found new ways to negotiate the novel conditions of writer-audience relationship.

Greene's critique of the "pariahhood" of the pamphlet-writer is only obliquely expressed in his pamphlets: the voice of the narrator tends to merge with the voices of his cony-catchers, but the identity is oblique and masked, so to speak, by "R.G.'s" humanist denunciation of cony-catchers as devils of the commonwealth. In contrast, Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, the likely authors of anonymously published pamphlet *News from Gravesend* (1604), much more clearly present authorship in ephemeral/degraded mediums as the work of a clown and the labor of the working class, which defies genre or media categories. In the mock dedication to this short pamphlet describing the horrors of the London plague, the authors call themselves servants to "Nobody," a group of masterless men who lost their patrons.¹⁹⁵ The writers identify themselves with "rhymesters, play-patchers, jig-makers, ballad-mongrels, and pamphlet-stitchers" —entertainers set out to make a profit, or writers who create art the way seamstress "stitches" her clothes.¹⁹⁶ Like Harvey in the opening quote, Dekker and Middleton link "cheap print," like ballads and

¹⁹⁵ Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, *News from Gravesend: Sent to Nobody*, ed. Gary Taylor, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford UP, 2007): 128-148.

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, The Epistle Dedicatory to *News from Gravesend*, lines 154-55, pp. 134-35. For complete citation, see the previous note 69.

pamphleteering with play-making, clowning and entertainment.¹⁹⁷ Their band of writers is not organized by genre or medium, but their status as laboring men without a master: confronted by the breaking down of the patronage system, they have to confront both the plague and the chaotic forces of the commercial market. The result is, surprisingly, clowning or unemployment – a re-configuration of audience/author relationship where the writer is imagined as a degraded entertainer vending his product. *News from Gravesend* is an especially bleak satire on the early-seventeenth century London beset by plague, but it is written specifically from the point of view of a writer who refuses to be like Greene. If “Greene” or “R.G.” gradually merges with the merry cony-catchers his pamphlets exhibit, these anonymous authors feel bitter about their position as degraded pamphleteers who are associated with the ephemeral and continuous production of the press.

By way of conclusion to this section, I end with the figure of the devil because it haunts both the identity of Greene’s cony-catchers and pamphleteers’ own identity as abject creatures in the “old” affective framework centered on temperance, virtue, and education. In the modern introduction to Thomas Middleton’s *The Black Book* (1604), a pamphlet Robert Greene never got to write, although he advertised it in one of his cony-catching pamphlets as his next installment, G. B. Shand claims that

¹⁹⁷ The phrase “cheap print” has been popularized by the title of Tessa Watt’s book, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1991), which groups everything from ballads to chapbooks to pamphlets under the rubric of “cheap print.”

Middleton's continuation and Robert Greene's earlier cony-catching pamphlets could not be more different. In her words, Middleton "surely capitalizes on Greene's advance publicity for his title," but, she adds, "Middleton's pamphlet is nothing like the gallery of roguish exploits seemingly promised by Greene."¹⁹⁸ Contrary to Shand's opinion, I see Middleton's *The Black Book* as a very fitting fulfillment of Greene's earlier promise: even more so than *News from Gravesend*, Middleton's *The Black Book* makes apparent the affinity between pamphleteering and devilish cony-catching, which Greene's pamphlets both resist and embrace. Like *News from Gravesend: Sent to Nobody*, Middleton's *The Black Book* provides a bleak satire of society, starting from Roman Catholicism to more widespread social corruption, but interestingly, it is written from the point of view of the Devil, who promises to protect poor pamphleteers, cony-catchers and other social deviants. Speaking as an imaginary forefather behind "black books" like Greene's cony-catching pamphlet, Lucifer sees himself in the role of a benevolent patron, proclaiming: "To these and those, and every damned one [a list of people, which besides various cony-catchers includes pamphleteer Thomas Nashe], I'll bequeath legacies to thrive upon."¹⁹⁹ The lack of boundaries separating poor players from cheap pamphleteers is evident in their

¹⁹⁸ G. B. Shand, "Introduction," Thomas Middleton, *The Black Book*, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford UP, 2007), 204.

¹⁹⁹ Thomas Middleton, *The Black Book*, ed. G. B. Shand, *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford UP, 2007): lines 106-07, p. 208.

common “master,” Lucifer (in *News from Gravesend*, figured as patron “Nobody”), which organizes a common conceptual space between the enterprises of writing a pamphlet and writing a play. Middleton’s Lucifer clarifies the role of Greene’s cony-catchers as *patrons* of his writing. These imaginary characters filled with exciting life and secret bonds of fellowship drive the sales of Greene’s pamphlets and as his cony-catching pamphlets get published, Greene gives them more and more “life.” But with cony-catchers acquiring more agency, the emotional framework that organizes Greene’s pamphlets starts to change too. From a fuming patriot burning with zeal for his country, Greene changes into a merry cony-catcher and a clown by the end of his pamphlets. If Middleton writes as “the devil incarnate” in *The Black Book*, both he and Dekker dedicate their *News from Gravesend* to “Nobody,” then Greene turns himself into a clown in his cony-catching series. What unites the three cases is the writers’ common critique of the social and economic relations, which supported the previous affective framework, where a writer functioned as an educator and a form of restraint on audience’s naturally anarchic desires.

Thomas Middleton’s *A Mad World, My Masters*: Affective Convergence of Theater and Print:

Even though scholars often see Greene’s cony-catching pamphlets as the work of a hack writer that served as sources for a variety of more accomplished works by Ben Jonson, Middleton, or John Marston, the similarity between Greene’s cony-catching pamphlets and Middleton or Jonson’s city comedy goes further than

resemblance in subject matter (prodigals, courtesans, criminals) and locale (stories about London).²⁰⁰ It encapsulates the affinity between two kinds of media – pamphleteering and theater – in terms of their marginal status in the literary market and their concomitant orientation to a new affective framework. Both Greene’s cony-catching pamphlets and Middleton’s city comedy portray affect as something reproducible and even easily faked. Their definition of emotion is directly related to the “repetition” of the printing press and the performativity of theater: to Greene’s orientation towards print reproduction, Middleton’s city comedy *A Mad World, My Masters* adds the suggestion of a degree of automaticity in human emotions which can be evoked as well by a theatrical performance as by a real event. In other words, Middleton’s affect theory allies the discourse of theatrical reproduction to the conversation about emotions, radically undermining any belief in a “natural” emotion. Focused on the *labor* of a performer/writer in trying to evoke audience emotions, both Middleton and Greene implicitly validate the affective work of laborers like themselves and expose mechanisms that go into making someone *feel*.

A Mad World, My Masters shows that emotion can as well be elicited by a theatrical representation / performance as by a real event. A city comedy mostly known for its references to London and its intertwining of economic and sexual

²⁰⁰ For instance, Brian Gibbons dismisses cony-catching pamphlets as simply a minor source for city comedy in Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1980), 13. For an important attempt to reclaim Robert Greene as a serious writer, see Kirk Melnikoff and Edward Gieskes, eds. *Writing Robert Greene* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

references, the play is also, I argue, a comedy concerning the art of representation.²⁰¹

One plotline of the play concerns the jealous husband Harebrain who, absurdly, hires a courtesan to teach his wife how to be chaste and honest. The Courtesan is a master performer: she performs piety and modesty so convincingly that Harebrain is overcome with emotion and gratitude for her “good” teaching: “*Harebrain* [to Courtesan]: What, done so soon? / Away, to’t again, to’t again, good wench, to’t again. / Leave her not so, where left you. Come” (1.2.120-22).²⁰² The absurdity escalates when the same scene repeats later, but now the wife is not learning about adultery, but is actually committing it. Master Harebrain mistakenly thinks that his wife is visiting a sick maid and passionately urges her to talk with her again, “Wife, as thou lov’st the quiet of my breast, / Embrace her counsel, yield to her advices, / ... [Weeping] Mine eyes can scarce refrain” (1.2.157-161). He weeps at the thought of

²⁰¹ Swapan Chakravorty’ treats Middleton’s city comedies as a sort of social and economic commentary on the relations between different classes and the power struggle between them. Chakravorty argues that in Middleton’s city comedies “the same love-sex chase pervades all layers of society. The stress is more on how an individual acts, rather than the social/political determinants of his status.” See Swapan Chakravorty, *Society and Politics in the Plays of Thomas Middleton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 45. Similarly, Mathew R. Martin elaborates the prevailing economic reading of Middleton’s city comedies, interpreting *A Trick to Catch the Old One* as staging “a form of cannibalism” where “in appropriating others’ possessions one is ingesting their souls.” See Mathew R. Martin, *Between Theater and Philosophy: Skepticism in the Major City Comedies of Ben Jonson and Thomas Middleton* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001), 87.

²⁰² All references to Middleton’s *A Mad World, My Masters* are from *A Mad World, My Masters*, ed. Peter Saccio, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford UP, 2007): 414-451.

his wife's increasing obedience and purity while what is increasing is his wife's passion for adultery.

Obviously a comic moment in a play that ends with the repentance of the adulterous wife, the play is nevertheless unusual in its insistence on the amount of labor it takes to be an "honest wife" and by extension, a good performer of a "good wife." In a lengthy monologue, the Courtesan instructs mistress Harebrain to follow a certain routine that is bound to dispel the suspicions of her jealous husband. Her list includes everything from how to greet household guests to what books have on the table and how much time to spend in public. Breaking down "an honest wife" into a procedural list, the Courtesan suggests that the body of an honest wife is itself is something partly automatic or mechanical, which could be elicited with a known set of actions. Master Harebrain "weeps" when he hears Courtesan act the role of his wife, herself supposedly weeping at the bedside of a sick friend. There is no sick friend and there is no wife in vicinity, but hearing these steps performed makes Harebrain respond with a predictable emotion. Similarly, in the second cony-catching plot, a young prodigal son Follywit coolly considers the objects and behaviors he needs to impersonate the mistress of his wealthy old uncle Sir Bounteous Progress: he instructs his accomplices to bring him "the lower part of a gentlewoman's gown, with a mask and a chin-clout" and "a couple of locks" (3.3.85-86, 120). When Follywit does put these objects on not only does he pass as a woman, but he is ardently desired by his uncle's serving-man Gunwater.

The unnerving suspicion that performance is all there is to human emotion haunts the play throughout. Not only the characters within the play cannot tell the difference between performance and reality, but the real theater audience has to experience the same confusion. After Sir Harebrain's wife happily committed adultery with Sir Penitent, the lover, the play takes a radical turn and shows us the devil on stage – in disguise of the wife herself – flirting with Sir Penitent. In Act 4.5, as Sir Penitent is reading the Bible and thinking about repentance, stage directions read, "Enter the Devil in [Wife's] shape, claps him on the shoulder." The devil then addresses Sir Penitent in rhyming couplets and tries to persuade him to continue the affair. Succubus, as the female devil is designated in stage directions, says, for instance: "Shall we slip this mutual hour / Comes so seldom in our power? / Where's thy lip, thy clip, thy fadom [embrace]?" Shocked Sir Penitent attempts to ward off the temptation, but does not realize that the performer is actually the Devil who is playing the role of his mistress.

If we look at the scene from the point of view of a theater audience, then we would most likely be in the same situation as Sir Penitent, vacillating between belief and incredulity: It is this mistress Harebrain or not? Given that on early modern stage, the Devil and the mistress would have likely been played by the same actor, it would be very hard for the audience know who is who. In the subsequent conversation with "real" mistress Harebrain, Sir Penitent says that it was impossible to distinguish the devil from the mistress:

The very devil assumed thee formally:

That face, that voice, that gesture, that attire
E'en as it sits on tee, not a pleat altered,
That beaver band, the colour of that periwig,
That farthingale above the navel, all
As if the fashion were his own invention. (4.5.26-31)

The devil is such a good performer that he tricks Sir Penitent and likely the audience, until Sir Penitent finds out that his lover never came to visit him. Crossing the line between reality and performance so easily, the Middleton's Devil comes to stand for the figure of theater itself: a simulation whose representations seem so real that they elicit the same kinds of responses that one would have to a real event. By insisting on the labor involved in theatrical representation and its concomitant success, *A Mad World* questions the predominant humoral / Christian framework, where passions are natural agents of the body, flowing out of the individual body and sympathetically interacting with the stuff of the outside world, from the passions are essentially made and to which they naturally incline.²⁰³ Instead, the play shows how emotions – Sir Harebrain's, Sir Penitent's, and ours – are constructed and elicited through the labor of the performer. The young prodigal Follywit goes even further in his questioning of the stuff from which emotions are made. If the female Succubus appropriates the very

²⁰³ On a related note, Karen Wendy Gilbert argues that the humoral body of the early modern period has been replaced by the "thermodynamic body" of the Industrial Revolution. See Karen Wendy Gilbert, "Slowness: Notes towards an Economy of Differencial Rates of Being," *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, eds. Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley (Durham: Duke UP, 2007), 77.

form and body of Sir Harebrain's mistress, Follywit's joke shows an identity between the body used on stage and the body that appears in real life.

A final example I will consider from the play is an act of theft embedded in stage comedy, which creates confusion between "the Constable i'th' comedy" and "the Constable i'th' commonwealth" (5.2.173-75). Follywit and his roguish friends rob the house of Sir Bounteous Progress, Follywit's wealthy uncle, but to Follywit's despair, his accomplices are apprehended by the Constable before Follywit has time to leave his uncle's and re-join them. "A pox of such fortune, the plot's betrayed!" he exclaims. But then he notices the chain, "Ah, pox - by light, happily thought upon, the chain! Invention, stick to me this once, and fail me ever hereafter" (5.2.47-54). When the Constable comes bringing his accomplices with him, Follywit impudently pretends to be an actor playing the role of Justice and he accordingly recruits the Constable as simply another actor who forgot his lines. The scene ends with the "bad" actor being bound, while his fellow actors ride merrily away.

While this scene might be dismissed as just a clever joke speaking to city comedy's exploration of "prodigality" or an instance of "wit" outsmarting the more established mechanisms of power, land and money, I read Follywit's joke as a comment about the status of stage comedy itself.²⁰⁴ Not only did city comedy make

²⁰⁴ Writing in 2011, Aaron Kitch still quotes Chakravorty's analysis of Middleton's city comedies as plays that "establish the drive for money and sex as the motor of human behavior at all levels." See Swapan Chakravorty qtd in Aaron Kitch, "The City's Money," *Thomas Middleton in Context*, ed. Suzanne Gossett (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2011), 68. Furthermore, "wit," the source of comedy in the cony-

the city knowable and imaginable to its inhabitants, as Jean Howard brilliantly argued, but it also changed the relationship between the performer and the play. By staging familiar characters and real locations from London, the comedy not only made ever-growing London imaginatively available, it also duplicated it. Follywit's "Constable in the Commonwealth" became a "Constable in the Comedy" and it would be very hard to take the two apart. Multiplying ever more images of the city and its inhabitants, city comedy could be theorized as a sort of printing machine that figures in Greene's cony-catching pamphlets. It is the tendency towards serial reproduction, which makes theater such an attractive trope for Middleton: his characters are performers, but they are performers with a confidence who know that their "duplications" of the original are actually no different from the real thing. I argue that Middleton takes the labor inherent in the performance of a play -- labor that often gets written off as insubstantial -- as indicative of a different relationship between bodies, emotion, and the environment. Instead of the humoral insistence on the naturalness and the inherent unboundedness of human passions, Middleton's comedies and *A Mad World* in particular align themselves with the degraded world of pamphleteering, which would make passions vendible and carefully constructed by the writer. Just as every Greene's pamphlet offers a world of pleasure, Middleton's *A Mad World* portrays performativity as instrumental in eliciting human emotions.

catching pamphlets and Middleton's plays alike, likewise has predominantly social/economic, rather than affective meaning. For the bibliography on "wit," see my previous Chapter 2, notes 108 and 109.

The alignment between theater and pamphleteering is also evident in the way *A Mad World* conceives of the opposition between books and pamphlets. The jealous husband Sir Harebrain is invested in the idea of the book, the Bible, as something that restrains and curbs sexual passions. He instructs the Courtesan as virtuous maid: "Do labour her [Sir Harebrain's wife], prithee. I have conveyed away all her wanton pamphlets, as *Hero and Leander*, *Venus and Adonis*, O two luscious mary-bone pies for a young married wife! Here, here, prithee, take the *Resolution* [a religious book by Robert Parson] and read to her a little." (1.2.46-50). In this remark Sir Harebrain imagines "wanton pamphlets" in emphatically sensual terms as "luscious mary-bones," which promise to deliver a substitute sexual/dietary pleasure that his wife might otherwise get through adultery. These pamphlets, indiscriminately referred to "as wanton pamphlets, as *Hero and Leander*, *Venus and Adonis*," are thought to promote and, to a degree, automatically elicit passions just by the fact of their mere presence. Later in the scene Courtesan draws a similar opposition between books and pamphlets in the following way: "[Let] Some book lie open 'gainst an unchaste mind," she instructs the wife, while "some stirring pamphlet" is laid "under your skirt, the fittest play to lay it" (1.2.94-97). The Courtesan repeats and inverts Sir Harebrain's terms, which link pamphlets to reproducing unlawful bodily pleasure while they invest religious books with the ability to curb and restrain such desire. As I hope to have shown, this affective framework, which would endow books with the power to restrain bodily passions, is itself blind to the bodies of people who should be in the position of authority. Far from occupying a privileged position of a humanist teacher (a role

superior to the body), both pamphleteer and playwright have bodies that need to fed and clothed and that are intimately related to the bodies of their both audience members and patrons. By drawing attention to the *labor* involved in performing a role and producing a pamphlet, Greene's pamphlets and Middleton's comedy are also redrawing the boundaries of the predominant affective framework, aligning themselves with cony-catchers, villains, and prodigals who must remind others of the commercial and bodily price of producing pamphlets and plays.

Chapter 4

HUMORAL INCONSISTENCIES: IMAGINATION AND GENRE IN *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

If urban writers like Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton associated laughter with urban sociability and modern degradation, Shakespeare's comedies, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*, show yet one more way to re-imagine what laughter is. This chapter explores the centrality of the concept of imagination in Shakespeare's understanding of emotion. Unlike humoral theory, which stigmatizes passions as always potentially anarchic and unruly, *A Midsummer Dream* demonstrates that passions are central to one's ability to relate to other people and imaginatively experience their predicament as one's own. Expanding the definition of passions to something that combines both reason and emotion, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* simultaneously dispenses with the humoral hierarchy of emotions, where laughter was consigned to merely be a form of bodily vitality while melancholy (despite its status as an imbalance of humors) was linked to the pursuit of wisdom and spiritual transcendence. Looking at instances of laughter in the play – the hilarious nightmare of forsaken love between Hermia and Lysander, Demetrius and Helena; the comic/tragic encounter of Titania with an ass; and a “very tragical mirth” of Pyramus and Thisbe— I argue that the play configures laughter as a form of sympathetic

judgment (5.1.57).²⁰⁵ Laughter is implicit in the play's mixing of genres, which frame Bottom's romance with Titania as a royal masque and alternatively, present the high-born Athenians chasing after each other as puppets in a farce staged by Puck. Many readers and audiences have surely laughed at these moments in the play, but I want to press on the definition of laughter that seems to emerge from these moments: What are the politics of this laughter? And how does the play imagine a different physiology for laughter, a physiology, which also enables a specific kind of politics? Central to the play's new configuration of emotion is the idea of emotion as a form of imaginative translation or remaking into a different kind of body. Imagination has been discussed extensively in the Galenic humoral theory of the body, but I argue that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* revalues imagination in a new way and instead of positing it as a sort of rebel or a traitor that is always ready to lead the person away from his more reliable faculties of reason and judgment, it presents imagination as a form of judgment superior to reason. Written as a fanciful excursion into the fairy land of magic and Puck's preposterous tricks, the play positions imagination as a sort of corrective to the everyday world which is ostensibly governed only by "reason" and logic, in Theseus's formulation (5.1.6).

The chapter reinforces the overall argument of the dissertation that any affective theory is also political theory by showing how Shakespeare participates in

²⁰⁵ All references to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in this chapter are based on Stephen Greenblatt et al., eds., *The Norton Shakespeare based on the Oxford edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008): 839-896.

the period debates on affect. Contrary to the humoral tendency to downgrade and pathologize affect, Shakespeare's comedy shows how humoral theory itself can be reworked to sponsor transgressive emotional sharing and shattering of boundaries separating tragedy from comedy, rude bodies from noble ones. Consequently, the comedy directs us to experience laughter differently. Instead of aligning laughter according to traditional class, gender, and ethnic boundaries – which, in Philip Sidney, Thomas Heywood, George Puttenham, and Baldassare Castiglione's influential treatises direct us to laugh at lowly people and admire the heroic ones – the play directs audiences to laugh at high-born Athenians imported from the respected literature of classical Greece and somewhat unexpectedly, process their stories in parallel with the mechanicals' presentation of *Pyramus and Thisbe*.²⁰⁶ Thus, instead of confining laughter to the section about English laborers, as the predominant humoral / dramatic theory advises writers to do, the play makes laughter a form of affective critique, which confuses categories between different kinds of bodies and challenges the very definition of laughter. From being a natural, anarchic bodily impulse, in *A Midsummer*, laughter transforms into an exercise in imagination and a form of sympathy superior to reason. Contrary to the Galenic humoral theory, which draws a

²⁰⁶ I am referring to Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry*, Thomas Heywood's *An Apology for Actors*, George Puttenham's *The Art of English Poesy*, and Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, which together represent, in many ways, early modern poetic theory. I refer to individual editions of these texts in this chapter.

strict boundary between passions and the mind, *A Midsummer* shows that emotions are inextricable from judgment and are a form of judgment themselves.

The next section describes the humoral status of “imagination” as a bodily process by which one body can become “imprinted,” or physically altered by another body. After first describing the popular perception of imagination – and its contradictory status within the period affect theory – I then show how Shakespeare chooses to uphold the definition of imagination as a creative faculty that is in excess of the factual world, in contrast to the competing definition of imagination as a form of malady / descent into madness and melancholy. The chapter reminds that physiological definitions are a choice and that humoral theory ascribed different aspects to imagination, some of which, especially its transgressive potential, it chose to de-emphasize and devalue. In contrast, *A Midsummer* takes up a relatively minor and certainly vilified aspect of imagination in humoral theory – its radical ability to change the make-up of one’s body – in order to question humoral theory itself and the hierarchies it used to underwrite. I therefore highlight the transgressive potential of imagination in the Galenic theory itself and then explain how *A Midsummer* embraces this aspect of imagination and uses it to question period hierarchies of tragedy over comedy and the culture of the classical past over the Anglo-Saxon inheritance.

Imagination and Bodily “Imprinting”

The comedy in *A Midsummer* is built on exploring a potent contradiction in early modern affect theory: the contradiction between the belief in the transgressive

potential of passions, especially in the context of theatrical transformation, and the rigid national and class/genre boundaries, which identify “ideal” bodies with certain nations and social classes. Thus, on one hand, we have a persistent early modern belief that an actor’s body possesses an exceptional ability to transform itself under the influence of passion. “Passion” is an early modern term that in the period meant “emotion” or “feeling,” but with a greater connotation of being physically as well as psychologically moved.²⁰⁷ The belief in the extraordinary force of passion to transform one’s physiology (or vice versa) is well demonstrated in this anecdote recorded by Thomas Heywood in his *An Apology for Actors* (1612).

Defending the acting profession against charges of immorality and uselessness, Heywood argues that Julius Caesar himself, a renowned Roman emperor, was an actor. And he goes on to tell an anecdote about him: Playing the role of Hercules, Caesar was supposed to “kill” on stage his servant Lychas who brought him the poisoned shirt of Nessus in a re-enactment of the Greek myth. However, Caesar “in the midst of his torture and fury, finding this Lychas [his servant] hid in a remote corner (appoynted him to creep into of purpose), although he was, as our tragedians use, but seemingly to kill him by some false imagined wound, yet was Caesar so extremely carried away with the violence of his practised fury, and by the perfect shape of the madness of Hercules, to which he had fashioned all his active spirits, that

²⁰⁷ Gail Kern Paster provides a classic definition of humoral passions as simultaneously physical and psychological in nature. See Paster, “Introduction,” *Humoring the Body* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1-24.

he slew him dead at his foot, and after swoong him, *terque quaterque* (as the poet says) about his head.”²⁰⁸ “Being in the depth of a passion” Caesar was impelled to kill his servant Lychas not simply because he confused fiction and reality, but because he “had fashioned all his active spirits” to the “perfect shape of the madness of Hercules.” In period terms, his imagination changed the “active spirits,” the primary vital forces in the early modern understanding, to reshape his body according to the image he created in his mind. Under the influence of passion, Caesar temporarily became Hercules.

Although this anecdote does more to condemn acting than to present it in a favorable light – for his part, Heywood seems blithely unaware of any negative implications – contemporary writers generally agree with Heywood in their tendency to ascribe transformative potential to the faculty of imagination. Laurent Joubert, a French doctor and the chief physician at the court of Catherine de Medici and then her son, king Henry III, goes as far as to say that “the imagination or firmly imprinted desire is able to move the body, not only of the living but also of the dead.”²⁰⁹ What we might perceive as a mystical or supernatural connection of the body to imagination and to other bodies was part of the early modern humoral theory, which Gail Kern Paster called “psychological materialism” or the belief in the material influence of

²⁰⁸ Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London, 1612; New York: Scholars’ Facsimiles and Reprints, 1941), 45.

²⁰⁹ Laurent Joubert, *Treatise on Laughter*, trans. and ed. Gregory Rocher (Tuscaloosa, AL: Alabama UP, 1980), 68.

emotion and the material interconnectedness of all bodies and things in nature.²¹⁰ A *Midsummer Night's Dream* as well as early modern physiological treatises portray the early modern body as more alive than our modern, more mechanized idea of the body allows. An early modern humoral body has a will of its own, and that will itself is composed of the consent of various organs. Consider, for example, how in his *Treatise of Laughter*, Laurent Joubert describes the brain and the heart while he is trying to decide which of them is responsible for the passion of laughter. He writes, "if the emotions are neither in the brain nor in the viscera which serve the vegetative, they will be in the heart. If they were in the brain, they would not be able to infringe upon its other functions; but we see often that judgment reproves such passions, and is powerless to arrest them."²¹¹ Joubert's word-choice, "infringe," "arrest," "reprove," and "powerless" are entirely typical of the worldview which conceptualizes bodily organs as independent ports of authority with their own agenda and power. In this context, imagination is itself a physical process, which summons active spirits and reconfigures the body under the imprint of its own desire. John Lyon's historical introduction to "imagination," *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau* argues that the central difference between contemporary and

²¹⁰ Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 12. For complete citation, see note 1.

²¹¹ Joubert, 31.

early modern understanding of imagination is “the close association of imagination with the senses, and therefore with the body” in the early modern period and earlier.²¹²

So when in the play Egeus accuses Lysander that the latter has “stol’n the impression of her [Hermia’s] fantasy,” he means more than just that Lysander made Hermia fall in love with him (1.1.32). As Theseus’s subsequent explanation to Hermia makes clear, to steal the “impression of her fantasy” is a form of imprinting. “Be advised, fair maid,” replies Theseus to Hermia, “To you your father should be as a god, / One that composed your beauties, yea, and one / To whom you are but as a form in wax, / By him imprinted, and within his power / To leave the figure or disfigure it” (1.1.46-51). Theseus’s speech glosses stealing someone’s “fantasy,” another word for imagination, as imprinting oneself onto the person’s body. Rather than being simply a producer of images, humoral imagination was also a gateway into a specific configuration of the body. Following the Aristotelian tradition, early modern writers posit imagination as a sort of interface between the world of the senses and the world of the mind. Sir John Davies, an early modern jurist and poet (1569-1626) defines “phantasie” as the first receptor of the brain which combines all sensory impressions into one: “Phantasie, neare handmaid to the mind, / Sits and beholds, and doth discern them all [sense impressions]; / Compounds in one, things diverse in their

²¹² John D. Lyons, “Preface,” *Embodied Imagination from Montaigne to Rousseau* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 2005), xii.

kind; / Compares the black and white, the great and small.”²¹³ Intimately connected both to the force of sensory passions and the rule of reason, imagination, “neare handmaid to the mind,” in Davies’s formulation, exists on the border between the two confusing the boundary between inner thought and outside impression. Hermia loves Lysander, but her love originates from the impression that he made on her fantasy.

The danger of “imagination” lies in its flexibility and openness to various influences: if Egeus can imprint himself on Hermia’s imagination, so can Lysander. Being a sort of portal in and out of the individual body, imagination can help an actor transform himself into a different character, and it can help forge an emotional link between Hermia and Lysander. Edward Reynolds, the author of *A Treatise of the Passions* (1640) underlines the transgressive potential of imagination thus: “For Reasons, and all other powers, have their fixed and determined limits in Nature; and therefore they alwayes frame themselves to the truth of things, yeelding assent to nothing but what they finde: But the Imagination is a Faculty boundlesse, and impatient of any limits, save those which it selfe maketh.”²¹⁴ Reynolds then goes on to explain the “libertie” of imagination: imagination has the power of “Creation, as I may so speake, and new making of Objects; Composition, or new mixing them; and

²¹³ John Davies, *Nosce Teipsum* (London, 1608), 46. *Early English Books Online*, STC (2nd ed.) / 6357. http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99845030 (accessed May 6, 2015)

²¹⁴ Edward Reynolds, *A Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man* (London: 1640; repr. Gainesville, FL.: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971), 24.

Translation, or new placing them: unto some of which three, will be reduced all Poetical Fictions, fabulous Transmutations, high Metaphors, and Rhetorical Allegories.”²¹⁵ By approaching the fictive territory of *A Midsummer*, Shakespeare then engaged not only with the idea of a disembodied poetic creation, but also his own stance vis-à-vis bodily manipulation. If all works of imagination “imprint” the body of an audience in a certain way, then how are we to make sense of this bodily imprinting?

Despite being considered a force beyond or before rationality, imagination was believed to create real conditions in the physical world and was held responsible for a wide variety of things, including lovesickness, melancholy, the appearance of an unborn child, and demonic possession in witchcraft, and plague. Period attitudes to “imagination” can be read as affect theories about the proper relationship between outer and inner, the world, the body, and the mind. So, in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton states “in Melancholy men this faculty [of imagination] is most Powerfull and strong, and often hurts, producing many monstrous and prodigious things, especially if it be stirred up by some terrible object, presented to it from common sense, or memory.”²¹⁶ Occupied as he is with diagnosing disease and eliminating its cause, Burton considers the ability of imagination to alter one’s body and moreover, spread to and influence other bodies as fascinating, but ultimately

²¹⁵ Ibid., 24.

²¹⁶ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Vol. 1, eds. Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicholas K. Kiessling, and Rhonda L. Blair (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1989), 152.

dangerous and unhealthy.²¹⁷ Alternatively, Philip Sidney's *Art of Poetry* much more positively praises poetry for its vividness and imaginative range, which can transport the audience to the golden world of imagination that is purer than the world of everyday reality. Sidney characterizes the poet as an inspired creator who is moved himself and who moves the audience correspondingly: The poet "lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect into another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in Nature [...]"²¹⁸ Sidney's belief in the divine or transporting power of poetry to move its audiences and access truth is ultimately traceable to Plato's discussion of imagination in the *Phaedrus*. John Lyons qualifies the Platonic tradition as one, which "rather dualistically sees imagination as both a dangerous faculty linked to the deceptive material world (following the *Sophist* and the *Theaetetus*), and, on the other hand (following the *Phaedrus*), as an almost numinous source of inspiration."²¹⁹ A French Neo-Platonic poet, Guillaume de Saluste du Bartas (1544-1590), whose views are similar to Sidney's praise of the "moving" power of poetry, again discusses

²¹⁷ Following Burton's lead, *Diseases of the Imagination and Imaginary Disease in the Early Modern Period* (2012) focuses on the diseases, both demonic and "natural," attributed to imagination. See Yasmin Annabel Haskell, ed., *Diseases of the Imagination and Imaginary Disease in the Early Modern Period*, Early European Research Series (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2011).

²¹⁸ Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*, 3rd ed., ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, rev. R. W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 85.

²¹⁹ John Lyons, "Preface," xii. For complete citation of this item, see note 6.

“imagination” in terms of imprinting on the wax, echoing both Egeus’s (failed) imprinting on Hermia and the play’s larger discussion of imagination in relation to bodily transformation. Du Bartas compares poetry to a form of imprinting in the readers’ imagination:

And, as a Seal printed in wax (almost)
Another Seal; a learned Poet graveth
So deep his passions in his Readers Ghost,
That oft the Reader th’Authors form receiveth,
For, Verses vertue, sliding secretly
(By secret Pipes) through th’intellectual Notions;
Of all that’s pourtraid artificially
Imprenteth there both good and evill motions.²²⁰

In these lines, du Bartas performs the exact same move as Theseus when the latter makes a link between the way poets impress their form on readers and the way lovers impress their form on the lover’s imagination. Du Bartas describes how poetry performs a form of bodily alteration in its readers when it “slides secretly... through th’intellectual Notions” and “imprenteth” itself in the readers’ minds. Let us compare now du Bartas’ speech with Theseus’ discussion of imagination in the aftermath of the magic forest. In act five, scene one, Theseus dismisses the lovers’ stories about their

²²⁰ Guillaume de Saluste du Bartas qtd. in Lewis Soens, “Introduction,” *Sir Philip Sidney’s Defense of Poesy*, ed. Lewis Soens (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), xxvi.

fantastic experiences in the forest as a product of imagination. He justifies his reasoning by appealing to the authority of “cool reason” which can reject this imaginative imprinting as false and misleading:

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact. [...]
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name. (5.1.4-17)

In this passage, commented upon by many critics, Theseus expresses displeasure with poetical representation, condemning fiction as a lie. Significantly, he relates poets to lovers and madmen, all of whom are guided by their unprofitable turn towards “imagination,” a faculty which “bodies forth / The forms of things unknown.” Although Theseus is remarkable in the force of his rejection, the reasoning by which he links lovers to poets and madmen is entirely unoriginal. As shown above, “imagination” was understood as a bodily process by which lovers fall in love, melancholy men succumb to madness, and poets transport their fictions into

audience's minds. More broadly, imagination signified certain openness to the outside world and its multitude of impressions. In the same speech Theseus lists the kinds of imprinting that gather decisive force in the minds of his three figures: the poet's eye "Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven" and gives a physical manifestation to these "absent" realities. Similarly, madmen and lovers let their bodies decay under the impression of devils from heaven or a ravishing beauty of one's beloved. What unites the three figures of poet, lover, and madman is their investment of affect onto simple physical objects or people: "How easy is a bush supposed a bear!" exclaims Theseus.

If we linger with the madman's "imagination" that appears in Theseus' criticism of poetry, then it becomes clear that Theseus rejects the spiritual dimension of objects and the world in general. His critique is aimed against the categories of hell and heaven, beauty, and fear. If we read *A Midsummer* as a play which most centrally engages with the question of imagination, then what is at stake are competing affect theories about how mind and body relate or should relate in the period. I argue that in its turn towards lovers and actors, the play supports the fluidity of bodily boundaries, suggested by the concept of "imagination." By letting Bottom be "translated," letting Lysander transfer his affection from Hermia to Helena, and finally uniting the body of a "rude mechanical" to the body of classical Pyramus, the play challenges foundational categories of human/beast, Hermia/Helena, and rude/aristocratic in its demonstration of the fluidity of bodily boundaries. The play shows that "imagination" has the ability to transform itself under the impression or shape of *anything* that it

encounters. So, a Bottom can imaginatively become Titania's lover, but also Pyramus in love, and himself, Bottom, the weaver, while Lysander can be an aristocrat in love with Hermia, a puppet or a beast in love with Helena, and finally, Lysander properly re-constituted as an aristocrat in love with Helena. Below, I outline some of the transformations that the poet's and the lover's imaginations are able to produce.

Love and Beastly Transformation in the Magic Forest

Practically everyone reading *A Midsummer* cannot help but notice the parody of love that transpires in the magic forest. Patricia Parker, for instance, turns our attention to the imagery of "joining" and "misjoining" that pervade the joining in marriage mentioned in the first Act and the play's disordered middle, which separates those who should have been together (the four lovers in love, Titania and Oberon) and joins them to the wrong people (the four lovers mixed up, Titania in love with an ass). She concludes, "The misjoinings and botched constructions of the so-called rude mechanicals throughout the *Dream* thus make it possible, as we have suggested a doubled perspective on the professedly natural order of its ending, an estrangement that allows such closure to be viewed as the naturalized righting that enables the very conjunctions on which rule and governance depend."²²¹ Reading the play's language as a political statement, Parker's analysis resonates with other feminist readings of the

²²¹ Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 107.

play. For instance, Bruce Boehrer makes a claim that “Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (ca. 1596) is patently about bestiality.”²²² Boehrer as well as other feminist scholars argue that *A Midsummer Night* is about bestiality because it represents women as basically beasts or, in Harold Brooks’ phrase, an “alien species” in need of man’s control and discipline.²²³ The primary scene for this kind of analysis is Titania’s infatuation with an ass: Oberon punishes Titania for her refusal to surrender him the Indian boy who was the child of her female friend/devotee. Oberon’s punishment of Titania then signifies the re-assertion of male control over female disobedience and female bonding and it also suggests that a proper fit for a disobedient woman is a beast. Boehrer further remarks that such punishment inevitably reflects on the patriarchal system itself: “as author of Titania’s and Bottom’s relationship [...] Oberon himself participates in the dalliance of people with animals, and this dalliance subtends the humanity of the very institutions (marriage, patriarchy, monarchy) he seeks to underwrite.”²²⁴ This kind of feminist analysis of the play illuminates the currents of female oppression in *A Midsummer*, but like Parker, I read Titania’s love of Bottom as a liberating, rather than a constricting comment on the lover’s “imagination” and its ability to impress oneself on any object. What the

²²² Bruce Boehrer, *Shakespeare among the Animals: Nature and Society in the Drama of Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 41.

²²³ Harold Brooks qtd in Boehrer, *Shakespeare among the Animals*, 47.

²²⁴ Boehrer, *Shakespeare among the Animals*, 43.

picture of Titania in love with an ass shows is the plasticity of the lover's imagination – in Theseus's terms, its readiness to take a bush for a bear and a brow of Egypt for Helen of Troy.

It is telling, for example, that Bottom's experience in the forest – during which he was transformed into an ass – is afterwards remembered in the language of the Bible. While Puck and the Athenian aristocrats perceive Bottom is nothing more than an ass, for Bottom himself the magic experience in the forest also meant something else. Bottom, the weaver, was made a king. He was loved by the fairy queen herself and served by the fairies, ready to do his every wish. Titania's treatment of Bottom was divinely exquisite: "Thou art wise as thou art beautiful" (3.1.131), she compliments him, and then later inquires, eager to fulfill his wishes, "What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?" (4.1.25); "Or say, sweet love, what thou desir'st to eat. [...] I have a ventures fairy that shall seek / The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee off new nuts" (4.1.28-33). We can imagine the embrace of Titania, the Queen of the Fairy Land, and Bottom, a "rude mechanical" as a form of an emblem. This picture, visually represented for instance on the cover of a collection of critical essays on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and rendered in the play as Titania's invitation to Bottom – "I do love thee. Therefore go with me" – as enacting a crucial move of representing the unrepresentable, that which does not materially and physically exist, but which is

nevertheless real and powerful (3.1.138).²²⁵ As Theseus remarked earlier, a bush is not a bear, but the picture of Titania in love with an ass gives a double identity to a single object. It represents Bottom as a donkey-head *and* as beloved of Titania. Instead of simply negating the lover's feelings, the picture of their potential embrace gives a striking reality to the lover's version of the story: it authorizes and celebrates the union of the "deluded" lover with his insubstantial and airy imagination. Titania's fairies salute Bottom with a triple "Hail" welcoming and acknowledging the solidity, so to speak, of Titania's love, which here functions on the par with divine right to kingship (3.1.158-60).

Early modern emblem books often functioned as memory aids, representing conventional biblical lessons and parables in visual form, with a motto or a short explanation of the significance of the picture underneath it. For instance, one of Geoffrey Whitney's emblems from his popular *A Choice of Emblemes and Other Devices* represents a man on a wagon with two horses that pull him forward. Underneath the picture are two stanzas of verse, which relate the wagoner to "That man, whose hath affections fowle untamde" and who lets his passions, instead of his reason, guide him. The last two lines conclude, "Then ridle will, and reason make thy

²²⁵ A picture of Titania embracing Bottom – painted by H. Fuseli and engraved by R. Rhodes – is represented on the cover of Dorothea Kehler, ed., *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

guide / So maiste thow stande, when others doune do slide.”²²⁶ Whitney reads the man on a wagon emblematically, concluding that a person should not let his passions pull him in whichever directions, but rely on reason as a guide. Titania’s romance with Bottom has the quality of an emblem insofar as it too represents a larger point about the lovers’ imagination as ready to take on any object. Helena’s verses earlier in the play may be a motto of this emblem: “Things base and vile, holding no quantity, / Love can transpose to form and dignity. / Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind.” (1.1.232-34). Although Titania-Bottom emblem can be read negatively as an expression of Titania’s supposed delusion, the play supports a different affect theory. Instead of dismissing imagination as insubstantial, the play shows the porousness of bodily boundaries and the ease with which a body can become something else. If critics have argued that the encounter makes Titania beastly, it also makes Bottom more “airy” (3.1.143). Bottom’s transformation is evident in his response to the dream, which can be conceptualized as *his* dream or his love for Titania. Emerging from his brief sojourn as a man with a donkey head and Titania’s beloved, Bottom reports:

I have had a most rare vision. ... Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was and methought I had—but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the

²²⁶ Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes and Other Devices* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 6.

ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to
conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. (4.1.198-205)

As critics have long recognized, Bottom's words echo a passage from *I Corinthians* (2:6-10), which contrasts the wisdom of this world to the "mystery" of God which is beyond understanding.²²⁷ Most strikingly, the speech positions Bottom as somehow touched and transformed by his experience in the magic forest. It shows that in contrast to Theseus' rejection of the reality of the magic forest, Bottom has not fully recovered from his experience as Titania's lover and almost a king of the Fairyland. The effects linger in his confused language and his stumbled attempts to explain what he has experienced: "Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was and methought I had—but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had." Bottom pauses and stutters, echoing Theseus' later comments about the stutters and gaps in the unwelcome welcomes he received. Explaining his surprising willingness to hear the rude mechanicals' disordered performance, Theseus states, "I have seen them [his subordinates] shiver and look pale, / Make periods in the midst of sentences, / Throttle their practiced accent in their fears, / And in conclusion dumbly have broke off" (5.1.95-98). Although Theseus is quick to dismiss the pauses and stuttering simply on account of his servants' rudeness, we can see, I think,

²²⁷ See Thomas B. Stroup, "Bottom's Name and his Epiphany," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29.1 (1978): 79-82; Meredith Anne Skura, *Shakespeare the Actor and the Purposes of Playing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), Chapter 2; Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 97-98.

something else going on in Bottom's incoherent report of his dream. More than anything, his report speaks to incommensurability between "my dream," in Bottom's own words, and his ostensibly rude body as someone incapable of dreaming and transformation. By giving his romance with Titania the official title of "'Bottom's Dream,'" Bottom effectively rewrites the magic forest as his own (4.1.208).

Furthermore, he adopts the traditional role of a lover, imagining his love transformed into a ballad and forming a natural part of the tragic discourse of love and sacrifice: "I shall sign it at her death," he adds at the conclusion of his musings (4.1.211).

That the boundaries between beastly and noble are not fixed but easily crossed with the help of one's imagination is evident in the Athenian lovers' own transformations in the magic forest. If at first, the love of Hermia and Lysander seems on the level above the working-class characters and worldly life in general, the magic sport of Puck quickly reveals their status as mere puppets or beasts that follow only their sense. If Bottom's imagination ennobles him, it degrades the four lovers, demonstrating that all they truly "imagine" is merely a proxy for sexual attraction. When we first meet Hermia and Lysander in the play, the two proclaim their love in lofty and bookish terms, comparing it to classical antecedents and Greek mythology. So Hermia defines the nature of her love through the classical antecedents of Cupid, Venus, and Dido:

My good Lysander,
I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head,

By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burned the Carthage queen
[...]

Tomorrow truly will I meet with thee. (1.1.168-178)

Hermia's love is portrayed as defying the ordinary material world of animal passion and desire. Instead, her love aspires to the realm of myth and transcendental feeling, not bound by time or place. Hermia's sacrificial desire to die for her love is also contrasted to the tyrannical will of her father who insists on her marrying another man. Such lovers' predicament is now well-known to Shakespeare's readers from *Romeo and Juliet*, written about the same time as *Midsummer*. The latter play takes however a different turn as the lovers experience the magic work of a love potion and begin to fight over the most trivial differences. Lysander suddenly abandons Hermia and falls madly in love with Helena while Demetrius forgets his previous attachment to Hermia and starts singing praises to Helena. The absurdity of the situation reaches perhaps its apogee when Hermia tries to find the reason for this sudden switch of love and blames it on Helena's tall stature. In contrast to her previous speech on the inexpressible nature of her love now Hermia attributes love to a matter of height: "Puppet?" she exclaims in response to Helena's inadvertent remark on Hermia, "Why, so! Ay, that way goes the game. / Now I perceive she hath made compare between our statures... / And with her personage, her tall personage, / Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed

with him” (3.2.290-294). Helena’s height, rather than some divine origin of love, now became the source of Lysander’s love.

The play uses the body – the women’s different heights – to trivialize and make fun of Hermia’s earlier claim to divine transcendence through love. Most obviously, however, the divine origin of love is ridiculed through making it a mere proxy for the magic love juice. Puck’s love juice, which can switch “true love” on and off arbitrarily, is a literal translation of the power of imagination into a single physical object. In effect, the Athenian lovers were made into actors of their own passions rather than truly possessing them. As by command of a theater director, Lysander, the actor, forsakes his passion for Hermia and exclaims, “Content with Hermia? No, I do repent / The tedious minutes I with her have spent” (2.2.17-18). He reveals the perfect transferability of his love from one person to another with the help of a simple object, which inflames his passion automatically. A suggestive metaphor for semen and the lovers’ disavowal of sex, the love juice also encompasses the magic of theater and the power of a lover’s imagination to construct its own reality: like a magic wand, “imagination” literalized as the love juice, transfers affection from one person to another, or transforms an actor into a character.

A number of early modern scholars including Joseph Roach, Jane Donawerth, and Tiffany Stern emphasize the central role of imagination in the early modern understanding of acting. In *The Player’s Passion* Roach describes the acting process thus: an actor imagines the passion of the character he is portraying; in turn, imagination transforms his animal spirits and produces the actor’s outward

expressions (movement, facial expression, etc.) as their effect. Thus the core of acting is imagination and it is this that accounts for the early modern conception of an actor as a “changeling proteus.”²²⁸ Similarly, Jane L. Donawerth traces early modern acting theories to the influence of classical rhetoric and the idea of actor as an impassioned orator; she argues that early modern acting theory gradually changed from thinking of an actor as adding passion to his role to the actor as adding his own characterization to the role he is playing.²²⁹ The earlier idea of actor as adding passion to his role, rather than his own unique understanding of character and plot, makes sense based on early modern physiology of acting as a passionate transformation. While we might think of acting passion as merely adding emotion, reading with intonation, gesturing, etc., early modern humoral theory implied that imagining someone else’s passion involves a material transformation of the body as a whole. Thus, in her research of early modern acting practices, Tiffany Stern concludes that the way the play portrays the “rude mechanicals”’ preparation for performance is “broadly true-to-life” despite its comic nature and its mixing of earlier theatrical traditions with contemporary Elizabethan

²²⁸ Joseph Roach, *The Player’s Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 19.

²²⁹ Jane L. Donawerth, “Shakespeare and Acting Theory in the English Renaissance,” *Shakespeare and the Arts*, eds. Cecile Williamson Cary and Henry S. Limouze (Washington, D. C.: University Press of America, 1981), 165-179. See especially the discussion on p. 169, where Donawerth directly contrasts passion and characterization.

practice.²³⁰ They do “study” their parts individually, and they assume the nature of their characters based on their “stock” identification. In a telling question Bottom inquires as to the nature of his character thus: “What is Pyramus? A lover or a tyrant?” (1.2.17). Bottom’s decision on how to play the role is based primarily on the dominant “passion” that is associated with each character type: as he puts it, “a lover is more condoling” (1.2.32).

Thus, when Puck confuses the imagination of Lysander and Demetrius and makes them both fall in love with Helena, he initiates a process similar to transformation under the influence of imagined passion, both in love and in acting. When Puck applies the love juice to the eye of Lysander, he says, “Churl [mistaking Lysander for churlish Demetrius], upon thy eyes I throw / All the power this charm doth owe. / When thou wak’st, let love forbid / Sleep his seat on thy eyelid” (2.2.84-87). The love transformation happens through the eye, and as a result of it Lysander immediately falls in love with Helena. Significantly, the idea that love contagion happens through the eye circulates in a wide range of early modern texts. Citing Levinus Lemnius’s *The Secret Miracles of Nature* (first translated in English in 1658, but available in Latin from 1599) as well as a range of other early modern treatises on physiology, Darryl Chalk argues, “An exchange of vision between individuals thus provoked the possibility of spreading disease; lovesickness and plague were thought to

²³⁰ Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000), 31.

spread in this way.”²³¹ This idea that vision somehow alters the bodily constitution of the person who is the subject of the gaze is emphatically a humoral idea, in line with early modern affect theory outlined in Chapter 1. In addition to ascribing negative contagion to vision, this affect theory similarly attributed transgressive potential to passions, marginalized groups associated with passionate excess (such as women and children), and identified material “sympathy” between bodily matter and the stuff of the outside world.²³² Levinus Lemnius’s *The Secret Miracles of Nature* is instructive both in its belief in the contagious power of eyesight and its desire to identify such contagion as detrimental and especially characteristic of the “unrestrained” members of society, menstruating women and by nature unreasonable animals wholly given over to passions. Lemnius explains:

For example: The Basilisk doth kill a man by his sight... So the sight of a woolf, if he can but come near a man doth cause hoarseness... So the Feminine sex having their Monthly terms flowing from them, do make dusk the brightness of Ivory, and a looking glass; doth blunt the edge of a Sword, doth

²³¹ Darryl Chalk, ““Make Me not Sighted Like the Basilisk””: Vision and Contagion in *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Embodied Cognition and Shakespeare’s Theatre*, eds. Laurie Johnson, John Sutton, and Evelyn Tribble. (New York: Routledge, 2014): 111-132. The quote is on p. 119.

²³² On sympathetic correspondences and their relation to humoral theory, see Mary Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2013). Floyd-Wilson argues that the early modern system of sympathies and antipathies extended, and sometimes contradicted, the humoral account of transgressive passions.

choak the Corn;... and she doth not only deform every one that she meets, but her own self with spots and blemishes. By the same reason the eyes being corrupted with blearey'dnesse, and ... rednesse in the eyes, or bloud-shot, doth happen to corrupt the eyes of others.²³³

Lemnius's affect theory stigmatizes emotional contagion, associating it with disease, death, and bodily/material deterioration. *A Midsummer*, however, uses this humoral idea of imaginative contagion and bodily transformation to critique the very hierarchies that humoral theory was used to uphold. By imaginatively transferring the affection of Lysander and Demetrius from Hermia to Helena, the play shows the "rudeness" of their bodies and the ease with which one object can substitute for another. On the other hand, the play suggests the suitability of a rude man like Bottom to play the role of a lover, as it opens up the possibility of his transformation in the forest and concludes with Bottom's performance of the role of Pyramus, a classical cousin to characters like Theseus and Hermia. The comedy realigns the lovers' relationship with their bodies by making imagination, not classically-inspired devotion the primary agent in the lovers' relationships. Moreover, the comedy exaggerates the power of imagination since the lovers become not simply *more* embodied, but actually on the par with "wood-birds" who "begin to couple now" and other beasts of the forest (4.1.137). In other words, the lovers become "beasts" who, in the early modern

²³³ Lemnius Levinus qtd in Chalk, 119. For complete citation of Chalk's article, see note 25.

physiology, are completely led by their sensual passions. Boehrer rightly notes the presence of animal imagery in relation to the lovers, but he ignores the fact that love transforms not only the women, but also the men of the play into beasts. So on one hand, Helena states that love made her behave like a dog. She says to Demetrius, “I am your spaniel, and Demetrius, / The more you beat me I will fawn on you. / Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me, / Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave, / Unworthy as I am, to follow you” (2.1.203-207). In this striking speech Helena reveals the dehumanizing effect of love, which makes her ready to sacrifice anything for the return of affection. On the other hand, men have been turned into beasts by their immediate turn to violence as the solution for their rivalry. Puck, that “merry wanderer of the night,” continues his sport on the lovers as he mimics Demetrius and Lysander’s angry voices and humanely leads them astray from each other (2.1.43). The play portrays the lovers in the forest as led only by their imagination, oblivious to all other demands. In this regard, Bottom’s wry remark that “reason and love keep little company together” stands as a piece of wisdom in contrast to the lovers’ emotional perturbations (3.1.127-128).

Genre Theory / Affect Theory

Bottom’s “divine” translation into Titania’s beloved and the lovers’ beastly transformations in the magic forest speak more than to the physical power of imagination to induce love and transform the body. The love juice or imagination also engages the question of genre. By suspending bodily boundaries between rude and

aristocratic – showing Bottom as divine and the four lovers as beastly – the play also suspends generic boundaries that were traditionally identified with these bodies.

Traditionally, early modern discussions of genre follow Aristotle's division of genre in the *Poetics*, which links heroic tragedy to the bodies of kings and nobility while consigning comedy to the bodies of rustics and mechanicals. The admiration that early modern writers profess for tragedy is unabashed and linked to the value of decorum, a term that is as much aesthetic as it is social. To cite just a few influential examples we can turn to Philip Sidney's discussion of tragedy versus comedy in *An Apology for Poetry*. In his work, Sidney makes a famous complaint against generic mixing that is especially relevant to *A Midsummer*'s mixing of comedy and tragedy. Taking an issue with contemporary plays' disregard of maintaining a continuous tone and level of formality throughout, Sidney states his objection to generic mixing thus:

But, besides these gross absurdities, how all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carries it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion; so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragi-comedy obtained.²³⁴

²³⁴ Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*, 3rd ed., ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, rev. R. W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 112.

Sidney's objection to plays' generic indeterminacy is both literary and social: on one hand, having a clown in the tragic part of a play disrupts audience's expectations, so that audience members do not know whether they should "admire and commiserate" or respond to "sportful" spirit of the play; on the other hand, earlier in *An Apology*, Sidney says that mixing kings and clowns contradicts social norms or "honest civility" of assigning king to a higher or a different place than to a clown.²³⁵ Although critics have taken Sidney's objection against tragicomedy as a reference to the popularity of tragicomedy in the early seventeenth century, inaugurated by John Fletcher's *The Faithfull Shepherdess* (1608), an English successor to Guarini's tragicomedy *Il Pastor Fido* (1590), Sidney's remark is really not as much an attack on a specific genre as it is a defense of social and aesthetic decorum.²³⁶

The Sidney's sentiment that generic decorum is also social decorum is widespread. In *Certain Notes of Instruction* (1575), a treatise on poetry and versification, George Gascoigne instructs his poet to stay focused on his "invention," making sure to suit form to content, "for as to use obscure and dark phrases in a pleasant sonnet is nothing delectable, so to intermingle merry jests in a serious matter

²³⁵ Ibid., 110.

²³⁶ Sidney's remark against mixing genres is usually discussed in the context of the popularity of tragicomedy in the seventeenth century, a trend inaugurated by John Fletcher's *Faithfull Shepherdess* in England. See, for instance, Subha Mukherji and Raphael Lyne, eds., *Early Modern Tragicomedy*, Studies in Renaissance Literature, Vol. 22 (Cambridge, U.K.: D. S. Brewer, 2007). Instead, I see Sidney's remark as directed more generally against the breaking of decorum, not as a statement on a specific genre.

is an indecorum.”²³⁷ Not bothering to explain why “merry jests” do not suit with “serious matter,” Gascoigne simply takes it as a given, referring readers to the matter of decorum. But the most explicit proponent of poetic decorum is probably George Puttenham, whose *The Art of English Poesy* (1589) is dedicated towards teaching decorum in all its various forms. Like Sidney and Gascoigne, Puttenham holds that “all hymns and histories and tragedies were [to be] written in the high style, [and] all comedies and interludes and other common poesies of loves and such like in the mean style.”²³⁸ In Chapter 4, “of language,” Puttenham makes a comment that clarifies the association of “decorum” not simply with high social class, but also, significantly, with the culture of the classical past. Discussing which language be most decorous to use, Puttenham explains, “Neither shall he [the poet] take the terms of Northern-men, nor, in effect, any speech used beyond the river of Trent, though no man can deny but that theirs is the purer English Saxon at this day, yet it is not so courtly nor so current as our southern English is.”²³⁹ Eager to reject the heritage of the Anglo-Saxon past, Puttenham is instead focused on maintaining our “so courtly” and “current” southern English. Wendy Wall, among other critics, has discussed Puttenham’s contradictory

²³⁷ George Gascoigne, *Certain Notes of Instruction* (1575), *Sidney’s ‘The Defense of Poesy’ and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 239.

²³⁸ George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, in *Sidney’s The Defense of Poesy’ and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 142.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

ambitions throughout *The Art of English Poesy*, claiming that even as Puttenham attempts to bolster national pride in the English language, he is also anxious to excise the language of women and peasants and not make his English too “domestic.”²⁴⁰

In addition to Wall’s focus on class and gender, I would like to draw attention to the *geographical* orientation in Puttenham and other theorists of poetry. In their division of “high” versus “low” genres, Puttenham, Gascoigne, Sidney, and others do not only privilege the culture of aristocratic men of court, but they also look towards integrating English with the culture of classical Greece and Rome, at the cost of their more immediate Anglo-Saxon past. The writers’ association of “high” genre with tragedy and “low” genre with comedy likewise follows the lines of these bodily and geographic divisions. Tragedy is theorized as something foreign, classical, and aristocratic; in contrast, comedy is considerably more “domestic,” appropriate for peasants and associated with lower social class. In early modern discussions of poetry, comedy is integrated only unwillingly as a species of art, while the respect for tragedy is much more immediate and unreserved. In *A Brief Apology of Poetry* (1591), a treatise that forms a part with the intellectual landscape of Sidney *An Apology for Poetry*, John Harington concludes that despite all reservations one can have against poetry, no objection can be made against “heroical poems” and *even* comedies may be considered useful: “I believe that the reading of a good heroical poem may make a

²⁴⁰ See Wendy Wall’s excellent book, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002).

man both wiser and honester. [...] Finally, if comedies may be so made as the beholders may be bettered by them, without all doubt all other sorts of poetry may bring their profit as they do bring delight, and if all, then much more the chief of all, which by all men's consent is heroical."²⁴¹ Harington is attuned to the humanist idea of "profit" as something that follows naturally from tragedy, but which "may be so made" as to follow from comedy too.

Importantly, this division of genre is also an affective stance, which combines the desire for tragedy with a specific configuration of the body – courtly, more classical than Anglo-Saxon, and built on the idea of decorum, which is really a sort of fence used to guard the translation of bodies from one to another. Sidney, Gascoigne, Harington and others are as opposed to the idea of mixing comedy and tragedy on stage, as they are to the idea of sickness by the eye, discussed by Chalk. Just as being susceptible to the "imprinting" of another body is considered a characteristically female trait, for example, mixing genres is also coded as inferior and unworthy of a truly great poet. In this context, *A Midsummer* validates bodily plasticity by making "imagination" not only a form of transformation that affects the lower classes, but also the most high born and classical. In doing so, the play thoroughly mixes genres, showing how heroic tragedy turns into comedy and how comedy morphs into heroic action. Thus, Hermia becomes a "puppet" and Bottom turns into a "divine" and

²⁴¹ John Harington, *A Brief Apology of Poetry (1591)*, *Sidney's Defense of Poesy and Selected Renaissance Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 273.

“exquisite” lover. The section below demonstrates generic mixing throughout the play in more detail.

Mixed Genres in *A Midsummer*

When Philostrate presents the mechanicals’ *Pyramus and Thisbe* as “A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus / And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth” (5.1.56-57), Theseus expresses astonishment at the juxtaposition of opposites alluding to the classical concept of *concordia discors*. He says, “That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow. / How shall we find the concord of this discord?” (5.1.59-60). His statement could obviously be applied not only to the rude mechanicals’ blurring of genres, but also to the play as a whole, which consists of unresolved juxtaposition of opposites throughout. Constructed as a series of tragicomic plots – starting with the farce among the aristocratic lovers in the forest to Titania’s strangely sublime romance with Bottom, and finally, to the mechanicals’ comedic presentation of classical tragedy *Pyramus and Thisbe* – the play proceeds by accumulation of frames which comment on each other and suspend boundaries between “high” and “low” genres and bodies.

Critics have long noted the similarities between the court of Theseus and Hippolyta and the fairy kingdom of Oberon and Titania. It is often remarked, for example, that in early modern period, the actors playing Theseus and Hippolyta would double the fairy couple – a practice often adopted in modern staging as well. In addition, the open and violent quarrel of Oberon and Titania over the Indian boy and

their mutual sexual jealousies are often seen as repressed counterparts of the much less vocal relationship between Theseus and Hippolyta. Kenneth Burke, for instance, notes in his 1972 lecture, “Probably commissioned as a kind of masque, to celebrate a wedding among persons of nobility, the ‘Dream’ simply exports the aesthetic and social values of the court to a series of fanciful scenes in the woods, which are the court all over again, but in an idealized form.”²⁴² Although the editors carefully note that Burke’s opinion that the play was commissioned as a masque “no longer reflects a consensus of opinion among Shakespeare scholars,” Burke notices a most potent aspect of the play: its genre as a masque or royal celebration, which is how Theseus casts the subsequent play in his opening remarks.²⁴³

Indeed, what unites the fairy forest with the court of Theseus and the young Athenian lovers is their comparable noble status as aristocrats and rulers of the land. Moreover, the similarity is linguistic and structural, as both fairy and daytime aristocrats employ formal language and the framework of law and classical culture to define their relationships with each other. Thus, in her first appearance in the play Titania narrates the fantastic consequences of her marital discord with Theseus in a

²⁴² Kenneth Burke’s 1972 lecture appears in Kenneth Burke, “Why *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*?” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 57.3 (2006): 297-308. The quote is from page 301. A full version of the lecture is reprinted in Scott L. Newstok, ed., *Kenneth Burke on Shakespeare* (West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, 2006).

²⁴³ The editors disagree with Burke’s opinion that the play was commissioned as a masque in Kenneth Burke, “Why *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*?” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 57.3 (2006), footnote 9.

way that echoes Theseus' earlier language focused on the rhetoric of law, power, and social privilege. Titania addresses Oberon thus:

And never, since the middle summer's spring,

Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead,

By paved mountain or by rushy brook,

[...]

But with thy brawls [referring to Theseus] thou hast disturbed our sport.

Therefore, the winds, piping to us in vain,

As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea,

Contagious fogs which, falling in the land,

Hath every pelting river made so proud

That they have overborne their continents. (2.1.82-92)

Titania's language is measured, stately, and formal. Echoing the authority of Theseus in the earlier scenes, it simply substitutes the fantasy of the magic forest and the authority of the "other" mysterious and unknown world for the political power of Theseus. Titania's iconic speech demands attention – indeed, repetition by the audience – through the stately language and through the implicit request to imagine the unimaginable, fantastic forces of nature, "Contagious fogs," which made whole rivers overflow, empty fields drowned by water, epidemics of diseases, and the bewildering change of seasons. The massive scale of changes and the fantastic aspect of the speech situates Titania, the bearer of the speech, in a whole other world from the audience, a world governed by other laws and accessible to the audience only in

part, as if by hearsay. The speech seductively substitutes social and political factors (the rule of the queen or the superiority of the aristocracy) with the rhetoric of magic and the possibility of transformation. Titania represents natural changes in weather and agricultural conditions as dependent on forces beyond human control and she simultaneously positions herself and Oberon on the level of royalty, with powers beyond those of the majority of audience members in attendance.

In terms of theatrical potential, the play “borrows” some of the forest’s magic as a function of its own semi-divine status – what Sidney called “the tragical part” of the play. When Titania talks about massive natural disasters, or when Puck applies the magic flower juice on the lovers’ eyelids, these characters become “distant” and separated from the audience by virtue of their supernatural majesty and power – and so does the play. Borrowing Robert Weimann’s famous distinction between “platea” and “locus,” it is possible to say that the fairy and aristocratic characters in the play appear more distant from the audience, both in terms of physical space and fictional time.²⁴⁴ Weimann writes that “locus” represents the play’s “symbolic action” as the kinds of events that are not really accessible to the audience directly – the iconic biblical scenes in medieval mystery plays, or, we can add, the world of the mythical forest and Athenian nobility in *A Midsummer*.²⁴⁵ The separation of Titania from the

²⁴⁴ Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*, ed. Robert Schwartz (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1978): 73-84.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

audience is effected not only through her supernatural powers (the ability to cause a flood or bad harvest), but also through the length and majesty of her speeches. For instance, the above speech, where Titania describes a series of natural disasters caused by magic is 36 lines long, but it appears longer because it is organized as a list, with Titania listing one natural disaster after another as a judge reading a list of offenses. Her diction is likewise formal, referring to “human mortals,” rivers that have “overborne” their continents and “distemperature” of seasons – Latinate, learned vocabulary that bears striking contrast to the rude mechanicals’ homely vocabulary and hilarious malapropisms. With Titania and Oberon, the stage “moves away” from the audience, portraying a world that appears inaccessible to the majority of English lay men and women. Oberon and Titania replay and mimic the royalty of Theseus and Hippolyta, while their fantastic magic heavily borrows from the tradition of aristocratic entertainments.

The confusion introduced by the play, however, consists in the fact that it presents Titania’s encounter with Bottom in the same language of the masque and aristocratic authority as that which defined Hermia and Titania’s own earlier speeches. The love juice, which Oberon sprinkles on the eyes of sleeping Titania has the unexpected effect of dissolving generic boundaries and makes Titania to relate to Bottom in the same “genre” she related to Oberon. She addresses Bottom:

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.

Mine ear is much enamored of thy note;

So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;

And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me

On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee. (3.1.113-117)

Titania's relation to Bottom is reminiscent of Lysander and Demetrius' praise of Helena and Hermia. It borrows the same rhetoric of sudden, unexplainable love, which transports Titania to new heights of being, not accessible to simple mortals. By making Bottom the object of her affection and foregrounding his power to "enthrall" and "move" her, Titania implicitly elevates her lowly lover and performs the opposite to what Bottom does to Hercules and Pyramus in his acting. If the clown makes the classical heroes ridiculous, Titania renders the English weaver "beautiful" and "gentle." The mixing of genres confuses comic content with "tragic," that is, elevated and formal, language and brings about a doubleness of vision – the possibility of seeing Bottom as indeed "gentle" and "beautiful."

If we think of genre as a guide or framework through which the play directs the audience on how to perceive the events within its story, then by asking us to "Hail" Bottom as Titania's lover, the play is implicitly directing us to re-evaluate our perception of the tragic genre and revise our view of Bottom as a strictly comic character. When a fellow-actor sees Bottom transformed into an ass, he remarks, "Thou art translated" (3.1.105). In the early modern period, "translation" meant not only rendering something into another language, but also and primarily, "transference;

removal or conveyance from one person, place, or condition to another.”²⁴⁶ Thus, Flute’s remark on Bottom’s “translation” refers to his transference or bodily movement from human into an ass: he was made into someone else. This movement from human to animal reveals proximity between the two bodies (Bottom is like an ass), but it also indicates the movement of Bottom from one place to another, from the realm of “rational” reality advocated by Theseus to the land truly governed by the logic of affective translation. Titania’s imagination makes her fall in love with Bottom, but Bottom in turn gets translated into someone more like Titania, speaking in the words of St. Paul and quoting the Bible to express his experience of love.

If we take into account the striking difference between English and Greek bodies in *A Midsummer* – a difference expressed in terms of the various degrees of embodiment and ways of speaking – it becomes clear that the play participates in the period reshaping and appropriation of the Greek ideals into the English culture. The geohumoral theory, itself a classical inheritance, unsurprisingly postulated that the climate of Greece was considered ideal for developing both the powers of the mind and the body. In *English Ethnicity* Floyd-Wilson explains that ancient Greeks were believed to have the quickness of wit and the strength of the body unmatched by their belated and misplaced English counterparts. In contrast, the English were situated to north of the ideal region, so that their own cold and moist climate was conducive to

²⁴⁶ "translation, n." . I.1.a. OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/204844?redirectedFrom=translation> (accessed May 06, 2015).

physical prowess, but it also encouraged slow wit and mediocre intellect. Floyd-Wilson summarizes, a “fundamental sense of displacement derived from the British Isles’ marginalized status in a set of classical texts that were revered and considered authoritative – gave rise to the notions that their bodies were intemperate, their culture borrowed and belated, and their nature barbarous.”²⁴⁷ This sense of English inferiority and Greek dominance was deeply ingrained in the English view of self, and as Floyd-Wilson argues, it often had a distinctly geohumoral character. So, John Bulwer, the author of *Chironomia* and *Chirologia*, two treatises on rhetoric and the art of gestures, justifies the necessity of his work by saying that he wants to restore to the English the perfection of bodily gestures they lost: the English have degenerated from the example of ancient Greeks who had “the thinnesse and purity of the aire” and “naturally [possessed] both motions of the Minde and Body to explain and unfold their cogitations and recondite senses with incredible facilitie.”²⁴⁸ Insofar as Shakespeare portrays Bottom and his English fellows as emphatically embodied, closer to assess than humans in their physicality, he confirms the traditional association between Englishness and their “northern” embodiment in the Galenic framework. However,

²⁴⁷ Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge, U. K.: Cambridge UP, 2003), 4.

²⁴⁸ John Bulwer, “Præuidum” to *Chironomia*, in *Chirologia, or the Naturall language of the hand [...]: whereunto is added Chironomia, or The art of manual rhetoricke [...]* (London, 1644), n.p. *Early English Books Online*, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:12004554 (accessed May 6, 2015)

insofar as the play shows the evidence of a “rude mechanical” like Bottom to “translate” himself beyond the bounds of his physiology and fall in love with Titania, it shows that “imagination” is a faculty, which can transport a lowly laborer into the realm of classical past and re-constitute his body accordingly.

In *Musophilus: Containing a General Defence of Learning* (1599), Samuel Daniel, a poet, historian, and a friend of Philip Sidney’s sister, Countess of Pembroke, presents an imaginary dialogue between Musophilus, an idealistic lover of learning, and Philocosmus, a cynical worldly man – a dialogue, which I think encapsulates the debate the aristocrats (and the audience members) are having as they are watching the mechanicals’ performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*.²⁴⁹ Philocosmus questions the value of *English* poetry, given the superior culture of the Continent: “Is this the walk of all your wide renown, / This little point, this scarce discerned isle, / Thrust from the world, with whom our speech unknown / Made never any traffic of our style?”²⁵⁰ Who would care to write poetry in English, given the physical and intellectual separation of Britain from the rest of Europe? We can imagine this question asked given, for instance, Bottom’s ludicrous attempt to perform Hercules. In Act one, scene two, Bottom enters on stage and enacts the role of a raging tyrant to what we imagine

²⁴⁹ Samuel Daniel, *Musophilus: Containing a General Defence of Learning* (1599), Sidney’s *The Defense of Poesy* and *Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (New York: Penguin Books, 2004): 274-280.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, lines 417-21, p. 277.

audience's laughs. Deviating from Quince's desire to proceed with the proper assignment of roles, Bottom declaims:

‘The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates;
And Phibbus car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar
The foolish Fates.’ (1.2.23-30)

Bottom turns the heroic part of Hercules into a comedic show, which only underlines the distance of an English rustic like Bottom from the humanist culture of classical learning and aristocratic refinement. In an article on the status of early modern rhyme, Katherine Bootle Attie has recently showed that in its appeal to the senses, rhyme had a persistent association both with the Platonic tradition of poetic madness and “cheap,” street ballad-mongering: “He [Shakespeare] also seems fully cognizant of the shifting social status and occasionally suspect moral status associated with rhyme, common property of courtier-poets in love, balladmongers in taverns, and clowns or Vices in plays.”²⁵¹ When Bottom uses rhyme and alliteration in his role as a raging tyrant, he

²⁵¹ Katherine Bottle Attie, “Passion Turned to Prettiness: Rhyme or Reason in Hamlet,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63.3 (2012), 393-423. The quote is from p. 402.

likewise uses language as a form of sensual attraction, “cheap” rhyme that renders a lofty hero into a common clown. He likewise confirms the poetic precepts about the classical value of “high” tragedy against “low” and native comedy.

Philocosmus would agree, and so do Theseus, Lysander, and Demetrius who are later laughing at the “beastly” acting of the “rude mechanicals” in their performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. However, the comments of Theseus, Lysander, and Demetrius, are indicative of the nobles’, but not the play’s derisive attitude towards the rusticity of Bottom and his fellows. The aristocrats do not realize that Bottom and Flute’s interpretation of *Pyramus and Thisbe* on stage is not only hilarious, but also parodically true. The forest experience makes it clear that the mechanicals’ play accurately portrays the absurd proclamations of love and speedy betrayals made by the Athenian lovers themselves. If *Pyramus and Thisbe* is a farce, so is Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius “plays” in the magic “sport” staged by Puck. The events in the magic forest demonstrate that it is the power of “imagination,” a form of physical imprinting in the Galenic theory, which is responsible for the lovers’ transformation, rather than some abstract idea of love. Thus, the play refutes Daniel’s Philocosmus and seems to side instead with Musophilus’s rejoinder to Philocosmus:

Or should we careless come behind the rest
In power of words, that go before in worth,
Whenas our accents, equal to the best,
Is able greater wonders to bring forth,

When all that ever hotter spirits expressed

Comes bettered by the patience of the north? (941-46)

Musophilus, the voice that seems to “win” in the Daniel’s dialogue, asserts the importance of the English language and specifically aligns English “accents” with the island’s geographical positioning in “the north.” He argues that despite the island’s geohumoral inferiority, the English language has much to teach the “hotter spirits” of the South.

Likewise, I see *A Midsummer* as a play whose focus on imagination and bodily plasticity effects a reorientation of the geohumoral discourse, showing how humoral theory itself can be used to transgress regional and class boundaries. Subversively, the play portrays both acting and love as a form of imaginative/bodily translation, which can equally valorize the lowly and downgrade the noble. Bottom, a “rude” working-class man, is at first sight an unlikely choice to perform the role of an aristocratic lover from a classical story of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. However, given that early modern humoral theory actually required an *identity* between actor and character as a result of the transforming role of passion, it makes perfect sense that Bottom would play Pyramus. The events in the magic forest conflated lovers’ imagination with the “love juice” and showed their bodies as prone to beastly transformation – in other words, the play showed that to portray a Pyramus in love requires nothing more than an ass and that is exactly Bottom. Moreover, the play also questioned the rigidity of beast/human boundaries by showing the ease with which Bottom gets affected by Titania’s love and starts to imagine himself in the language of the Bible.

Finally, the mechanicals' performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, aptly titled as "the most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe," thoroughly mixes genres and languages, casting doubt on the impenetrable boundary separating tragedy from comedy and Latinate phrases from the Anglo-Saxon accents. When in the end of the play, Peter Quince enters the stage and delivers a "Prologue" to the tragic love story, he implicitly ridicules the classical pedigree by using harsh sounds associated with the Anglo-Saxon heritage. Quince declaims: "Whereat with blade – with bloody, blameful blade - / He [Pyramus] broached his boiling bloody breast; / And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade, / His dagger drew and died" (5.1.145-148). Quince's forceful repetition of "b" and "d" sounds as if he attempts to enact the killings in words. The harsh sounds of "b," "d," and "r" also make the speech sound more Anglo-Saxon, imitating the Germanic sounds of Old English and therefore ridiculing the classical pedigree of *Pyramus and Thisbe* and the culture of humanist learning and geohumoral inferiority associated with it. Collectively, *A Midsummer* delivers a sly critique of the Galenic framework by using one of its core tenets – the transformative power of imagination and its ability to cross bodily boundaries by "imprinting" one body on the other.

Chapter 5

LAUGHTER IN *TWELFTH NIGHT*:

HUMANIST COMEDY AND ITS AFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE

In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1601), Maria writes a mock letter that is designed to make fun of Malvolio's vices of arrogance and self-love. When Malvolio does follow Maria's ridiculous instructions in the letter and appears smiling, in yellow-stockings and cross-gartered, Maria triumphs and invites her conspirators to share in the joke thus:

If you desire the spleen, and will laugh yourselves into stitches, follow me.

Yon gull Malvolio is turned heathen, a very renegado, for there is no Christian that means to be saved by believing rightly can ever believe such impossible passages of grossness. He's in yellow stockings. (3.2.64-69)²⁵²

Maria advertises the effect of her mock letter on Malvolio by the prodigious amount of laughter it will produce. If her conspirators want to feel the "spleen," she offers, or the flow of pleasurable emotions associated with amusement ("spleen"); if they want to "laugh [themselves] into stitches," or experience laughter so violent that they will feel

²⁵² All quotations of *Twelfth Night* in this chapter are from Keir Elam, ed., *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Cengage Learning, 2008).

stabs of pain, then they should see Malvolio “in yellow stockings.”²⁵³ Maria’s call to Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Fabian foregrounds the laughter on offer, in its most overwhelming degree, as the primary payback of watching Malvolio make a fool of himself. Similarly, Sir Toby calls the others to keep laughing at Malvolio until their joke gets “tired out of breath” (3.4.134). While one might happily think of Maria and Sir Toby’s invitation to more and more laughter in the style of “the more, the merrier,” early modern audiences would have felt either discomfort at the intemperance and sensuality of the characters’ passionate engagement, or more likely, they would have enjoyed Malvolio’s humiliation with the distinct sense that their own laughter might compromise their status as reasonable human beings in control of their sensual emotions. *Twelfth Night* vividly dramatizes the stakes of evoking laughter in the early modern period through the structure of its double plot: the subplot parodies the predominant humanist technique of using laughter to purge social vices, even as the main plot frames this experience as all too English, too bodily and potentially anarchic. The tension between these two plots – the hilarious subplot with Malvolio and the improbable plot centered on “cross wooing” and set in mysterious Illyria – has a distinctly national character that hitherto has not been noticed by critics.²⁵⁴ In

²⁵³ "spleen, n.". 8.a. OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/187104?rskey=WE2MVM&result=1&isAdvanced=f>
also (accessed May 07, 2015).

²⁵⁴ The phrase “cross wooing” derives from Ben Jonson’s definition of comedy in *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), where he opposes the comedy centered on “cross wooing” to his own kind of comedy focused on exposing abuses of his time.

contrast to the critical tendency to conflate the two plots as if they refer to the same national reality or propose a unified vision of England, this chapter suggests that the lines of division between the affective experience of the English and the foreigners are clearly demarcated and meaningful for the play as a whole.

The subplot with Malvolio, I argue, is based on the humanist strategy of using the humoral status of laughter in order to teach social lessons and improve audience's behavior. Early modern theoreticians of laughter, learned writers like Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, Thomas Wilson, and Baldessar Castiglione universally advised their readers and audiences to refrain from laughing too much and giving in to the pleasure of laughter at the cost of social "profit." Blending Christian morality with humanist ideals and humoral view of passions as chaotic and potentially ungovernable, humanist writers urged poets to restrain and temper audience passions by directing them to socially useful goals. As Philip Sidney states in his humanist apology for poetry, the ultimate justification of good comedy is to "make a man laugh at folly, and length ashamed to laugh at himself, which he cannot avoid, without avoiding the

See Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour, The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, ed. by G. A. Wilkes, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981–82), vol. 1, lines 3.6.169-174.

The critical tendency to conflate the two plots is evident in almost all discussions of the play's setting. See Patricia Parker, "Was Illyria as Mysterious and Foreign as We Think?" in *The Mysterious and the Foreign in Early Modern England*, eds. Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008): 209–34; and Catherine Lisak, "Domesticating strangeness in *Twelfth Night*," *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer (London: Routledge, 2011): 167–84.

folly.”²⁵⁵ The Shakespeare’s comic subplot, I argue, both replays and parodies the predominant humanist, Christian, and humoral strictures against the pleasure of laughter that postulated that laughter should only be used to ridicule social vices. Written in the aftermath of the Bishops’ Ban of 1599 and as the Poets’ War was winding down to its close, *Twelfth Night* seems skeptical of the power of railing (Malvolio plot) to achieve social good or eradicate the vices the railing aims to purge.²⁵⁶ Malvolio is unrepentant and moreover, vindictive, as the revelers themselves quarrel and separate. However, the fact that Jonsonian plot is included in the play at all and that it clearly aims to dazzle and entertain audiences indicates that Shakespeare appreciated the pleasure of ridicule and its connection to Englishness and embodiment. Straddling classical culture with English present, the play seems only partially invested in the alternative set of ideals of manly valor, gentility, and courtly love exemplified in the play’s Illyrian/Italian protagonists. As in a hall of mirrors, a trope that is so important to the play about identical twins, the play allows us to see English and classical ideals as reflected in one another. The characters’ merciless

²⁵⁵ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*, 3rd ed., ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, rev. R. W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002): 97-98.

²⁵⁶ On *Twelfth Night*’s relation to the Poets’ War, see James P. Bednarz, *Shakespeare and the Poets’ War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001): 175–202. Bednarz argues that Malvolio is Shakespeare’s satire on Ben Jonson’s self-love. On Shakespeare’s use of railing language and its connection to print satire, see Maria Prendergast, *Railing, Reviling and Invective in English Literary Culture, 1588–1617: The Anti-Poetics of Theater and Print* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), especially pp. 103–44.

laughter at Malvolio's vices is thus a type of citation – a complex tribute to Jonsonian type of theatrical satire and its transposition on stage in the aftermath of the Bishops' Ban.

This chapter continues my inquiry into genre and its connection to emotional regulation. If chapter 1 demonstrated the contradiction between the embodied medium of theater and the humoral precepts for temperance and affective self-restraint, chapter 2 demonstrated how Robert Greene and Thomas Middleton entirely broke off with the humoral theory of passions. Greene's cony-catching pamphlets and Middleton's city comedy portray passions as working in tandem with the serial reproduction of the printing press and the mechanicity of theater, which relies on the predictability of audience response and the "technology" of actors' bodies. This chapter takes up the idea articulated previously in relation to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that Shakespeare's comedies attempt to invent a new affective framework for the encounter between play and its audience: they ask audiences to sympathize with the unlikely scenarios portrayed on stage and let themselves be "translated" under the influence of transgressive passions. In contrast to the humanist/humoral view of emotions as potentially always excessive and in need of discipline, the Shakespearean comedies treat passions as a space of possibility and an agent of radical social change. If *A Midsummer* shows a tragicomedy that results from exploring the transgressive power of imagination, *Twelfth Night* further widens the split between the humoral framework geared towards harnessing the pleasure of laughter and the alternative mechanism of affective "translation."

The play's structure of the double plot portrays, on one hand, a typical humanist organization for comedy whereby excessive passions are purged with the help of derisive laughter, and on the other, an Italian/Illyrian world, where characters experience other worlds and alternative identities through their affective "translation" into another person. Contrary to the humanist emphasis on the restraint and moderation of emotions, the genre of the main plot imagines emotion as a space of possibility rather than a static product of audience's psycho/physiology and external models of discipline. It liberates the stage from the stigma of "cheap" entertainment and defines a new role for fiction as a tool for the development of empathy with people and places one might otherwise never encounter or take seriously. The subplot critiques the humanist affective framework since Malvolio, left bitter and alone by the end of his "humanist" education, is hardly a model student, while his teachers, Sir Toby, Maria, and Sir Andrew, are more interested in laughter per se than in Malvolio's socially beneficial reform. As *Twelfth Night* questions laughter's ideological utility, at the same time it proposes a new method by which theatrical passions can serve the social good. The section below focuses on the two plots in light of their contrasting affective frameworks, which at once return us to humanist comedy and show an attempt to revise it.

Plot versus Subplot:

Several critics of *Twelfth Night* have noted the disparity between the play's subplot centered on ridicule and the main plot focused on the complicated love pursuit

and the confusion of twins. How do we reconcile Orsino's love melancholy and Olivia's romantic longing for Cesario with Sir Toby's drunken merriments and the comic humiliation of Malvolio in a dark room? John Manningham's 1602 diary entry first records the discrepancy between plot and subplot. His diary entry reads:

2. At our feast wee had a play called ~~Mid~~ 'Twelve night, or what you will'; much like the commedy of errores, or Menechmi in Plautus, but most like and neere to that in Italian called Inganni.

A good practice in it to make the steward beleieve his Lady widowe was in Love with him, by counterfayting a letter, as from his Lady, in generall termes, telling him what shee liked best in him, and prescribing his gesture in smiling, his apparraile, &c., and then when he came to practise, making him beleieve they took him to be mad.²⁵⁷

Manningham was a law student at Middle Temple; as a young, educated audience member, he correctly identified the possible sources for the play's romantic plot and possibly related it to Shakespeare's previous comedy *A Midsummer*. But overall his comments implicitly privilege the comic subplot with Malvolio, which he approvingly notes as a "good practice" and then summarizes the plot in detail, portraying it as something striking and immediate, worth re-telling as a kind of news. In contrast, his entry processes the romantic plot only through its resemblance to its predecessors as a

²⁵⁷ John Manningham's diary entry is reproduced in Keir Elam, ed., *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Cengage Learning, 2008): 3-4.

literary piece that he has already heard and seen in other forms – a literary artefact, not a striking performance.

This tonal difference between the two plots, recorded by Manningham, has been rarely discussed by modern critics. There is a critical tendency to fuse the two plots together as if the two refer to the same reality or evoke one and the same world. Thus, in her study of the sources behind the play's "Illyria," Patricia Parker blends plot and subplot together, stating "Shakespeare famously domesticates foreign settings – and transforms Illyria at least in part into the England evoked by the names of Andrew Aguecheek and Toby Belch."²⁵⁸ Similarly, in the essay focused on the relations between foreigners and natives in the play, Catherine Lisak concludes that the play "refers to a familiar English world, even while evoking some other world."²⁵⁹ Like Parker, she conflates the differences between Illyrian plot and the English subplot, arguing that the two plots refer to the same reality, or "a familiar English world." Other critics silently pass over the temperamental differences between the two plots when they focus their discussion on one plot to the exclusion of the other - thus, readings of the subplot focused on Malvolio often gravitate towards economic and

²⁵⁸ Patricia Parker, "Was Illyria as Mysterious and Foreign as We Think?" in *The Mysterious and the Foreign in Early Modern England*, eds. Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 209.

²⁵⁹ Catherine Lisak, "Domesticating strangeness in *Twelfth Night*" in *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer (London: Routledge, 2011):179. Subsequent references to this essay collection edited by Schiffer will only list the name of the editor and page numbers.

social matters,²⁶⁰ whereas commentary on the main plot has tended to produce arguments about love and identity in connection with Viola and Feste's role-playing.²⁶¹

However, the temperamental differences between the two plots are very noticeable and have been commented on obliquely from a variety of viewpoints. James Schiffer, the editor of the recent collection of critical essays on *Twelfth Night*, captures some of the affective difference in the archetypal terms of Northrop Frye: he states that the romantic plot tends "toward the summer of romance and ending in the promise of marriage and the reuniting of separated twins," while the satiric plot moves "toward the winter of realism, irony, satire, and the 'expulsion' of Malvolio."²⁶² Similarly, Anne Barton describes the romantic world of Olivia and Sebastian, Viola and Orsino in terms of happiness and fulfillment, as "this heightened world [of play-

²⁶⁰ See economic readings of the subplot on Malvolio, see Ivo Kamps, "Madness and Social Mobility in *Twelfth Night*," *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer (London: Routledge, 2011): 229-44; and Angela Hurworth, "Gulls, Cony-Catchers and Cozeners: *Twelfth Night* and the Elizabethan Underworld," *Shakespeare Survey* 52 (1999): 120-32.

²⁶¹ For discussions of the nature of love in the main plot of the play, see Bruce Smith, "'His fancy's queen': sensing sexual strangeness in *Twelfth Night*," *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, 65-80; and David Schalkwyk, "Music, food, and love in the affective landscapes of *Twelfth Night*," *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, 81-98. For some discussions of the play's treatment of gender, see, for example, Catherine Belsey, "Disrupting Sexual Difference: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies," *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis (London: Methuen, 1985): 166-90.

²⁶² James Schiffer, "Introduction. Taking the long view: *Twelfth Night* criticism and performance," *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, 2.

acting and revelry]” while she notes that for Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria by the end of the play “the dream is over and the moment of awakening is bitter.”²⁶³

Taking Shiffer and Barton’s suggestion that the subplot is “unhappy,” despite the amount of laughter it produces, I want to extend their arguments by drawing attention to the humanist tradition of comedy it relies upon. The Malvolio subplot both follows and critiques the dominant humanist method of using laughter to ridicule social vices, thus turning theatrical pleasure into social profit. The Shakespearean version is “unhappy,” as Shiffer and Barton notice, because it shows the failure of the humanist plot to harness the pleasure of laughter for the goal of social cohesion – in Sir Toby and Maria’s hands, laughter easily becomes an end in itself rather than a means to Malvolio’s reform and leads to Malvolio’s “abuse,” in Olivia’s words. So, at the outset of their trick Maria, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Feste think of their deception of Malvolio both as a revenge, in the humanist sense of the proper distribution of justice and problematically, an independent source of pleasure that will be enjoyable beyond being merely useful. Maria outlines the terms of her plan thus: “it is his [Malvolio’s] grounds of faith that all that look on him love him, and on that vice in him will my revenge notable cause to work” (2.3.146-148). Thus, the obvious motivating factor for the “revenge” on Malvolio is his “vice” of self-love, as it is perceived by Maria and others. At the same time, however, the revenge is also called

²⁶³ Anne Barton, “Shakespeare’s Sense of an Ending in *Twelfth Night*,” *Twelfth Night: Critical Essays*, ed. Stanley Wells (New York: Garland, 1986): 308-09.

“a device,” “sport royal” and “my physic [that] will work on him” (2.3.157, 167, 167-68). While the initial designation of the deception as “revenge” might simply suggest the intentions of vengeance and retribution, the other terms reveal Maria and Sir Toby’s understanding of the mock letter as a more complex phenomenon: it is also “a contrivance,” “an ingenious or clever expedient” (“device”); a great “diversion, entertainment, fun” (“sport”); and a type of medicine or “physic” that will “work” on Malvolio in order to finally cure him of his “vice” of self-love, here figured as a form of disease.²⁶⁴

Structurally, the joke on Malvolio replicates the typical design for comedy advocated by early modern humanists: writers such as Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, or Thomas Heywood wanted to use and direct the pleasure of laughter against social vices. Laughter at follies is essential to Jonsonian comedy since it is part of the humanist educational process, which leads the audience from scornful laughter to rejection of these vices and individual reform. As Jonson writes in the Prologue to *Volpone* (1606), “In all his poems still hath been this measure, / To mix profit with

²⁶⁴ For “device,” see “device, n.”. 6. OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/51464?redirectedFrom=device> (accessed May 07, 2015). For “sport,” see “sport, n.1”. I.1.a. OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/187476?rskey=A3PM4i&result=1&isAdvanced=false> (accessed May 07, 2015).

your pleasure” (Prologue. 7–8).²⁶⁵ Similarly, Philip Sidney is willing to defend laughter in comedy only if it serves the “profit” of audience education and reform. In the *An Apology*’s section on tragicomedy, Sidney objects to the comic part, which is “indeed fit to lift up a loud laughter, and nothing else.”²⁶⁶ In contrast, he speaks approvingly of the satiric poet who “sportingly never leaveth until he make a man laugh at folly, and at length ashamed to laugh at himself, which he cannot avoid, without avoiding the folly.....”²⁶⁷ In the humanist theory of comedy, laughter is a strategic device used by the playwright to “capture” the audience into enjoyment and from hence lead them into “profit” or useful behavior. Along similar lines, in *The Schoolmaster* (1570), a handbook of humanist education, Roger Ascham argues that a schoolmaster should not use fear, but gently direct the scholar’s interest to learning, for profit is greatest when it is combined with pleasure. For instance, the schoolmaster must encourage the student by using praise, by employing the “best allurements [he] can” in order to foster questions, and by following the Ascham’s own “lively and

²⁶⁵ Ben Jonson, *Volpone, Ben Jonson’s Plays and Masques*, 2nd ed., ed. Richard Harp (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001): 3–111. All subsequent quotations from the play are from this edition.

²⁶⁶ Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*, 3rd ed., ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, rev. R. W. Maslen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002): 112. All subsequent references to Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* are to this edition.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

perfect” method for teaching the often tedious subject of grammar.²⁶⁸ As in Jonson and Sidney, student’s “discreet” enjoyment forms the basis of Ascham’s educational principles.²⁶⁹

By devising a plot that aims to expose Malvolio to public laughter and thus teach him a lesson, Maria and others follow a typical method of humanist education: they envision the comedy as an experience of pleasure and ridicule and their collective laughter as a tool that brings about Malvolio’s humiliation and possible “cure.” The same vocabulary of “physic,” “cure” and “restorative,” as in Maria’s reference to her joke as “my physic,” frequently appears in Jonson’s comedies, where humoral characters are “sick” of self-love or other character vices, while laughter and public humiliation serve as purgatives of individual diseases.²⁷⁰ But if Maria’s statement refers to the curative properties of her joke, Fabian’s exclamation, “What dish o’poison has she dressed him [Malvolio]!” reveals the thin line separating Maria’s “physic” from “poison” and the bitter-sweet aftertaste of humanist comedy (2.5.111). In the context of the humanist valorization of laughter as an effective tool of ridicule,

²⁶⁸ Roger Ascham, *The Schoolmaster*, ed. Lawrence V Ryan (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell UP, 1967): 16.

²⁶⁹ On humanist belief in the educational potential of theater, see William West, *Theatres and Encyclopaedias in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2002).

²⁷⁰ See, for instance, Jonson’s poetic declarations in his Prologues to *The Alchemist* and *Every Man Out of His Humour*. See also Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, line 23, page 95, where Sidney compares poetry to pleasant “physic.” (See note 15 for Sidney’s edition).

Twelfth Night conversely exposes the link between humanist laughter and cruelty and laughter's association with various forms of bodily excess.²⁷¹

It has already been noted that the subplot with the humiliation of Malvolio is indebted to Ben Jonson's comedy of humours, the genre of comedy, which defined itself by its objective to show "every man in his humour," or to represent each person according to his dominant character traits. Given that *Twelfth Night* (1602) was performed following the success of Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1598) and moreover, since it is very likely that Shakespeare himself acted one of the character parts in the Jonson's comedy, it makes sense that Shakespeare's own play replicates the comedic structure centered on ridicule in his subplot with Malvolio.²⁷² Positioning *Twelfth Night* in the context of Ben Jonson's earlier comical satires, Harry Levin and David Bevington have separately found in the subplot of *Twelfth Night* echoes of Jonson's comedic plots: "The plot against Malvolio," Bevington explains, "displays fully the characteristics of Jonsonian satire: an exposure plot manipulated by witty persons against a socially ambitious hypocrite who prepares his own trap, is laughed at scornfully by the audience, and is subjected to a ridiculing form of

²⁷¹ See Jason Scott-Warren traces the similarity between comedy as a type of bear-beating (the model implicit in Jonson's comedy of humours) and *Twelfth Night*'s subplot with Malvolio in Jason Scott-Warren, "When Theatres were Bear-Gardens; or, What's at Stake in the Comedy of Humours," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 54.1 (2003): 63-82.

²⁷² For Shakespeare's indebtedness to Jonson's comedy of humours, see James Schiffer, "Introduction. Taking the Long View: *Twelfth Night* Criticism and Performance," in *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, 1-44.

punishment befitting the nature of his offense.”²⁷³ Harry Levin similarly remarks that “Malvolio seems to have a Jonsonian rather than a Shakespearean temperament.”²⁷⁴ And, long ago, Paul Mueschke and Jeannette Fleischer argued for specific resemblances between plot elements in the two Jonsonian satires and the humiliation of Malvolio.²⁷⁵ However, I want to read the dual structure of *Twelfth Night* not simply in terms of influence and theatrical borrowing—Ben Jonson and other writers of satirical city comedy influencing the way Shakespeare wrote *Twelfth Night*—but in terms of the play’s dual “program of emotional conditioning,” evident in the two genres of its plot and subplot.²⁷⁶ The classic humanist comedy, exemplified in Jonsonian satires, comes with a specific organization of affect, which the Malvolio plot both replicates and extends.

The subplot seeks to harness audience emotions in line with the revelers’ own enjoyment of Malvolio’s humiliation. But instead of the humanist insistence on

²⁷³ David Bevington qtd. in James P. Bendarz, *Shakespeare and the Poets’ War* (New York: Columbia UP, 2001), 179.

²⁷⁴ Harry Levin, “The Underplot of *Twelfth Night*,” *Twelfth Night: Critical Essays*, ed. Stanley Wells (New York: Garland, 1986), 169.

²⁷⁵ Paul Mueschke and Jeannette Fleischer, “Jonsonian Elements in the Comic Underplot of *Twelfth Night*,” *PMLA* 48.3 (Sept. 1933): 722–40.

²⁷⁶ R. Darren Gobert discusses plays as enacting a “program of emotional conditioning” in his brilliant article on the history of catharsis. See R. Darren Gobert, “Behaviorism, Catharsis, and the History of Emotion,” *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 26.2 (2012): 111.

comedic display and restraint of vices, the joke on Malvolio shows the pleasure of laughter to be infectious and addictive – or so the revelers desire. In the famous letter-reading scene, Maria invites Sir Toby, Fabian, and Sir Andrew to witness the humiliation of Malvolio, but her invitation implicitly functions as a welcoming act to real theater audiences as well: “Get ye all three into the box-tree. Malvolio’s coming down this walk... Observe him for the love of mockery, for I know this letter will make a contemplative idiot of him.” (2.5.13-17). Critics have written about the complicity between actors and audiences fostered by the design of the early modern stage, a platform which protruded into the audience space, positioning the standers-by as part of the onstage action, who could be addressed and coaxed directly from the stage.²⁷⁷ For instance, in an acclaimed modern production at the Globe, which in part attempts to replicate early modern staging conditions, Malvolio (played by Stephen Fry) turns directly to the audience as he intimates in a ridiculous, knowing fashion, that he is aware of Olivia’s “secret” passion for him – “Sweet lady,” he says triumphantly and laughs, sending an understanding look to audience members that they too know what “sweet lady” really means (“C-U-T” in the letter).²⁷⁸ Pronouncing

²⁷⁷ See Erika Lin, *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), esp. “Introduction: Materializing the Immaterial,” 3-22; and Allison Hogbood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2014).

²⁷⁸ *Twelfth Night* was staged at the London’s Globe Theatre during 2012/2013 season. The production, directed by Tim Carroll and featuring Stephen Fry (as Malvolio) and Mark Rylance (as Olivia) subsequently won the 2012 Tony award. A clip from this production, recorded live at the London’s Globe theatre in 2012, is

“sweet lady” as some kind of bawdy joke, Fry’s Malvolio exhorts audience members to laugh at Olivia with him. While Malvolio’s effort to elicit complicity from standers-by is rather problematic in this case – after all, audiences know that the letter was written by Maria – the ability of the tricksters to garner audience sympathy for laughing at Malvolio himself is much higher. The hiding behind the “box-tree” effectively divides the stage in two, positioning Malvolio as the gull, seen and commented by all. So, when Maria exhorts her conspirators to observe Malvolio and enjoy his overblown dreams of Olivia “in the marriage bed,” the real theater audiences are also implicitly encouraged to get behind the “box-tree” and laugh at Malvolio’s “imagination.”

Throughout the scenes with Malvolio, the same structure of partial hiding space vs. complete disclosure repeats: Maria, Sir Toby, Fabian, and/or Feste, physically hide or command a superior view of the situation, as they frame Malvolio’s actions as ridiculous and worthy of laughter. For instance, Malvolio’s captivated reading of the love letter is constantly interrupted by Sir Toby and Sir Andrew’s comic remarks like “Pistol him, pistol him!” or “O for a stone-bow to hit him in the eye!” (2.5.34, 43). The revelers can hardly contain their urge to take revenge on Malvolio right there, without waiting for the culminating laughter and disclosure in the end. The alternation between Malvolio’s elaborate daydreams and the revelers’ comic demands

available on youtube. See Opus Arte, *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare’s Globe) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDPT2e26SgY> (accessed May 7, 2015).

for revenge is apt to produce audience laughter, as the real theater audience can laugh at the disclosure of Malvolio's hidden arrogance and "imagination," but also enjoy the extremity of Sir Toby's frustration and desire for revenge.

Laughter is implied throughout the Malvolio joke, as the revelers find new ways to display Malvolio's vices and savor them in front of the audience. Pulling together a whole play-within-a-play Sir Toby, Maria, Fabian, and Feste take turns role-playing their concern for the "mad" Malvolio and asking him questions that only solicit further display of Malvolio's arrogance and self-regard. So Maria addresses Sir Toby: "Get him [Malvolio] to say his prayers, good Sir Toby, get him to pray," where Malvolio haughtily intervenes, "My prayers, minx?" (3.4.107-09). Throughout the scene, Maria displays concern and care for "poor" Malvolio, thus only intensifying Malvolio's attempts to brush off the revelers' solicitations as misguided and presumptuous. As a result, his comments portray his "true" self, only partly revealed before. Priming himself for his impending marriage to Olivia, Malvolio discloses his true pride and arrogance: "Go hang yourself, all. You are idle shallow things; I am not of your element. You shall know more hereafter." (3.4.119-121). The structure of this scene, as the one with Malvolio reading the letter, privileges a kind of "show-and-tell" with the tricksters functioning as comic humanist teachers who elicit Malvolio's vices and make his hidden arrogance public and ridiculous.

Thus, when Fabian has to justify their joke on Malvolio before Olivia in the end of the play, he uses a classic humanist appeal for the value of corrective comedy.

The nature of their plot, he implies, is really educational and socially beneficial.

Fabian states:

How with a sportful malice it [the deception] was followed

May rather pluck on laughter than revenge,

If that the injuries be justly weighed

That have on both sides passed. (5.1.359-362)

He effectively asks Olivia to join in the rank of audience members and laugh at Malvolio the way the characters in the subplot as well as audience members in the theater may have laughed. He thinks of laughter in the context of a system of justice and punishment—"if that the injuries be justly weighed," it would be found that Malvolio has offended more and therefore deserves to be laughed at. Justifying their trick post-factum, Fabian appeals to the classic humanist defense of laughter as a form of punishment for Malvolio's vices. This defense tactic, however, belies Fabian, Maria, and Sir Toby's whole-hearted investment in the trick for its own sake.

The figure of the audience is key to understanding how humanist writers like Jonson imagined the routes of emotional transmission from the stage and out in the world. Contrary to modern tendency to believe, for example, that we should empathize with characters and events on stage, Philip Sidney, Thomas Heywood, and Ben Jonson had a very ambivalent attitude to passion, especially to laughter in a comedy. The ideal audience member is not the one who gives himself away to the influence of theatrical passion, but the one who tempers his passions with reason and is able to judge, rather than simply laugh at the performed events. In humanist defenses of

comedy, the role of the ideal audience is imagined similar to that of a judge, whose laughter is tempered with reason and the knowledge of right and wrong. Given the humanist emphasis on judgment and reason, it only natural, though paradoxical, that humanist comedies often end in court. So, Ben Jonson's *Every Man In His Humour* (1598) ends with Justice Clement evaluating each character's grievances while his *Volpone* (1606) concludes with the main character being publicly tried for his practical jokes on others. Both in theory and practice, humanist comedies envision audiences who relate to the play not by trying on the characters' passions, but by evaluating them as if from a distance and only selecting those, which are worth imitating. Conversely, in humanist discussion of comedy, pleasurable laughter is often configured simply as "bait," a sort of give-away to the audience that needs to combine "pleasure" with "profit" in order to learn from comedy. Ideally, laughter never functions as an end in itself, but only as a means to the higher end of learning and social reform.

The Malvolio plot, however, undermines this idealized view of passions by insisting on their infectious and intensely pleasurable nature. The lack of "confinement" rings throughout Sir Toby's actions, including his self-indulgence in laughter, a form of bodily pleasure that is comparable to his indulgence in drinking. Early in the play, Maria advised Sir Toby to "confine yourself within the modest limits of order," to which Sir Toby rebelliously and drunkenly replied, "Confine? I'll confine myself no finer than I am. / These clothes are good enough to drink in, and so be these boots too. An they be not, let them hang themselves in their own straps!" (1.3.7-12). The main justification for laughter – that it provides "honest mirth" and allows the

audience to revive their bodies after labor – could not really justify instances of unrestrained bodily pleasure, such as Maria and Sir Toby’s invitation to laugh and keep laughing at Malvolio. Their loud and unrestrained laughter contradicts the early modern amalgam of humoral, Christian, and classical precepts, which underpinned humanist defenses of comedy as educational and only moderately/usefully funny. By replaying the classic humanist plot of a gull being laughed at by a group of clever characters, the Malvolio plot thus follows and critiques the humanist insistence on the productive use of bodily pleasure, showing instead how laughter easily becomes contagious and uncontrollable.

Sympathy with Malvolio, especially by the end of the play, is not just a modern phenomenon since the characters from the main plot also condemn the “abuse” of Malvolio (5.1.372). So, Olivia does not see the plot as comedic despite Fabian’s humanist appeal for the value of Malvolio’s ridicule. Moreover, not only does she reject Sir Toby’s joke on Malvolio as “not funny,” but she also classifies his laughter as one of the many traits that make Sir Toby prone to physically excessive, socially disruptive behavior. In contrast to the humanist insistence on the regulation of passions and the restraint of bodily pleasure, the subplot exposes laughter as exactly this sign of excess or a form of bodily abundance that would not be kept at bay.

The play first introduces Sir Toby’s merriment in the context of Olivia’s displeasure with his night-time reveling: the picture that the revelers represent is a classic type of fun that in the period was believed to corrupt a person and turn him or her into a beast-like creature. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew are up in the middle of the

night, drinking, singing songs, and generally disregarding all social norms. In a suggestive exchange, Sir Toby asks Sir Andrew, “Does not our life consist of the four elements?” to which Sir Andrew replies, “Faith, so they say, but I think it rather consists of eating and drinking.” Sir Toby then concludes, “Thou’rt a scholar; let us therefore eat and drink.” (2.3.9-13). The short dialogue functions as an ironic catechism, which inverts traditional values of Christianity and social responsibility and proposes a self-satisfied life of eating and drinking.

It is also no coincidence that Malvolio hopes to insult the three men by comparing them to working-class people. He addresses the riotous trio, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Feste, thus: “Have you no wit, manners nor honesty but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night? Do ye make an alehouse of my lady’s house that ye squeak out your coziers’ catches without any mitigation or remorse of voice?” (2.3.86-89). This type of merriment, Malvolio insinuates, is appropriate only for “tinkers” and “coziers,” people who mend pots and shoes, and it should be practiced in an “alehouse,” commonly perceived as a low-class location. Although Sir Andrew and Sir Toby are knights and Feste is a professional clown serving a gentlewoman, their position is implicitly compromised by their association with riotous behavior and financial profligacy. While the play ends up humiliating Malvolio, it never fully acquits the revelers from their identification with drunken “tinkers” and “coziers.”

In addition to their social deviance, the revelers are also distinguished by their emphatically English names that indicate their lack of restraint and imply their low social status (belied by Sir Toby and Sir Andrew’s knighthood). Keir Elam notes that

Toby is “typical English name, diminutive of the biblical Tobias” while his last name is indicative of his lack of social decorum.²⁷⁹ Andrew was also a common English as well as Scottish name while his last name, Aguecheek refers to Sir Andrew’s pale skin, a popular sign for cowardice in humoral discourse.²⁸⁰ Through their physical embodiment and bodily inferiority – belching, cowardice – and their emphatic Englishness, the jokes of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew acquire a low cultural status that taints their carnivalesque abandon.²⁸¹

The play’s association of Englishness with excessive embodiment and “low” comedy is in many ways pervasive to the culture as a whole. In the play’s denigration of Sir Andrew as “almost natural” and a “fool,” we might also hear the echo of the word “native” and the corresponding denigration of the “natural” Englishman unrefined by foreign training and foreign sensibility (1.2.26-27). “O, had I but followed the arts!” exclaims Sir Andrew in one of his humiliating dialogues with the more cosmopolitan Sir Toby (1.3.91-92). As a nation that in many ways attempted to model itself on the culture of classical Greece, the English often had a pervasive sense of their belatedness in relation to the “golden age” of antiquity. Writing in the context of the English humoral theory, Mary Floyd-Wilson argues that many English writers

²⁷⁹ Keir Elam, “List of Roles” in Keir Elam, ed., *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Cengage Learning, 2008), p. 158, note 11.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ On carnivalesque laughter, see the classic work by Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984).

attempted to revise the predominant geohumoral myth that postulated the culture of classical Greece as ideal for development of both the faculties of the mind and the body. She writes, “In both imaginative and non-imaginative literature, late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English writers struggle to stabilize and rehabilitate their northern identity [as physically strong, but lacking in wit].”²⁸² As Floyd-Wilson notes, this complex process of cultural and physiological revision went on not only in medical treatises, but in imaginative literature as well. Thus, on one hand, *Twelfth Night* conveys an enduring sense of Englishness as an undesirable characteristic associated with excessive laughter, foolishness, and embodiment, but on the other, it flaunts the challenge the joke presents to “kill-joy” Malvolio and the associated dreams of melancholy and refinement that connect him to the main plot.

Thus, Sir Toby and Maria’s powerful laughter at Malvolio—their ability to make an authority figure ridiculous through jest—comes with an implicit cost of being thought disobedient, excessive, or even “barbarous” by the characters in the main plot and partly by the play itself (4.1.46-48). The exquisite pleasure of their plot, masterfully orchestrated by Maria and further abetted by Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, is confined by the logic of humoral excess, which in the period associated excessive laughter with marginality and intemperance. Continuing the play’s connection between laughter and marginality, Thomas Dekker, for instance, imagines a would-be

²⁸² Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*, (Cambridge UP: New York, 2003), 4.

gallant as a person distinguished by his excessive laughter. In his mock city-guide, *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609), Dekker ironically advises a would-be gallant “to laugh aloud in the midst of the most serious and saddest scene of the terriblest tragedy” and generally talk and laugh during the performance, disregarding the action on stage—“for by talking and laughing, like a ploughman in a morris, you heap Pelion upon Ossa, glory upon glory....”²⁸³ Dekker’s comparison is suggestive because it associates foolish audience laughter with the country and its rustic representative, a ploughman. In theatrical context, “loud laughter” is also frequently associated with clown performances, bawdy comedies, and low-class, uneducated audiences who care about nothing but entertainment. Andrew Gurr writes, “[John] Lyly’s prologues written in the 1580s for boy plays at the first Blackfriars and Paul’s more than once express the hope that the gentlemanly audience in the halls would react with ‘soft smiling, not loude laughing,’ or at worst would be too courteous to hiss. These were evidently common reactions elsewhere.”²⁸⁴ Insofar as the comic subplot connects laughter with excessive embodiment and peculiar Englishness, it participates in the humanist and humoral tradition of defining laughter in relation to bodily excess.

However, the play’s denigration of laughter is far from complete, for even as the play reflects English revelry through the prism of Italian/Illyrian gentility, it also

²⁸³ Thomas Dekker, *The Gull's Hornbook*, ed. R. B. McKerrow (London: De La More Press, 1904): 52-53.

²⁸⁴ Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 52.

allows Sir Toby Belch to exorcise Malvolio and administer a blistering critique of classical culture. Critics such as James P. Bendarz and Ivo Kamps have noticed that Malvolio can be read as a distorted version of Orsino and that Sir Toby's exorcism of Malvolio's "madness" represents in part the subplot's attack on the virtues of melancholy, fancy, and imagination so important to the romantic plot. The same terms - "dreams," "madness," and "infection" – appear both in the comic subplot and the romantic main plot. Just like Olivia's romantic "madness," Orsino's "fancy," Sebastian's "dream," and Antonio's experience of love as "witchcraft," Malvolio's condition is similarly referred to as his "dream" (2.5.187), a "midsummer madness" (3.4.53), an "infection" (3.4.125) and a product of Malvolio's "imagination" (2.5.40). Olivia herself underlines the similarity of her love to Cesario and Malvolio's enactment of his own dream when she comments, "I am as mad as he [Malvolio], / If sad and merry madness equal be" (3.4.14-15). The fact that Malvolio's "imagination" and lovers' fancy are referred to by the same terms throughout the play underlines the links between the two plots and at the same time their difference: for if the humanist comedy implicitly takes the function of theater to be the scourging of characters' false "imaginings," the alternative vision of comedy in the main plot suggests that theater is a space where imagination is allowed to reign and improbable scenarios are contemplated and presented for audience's pleasure. The identity of terms also suggests that the frequent portrayal of Malvolio as a victim in modern productions might be justified from the point of view of the main plot – so, for instance, at the end

of the romantic plot Olivia takes pity on Malvolio and instead of finding his imagined love ridiculous, she finds fault with his humanist “teachers.”

Noticing the link between Malvolio’s sensibility and Orsino’s “imagination,” Ivo Kamps has argued that the main difference between Malvolio and Orsino is merely “one of class. Orsino is the aristocrat whose melancholy love makes him appear fashionable, sensitive, and profound, whereas Malvolio is a commoner who must out of his mind to court someone above his station.”²⁸⁵ Whereas Kamps sees Malvolio as a sort of early modern proto-capitalist who yearns to rise above his station, I see the play’s different treatment of Orsino and Malvolio as a symptom of the play’s unreconciled division between the values of classical culture and those of the English present. For even as the play makes fun of Malvolio’s melancholy and his pretensions to gentility, it also valorizes the culture of refinement, gentility, and introspection, which is only partly discredited by Malvolio’s “imagination” and Orsino’s desire for “excess.” In the last section below, I demonstrate the new affective logic in the play’s main plot and the challenge it presents to the hilarious, embodied, and emphatically English laughter in the subplot.

The Italian/Illyrian Love Plot: A Technology for Affective “Translation”

²⁸⁵ Ivo Kamps, “Madness and Social Mobility in *Twelfth Night*,” *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, 236.

Scholars have debated the extent to which Illyria, the location of the play, evokes a real location for early moderns or denotes a more imaginative space suggested by the word-play illyrium/delirium and the characters' repeated reference to their experience in Illyria as a dream or mere illusion. While the bibliographic search by scholars like Patricia Parker and Elizabeth Pentland has unearthed a substantial amount of information about Illyria that would have been available to early moderns, *Twelfth Night* arguably makes sparing use of the specificity of the country where the events take place.²⁸⁶ Illyria or as it was also called at the time Sclavonia (modern-day Serbia) figures in the play only weakly: most notably, there is a typical association of Illyria with piracy, dangerous shores and shipwreck, possibly a hint at Illyria's turbulent history as a Turkish province in Malvolio turning "heathen, a very renegado" (3.2.59-60) or being castrated (the letters C-U-T in Maria's letter) and the echo of the famous independent queen of Illyria Teuta in Olivia's rule over her household. Despite the specificity of these references, attempts to distinguish the Italian "foreigners" Viola and Sebastian from the "native" Illyrians, Orsino and Olivia, have been largely unsuccessful. So, in an article set out to explore the relations between the foreigners and the natives, Catherine Lisak concludes that the play "emancipates foreignness from strangeness" as it allows the "intruder" Viola to quickly integrate herself into the

²⁸⁶ For criticism on the play's location in Illyria, see Keir Elam, ed., *Twelfth Night*, 68-77; Elizabeth Pentland, "Beyond the 'lyric' in Illyricum: some early modern backgrounds to *Twelfth Night*," *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, 149-166.

new place and lets Olivia and Orsino's idiosyncrasies, not Viola's newcomer status, occupy the focus of the plot.²⁸⁷ The main lines of national division, I argue, are not between Italians and Illyrians, but between the English characters and their Italian/Illyrian counterparts. In contrast to the emphatically English Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, the other characters seem to inhabit a different world of Illyria/Italy and they also have predominantly Italian names, Orsino, Viola, Olivia, Malvolio, and Curio, and two names that recall figures from Roman history, "Sebastian" refers to the 3rd - century Roman saint pierced by the arrows, while "Cesario" echoes Caesar, the Roman emperor.²⁸⁸ Moreover, Viola and Sebastian are much more like Orsino and Olivia, as the same ties of gentility and graceful speaking make the two groups immediately recognizable to each other. By the end of her first meeting with Viola, Olivia readily believes in the veracity of Viola's statement, "I am a gentleman" (1.5.271) while upon seeing Sebastian, Orsino immediately reassures Olivia, "Be not amazed, right noble is his blood" (5.1.260).

The rift between the two worlds of Illyria/Italia and England is also a temporal split between "old and antic" melancholy and "present laughter." In their excesses, Orsino and Malvolio embody the distance of the contemporary English world from its classical heritage – the geohumoral association of melancholy with wisdom and its

²⁸⁷ Catherine Lisak, "Domesticating Strangeness in *Twelfth Night*," *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, 178.

²⁸⁸ Keir Elam, "List of Roles" in Keir Elam, ed., *Twelfth Night*, 157-59.

inverse positioning of the English people as too embodied and prone to passionate excess. Juliana Schiesari has persuasively written about the Renaissance cultural status of melancholy as the ultimate upper-class characteristic and a fashionable pretense imported from Italy. Focusing on the association between melancholia and the male artist, conserved in writings by Marsilio Ficino, Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, and the figure of Hamlet, Schiesari argues that "[in addition to being a humoral disease] melancholia by the time of the Renaissance had also come to be perceived as an eloquent form of mental disturbance – a special, albeit difficult, gift – as hierarchically superior to mere depression as were the individuals afflicted by it."²⁸⁹ In their initial seclusion, melancholy, and unfulfilled love, Olivia, Orsino, and Viola/Cesario embody the emotional traits traditionally associated with a culture of refinement and gentility that is only partially accessible to the English. In the opening scene, for instance, we have Orsino subtly contemplating the fluctuations of his melancholy fancy – it is first receiving as "the sea" and then tiring of the object that pleased it just a moment ago (1.1.12). Orsino's language is convoluted, self-centered and focused on the abstract workings of his fancy. Next, we hear about Olivia, Orsino's love passion, who like Orsino is solely focused on the intricate workings of her mind, the grief and devotion to her brother – "But like a cloistress she will veiled walk / And water once a day her chamber round / With eye-offending brine," reports

²⁸⁹ Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell UP, 1992), 8.

the rejected servant Valentine to his master (1.1.27-29). And finally, the next important figure we meet is Viola, who, though more joyful and optimistic than her Illyrian counterparts, is likewise grieved by the supposed death of her brother Sebastian and seeks a remedy “Till I had made mine own occasion mellow – / What my estate is” (1.2.40-41). The overall result of these opening scenes is to establish a melancholy, subtly introverted tone, where concealed passions battle with reason and endow the Illyrian characters with a degree of separation from reality.

Framing the Italian and Illyrian characters’ emotions as partly concealed – hiding under Olivia’s veil, or in the “book of my [Orsino’s] secret soul” – the play endows these characters with a degree of interiority that the English characters hardly possess. In this context, Orsino’s bold order to Cesario to “Be clamorous and leap all civil bounds” when courting Olivia sounds like a return to the affective logic of the Malvolio plot, where Sir Toby aims to exorcise Malvolio’s passions with the sound of loud, clamorous laughter. (1.4.21-22). In contrast, the romantic plot treasures passions “like a jewel,” in Helena’s words, something to be fostered and grown, much like the love of Cesario’s fictional sister that “rots” for lack of nurture or Orsino’s reciprocity.

The different character of the romantic plot lies in the fact that it revises the humoral and humanist perception of passion as a potential threat of disease and as a characteristic quality of the marginal members of society whose intemperate bodies easily give in to sensuality and passions. Instead of the humanist insistence on the moderation of passions or their productive re-tooling, the romantic plot imagines a world where passions are radically beneficial and mutually constituted. When, in Act

2, Cesario complains to Orsino of her “concealed” love, he gives us the image of “disease” that cannot be cured simply with the humanist tactic of purging passions. In response to Orsino’s, “And what’s her history [in reference to Cesario’s fictional sister]?” Cesario replies,

A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
But let concealment like a worm i’t’h’ bud
Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like Patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed? (2.4.110-115)

On one hand, Cesario’s “disease” bears some similarity to Jonson’s portrayal of passions in *Every Man in His Humour*, which sets out to show the extremity of men’s passions and thus cure the audience of the like abuses. Like one of the humoral characters, Cesario similarly complains of the overabundance of passions that find no outlet. And he/she also mixes the psychological and the physiological by figuring her concealed love in natural terms: the comparison between concealment and “a worm i’t’h’bud” that “feeds” on Viola’s cheek portrays unrequited love as an organic process of internal disease, parasitism, and possible death. At the same time, the passage is framed as an implicit appeal to Orsino to recognize Cesario’s feelings and thus stop the seemingly inevitable cycle of consumption. Thus, in revision to humanist perception of the workings of passion and disease, Cesario’s cure lies not in the attempt to control or moderate her passions, but in Orsino’s reciprocal love. The

episode points to the larger tendency of the main plot to celebrate passion as radically transformative, beneficial, and apt to change under the pressure of new encounters.

In place of the humanist “judges” as audience members, the romantic plot imagines audience members who let themselves be “translated” into the characters they see on stage. A famous case of Shakespearean comic “translation” occurs, of course, in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, where a fellow actor sees Bottom transformed into an ass and exclaims, “Thou art translated!” (3.1.105). In the early modern period, “translation” meant not only rendering something into another language, but also and primarily, “transference; removal or conveyance from one person, place, or condition to another.”²⁹⁰ Bottom’s parodic “translation” into an ass arguably reveals an essential part of his identity: it reveals his affinity with an ass as part of his “rude mechanical” nature, but it also demonstrates his ability to be transformed and experience visions close to the divine. The ambiguity of Bottom’s “translation,” both valorized and ridiculed in *A Midsummer*, resonates with the romantic characters’ “translation” in the main plot of *Twelfth Night*. *Twelfth Night* retains the ambiguity bestowed on the transformative power of imagination in *A Midsummer*, for even as the English Sir Toby Belch and Maria mercilessly ridicule Malvolio’s “imagination,” Cesario and Olivia carry themselves beyond their former identities with the power of their passions.

²⁹⁰ “translation, n.”. I.1.a. OED Online. March 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/204844?redirectedFrom=translation> (accessed May 06, 2015).

The centerpiece of the new affective framework lies in the first encounter between Cesario and Olivia. At the start of the meeting, Cesario struggles to keep close to the “script” of his message and simply adhere to the conventions of praising one’s beloved. He begins with a conventionally hyperbolic tribute to Olivia’s beauty as “Most radiant, exquisite and unmatchable beauty,” but then comically breaks off in order to verify whether she is indeed “the lady of the house” (1.5.165-66). On her part, Olivia tests Cesario by subtly ridiculing the love conventions and probing the sincerity of his passion. She teases Cesario’s desire to follow his “script” by asking, “Are you a comedian?” (1.5.177) and when he again resolves to go on “with my speech in your praise,” Olivia ironically comments, “Come to what is important in’t – I forgive you the praise” (1.5.184-88). The dialogue thus alternates between Cesario’s half-hearted attempts to follow the Petrarchan conventions of romantic love and Olivia’s ironic detachment and ridicule. In the manner of Thisbe’s mangled praise of Pyramus from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*—“These lily lips, / This cherry nose, / These yellow cowslip cheeks...” (5.1.317-322)²⁹¹—Olivia likewise ridicules the conventional blazon in her response to Cesario, “O sir, I will not be so hard-hearted. I will give out diverse schedules of my beauty. It shall be inventoried, and every particle and utensil labelled to my will, as, item, two lips, indifferent red; item, two grey eyes, with lids to them; item, one neck, one chin and so forth” (1.5.236-240). By

²⁹¹ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Stephen Greenblatt et al., eds., *The Norton Shakespeare based on the Oxford edition*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2008): 839-896.

substituting the indifference of a legal catalogue in place of the love blazon, she points out the indifference and mechanicity inherent in the love convention itself.

But the surprising outcome of the meeting is that Cesario “passes” the test of Olivia’s ridicule: he impersonates a lover so convincingly that it looks as though he becomes the part he is acting instead of merely rehearsing the studied lines. In a series of powerful moves, he demands to remain alone with Olivia; he wants to see her face, a request which Olivia points out, is “out of your text” (1.5.225); and by the end of the dialogue, he shifts to the personal pronoun “I,” completely subsuming Orsino’s identity in his own execution of the role. Orsino’s passion becomes Cesario’s own, as he exclaims, “[I would] Make me a willow cabin at your gate / And call upon my soul within the house; / Write loyal cantons of contemned love / And sing them loud even in the dead of night; ... / O, you should not rest ... / But you should pity me.”

(1.5.260-268). Love songs, sleepless nights, and complete devotion to one’s beloved – on one side, Cesario’s love is expressed in conventional Petrarchan terms, but on the other, what is striking in this speech is the power of his passion and its ability to be transferred, from Orsino to Cesario to Olivia and perhaps to theater audiences too.

This scene marks an important change from the way passion is handled in humanist comedy because in contrast to its derisive laughter and the demand for excessive passions to be purged, the main plot models a different affective framework for the play’s theater audiences—it invites audience participation in the passions felt by the characters, so they too can be translated and reconstituted into “other” bodies, unknown even to themselves. Passion, a much maligned force, especially in the

context of theater, thus becomes an avenue of freedom, the force, which theater uses to move its audience beyond the limits of individual embodiment and humoral psychology.

Proposing the idea of comedy as a “dream” or passionate “translation” (the idea also evident in *A Midsummer*), the romantic plot shows us a utopian world, where the unlikely sympathy between Cesario and Olivia, and Orsino and Viola/Cesario, is allowed to prosper and develop, leading to the magically opportune marriage between Olivia and Sebastian, and Orsino’s “discovery” of Viola in Cesario’s guise. The frenzy of the concluding scenes (notoriously hard to stage) with multiple characters shifting in and out of stage, but looking identical to each other, is a sort of accommodation to the plot’s main principle that several, contradictory passions can exist in the same person and as these nuances divide, new characters are needed to embody the selves the characters have imaginatively become. Thus Viola emerges as Cesario’s hidden counterpart, expressed previously as his fictional sister and his sensitivity to “antic” music, which Orsino misread as Cesario’s passion for some unknown beloved (2.4.21-28); and Sebastian appears to fill in the passions that Cesario vicariously expressed as a romantic lover of noble Olivia. “Why, what would you?” asks Olivia in bewilderment as she notes the extremity of Cesario’s assumed passion. “[I would] Make me a willow cabin at your gate / And call upon my soul within the house / Write loyal cantons of contemned love / And sing them loud even in the dead of night” (1.5.259-63). The sentiment that Cesario/Viola really loves Olivia assumes a physical shape in the end in the form of Sebastian, who is ready to take Olivia’s hand in

marriage where Cesario was reluctant. The tradition of comedy advocated by the main plot relies on the virtue of imaginative “translation,” whereby audience’s passions would be sympathetically aligned with experiences and emotional tribulations experienced by the characters on stage. And insofar as these experiences are wider and different from our own, the main plot promises to “merge” reality with fiction, audiences with characters, and lead to the creation of such “monsters” as Viola in the shape of Cesario, or as Bottom “translated” into a donkey and beloved by the Fairy Queen.

We can see some of the theoretical framework behind the humanist practice of “purging” passions versus the strategy of affective “translation” from the Ben Jonson’s Prologue to *Every Man In His Humour*, which directly contrasts Shakespeare’s plays to Jonson’s own comedies. Jonson compares his own comedy of humours with Shakespeare’s improbable and fantastic history plays: he prides himself that *Every Man Out* does not conform to “th’ill customs of the age,” which Jonson describes as the following:

To make a child, now swaddled, to proceed
Man, and then shoot up, in one beard and weed,
Past threescore years; or, with three rusty swords,
And help of some few foot-and-half-foot words,
Fight over York and Lancaster’s long jars;
He rather prays you will be pleased to see
One such, today, as other plays should be.

Where neither Chorus wafts you o'er the seas;

No creaking throne comes down, the boys to please;²⁹²

Jonson objects to Shakespeare's violation of the Aristotelian unities of time and action, with the events of his history plays spanning the life of a man and representing the whole history of wars between the houses of York and Lancaster. But he especially takes issue with Shakespeare's use of improbable and spectacular elements, such as transporting the audience "o'er the seas" or using stage machinery, in order "to please" the most immature section of the audience, the boys. While leveled at the Shakespeare's cycle of English history plays, this critique of the improbable and the spectacular could equally apply to the Shakespeare's practice of writing comedy. The twins' shipwreck on the mysterious coast of Illyria, their separation and miraculous reunion, and the fortunate appearance of Sebastian who functions much like *deus ex machina* in the last act – all these events from the romantic main plot of *Twelfth Night* would have likely struck Jonson as preposterous and unbelievable as the war and thunder of the earlier history plays. He dismisses these theatrical practices as irrelevant to the local abuses of the time, which his comedy, by contrast, purges through display and ridicule. In the Jonson's contrast between the comedy of humours and Shakespeare's history plays we may recognize the double-plot structure of *Twelfth Night*: its humanist plot focused on display and ridicule of Malvolio's vices as

²⁹²Ben Jonson, Prologue to *Every Man in His Humour*, *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*, ed. G. A. Wilkes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981–82), vol. 1, line 4, lines 7–16, p. 183.

opposed to the fantastic and improbable scenarios transported from the coast of Illyria to the London stage.

The two plots are more than just different ways to write comedy because they also encapsulate different ways of conceptualizing emotion and its potential with regard to theater audiences. With the romantic plot, Shakespeare moves away from the humoral and humanist view of passions as potential carriers of disease, insisting on the contrary on the benefits of “infection” and its ability to create a more harmonious and tolerant society. My previous chapter on *A Midsummer* argued that the play mixes generic frameworks, the tradition of comedy with the aristocratic genre of tragedy. The main plot of *Twelfth Night* moves further from its comedic predecessor by inviting a more explicit re-orientation to a new emotional framework, which makes a virtue out of sympathetic “contagion” and affective “translation” with the events portrayed on stage. The request to enter the magic forest and let one’s imagination run wild acquires a new urgency in *Twelfth Night* – its plot hints at the potentiality of “other worlds” hidden in the present one and the ease with which “Viola” can become “Cesario” or Olivia find herself affected by the “plague” of Cesario.

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Appendix

PERMISSIONS

From: **Sabina Amanbayeva** <amanbayeva.sabina@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, May 12, 2015 at 11:38 AM
Subject: Permissions Request for Early Modern Literary Studies
To: Matthew Steggle <M.Steggle@shu.ac.uk>, "Connolly, Annaliese F" <a.f.connolly@shu.ac.uk>

Dear Matthew Steggle and Annaliese Connolly,

I am writing to request a permission for an article I published in the Early Modern Literary Studies, entitled "Laughter in *Twelfth Night* and Beyond: Affect and Genre in Early Modern Comedy," in December 2014.

I need to submit my finished PhD dissertation to ProQuest, and this article is a part of my dissertation chapter. ProQuest requires permissions for material previously published elsewhere, and I need your permission to re-use this article as part of my dissertation. Could you please grant me the permission?

I am unable to submit my dissertation and graduate this May unless I hear back from you. Please reply at your earliest convenience!

Looking forward to your response! Thank you so much in advance.

Best wishes,
Sabina Amanbayeva

From: **Steggle, Matthew** <M.Steggle@shu.ac.uk>
Date: Tue, May 12, 2015 at 11:43 AM
Subject: RE: Permissions Request for Early Modern Literary Studies
To: Sabina Amanbayeva <amanbayeva.sabina@gmail.com>, Matthew Steggle <M.Steggle@shu.ac.uk>, "Connolly, Annaliese F" <a.f.connolly@shu.ac.uk>

Dear Sabina,

This email is to confirm that EMLS has no objections to you reusing the article "Laughter in *Twelfth Night* and Beyond: Affect and Genre in Early Modern Comedy," as part of your dissertation.

All the best,

Matt Steggle
Co-editor, EMLS