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University of Massachusetts Amherst

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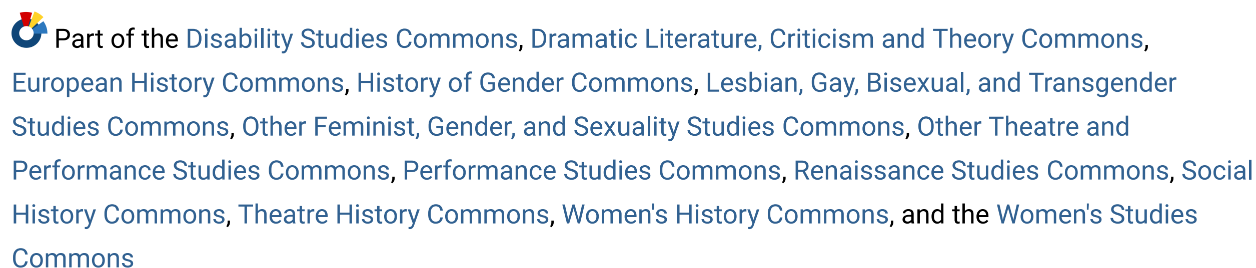
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Stranger Compass of the Stage: Difference and Desire in Early Modern City Comedy

A Dissertation Presented by

CATHERINE ELLIOTT TISDALE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

February 2021

English

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Stranger Compass of the Stage: Difference and Desire in Early Modern City Comedy

A Dissertation Presented by
CATHERINE ELLIOTT TISDALE

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Adam Zucker, Chair

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DEDICATION

To Gillian, whose strength, creativity, and intellect know no bounds,
and to my parents Elizabeth and Keith, who inspired my love of learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Adam Zucker, for his patience, investment, and time. Adam's encouragement and direction over the past eight years made this project possible, his insights shaped this project in its infancy, and I am grateful to have had such an exemplary mentor and brilliant mind chairing my dissertation. I would also like to thank my likewise brilliant committee members, Marjorie Rubright, who generously provided her expertise and feedback on multiple chapters; Jane Degenhardt, who read each draft and who led our peer-to-peer dissertation workshop group; and Harley Erdman, who was willing to assist a student outside of his department and who provided a theatrical and a critical eye to my project.

My gratitude also goes to those scholars who have helped me along the way, including Peter Stallybrass and Ann Blair who co-ran a yearlong dissertation workshop at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Arthur Kinney and Joseph Black, who supported my masters level work, Katherine Schaap Williams and Stephen Spiess who provided specific feedback on sections of this dissertation, Lindsey Row-Heyveld who encouraged me to write on disability and explore a new field, and Owen Williams and the team at the Folger Shakespeare Library, who supported my research and academic explorations. I also need to thank my colleagues at Shakespeare Association of America 2018 (LA), 2019 (DC), and 2020 (CO) who provided feedback on various sections of my work.

Many friends and colleagues also deserve thanks for the generous feedback they provided. Thank you to those who read my dissertation at various stages, including a monumental effort from Greg Sargent, and much input from William Steffen, Sean Gordon, David Katz, Neelofer Qadir, Kate Perillo, and Sharanya Sridhar. I am grateful to

those who helped me refine, develop, and explore my ideas, including my great friends Justine DeCamillis, Manuel Jacquez, Vanessa Braganza, Melissa Hudusko, and Dina Alqassar and my wonderful colleagues Joey Gamble, Josephine Hardman, Liz Fox, Fawn Albert, and Annaliese Hoehling. And many thanks to my editor and friend, Daniel Armenti.

I wish to thank all of my friends, many of whom are listed above, who provided support, love, and friendship throughout the writing of this dissertation. They forgave my absence and relished my presence in equal measure. Jacob LaRocca, Amelia John-Schonfeld, Beata Kaminska-Kordowska, Sonia Brand-Fisher, Peter Kritikos, and Lena Komarova, thank you for making the past eight years as joyful as they were demanding.

There are few words I can use to convey how indebted I am to my professors from Union College who helped me realize my potential and who inspired me by demonstrating what a difference great professors and genuinely good people can make in the lives of their students, Kara Doyle, Anastasia Pease, Andrew Burkett, Harry Martin, Patricia Culbert, William Finlay, Charles Steckler, Claire Bracken, Bernhard Kuhn, Bunkong Tuon, Ruth Stevenson, Hugh Jenkins, Patricia Wareh, Linda Cool, and President Stephen Ainlay. Every day of every year you've nurtured students who need you, some more than others. Thank you for the attention and care you afforded me as an undergraduate, and the friendship you've sustained with me as I've grown.

Without the support and love of my parents, Elizabeth and Keith, my sister Sarah, and her family, David, Thomas, and Jessica, I would never have been able to come to the U.S. and do the worthwhile work that I have done. Their continual investment helped me to move through the difficult parts of this project with joy and confidence. My kittens

Bramble and Thistle deserve honorable mention for their role in keeping me company as I wrote and in helping me recover from post-concussion syndrome.

Finally, my unending gratitude goes to my wife, Gillian, whose curious mind pushed me, whose ambition challenged me, and whose love changed me. This dissertation journey was as much hers as it was mine. Amid the constant reading, writing, teaching, and grading Gillian helped me prioritize life: the bike rides, cat adoptions, beach walks, swimming holes, impromptu dance parties, family visits, and explorations of the world. Thank you for your resilient optimism and your relentless love.

ABSTRACT

STRANGER COMPASS OF THE STAGE: DIFFERENCE AND DESIRE IN EARLY MODERN CITY COMEDY

February 2021

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Directed by: Professor Adam Zucker

In periods of social and political upheaval like our own, it is more important than ever to interrogate constructions of identity and difference and to understand the histories of alterity that separate us from one another. *Stranger Compass of the Stage: Difference and Desire in Early Modern City Drama* reimagines the cultural and social effect of alien, foreign, and stranger characters on the early modern stage and re-envisions how these characters contribute to, alter, and imaginatively build new epistemologies for understanding difference in early modern London. Resisting the field's current critical inclination toward English identity formation and readings that theorize national identity as a process of absorption or assimilation, this project works intersectionally to exhume the delicate cultural and theatrical networks in which difference was negotiated. In doing so, it rescopes the limits of what counts as difference in the period (including in terms of alien-ness).

Stranger Compass addresses fundamental questions of how early modern theater navigated difference on the stage by looking to four areas of performed difference: geographic and social difference, sexual difference, physical difference/disability, and

gender non-conformance. Each chapter focuses on one of these areas, and each chapter is treated with a similar analytical framework that draws on transformation and desire as socially constitutive forces. Rescoping the cultural and theatrical landscape of London allows this project to begin with geographic and social difference and to work ever closer to negotiations of individual difference in the theatrical space.

Ultimately, *Stranger Compass* brings together methodologies that demonstrate how theatrical performance stimulated audience members to engage, participate, and revise their intimate attitudes toward difference. Looking to Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1604) and *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1605), the anonymously authored *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607), Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1607/10), and Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1616 folio), I highlight that figures of difference are also often figures of familiarity and locality, who were integral to London's most basic social relationships as a growing city with a malleable culture. Vital in their difference and desirable in their tangible divergence, the characters in these works and the wider exigencies of early modern drama call on us to reconsider difference, identity, and desire.

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INTRODUCTION
THE MEANS THAT MAKE US STRANGERS

There's a wench
Called Moll, mad Moll, or merry Moll, a creature
So strange in quality, a whole city takes
Note of her name and person.

—Dekker's & Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1607/10)

Mad, merry, or strange, *The Roaring Girl's* eponymous Moll is infamous "in quality" and ineffable in words. She transforms into a musician, a bride, and a barrister, wears traditionally masculine clothing, smokes tobacco, and trades linguistic secrets: Moll alters sartorially, linguistically, somatically, socially, kinaesthetically, and sexually. In doing so, Moll emblematizes the transformative capacities of London itself where close-packed people navigated tumultuous spaces like theaters, markets, public houses, streets, homes, churches, shops, docks, parks, and yards as they went about their daily life. Like Moll, who "slips from one company to another like a fat eel between/ a Dutchman's fingers," the average Londoner who trades in markets or at the Royal Exchange had to "take on new faces, manners, and characteristics in order to ply their trade" and intermingle with others (3.188, Kermode 50). Moll's metaphorical representation as a native English "eel" weaving through Dutch hands demonstrates the intricately latticed relationship of national difference with London culture as Moll becomes close, yet unknown; native, yet infused with the alien.

In early modern London, slippery social and commercial interactions based on transforming semiotic markers expose a fundamental paradox underlying processes of urban identity formation in the period: How do people assert belonging within a

permeable sphere (London) that requires alteration to survive and that plays host to an unceasing influx of productive differences that go far beyond nationality? *Stranger Compass* works with fundamental questions of how early modern theater navigated difference on the stage in four fields: geographic difference and social status, sexual difference, the disabled body, and gender fluidity. Each chapter is primarily dominated by attention to one of these fields, and each chapter is treated with a similar analytical framework that draws on transformation and desire. This methodology helps distill emergent theatrical logics in the city comedies they examine, while leaving room for intersectionality and cross-pollination between chapters and between fields of difference.

A Londoner's Metropolis: Diversity & Difference in Early Modern London

The epigraph draws together notions of difference that encompass the international, but *Stranger Compass* does not directly address difference on a national scale after the first chapter. In part, this is because drawing parallels between many kinds of difference enables us to locate and understand wider interpretive patterns and logics that circulated in the period. Looking to city comedy in particular helps us to recognize the role of theatrical representation in London life as active, participatory, responsive, and exploratory. My focus on national difference in this introduction serves as a case study for the larger project and posits some guiding questions that hold opportunities for analysis in *Stranger Compass's* following chapters.

Alien characters (specifically those who exhibit national difference) are everywhere in early modern London and in early modern theater. The ravaging of the Low Countries by Spain's Catholic armies caused many Dutch protestants to flee in

search of religious asylum, and an economic upturn in London saw a considerable stream of non-native spices, tobacco, cloth, and luxury goods entering London along with their international merchants (Rubright 38).[1] A massive transformation in wealth occurred through "global commerce" and "inter-imperial" mercantile ventures with thirteen new chartered companies founded between 1550 and 1610 (Degenhardt 403, Doyle 339).[2] This economic growth coupled with London's ever increasing urban sprawl led to an environment that fostered "a greater need to assert identities and status through 'material culture' in the form of dwellings, diet, dress, furnishings, decorations, and ornaments" (Luu 37).[3] In London this economic growth manifested as a global sensibility, as citizens and inhabitants were surrounded by merchants, aliens, and exotic wares on a daily basis, especially with the opening of Gresham's Royal Exchange in January of 1571.

Prevailing conversations that circulated around theatrical representations of English national identity deployed the specific language of the alien, foreigner, or stranger to describe something "strange or hostile" that one defined oneself against.[4]

---

[1] Marjorie Rubright, *Doppelganger Dilemmas: Anglo-Dutch Relations in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

[2] Jane Hwang Degenhardt. "The Reformation, Inter-imperial World History, and Marlowe's Doctor Faustus," *PMLA* vol. 130, no. 2, Modern Language Association, 2015, pp. 402-411; Laura Doyle, "Inter-imperiality and Literary Studies in the Longer Durée," *PMLA* vol. 130 no. 2, Modern Language Association, 2015, pp. 336-347.

[3] Lien Bich Luu, *Immigrants and the Industries of London, 1500-1700*, Ashgate Publishing, 2005.

[4] Scholars like Alan Stewart have neatly set legally termed "aliens" apart from the larger migratory populous, as the early modern "alien" judicially referred to those who inhabited the country but originated from outside of its borders (much like today's "legal aliens"). In contrast, the term "foreigner" specifically referred to native born English men and women from outside the local community. In London, foreigners arrived via various pathways, often as adults, "rather than [as] young assimilable apprentices," making attempts at assimilation to London culture more challenging (Archer 7-8). "Strangers," on the other hand, overlapped alien and foreign groups. Since the early fourteenth century, "stranger" described "one who belongs to another country . . . one who resides in or comes to a country . . . an alien," and "one who is not a native of, or who has not long resided in, a country, town, or place. Chiefly, a new comer . . . one who is not yet well known" (Stranger adj. & n. OED). None of these terms are as clearly delineated as they may seem, which is an issue I attend to in Chapter One. Alan Stewart, "'Euery Soyle to Mee Is Naturall:' Figuring Denization in William Haughton's *Englishmen for My* Money," Renaissance *Drama New Series* vol. 35, University of Chicago Press, 2006, pp. 55-81, http://www.jstor.com/stable/41917442, accessed

Aliens were "marked for attack" by authority, generating a dichotomy that offset English identity and that helped establish a distinctly English sense of self (Greenblatt 9).[5] Lloyd Edward Kermode joins Stephen Greenblatt, positing that the rejection of the alien figure enables the absorption and celebration of specific stimulating alien characteristics into the English nation (Kermode 162).[6] More recently, Nina Levine shifts away from Kermode's and Greenblatt's polarized conclusions in favor of exploring the vibrant webs of communication and exchange between communities, webs that generate a "new form of theatrical practice contingent upon . . . local audiences" (Levine 9). Her discussion on *Englishmen for My Money* (1598), widely known as the first extant city comedy, argues that the topography of the city separates alien from native by reconstructing London as "a labyrinth protective of locals and inaccessible to foreigners" (Levine 20).

Looking to the same play, Emma Smith works to complicate the boundary between alien and Englishman as she draws connections between English national pride, language, and early colonization tactics that aim to dominate the wombs, tongues, and the bodies of women born into an "ambivalent" national status (Smith 167).[7] Smith's exploration of the fraught boundaries of national identity and gender is supplemented by

---

January 4th 2016; Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London*, Cambridge UP, 1991.

[5] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, University of Chicago, 1980.

[6] Kermode claims that there were two phases of representations of foreigners on the stage. The first, "defines Englishness against a corrupt, immoral, and dangerous foreignness," and the second "constructs Englishness in combination with the foreigner" (Kermode in Levine 106). Kermode also recognizes that his use of the term alien "is not perfectly consistent" (106). English Identity is further discussed by Stephen Mullaney in *Affective Technologies: Toward an Emotion Logic of the Elizabethan Stage,* University of Chicago Press, 2006; Lloyd Edward Kermode, *Aliens and Englishness in Elizabethan Drama*, Cambridge UP, 2009; Nina S. Levine, *Practicing the City: Early Modern London on Stage*, Fordham University Press, 2016.

[7] Emma Smith, "'So Much English by the Mother': Gender, Foreigners, and the Mother Tongue in William Haughton's 'Englishmen for My Money,'" *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England,* vol. 13, Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp DBA Associated Presses, 2001, http://www.jstor.com/stable/24322524, accessed January 4th 2016.

Alan Stewart's much needed examination of the legal term "alien," which uncovers the subtleties in Londoners' perceptions of others in the city and explores the unique legal and social grey-zone generated by denization (Stewart 57).[8] Jane Pettegree recognizes the complexities of early modern English identity, noting that it is "not simply a binary opposition between 'us' and 'them', but . . . a complex and interpenetrated matrix of ideas of 'foreign' and 'native'" (Pettegree 3).[9] These critics all call for a closer examination of the place of national difference on the early modern stage and recognize nuanced expressions of national difference but continue to foreground the alien's role in English identity formation. Doing so minimizes the impact of characters exhibiting national difference and directs attention to only one aspect of possible interpretation—how they help English people define themselves. In Chapter One, I look to alien and foreign characters as sites for new theatrical exploration. As *Stranger Compass* progresses, I look to manifestations, processes, and meanings of difference that coalesce around many aspects of London life outside of national identity and the normatization of Englishness.[10]

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[8] For more see Jacob Selwood, *Diversity and Difference in Early Modern London*, Ashgate, 2010; Laura Hunt Yungblut's *Strangers Settled here Amongst Us: Policies, Perceptions and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England*, Routledge, 1996. See also Nigel Goose, "'Xenophobia' in Elizabethan and Early Stuart London: An Epithet Too Far?," *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England*, eds. Nigel Goose and Lien Luu, Sussex Academic Press, 2005; Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck, eds., *The Mysterious and the Foreign in Early Modern England*, University of Delaware Press, 2008; Randolph Vigne and Charles Littleton, eds., *From Strangers to Citizens: The Integration of Immigrant Communities in Britain, Ireland, and Colonial America, 1550-1750*, Huegenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 2001.

[9] Jane Pettegree, *Foreign and Native on the English Stage 1588-1611: Metaphor and National Identity*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

[10] All of these studies are fundamentally necessary and useful in their work to explore economic and social shifts around nation-building. I highlight their disinterest in other possibilities for characters that exhibit national difference only to highlight a deficit in our field of knowledge that extends further to affect many types of difference beyond the national. There are a number of excellent historical texts that also take up these issues in early modern London but that pay close attention to the fissures and nuances among inhabitants alongside national difference. See John Archer, *Citizen Shakespeare: Freemen and Aliens in the Language of the Plays*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005; Nigel Goose and Lien Bich Luu eds., *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England*, Sussex Academic Press, 2005; Joseph P. Ward, *Metropolitan*

The critical inclination toward polarized readings and the interest in theorizing national identity as a process of absorption or assimilation where alien characteristics are concerned is symptomatic of larger methodological issues within our field with regards to how we analyze difference. Three key issues emerge from focusing so closely on English national identity. The first, is that national identity inflects not only our perception of lived experience in England, it also more broadly inhibits our understanding of the multitude of roles that differences between localities, cities, counties, and states played.[11] Second, by describing a process of nationalization (a process where smaller, local differences are subsumed into a larger cohesive narrative), we forget on what these narratives of national difference rest—the differences between others at a social, local level and how everyday people learned to navigate the intricacies of everyday difference. Third, if our understanding of theatrical characters who exhibit difference is shaped by a fixation on their relationship to English identity (including the upholding of hierarchical power structures such as virginity, marriage, economic gain, and political success), we flatten the role of other differences in identity on the early modern stage and remain bound by patriarchal readings inscribed onto narratives and characters that hold far more

---

Communities: Trade Guilds, Identity, and Change in Early Modern London, Stanford University Press, 1997; Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts, *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533-1707*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[11] Gerald MacLean claims that for the "insular British, personal and national desires and identities were no longer constructed only from within the local, the familiar, and the traditional, but increasingly became inseparably connected to the global, the strange, and the alien" (MacLean 86). MacLean links local constructions of identity to nationality but does so through the language of large-scale national difference, implying unity in "the local, the familiar" and "the traditional." It is this very notion of the cohesive familiar, and the splintered alien that I contest. The local and the familiar in London could never be accurately described as cohesive or uniform. Both familiar and unfamiliar are fragmented conceptions. See Gerald MacLean, "Ottomanism before Orientalism? Bishop King Praises Henry Blount, Passenger on the Levant," *Travel Knowledge: European "Discoveries" in the Early Modern Period*, eds. Ivo Kamps and Jyotsna G. Singh, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

theatrical potential.[12] Implicit in the language of English national identity is the issue that defining Englishness meant defining white, male, native life. Attempts to define Englishness in the period were an attempt (often exclusively amongst white men) to construct, maintain, and ubiquitize patriarchal structures across the social, economic, linguistic, political, religious, and cultural spectrums.

Looking to aliens (those arriving from outside of the country) only as sites for national self-definition shutters possible avenues for understanding difference in at least three clear ways. First, this dynamic incorrectly suggests that Englishness (white male identity as a national identity) was not negotiated within England amongst husbands, wives, land workers, vagabonds, soldiers, clergymen, and many other social groupings to the detriment of resident minorities. English national identity formation could be viewed as an experiment in colonization that played out internally, tightening the grip of patriarchal systems that flattened diverse experience and unifying those systems under the banner of English identity. Second, it implies that other kinds of difference worked to perform similar processes of polarized self-definition, which essentially limits staged difference to a placeholder for expositions on normality. Third, the focus on alien characters as a site of national self-definition quietly privileges historical narratives of white male identity formation and obfuscates important, diverse histories of different identity formation that were also taking place throughout the city and that were signified theatrically.

[12] I do not mean to imply that the theorists I have discusses are guilty of flat or underdeveloped readings. On the contrary, Greenblatt, Levin, Smith, Pettegree, Stewart, and Kermode all make great strides in uncovering new dynamics around difference in early modern London. I only use their work to demonstrate a strong methodological inclination toward English identity formation, which, while serving many uses, also has limitations.

While it is vital to explore how the global and international came to impact English people and their conceptions of self, I redirect attention toward local difference as a site of splintering human experience that was foundational to social life and theatrical representation in city comedy. Some vital questions emerge from the language of English national identity formation: How can we look to critical questions of race and nationhood when our understanding of difference rests necessarily on an unstable conception of local cohesion and social normativity?[13] What can we learn from investigating social differences at a variety of different registers such as sex, embodiment, and gender representation, that could inform larger scale examinations of identity formation and social, racial, cultural, or economic supremacy? Rather than track dominant logics of national identity or argue that the stage was entirely subversive or conventional, I look to the stage as a responsive, multiplicitous space that charted and imagined difference in diverse ways and that informed local understandings of difference.[14] Acts of theatrical writing, performance, and spectatorship provide opportunities to trace extant but less familiar considerations of identity and collective social exploration. *Stranger Compass* concentrates on exhuming and reviving these extant logics surrounding figures of difference in city comedy in order to animate theatrically negotiated patterns of thinking that privilege flexibility and possibility.

[13] Put differently, what do we learn from articulating difference on a local scale from 1580-1640, and what can we articulate about racial or cultural legibility by examining intimate difference and self-definition?
[14] The formulation of the stage of a responsive space comes from Gregory Sargent's dissertation *The Violation of Theatrical Space in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, University of Massachusetts Amherst, PhD dissertation, 2021.

We Are Undone Already: Transformation & Early Modern Theater as Solvent[15]

Early modern London in the late sixteenth century was a heavily stratified place. It comprised of six hundred and seventy-seven acres of land, divided into twenty-five wards, two hundred and forty-two constabular precincts, averaging "120 yards to a side," and one hundred and eleven parishes (Pearl and Rappaport 15, Manley 4).[16] Overlapping spheres of governance on the civic level met with religious and occupational regulations issued by up to seventy nine craft guilds, of which twelve were deemed the "Twelve Great Livery Companies" (Manley 3). Nearly three fourths of adult men belonged to these guilds and were thus considered citizens (or "freemen") of London (Ward 2). The guilds were almost entirely in control of citizenship, which could be gained by birth, through purchase of "redemption," or through seven years of apprenticeship, which served to differentiate the immigrant strangers or "aliens," and non-citizen Englishmen known as "foreigners" (Manley 4). Sumptuary laws policed the sartorial signification of social status and the walls of the city differentiated the policed town from its less regulated neighbors, the liberties. Such divisions that were a spatial reality of the city worked to create a sense of religious, political, geographic, and vocational belonging but also came to delineate and articulate borders of social inclusion.

Rather than assert a sense of iron-clad stability, the series of overlapping jurisdictions and laws demonstrate a more fractious approach to regulating the city and

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[15] I follow here Peter Womack's description of the theater: "the sea of people as the solvent of all discursive order and truth" (Womack 93). Peter Womack, "Imagining Communities: Theatres and the English Nation in the Sixteenth Century," *Culture and History 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities, and Writing*, ed. Davis Aers, Wayne State University Press, 1992.

[16] Valerie Pearl, "Change and Stability in Seventeenth-century London," *The London Journal*, vol. 5 no.1, Taylor & Francis, 1979, pp. 3-34, (DOI: 10.1179/ldn.1979.5.1.3), accessed June 12th 2018; Stephen Rappaport, "Social Structure and Mobility In Sixteenth-Century London," *The London Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2, Taylor & Francis, 1983, pp. 107-135, (DOI: 10.1179/ldn.1983.9.2.107), accessed June 12th 2018. Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London*, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

illustrate the splintered nature of social life in London. For all of its structure, London thrived in a state of flux, with new ideas, fashions, fruits, and ways of understanding the world arriving daily. A dialectical and mutually constituted relationship existed between city comedy and urban London life encompassing both the composition of the text and the localized but diverse spectatorship. Audiences took part in the intricate social exchanges within playhouses and on the streets of the city, becoming an "active part of the performance text" (Leinwand 15, Gurr xiv).[17] Theater spaces in London modeled "networks of association" on the stage while simultaneously operating as networks themselves in wider society, enabling citizens to "experiment in the complex reciprocities" of urban belonging (Levine 3). Vitally, early modern theater could be "a decidedly local event" that enabled the populous to "engage in the politics of urbanization," yet it also drew visiting merchants, newly arrived migrants, and enthusiasts of specific play types (Levine 18). The early modern audience was a diverse social group whose "unstable . . . point of view" could experience and interpret plays in a variety of non-linear, ambiguous ways (Novy, 11).[18] When packed with people, the space of the theater itself encompassed processes of transformation in which ideals, expectations, and practices could be attuned, reworked, and reinvented. As sites of responsive creativity and imaginative exploration, London's theaters and their spectators took part in the constant negotiation of imagined difference.

As much as the imaginative theatrical space was embraced, many found the ability to alter identificatory markers unsettling when it manifested in wider society. The

[17] Theodore B. Leinwand, *The City Staged: Jacobean Comedy, 1603-1613*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986; Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.
[18] Marianne Novy, *Shakespeare & Outsiders*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

transformation of semiotic signification through clothing, hair length, posture, gesture, and mannerism could be met with distrust. Kermode investigates transformation in early modern London as a negative quality that generates distrust:

> persons crossing socio-political boundaries have to take on new faces, manners, and characteristics . . . Recognition of friend and enemy, native and alien, becomes very difficult and professions of identity highly questionable as anyone, whatever his or her character or occupation, has the potential to act out their anti-self (Kermode 50-1).

In modern life, the ability to read, adapt to, and appeal to others is often considered a skill because it creates a sense of artificial closeness and cooperation that allows social and economic transactions to proceed smoothly and end amicably. Kermode's argument candidly exposes a central paradox in some considerations of early modern identity—that there exists a real or true self to be compromised, and that transformation creates a less genuine other, or "anti-self." The concept that the exchange of culturally produced traits make recognition difficult and can produce an anti-self seems an oversimplified way of discussing early modern identity formation.[19] Yet, in relation to studies of nationalism that explore commerce, like Kermode's, the true or false identity model arises frequently. For instance, Jean-Christophe Agnew describes the disruptive and transformative power of "the commodity exchange"[20] and its role in prompting social anxiety around identity

[19] Since Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud published on psychoanalytic theory and self-formation, it is widely accepted that within a single person are multiplicitous manifestations of a self. Since Jung's original publication, Jung's theory that position the self as particulate but still a coherent whole has developed into a variety of theories, most of which acknowledge that the self does not function on a diametrically polarized axis (such as true or false). For instance, in 1977 Joseph Redfearn argued that the self consists of a range of "subpersonalities" that coalesce and alter over the course of a lifetime. For more, see C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious vol. 1-9*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Princeton University Press, 1984-1996; J. W. T. Redfearn, "The Self and Individuation," *Journal of Analytic Psychology*, vol. 2. no. 22, Wiley-Blackwell, 1977, pp. 125–141., (doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-5922.1977.00125.x), accessed June 7th 2020.

[20] Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750*, Cambridge University Press, 1986.

(Agnew 96).[21] Agnew connects identity formation with trade and indebtedness as he argues that a "national i[f] not global crisis of representation" was occurring because "social signs and symbols had metamorphosed into detached and manipulable commodities," creating a new kind of self-composed, commercial, "illusion" and "imposture" in the early modern London life (Agnew 97, 83). Agnew's characterization of transformative identity shifts as self-composed illusory imposture infers that identity is not already a self-composed fiction. Regardless of negative or positive characterization, the idea of a fixed or stable identity away from which one shifts, alters, or transforms, closely aligns with historical critics of the theater.

In the period itself, antitheatricalists played a key role in discussing discomfort with the malleability and slipperiness of prosthetic gender. Phillip Stubbes, for one, expressed deep frustration with improperly clothed individuals (Stubbes 48).[22] His voice is joined in chorus by Puritan scholar John Rainoldes, who especially disavowed cross-dressing on stage. In *Th' Overthrow of Stage-Plays* (1599), Rainoldes warns readers to "beware of beautiful boys transformed into women by putting on their raiment, their feature, looks and fashions" (Stallybrass and Jones 216, Rainoldes 34).[23] Puritan lawyer, polemicist, and author, William Prynne, likewise fearfully deplored long hair on men and cropped hair on women as it could serve to eliminate clear bodily sexual difference. Prynne states, we live "in unnatural, and unmanly times; wherein . . . sundry of our manish, impudent and inconstant female sex, are Hermaphrodited and transformed into

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[21] An idea buttressed by Stephen Greenblatt in *Renaissance Self* Fashioning, 1980.

[22] Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomy of Abuses*, London, 1583, *Early English Books Online, ProQuest*, accessed August 18th 2020.

[23] Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory.*, Cambridge University Press, 2000; John Rainoldes, *Th'overthrow of stage-plays*, London, 1599, *Early English Books Online, ProQuest*, accessed August 12th 2018.

men" because they "unnaturally clip and cut their hair" (209, Prynne A3, G2).[24] This is a sentiment backed up by *Hic Mulier*, "the long hair of a woman is the ornament of her sex . . . the long hair of a man, the vizard for a thief or murderous disposition" (Anon 9).[25] Adding or doffing of hair, be it through clipping or wigs transforms the supposedly natural state of hair into a flexible artifice of gender (Stallybrass and Jones 208). The mutability of hair length, of clothing, and of socially decipherable somatic markers on the renaissance stage deeply troubled symbols of distinction that were considered "natural" ontological markers of embodied sex-based difference, rather than fluctuating cues for reading gender.[26] In 1582, Stephen Gosson argued that stage plays were not only pagan, but mimetically suspect: "for a boy to put on the attire, the gestures, the passions of a woman; for a mean person to take upon him the title of prince, with counterfeit train; is by outward signs to show themselves otherwise than they are" (Gosson 102).[27] Gosson, like Agnew, seems convinced that there is an inherent "truth" that can become obscured through the transformative manipulation of signs and signifiers. A fundamental discomfort pervades antitheatricalist, religious, and pamphlet culture that focuses on how gender can be read from the body and that extends to impact many kinds of difference, including sex, social status, and somatic manifestation. In each instance, this line of reasoning attempts to suppress and condemn what happens when transformation is non-linear, uncontrolled, and outside of the enforceable patriarchal purview.

[24] William Prynne, *The Unlovliness of* Lovelocks, London, 1628, *Early English Books Online, ProQuest*, accessed August 12th 2018.
[25] Anonymous, *Hic mulier: or, The man-woman: being a medicine to cure the coltish disease of the staggers in the masculine-feminines of our times, Expressed in a brief declamation*, London, 1620, *Early English Books Online*, accessed January 21st 2020.
[26] It is especially useful to keep issues of gender prosthesis in mind when reading Chapter Four.
[27] Stephen Gosson, "Plays Confuted in Five Actions, 1582," *Shakespeare's Theater: A Sourcebook*, edited by Tanya Pollard, Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Antitheatricalist attention to the theatrical threat of manipulable identity overlooked the way that, regardless of status, ethnicity, occupation, or religious belief, the people of London habitually transformed in a variety of ways on a daily basis. As *Stranger Compass* progresses, it is key to recognize that staged identities and the many transformations that they go through are all legitimate and equally real iterations of an imagined character. In part, transforming theatrical identity exposes the fiction of stratification and fixed social roles (often dramatized through characterological type) by working as a liberated imaginative tool through which unstable identity formations can be staged and thought. In city comedy in particular, theatrical attention turns to fictive depictions of recognizable lived experience and asks its audience to exercise a diverse range of logics. Londoners were often navigating a multitude of unique experiences and identities. Rather than a system of clearly defined lines of identity and status—for example, one was either wealthy, or one was not—a more complex human tissue developed in early modern London that reveals a multiplicity of boundaries in which individuals continually traversed questions of belonging and rejection as they negotiated the day. Examining characterological transformation allows us to better discover the performance of difference on stage and to chart how early modern audiences related to vibrant depictions of transformative identities. A central tenet of *Stranger Compass* is that by tracing moments of transformation we can better understand how identity is imagined, crafted, manifested, and navigated on the early modern stage. Rather than expecting these explorations of identity to indicate a "true north," I track where the compass's needle is drawn as a site of early modern theatrical attraction and worthy of our critical attention.

Examining staged transformations around difference enables us to chart how early modern audiences related to and engaged heuristically with rich depictions of transformative social identities. Alongside transformation, desire sits as a central analytical and literary refrain that guides *Stranger Compass's* examination of staged difference in the period. In 2013, Christine Varnado reoriented eroticism, positioning it as “a constitutive force on the same order as ‘language,’ and ‘culture’—as the same kind of thoroughly constructed yet totally fundamental and pervasive structure through which . . . existence is experienced” (Varnado 29). While I use the term desire rather than eroticism, I explore that same constitutive erotic force that stimulates and enlivens processes of transformation in early modern dramatic performance and in the wider social sphere.[28] I look to desire's stimulants, knowledges, practices, stressors, and processual repercussions.[29]

Desire and difference are intimately linked yet somehow find themselves as opposites in the narrative of national difference, which serves as an example for *Stranger Compass's* larger argumentative through line. For instance, when attempting to explore

[28] I use desire rather than eroticism in order to widen the breadth of my thematic scope. I look at desire as it manifests erotically, but also socially and culturally. Each of the many possible desires that I look to is rooted within the body and within networks of titillation, stimulation, or yearning, all of which connect to the erotic landscape of human experience and interaction.

[29] Christine Varnado argues that eroticism in early modern drama works as “an invisible force . . . connecting bodies,” and that, many readings of implicit sexual acts need to be read through the lens of queer eroticism (possible sex, possible eroticism “which was not explicitly named *as* sexual in the period” (29. 28)). Failure to do so leads to “high minded,” overly historicized, and heteronormative readings that render many possible sex acts “invisible” (29). See Christine Varnado, “Invisible Sex! What Looks Like the Act in Early Modern Drama?,” *Sex before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England*, eds. James M. Bromley and Will Stockton, University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

desire manifesting around national difference in *Englishmen for my Money* (1598), Emma Smith argues:

> The fascination of the possible attraction between English and foreign attests to the compulsion of English projections of national identity, and these dramatic courtships stage a culture that is imaginatively engaged in defining and fixing the otherness of the foreigner, and in testing and affirming its own self-identity (Smith 177).

Smith expresses the play's engagement with difference as an exercise in "defining and fixing the other," and "testing and affirming" national identity, spurred by "attraction." Her larger point regarding attraction between three English men and three half-English women focuses on the heteronormative domination of the women and becomes about "the foreigner" in that the Englishmen eventually manage to thwart the foreign father's patriarchal dominance. For Smith, English national identity is established through patriarchal dominance over other males, and over women perceived as outside of the purview of English male dominion. The alien characters (the father, the young women, and the competing suitors), are diminished in a reading that privileges the narrative of patriarchal systems, yet other readings of the play find more flexibility leaning against this white, male, nationalist through line. Should we read for "attraction" and courtship differently, other desires emerge within the text and many contrary stories unravel. Many desires that emerge are tied to Englishmen's patriarchal hope for land and power, but others emerge that demonstrate the strength of women's desire (hence the play's second title *A Woman Will Have Her Will*), the aspirations of newcomers to London, and the disjuncture between social status and wealth. Smith demonstrates how easily we slip into somewhat limiting considerations of difference when she states that the purpose of aliens is the "fixing" and "affirming" other character's identities. Assimilation and the English

interpolation of attractive alien practices are also rewarded, as long as such deviation goes no further than the enhancement of supposedly English traits. The distance drawn between national differences remains deeply problematic, especially because characters who exhibit national difference (and many other forms of difference) are rarely so simply absorbed or their characteristics assimilated and contained within performative renditions of otherness.[30] Tracing the ligaments of desire leads to the fleshier substance of how and why differences are articulated and the multitude of possibilities that underpin theater's position as a space of local responsivity and collective imagining.

Each of my chapters works to trace how desire is enacted on the stage through characters that exhibit difference, how desire catalyzes city comedy narratives, and how difference generates a semi-erotic desire to "know" that focuses audience attention around questions of belonging, self-identification, and erotic stimulation.[31] In city comedy, studies of desire focus primarily on economic desire (desire for new fashions and commodities)[32] or on sexual desire for women and the anxieties they invoke.[33] For example, texts that trace early modern desire for, amongst, or deriving from women often include female monstrosity (and monstrous births), witches, virginity, and male anxiety around female desire.[34] Francis Dolan explains that women who lived outside of

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[30] This is especially true as the stranger or alien is physically, linguistically, and culturally irreducible with regards to markers such as race, accent, fashion, and cultural practice. These can define national difference in non-negotiable, tangible terms.

[31] For instance, in Chapter One characters model a desire to know how Sir Andrew Lethe, a Scottish knight, has wooed a citizen's daughter.

[32] For a discussion of commerce in early modern drama, see Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004; Bradley D. Ryner, *Performing Economic Thought: English Drama and Mercantile Writing, 1600-1642*, Edinburgh University Press, 2014; and Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[33] While those studying city comedy often discuss social climbers, political gain, marriage, etc., few critically engage the concept of desire to develop and explore these topics.

[34] For more on virginity in particular, see Jankowski's description of queer virgins as "those who confound the sex/gender system *not* by trying to be men, but by *not being* women," that is, women who refuse the

traditional marriage were often criminalized in popular literature and in legal settings with "representations of infanticide and witchcraft explicitly target those women who live outside direct male supervision, revealing the anxieties such women provoked" (Dolan 14). Monstrous births were said to occur when women were especially depraved, or, to the contrary, when women were so "compassionate," that in witnessing a terrible thing, could "produc[e] madness in the womb" (Shildrick 36). The major issue for early moderns, in either case, is that the "feminine imagination gives material expression to the hidden desires and passions of women that threaten, always, to corrupt" and mark women or their offspring with monstrous features (Shildrick 37).[35] As Elizabeth Bearden notes in her study of the monstrous body and possibility, to early moderns the "mind and body are integrated; they suffer and change together," so female desire, which was equated to wickedness, could easily be reflected in the outward appearance of women (Bearden 17). The embodiment of female desire and different models of sexual access both seem entirely dangerous, yet my second chapter actively works to explore city comedy's unique ability to stage female desire by looking to women who break out of linear expectations of virginity and marital chastity as a means of attaining personal agency. This agency then enables social climbing, sexual gratification, marital ambitions (sometimes cast as the recovery of lost honor), or other social maneuvers, all of which are catalyzed by different forms of social, sexual, or material desire.[36]

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designation of woman by refusing to marry, yet who may have been queer and erotically active outside of sanctioned societal formats (Jankowski 10, 12). Theodora Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.

[35] Research of sexual slander also encompasses questions of female desire. Mario DiGangi's work on sexual slander in *The Roaring Girl* is especially useful. See chapter 4, "Calling Whore," of DiGangi's *Sexual Types: Embodiment, Agency and Dramatic Character from Shakespeare to Shirley*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

[36] There are notable exceptions to the above narratives that chart female desire, such as the work of Kay Stanton, Duncan Salkeld, and Stephen Spiess who excavate whore narratives in early modern drama and

I by no means wish to dismiss sexual desire as a vital part of this project. As Douglas Bruster notes, critics must explore how "complicated pleasure, desire, and the implications of sexual practices are" in early modern London (Bruster 2).[37] Bruster's point asks us to recognize the delicate interactions between pleasure, want, and bodily practice, which are elements that are important in each chapter, but particularly in Chapters Three and Four as I look to questions of somatic speculation and desire. Rather than focusing on what Bruce R. Smith describes as "the satisfaction of desire," which is "in making the 'not me' mine," that is, the conception of attaining or fulfilling desire, I focus instead on the intersection of desire with processes of transformation (Smith 127).[38]

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breathing new life into the analysis on sexually desired women and their theatrical significations. Likewise, Valerie Traub's groundbreaking work on female homoerotics in early modern drama positively explores female sexuality by examining the means "by which erotic bonds between women were rendered intelligible," and by rendering visible "asymmetrical representations of . . . early modern discursive figures" such as "the French female sodomite, the English tribade, and the theatrical 'femme'" (Traub, *Perversion* 23, Traub "(In)significance" 62). Kay Stanton, *Shakespeare's Whores: Erotics, Politics, and Poetics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; Duncan Salkeld, *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans Prostitution, Literature, and Drama, 1500-1650*, Ashgate, 2012; Stephen Spiess, "The Terms of Whoredom in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare's Whore: Language, Prostitution, and Knowledge in Early Modern England*, PhD dissertation, University of Michigan MLibrary Deep Blue, 2013, (DOI: hdl.handle.net/2027.42/97951), accessed 9th Sept 2020; Valerie Traub, "The Perversion of 'Lesbian' Desire," *History Workshop Journal*, Oxford University Press, 1996, no. 41. pp. 23-49, www.jstor.com/stable/4289429, accessed August 17th 2020; Valerie Traub, "The (In) Significance of 'Lesbian' Desire in Early Modern England," *Queering the* Renaissance ed. Jonathan Goldberg, Duke University Press, 1994. For more on female homoerotic desire, specifically, see Traub's *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

[37] Traub later takes up considerations of sexual practice in more detail in *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns.* For those interested in sexual practice more broadly, Joseph Gamble recently offered an analytic method for "foregrounding the bodily practices with which early moderns worked through" the "epistemological opacity of sex" (Gamble 111, Traub in Gamble 111). See also Will Fisher's work on chin-chucking and cunnilingus, and James M. Bromley's work on anilingus. Valerie Traub, *Thinking Sex with the Early Moderns*, Pennsylvania University Press, 2016; Joseph Gamble, "Practicing Sex" *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, vol. 19, no. 1, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019, pp. 85-116, (DOI: doi.org/10.1353/jem.2019.0013), accessed August 17th 2020; Will Fisher "'Stray[ing] lower where the pleasant fountains lie': Cunnilingus in Venus and Adonis and in English Culture, c.1600- 1700," *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, ed. Valerie Traub, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 333-46; Bromley, James M. "Rimming the Renaissance." Sex Before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England. Eds. James M. Bromley and Will Stockton. University of Minnesota Press, 2013. 171–93. See also Harriette Andreadis, "The Sapphic-Platonics of Katherine Philips, 1632-1664," *Signs*, vol. 15, no. 1, University of Chicago Press, 1989. pp. 34-60, (www.jstor.org/stable/3174705), accessed August 17th 2020.

[38] Bruce R. Smith, "Making a Difference: Male/Male 'Desire' in Tragedy, Comedy, and Tragi-Comedy," *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance* Stage, ed. Susan Zimmerman, Routledge, 1992.

In doing so, I decentralize sexual practice and the fulfillment of pleasure in order to explore how desire as a constitutive force is wielded theatrically, how desire is catalyzed on-stage and off-stage amongst audience members, and what it means to desire for those watching characters who exhibit specific forms of difference on the early modern stage.[39] This project parses both the desire exhibited on-stage by characters or through narrative points as well as desires generated off-stage via theatrical stimulation. In doing so, I expose the theatrical mechanism by which quotidian desires, such as the desire to socially climb, work as a catalyst for transformations that subsequently generate diverse interpersonal and often erotic, investments. By decentralizing erotic desire, I work to chart how the sometimes-painful, sometimes-comedic, sometimes-sexual, transformative experiences that occur as diverse forms of desires are staged, articulated, and explored.

In every chapter of *Stranger Compass*, I look to a series of desires that are representative of the range of my larger work. First, in Chapter One desire is deployed alongside repulsion as specific characters generate alternative pathways for understanding and help rewrite the social script of belonging to specific status groups. In Chapters One, Two, Three, and Four the encouragement of conflicting desires amongst characters or audience members remediates social expectation; for instance, one staged social group may establish a boundary that a new arrival to London does not meet, does not want to meet, or only meets halfway causing fractures within each group's social boundaries and demonstrating the constructed nature of said boundary. Conflicting desires can also be used to stimulate off-stage audience engagement or encourage resistance or support for specific characters or staged perspectives. Furthermore, in every

[39] By on-stage audience I mean to reference the other performers who act, react, and perform specific kinds of spectatorship on the stage.

chapter, on-stage audience members (the other actors on-stage who watch and react theatrically) work as part of a coordinated theatrical mechanism that helps direct and tailor audience attention. Doing so draws the notice of off-stage audience members to speculate and to consider specific traits, characters, moments, or concepts often with the goal of guiding audience response. Lastly, in Chapters One, Two, and Three, the desire to transform in status, in body, or otherwise splinters character type by fracturing the illusion of social cohesion once again. In each instance, rather than stepping from one social group or status from another, characters find themselves straddling vastly different spheres of influence, which leads to the productive enmeshing of many supposedly delineated spaces, bodies, statuses, and identities. Overlapping and conflicting networks of knowledge, desire, and expectation are, in part, the subjects of each chapter and reveal a complex, kaleidoscopic theatricality that recognizes the power of potentiality, of overlapping modes of difference in identity formation, and of destabilizing structures that limit self and communal expression. Transformation as a fundamental theatrical process and desire as a fundamental theatrical force necessarily inform one another. Looking to both transformation and desire helps us not only see how difference is depicted and explored theatrically but helps us understand how and why early moderns were motivated to rethink and feel their way through difference.

Reckoning Methodology

The body of this dissertation is organized around four forms of performed difference, all of which develop our understanding of how difference functioned in London and on the early modern stage: geographic difference and social status, sexual difference, physical

difference/disability, and gender fluidity. Each chapter builds upon the next and works with one or two plays, which serve as case studies that articulate new ways of understanding early modern perceptions of and interactions with difference. Chapter by chapter, these case studies examine theatrical representations of difference via the scattering of theatrical signifiers, the deployment of structural narrative strategies, the creation of lexical pathways, the operation of prosthetic parts, and the pedagogical use of on-stage performances of spectatorship. Each chapter works to emphasize the multiplicity of meanings, possibilities, and overlaps in logic that flow around their specific difference. Chapters One and Three share an interest in performances of difference that ostensibly reassert theatrical and social typologies in limiting ways but that, in fact, dislocate these limitations and reveal a host of different social, erotic, and embodied possibilities. Chapters Three and Four are both key stakeholders in conversations of how, when, and why the body is read as divergent, dangerous, or monstrous, and both chapters resist how the unknown body is imagined as deformed by revising critical readings to excavate significant instances of desire for the unknown body. Likewise, Chapters Two and Four share an interest in gender and the sexed body, as they work to explore female desire and gender fluidity as theatrical energies that powerfully challenged social and structural logics of normalcy and male supremacy. Three of the six plays I touch on are written by Thomas Middleton, in part due to his prolific writing in the genre of city comedy but also because of his clear investment in responding to the transformative logics of London and interest in multiplicity and possibility rather than structure and fixity.[40]

[40] Records show that Middleton wrote for Prince Henry's Men, the King's Men, Lady Elizabeth's amalgamated company, the boy actors at St Paul's and at the Blackfriars, and his work was performed at Inner Temple, at court, and featured as the Lord Mayor's pageant each year. Middleton co-wrote with many other dramatists, published pamphlets, masques, and books, collaborated with William Shakespeare on

United under the banner of desire and transformation in *Stranger Compass* are numerous methodological approaches. This project combines performance studies, philological analysis, textual analysis, typological and characterological analysis, cultural materialism, disability studies, and queer theory to reconstruct the unstable, desire-based networks of relation that quietly permeated everyday negotiations of difference, and that were actively negotiated with and imagined on the early modern stage. Working intersectionally to exhume the delicate cultural and theatrical networks in which difference was negotiated, I rescope the limits of what counts as difference in the period (including in terms of alien-ness). Rescoping the cultural and theatrical landscape of London as one made up of overlapping and interconnected networks of association that scattered and united various kinds of difference allows this project to begin with geographic and social difference and work ever closer to negotiations of individual difference in the theatrical space. *Stranger Compass* brings together methodologies that demonstrate how theatrical performance stimulated audience members to engage, participate, and revise their intimate attitudes toward difference. Propelled by its central focus on social, sexual, bodily, and gendered differences, this project ultimately argues that the early modern stage galvanized interest in difference and modeled new logics for its audience members via the stimulation of their own desires.

Chapter One takes its inspiration from this introduction's discussion of national difference by investigating Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1604), and Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor* (Folio 1616), which both follow new migrants to the

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Timon of Athens (1605-6), and was the only playwright on record "trusted by Shakespeare's company to adapt Shakespeare's plays after his death" (Taylor). Gary Taylor, "Middleton, Thomas (bap. 1580, d. 1627)," *Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed February 23rd 2015.

city of London. Here I broaden the critical perspective to include a multitude of people arriving in the city (both on and off the stage), whose ability to transform afforded them new avenues of social, economic, and emotional life. Chapter One looks to three men, Sir Andrew Lethe, Master Richard Easy, and Master Stephen, who struggle to meet standards of social signification due to their geographic difference. Starting broadly with characters who arrive in London with the goal of raising their social status (like so many of those inhabiting the city and its liberties), I deploy philological and textual analysis to complicate what alien, foreign, or strange could mean in early modern performance. Furthermore, I dissolve mechanisms of failure and success around alien and country gull figures by focusing on transformation as a theatrical process that exposes logics of social status and difference. Rather than reinforcing social status, the transformations each character undergoes (or the lack thereof) to achieve their social desire reveals the constructed nature of social status, its fungible boundaries, and its tenuous fragility when confronted with unyielding, irreducible instances of social difference. Mapping processes of transformation, which are catalyzed by desire, demonstrates how the early modern stage uses this desire-based transformation as a theatrical mechanism for affirming geographic difference and for encouraging social multiplicity.

Chapter Two takes up the categorization and sexual typing of women in Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1604) and *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1605), with the aim of rendering sexual signification and social transformation intelligible by examining the shifting boundaries of geographic, lexical, and bodily difference in female characters who are categorized as whores. I argue that the staging of female desire as a catalyzing and theatrically revelatory force destabilized sexual logics, marked sexual status, and

relocated sexual worth outside of the schema of patriarchal power in the period. Furthermore, I isolate a linguistic theatrical maneuver, accretive semiotics, that works as a linguistic device to facilitate transformation by destabilizing sexual type and producing lexical proximity between seemingly distinct categories of belonging. I show that a single character can reveal the mechanisms of transformation and thus expose social and cultural mechanisms that uphold structures of power. In doing so, I demonstrate that early modern theater (particularly Middleton's early city comedy work) was invested in unsettling established sexual logics in favor of exploring the possibilities within female bodies, statuses, and desires in early modern London.

Chapter Three departs from the previous chapters by reorienting the focus on type and sex to look at the physical body as a site of difference, specifically in the form of physical disability. This chapter examines the anonymously authored *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (speculated to have been written by Thomas Heywood in 1607) and examines the central love plot that circulates around the play's protagonist, the Cripple of Fanchurch. Shifting scope from typology, I look to the disabled somatic body as a site of generative potential and intense speculation that recasts the renaissance stage as a richly layered site for accessing modes of sexual and bodily signification. This chapter looks to the physical body in order to draw closer to generative, intimate sites that formulate, negotiate, enforce, and elide notions of bodily difference. I demonstrate how looking to physical difference can transform the familiar body of the actor-character through a desiring gaze and I use the term "cripped desire" to describe two processes of transformation. First, I expose how prosthetic extension and the lexicon of desire within the play generates a theatrical dependence on the Cripple's speculative body and somatic

difference. By creatively deploying the theatrical prop of prosthetic extension, *Fair Maid of the Exchange* models an entirely different mode of early modern desire. Second, I argue that disability was foundational to key elements of love language in renaissance literature and that *Fair Maid of the Exchange* presents alternative ways to read the history of disability and transgressive somatic embodiment.

Chapter Four builds upon Chapter Three's conclusions regarding somatic speculation, prosthesis, theatrical attention, and desire in order to examine the anonymous *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607) and Thomas Dekker's and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1607/10). In this chapter I argue that somatic speculation about the body can challenge and alter gender and power relations. In *The Roaring Girl,* which stoutly refuses to produce clear categories for interpreting gender, the eponymous Mad Moll's gender fluidity works to presents a more expansive manifestation of the body and self through a series of interpretive portraits hung in a theatrically conjured gallery that display different ways of seeing the titular character. I deploy queer time as a methodology that allows the recasting of the text's wildly different and often contradictory depictions of Moll that occur simultaneously. By proffering such a variety of possible ways to see and desire Moll, the play presents a gallery in which no singular representation can adequately represent Moll, thus generating new ways of comprehending and knowing physical, sexual, and social difference. I build on the larger chapter to demonstrate that Middleton and Dekker's interest in rewriting epistemologies of desire, bodily knowledge, and erotic engagement extends through structural, linguistic, and theatric modes within the play-text, demonstrating how gender fluidity works to

activate new modes of understanding the unique social ramifications of gender difference on the early modern stage.

This is, then, a project that seeks out extant early modern processes and logics through theatrical representations of social, sexual, bodily, and gendered difference in order to challenge current methodologies and privilege migrant, female, disabled, and gender-fluid narratives. I highlight that figures of difference are also, often, figures of familiarity and locality, who were integral to London's most basic social relationships as a growing city with a malleable culture. Rather than apply one literary theory or model to a variety of plays, *Stranger Compass* argues for a methodology that centralizes theatrical processes of transformation and desire. Vital in their difference and desirable in their tangible divergence the characters in these works and the wider exigencies of early modern drama call us to reconsider difference, identity, and desire.

CHAPTER 1
ARRIVING ’MONGST STRANGE EYES

What did it mean to be a stranger in early modern London? For those arriving from outside and for those living within the city, London served as an immersive social crucible that both expected participation in social negotiations and that regulated access to various social groups. In city comedy, a genre grounded in social exploration and performed in spaces of imaginative and social experimentation, the same characters who exhibit the desire to socially transform and fit into the London scene also frequently exhibit international and intranational geographic difference. These alien, foreign, and stranger characters sit squarely within discourses on social status in early modern London.[41] Terms such as alien, foreigner, and stranger embody a range of polysemic meanings that access this inescapable, and often uncomfortable, experience of inter-cultural negotiation. This chapter takes as its subject the multiplicity and polysemy of theatrical acts and language that deal with geographic and social forms of difference, a kind of strangeness that colors the fictional characters who move across the stage.

A brief interrogation of the language of geographic difference in the period can reveal the capaciousness of the terms, the correlative polysemy that worked upon the early modern stage in stranger characters, and the range of London’s inhabitants who resided within the categories of alien, foreign, or stranger themselves—including many

[41] Strangeness was (and is) negotiated in many ways, including geographically, socially, sartorially, linguistically, occupationally, and otherwise. Discourses that navigate strangeness are necessarily complex, as social status was predicated on the complex and varied collation of birth, education, profession, wealth, marital connections, royal decorations, citizenry, guild membership, social credit, and familial and individual reputation. Within each category splintered a multitude of status indicators. Taking citizens, for instance, we learn that a citizen must necessarily be of a profession in the guild Companies, including the Apothecaries, Fletchers, Loriners, Basketmakers, Horners, Merchant Taylors, Drapers, Haberdashers, Glovers, Carpenters, Fishmongers, Grocers, Goldsmiths, Weavers, and Dyers (to name just a few).

playwrights.[42] In early modern dictionaries, the term alien, for instance, did not only refer to a person "born in . . . a foreign country" but could be a verb or a noun, meaning to "transfer the property of any thing unto another man" or to indicate a person's state, with synonyms including "a foreigner, a stranger . . . a country swain, a clown" (Cowell "alion") (Florio "alieno," "forese, foresano").[43] Associating an alien with two theatrical (and social) character types, the country swain and clown, demonstrates that alien not only labeled spatial and geographic difference, but also designated theatrically resonant

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[42] Many playwrights including Thomas Dekker, John Marston, and Christopher Marlowe interacted closely with alien people living in London. Likewise, William Shakespeare, Thomas Heywood, Philip Massinger, John Fletcher, and Thomas Nash were were born outside of London in more rural communities—Warwickshire, Lincolnshire, Wiltshire, Suffolk, and Sussex—and became part of a larger historical migration to the city whose population quintupled between 1555 and 1600 due to mass (im)migration (Howard 1, 9). Who, then, was the stranger in early modern London? See John Twyning, "Dekker, Thomas (*c.*1572–1632)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2008, accessed March 15th 2016; James Knowles, "Marston, John (*bap.*1576, *d.*1634)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2009, accessed March 15th 2016; Charles Nicholl, "Nash, Thomas (bap. 1567, d. c.1601)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed May 10th 2016; Martin Garrett, "Massinger, Philip (1583–1640)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2011, accessed May 10th 2016; David Kathman, "Heywood, Thomas (*c.*1573–1641)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed May 10th 2016; Gordon McMullan, "Fletcher, John (1579–1625)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2006, accessed May 10th 2016; By 1600 the population reached 200,000 in London's city perimeters, but this does not include those inhabiting London's liberties. Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007.

[43] As John Bullokar notes in *An English Expositor* (1616), an alien was also "a stranger born, an outlandish man" (Bullokar "alien"). Others who list alien as "a stranger" include Robert Cawdrey, "Alien," *A Table Alphabetical, Containing and Teaching the Understanding of Hard Usual English Words* (1617), *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed February 21st 2017; Henry Cockeram, "Alien," *English Dictionary* (1623), *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed February 21st 2017; John Bullkar, "Alien," *An English* Expositor, 1616, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*. Ed. Ian Lancashire. University of Toronto Press, accessed February 21st 2017; Edmund Coote, "Alien," *The English School-Master* (1596), *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed February 21st 2017; "alien, adj. and n," 1.B, a, *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 2016, accessed November 27th 2016; John Cowell, "Alion (alienare)," *The Interpreter: or Book Containing the Signification of Words* (1607), *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed February 21st 2017; Florio, John. "Alieno," "Forese, Foresano," *A World of Words* (1598), *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, accessed February 21st 2017. For modern scholarship on alien settlers in London see Alan Stewart's "'Euery Soyle to Mee Is Naturall:' Figuring Denization in William Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money*," 2006; John Michael Archer's *Citizen Shakespeare: Freemen and Aliens in the Language of the Plays*, 2005.

types of social difference.[44] Lexicographers Thomas Thomas and John Baret also both emphasize the performative quality of strangers in their respective dictionaries. Thomas states that a stranger is "outward, external, strange, not of that country, a foreigner, an alien, a stranger (Thomas "stranger").[45] Likewise, Baret defines a stranger as "outward, a foreigner, an alien, a stranger" (Baret "stranger").[46] The emphasis in both definitions places weight on outward strangeness, which certainly references geographic, spatial, or perhaps physical difference but could also indicate conspicuous outwardness from social systems and from shared cultural knowledges.[47] Thomas and Baret use foreigner and alien as synonyms to describe the outward nature of the stranger and enmesh the terms to expose overlapping impressions of geographic disjunction.[48] The kaleidoscopic overlay of possible meanings for alien, foreign, and stranger colorfully indicates the proximity of each term to the other. Upon the early modern stage, explorations of geographic difference and social transformation deployed this linguistic polysemy and generated similar variegation through characterization. Theatrically, if

[44] Cotgrave, Randle. "Aliener" *A Dictionary of the French and English Tongues* (1611), *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed February 21st 2017. Cotgrave gives several other related definitions including: "to alien; alienate; alter; to sell, put, pass, or make away; also, to estrange, turn, draw, or withdraw from" (Cotsgrave "aliener").

[45] Thomas Thomas, "Stranger," *Dictionarium Linguae Latinae et Anglicanae*, 1587, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed February 21st 2017.

[46] In Baret's description "alien," "foreign," and "stranger" are used synonymously. John Baret, "Stranger," *An Alveary or Triple Dictionary, in English, Latin, and French*, 1574, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed February 21st 2017.

[47] If geography is only one component of the stranger people born in London (or another respective local) who lack social fluency could also sit in this category of definition. It is possible that the language of national difference is also, if not predominantly, a language born out of minute social differences.

[48] A performative connotation is also present in the early modern form of "alien" as the Oxford English Dictionary notes, it also held a social definition: those who "change in nature or appearance" (*OED* "Alien, adj. and n").

characterological aspects of social and geographic difference were shards of glass, theatrical transformation was the process, and desire the catalyst of theatrical alteration.[49]

This chapter articulates the intersection of geographic difference and social status on the early modern stage by tracing processes of social transformation driven by desire in Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1604) and Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor* (1616 folio). The transformations each character undergoes (or the lack thereof) to achieve their social desire reveals the constructed nature of social status, its fungible boundaries, and its tenuous fragility when confronted with unyielding, irreducible instances of social difference. Mapping processes of transformation, which are catalyzed by desire, demonstrates how the early modern stage uses this desire-based transformation as a theatrical mechanism for affirming geographic difference and for encouraging social multiplicity.

Narratively speaking it may be tempting to focus on the success or failure of a social transformation, but this chapter focuses on processes of social transformation that render a constant negotiation of imagined difference visible. While many performances seem to depict failed transformations, I argue that these perceived failures depict new relational possibilities and forms of social identity. As such, my conception of success or failure more accurately aligns with Jack Halberstam's recent efforts to reframe failure as "a way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline . . . as a form of critique" (Halberstam 88). For Halberstam, failure is not an ontological endpoint that

[49] I see transformation as a fundamental theatrical force that partakes in shaping knowledge of the self and of the body in early modern drama. In this understanding, I follow Erika T. Lin who states: "I take performance both as an object of study . . . and as an epistemology, a way of knowing that bears within it transformative force" (Lin 7). See Erika T. Lin, *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

demonstrates the weakness or inadequacy of what has been attempted, instead, failure can be an intentional practice:

> As a practice, failure recognizes that alternatives are embedded already in the dominant and that power is never total or consistent; indeed, failure can exploit the unpredictability of ideology and its indeterminate qualities (Halberstam 88).[50]

When failure is refigured as a refusal to acquiesce, a critique, and a recognition of alternatives, it is repositioned as a vital part of the transformational processes, and it summons questions about the kinds of desire that drive transformation. For instance, what happens when a character desires to be accepted in a social group but resists specific elements of the expected transformation?[51] I place emphasis on how perceptions of failed social transformation help audience members investigate the "unpredictability of ideology" by drawing attention to the constructed, flexible nature of social status groups. This work does not aim to determine the success or failure of a character to pass as part of a designated group, to achieve concealment, or to attain some ontologically discrete identity. Rather, this project investigates the ways that on-stage audience members are encouraged to spectate, that enable social transformation to occur, and how these curated patterns of viewership extend beyond the stage to instruct and inculcate off-stage audience members in the self-conscious interrogation of their senses and understanding. Here I am indebted to Amy Robinson's formulation of the relationship between the terms "passer," "in-group," and "dupe" (Robinson 715).[52] Robinson argues for a triangulation

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[50] Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, Duke University Press, 2011.
[51] This is a question that takes on particular import in part three where I look at Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor* (1616 folio).
[52] Amy Robinson, "It Takes One to Know One: Passing and Communities of Common Interest," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 4, The University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp.715-736. (www.jstor.org/stable/1343856), accessed December 13th 2017.

of sight that appears with “conspicuous regularity” in moments of social passing (Robinson723).[53] For Robinson, who writes about racial and sexual passing, the question of identity is always a question mediated through an onlooker’s knowledge and subject position.

> Three participants—the passer, the dupe, and the representative of the in-group—enact a complex narrative scenario in which a successful pass is performed in the presence of a literate member of the in-group. As a standard feature of the passing narrative, such a triangle poses the questions of the passer’s “real” identity as a function of the lens through which it is viewed. Resuscitating the question of knowing and telling in the terms of two competing discourses of recognition, the pass emerges as a discursive encounter between two epistemological paradigms (Robinson 723-4).

Robinson demonstrates that in a situation where an individual is passing (as white, or straight, or wealthy, &etc.), and one onlooker is “duped” while the other onlooker is in the “in-group” and knows that the subject is passing, a discursive encounter emerges that holds two epistemological paradigms in tension. The subject is at once passing and exposed. I deploy the terminology of passing, in-group, and dupe at moments within this project, but my primary aim is to articulate and mobilize Robinson’s methodology within processes of social transformation. Specifically, I argue that the off-stage audience in the playhouse, like Robinson’s in-group, is encouraged to have “hostile encounter[s]” between two ways of perceiving and knowing an on-stage subject, by the on-stage audience acting as “dupe,” because the “unstable ground of authenticity” authorizes off-stage spectators to challenge “hegemonic . . . rules of recognition” (Robinson 716, 730).

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[53] When I use the words pass or passing I refer to the act of passing as a member of a specific group or community. For example, a feminine representing lesbian being presumptively straight to outside onlookers. Robinson works closely with race and sexuality. In this chapter, we will most often be positioned as audience members/readers in the role of “in-group,” the other lesbian in the room that sees both the lesbian femme, and the passing straight woman.

Due to the instability encouraged by clashing depictions of identity, off-stage audience members watching characters transform within networks of triangulated knowledge and social status have the opportunity to perceive "the apparatus" of transformation and think differently with characters that sit strangely because they neither fail nor succeed in the process of transforming their social identity (Robinson 722).[54]

This chapter straddles geographic and social difference by looking to *Michaelmas Term*'s Scottish social climber Sir Andrew Lethe, and country gull, Master Richard Easy of Essex, before turning to *Every Man in his Humor's* country gull, Master Stephen of Hogsden (Chalfant 96).[55] Rather than charting successful or failed transformations in *Michaelmas Term* and *Every Man in His Humor*, I argue that the audience are presented with opportunities to learn new patterns of viewership that challenge the limits of social status and identity through theatrical congruence or disjunction with their on-stage counterparts (the on-stage audience). In short, the audience are granted stranger eyes with which to re-mediate questions of social belonging. In generatively reworking notions of successful or unsuccessful social transformation, this chapter focuses on processes of transformation and the triangulation of social passing as theatrical windows into underlying social structures. Tracing processes of staged social transformation extends beyond the immediacy of the playhouse and drives forward the notion that the theatrical modeling of networks of association on stage enabled inhabitants of London to

[54] Further discussion on the performance of sight can be found in Hal Foster, *Vision and Visuality*, New York New Press, 1999; or in Amy Robinson, *To Pass//In Drag: Strategies of Entrance into the Visible*, PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1993.
[55] As evidenced by the term country gull, theatrical types could directly draw on geographic difference to assert a social issue. Hogsden is now "Hoxton." Fran, C. Chalfant, *Ben Jonson's London: A Jacobean Placename Dictionary,* University of Georgia Press, 2008.

"experiment in the complex reciprocities of new modes of urban belonging," which could include meeting strangers with the anticipation of proximity and familiarity (Levine 3).

Part one of this chapter looks to Sir Andrew Lethe in *Michaelmas Term*, part two does a parallel reading of Master Richard Easy in *Michaelmas Term*, and part three shifts to examine Master Stephen in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor*. Rather than asserting the borders of Englishness or attempting to fix a mutable lexicon as other critics have in the past, I trace the shifting borders of possibility that these three figures navigate when arriving in the city. This chapter works to reveal the vibrant and challenging ideas that characters who display geographic and social difference productively generate on stage. Charting transformation in this chapter means retracing the diverse roles of alien, foreign, and strange characters, unmooring our understanding of geographic difference from nationalist narratives, and exploring how alteration dislocates categorizations of belonging to reveal new interpretive breadth. Rather than reinforcing social status, the transformations each character undergoes (or the lack thereof) to achieve their social desire reveals the constructed nature of social status, its fungible boundaries, and its tenuous fragility when confronted with unyielding, irreducible instances of social difference.

~ I ~

A Toothdrawer's Son: London, Desire, and Social Transformation

While published in 1607, *Michaelmas Term* was first performed in 1604 by the Children of Paul's. In 1604, Scotland had been united with England under the crown of King

James I/VI for between nine and twenty-one months.[56] To arrive in a London that was newly grappling with its first Stuart king, who fashioned himself the first king of Great Britain, was to arrive in a social landscape permeated with strong opinions about the Scottish. Sir Andrew Lethe in Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* is an especially clear example of just such an arrival. I analyze Lethe as an alien and transforming character who both desires alteration and is desirable in his difference.[57] As the play progresses, Lethe's changed status and appearance and the emergence of a similar character, Master Richard Easy, challenges ways of thinking with questions of status and belonging.

In current readings of *Michaelmas Term*, Lethe's transformations are characterized as "driven by a sense of lack," and as such Lethe is viewed as immured in material-based, sartorial attempts to "produce the right resemblance to those urban insiders already in place" (Paster 27).[58] More recently, Michelle O'Callaghan reads Lethe as an insubstantial "social actor" whose transformation from Andrew Gruel into Andrew Lethe signifies a process of "cultural forgetfulness of bonds of trust which should bind the community" (O'Callaghan 37, 29).[59] Amanda Bailey also takes up the transformation of Lethe as the "pseudo-knight" who has engaged in the "invention of a prosthetic or artificial persona" that inadvertently separates him from important social and civil networks as he fashions himself into a "wor[k] of art" (Bailey 92).[60] For these critics, precedence is given to Lethe's failures at "duplication," "resemblance," and "prosthesis"

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[56] Depending on the month the play was first performed.
[57] Lethe is referred to as alien several times throughout the play. See 2.3.10, 3.1.167-8. Thomas Middleton, *Michaelmas Term* (1604), ed. Gail Kern Paster, Manchester University Press, 2000.
[58] Gail Kern Paster, "Introduction" *Michaelmas Term*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Manchester University Press, 2000.
[59] Michelle O'Callaghan, *Thomas Middleton, Renaissance Dramatist*, Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
[60] Amanda Bailey, *Of Bondage: Debt, Property, and Personhood in Early Modern England*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

that inhibit, if not extinguish, his ability to engage in social and civil networks and that impede his ability to pass, fit, or assimilate to London society. However, each of these examinations assume that Lethe has failed in his attempt to convincingly assimilate into a higher social status. I contend that Lethe sits within an ongoing process of transformation and that his character generates as much curiosity as it does scorn. Through Lethe's awkward performance of status, it becomes clear that he fails to pass for a London gallant; yet, it is Lethe's inability to pass that focuses audience attention on the permeability of social status groups and modes of belonging. In short, through Lethe's failure at social transformation the very categorizations of gallant and alien break down and demonstrate the integral role that alien figures held in the most basic of London's social relationships.

Despite dressing impeccably, Sir Andrew Lethe is perceptibly an outsider. His very name denotes difference in no uncertain terms by satirizing the opportunistic Scottish courtiers new to England through references to Saint Andrew, "the patron saint of Scotland . . . [and] Lethe the mythological river of forgetfulness" in Hades (Paster 54). In attempting to move past his heritage, Lethe doffs the surname Gruel, which indicates his poverty, forgets his upbringing as a toothdrawer's son, and pretends that he is not related to his own mother (Paster 54). When Mother Gruel appears in London and unwittingly enters the employ of her son as a servant she primarily stands as a reminder to the audience of Lethe's former state and his remarkable alteration. For instance, upon meeting Mother Gruel in London, Lethe (unrecognized by his mother) attempts to surreptitiously draw compliments from her by asking about her son "Andrew Gruel," to which she states "virtues? No, 'tis will known his father was/ too poor a man to bring him

up to any virtues" (1.1.295-7). In this brief interaction, audience perception is tailored to consider a jarring inconsistency in the logic of social status. Mother Gruel attests that her son, Andrew Gruel, could not be wealthy or virtuous due to his background. She demonstrates both ignorance about the transformative space that London affords and the fact that the knight addressing her is her own son, decked in wealth. In the same stroke, Lethe is not virtuous at all, but he is wealthy. The knowledge that the off-stage audience holds regarding Lethe's true relationship to his mother both alters their perspective comedically (they may laugh at the way she discredits Lethe to his face), but also alters their perception of the alignment of wealth with virtue. What Mother Gruel's comment highlights is that regardless of his wealth, Lethe's lack of social virtues (or manners) prevent him from passing as a gallant gentleman.

While coming to London has placed Lethe in strong enough economic standing that he can gamble and drink comfortably, enjoy the company of gallants, and purchase a knighthood, Lethe suffers from an inability to "pass" in early modern gallant society. Each attempt at assimilation is undermined by an inherent inability to affect London habits, style, customs, and behavior convincingly. Lethe is unwittingly and forcibly exposed as he becomes a spectacle to those of both lower and upper social statuses due to his specific social deficits. Due to Lethe's lack of social fluency and poor Scottish origins, the on-stage audience of Londoners actively disdain him. Yet, is not enough to witness these performed interactions and assume that the off-stage audience would also reject Lethe. To the contrary, I argue that the play actively solicits a diverse series of audience engagements with Lethe and curates audience perception in a way that

positions Lethe, stranger and social climber though he is, as one of the most captivating, relatable, and desired characters in the text.

Appearing for the first time in act one, theatrical attention pivots around Lethe thorough the observation of the texts on-stage audience. Lethe's initial entrance frames him as unusually engaging and worthy of audience attention as he stands silently aside while three London gallants, Master Salewood, Master Rearage, and Master Cockstone extensively comment on his character and history:

> *Salewood*: Lethe?
> *Rearage*: H'as forgot his father's name, poor Walter Gruel that
> Begot him, fed him, and brought him up.
> *Salewood*: Not hither?
> *Rearage*: No. 'Twas from his thoughts; he brought him up below.
> *Salewood*: But does he pass for Lethe?
> *Rearage*: 'Mongst strange eyes
> that no more know him than he knows himself.
> That's nothing now, for Master Andrew Lethe,
> A gentleman of most receivèd parts,
> Forgetfulness, lust, impudence, and falsehood,
> and one especially courtly quality,
> To wit, no wit at all. I am his rival
> For Quomodo's daughter, but he knows it not (1.1.148-162).

At first glance, the audience's introduction to Sir Andrew Lethe is decidedly negative. The established gentlemen deconstruct the thin veneer of Lethe's gentlemanly characterization. Salewood and Rearage explicitly outline Lethe's name change, and, punning on Lethe as "forgetful," cast it as a churlish, ungracious rejection or "forgetting" of his patrilineal heritage, which the gentlemen also point out, is "poor," both fiscally and socially. This initial exchange establishes Lethe as an object of scorn: one who is financially and socially beneath the gentlemen who dominate the stage space.

Furthermore, Lethe is actively observed by Salewood and Rearage, placing rhetorical and spatial power in their hands, while also encouraging the audience to engage with their subject position as observers of Lethe. This observational dynamic attempts to inculcate spectators as co-conspirators and establish a boundary of difference between them (the off-stage audience) and the observed (Lethe).[61] Salewood emphasizes this move to estrange Lethe by asking the rhetorical question "not hither?," clarifying to the audience his suspicion that Lethe was not born or raised in London. The implication, confirmed by Rearage, is that he is not one of "us" (the London natives). Indeed, Lethe was "brought up below," meaning outside of London, a marker that categorizes him a true stranger in the City, since he was born and raised under foreign customs in another part of Great Britain that, until a year earlier, had not been united with England through the crown.

Recognizing Lethe as anything but a social impostor among the gallants is flagged as hazardous when Salewood confirms that Andrew "Gruel" does not even "pass for Lethe" publicly. The gallants, an in-group of sorts, patrol the social limits that support a binarization between those who pass as a city gallant and those who do not. The off-stage audience watch as Salewood, Rearage, and Cockstone establish and patrol the perimeter of gallant status by testing and endorsing or denying a vague array of social indicators ranging from upbringing, family lineage, Englishness, fluency in London life, citizenry, and wealth in an attempt to estrange Lethe from the audience (before he can utter a word) through a superficial amalgam of socially reprehensible identificatory points. Rearage finishes by further stripping Lethe of his ability to pass by meticulously attaching a

[61] I linger on these theatrical maneuvers in order to explore how difference is articulated by the gallants. The success of their attempt to estrange Lethe is debatable, as I go on to describe. Lethe is not so easily relegated.

stigma to reading Lethe as even vaguely "passable." To do so, even as an off-stage audience member, would be to implicate oneself as the owner of the embarrassing and alien "strange eyes." Regardless of status or gender, the off-stage audience are inculcated into the gallant in-group through the expectation that they, too, recognize Lethe's social deficits despite having no knowledge of his character. To empathize with Lethe is to reject the comradery established by on-stage observation, to behold the stage strangely, and to estrange oneself as an audience member from the presumed agreement of the surrounding warm bodies who are likewise engaged with Rearage's narrative.

Leaving Lethe's introduction here would be to ignore a whole host of conflicting signifiers that resist the negative posturing of the gallant's commentary. Theatrical semiotics both empower and undermine Lethe as his entrance and position on-stage attract attention and stimulate the desire to understand his character even as he is observed and critiqued.[62] Lethe's entrance is marked by his silent presence on-stage, his situation at the center of theatrical attention. At the focus of this singular observation Lethe provokes some simple questions: Who is this man, really? Is he as the gallants describe? In this elongated moment of curiosity, when the audience member's interest may well be suspended between the gallant's gossip and Lethe's silence, Rearage and his companions undermine their trustworthiness as commentators. First, having described Lethe's impoverished background, Rearage lists Lethe's "receivèd" (inherited) parts but adds that Lethe holds "one especially courtly quality,/ to wit, no wit at all." Insult or not, if Lethe inherited a courtly quality from his impoverished lineage, Rearage implies that

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[62] Desire to know is one of the many kinds of desire that can be stimulated through theatrical cues. While desire is often synonymous with specifically sexual desire, I take up whatever desires are most clearly activated in theatrical performance.

even one brought up “below” could hereditarily hold qualities common at court. Rearage carelessly blurs status groups by noting similarities between them rather than differences—by drawing Lethe’s status as a stranger into intimacy with the local status of courtier. In doing so, Rearage teases at the edges of how social status is constructed by flippantly blurring or patrolling limits of status at will.

Furthermore, after railing over Lethe’s “most receivèd parts,/ Forgetfulness, lust, impudence, and falsehood,/ And . . . to wit, no wit at all,” Rearage also surreptitiously adds, “I am his rival/ For Quomodo’s daughter, but he knows it not” (1.1.159, 161-2).[63] Lethe may aggravate the borders of gallantry that Rearage strictly patrols, but a more discerning assessment of Rearage’s language indicates a larger social and status based issue: “I am his rival.” Lethe does not *only* fool stranger eyes, then, but also the citizen eyes of Susan, Rearage’s love interest, and of Quomodo, her wealthy father.[64] To Rearage’s chagrin, he and Lethe are positioned on the same level of status and marriageability by London’s marriage market. The reminder of Rearage’s marital ambition unceremoniously collapses Lethe’s social status as a marital candidate into Rearage’s own social status. It is at this juncture that Lethe abruptly notices the presence of the gentlemen (“H’as spied us o’er his paper”), which further destabilizes the social agency of the gallant group (1.1.163). Rearage’s admission of rivalry with Lethe comedically halts the gentlemen’s feigned objectivity and draws audience attention to Rearage’s and Lethe’s equivalency in marriage prospects. These shifts in Rearage’s

[63] This moment clarifies Rearage’s earlier note that he is “vilely rivalled” by Lethe (1.1.61).
[64] Only after seeing visual proof of Lethe’s sexual involvement with the Country Wench, Susan exclaims to Rearage; “pardon my wilful blindness and enjoy me./ For now the difference appears too plain/ Betwixt a base slave and a true gentleman” (5.2.10-12).

narrative and theatrical action reveal the perspective-based fluctuations in status and the socially constructed nature of social status.

The first scene's fluctuating social representation of Lethe indicate a difficulty in reading his social signification. While sartorially and financially Lethe should fit and function well as a London gallant, his attempts at social transformation are disjunctive, especially during important social interactions. A simple example of this comes shortly after Salewood's and Rearage's observation of Lethe. Lethe describes his romantic situation in soliloquy, arguing that his "state" and "sudden fortunes" are qualifiers for his marriage to Susan, the wealthy merchant's daughter (1.1.213-14). As Lethe continues, it becomes clear that he understands his finest merits manifested in unusual areas; "I can command/ a custard, and other bakemeats…I could keep the house with nothing…/How/ well am I beloved, e'en quite throughout the scullery" (1.1.214-17). Both Gail Kern Paster and Michelle O'Callaghan have noted the satirical absurdity of boasting about influence in the court kitchens and it is within this absurdity that Lethe defines his contribution to a marriage, that is—access to food—to gluttonous and implicitly sexual satisfaction (Paster 77, O'Callaghan 29, 37). While Paster casts Lethe as an absurd figure, his access to food is clearly something he values. Recalling Lethe's prior name (Gruel) and prior context as a toothdrawer's son, his resourcefulness and ability to keep the house with fine food (not gruel) without expending any money, and his implicit ability to satisfy Susan sexually and procreate highlights Lethe's ability to bring important and useful qualities to a marriage if one is not financially secure. Of course, Lethe, while valuing these qualities, is financially comfortable in London. Lethe's embodiment of knighthood and financial affluence sits disjunctively alongside his value statements that are based on

previous poverty and fiscal hardship, which creates discrepancies in his performance of social status. This behavior marks Lethe as different and generates social discomfort among those on-stage (demonstrated by Rearage and Salewood's scathing narrative about Lethe's life). The discrepancy between Lethe's understanding of the social and material manifestations of wealth and the reality of his actions (such as filling his pantry for free) marks Lethe as differently constituted. His social transformation positions Lethe as oddly straddling positions within the hierarchy of social status in ways that are impossible to reduce or dismiss. Lethe is both wealthy and yet materially avaricious; he is both marked as noble, and yet sexually and financially rapacious. The fissiparous splintering of social signifiers encompassed by Lethe only amplifies as the play progresses.

Lethe's disjunctive relationship with Mother Gruel further illustrates his strange social position. Mother Gruel attends London after a "sore journey" to seek her son, Andrew Gruel, hoping that he is "in some place about the kitchen" (1.1.267). Mother Gruel initially seems to serve as a moral anchor as she enters to interrupt Lethe's proud soliloquy, reflecting Lethe's "forgotten," and perhaps better, parts (1.1.272-3). However, Mother Gruel's plain speech and moralizing demeanor are all swiftly destabilized, like Rearage's, through her own words, as is the notion of Lethe's forgetfulness:

> *Mother Gruel*: Pray, can your worship tell me any tidings of
> One Andrew Gruel, a poor son of mine own?
> *Lethe*: I know a gallant gentleman of the name . . .
> *Mother Gruel*: That's not he then! He is no gentleman that I
> Mean . . . / He can
> Scarce write and read.
> *Lethe*: He's the better regarded for that amongst courtiers, for
> That's but a needy quality.
> *Mother Gruel*: If it be so, then he'll be great shortly, for he has
> No good parts about him (1.1.255-60, 266-301).

Humbly addressing Lethe as "your worship," Mother Gruel foregrounds Andrew Gruel's "poor" origins and lowly status in an effort to demonstrate modesty and moral decency, yet she simultaneously manages to refute each kind word spoken about her son. Within this simply structured conversation, Mother Gruel's impression of Lethe implicitly devalues her as a reliable and trustworthy narrator when she states: "That's not he then! He is no gentleman." Her vision of Sir Andrew Lethe conflicts with the knowledge held by the off-stage audience, who are privy to the truth that Lethe is Mother Gruel's son. Furthermore, Mother Gruel goes on to note "he can/ scarce write and read." Yet, only moments before, Lethe reads aloud a letter of ten lines "as I have writ," to Thomasine Quomodo (1.1.218). While Lethe admits to lacking strong writing and reading skills, his skills are polished enough to enumerate his sexual desires articulately. Mother Gruel's sight falters, as she becomes, like Susan, one of Rearage's "strange eyes" that cannot decipher Andrew Gruel through the visage of "a glorious suit" (1.1.278). Mother Gruel flounders in her expected function of comedic moralizing. Instead, she demonstrates Lethe's social variegation and the frustrations of being neither Gruel nor Lethe entirely but both in a dizzying array of fragments, signifiers, and social relationships. Through the mirror of her perception, Lethe is simultaneously an impoverished toothdrawer's son and potential scullery boy with a desperately poor mother who originates from the Scottish countryside *and* a gentleman knight employed at court who lives lavishly among London's wealthy elite and who has a wealthy potential bride.

Critics George Rowe and Amanda Bailey agree with Rearage in his assessment that Lethe has "forgotten" himself because Lethe "ignore[s] his origins" and "cut[s] loose

from all original ties” in his attempts to pass (Rowe 98, Bailey 92).[65] Yet Lethe, even when actively attempting to “forget,” “ignore,” or sever himself from his past, is unyieldingly immured in it, as his failure to pass in London generatively unites a series of personal and seemingly contrasting traits within the moniker of Lethe. Mother Gruel’s “strange eyes” are instructive, in that she defiantly and consistently marries competing modes of reading Lethe’s body and in doing so forges a uniquely blended sense of social identity.

Much of Lethe’s behavior connects him to other foreign and stranger figures arriving in the City, including Mother Gruel from Scotland and the Country Wench and her Father who both hail from Northamptonshire (1.2.13). Lethe’s connectivity to different social groups both within London and stretching far beyond makes legible the dynamic representations of foreign and alien figures of poorer origins in *Michaelmas Term*. The Country Wench’s Father mimics a similar pattern to Mother Gruel when he follows his child to London with the hopes of locating her. Her Father knows “this man-devouring city!—where I spent/ My unshapen youth” (2.2.21-2); yet, like Mother Gruel, Father demonstrates his estrangement from the City and weakness as a moral authority through the same mechanism of misrecognizing his own child:

> Father: A mistress of a choice beauty! Amongst such
> Imperfect creatures, I ha’ not seen a perfecter. I should
> Have reckoned the fortunes of my daughter . . . whereas now
> I rest doubtful whom or where she serves (3.2.61-65).

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[65] George E Rowe Jr., “Prodigal Sons, New Comedy, and Middleton’s Michaelmas Term,” *English Literary Renaissance* vol. 7, no. 1, The University of Chicago Press, 1977, pp. 90-107, www.jstor.com/stable/43446884, accessed Jan 10th 2017.

Father not only misrecognizes his daughter, who is the "mistress of choice beauty" that he addresses, but he also misrecognizes the processes of "city powd'ring" she has undergone to seem a gentlewoman rather than a "squall/ come out of the bosom of a barn and the loins of a/ haytosser" (1.1.57, 3.1.25-7). Indeed, the entire scene of the Country Wench's transformation is explicitly structured to emphasize this perceptible misunderstanding, as Hellgill asks "do you not think it/ impossible that her own father should know her now" only six lines before her Father enters into the scene. The question of knowing a person becomes conflated, as it did with Lethe, with the question of social identity and somatic representation. Lethe and the Country Wench's elevation in status and their desire to circulate in gallant society makes them not only unrecognizable, but unknowable. In both cases, identity and knowledge collapse through desired transformation and the inability to adjust "strange eyes" to perceive new models of identification. Ironically, this on-stage disjunction serves to emphasize new identity formations for off-stage spectators, who perceive various forms of conflicting social knowledges about each character that become fused in the embodied presences of Lethe and the Country Wench through their continual staged transformations.

The construction of social and cultural type in London space is actively staged in act three scene two. While renaissance Londoners knew the City was a place of reinvention and transformation, their sudden encounter with a tailor's shop upon the stage renders somatic and social transformation into a visual spectacle, rather than a private experience. In this environment, Father, like Mother Gruel, represents a theatrically outmoded figure who, due to his moralizing essentialism and paternal title, represents an antiquated epistemology of sight that recognizes only rigid social status significations.

Characters like Father and Mother Gruel generatively estrange themselves from the off-stage audience by catalyzing a desire to see differently to those with inflexibly stranger eyes.

While a stranger like Lethe, the Country Wench explicitly hopes to elevate herself and does so by connecting her social transformation via sartorial alteration at the tailor's shop to transformations within the city and uniting the concept of sight with that of site:

> *Father*: Be it as you have spoke, but 'tis my hope
> a longer term
> *Country Wench*: No, truly, our term ends once a month. We
> should get more than the lawyers, for they have but four
> terms a year and we have twelve; and that makes 'em run
> so fast to us in the vacation (3.1.55-60).

Here the Country Wench refers to whoring as operationally imbedded in both her body and in the temporal rhythms of City life, as she links whoring with women's natural periods and to the legal terms that rhythmically punctuate London life. She expressly states that a both whoring and law are commodities and services that lack morality or justice, yet which shape the movement of bodies in the City. Throughout the text in both form and language Middleton repeatedly connects transformation to entrance into the City, characterizing the desire that drives such transformation—the desire to socially excel—as a type of necessary prerequisite of City life.

Indeed, this connection between transformation and London's geography is demonstrable even in the seemingly formulaic deployment of characterization. For instance, at the end of Mother Gruel's first appearance in act one scene one, she states:

> *Mother Gruel*: "Nay, an that the fashion I hope I shall get
> it shortly; there's no woman so old but she may learn.

> And, as an old lady delights in a young page or monkey,
> so there are young courtiers will be hungry upon an old
> woman, I warrant you" (1.1.313-17).

Alone on stage, Mother Gruel, now unwittingly a servant and messenger for her own son, Sir Andrew Lethe, notes that she hopes she shall "get" the "fashion" of London shortly, showing that she desires to alter in appearance in order to partake in customs and social exchanges more fluently. Mother Gruel mimics Lethe's own idiomatic food-based sexual language, claiming "young courtiers will be hungry," as she advertises herself as sexually available outside of marriage and interested in pursuing young men. Social transformation is driven by her desire for new social and sexual roles and works as an integral part of her experience in the City. Like the son she is so unwilling to perceive before her, upon leaving the stage, Mother Gruel embodies a multiplicity of potential social formations. Mother Gruel is an elderly widow and mother to Andrew Gruel, the unwitting mother to Sir Andrew Lethe, an aspiring fashionista, and a sexual "delight" seeker amongst young courtiers like her son. Likewise, upon his entry into the City, Father transforms himself from a country farmer to a city servant in order to live amongst City "devils," and "see/ How former follies did appear in me" while seeking his daughter (2.3.38, 3.2.300-2). Both Mother Gruel's and Father's transformation recalls the first transformations that are staged in the play's induction. First, when the embodied Michaelmas Term himself arrives in the City during the Induction,[66] and later, when the generic "Fellow" is transformed through a quasi-dumb show:

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[66] "*Enter* MICHAELMAS TERM *in a whitish cloak, new come/ up out of the country* . . . Michaelmas Term: Lay by my conscience, give me my gown;/ that weed is for the country./ We must be civil now and match our evil" (Induction 1-5).

Playing music. Enter the other three [embodied legal] Terms, *the first bringing*
in a Fellow *poor, which the other two advanceth, giving*
him rich apparel, a Page*, and a* Pander. *Exit* [Fellow]

Michaelmas Term: What subtlety have we hear? A fellow
Shrugging for life's kind benefits, shift and heat,
Crept up in three Terms, wrapped in silk and silver
So well appointed too with page and pander.
It was a happy gale that blew him hither (Induction 30-36).

The induction frames the City and its legal terms as transformative forces that work upon the physicality of the generic "poor" Fellow, altering his "apparel," and social standing through the allotment of a Page and Pander. The dumb show places theatrical weight on the audience's ocular capacity to interpret. These transformations demonstrate the ubiquitous production of transforming bodies in the City, mitigating sour judgments of Lethe's transformative "creeping up" and refocusing emphasis on the result, which is the irreducible way of seeing Lethe's blended social presence and that of the thousands of others like him (Induction 1.1.63-4).[67] Middleton's strategic deployment of desire and transformation in *Michaelmas Term* gives alien and strange characters arriving in the City, like Lethe, unique traction—not simply as figures of mirth—but as figures that represent blended social signification.

In the final act of *Michaelmas Term*, conflicting perceptions of Lethe decisively blend together when he is publicly paraded through London on his "wedding morning" (to Susan Quomodo) by officers who have arrested him with his "Harlot" (the Country Wench) (5.2.3, s.d.1). Lethe is publicly "disgraced" and "coupled together" in front of so

[67] The concept of creeping up, which means to "become wealthy, [to have] gained in station" is the first description we hear of Lethe in Act 1 Scene 1 from Rearage and Salewood: "One Andrew Lethe, crept to a little warmth, and now/ so proud that he forgets all storms" (Induction footnote 34, 1.1.63-4).

many that the Country Wench claims it may be “people enough” to consider themselves “lawfully” wed (5.2.3,6-7). Lethe’s humiliation could be considered the most generative failure in the whole text because, while many in the text know of Lethe’s origins including Susan’s mother Thomasine, Lethe’s serving man Hellgill, and the gallants Rearage and Selwood, Lethe’s moment of public exposure serves to explicitly address the larger social disjunctions cultivated around him throughout the play.

When Susan sees Lethe with the County Wench she exclaims to Rearage “the difference appears too plain/ Betwixt a base slave and a true gentleman,” and opts, instead, to wed Rearage (5.2.11-12). While Susan seems to juxtapose Lethe, a base slave, against Rearage, a true gentleman, her language only serves to describe the blended amalgam that Lethe, himself, embodies. Lethe, who recognizes his wedding to Susan is under great threat, exclaims how “little conscience” the officers have for not taking “a bribe” (5.2.4-5). In the same stroke, the Country Wench offers Lethe a new wedding, to her, “we may lie together lawfully/ hereafter, for we are coupled together before people/ enough, i’faith” (5.2.7-8). The public procession itself is not unexpected for the off-stage audience who are already familiar with Lethe’s diverse and intersecting desires (his desire for higher social status, financial gain via marriage, urban pleasure, gallant friendship, influence at court, fashionable clothing, and sexual satisfaction via the corruption of his foil, a country girl). Lethe both belligerently sticks to his status as knight who can bribe, whore, and still marry into wealth, while the Country Wench explores the concept of the public parade as an equalizing moment, in which she and Lethe meet not as whore and knight, but as wife and husband, drawing attention to their similar social backgrounds and meteoric rise to genteel status in the city of London. Both

perspectives are simultaneously valid, and both express conflicting yet interlocking desires angled at greater social ease and upward mobility. Rather than decimating Lethe's standing, this scene provides a moment of enjoyable spectacle and social reckoning for those off-stage audience members who see, at last, the crescendo of Lethe's clumsy social blending.

As the play comes of a close, Lethe stands exposed as one whose desire for social elevation has irrevocably transformed him and led to a blending of social status groups and expectations. Under the eye of a Judge, Lethe is spurned by both social status groups that he inhabits and signifies, embodied on the one hand by his gallant friends and on the other by his impoverished mother. After suffering a variety of punishments for keeping the Country Wench for pleasure and to satisfy his desire for acceptance and accolades from fellow gallants, Lethe is offered pardon only if one of the people assembled on stage "whom [he has] most unnaturally abused," offers forgiveness (5.3.135). After casting about for assistance, to no avail, Lethe turns to Mother Gruel:

> *Lethe*: [*Aside*] Mass, I forget my mother all the while;
> I'll make her do't at first.—Pray, mother, your blessing
> for once.
> *Mother Gruel*: Call'st me mother? Out, I defy thee, slave! . . .
> Let me not have this villain put upon me, I
> beseech your Lordship . . .
> *Judge*: Wilt thou believe me, Woman? . . .
> know him for a villain; 'tis thy son.
> *Mother Gruel*: Art thou Andrew, my wicked son Andrew?
> *Lethe*: You would not believe me, Mother (5.3.146-159).

Mother Gruel continues to misrecognize her son, in part due to the continued visual discontinuity of his gentlemanly appearance but also due to his social and moral

predicament. Mother Gruel doesn't *want* to recognize Lethe as her son, instead calling him a "base slave" and "villain" to emphasis his moral turpitude in contrast to her own (rather dubious) morality. Lethe is both too high in social status and too low in social status for his mother to perceive him, as he concurrently straddles London wealth and Scottish poverty—moral humiliation and economic growth. Indeed, she only acknowledges Lethe as Gruel with the assurances of a Judge, the cog in London's transformative dynamism (as we learn in the induction). Upon finally recognizing Lethe, Mother Gruel repeats only his first name "Andrew," twice, acknowledging the multiplicitous state that Andrew sits within, as both Lethe and Gruel. Neither of Andrew's two names—Lethe nor Gruel—takes precedence as his character transforms once more before the audience's eyes to encompass manifold significations of self and status with no single element or part outweighing the whole. Lethe's preceding arrest and march through the streets, marriage to the Country Wench, reunion with his Mother, and public renaming as "Andrew" impresses upon the audience Lethe's necessitated remembrance of his various identifications. While the play begins with jests about forgetting,[68] it ends as Lethe accepts family members and signifiers that reiterate his impoverished history. The audience are likewise called to remember and hold in tension the composite constitutive state that is Andrew, who is neither resolved nor relegated.

With Lethe's sprawling social identity laid bare and with only ten lines of the play left, Mother Gruel absorbs five of these lines to proffer mercy and extend a strange form of forgiveness:

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[68] Each of the following citations reference jests in reference to or based on Lethe's supposed "forgetfulness:" 1.1.64, 150, 159, 172, 175, 177, 179-83, 208; 2.1.68, 155-6; 2.3.9-18.

> *Mother Gruel*: How art thou *changed*! Is this suit fit for thee,
> a toothdrawer's son? This country has e'en spoiled thee
> since thou cam'st hither. Thy manners were better than
> thy clothes; but now whole clothes and ragged manners.
> It may well be said that truth goes naked, for when you
> hadst scarce a shirt, thou hadst more truth about thee (my emphasis,
> 5.3.160-5).

I emphasize the term "changed" as it functions, much like the tailoring scene, to explicitly draw out the transformative force within city comedy (and perhaps within London itself) that generatively creates figures with "ragged manners" and rich clothing.[69] Mother Gruel's vaguely Puritanical moralizing weakly veils the social discrepancy between those who believe in fixed boundaries of belonging, and those who navigate them and so demonstrate their permeability: Lethe's "manners" do not match with those of the gentry or those of the citizenry, despite his wealth, employment, and status as a knight.[70] Importantly, while this moment can be read as prodigal resolution, Lethe, who is repudiated and disavowed by the gentry, the citizenry, his servants, and his family, remains without reply as an irreducible, uncontainable, unabsorbable, foreigner, who, while reprimanded, remains in London circles and retains his title, wealth, and employment. At the play's close, the final image focuses attention on Lethe's simultaneous state of unassimilable, irreducible alienness, alongside his immitigable belonging. There is no resolution to the problem of Lethe, as he reminds all who view him of the constructed nature of social boundaries that can be blended or dissolved by the

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[69] A reading of Lethe's and Mother Gruel's relationship from Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones places great emphasis on "misrecognition" due to the "paradoxical symbolic logic of clothes" and social memory.

[70] Recalling Bourdieu, Lethe's manners mark him as different just as much as his geographic relocation might. Yet, city comedies such as *Michaelmas Term* may present this failing as frustrating, but also demonstrate that like him or not, Lethe is not going anywhere, and neither will those social climbers who likewise struggle yet remain in London's social milieu.

transformative and visceral nature of desire. Lethe remains sympathetic and repulsive, wealthy and poor.

Michaelmas Term demonstrates how desire for alteration in social status catalyzes transformation and complicates characters that are traditionally relegated to the status of assimilated alien figures. The play locates desire within the repulsive, it observes the absurdity of essentialized ontological identity formations, it explores the threshold between rejection and belonging by reinventing perceptions of failure, it demonstrates that this boundary may not sit flush against social categorization or status groupings, and it teaches its audience to re-see with stranger eyes the possibilities of social status and its significations by drawing attention to the unreliability of sight. In doing so, Middleton draws the stranger startlingly close by manipulating the delicate boundary between foreign and familiar on the early modern stage. This generative process driven by narrative desire and theatrical transformation inevitably spills over, refracting in a variety of ways amidst the audience by challenging them to cogitate and to carry Lethe into the space of the City as they examine the ambiguous space they inhabit, its "strange" inhabitants, and themselves.

~ II ~

The Passive Agent: Catalytic Desire and Transformation

Lethe's powerful desire drives his transformative capacity, impacting the Country Wench, Mother Gruel, and many others around him. But it would be remiss to ignore

another notable stranger who sits incongruously in contrast to Lethe for the majority of the play-text. Like Sir Andrew Lethe who left Scotland and renounced his "staining birth," and the Country Wench who escaped covertly from a "poor, thrummed house," Master Richard Easy is liberated for "long London sojours" by the death of his father (1.2.13, 1.3, 5-6, Paster 20). At the play's opening, Richard Easy, a gentleman from a large estate in Essex, who "seldom visit[s] London," traverses the country roads to attend Michaelmas Term (1.1.44). Easy seems the familiar country gull embodying "the gentry-fault" of trusting too easily when first in town (1.1.57). Richard Easy is characterized by both Paster and Leinwand as coming to London with a kind of "conventional innocence . . . [that] the play encodes as a kind of social virginity" and as one who embroils himself in "heterosexual, homosocial, and sodomitical or homoerotic circuits of relations" (Paster 21, Leinwand, 57).[71] Easy's innocence takes a number of forms, including economic exploitation by Quomodo, homosocial/homosexual dependency on Shortyard, and a passive naivety that positions him as sexually passive when juxtaposed against Andrew Lethe's "sexual avidity" (Paster 20). Easy's passivity, often foregrounded by critics, belies his transformative narrative arc and obscures the desires (including those other than his own) that drive it. In this section, I excavate Easy's catalyzed transformations in contrast to his foil, Lethe, and track his transformative development as a stranger in London in order to recognize other kinds of transformation that occur around geographic relocation.

Like Lethe, Easy's name is pun-based, jesting on his gullibility as he "falls so easily into Quomodo's trap" as a stranger in the City (Paster 54). While both Lethe and

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[71] Theodore B. Leinwand, "Redeeming Beggary/Buggery in *Michaelmas Term*," *English Literary History,* vol. 61, no. 1, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Easy are strangers, they experience the City very differently. Easy, a man of "three hundred pound a year in Essex," arrives in the city flush with money and excitement. In parallel Lethe, who arrived in the City in a "pickle" of social and fiscal poverty, must rely upon "two of his countrymen" (Scotsmen) to lend him credit for a plain cloth "suit of green kersey" (2.3.278, 3.1.253, 2.3.10-11). Lethe and Easy are oddly akin, working as foils that anchor one another's experiences. As such, it would be simple to point to the two men's differences in status and fortune upon arrival as the deciding factor in their dissimilar experiences. But while social and economic status underlie their initial opportunities in London, it is Lethe's sense of desire and Easy's lack thereof, that decisively impact the two men's different paths. Lethe enters London actively trying to alter his status and transform his outward appearance. Easy, on the other hand, remains mostly passive and suggestible, while others, such as Shortyard, "a shape-shifting apprentice," transform around him (Paster 17). Paster explicitly describes Easy as a "less desiring subject than desired object" because he receives material and "erotic . . . largess" from Quomodo and his family unit (20). Through their differences in desire, Lethe and Easy present quite different models of entry to and conduct in London. In doing so, *Michaelmas Term* draws geographic difference into the intimate purview of the theater's audience and critiques notions of fixed social belonging and status.

While Lethe is cast as the forgetful character, Easy shares this trait to a large degree, generating a complex cross-hatching of shared characterization. Lethe is cast as forgetful via his name and conduct. In his first speech Lethe references his poor memory five times, including "I remember you not," "I had quite forgot," "had I not the better memory" (1.1.172, 175, 178). However, as demonstrated in part one of this chapter,

Lethe is painfully aware of his delicate City status and prior life, proclaiming in soliloquy: “my poorer name . . . [is] drenched in Lethe . . . / and [will] ne’er be noted . . . to shame my blood/ And drop my staining birth upon my raiment” (1.1.281, 285-6). Lethe, then, is selectively forgetful, which is to say, his forgetfulness aids him in protecting his “raiment” and reputation as he socially navigates the City. In contrast, Easy demonstrates that he is genuinely forgetful, specifically in terms of social codes and obligations:

> *Shortyard*: Master Easy, mark my words. If it [the bond] is stood not upon
> The eternal loss of thy credit against supper—
> *Easy*: Mass, that’s true.
> *Shortyard*: The pawning of thy horse for his own vittles— . . .
> And thy utter dissolution amongst gentlemen for ever— . . .
> *Easy*: I forgot all this. What meant I to swagger before I had
> money in my purse?—How does Master Quomodo? Is
> the bond ready (2.3. 302-308, 314-316)?

In this scene Shortyard reminds Easy of the “credit” he has invested by promising supper to the other gentlemen, the loss of his personal affects, like his “horse,” should he baulk at signing the bond, and the “utter dissolution” he would face “forever” should he be found too poor to pay for dinner. Evidently, Easy, like it or not, has become embroiled within the economic motions of status and social expectation within the City. He fails quite spectacularly to enter into gallant society as an equal, instead speaking short, compliant responses. His plaintive “I forgot all this” demonstrates how utterly detached his interests are from City social dynamics, as he congenially accepts rules dictated by Shortyard, rather than through personal observation or reasoning. Easy and Lethe mirror one another through the swapping of character traits and expectations, generating a web of associations that draws the audience into moments of comparative examination.

If Lethe has an "appetite" for status, food, clothing, and sex, Easy is depicted as the food. In act one scene one, Easy is described by Cockstone as "fresh" and in want of "the city powd'ring" (1.1.238, 1.1.57). Cockstone recognizes Easy's newness to the City and lack of refinement by depicting him as "fresh," meaning he is in prime condition for the process of "powd'ring" (or seasoning) that removes such freshness. Like a piece of meat in need of seasoning, Easy is easy prey to those who wish to infuse him with their own seasoning. Such a comment positions Easy as consumable, rather than as a consumer, juxtaposing his physical arrival in London against the social, economic, and sexual networks that he has yet to penetrate within the City.

As Easy begins rollicking with City gallants he seems to begin the same social transformation as Lethe but his engagement is not catalyzed by the same desire. For example, Lethe desires alteration and participates actively in processes of social transformation, he secures his social standing by participating ("he's base that visits not his friends"), he demonstrates economic self-sufficiency ("I hold some store of venison. Where shall we devour it,/ gentlemen"), he appears sexually desirable to at least one woman (Susan) while pursuing two more, and as a consequence Lethe holds good social credit (2.1.52, 1.1.190-1).[72] Contrastingly, Easy lazily diminishes his own agency throughout his introduction to London and fails to mention any of his own interests or desires. He allows Master Blastfield to control his transformation ("Nay, but good master Easy . . . / I cannot ha' you alter your body/ now for the purge of a little money," 2.1.71-3) and dictate his economic and social obligations in the City under the guise of friendship ("a man must not so much as spit but within/ line and fashion/ . . . smile upon/

[72] Lethe essentially embodies Shortyard/ Blastfield's description of a gentleman "There is a kind of bold grace expected throughout all the parts of a gentleman" (2.1.102-3).

your ill luck and invite 'em tomorrow to another a break-/ fast of bones," 2.1.103-4, 115-17), while also seeming to preoccupy Easy's sexual needs in tandem with his economic needs ("our purses are/ brothers; we desire but equal fortunes/ In a word, w'are man and wife; they can but lie together, and so do we," 2.3.166-8). Easy gives over his agency for engagement with London's economic, social, and sexual markets. However, due to his reliance on others and lack of personal desire, Easy finds himself entrenched in an isolated sexual, economic, and social market that circulates entirely through one (fictive) persona: Shortyard, who pretends to know him through a mutual acquaintance "Master Alsup" (2.1.9).[73] Easy's lack of transformative activity driven by desire is characterized by his social, sexual, and economic torpor, which results in a loose grasp on City social dynamics. Indeed, it is only through catalyzing Easy's sexual desire (aided by Quomodo's Wife, Thomasine) that Easy escapes total destitution and the loss of his country estate.

Easy's strangeness in the City negatively mirrors Lethe's via a lack of desire generated transformation. Yet it is this very lack that saves Easy from social ruin. The sexual desire that aids Easy in finding economic and social equipoise does not emanate from him but from Thomasine, whose desire catalyzes Easy's own through encouragement and sexual enticement. In act two scene three, Thomasine watches Quomodo and Easy from above. In this position of visual and theatrical power,

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[73] Those interested in homosocial and homosexual interpretations of *Michaelmas Term* should look to Theodore B. Leinwand's useful writing on homosexuality in the play. His central argument claims that the text mitigates heterosexual norms by destabilizing all character's as stable signifiers of heterosexuality. By blurring homosociality and homoeroticism "easily" these characters avoid the stigmatization of sexual difference. See Theodore B. Leinwand's "Redeeming Beggary/Buggery," 1994.

Thomasine speaks directly to the off-stage audience and chimes in only twice. The first time, she dramatically declares herself married to “no man”:

> why stand I here (as late our graceless
> dames that found no eyes)
> to see that gentleman
> alive, in state and credit executed,
> help to rip up himself, does all he can?
> Why am I wife to him that is no man?
> I suffer in that gentleman’s confusion (2.3.218-224).

Thomasine’s position of semiotic power through observation takes on a distinctly sexual tone, as she “see[s] that gentleman alive,” whilst intimately witnessing and carrying the burden of his death “in state and credit.” Her voice, penetrating the scene suddenly from above with a potent moral and ethical statement draws the off-stage audience’s attention to her. Once captured, her language reframes the scene below, asking the audience for emotional engagement that meets her own, and to revise their understanding of Easy’s position from an intimate standpoint. The authority of her physical position above the action and the interruptive mode of interaction disrupts theatrical time, pausing the scene below for audience members while they engage with her. Doing so lends additional authority to Thomasine’s voice and her declaration of spiritual uncoupling from Quomodo, since one cannot be “wife” if there “is no man.” Her final line focuses tightly on the figure of Easy, who stands on the stage, happily bargaining, but who is swiftly reframed as “suffering.” Like a playwright or prophet, Thomasine parses the future action of the play to elicit sympathy and engagement. This moment establishes Thomasine (who has already demonstrated her moral and social resolution against Lethe) as the play’s moral and sexual agent. It is Thomasine’s pity for Easy’s social and financial failings and

disgust with her husband that drives her desire. Upon entering the scene fully from off-stage, Thomasine's agency in her interaction with Easy only increases via her actively flirtatious engagement with his gentlemanly gestures:

> *Easy*: [kisses her] I have commission for what I do, lady, from
> your husband.
> *Thomasine:* You may have stronger commission for the next,
> An't please you, that's from myself . . .
> [aside] beshrew my blood, a proper springal and
> A sweet gentleman (2.3.428-31, 433-4).

Thomasine's ability to alter a friendly kiss into a "stronger commission" that affects her "blood," indicates a transformation of sorts, from wife to romantic paramour. Unlike Easy, whose desires are dictated for him, Thomasine subverts the economic desires and aims of Lethe and Quomodo through the agential acknowledgment of romantic desire and pursuit for satisfaction with a stranger (rather than her citizen husband). Upon the (fake) death of Quomodo, Thomasine excitedly summons "*in haste*" her maid, Winifred, to send Easy a romantically motivated letter: "take this letter and this ring . . . / O how all the parts about me shake! Enquire for one Master Easy" (4.3.24, 4.3.26-9). Her physical "shake" demonstrates a level of embodied desire that only grows clearer as a theatrical signifier. When Thomasine and Easy decide to marry, she first swoons purposefully into his arms, then begins the romantic conversation, urging Easy to "Delay not now,/ Y'ave understood my love. I have a priest ready" (4.4.73, 80-1). Her consistent direction of each romantic encounter, even their proposed marriage, is fruitful for Easy, a self-proclaimed "mere stranger" who, after marrying Thomasine, miraculously gains London eyes and recognizes Shortyard through all of his transformations (3.4.53):

> *Enter Quomodo's Wife* [Thomasine] *married to* Easy . . .
> Easy: Rascal . . .
> Rogue, Shortyard, Blastfield, Sergeant, Deputy, coz'ner (5.1.11, 20-22)!

Through marriage, Thomasine's desired transformation into wife lends Easy the requisite transformation into Husband, and he suddenly arrives at the answer that the off-stage audience has held for the entire play: Shortyard has transformed into multiple characters in order to monopolize Easy's social, sexual, and economic engagements, and to swindle Easy of all of his money, land, and good credit. This social awakening sees Easy imbued with his first strong feeling: outrage. The final scene restores Easy's lands, imbues him with social feeling, satisfies Thomasine sexually, and punishes Quomodo roundly through cuckoldry, but it is important to note Easy's continued lack of agency throughout the resolution of the play. In many ways, Thomasine works as the positive inverse of Shortyard, transforming from wife, to observer, to mourner, to lover, to wife again, in order to catalyze Easy. As she notes: "I have always pitied you . . . / Let this kiss/ Restore thee to more wealth" (4.4.79, 83-4.). Thomasine instigates the sexually, economically, and socially restorative tryst, but it is just that: a restorative. Easy ends the play as he began it—as a wealthy Essex gentleman of three hundred pounds a year, unmarried (because the wedding is annulled by the Judge upon Quomodo's return), a social failure in London, and uniformly straddling his status as a country gentleman and his lack of City literacy. Like Lethe, Easy blurs status groups by inhabiting that of the city gallant while never expressly instigating gallant behavior. Easy remains a self-confessed "stranger for/ these parts," but he is not entirely unchanged (3.4.53-4).

Lethe and Easy connect with one another across the text through a series of characterological touchpoints that ask audience members to compare, contrast, and consider the connective tissue that holds these two men in tension. Like the stage itself, the City staged emerges as an intrinsically transformative space with inhabitants, spaces, activities, wares, and social systems that envelop and alter any who dare enter. Both personal and ancillary desires for transformation bring about alteration within this City, allowing few to remain untouched either by their own will or by the will of others. *Michaelmas Term*, then, blurs distinctions between City and stage, as the audience is asked to follow a mess of social interactions just as they would on the City streets. Many strangers appear upon the stage (Lethe, Mother Gruel, the Country Wench, Father, Easy), but as the audience leaves the theater, how many strangers remain? The judgment of Easy and Lethe is not restricted to the Judge in act five. The audience is expressly encouraged to self-identify, desire, reject, pity, and experience conflicting significations of social status. Importantly, the two models of entering and experiencing the City—Lethe's transformative desire, and Easy's receptive pliability—actively demonstrate the complexity of belonging and reveal a larger status-based commentary on belonging, difference, and desire.

Middleton's cultivation of desire-driven transformation through characterization, language, failed social integration, and the direction of audience attention distills new modes of understanding social status and navigating difference in *Michaelmas Term*. Examining strangers or aliens entering the city reveals new patterns of functionality for characters exhibiting geographic difference on the early modern stage. Rather than assimilating, or drawing out nationalist comparison, strangeness encourages the social

and cultural work of negotiating belonging on a larger scale, both within the playhouse and beyond. Like *Michaelmas Term,* Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* models ways of understanding geographic difference and social status through transformation. Jonson deploys specifically crafted characters, like Master Stephen of Hogsden, whose attempted transformation from country gull to city gallant becomes dislocated and generates a motley assemblage of social parts that sit unclearly across various social groupings. Jonson also operatively implements "disknowledge," a term coined by Katherine Eggert, to directly challenge ways of knowing social status and geographic difference in the period (Eggert 1).[74]

~ III ~

Choosing to Remember: The Function of Forgetting

Disknowledge, according to Katherine Eggert, is a strategy for managing knowledge—an epistemological maneuver that manages risk by setting aside one mode of understanding in favor of another. In simple terms, disknowledge is the practice of "ignor[ing] new knowledge" in order to preserve an existing or favored logical system (Eggert 2, 3, 8). While Eggert's work focuses on alchemical transformation, I apply the central core of her logic to explore one particular character. Stephen is a geographically mobile character who willfully undergoes transformation but practices disknowledge by selectively listening and retaining knowledge (via ignoring, forgetting, or eliding alternative ways of

[74] Katherine Eggert, *Disknowledge: How Alchemy Transmuted Ignorance in Renaissance England*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

thinking). His practiced ignorance and emphasis on selected "gallant" elements like swords, swears, and practiced behaviors repeatedly stalls his own transformative process and surfaces questions of social belonging and status boundaries. Part three of this chapter focus on Stephen's constantly stalling process of transformation into a city gallant, engendered by disknowledge, and considers how spectators are asked to think with destabilized categories of status and geographic belonging.

Much critical debate around *Every Man In His Humour* (1616) gravitates around its revision from the 1598 performance, its relocation from a vaguely English Florence to the streets of London, and its comedic depiction of gallantry and the "social outsider," "braggart soldier," and "Paul's Man" Bobadill (Dean 265, Hutson, 22, Angus, 68).[75] However, I reorient the lens of social difference to focus on Master Stephen as a character who more purposefully blurs boundaries of familiarity and difference. Stephen's desire to transform into a city gallant results in transformations that resist prescribed models of gentility and city gallantry. His transformations break down early modern type-based expectations by reinforcing Stephen's own interwoven forms of understanding. Jonson's seemingly typical country gull character stimulates a vital exploration of social and geographic difference, and the struggles of navigating diverse social landscapes. Likewise, Jonson's revision of *Every Man In* for performance and subsequent publication is itself an act of transformation that alienates spectators from earlier viewership experiences while asking them to refigure their knowledge in relation

[75] Leonard, F. Dean, "Three Notes on Comic Morality: Celia, Bobadill, and Falstaff," *Studies in English Literature 1500*-1900 vol. 16, no. 2, Rice University Press, 1976. pp. 263-271; Lorna Hutson, "Civility and Virility in Ben Jonson," *Representations* vol. 78, no. 1, University of California Press, 2002, pp. 1-27; Bill Angus, *Metadrama and the Informer in Shakespeare and Jonson*, Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

to estranged yet strikingly recognizable characters.[76] These characters not only replicate the original text but draw it closer through familiar settings, character types, and local references.[77] Much like Master Richard Easy of *Michaelmas Term*, Stephen is new to the City of London, but unlike Easy, the audience witnesses Stephen's physical movement through space from the country to the City alongside his reasoning and desires.

Despite his social standing as a country gentleman, Stephen more closely resembles the social climber, Sir Andrew Lethe, of *Michaelmas Term*—if not in intellect, then in his acquisitive clutching at signifiers of social standing and forgetfulness of choice elements to achieve City credit. Notably, Jonathan Haynes discusses Stephen in relation to his cousin, Edward Knowell, in *The Social Relations of Jonson's Theater*

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[76] Scholars including Jonas Barish, James Shapiro, Richard C. Newton, Anne Barton, and Alexander Leggatt comment on the alterations in Jonson's manuscript as a kind of self-fashioning that foregrounds the cultivation of Jonson's folio and how he hoped to present himself in publication. More recently James Riddell posited the additional factor that, since *Every Man In* was printed last (despite its prime position in the final folio text) and that there was a "possibility that the extensive cuts made in the last few pages" came due to the awkward reality that Jonson and his printer had run out of space. Ralph Alan Cohen examines the importance of the City in the revision of *Every Man In*, tying characterization to intimately relatable spaces, confining some settings within the city to local neighborhoods, which "sharpens and clarifies the theme of the play by casting the major conflict in terms of place" (Cohen 196). For fuller discussion, see James A. Riddell, "Jonson and Stansby and the Revisions of 'Every Man in His Humour,'" *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 9, Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp DBA Associated, 1997, pp. 81-91, www.jstor.com/stable/24322148, accessed June 14th 2017; and Ralph Alan Cohen, "The Importance of Setting in the Revision of 'Every Man in His Humour,'" *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 8, no. 2, University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp. 183-196, (www.jstor.org/stable/43446901), accessed May 22nd 2017; James Shapiro, *Rival Playwrights: Marlowe, Jonson, Shakespeare*, Columbia University Press, 1991; Jonas Barish, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy*, Harvard University Press, 1960; Richard C. Newton, *Foundations of Ben Jonson's Poetic Style: Epigrammes and the Forest*, Garland Publications in American and English Literature, 1988; Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson: Dramatist*, Cambridge University Press, 1984; Alexander Leggatt, *Ben Jonson: His Vision and His Art*, Methuen, 1981.

[77] The date of revision has been hotly debated since the early 1920s. E. K. Chamber's seminal writings posit the most popular possible dates of revision as 1604-5 or 1612. Recently James Knowles has noted that 1604 remains most likely because it is prior to its first court performance in 1605 and "it would seem most likely that Jonson revised *Every Man's* main text for performance rather than for simple literary ends" (Knowles xlix-xlil). Historically speaking, there is no directly recorded performance after its run at court until 1631. However, it is likely that the revised version was actively in the King's Men's repertory from the date of its revision until theaters closed in 1642. E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Oxford Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 1923; Knowles, James. "Introduction," *The Roaring Girl and Other City Comedies.* Oxford University Press, 2008.

(1992). Haynes argues for the emergence of a new gallant type in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*:

> the gallant, who had for centuries been a principal target of the morality plays as a figure for foppery, novelty, and urban degeneracy, is rehabilitated (or split, becoming Edward *and* Stephen) as the model for a new balance, a new class style that can cope with and dominate the city (Haynes 40-1).[78]

Haynes concurs with P. K. Ayers that Edward and his friend Wellbred are "the first true gallants on the English stage" (Ayers 74).[79] Indeed, Haynes goes further, implying that Edward *belongs* in the City in an unprecedented way due to his success as a rehabilitated "urbane gallant" whose "first characteristic is mastery" (Haynes 41). Edward, then, seems a prime example of assimilative success except that his entry into the City and his subsequent transformation remain undocumented and unreferenced for the entirety of the play. In contrast to Edward, Stephen must be cast as some combination of the "fop," "novelty," or "urban degenerate;" James Knowles, editor of the 2001 edition of *Every Man In*, goes as far as to brand Stephen an "accomplished monster" (Knowles xl). Stephen is essentially successful at nothing, perhaps affirming Haynes's theory as Edward, in contrast, is successful at everything. However, I argue that Stephen's lack of success is part of a generative transformation process in the text.

While Stephen is certainly a fool and a failure of sorts, the minimization of his behavior to an "extreme expression of humors" necessitated by a "crowded . . . saturated system" of social distinctions loses sight of the unusual transformative potential Stephen holds

[78] Jonathan Haynes, *The Social Relations of Jonson's Theater*, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
[79] P. K. Ayers, "Dreams of the City: The Urban and the Urbane in Jonson's *Epicoene*," *Philological Quarterly*, vol. 66, no. 1, University of Iowa, 1987, pp.73-86.

within the text (Haynes 42). Stephen's purposeful choice to ignore new knowledge destabilizes familiar boundaries between status types. Rather than embodying a specific subset of gallant as Haynes argues, Stephen's performance of disknowledge embodies a rejection of standard boundaries that designate type. I posit that Stephen's behavior, like Lethe's and Easy's, allows for experiments in status and self-identification and that his disknowledge-based failures elicit opportunities for spectators to reevaluate their notions of social status and geographic belonging in London.

Stephen, much like Middleton's Lethe, engages directly and purposefully in a process of transformation in an effort to enter into London society. Yet, unlike Lethe, Stephen actively dislocates his transformative process through enacting disknowledge. From the outset, Jonson positions Stephen as a desiring country gull whose overreaching, transformative, yet desirable characteristics position him at the center of theatrical attention. The depth and complexity of Stephen's character emerges through his first speech, as he describes his desired movement into City-based social groups. This speech is also, incidentally, the first instance of Stephen practicing disknowledge. In act one scene one Stephen explains to his gentleman uncle, Knowell, that he wants to borrow a book on hawking and hunting in order to become a city gallant:

> *Stephen*: Why, you know,
> an a man have not sill in the hawking and hunting languages
> nowadays, I'll not give a rush for him. They are more studied than
> the Greek or Latin. He is for no gallant's company without
> 'em. And by God's lid, I scorn it, I, so I do, to be a consort for
> every humdrum, hang'em scroils, there's nothing in e'm i'the
> world . . . . Because I dwell in Hogsden I shall
> keep company with none but the archers of Finsbury? Or the
> citizens that come a-ducking to Islington ponds? A fine jest,
> i'faith! 'Slid, a gentleman mun show himself like a gentleman.

> Uncle, I pray you be not angry, I know what I have to do, I trow, I am no novice (1.1.37-48).[80]

Each statement or assertion of certainty in Stephen's speech subtly misses its mark in terms of understanding the nuances of social power, education, fashion, and gentlemanly behavior. His idea of gallantry relies not on humanist, language-based intellectual expansion but on learned, pleasure-based social activities. While placing primacy on pleasure to gain credit amongst gallants, Stephen simultaneously asserts that others of all status groups and educational levels are "humdrum" with "nothing in 'em" if they do not study hawking and hunting. With such reductive logic regarding the social act of hawking, Stephen goes on to highlight his own lack of substance with blustering exclamations and accusations of the same in others, who have "nothing in 'em i'the/ world." Selective knowledge retainment in pursuit of desirable transformation is a central component to Jonson's construction of Stephen's character, which Stephen confirms by robustly asserting, "I know what I have to do" to prove a gentleman and "no novice," when it is quite clear that he has no idea. Rather than comfort his uncle, or the audience, these final two lines of speech reinforce Stephen's social deficiency and generate comic power. Indeed, Stephen's reliance on a system of disknowledge underscores his inability to perform gallantry and emphasizes the depth of his incompetency by demonstrating his chronic miss-reading of markers of power, gentility, and status. Stephen's enmeshed muddle of desires and actions reverberate spatially, punctuating the theatrical rhythm of the scene as his interjections, exclamations,

[80] Ben Jonson, "Every Man in His Humour," *The Roaring Girl and Other City Comedies*, ed. James Knowles, Oxford University Press, 2008.

and gallantry-oriented language contrasts wildly against Knowell's humanistic musings on poetics and gentility.

Stephen's opening speech serves a secondary purpose: animating audience engagement with the topography of London and its surrounding areas. If his accusations of being "humdrum" with "nothing in 'em" is not enough to engage his audience (which may include citizens, tradesmen, and artisans from London and its surrounding liberties), Middleton's portrayal of country spaces certainly would.[81] When Stephen indignantly inquires if he should "keep company" with "none but" the archers of Finsbury or citizens at Islington pond, Jonson directly addresses his audience by ridiculing both citizens and those who enjoy archery, both of which are key demographics that attended a variety of playhouses. The Theater, located in the north of London, was directly next to Finsbury Fields archery and The Globe, located to the south of London, was located a short 25-30 minute walk from Newington Butts, an area renowned for its archery range.[82] In large part, Stephen's rejection of archers and citizens derives from their inhabitation of locations on the periphery of the City in sub-urban spaces. Not all citizens are "humdrum," but citizens "that come a-ducking to Islington ponds" are. Likewise, it is specifically the archers of Finsbury that aggravate Stephen—those located on the outskirts of the City just as he is located on the outskirts of the gallant society he craves. With this short twelve-line speech, Jonson draws clear topographic distinctions that emphasizes the role of geographic movement into and out of London in shifting

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[81] Whether reading or viewing the play, the audience's association with local spaces would have resonated deeply.

[82] The Theater (to the north of the city) is the more likely location of the Chamberlin's Men's early performances of *Every Man In* (hence why Jonson may have chosen Finsbury) since the Admirals Men had begun performing more in Newington Butts, and the Globe was not completed until 1599. See more on *Encyclopædia Britannica,* "The Lord Chamberlin's Men," Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2006, accessed August 27th 2017.

understandings of social status. In London, a citizen taking a day-trip to the country might be luxurious, whereas to Stephen, the attempts of citizens to enact country life is a mark of social inferiority. It is this same inflexible relational logic in reverse that seems to position Stephen, despite his alterations, as a failed gallant in London. Yet, as the play progresses, his failures in gallantry yield very different results to those ducking in Islington. In *Every Man In*, Stephen is a complex mixture of Lethe, Easy, and Mother Gruel: Stephen is a social climber, a gull, and inept at holding space for social nuance which, ironically, is exactly what he characterologically achieves.

In answer to Stephen's enlightening opening speech, his uncle Knowell attempts to reeducate Stephen. Knowell opens the play lamenting his son, Edward's, interest in poetry rather than study and is greatly alarmed at Stephen's investment in bird husbandry as a gateway to genteel friends and gallant culture.

> *Knowell*: What would I have you do? I'll tell you, kinsman:
> Learn to be wise, and practice how to thrive,
> That I would have you do; and not to spend
> Your coin on every bauble that you fancy,
> Or evert foolish brain that humours you.
> I would not have you to invate each place . . .
> Nor thrust yourself on all societies,
> Nor would I you should melt away yourself
> In flashing bravery, least while you affect
> To make a blaze of gentry to the world . . .
> Nor stand so much on your gentility,
> Which is an airy and mere borrowed thing,
> From dead men's dust and bones, and none of yours
> Except you make, or hold it. Who comes here?
> [*enter a*] Servant
> *Servant:* Save you, gentlemen.
> *Stephen*: Nay, we don't stand much on our gentility, friend (1.1.60-85).

Stephen actively resists knowledge coming from reliable sources such as socially elevated gentlemen. The tension between Stephen's desire for social elevation and rejection of genteel practice manifests through promptly, when he swiftly ignores twenty-four lines (truncated above) of valuable advice packaged neatly into versified, memorable phrases including "learn to be wise and practice how to thrive" (1.1.61), "Nor would I you should melt away yourself/ . . . To make a blaze of gentry to the world" (2.2.71-3), and "gentility/ . . . is an airy and mere borrowed thing,/ From dead men's dust and bones, and none of yours" (1.1.81-3). Knowell speaks of working diligently to learn personal skills from which genteel behaviors emanate, like wisdom, poise, constancy, and practicality. Instead, Stephen circumvents his knowledgeable uncle and opts instead for the fungible lexical adoption of the phrase "stand so much on your gentility," unsettling the social expectation of Knowell, who, knowing well, intends to impart knowledge (1.1.81).

Stephen's selection of the phrase "stand upon our gentility" (the first sentence of Knowell's final rhetorical movement) indicates that Stephen ceases to listen as the serving man enters and locates the newcomer as his new audience. Stephen, captivated by the performance of gentility, enacts disknowledge by ignoring opportunities for genteel learning. By reusing the single phrase that was originally leveled at Stephen as an admonishment, Stephen pretends at intellectual growth and social altitude, while proving the reverse, that he has learned nothing at all save an articulate sounding phrase that was selectively chosen to tout in front of servants. In a clear demonstration of disknowledge, Stephen completely ignores Knowell's substantive speech and chooses to cherry pick phrases and modes of speaking and acting in order to performs them anew as part of an

imagined transformation that inherently deserves cultural capitol.[83] Stephen simultaneously scrambles to attain symbols and phrases of gallantry while also vigorously rejecting designated behaviors, tastes, and social codes associated with the gallant status group. In doing so, Stephen's character challenges the markers and measures of gallant status and elicits questions that trouble ontologies of type and that interrogate the social signifiers that compose social status in early modern England. While Stephen's transformations are primarily concerned with assimilation into gallant society, for his off-stage audience, who are so centrally located (both figuratively and literally) in the spaces of London, his oscillation between signifiers of identification and difference serve to destabilize familiar social categories.

Stephen's geographic journey from the country to the City specifically foregrounds his desire-based transformation and the generative nature of Stephen's inability to achieve his aims. In act two scene two Stephen makes his first significant movement toward the City as he travels with his cousin, Edward, over "Moorfields to London" (2.2.8). Stephen and Edward are waylaid at Moorfields by Brainworm, their family servant (working on behalf of Knowell Senior), who is disguised as a soldier. This interaction, which sees Brainworm attempting to sell Stephen a sword, showcases Stephen's simultaneous disinterest in gallant learning alongside his desire for material signifiers of gallantry.

Brainworm: Nay, 'tis a most pure Toledo.

[83] Desperation to seem genteel through performed signifiers is also visible in his performance of melancholy (2.2.22-50) and of sword fighting bravado (3.2.145-75), such as his attempt to attack Downright as he duels with Bobadill (4.1.136). Each scene draws around Stephen as his very presence inhibits theatrical progression through linguistic and physical disruption that imaginatively dismantles boundaries between gallant, gull, and gentleman.

Stephen: I had rather it were a Spaniard! But tell me, what shall I give you for it? An it had a silver hilt—
Edward: Come, come, you shall not buy it; hold, there's a shilling Fellow; take thy rapier
Stephen: Why, but I will buy it now, because you say so, and there's another shilling, fellow. I scorn to be out-bidden. What, shall I walk with a cudgel like Higgenbottom? And may I have a rapier for money?
Edward: you may buy one in the City.
Stephen: Tut, I'll buy this i' the field, so I will…
Edward: Come away, you are a fool
Stephen: Friend, I am a fool, that's granted; but I'll have it. For that word's sake (2.2.72-90).

The liminal space of Moorfields enables disknowledge to manifest through social and material confusion as Stephen's attempts at city behavior meet resistance from his gallant cousin, Edward. Stephen seems to believe Brainworm's sales pitch, a foolish move according to Edward, the on-stage audience with gallant social credentials, but especially ridiculous to the off-stage audience who know from the opening of the scene that the Soldier is Brainworm in disguise. Stephen misidentifies Toledo, the ancient Spanish city, exclaiming "I had rather [the rapier] were a Spaniard!" Through this misidentification, Stephen demonstrates only surface knowledge of materials favored by gallants alongside an inadequate educational grasp of European geography. His misrecognition doubles, as Stephen becomes both intellectually and socially confused about the social standard Edward sets with a City-savvy understanding of commercial exchange and emphasis on the importance of place-of-purchase. This economic incongruence emerges when Stephen confuses his cousin's bribe to be rid Brainworm for the instigation of a bidding contest. Beyond simple economic confusion Stephen flounders due to his refusal to listen to his

genteel cousin.[84] Even Edward's clarifying emphasis on purchasing in the city rather than the field, miscarries as Stephen fails to practice gallant behavior or imbibe suggestions from his gallant cousin. This confusion instigated by Stephen's practiced disknowledge generatively dislocates his performance of gallantry and undercuts the notion of gallantry itself by revealing its reliance on material signifiers and conduct.

Furthermore, Stephen's fear of being like the fictional country-swain cudgel bearer, Higgenbottom, demonstrates that his underpinning idea of gallantry is deeply inaccurate, if not entirely unattainable. While attempting to seem gallant, it seems that Stephen's foundational understanding of gallantry is deeply inaccurate, if not entirely unattainable. In fact, Stephen's ideal is less gallant than underpinned by social types that he does not wish to embody, which now includes citizens visiting the country, archers practicing in the fields, or the country-swain, Higgenbottom. As Edward and Stephen argue over the boundaries of gallant behavior, Stephen's disknowledge frustrates his transformation, revealing the performative nature of social boundaries and serving the radical purpose of stripping gallant status to its component parts—language, material items, and location—before encouraging audience interrogation of each one.

The faux-Toledo sword comes to represent the constructed nature of gallantry throughout the text. Stephen's sword is publicly exposed as counterfeit by non-other than Bobadill, the play's greatest gallant pretender, who exclaims "this a Toledo? Pish! . . . A Fleming, by heaven, I'll buy them for a guilder apiece and I would have a thousand of them" (3.1.143-5). Despite such an embarrassing public disclosure, Stephen goes on to use his Fleming rapier to practice swordplay while muttering newly learned swears,

[84] This is the fourth time in two acts that Stephen has asserted a desire to alter himself and conveniently ignored all helpful advice.

"(*Stephen is practicing to the post*) 'By this air,' 'as I am a gentleman'" in the hopes of seeming more gallant (3.2.323). The absurdity of this staged moment of physical and lexical practice reveals a fundamental absurdity in the social performances in which every member of every social status partakes. Furthermore, the presence of a Toledo-Fleming-prop sword on Stephen's hip throughout the text remains a notable, physical marker of his incompetence at reading social cues, his inability to grasp London economic and social literacy, and his failure to pass as gallant.[85] A simple sword, then, bears the weight of considerable critical energy within the text: as a semiotic cue, a comedic stimulant, a symbol of disknowledge, and a social marker, the sword reveals the constructed nature of gallantry's idiomatic performance.

Stephen's disknowledge-based blurring of social signification throughout the text is complicated by his relationship to his on-stage audience. His over-excited zeal for gallants, penchant for swearing, and a constant stream of questions for his City counterparts is initially tolerated with a sense of schadenfreude by the on-stage gallant audience of Wellbred and Edward, who find Stephen "a rascal" and "a pretty piece of civility" (3.1.177-8). Wellbred notes:

> *Wellbred*: [*aside to Edward*] O, it's a most precious fool, make much on him. I can compare him to nothing more happily than a drum; for everyone to play upon him.
> *Edward*: [*aside to Wellbred*] No, no, a child's whistle were far the fitter (3.1.181-85).

[85] Stephen's enactment of disknowledge continually dislocates his transformation into a London gallant. This is demonstrated once more via his obstinacy in conversation, even with gallants. Stephen takes issue with almost everything, including verbally sparring with both his uncle and an unsuspecting servant in act one scene one, (1.1.85-109) weeping suddenly thinking he lost his purse (2.2.22-31), loudly arguing with Edward over purchasing the rapier (2.2.75-91), cussing wildly at Brainworm for selling him that rapier (3.2.145-75), attempting to attack Downright as he fights Bobadill (4.1.136), and later stealing Downright's cloak and lying about it (4.5.132-8).

Stephen's blithe idiocy is consumable for Edward and Wellbred who engage as spectators through the metaphor of children's instruments, that one can "play" or manipulate at will. In this instance, Stephen fulfills the scripted role of a country gull, entertaining others through innocent foolishness. Upon arrival in London, both on and off-stage audience members receive the message that Stephen is at once loveably affable and irritatingly foolish, which makes his disjointed behaviors that blur the boundaries between status groups seem excusable. As Wellbred declares: "I forgive Master Stephen, for his is stupidity itself" (3.2.206)!

The on-stage audience recognize Stephen as oddly disarming and sometimes endearing, but his social failings begin to emphasize the splintering expectations and desires that are tenuously held in tension within his character. In act three, as Stephen attempts to learn Bobadill's swears as part of his gallant transformation: "'By Pharaoh's foot,' 'body of Caesar,' … 'upon mine honour, and by Saint George'" (3.2.315-7). Early in Stephen's swearing extravaganza, Wellbred comments: "Rare! Your cousin's discourse is simply drawn out with/ oaths!" to which Edward responds, "'Tis larded with 'em. A kind of French dressing, if you love it" (3.2.346-7). This commentary could easily have been uttered by an external audience member, as Edward and Wellbred discuss Stephen as a hyperbolic comic figure, whose presence can be equated with rich, exotic food. At first humorous, Stephen's oath-swearing accumulates through act four scene one where he almost compulsively swears ("Not I, sir; upon my reputation, and by the foot of Pharaoh" (4.1.44), "Body o' Caesar . . . the best I ever heard, as I am a soldier" (4.1.91-2)). These oaths wield comedic power both in their frequency and in their ridiculous appeals to authority. Stephen's hyperbolic enthusiasm and relentless repetition not only

demonstrate his lack of skill, but also emphasize the failure of his ever-growing lexicon as it coagulates to inhibit clear meaning. By act four, the on-stage gallant Wellbred becomes ever more irritated with Stephen's botched lexical transformation and exasperatedly states: "O, chide your cousin for swearing" (4.1.45). Stephen's poor performance is so irritating to Wellbred in part because it exposes the performances of social status around him. Stephen's lexical entanglement mirrors his larger disknowledge-based inability to adopt social norms or subtlety perform gentility, despite his high-born status. This failure in transformation catalyzes theatrical friction amongst the staged London gallants, who rely upon breading, money, and professions of taste to produce gallant social circles. While some failure in performance is entertaining, Stephen's status position as Edward's cousin destabilizes the carefully articulated ligaments that mobilize gallant social life.

If Stephen is initially characterized as a "drum" or "whistle" upon which to play, his intrinsic volatility cannot be ignored, as he relentlessly and jarringly manages to march to his own beat. Before entering the City, Stephen's disknowledge emerges once more when he misinterprets Edward's assessment of his comportment and exclaims, "I will be more proud, and melancholy, and gentleman-like than I have been, I'll ensure you" (1.2.105-6). Edward did not instruct Stephen in this behavior, but he initially finds good humor in Stephen's desire to perform melancholia. However, upon meeting Wellbred, Matthew, and Bobadill in act three, Stephen suddenly brings up this faux-melancholic disposition four times in the space of 29 lines: "I am somewhat melancholy," "I am mightily given to melancholy," "have you a stool there, to be melancholy upon," and "Cousin, is it well? Am I melancholy enough" (3.1.65, 73, 85, 91)? In each instance

the absurdity of Stephen's poor gallant performance builds as greater theatrical attention swings toward Stephen's disastrous performance of gentlemanly melancholy. Disruptive and confusing due to Stephen's practice of disknowledge, these exchanges refocus the scene's theatrical attention around Stephen's failure to transform and ask the off-stage audience alongside Edward to asses Stephen's performance. Stephen undermines the boundaries of gallant and gull by blurring performances of gallantry and gullishness, reminding the audience of his high-born status alongside his wasteful foolery and drawing attention to the performative construction of status. Through this construction and strategic deployment of disknowledge, Jonson pushes the audience to imaginatively engage in the deconstruction of social and cultural modes of belonging.

In body, mind, habit, and language, Stephen spends the course of the play enacting disknowledge by selectively doffing his country traits, affiliations, and persona, in order to selectively adopt the most exciting elements of a gentlemanly persona. This practice of selection dislocates his transformative process into the City gallant he venerates at the same time as he destabilizes the gallants' own social indicators. In short, Stephen practices a form of social appropriation, in which he proselytizes the conversion to gallant life, but only accepts the snippets and components that suit him (swears, swords, and behavioral patterns), which causes disorder and social fatigue for those inhabiting that social group. In doing so, Stephen dislocates himself geographically as well as socially, becoming both/neither country gull and city gallant at once.

In the final act, the complex blend of Stephen's social significations culminates in a portrayal of his vibrant disjunction. Stephen's first line identifies him as "a gentleman,"

and swiftly links him by blood to his high status "Uncle" Knowell (5.1.82).[86] Suddenly disrupting Stephen's claim of genteel succession, another gentleman gallant, Downright, charges Stephen with theft before a local Justice. Downright claims that Stephen stole his cloak and lied about it—an embarrassing accusation that the external audience knows is entirely accurate (5.1.86). Even more embarrassing is that Stephen's misdemeanor is so low on Justice Clement's list of problems to solve that he neglects to dole out a punishment, at first. Stephen, as a self-declared gallant, is indisposed to be forgotten even in punishment, and he interrupts with the self-interested question "and what shall I do?" Clement deals with the blend of gentleman and cheap thief before him, stating:

> *Justice Clement*: O, I had lost a sheep, an he had not bleated! Why, sir, you shall give Master Downright his cloak, and I will entreat him to take it. A trencher and napkin you shall have, i' the buttery, and keep Cob and his Wife company here—whom I will entreat first to be reconciled—and you to endeavor with your wit, to keep 'em so (5.1.259-63).

Clement's positioning of Stephen as a lost sheep references his country origins and describes his social and geographic development. While Stephen is from the country, he has strayed to the City and found new pasture, which indicates his ability to inhabit various social and geographic landscapes. Next, Clement requests that Stephen redeem his gentlemanly manner's despite his gullish behavior by returning Downright's cloak, a concurrent marker of gentility and base theft. Finally, Clement directs Stephen to stay in London, dine "i' the buttery," and use his minimal wit to help reconcile the water-bearer

[86] Aside from his title and land, Knowell is listed first on the 1616 folio "Persons of the Play" list, demonstrating his position of high status in the text. See Ben Jonson, "Persons of the Play," *The works of Benjamin Jonson Folio*, 1616, LUNA Digital Image Collection, Folger Shakespeare Library, https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/s/b9li7x, accessed December 14th 2017.

Cob and his wife Tib. Clement, then, simultaneously invokes Stephen's genteel country origins and his gullish gallantry while positioning him at the lowest position possible alongside a water-bearer in the servant's buttery, which perhaps is intended to satiate Stephen's hunger for belonging (*OED* "buttery").[87] While some read this moment as the ultimate relegation of Stephen, his placement in the buttery indicates once more, his capacity to straddle and blend diverse social statuses. Stephen's purposeful application of disknowledge stalls his intended transformations and as the play closes, instead of resolving Stephen, these alterations modify his embodiment and adoption of social significations of status, generating a diverse but cohesive figure.

The final scene does not reconcile the disruptive presence of Stephen nor does it eject him from London. Stephen spans many social statuses, allowing a born gentleman, attempted gallant, foolish thief, and goodhearted country gull with the manners the servant class, to co-exist within one embodied figure. Jonson's deployment of characterization stretches the borders of how we understand geographic belonging and social status in the period. Stephen, while a fool, is as much a Londoner as he is a country gull—as much a gallant, as a gentleman. Stephen remains an irreducible marker of geographic and social difference in the City and his unresolved presence asserts that there is a space for those like him to productively pursue their desires and test them freely in an urban setting.[88] The disruptive application of disknowledge and Stephen's transformative

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[87] Buttery means: "a place where provisions were laid up." See "buttery, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 2017, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/25423), accessed December 14th 2017.

[88] The freedom to try, fail, and become something socially diverse is just as relevant an idea for the London audience as Edward's ability to pass. Just as there was "an increasingly important sector of the theater audience" who "could identity with [Edward] directly and powerfully," so, too, was there a large sector of the audience, who were growing in social and political power and who could directly identify with Stephen's struggle to alter himself in order to inhabit the City in a preferred fashion (Haynes 41).

movement across the social spectrum overtly celebrates and encourages difference and breaks down normative social types through vibrantly disjunctive characterization.

Conclusion

Inspired by this project's introductory discussion of the national, Chapter One's investigation of Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* and Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor* broadens our critical perspective to include a multitude of people arriving in the city (both on and off the stage), whose ability to transform or to change afforded them new avenues of social, economic, and emotional life. The three men who sit centrally to this chapter, Sir Andrew Lethe, Master Richard Easy, and Master Stephen all struggle to meet standards of social signification due to their geographic difference. Chapter One has argued for the integral role that desire emanating from characters who are geographically different holds in processes of transformation and explores key variations on transformative pathways taken by those who exhibit geographic difference in the early modern stage's London. *Michaelmas Term* emphasizes the way in which desire for altered social status catalyzes transformation and complicates characters that are traditionally relegated to the status of assimilated alien figures. Both personal and ancillary desires brings about alteration within this City, allowing few to remain untouched either by their own will or by the will of others. By locating desire in the repulsive through Andrew Lethe and emphasizing the need for stranger eyes, the play reinvents perceptions of social failure and draws attention to both the unreliability of sight and the unreliability of social signifiers. Middleton's manipulation of the foreign and the familiar directs audience attention and generatively spills over to ask the audience

to examine the ambiguous space of London, its geographically different inhabitants, and themselves. Importantly, the two models of entering and experiencing the City—Lethe's transformative desire and Easy's receptive pliability—demonstrate the complexity of belonging and reveal a larger status-based commentary on belonging, difference, and desire. Like Sir Andrew Lethe, Jonson's Master Stephen in *Every Man in His Humor* experiences issues passing amongst the gallant populous of London. However, Stephen follows his desire and greedily consumes the material and lexical markers of gallantry, while specifically resisting certain forms of knowledge. This intra-character process of disknowledge inhibits transformation and augments how spectators read Stephen's social signifiers. Disknowledge and the resultant stalled transformations enable the cultural work of tracing and destabilizing boundaries of geographic belonging and social status through self-identification.

Furthermore, this chapter has reoriented mechanisms of failure and success around alien and foreign gull figures by focusing on transformation as a theatrical process that exposes logics of social status and difference. Rather than reinforcing social status, the transformations each character experiences in order to achieve their social desire reveals the constructed nature of social status, its fungible boundaries, and its tenuous fragility when confronted with unyielding, irreducible instances of social blending. As I maintain throughout this project, early modern playwrights and audiences alike sustained a fascination with transforming characters whose difference generated a theatrically compelling renegotiation of established limitations and whose on-stage experiences stimulated attention to new modes of belonging outside of the playhouse. Chapter Two, "Female Desire and Transforming Whores on the Early Modern Stage," turns this

chapter's questions about desire and transformation toward whore characters on the early modern stage. Chapter Two concentrates on the boundaries of female agency, sexual difference, and desire in relation to constructions of gender in city comedy. In doing so, Chapter Two examines a sub-group of women who are defined by their desirability and whose desire is rarely discussed. Their contribution to this project is the unmooring of social and sexual types through lexical, semantic, and visual proliferation, which teases at the edges of identity in both alarming and erotic ways.

CHAPTER 2
"WHAT LIES WITHIN THE POWER OF MY PERFORMANCE": FEMALE DESIRE AND TRANSFORMING WHORES ON THE EARLY MODERN STAGE

Whores, widows, spinsters, courtesans, maids, drabs, squalls, virgins, dowagers, bawds, daughters, wives, aunts, women. Each category is delineated yet porous—a flexible composite—on the early modern stage. Implicit in each of these titles is a deep history of the hierarchical categorization of female bodies that relegates women to objects defined in relation to men and who are rarely, or never, defined independently.[89] Chapter Two, like Chapter One's "stranger eyes" is an invitation to revise perceptions of figures categorized as alien, foreigner, or strange and to complicate how signifiers of difference are understood.[90] In this chapter, I build on our prior exploration of geographic and social transformation to focus on female desire and sexual type as indicators of sexual difference and sexual status in city comedies.[91] Sexual status delineates characters through sex, sexual access to the body, and linguistic or visual signifiers that signal deviance from conventions of morality and social norms.[92] Sexual deviance incurred serious social consequences in the early modern period, with Protestant categories of

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[89] This chapter heeds Jean Howard's call to explore early modern dramatic texts as spaces in which many playwriters presented "powerful and socially significant alternatives to normative prescriptions only about prostitutes, but also about women in general." (Howard *Theater of a City*, 115).
[90] The alien/foreigner/stranger in this chapter takes on a more intimate visage as I look to women who exhibit female desire and who are thus cast as sexually deviant.
[91] Sexual difference does not reference male/female sexed difference in this chapter. Instead, it points to non-normative differences in sexual desire, activity, or availability. This chapter asserts that there are many desire-based trajectories that women could take outside of "the approved social trajectory of young women" that impacted sexual status on the stage, and that complicates the conventional move "from dutiful virgins to wives" (Jankowski 123).
[92] Examining how cultures and institutions "recall, identify, enable, suppress, forget and overlook sexual commerce," Stephen Spiess notes how courtesan characters were often actively situated within networks of cultural meaning that connected and produced epistemologies of "whorishness" and that demeaned and devalued the human experience of women who sold their bodies to survive (Spiess, "The Measure" 325). These networks produce visual and linguistic indicators of sexual deviance that align with binarized moral/immoral readings of female desire and sexual engagement. Stephen Spiess, "The Measure of Sexual Memory," in *Shakespeare Survey*, ed. Peter Holland, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 310-326.

virgin/not-virgin closely linked to polarized paradigms of gender and heteronormativity that were understood "in terms of bodily differences" (Jankowski 11).[93] Analyzing sexual status in early modern drama requires a strong focus on the social and cultural roles of women in the period due to the early modern cultural tendency to define women using terms that not only position them socially, but simultaneously define their sexual status.[94] Often, sexual difference (constituted by differences in sexual activity and availability) also connotes geographic or material difference because the excavation of sexual difference simultaneously involves an excavation of shifts in geography and social status.[95] For instance, many of early modern drama's famous whores and courtesans are Dutch, Welsh, or otherwise foreign, and dress sumptuously or scandalously as they traverse nations, languages, social groups, and sexual statuses.[96] Regardless of a woman's

[93] This focus on material forms of signification on the stage is in part contributed to by scholars such as Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* and Lena Cowen Orlin's "Introduction," *Material London c. 1600*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000. Importantly, Katherine Gillen describes the relationship between virginity or chastity and the body as a "fictitious commodity" (5) whose discursive significance lies within the economic language surrounding chastity. This reading is especially useful for understanding the inscription of value on the female body as linguistically based, and how it may have translated into sexual labor (Gillen 5). See Gillen's *Chaste Value: Economic Crisis, Female Chastity, and the Production of Difference of Shakespeare's Stage*, Edinburgh University Press, 2017, especially pp. 1-24, 33-49.

[94] Sexual and social identity are deeply interconnected for women in the early modern period. While there are terms like widower and husband that apply to men, many terms that describe men draw on their social standing and are not dependent on their sexual status. For example: many men were referred to by the title of their profession, title, skill level, or political rank.

[95] Kim Hall has already generated valuable discourse around the relationship between sexual status and race in her work. Hall explicitly traces networks of material signifiers, such as skin color and fabric, as they relate to non-material ideals such as morality, magic, truth, and perfection. Articulating the living, imaginative tissue that so powerfully manifested in a variety of sensory modes, Hall has opened new avenues for interpreting significations of difference on the early modern stage. Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economics of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, Cornell University Press, 1995, especially pp. 160-76, 177-210.

[96] See John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan* (1604), ed. David Crane, Methuen Drama, 1997; Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613), ed. Alan Brissenden, A&C Black Publishers, 2002; Thomas Heywood, *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody Parts I and II*, London, 1605; William Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors* (1594), ed. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine, The Folger Shakespeare Library, Simon & Schuster, 2020; William Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (1607), ed. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine, The Folger Shakespeare Library, Simon & Schuster, 2005; William Shakespare's, *Othello* (1603), ed. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine, The Folger Shakespeare Library, Simon & Schuster, 2004; John Webster, "Nothward Ho (1607)," *The Works of John Webster*, vol. 4, eds.

sexual status as virginal, any association with foreignness could indicate slippage in the surety of categories of sexual belonging.[97] Movement across a variety of boundaries could indicate illicit movement across sexual boundaries. Transformation foregrounds female desire in this chapter and works to revise the cultural logics that shape staged female characters who may be considered sexually deviant due to differences in their sexual activity.[98]

As I look to transformations of women in body and in sexual status, it is useful to ask: what is a sexual type? What, in particular, constitutes a whore?[99] Mario DiGangi

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David Carnegie, David Gunby, Jackson P. MacDonald, Cambridge University Press, 2019; Thomas Dekker, "Match Me in London (1607)," *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker Volume III*, ed. Fredson Bowers, Cambridge University Press, 1958.

[97] Each woman discussed at length in this chapter is quite literally foreign in at least a geographic sense. For more on the threat of foreignness and early modern anxieties surrounding specific female roles, such as the widow, see Ian Fredrick Moulton's *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England*. Oxford University Press, 2000, especially 28-32 and 159-193. Focusing on the historical space of London, Natasha Korda's article "Sex, Starch-Houses, and Poking Sticks" connects foreignness with sexual trade and the economics of value, especially the formation of the character type "Dutch widow" (Korda 203). Korda notes that the sexualization of Dutch working women is not surprising, given the general tendency to sexualize female labor during the period (Korda 203). See also Rubright's *Doppelgänger Dilemmas* (2014), especially 162-188; Natasha Korda, "Sex Starch-Houses and Poking Sticks: Alien Women's Work and the Technologies of Material Culture," *Early Modern Women*, vol. 5, University of Arizona Press, 2010, pp. 201-208, accessed October 12th 2017.

[98] Part of this project's aims are, as Saba Mahmood notes in Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), to "dislocate the certitude of [our] own projections" and become attuned to "alternative ways of knowing and being" that unravel within a play-text (Mahmood in Halberstam 12). Also pertinent is Valerie Traub's comment that: "critics lose sight of the degree of agency constructed from the contradictions and fissures within the symbolic. For it is the schism between 'women as representation' and the plurality of women that a negation for power within and against the phallocentric order takes place" (Traub *Desire and Anxiety* 96). Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama*, Routledge, 1992.

[99] An excellent study on prostitution in late Elizabethan London comes from Gustav Ungerer, who, through extensive archival research and accounting, "rescues from oblivion" the voices of thirteen bawds and prostitutes including the noted Mary Newborough (Ungerer 139). Jean Howard's theatrically oriented study in *Theater of a City,* addresses the boundaries between wives and whores, and figures the place of women in the expanding and commercializing city by exploring the place of the brothel, cosmopolitanism, and the "sartorial hybridity of whores" (Howard 144). Howard's examination of the material and embodied role of women generates enlivening readings of female agency, autonomy, and their engagement in the London marketplace (Howard 144). Kay Stanton's *Shakespeare's Whores* usefully discusses the use of the term "whore" in Shakespeare's plays and how female characters "dea[l] with circumventing the label of sexually disparaging terms, particularly the name 'whore' as they strive to . . . prove themselves . . . more than 'that name'" (Stanton 14). While Stanton unveils the term whore's "wide sematic range and its efficacy as a cultural weapon that simultaneously polices female sexual expression and displaces attention from male behavior," Stanton's findings are "limited by conspicuous occlusions" such as bypassing Laura Gowing's,

deploys the term sexual type precisely when considering city wives, women, and whores. A sexual type, he argues, is a "familiar cultural figure that rende[rs] sexual agency intelligible as a symptom of the transgression of gender, social, economic, or political order" (DiGangi 6).[100] Building on DiGangi's typological work, Stephen Spiess examines the whore as a historical persona—as a dynamic, socially constructed, and communally imagined mnemonic image—such as the "deformed prostitute" (Spiess, "The Measure" 312).[101] Spiess highlights Franciscan priest John Ridevall's depiction of idolatry as a whore, "her face painted and disfigured, her ears mutilated and her body conspicuously diseased,"[102] to discuss its imaginative contours and affective intensity: "the image clearly draws upon a collective social typology" that stimulates repulsion, horror, and

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Lena Cowen Orlin's, and Mario DiGangi's work on women as social enforcers of sexual type (Spiess "Reviewed Work" 1201). Gustav Ungerer, "Prostitution in Late Elizabethan London: The Case of Mary Newborough," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England,* vol. 15, Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp DBA Associated University Presses, 2003, pp. 138-223, http://www.jstor.com/stable/24322659. Accessed January 10th 2018; Stephen Spiess, "Reviewed Work(s): Shakespeare among the Courtesans: Prostitution, Literature, and Drama, 1500–1650, Anglo-Italian Renaissance Studies by Duncan Salkeld: Shakespeare's "Whores": Erotics, Politics, and Poetics. Palgrave Shakespeare Studies by Kay Stanton Review," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 69, no. 3, Cambridge Univeristy Press, 2016, pp. 1199-1202.

[100] DiGangi further discusses wives and whores as character types in Chapter Four, "Calling Whore: The Citizen, Wife, and the Erotics of Open Work," and strikingly demonstrates that, while many texts work at "managing conventional wisdom about women," specific characters "cannot be adequately contained by the disciplinary parameters of [their] sexual type" (DiGangi 177).

[101] The whore was a popular early modern character type. Numerous plays, sermons, ballads and broadsides conjured the whore as a culturally recognizable corrupt figure to position oneself against. In popular culture ballads frequently circulated that mentioned, if not centralized, the whore. One in particular has the catchy refrain, "And Gallants all by this my fall,/ take heed trust not a whore" (Anonymous *A Caveat*). Anonymous, "A Caveat or warning for all sorts of men both young and old to avoid the company of lewd and wicked women to the tune of Virginia," London, 1620, *Early English Books Online*, accessed September 20th 2018.

[102] Damning religious doctrines, and social, medical, and economic narratives positioned the whore's body as consumptive, destructive, alluring, diseased, and damned all at once. Duncan Salkeld notably discusses shifts in theatrical typology of the whore in his book *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans* (2012), pointing to typical patterns in representations of courtesans, and Kyd's innovative "transformation" of the Italian Courtesan into a character of "strength and dignity," rather than rage and degeneracy. See especially (97-117).

judgment from the priest's audience as they participate in an act of cultural remembrance (Spiess, "The Measure" 325, 312).[103]

Both DiGangi and Spiess suggest that these representations of sexual typology are useful because playwrights, among others, could invoke them strategically to disturb "the logic of the reductive and vilified associations imposed by the type" by unsettling the "taxonomical thinking" that produced them (DiGangi 6-7, 9). In this chapter, I argue that these logical disturbances of taxonomical thinking, that for DiGangi are frequently embodied, can, as Spiess demonstrates, occur lexically, and that they are often part of processes of transformation. Driven by female desire, these transformations begin to shift, challenge, and reveal the substructures of sexual type, social status, and female agency. In doing so, transformation driven by female desire generates an affective bricolage composed of plurality and possibility that is predicated on ways of seeing and on epistemologies rather than on dichotomous notions of stable identity structures. Such an unravelling of dominant ways of understanding sexual type and female desire through transformation (both physical and linguistic) proffers new opportunities for navigating social and sexual bonds with women and for considering women outside of dichotomous, heteronormative sexual relations. Sexual type, then, is the "familiar cultural figure,"

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[103] In "Turning Chaste," Stephen Spiess pointedly describes the "early modern women's 'life cycle'," which as a prescriptive paradigm "positioned respectable women within one of four identity categories—Maid, Wife, Mother, and Widow" (Spiess 14). This temporally, sexually, and socially restrictive sequence, as social historians have aptly noted "framed women in terms of their reproductive capacity and licit conjugality, [and] while offering traction on one of the many ways in which women's lives were framed, adjudicated, and policed in a patriarchal society, this interpretive frame, as many soon pointed out, threatened to reproduce the very ideological work performed by the texts under analysis: reading the prescriptive as the descriptive, the 'life cycle' thesis conveyed a sense of social intelligibility best described as illusory" (Spiess "Turning Chaste" 15-16). Spiess "Turning Chaste," *The Refinery,* Lecture and workshop February 1st 2019, Kinney Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst. For more, see Sarah Toulalan, "'Age to great, or to. Little, doeth let conception': bodies, sex, and life cycle, 1500-1700," *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body: 1500-Present*. Eds. Sarah Toulalan and Kate Fisher. Routledge, 2013. pp. 279-295.

described by DiGangi, that "renders sexual agency intelligible." Sexual status is the social ranking implied and enforced by this typing, and sexual difference describes the movement within, around, and away from strict conceptions of condoned sexual engagement.[104] When, for instance, I discuss the Country Wench in Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1604) and refer to her as sexually different, I reference her shift in sexual status to that of a courtesan but also refer to her social transformation and her oscillation between and around sexual categories of meaning.[105]

Part one of this chapter looks to *Michaelmas Term* with the aim of rendering sexual signification and social transformation intelligible through an examination of the shifting boundaries of geographic, lexical, and bodily difference in the character of the

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[104] Virginity is one of the sexual status groups that holds scholarly attention, especially the nuances of bodily access and the idea that virginity is dependent on the "temporal dialectic" between sexual inactivity and the imminence of sexual activity (Ferguson 7). Margaret Ferguson argues, "The virgin item's cultural value lies in the fact that is has not yet been used: the specter of an imminent or eventual use, consumption, or violation is indeed central to many cultural conceptions of virginity from the Middle Ages to the present." For more on figurations of virginity, see Margaret Ferguson, "Foreword," *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie, University of Delaware Press, 1999, pp. 7-14; and Ferguson's chapter "Hymeneal Instruction," *Masculinities, Violence, Childhood: Attending to Early Modern Women—and Men*, eds. Amy E. Leonard and Karen L. Nelson, University of Delaware Press, 2010, pp. 97-129; Kathryn Schwarz, "The Wrong Question: Thinking through Virginity," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 13 no. 2, Duke University Press, 2002, pp. 1-34; Will Stockton, "Chasing Chastity: The Case of Desdemona," *Rethinking Feminism: Gender, Race, and Sexuality in the Early Modern World*, eds. Ania Loomba and Melissa Sanchez, Ashgate, 2016, pp. 195-212. See also Theodora Jankowski's, *Pure Resistance*, 2000.

[105] Focusing on two plays may seem limited, but many other plays do the work of breaking down sexual epistemologies through transformation, such as Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605), Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1603/4), Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603) and *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody Part I* (1605), Dekker's *Match Me in London* (1611), Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), and Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money* (1598). I focus on Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* and *A Trick to Catch the Old* in part because of Middleton's consistent fascination with the constitution of identity and with linguistic transformation. As such, Middleton's two texts, in particular, are rich sites of encounter for the purposes of this work. Ben Jonson, "Bartholomew Fair" (1614). *The Alchemist and Other Plays.* ed. Gordon Campbell. Oxford University Press, 2009; William Haughton, *Englishmen for My Money* (1598), *Three Renaissance Usury Plays.* ed. Lloyd Edward Kermode. Manchester University Press, 2014; *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614). Ed. Leah S. Marcus. The Arden Shakespeare, 2009; William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (1603/4). Ed. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine. The Folger Shakespeare Library, Simon & Schuster, 2005; Thomas Heywood, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603). Ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie. The Arden Shakespeare, 2017. (Other plays of Middleton's that also fall into the purview of this study include Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622), Middleton and Rowley's *Women Beware Women* (1621-4), and *No Wit, No Help Like A Woman's* (1611)).

Country Wench. I foreground female desire as both a catalyzing and a revealing force through which to note shifts in geography, lexicon, and appearance that support larger sexual and social transformations. I use desire here to describe relational interactions and negotiations that break down or expand boundaries. As with Chapter One, desire does not exclusively refer to sexual desire. Rather, desire references a series of semiotic, linguistic, and social signals that generate affective experiences. The first half of part one focuses primarily on the destabilization of sexual status based on geography and lexicon, and on the relocation of sexual worth through the energy of female social and sexual desire. The second half shifts to detail physically manifested transformation through apparel and the role of female social and economic desire in the commercial, masculinized space of the city.

Part two of this chapter looks to Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1605) and concentrates on the transformative lexicon of sexual difference and its disjunctive social manifestations. This section works to establish accretive semantics, a linguistic pattern that facilitates transformation by destabilizing sexual type and crafting lexical proximity between seemingly distinct categories of belonging. Here I argue that Middleton's Courtesan character, while seeming to shift between two or three performed identities throughout the play, embodies a more complex synthesis of sexual and social statuses due to accretive semiotics, which results in a deeply pedagogical theatrical tension. The ability of a single character to reveal the mechanisms of transformation, and subsequently the mechanisms of social and cultural structures of power, emerges through accretive semantics and, in doing so, compellingly unsettles established normative logics

by generating nuanced interpretations of women, their bodies, their statuses, and their desires in early modern London.

~ I ~

Geographic and Sexual Boundaries: Aspirations of Female Agency

In Chapter One, I focused on characters of arrival and will return to one in particular: the Country Wench. While the Country Wench of Thomas Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1604) is a stranger from Northamptonshire attending the city (with Lethe's servant, Hellgill) to seek her fortunes, her transformation is quite different to Lethe's. The Wench's aims are not dissimilar from Lethe's, insofar as she hopes for wealth and status: "if I had not a desire to go like a gentlewoman,/ you should be hanged ere you should get me to't" (1.2.29-30). Yet, for the Country Wench, her ability to "go like a gentlewoman" does not depend upon her ability to earn money regularly or marry wealthily, but on selling off her virginity for a better life. In a deeply patriarchal society where women's labor, extensive as it may be, is undervalued, the primary value read onto a woman's body emanates from the cultural construction of virginity and when married, chastity.[106] As she traverses the space between country and city, the Country Wench undergoes more than a geographic transformation, she also alters the terms of access to her body (by

[106] Lien Bich Luu details the immense number of female domestic servants that worked in London every day, but they are infrequently referenced directly as laborers in contemporary texts: "it is estimated that by the 1690s there were some 120,000 servants in the capital comprising one fifth of the total population . . . domestic service was the largest single source of employment for women in the seventeenth century." Luu, Lien Bich. *Immigrants and the Industries of London, 1500-1700* Ashgate, 2005. 40.

making the choice her own rather than her father's). In short, the Country Wench undergoes a sexual transformation.

The term sexual transformation elicits a number of questions, including what it means to undergo sexual transformation, how the material body is impacted, and the necessity (or not) of sexual intercourse. Sexual transformation simply outlines a desire-based alteration of sexual access or availability that makes one sexually different (or deviant). The occurrence of sexual intercourse is entirely variable and not indicated by the transformation itself. Rather, sexual transformation indicates a shift in sexual possibilities that often places sexual agency in female hands outside of patriarchal systems of dominion. The desire that drives said transformation is likewise often removed from the physical act of sex itself. Rather than exploring hegemonic constructions of virginity, wifehood, or prostitution, I look to the potent agency of female desire as an enlivening catalyst for sexual transformation. Here, I build on Jean Howard's reading of women and sexual commerce in early modern London.[107] Howard argues that "the city seems capable of making almost alchemical changes in women's social and sexual status" by allowing access to a "thoroughly commercial world with its structures of illicit opportunity" (Howard 132). While suggesting women hold greater opportunity, I further argue that women also drive these "almost alchemical" transformations by desiring (status, clothing, marriage, sex, transportation), and that this desire is facilitated by licit and illicit opportunities alike. In the case of the Country Wench, desire is

[107] Valerie Traub, too, works on erotic desire as a circulatory, socially constituted element that destabilized essential understandings of sex in favor of diverse understanding born out of the constitutive "complex and contradictory social field" (Traub 2).

certainly a fundamental factor in her sexual and social transformation from a stranger into city woman.

Even before the Country Wench transforms, the processes of blurring sexual types and modes of belonging through desire begin to manifest in the Country Wench's character. The Country Wench appears for the first time alongside Lethe's servant, Hellgill and clearly signals that desire drives her movement from country to city:

> *Country Wench*: Beshrew you now, why did you entice me
> from my father?
> *Hellgill*: Why? To thy better advancement. Wouldst thou, a
> pretty, beautiful, juicy squall, live in a poor, thrummed
> house i'th' country in such servile habiliments, and may
> well pass for a gentlewoman i'th' city? Does not five
> hundred do so, think'st thou, and with worse faces (1.2.2-8)?

Prior to the visual markers of transformation, the audience and reader are cued by desire infused within the Country Wench's first dialogue as to the nature of her transformation. The striking use of the term "enticed" indicates knowledge of an "allure," as enticed means to "provoke pleasantly," and "attract by the offer of pleasure or advantage" (Baret, "entice"; OED "entice, v").[108] Enticed is framed as an accusation, as a question, and as an invitation, implying Hellgill is the agent, but concurrently working to implicate the Country Wench as an agent in seeking pleasure or advantage: a pleasure that she requests again as she asks "why?" essentially calling for a repetition of the desire-based process of enticement that initially convinced her to leave for London with a stranger. The Country Wench's supple threads of desire for erotic, social, and material gain sustain tension

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[108] John Baret, "entice," *An Alveary or Triple Dictionary, in English, Latin, and French*, (1574), Lexicons of Early Modern English, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, accessed Aug 31st 2020; "entice, v," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, 2018, accessed 26 May 2018.

throughout the scene and resonate lexically through her partly opaque, but overly effusive language. For instance, at the close of the scene the Country Wench again scolds and praises Hellgill for convincing her to go to the city, stating, “beshrew your sweet enchantments, you/ have won . . . / I am in swoon till I/ be a gentlewoman” (1.2.49-50, 57-8). Masking the physical exertion and will that sends the Country Wench to the city beneath the swoon, an image of classical female passivity and vulnerability, the Country Wench’s desire for gentlewomanly status and material signifiers thrums softly, but notably, within the playful lyric of “won” and “gentlewoman”—Hellgill has “won” only when he *delivers* and she achieves her desire of becoming the imagined “gentlewoman.” Desire, then, is immediately on the table; however, it is not the sexual satisfaction of others that takes primacy but the satisfaction of the Country Wench’s personal desires.

In her travel to London, the Country Wench wears “servile habiliments” and shows no sartorial markers of alteration, but her desire has already catalyzed a sexual and social transformation through the valuation of her sexual value by Hellgill. Hellgill’s responses to the Country Wench are interestingly infused with desire. While he has been instructed to bring a beautiful woman to Lethe from the countryside, he demonstrates that he evaluates her as “pretty, beautiful, juicy” and able to “pass for a gentlewoman” in front of Lethe and in the city. Hellgill’s comment that many others pass for a gentlewoman “with worse faces” serves two purposes: it acknowledges the commonplace practice of passing in the city, and it emphasizes the outward desirability of the Country Wench.[109] She may not have physically transformed in the city, but her sexual value, her desire to be a gentlewoman, and Hellgill’s insistence that she is both beautiful and able to

[109] Hellgill somewhat begrudgingly acknowledges the role of female desire, derisively stating, “you are all chaste enough till one thing or other/ tempt you” (1.2.32-3).

pass allows her a transformational potential—the possibility of alteration to her desired status.[110] Hellgill's response to the Country Wench not only recognizes her desire, but evaluates the desiring responses of those viewing her to determine a sense of sexual and thus social (gentlewomanly) value. For Hellgill, sexual and social status are a question of market value, rather than of morality, manners, or social significations. Despite the complete absence of sexual contact, the Country Wench's desire and Hellgill's valuation of her body blurs the Country Wench's sexual status. She is neither virgin nor whore because she is sexually valuable outside of traditional patriarchal systems of sexual exchange (such as marriage contracts). Combined, Hellgill's expression of bodily desire for the Country Wench and her desire for clothing, compliments, and genteel status coalesce into a propulsive energy that generatively transforms the Country Wench. No longer a chaste maiden statically living at home and not yet a whore working in a city brothel, the Country Wench moves through the transitional space of traveling-to-London and illustrates how desire facilitates shifts in geography, in social status, and in sexual status.

Hellgill frames the Country Wench's potential transformation in sexual status from country virgin to city courtesan as a desirable exercise in female pleasure that destabilizes the boundaries between virginity and chastity by altering the terms of sexual access to the Country Wench's body. He expressly states that he will take her to "Lethe . .

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[110] Throughout this scene it is useful to recall that the idea of becoming a "gentlewoman" evolves as form of a self-duping, as the Country Wench, like Lethe, comes to believe that material signs of status alone achieve the goal of altering one's status. Within this notion is the possibility of social collapse that the theater itself stimulated through comic fantasy—since it is only the doffing or adoption of specific clothing and behaviors that transforms actors into the characters they portray. The triangulation of, and shifts within, epistemologies that occur between subject, on-stage audience, and off-stage audience in these moments should be ever present in our consideration of transformation, as they implicitly revel the sub-structures and scaffold upon which performance, both social and theatrical, are built.

. / a man of one most admired property . . . [who] can both/ love thee and for thy better advancement be thy panderer" (1.2.18-20). The statement purposefully elides sexual and social status and introduces the term "panderer," meaning "a man bawd to a whore" to indicate the Country Wench's expected role as a whore.[111] This moment carefully depicts the negotiation of sexual and social status, as she resists "prov[ing] a harlot," yet "desire[s] to go like a gentlewoman," and is finally convinced by the promise of a "satin gown" and Hellgill's versified entreaty, "virginity is no city trade;/ you're out o' th' freedom when you're a maid" (1.2.25, 29, 34, 45-6). Here, geography, sexual status, economics, and social positioning draw together as Hellgill articulates a clear relational line between the Country Wench's movement to the city, her expected entry into the sex trade, and her ability to live within London society. Importantly, this logic, while sound in the moment, is not borne out in the larger text, as the Country Wench is able to maintain sexual exclusivity with Lethe, who becomes her husband, avoiding the sexual marketplace and securing her ability to remain in the city as wife to a courtly knight. What is borne out is the developing logic that traces female desire as sexually, socially, and economically beneficial through its manifestation in geographic movement to the city and the promise of trade. This shift, which is dependent on women's willingness to alter the terms of access to their bodies, relocates female worth from the erotic marketplace of the body to the agency of female desire.

With the simple question of enticement in *Michaelmas Term,* the Country Wench demonstrates an important point that underwrites many shifts in sexual status: women

[111] Hellgill and Lethe see the Country Wench not as a courtesan, but as a whore that they will bodily control, but contrary to Lethe's hopes, the Country Wench maintains a clear sense of control over who has access to her body or engages in sexual activity with her throughout the play. John Florio, "pander" *A World of Words* (1598), Early English Books Online, ed. Ian Lancashire, accessed September 1st 2020.

want, women aspire, women strive—just as men do—and in doing so, they fundamentally question and alter the landscape of sexual and social attributions of worth. Regardless of whether or not the initial desire is sexual, for women, the means to achieve said desire often becomes sexually charged due to social attributions of value applied to the female body. Recalling Thomasine Quomodo from Chapter One who desires to help Richard Easy and who becomes romantically and sexually involved with Easy to help him regain his land, it seems that by exercising female desire through mobilizing sexual markers and signs, the women of *Michaelmas Term* enable social and cultural shifts of enormous proportions. The Country Wench's first appearance on stage serves to destabilize notions of stable sexual and social type by depicting the logic of her desire to become a gentlewoman. Hellgill's valuation of her sexual desirability further charges her and emphasizes her shifting signifiers of sexual status. Though visually remaining a country maid, while indicting her social desires, the Country Wench simultaneously signals her bodily autonomy and demonstrates her potential for social and sexual transformation.

Bodily Transformation and Desire: "You talk of alteration; here's the thing itself"

In representations of women on the early modern stage, female desire is often subsumed by the wide-ranging criticism on sexuality, lesbian eroticism and female friendship, male desire within patriarchal systems, female illness and hysteria, or moral narratives that privilege male victimhood at the hands of a consumptive, predatory version of female desire.[112] Each of these fields of study, and many others that look to well documented

[112] Of the many outstanding works on early modern sexuality, Valerie Traub most expressly looks to female-female love, eroticism, and desire in her work *The Renaissance of Lesbianism* (2002). Another

depictions of witchcraft, sexual violence, pornography, sex acts, monstrous births, and more, have shaped the field of early modern sexuality and demonstrated a constellation of possibilities when it comes to exploring desire in the period. Recently, Laura Gowing and Miranda Chaytor have both worked to historicize sexual violence against women and legal proceedings around that violence.[113] These studies illuminate a vital form of desire for women in the period—the desire for sexual safety. Moving forward, this chapter examines the social and sexual desires depicted through female characters on the early modern stage. In doing so I work to reveal the catalytic force of desire that resists the theatrical relegation of women, the narrative of passive assimilation, and the reduction of female characters to social or sexual types, in part by destabilizing boundaries between types. It is worth recognizing representations of female desire for social and sexual status

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excellent contribution to the field is Harriette Andreadis's S*appho in Early Modern England* (2001). Contrastingly, in *The Politics of Female Alliance in Early Modern England* (2017), Bernard Capp looks to historical and literary documents to trace female agency and argues for networks of female alliances that enabled female agency. Ian Frederick Moulton describes the early modern bias of male oriented sexuality "sex is something men do to others and should be understood primarily in terms of its effects on the male body," whereas logics of female sexuality were primarily oriented around "continence and chastity" (Moulton 8). In terms of hysteria, Kaara Peterson's article "Fluid Economies" (2001) focuses on Shakespeare's plays and notes the early modern "tendency to see female desire as insatiable, even monstrous" and caused by "putrefied fluids that cannot escape the female-as-vessel and that burn or spoil within" (Peterson 41). Peterson's work on medical discourse directly feeds into cultural and moral discourses regarding the whore as the corrupter of young men, which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter. An excellent work on female desire comes from Melissa E. Sanchez whose article "'Use Me But as Your Spaniel'" (2012), deploys queer theory as a critical framework that enables a view of alternative sexual fantasies and practices. Sanchez focuses on exploring alternatives to heteronormative "tender and monogamous" sex models as "the optimal sex for women" (Sanchez 494). Her work certainly generates space for those whose desires do not fit heteronormative or even feminist ideals. Bernard Capp, *The Politics of Female Alliance in Early Modern England*, University of Nebraska Press, 2017; Ian Frederick Moulton "Introduction," *Renaissance and Reformation*, vol. 38, no. 4, University of Toronto Press, 2015, pp. 7–17; Peterson, Kaara L. "Fluid Economies: Portraying Shakespeare's Hysterics," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, vol. 34, no. 1, University of Manitoba Press, 2001. pp. 35–59; Sanchez, Melissa E. "'Use Me But as Your Spaniel': Feminism, Queer Theory, and Early Modern Sexualities," *PMLA*, vol. 127, no. 3, Modern Language Association, 2012, pp. 493–511, URL: (https://www.jstor.org/stable/41616842), accessed February 4th 2019.

[113] Laura Gowing, *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London*, Clarendon Press, 1996; Garthine Walker, "Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence in Early Modern England," *Gender & History*, vol.10, no.1, Wiley-Blackwell, 1998, pp.1-25; Miranda Chaytor, "Husband(ry): Narratives of Rape in the Seventeenth-Century," *Gender & History* vol.7 no.3, 1995, pp. 378-407.

on the early modern stage and the unique agential narratives expressed through these depictions.

At the end of act one scene two, the Country Wench asks, “what flesh is man’s/ meat, till it be dressed” (1.2.58-60)? The undergirding importance of material items, such as clothing, to transform the “meat” of a woman is often central to discussions of the desire *for* whores and economic agency in the early modern period. Here I demonstrate how material items can facilitate a whore’s desires. Jean Howard examines the identity formation of whores and city wives alongside the role of material objects and focuses on the elision of the binaries presented by a play’s formal character types and the conventions of city comedy (Howard, *Theater* 161). In doing so, Howard expertly reveals the blurring that occurs through material, cosmopolitan “hybridity” across the “line separating prostitutes and honest women” (Howard 133). The following examination furthers Howard’s notion of instability, arguing that transformations trouble fundamental modes of distinction that attempt to assert the typing of whores ontologically and structurally. By exploring more subtle differences, I consider staged identities as open to more pluralistic, constellated possibilities that blur types and explore the processes within the text that are informed or generated by such instability.

For Middleton’s Country Wench in *Michaelmas Term*, material transformation is paramount in her efforts toward a higher social status. The scene in which the audience and reader observe her physical transformation is underscored as important through its placement at the very center of the play, 3.1 (Howard 132). In it, the wondrous workings of a tailor (named Tailor) and tirewoman (named Mistress Comings), are showcased as the Country Wench undergoes the process of alteration and is stripped of her “thrummed”

and “servile habiliments”[114] in favor of “*a new-fashion gown*” (2.2.4-5, 3.1.s.d.1). Here, Tailor and Mistress Comings are described as the “parents” of “deluding shadows,” “begot” through the industry of their making (3.1.6, 5). In seeing Tailor and the tirewoman labor over and birth the newly cosmopolitan Country Wench, the viewer is also privy to the to the birth the city itself through the handiwork of these creative community members and social laborers. Tailor and the tirewoman become an engine of literal alteration that holds serious social, and in this case, sexual, consequences for the Country Wench. Hellgill, the play’s cynical native-Londoner commentator, comments openly on the uses of physical change to stimulate social shifts: “you talk of alteration; here’s the thing itself. What/ base birth does not raiment make glorious? And what glo-/ rious births do not rags make infamous” (3.1.1-3)? Such an introduction frames the following scene as an exclusive look into a topsy-turvy world. Yet the scene goes far further than simply implying that physical alteration can elevate or relegate on the London streets—it implies that such work takes a role in the cultural crafting of the city itself.

> *Tailor*: I promise you, ’tis a wire would draw me from my work seven days a week.
> *Country Wench*: Why, do you work o’ Sundays, tailor?
> *Tailor*: Hardest of all o’ Sundays, because we are most forbidden.
> *Country Wench*: Troth, and so do most of us women; the better day the better deed, we think (3.1.9-15).

[114] Thrummed in this instance most likely references the homely décor made of coarse, threaded (or threadbare) fabrics, casting negative judgment upon the “servile” home-made textiles and “habiliments” (attire) of country life. “Thrum, v.2,” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2018, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/201435), accessed 26 May 2018.

Daringly, the Tailor links the Country Wench's wire corset, implicitly referencing the work of sexual attraction and his creative work to breaking the social codes of the Protestant moral system. His interest in working on Sunday is characterized by its allure as a "forbidden" day and the Country Wench joins with the Tailor exclaiming with strongly sexual implications her belief that "most of us women" do "deeds" on Sunday. Her mutual alignment of sex-work with the Tailor's creative efforts positions both forms of labor as endeavors that break with moral tradition but that produce valid economic work.[115] Furthermore, the Tailor's words suggest that his transformative work disrupts moral and social rhythms in the city, especially by sexualizing the material signifiers of genteel social status. Sexual and social status are in flux in this scene. The Country Wench sits both within and without the designations of country lass, city whore, and fashionable gentlewoman, as signifiers of each are encountered and diverged from based on her linguistic and sartorial representation.

Visual and conceptual disjunction are rife from the onset of act three scene one. The Country Wench is placed in a variety of social (and subsequently, sexual) categories. Before a word is uttered she enters "*coming in with a new-fashion gown, dressed/ gentlewoman-like*," with attendants fluttering about her hair and dress (3.1.s.d.1). Howard posits that "the city has made her what she was not," yet the complexity of vying signifiers in this scene creates a stunning jumble of possibilities, rather than a clear depiction of "the Country Wench transformed into a whore" as Howard suggests (Howard 132). Furthermore, while clothing certainly does construct social identity, it does not "erase a subject's social origins and obscure her sexual status," rather, it

[115] For more on the connections between feminity, sex work, and foreignness, see Natasha Korda's article "Sex, Starch-Houses, and Poking Sticks" (2010).

generates a variety of overlapping possibilities (Howard 133). For example, while the Country Wench is dressed as a gentlewoman, boundaries around her sexual and social status are fractured through a prism of descriptions and interpretations from the on-stage audience of her physicality that vie for primacy. The Tailor and Tirewoman describe her as "excellent, exceeding," as her dress "sits at marvelous good ease and comely/ discretion" just as Hellgill exclaims that "this sophisticated squall/ came out of the bosom of a barn and the loins of a/ haytosser" (3.1.16, 23-4, 26-7). The Country Wench herself exclaims that even her father would misrecognize her since "I scarce know myself," which, in fortuitous city comedy style, her father (who is hired as her man-servant) promptly does (3.1.37). Her Father simply states: "amongst such/ imperfect creatures, I ha' not seen a perfecter. I should/ have reckoned the fortunes of my daughter amongst the/ happiest, had she lighted into such a service" (3.1.61-4). Like Mother Gruel, Father's misrecognition of his daughter serves to highlight the enormity of her alteration and the successes thereof, but also serves to hyperbolize and thus underscore the elasticity of her movement across boundaries of belonging. This is especially clear as his assessment of the Country Wench's gentility comes on the heels of her description of sex-work ("lawyers . . . have but four/ terms a year and we have twelve; and that makes 'em run/ so fast to us in the vacation") that her Father also fails to recognize (3.1.58-60). The confusion of signifiers increases as Lethe appears, having been told by Hellgill that the Country Wench is, in fact, a gentlewoman that has decided to become his paramour. Within just sixty lines, spectators are explicitly confronted by the Country Wench's diversity of comingling significations: she is dressed as a gentlewoman, referred to as a country squall, believed to be an actual gentlewoman, imagined as a perfect creature,

misrecognized by her father, and surprised by her own alteration. Each appraisal of her sexual or social status encourages audience members to likewise perceive the bricolage as a whole, rather than as separate parts. In doing so, the Country Wench, once more, blurs the boundaries of clear sexual and social status.

Through the geographic location from countryside to city, Howard argues that the Country Wench converts from "a maid into a harlot, a simply dressed woman into a fashion plate complete with satin gown, [and] elaborate hair style, [with] employees hired to maintain this new façade," but her transformation does more than alter her from maid to harlot, as Lethe reveals (Howard 132). Lethe, despite his own transformation, perfectly (if not ironically) embodies the dupe who fails to recognize the stranger's difference.[116] The value and utility of positioning Lethe as a dupe is pronounced because it exposes how powerful desire is in the apparatus of transformation. This is especially evident in Lethe's first on-stage encounter with the Country Wench where he stands aside, along with Rearage and Salewood and articulates his perception of the Country Wench whom he believes to be a gentlewoman:[117]

> *Lethe*: Come, gallants, I'll bring you to a beauty shall strike
> your eyes into your hearts. What you see you shall desire,
> yet never enjoy.
> *Rearage*: And that's a villainous torment.
> *Salewood*: And she is but your underput, Master Lethe?
> *Lethe*: No more, of my credit; and a gentlewoman of a great

[116] Recalling Amy Robinson's "It Takes One to Know One: Passing and Communities of Common Interest," from Chapter One, the dupe is usually someone who sits within the social group that the subject has transitioned into (in this case the genteel social class). Lethe's position as a fellow transformer from lowly means *should* instead place him in the "in-group," of those who recognize the transformation in one another, as they have both experienced a similar process and as such can recognize subtle markers of performative difference.

[117] An obvious departure from Lethe's first appearance on stage is that the viewer already knows a great deal about the Country Wench and is explicitly able to see the faults and fallacies in Lethe's account of the Country Wench.

> house, noble parentage, unmatchable education—my
> plain pung. I may grace her with the name of a courte-
> san, a back-slider, a prostitution, or such a toy. But, when
> all comes to all, 'tis but a plain pung (3.1.76-85).

Lethe invokes two conflicting images of the Country Wench in just nine lines; the first image is of a beauty so great that it assaults the visual sense and the heart simultaneously. Lethe, in visually interpreting the Country Wench as a gentlewoman due to her dress, has duped *himself*, as his purse purchased the garments she wears. Furthermore, Lethe points out "what you see you shall desire," indicating both that he desires the Country Wench and that through ocular perception the gentlemen will desire her too. However, his logic does not hold. A man who transformed similarly to the Country Wench through a suit of Kersey cloth, Lethe is deeply familiar with the process of, and relationship between, physical and social transformation. Thus, his declaration that through sight alone he and his fellows will "desire" her disguises a key truth of his attraction to the Country Wench, an attraction that is revealed in his second invocation of her person.

Lethe wants the Country Wench for her pedigree but also for her disgrace. Through sex, Lethe hopes to assert his own social and sexual dominance over a "gentlewoman of a great/ house" with pedigree and education. By willfully ignoring any signs of ungenteel behavior in order to build an image of gentility that he may rule over, Lethe reveals his own social insecurity and facilitates the Country Wench's social transformation.[118] His use of the term "plain pung," for instance relegates this gentlewoman of "noble parentage" and "unmatched education" to a common purse in

[118] Lethe's social insecurity, much like his continued sense of food insecurity (discussed in Chapter One pick whether you will capitalize or lowercase and be consistent), manifests as sexual gluttony and a kind of fetishism around controlling the female body.

which to spend his sexual urges.[119] While ostensibly just boastful, Lethe expresses his desire to be as good as, if not better than, a gentlewoman by elevating his social status through relegation of her sexual status. In short, by dominating a gentlewoman through sex, Lethe believes he attains even greater social status.

Middleton emphasizes Lethe's attempt at sexual power by having him feign benevolence while deploying progressively more judgmental terms to describe the Country Wench. He begins, "I may grace her with the name of a courtesan," a term that commonly referenced a whore that has attached herself to one specific man,[120] before describing her as a "plain pung" (a plain purse to deposit himself within) or "back-slider," a term that combines both a moral reference to those who fall away from or lose faith and a sexually charged meaning of sliding, which meant "sexual lapse" (Williams 279).[121] His final reduction of the Country Wench to a "toy," reduces her to a plaything that he will dally with for entertainment but nothing more. This progressively diminutive language demonstrates that his desire for domination and social elevation overrules any sense of the Country Wench's personal or sexual agency. Caught up in his imagined domination of an imagined gentlewoman turned whore (rather than a Country Wench turned faux-gentlewoman courtesan), Lethe allows sexual-social desire to drive his

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[119] Pung etymologically originates from Old Frisian and Middle Dutch and means "a purse" (*OED* "pung, n." In this instance, pung is a direct reference to the purse of the Country Wench's vagina. "pung, n.1," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2020, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/154652), accessed September 2nd 2020.

[120] The meaning of the term courtesan could range broadly from a simple whore to a more specific kind of harlotry, as Richard Huloet describes in his dictionary *Abecedarium Anglico Latinum* (1552): a "harlot or concubyne to a wedded man." Richard Huloet, "Harlot or concubyne to a wedded man," *Abecedarium Anglico Latinum,* London, 1552. *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed 3rd May 2019.

[121] "backsliding, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2020, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/14453), accessed 2 September 2020; Gordon Williams, "Sliding," *Shakespeare's Sexual Language: A Glossary*, Continuum Press, 2006.

speech and action allowing him to bypass any mutual recognition between himself and the Country Wench. Desire, in this instance, alters Lethe's perception. Despite his status as a fellow social transformer, Lethe effectively collapses the on-stage theater of representation in order to privilege the epistemology of the desiring master. As a fellow geographic and social transformer, Lethe's willful re-envisioning of the Country Wench's ability to straddle gentility and poverty demonstrates the power of desire to facilitate social transformation, as it is only due to Lethe's blind desire that the Country Wench is able to enter London society and attempt her own transformation.

The Country Wench, like Lethe, straddles a variety of social strata, generating discomfort for those around her, but unlike Lethe who mostly transforms through financial and social channels, she has the additional factor of sexual dislocation and transformation. The interaction between Lethe and the Country Wench as a duo entering the city establishes the significance and utility of various desires in the process of social transformation. She is not simply a new woman in the city, but visually and interpretively a virgin, a daughter, a squall, a courtesan, a gentlewoman, a pung, a back-slider, and a wife. The Country Wench mobilizes material items of clothing to manifest her desire for transformation, which enables her to straddle this variety of social and sexual identities. Uniquely, the Country Wench uses desire for sartorial markers of wealth combined with the visual interpretations of an assortment of men (Hellgill, Tailor, Father, Lethe, and other gentlemen) to socially transform and trouble the clarity of boundaries of belonging. Her transformations expand horizons of expectation by enabling new ways of understanding women and female desire while simultaneously disrupting ontological and strictly moral categories in which women are defined exclusively by the maintenance of

their chastity or honor. For the Country Wench, transformations in sexual status have wide-ranging social implications that demonstrate the ability of material and social desire to facilitate transformation by enabling her to pass.[122] Through this process the Country Wench is able to inhabit various social strata while disrupting their fixity as she straddles rustic poverty and city sophistication, chaste gentility and sexual depravity, and whorish flirtation and honest wifehood. Desire, then, works as part of the relational interactions and negotiations that break down boundaries or expand them. By eliding the boundaries of each category, a diverse and somewhat dizzying bricolage of sexual typologies and social statuses collide within her character, demanding, if not requiring, new modes of interpretation.

~ II ~

Comingling Desire and the Transformative Lexicon: "My love/ My loathing!"

What lexicon is used to describe women in early modern drama? What lexicon is used to describe a whore? Are the two distinctly different? This chapter has already noted a number of ways that women are described or named in early modern dramatic pieces, but it seems they can be named by such a vast array of terms—from proper nouns to random

[122] Another excellent example of the driving force of female desire is Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1602), where the women of the play, Viola, Olivia, and Maria, thrust the plot and sub-plot forward through sheer force of will. Viola/ Cesario, in particular undergoes a similar form of sexual and sartorial transformation that enables her to pass as she pursues her desire for social (and sexual) survival as an alien shipwrecked in a foreign land. Throughout the play, the other female characters similarly become rich loci of transformative experience through desire, including Olivia's carnal desire for Cesario, and Maria's emotive desire for levity and reprisal against the household steward, Malvolio.

adjectives—that it would be challenging to generate an exhaustive list. A brief sampling of names opened this chapter, and I will discuss many more. Here, I simply aim to recall the importance of specifically deployed language, especially in terms of naming and how language alters perception and ways of understanding the world. I turn to another Middleton text, *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1605), as an excellent example of accretive semantics, by which I mean the destabilization of sexual types through the many varied terms applied to female characters often in lieu of a proper noun or name. I argue that these terms work alongside and facilitate transformation through generating lexical proximity between seemingly disparate categories of belonging. In *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, when sexual and social transformation occurs, it coincides with sartorial transformation *and* transformations in lexicon. Similarly to *Michaelmas Term*, carefully deployed lexical shifts around the character of the whore work, in this text, as a prelude to physical transformation.

The terms used to define the play's courtesan character shift dramatically throughout the text, and critics including Paul A. Mulholland, Valerie Wayne, and Anthony Dawson have discussed at length the relationship between the use of the noun "Courtesan" in print editions to designate her speech headings, and how naming relates to the shifting nature of the Courtesan's status. Despite the 1608 quarto using "Courtesan" throughout in reference to the character, Wayne posited the vital importance of shifting signifiers and proposes altering the speech headings to read "Jane": to Wayne, "editorial fidelity" to the term courtesan disproportionately favors the subject position of courtesan at the expense of the others (Wayne 42).[123] Contrarily, Dawson argues that the use of the

[123] Valerie Wayne, "The Sexual Politics of Textual Transmission," *Thomas Middleton, The Collected Works*, ed. Laurie E. Maguire and Thomas L. Berger, University of Delaware Press, 1998.

term Courtesan works to locate and challenge roles in the social network by creating "language that escapes from fixed meaning" to "make manifest certain hidden relationships in the social network" and unearth their inherent contradictions (Dawson 383, 382).[124] Wayne claims "courtesan" is a term that problematically stabilizes the "character's sexual inconsistency," but I argue, following Dawson, that as a heading for readers the term is actually *de*stabilizing, because it places pressure on the surrounding language (Wayne 375). Michelle O'Callaghan, likewise, champions the use of "Courtesan" as it "foregrounds the misogyny of the play's discourse and the contradictory construction of her character" (O'Callaghan 42).

However, a few important limitations challenge a fuller discussion of the character called Courtesan. For instance, the focus on the name used in headings for speeches is a text-based issue, and as such we must recall that those seeing the play performed would not observe these headings. Additionally, focusing on a heading name that is infrequently used in dialogue ("courtesan" is used only twice in the entire play) draws attention away from the fluctuating lexicon used to describe the Courtesan on a microcosmic level, line-to-line and scene-to-scene.[125] While I concur with Dawson that using the term Courtesan as a title heading gestures to a wider pattern of destabilization for *readers*, I disagree that this destabilization occurs only within the dichotomy between

[124]Anthony B. Dawson, "Giving the Finger: Puns and Transgression in *The Changeling*," *Elizabethan Drama*, ed. Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publishers, 2004.
[125] "Courtesan," is only uttered twice in the entire play, first in act one scene one by Hoard's country-based brother, Onesiphorus, who states "h'as consumed all upon that/ courtesan," and later in act five scene two by Limber, another friend from the country who exclaims to Hoard: "in your old age dote on a courtesan!" (1.1.96-7, 5.2.79). Onesiphorus then immediately goes on to sexualize and value his virginal niece, Joyce, who Witgood desires, "she now remains at London with my brother/. . . to learn fashions, practice music; the voice between her lips, and/ the viol between her legs, she'll be fit for a consort very speedily. A/ thousand good pound is her portion" (1.1.122-5). The most common terms used to describe the Courtesan are widow and wife.

"Courtesan" and "Jane"[126] or that it only deconstructs a binary distinction between "virgin and whore" (Dawson 383).[127] Instead, I argue that a multitude of identities, both social and sexual, are destabilized throughout the play, and that strong evidence of destabilization emanates from the combined force of lexical shifts within dialogue alongside the physical transformations of the Courtesan on-stage. In short, I argue for transformation. Jane, or the Courtesan, as a character that is assigned mutable linguistic and physical signifiers, challenges the way women are designated sexually and how material value becomes assigned to their bodies. I would contend that the Courtesan does not deconstruct the categories of "courtesan" and "widow" so much as trouble the categorical boundaries and ideas of embodiment so greatly that the categories begin to elide, making such distinctions unclear. This disruption troubles more than just the notion of honesty versus deviance, but also notions of social status, of female sexuality, of women's cultural power, and of women's bodily autonomy. Furthermore, through such disruption, these shifting signifiers both destabilize and dismantle ontologies of type and cultural logics that undergird boundaries of morality, agency, power, and belonging. My larger conclusion demonstrates that women were actively re-imagined outside of restrictive categories of sexual, moral, and material worth in the period, as demonstrated by plays like *A Trick to Catch the Old One* that attempt to teach new ways of understanding and of interpreting the female body.

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[126] Jane could be used as a term to reference whores. As Edward Phillips notes in his dictionary, *The New World of English Words* (1658), Jane is "the Christian name of divers women, mollified, as some think, from Joan." and Joan, according to Williams means "a man's casual bedfellow" (Williams 174). This means that the dichotomy between courtesan and jane can hardly be called a dichotomy, as the terms elide together, once again, to blur notions of sexual access, and thus sexual status. Edward Phillips, "Jane," *The New World of English Words* (1658), Lexicons of Early Modern English, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed September 3rd 2020.

[127] Dawson also argues that "Marriage to a whore thus ironically confirms the legitimacy of illegitimate desire and questions the differentiation between virgin and whore" (Dawson 383).

Similarly to Mulholland, Wayne focuses on fixed identities with the aim of dispelling the notion that the Courtesan's embodiment of a widow and a wife are "feigned" identities (Wayne 375). Instead, Wayne isolates these three identities and aims to make each of them equally open to critical examination, yet Wayne, too, subscribes to the problematic notion that there are only three social identities being discussed: "Witgood's mistress, rich country widow, and Hoard's wife" (Mulholland 72).[128] One of the limitations of these discussions is that the Courtesan's identity may shift, but it shifts between a series of only three consecutive identities, with a "continuing status" and "continuing awareness" (or "original identity") of "Courtesan" that runs parallel to the shifts that serve to "comment on, sharpen, elaborate, or playfully tease out ironic allusions in dialogue" (Mulholland 76). Mulholland uses the term "original status," and claims that the Courtesan creates a "performance" of widowhood and wifehood (76). While Mulholland is certainly correct about the comedic effect of sexual references to the Courtesan, and Wayne is right in arguing for equal critical examination of the Courtesan's social transformations. Both critics seem to be wrestling with the difficulty of the Courtesan's own professed performance of widowhood ("what lies within the power of my performance"), her earnest desire for marriage ("I'm yet like those whose riches lie in dreams"), and the vast multitude of sexual puns that work *only because* the audience is aware of her sexual relationship with Witgood (1.1.46, 4.4.127). There is an unspoken tension between sexual status and social status in these arguments. Wayne attempts to tackle this tension by arguing that the term courtesan "stabilizes this

[128] The use of these three "identities" is understandable due to the consistent use of the words "widow" and "wife" in the text; however, the terms do close off other understandings or variances available for interpretation. Paul A. Mulholland, "Introduction," *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, Manchester University Press, 2017.

character's sexual inconsistency" but by also widening the field to three possible sexual statuses does not adequately depict the variety of sexual and social statuses that the Courtesan embodies (Wayne 194). I expand upon Wayne's argument and propose that the Courtesan does not lack continuity or consistency, rather she embraces a generative lack of social, sexual, and visual conjunction. Widow, wife, and courtesan each bespeaks a specific sexual interaction alongside their social position, but the Courtesan enables massive extralinguistic diversity as these categories blend together and comingle within her.[129]

To demonstrate this comingling, I turn to act one scene one: Middleton begins by adopting the typology and lexicon associated with whoring strategically, using it not only to revise the category of whore but to destabilize ontological notions of a sexualized ranking among women. In act one scene one, the dramatic casting of Courtesan as the consumptive whore seems both appropriate and familiar, because she initially embodies her historical characterization as a "financially convenient" drain on the gentleman Theodorus Witgood's resources (Taylor and Loughrey xiii).[130] Witgood, a standard genteel son, who is bereft of his riches in Leicestershire because of gambling, whoring, and debauchery, outlines the means of his downfall and derides his "fox-brain'd and ox-brow'd" uncle, Lucre, who holds his lands (1.1.9-10). Alone on stage, Witgood vacillates across a range of emotions, first bemoaning his situation, then blaming his woes on the price of whoring and the nature of his uncle, before arriving at a plan to live on his wits. This prelude establishes a clear social and sexual lexicon for his predicament.

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[129] Encapsulated within each name are the terms of sexual intercourse; a wife with her husband, exclusively, a courtesan with her high-status client, exclusively, and a widow with her late-husband, exclusively.
[130] Neil Taylor and Bryan Loughrey ed. *Thomas Middleton: Five Plays*, Penguin Classics, 1988.

> *Witgood*: All's gone! Still thou'rt a gentleman, that's all; but a poor one, that's nothing. What milk brings thy meadows forth now? Where are thy goodly uplands and thy downlands? All sunk into that little pit, lechery. Why should a gallant pay but two shillings for his ord'nary that nourishes him, and twenty times two for his brothel that consumes him? . . . I dare not visit the City;
> there I should be too soon visited by that horrible plague, my debts, and by that means I lose a virgin's love, her portion, and her virtues. Well, how should a man live now that has no living? Hum? Why, are there not a million of men in the world that only sojourn upon their brains and make their wits their mercers? . . . Any trick out of the compass of law would come happily to me.
> *Enter* COURTESAN.
> *Courtesan*: My love (1.1.1-4, 16-23).

By explicitly summoning the specters of "a million of men in the world that only sojourn upon their brains,"[131] *A Trick to Catch the Old One* establishes the common dilemma of a young man who has "sunk into that little pit, lechery," been "consumed" by "his brothel," and is now plagued by debts and the loss of a "virgin's" love. The descriptive elements of his land ("what milk brings thy meadows forth"), his "wits," and his "virgin's love," "portion," and "virtues" stand starkly against the consumptive brothel and miserly uncle, generating a dichotomous version of events with clear moral, financial, and sexual boundaries drawn through the lexicon of the female body in which the virgin represents generative sexual, economic, and social gain, and the brothel represents net loss and social ruin. Surrounded, by spectators in the theater and the specters of Witgood's past, a

[131] In a city with a population of 200,000 and a country with a population of about 4 million in 1600, this statement demonstrates a country-wide, if not global understanding of the wealth economy and shifting modes of income for gentlemen (Howard, *Theater of a City* 1, 9, Broadberry et al. 22, 54, 205). Stephen Broadberry, Bas van Leeuwen, and Bruce M. S Campbell, "English Medieval Population: Reconciling Time Series and Cross-Sectional Evidence," *British Economic Growth 1270–1870*, Cambridge University Press, 2010.

woman appears upon the stage with the simple, punctuating, yet incongruous greeting, "my love" (1.1.23).

If anything, the Courtesan's appearance seems fortuitous, coming as it does, on the heels of Witgood's wish for "any trick" to assist him. At the moment of her entrance, there are various possibilities; is she Witgood's virgin love, who's "portion" and "virtues" he fears losing? Is she from the "consumptive" brothel? There is little, save costume design, an intimate utterance of love, and Witgood's reaction to signal the social or sexual status of the Courtesan's character to a physical audience.[132] Despite such an innocuous entry, the question of who the Courtesan is seems to be answered swiftly by Witgood, who rounds upon her with sudden vitriol, fastening her tightly to the whorish societal mnemonic:[133]

> *Witgood*: My loathing! Hast thou been the secret consumption of my
> purse, and no com'st to undo my last means, my wits? Wilt leave no
> virtue in me, and yet thou ne'er the better?
> Hence, Courtesan, round-webb'd tarantula,
> That driest the roses in the cheeks of youth (1.1.24-9).

The power of Witgood's position lies in his role as initial speaker and accuser. As historian Laura Gowing argues, the "power of slander [lies] in the social drama of speaking about sex on the street" (Gowing 71). In proclaiming the woman before him a courtesan, Witgood positions himself as "an agent of moral authority" (Spiess, "Turning Chaste" 4).[134] As Stephen Spiess succinctly states: "from the streets and doorsteps to the

[132] Indeed, to a reader her title of Courtesan may seem jarring too, accompanied as it is by her profession of love.
[133] Stephen Spiess explores the whore as a moral and sexual mnemonic in "The Measure of Sexual Memory" (Spiess 312).
[134] Gowing and Spiess both note that it was women "most of all, who hunted out whores and called for their punishments" (Gowing 101). This fact speaks to one of the "double-binds which informed and restricted

churches and courtrooms of early modern London, efforts to define an individual's sexual substance were often carefully orchestrated performances designed to maximize the symbolic force of public denomination" (Spiess "Turning Chaste" 4). Even in this first exclamation, our perception of the Courtesan begins to shift, as details about her accrete through lexical shifts, altering the composition of her character. Assonance emphasizes the jarring shift emotionally and linguistically as Courtesan's "love" is met by Witgood's exclamatory "loathing," followed by his identification of her as the "secret consumption" he first lamented in line five, which explicitly links Courtesan to the "brothel that consume[s]" him (1.1.5). The invocation of Witgood's "purse" emphasizes the economic role of whores by equating them to a devouring purse (vagina), and begins to reveal the source of Witgood's violent reaction to the Courtesan: he believes she comes to "undo" even his "last means," the wits he intends to use to survive. Such hyperbole is both ridiculous and revealing, as Witgood's pitiable impoverished identity relies upon the derision of his "consuming" addiction—one dictated not by his own appetite, but by the devouring "little pit" of consumption that aggressively envelops not only the male member, but entangles and strangles the "roses" in Witgood's "cheeks of youth" like a poisonous "round-webb'd tarantula" (1.1.3, 29).[135] This fiction of female force positions

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women's agency within the patriarchal hegemony" of early modern London, the problem that women enforced sexual standards through "words that defined femininity based on sexual honesty" (Spiess "Turning Chaste" 37, Gowing 271). Importantly, Gowing explains further that insults based on sexual honesty were infrequently focused on sexual practices, instead, "words of slander, ostensibly about sex, turn out to be about almost everything else. The sexual insult of women absorbed and refracted almost every kind of female transgression" (Gowing 118).

[135] Jonathan Gil Harris details the early modern usage of "consumption" in both an economic and medical sense in chapter seven of *Sick Economies* (2004). In Middleton's comedies, Harris argues, "consumption is associated less with acquisition of goods than with a hepatic or tubercular wasting of wealth and health alike" serving to "pathologizes foreign bodies" and "ratify global connectedness" (Harris 164). In terms of early modern lexicon, consumption referred to "'wasting' or 'devouring,' including incineration, eating, and profligate spending" as well as "burning up of the humors, the wasting of the body, and specific ills of the blood" (164). Such terms were employed metaphorically by writers and often discursively connected to wealth as the "blood" of the nation, or through conceptions of luxury and expanding transnational markets

whores as disproportionately powerful, removing autonomy from male parties for the retention of their goods, sexual organs, and desires. Such a depiction only strengthens the Courtesan's relegation to the cultural mnemonic of an economic drain and sexual digression that whoring encapsulated. However, even in the midst of this whorish characterization, Witgood begins implicitly to direct attention to the nuances of the Courtesan's character. These terms return later in the scene as accretive linguistic vessels that themselves demand the reconsideration of meaning.

The first few lines of Witgood's speech seems to place the Courtesan firmly in the role of a whore. But deploying the title "Courtesan" rather than whore or another term is the first in a series of indicators that begin to trouble the blanket image of the whore that Witgood previously established. Courtesan, in the early modern period, was a term used to indicate the socially and culturally recognized fiction of sexual loyalty that overlaid the transactional solicitation of prostitutes.[136] Witgood's characterization of Jane as a

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encouraging a "pathological appetite" (165, 167). The entanglement of nationalistic, economic, and medical meaning within the term consumption is useful to consider in relation to Witgood and the Courtesan. Harris's reading of the movement of wealth/blood from outside of the national body can be expanded to consider the genteel, English, land-owning character type as a synecdoche for the health of the paternalistic national body, seeking to regain balance. With this figuration, the consumption of wealth from a character like Witgood equates to the loss of sovereignty by the invasive force of a (female) foreign body (the Courtesan). Regardless how the wealth was lost—e.g. in buying clothing, lodging, or gifts and thus reentering into national circulation—the loss of wealth is considered terminal, meaning there is no mode of recovering the lost wealth, as the Courtesan seems to have literally "consumed" (or destroyed) it, making the wealth unable to re-enter circulation. Thus, in this moment, Middleton may also hyperbolize the economic fear of consumptive force assigned to women with purchasing power.

[136] The fiction often used in the early modern period was that "courtesan" emanated from the same root as courtier and described a woman outside of wedlock that remained exclusively sexually involved with one man. Gordon Williams describes a courtesan as "A court-mistress; a woman of the town, a prostitute" (84 Williams). Valerie Wayne's Introduction to *A Trick to Catch the Old One* argues that the term courtesan in early modern England generally "referred to a woman who was 'kept' by a single man, and would therefore not be seen as a 'whore'" in the same way, "and that the courtesan in *A Mad World, my Masters* is an example of a woman who is successively kept by a single man, despite her mother's boast that her maidenhead has been sold fifteen times" (Aughterson 333). Kate Aughterson points out Middleton's (and subsequently, Wayne's) status distinctions between different kinds of sex workers (Aughterson 333-4). Kate Aughterson, "The Courtesan and the Bed: Successful Tricking in Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters*," *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 109, no. 2, Modern Humanities Research Association, 2014, pp. 333-356, (www.jstor.org/stable/10.5699/modelangrevi.109.2.0333), accessed September 3rd 2020;

courtesan interacts with his description of her as a "tarantula" to signify a deeper intimacy, indicating that they became entangled through exclusive sexual intercourse. If whoring is to sleep with multiple men outside of wedlock for money, the Courtesan's charge is reduced, even as she is derided, to a lower charge of sleeping exclusively with *one* upper class gentleman for money.[137] Such a small modification may not seem significant, but it is the first in a series of lexical shifts that introduce new ways of understanding the Courtesan and that later align with the physical transformation that the Courtesan undergoes. In this scene, these shifts emerge line-by-line, incrementally augmenting the audiences' perception of the woman before them, and destabilizing assumptions about type, and about sexual and social status.

Valerie Wayne, "Introduction to *A Trich to Catch the Old One*," *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, associate eds. Jackson P. MacDonald, John Jowett, Valerie Wayne, Adrian Weiss, Oxford University Press, 2007.

[137] Some use the terms prostitute, whore, harlot, and courtesan interchangeably and claim that the distinction between terms in the period was negligible. For example, Duncan Salkeld argues in his text *Shakespeare Among the Courtesans* that "the distinction should no longer distract us" (Salkeld 23). However, as this chapter and a variety of scholars have proven, the subtle distinction between terms that designate sexual status and sexual difference are a fundamental theatrical and social language that had a substantial impact on interpretation of plays and on how women were treated in everyday life. Sexual status is not negligible. The codification of terms that distinguished status levels within the category of sexual promiscuity (prostitution) may not be easily distinguished today, but their meanings most certainly designated a variety of meaningful significations to those inhabiting early modern London, including social status, sexual exclusivity or frequency of access to the body, wealth level, and a whole host of other distinctions. As Stephen Spiess argues in "Terms of Whoredom in Early Modern England," the variety of terms that lexicographers like Rider and Cawdrey used in their dictionaries to describe prostitution "indicate distinctions of cost, age, attitude, clothing and behavior: although the 'Whore, or harlot' appear[s] akin to the 'common,' 'young,' or 'wedded man's' whore, they clearly are not equivalents" (Spiess, "The Terms of Whoredom" 54). With the inequivalence of whore and "'wedded man's' whore" in mind, Anne Haselkorn identifies the difference between whore and courtesan as a matter of degrees, arguing that courtesans were "the more ambitious prostitutes who had loftier ideas of becoming mistresses or wives" (Haselkorn 2). Valerie Wayne goes further, arguing that the term courtesan had associations of upper-class privilege as the feminine form of *cortigiano*, meaning courtier in Italian. Wayne states that "courtesan" designated "a mistress—usually an unmarried woman—whose exclusive sexual relationships are of some duration" (Wayne 40). However, recognizing the importance of differentiating terms for sexual status, does not mean that we should rely upon fixed readings. Wayne's discussion of upper-class association and privilege gestures toward the fact that the term courtesan, itself was somewhat unfixed and that such buoyancy of status was both socially empowered and liable to alter as passion, desire, or interest shifted. The term courtesan was unfixed, as many terms were in the period, but it is this very slipperiness that underpins my reading. While the term courtesan may not absolve the Courtesan character of sexual promiscuity or social degeneration, it *does* augment Witgood's prior depiction of her as a consumptive whore. Anne M. Haselkorn, *Prostitution in Elizabethan and Jacobean Comedy*, Whitston Publishing, 1983.

The Courtesan's rejoinder and first lengthy speech initiates another shift, as she troubles her prior characterization by speaking eloquently and morally about her relationship with Witgood. Unexpectedly her first words are "I have been true unto your pleasure" immediately diffusing the ire and defamatory language of Witgood and emphasizing the role of Witgood's own catalytic sexual desire in his predicament:

> *Courtesan*: I have been true unto your pleasure, and all your lands
> thrice rack'd was never worth the jewel which I prodigally gave you,
> my virginity:
> Lands mortgag'd may return, and more esteem'd
> But honesty once pawn'd is ne'er redeem'd (1.1.30-4).

The contrast between Witgood's venomous railing and the Courtesan's indignant yet decorous response alone is jarring but it is also accompanied by a timely revaluation of the assets lost—her virginity and his land. The revelation that the Courtesan was virginal before Witgood shifts assumptions regarding social and sexual status: as Witgood states at the play's close, "she ne'er had common use nor common thought" (5.1.110). In some regards, the Courtesan's initial virginity is held up as a totem of her honesty while concurrently serving to muddy the waters of clearly defined sexual status.[138] Recently, Kate Aughterson has recognized Middleton's status-based distinctions between different kinds of sex workers and argues that there were different social distinctions between types of prostitution in the early modern period (Aughterson 333-4).[139] What follows is a fairly conventional analysis of courtesan construction, but my analysis allows us to

[138] A prime question is what *sexual* (if not social) difference remains between a widow with one prior husband and a courtesan with one prior lover?
[139] See footnote 135 for more on "courtesan" and its use to distinguish social and sexual status based on specific factors.

reinterpret a familiar story in a new way as part of shifting definitions that tease out conventional expectations.

While sexual definition is an inherently problematic practice itself, the Courtesan capitalizes on the social distinctions made between types of sex-work in her first moments on stage in order to destabilize dominant readings of her character type and problematize both the categories of virgin and of courtesan. In the Courtesan's valuation, she recklessly gave away the "jewel" of her virginity to Witgood, which can never be regained, whereas his lands, which were never worth as much, "may return" and earn him greater respect in the process. Virginity and sex are commonly sold and resold by whores and courtesans in city comedies, but the Courtesan indicates that her virginity was priceless.[140] In emphasizing the physical and moral value society has placed upon her virginity alongside her singular sexual interactions with Witgood, the Courtesan pulls away from the images of the brothel and of the consuming "round-webb'd tarantula," instead aligning herself with the virginal tradition in which moral rectitude, gentility, and eloquence articulate her virtues. The sudden and jarring shifts in perception continue as Witgood immediately acknowledges the truth of the Courtesan's statements: "Forgive; I do thee wrong/ To make thee sin and then to chide thee for't" (1.1.35). Witgood's sudden and full retraction is startling as he admits he did "make thee sin," suddenly refiguring the Courtesan as a voice of honesty and weakening Witgood's position as a reliable narrator. This shift both in sexual and social dynamic is further emphasized as the Courtesan

[140] Middleton revisits this trope from a previous play written alongside Thomas Dekker in 1604—their collaborative text *The Honest Whore Parts I & II*. Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters* (1605) is play that contains a boast of the selling and reselling of virginity "fifteen times" (Aughterson 333). Similarly, in Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (1607/8), Marina's virginity is sold many times over, but preserved through her ability to convince men that they should seek her virtue.

threatens to leave and repeats back Witgood's previous accusation, emphasizing her aggrieved position:

> *Courtesan*: I know I am your loathing now; farewell.
> *Witgood*: Stay, best invention, stay.
> *Courtesan*: I that have been the secret consumption of your purse, shall I stay now to undo your last means, your wits? Hence, Courtesan, away!
> *Witgood*: I prithee make me not mad at my own weapon stay – a thing few women can do, I know that, and therefore they had need wear stays – be not contrary. Dost love me? Fate has so cast it that all my means I must derive from thee (1.1.37-44).

The Courtesan recalls verbatim a series of insults and specific nouns used to describe her including "loathing," "consumption," and "Courtesan." The phrase "I am your loathing," in particular recalls Witgood's first retort of "loathing" in response to the Courtesan's exclamation of "my love," and reimagines the Courtesan's identity by way of Witgood's affect. In emphasizing Witgood's affect-related perception of the Courtesan, the text itself charts the large-scale transformations in male-affect that have directly impacted the audiences understanding of female sexual status throughout the scene and anticipates the next shift in his interpretation of the Courtesan. Doing so reveals the powerful role of male suggestion in shaping public perceptions of female sexual status, while also demonstrating their grounding in subjective perspective and the fluctuations that these perceptions undergo based on personal desire. Witgood's attempt to refute the very terms he deployed shortly before juxtaposes loathing against a new, much different signifier: "best invention." While attempting to recant some of his ire, Witgood and the Courtesan recite the Courtesan's shifts in status from loathed, to consumptive whore, to courtesan, to lover, and then to best invention, emphasizing the whirlwind of alterations and the

shifting lines of identification that guide how the Courtesan is understood within the scene, and the larger play.

The virtue of the Courtesan is pronounced enough that various critics have taken note. Paul A. Mulholland's analysis of *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, depicts the Courtesan as exemplary of "maturity [and] responsibility," as she reacts in "sharp-witted and marvelously quick" ways to situations with a sense of "logic, decisiveness, and command" Likewise, R. G. Lawrence deems her "the most likeable and intelligent" of Middleton's women of "suspect virtue" (Mulholland 73, 79, Lawrence in Mulholland 78). This jumbling of virtue and sexual status is scintillating for these critics who find such juxtaposition worthy of comment, and it does not simply manifest in act one, but grows as the play progresses,

> Courtesan: I'm yet like those whose riches lie in dreams;
> If I be wak'd, they're false; such is my fate,
> Who ventures deeper than the desperate state.
> Though I have sinn'd yet could I become new,
> For where I once vow, I am ever true (4.4.127-31).

In act four scene four, the Courtesan speaks in verse with articulate and poetic descriptions of her hope. She gestures towards penance, and emphasizes her trustworthiness, all of which encourage understanding and compassion.[141] Rather than stressing her sexual status, emphasis is placed on the Courtesan's skill, integrity, eloquence, beauty, morality, and wit. Such traits could be scattered across a variety of

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[141] For a thorough discussion of the concept of undoing the whore, contact Stephen Spiess's "Turning Chaste" where he asks important questions including "Does a single act or episode[…]make an early modern whore? Can a moment of penance overwrite a long-soiled reputation? Does chastity evolve, strengthen, or solidify over time" (Spiess "Turning Chaste" 6)?

sexual identities, but rarely that of the Courtesan, prostitute, or whore.[142] These moments of virtue organically arise a number of times throughout the text, punctuating the reader's or audience's notion of performed widowhood with earnest passion and an articulated desire for transformation.[143] Vitally, Witgood's love interest, Joyce, stands in stark contrast to the Courtesan's powerful performances, earnest entireties, and avowals of honesty and truth. Joyce appears only for three short scenes, and her romantic feelings seem limited and poorly expressed, serving to "ironize her professions of earnest affection" (Mulholland 72). Indeed, as Joyce is the only character in the text that escapes the venality of the marriage marketplace, her devotion to Witgood takes on "a self-conscious parodic coloring as comic spoofs of conventionally earnest romantic encounters" (Mulholland 72). Comparison between Joyce and Jane (the Courtesan) encourages the critical analysis of personal value that is elicited by the Courtesan's circumstances, generating a depth of character that perhaps could not be attained without struggle against, and involvement with, the fiscal and sexual forces that dominate London's social stage.[144]

Returning to act one scene one, the Courtesan is established as a trustworthy narrator with virtuous traits. Almost as proof of this, Witgood invests in her by asking the Courtesan to literally become his "best invention:"

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[142] A courtesan was expected to be more sophisticated than a whore but would not be referenced alongside paradigms of integrity or morality.

[143] These moments distinctly recall redemption plays popular at the time such as Dekker's and Middleton's *The Honest Whore Parts I & II* (1604, 1605/6).

[144] In Joyce we see the marriage of weak character development to virginity, which is then juxtaposed against the characteristic strength of the Courtesan to reveal Middleton's interest in alternate ideological systems that assign value to the female body not through placidity or morality, but through the evaluation of women's roles, their physical and sexual agency, and their social influence and/or authority within London.

> *Courtesan*: From me? Be happy then;
> What lies within the power of my performance
> Shall be commanded of thee.
> *Witgood*: Spoke like an honest drab, i'faith; it may prove something/
> What trick is not an embryon at first, until a perfect shape come over it?
> *Courtesan*: Come, I must help you. Whereabouts left you?
> I'll proceed.
> Though you beget, 'tis I must help to breed.
> Speak, what is't? I'd fain conceive it.
> *Witgood*: So, so, so; thou shalt presently take the name and form upon
> thee of a rich country widow (1.1.45-55).

Witgood calls the Courtesan an "honest drab," an oxymoronic linguistic blend that was notoriously used to reference whorishness or to imply dirtiness and untidy apparel (Williams 105, "drab, n.1." *OED*).[145] The competing meanings generate tension while concurrently metaphorically reinitiating Witgood's sexual connection with the Courtesan. In this incarnation of sexual intimacy, the Courtesan is not cast as a consumptive pit, as before; instead, this conception of sexual experience is imbued with reproductive and generative value: becoming co-parent to Witgood's "embryonic" trick the Courtesan agrees to "beget" and "help to breed" his trick until "a perfect shape come over it."[146] Dwelling on shape here draws attention to the physical component of the trick, which goes on to manifest fiscally and physically, as well as lexically, on the Courtesan who

[145] While the etymology of the term drab is uncertain, it could be closely related to the common usage of the term in clothmaking and imply commonness, or plainness. Drab was a common English made woolen cloth of "dull light-brown" color (*OED* "drab, n.2, adj., n."). As an available item with traits such as coarseness (woolen) and dull coloration the word drab may have become synonymous with the concept of common, and thus become associated with common women. Drab could simply mean "harlot" (Williams *Shakespeare's Sexual Language* 105). Loughrey and Taylor suggest that, here drab means no more than "wench" (Loughrey and Taylor 5 footnote 48). "drab, n.1," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2018, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/57356), accessed 2 July 2018; "drab, n.2, adj., n.," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2020, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/57357), accessed 8 September 2020.

[146] Embryonic indicates something that is "immature, unformed, undeveloped; that is an embryo, embryonic" (*OED* "embryon, n., adj."). "Embryon, n. and adj.," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2020, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/61076), accessed 8 September 2020.

takes the "name and form" of a rich country widow.[147] As different descriptors shift and accrete throughout the scene, the Courtesan emerges as a synthesis of sexual and social statuses, altering from an unknown female to a consumptive whore, to a courtesan, to a previously virginal courtesan, to Witgood's best invention, to an honest drab, to a co-parent and conspiratorial investment, and finally to a rich Staffordshire widow (2.1.34).

As the Courtesan begins to leave, Witgood proclaims: "begone; here's all my wealth!/ Prepare thyself. Away" (1.1.87)! By investing the last remnants of his fortune in the "power of [her] performance," Witgood performs the economic inverse of typical prostitution-based relationships by investing in the Courtesan to see a return, rather than paying for sexual services validating her as a trusted and trustworthy character. Witgood essentially recalibrates his relationship with the Courtesan as they shift from money for service rendered, to investor and performer—partners in a risky financial, sexual, and social endeavors.[148] The Courtesan in this first scene troubles the notion of the virtuous "virgin" that Witgood initially laments, as she demonstrates trustworthiness, virtue, wit, and poise. With each lexical shift comes a new possible way of understanding the Courtesan, as boundaries around sexual and social status clash and reshape to accommodate her mutability. Unlike *Michaelmas Term's* Country Wench, the Courtesan is not dependent on the perceptions of her on-stage audience for these shifts in sexual and social comprehension, rather, she actively negotiates them with Witgood, and alters

[147] It is useful to note that the character type of the widow is not simply a two-dimensional vision of respectability—widow characters also typically manifested with voracious sexual appetites and opportunistic social and economic goals. DiGangi demonstrates the proximity between the whore and widow and the disjunctive assertion of type through "comic desideratum" in his analysis of Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (1612/27) (see especially pp.188-90 in DiGangi's *Sexual Types*).
[148] For more on the Elizabethan theater as a site of prostitution, as this generative partnership between "investor and performer" suggests, see Joseph Lenz's "Base Trade: Theater as Prostitution," *English Literary History*, vol. 60, no. 4. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, pp. 833-55, accessed September 15th 2018.

perception through the power of her performance. The culmination of these lexical shifts is the inversion of the whore's basic cultural mnemonic as a moral and economic drain as the Courtesan is both lexically, sexually, and economically imbued with the role of a widowed gentlewoman and primed for her imminent physical, sexual, and social transformation.

Despite opening act one scene one with staunch assertions of sexual type and status, neither of these typologies are clearly established at any point during this scene: rather, these assertions are dramatically undercut as they come to variegate and overlap. Signifiers for the Courtesan are constantly shifting, making the determination of her type or generic characterization engagingly elusive. The accretive semantics and lexical shifts in the opening scene of *A Trick to Catch the Old One* reveal new modes of understanding, generating a prismatic effect in which many versions of the same embodied figure filter together kaleidoscopically. In doing so, each new shift destabilizes the last as the many signifiers of sexual and social identity collide. In act one scene one, the audience, if paying attention, is given the chance to comprehend the provocative possibility and taught to see the shifting boundaries that comprise a fluid character.

~ III ~

Lexical Disjunction: She's rich, she's young, she's fair, she's wise/ A Dutch widow, a Dutch widow, a Dutch widow, a Dutch widow! [149]

Conflicting language that attempts to stabilize sexual status falters consistently due to Middleton's larger lexical deconstruction of stable signifiers within the text, and material signifiers assist in articulating the contours of the Courtesan's generative lack of social, sexual, and visual conjunction. Material transformation in terms of clothing in *A Trick to Catch the Old One* is more muted in the play-text than the scenes devoted to such transformation in *Michaelmas Term,* but physical transformation remains central to the transformative operations that undergird Middleton's creative enterprise. With just a few stage directions indicating the physical transformation of the Courtesan, her bodily difference is most discernable through her performance and demonstrable through textual cues and sometimes the lack thereof. At the end of act one scene one, signifiers of sexual type are already unstable, and the processes of sexual, social, and sartorial alteration begin to manifest materially as the Courtesan begins her transformation into Widow Medler. Her most perceptible, but textually muted transformation occurs between act one where the she is visibly "that courtesan" to gentlemen in the area and act two when she enters London (1.1.97-8). Notably the dialogue primes the audience for her seamless interpolation into London's society as she vows transformation:

> *Courtesan*: There shall want nothing in
> me, either in behavior, discourse, or fashion, that shall discredit your
> intended purpose.
> I will so artfully disguise my wants
> And set so good a courage on my state
> That I will be believed (1.1.66-71).

[149] 4.4.5 and 5.2.90, both of these phrases are used by Walkadine Hoard to describe the Courtesan/Jane Medler/Jane Hoard.

The Courtesan's promise that "there shall want nothing in/ me" directly references her physicality and bodily performance as she assures that her "behavior, discourse," and "fashion" will fully meet the standard of a genteel country widow. She also promises to disguise her "wants," which is often glossed as her "deficiencies" (Loughery and Taylor, 5 foot note 69). However, it is also possible, in this moment, that she is also indicating her own personal sexual or social desires ("wants") that underpin her transformation, and the desires of those around her, who will sexually want for nothing. Without stage directions or verbal recognition of her dress in act two, it is impossible to know what costume decisions were made in the original performance. As such, the clearest way of perceiving the Courtesan's transformation in the early half of the play is to observe the reactions of those around her, and her "behavior" and "discourse," if not "fashion." In act two Witgood's uncle Lucre, his wife Ginny, and step-son Sam accept the Courtesan unquestioningly upon her first entrance as the Widow, uttering "she's come indeed" and "sweet widow" (2.1.261, 266). Likewise, upon meeting her with two gentlemen friends, Hoard calls out "my sweet widow" (3.1.135).

The power of the Courtesan's ability to pass in this text must not be understated.[150] Unlike Lethe and the Country Wench, the Courtesan navigates London seamlessly. Of the play's internal audience who interact with the Courtesan, including a gaggle of creditors, a Host, two serving men, Witgood's uncle Lucre, his wife Ginny, and his stepson, Sam, Hoard and his three gentleman friends, and Lady Foxstone, all

[150] It cannot be understated in terms of the physical/visual standard she meets, or in terms of the effect the internal audience's belief in her pass has on the readers and audience members and how they understand her.

unquestioningly accept the Courtesan as widow Jane Medler. The power of the Courtesan's performance is truly remarkable, as "she performs with admirable authority, assurance, and consistency: no hint of suspicion that she may be an impostor materializes until the final scene" (Mulholland 79, 73). In act four scene four, the play-text makes it quite clear that visual markers of difference are facilitating the Courtesan's physical change into Mistress Jane Hoard, wife to Walkadine Hoard, further challenging the boundaries between sexual and social status:

> *Hoard*: Wife! Mistress Jane Hoard!
> *Enter* **COURTESAN** *alter'd in apparel.*
> *Courtesan*: Sir, would you with me?
> *Hoard*: I would but know, sweet wife, which might stand to thy liking, to have the wedding dinner kept here or i'th'country?
> *Courtesan*: Hum. Faith sir,'twould like me better here; here you were married, here let all rites be ended.
> *Hoard*: Could a marquess give a better answer? Hoard, bear thy head aloft, thou'st a wife will advance it (4.4.70-77).

The stage direction "*Enter* **COURTESAN** *alter'd in apparel*" accompanies her first summoning and appearance as Hoard's wife and is accompanied by a litany of praise. Middleton's typical use of irony in this moment of new marital delight draws out the Courtesan's deception, as she has nowhere "i'th'country" to hold a wedding dinner. Her new "apparel" as his wife emphasizes the difficult location of the Courtesan; from this point forward, she looks, acts, and legally *is* Hoard's wife, esteemed for her sweetness, noble conduct, and civility. Yet, while Mullholland might claim it is the Courtesan's original identity that undercuts her new status as wife to Hoard, it is more accurately two elements of her transformation that generate the comic undertones in the couple's exchange: her sexual connection to Witgood and the assumption of land in the country.

Within each exchange these *apparatuses of her transformation* linger ironically, generating humor between assumptions of sexual and economic value as they chafe against the Courtesan's consistent honesty and expansive ability to inhabit many statuses and stations at once. Hoard's comparison of his wife to a marquess (or marchioness) sounds hyperbolic and sits disjunctively against the strange truth of her ability to inhabit such a highly esteemed role as demonstrated in act five scene two shortly before her origins are revealed.

In that climactic scene, the Courtesan welcomes Lady Foxstone for the wedding feast and walks with her in the garden. Lady Foxtone's name is no mistake, as "Lady" was used in the 15th and 16th centuries as a prefix to the "first name of a female member of the royal family," to refer to a woman of noble title in her own right like a "*Marchioness*, *Countess*, *Viscountess*, [or] *Baroness,*" to refer to the wives of baronets and knights, or to refer to the daughters of dukes and earls.[151] Such a vast array of possibilities and Hoard's flustered demeanor upon her arrival ("my Lady Foxstone, a' my life! . . . Wife!/ Mass. 'tis her ladyship indeed") demonstrates the generative instability of terms surrounding women's statuses in the period. The Courtesan's genteel bearing further validates the ability of the Courtesan to pass with and entertain an array of high-ranking nobility symbolized by one figure, who, as those before her, accepts the Courtesan as a Hoard's wife and a gentlewoman on sight "Is this your bride? . . . 'Twill please us well" (5.2.24-5, 30, 33). Despite their differences, the Courtesan's successful pass is just as generative as the unsuccessful passes of Chapter One, primarily due to what Mulholland calls the "cumulative succession of remarks and situations," referencing

[151] "lady, n.3.a.," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2018, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/105011), accessed 17 July 2018.

the Courtesan's expanding and oscillating sexual status (Mulholland 76). While somewhat muted textually, the play capitalizes on transformation of understanding in conjunction with visual transformation to reveal apparatuses of transformation and challenge the audience and reader to grasp new possibilities and ways of understanding the female body.

The power of the Courtesan's performance has the potential to reach many of those watching and reading. Her immaculate performance of gentility alongside ironic punctuative sexual comments reminds the audience or reader of her connection to Witgood but also explicitly lays bare the apparatus of her transformation. These moments usually occur when her performance has been most convincing, when she has been most honest, and when the line between truth and performance seems most murky: calling into question warring conceptions of belonging and status, the Courtesan confounds the logics of sexual, and thus social, status. For example, in act one scene three, the Courtesan accepts Hoard's proposal of marriage only after she states:

> *Courtesan*: Alas, you love not widows but for wealth.
> I promise you I ha' nothing, sir.
> *Hoard*: Well said, widow, well said; thy love is all I seek, before these Gentlemen.
> *Courtesan*: Now I must hope the best.
> *Hoard*: My joys are such they want to be express'd (3.1.203-8).

A breech between fiscal desire and the integral value of women opens in act two as value that proliferates based on the (financial/sexual) "interest" of suitors and on the reputation "of the widows wealth" is set against the qualities of the Courtesan's character (2.2.216, 2.2.66-7). The Courtesan's blunt confession of lack may seem like a coy romantic tactic

to Hoard, but to the audience or reader the truth of the matter is plain. The Courtesan is ruthlessly honest in the "hope" that she may later salvage a marriage from the bargain. The line deploys knowledge of the Courtesan's transformations, and while it may be delivered with comedic emphasis, ridiculing Hoard, it is also a moment of sincerity that ends with a rhyming couplet between the couple emphasizing the Courtesan's doubts juxtaposed against Hoard's elation. The signifiers of her gentility (such as her speech in verse) sit incongruously against her untempered honesty. Humorous but disjunctive, the Courtesan's bluntness brings into focus more deftly the shifting boundaries of sexual status and the value of women's bodies due to the overlay within her character of elements of prostitution, gentility, urbanity, and honesty that sit outside of any one sexual or social type. Her passing is all the more impressive as these persistent (and often conflicting) indicators of difference and sameness strains not just visual and interpretive boundaries between courtesan/widow/wife and the articulation of sexual and social status, but also energizes the imaginative capacity of the audience, challenging them to grasp a more complex epistemology of embodied social and sexual beings.

The over saturation of the female body with economic or sexual value works both to muddle the imagined barriers between wealth, status, and sexual enjoyment in act four scene four. Imbuing the Courtesan with material value becomes a subject of Hoard's speech, the only monologue of the text, aside from Witgood's opening lament. Yet, while he imagines economic wealth, as Hoard stands alone on-stage, his sexual desire for Jane, his own desire for transformation, and his desperation to hoard material wealth verbally grapple with one another:

> *Hoard*: not only a wife large in possessions, but/
> spacious in content: she's rich, she's young, she's fair, she's wise. When I wake I think of her lands; that revives me: when I go to bed, I dream of her beauty, and that's enough for me; she's worth four hundred a year in her very smock, if a man knew how to use it. But the journey will be all, in troth, into the country . . . I'll entertain some ten men of mine own into liveries, all of occupations or qualities (4.4.3-8, 13-14).

Hoard deftly illustrates the tension between the characteristic verity of the Courtesan, proven through her conduct and consistency throughout the text, against the dearth of land and material valuables that she is said to embody. He notes that she is "spacious in content," of character in youth, beauty, and judicious intelligence. Of the four elements listed "rich," "young," "fair," "wise," she is indeed "rich" in three of them. Hoard's declaration that her physical body alone, regardless of the material wealth she brings, including clothing, is "worth four hundred a year." This simple sentiment of admiration holds dual meaning—he clearly believes the Courtesan holds great social, sexual, and emotional value integral to herself—but the phrase also, unwittingly, positions her as the prostitute, and instantly calls upon her relationship to Witgood, who also saw her as worth a great deal of money "in her very smock." This elision, combined with Hoard's discussion of liveries, actively parses the role of male desire in monetizing the female body, thus undercutting the notion of monetary or material value being innately tied to the female body, as the legitimate performance-based evaluation leveled at the Courtesan rests on her "spacious content."[152] While Hoard is clearly a dupe, the entire on-stage audience aside from Witgood are too. Thus, Hoard's verbosity regarding his new wife

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[152] At various points in the text, Middleton takes pains to demonstrate the integrity of the Courtesan. Notably in act four scene four, she scolds Witgood for making her partake in an additional "trick" against Hoard that settles Witgood's debts, despite his having already succeeded in obtaining his lost land: "methinks, i'faith, you might have made some shift to/ discharge this yourself, having in the mortgage, and never have bur-/ den'd my conscience with it" (4.5.161-63).

once again exposes the mechanism of her sexual, social, and sartorial transformation (her connection to Witgood) and reinforces her social and sexual elasticity as her presence collides notions of type, blurs social and sexual boundaries of belonging, and works to deconstruct larger social and cultural views of women in early modern London.

~ IV ~

Lexical and Sexual Difference: "Who seem most crafty prove oft-times most fools"

The 1608 playbook uses "widow/widdow" 111 times, and wife 20 times in direct reference to the Courtesan. Medler appears 9 times, once alongside "Jane," which itself appears only three times (twice more as "Jane Hoard"). In terms of numbers alone, the overarching lexical framework used to describe the Courtesan is "widow" one of seeming respectability mingled with economic possibility and social (specifically sexual) distrust.[153] It is useful to consider this in relation to the final scene where the Courtesan visually and lawfully stands as Hoard's wife while her sexual history with Witgood is finally revealed. In this moment, a surfeit of terms bubble-up to define the Courtesan:

> *Hoard*: This grows too deep; pray, let us reach the sense.
> *Limber*: In your old age dote on a courtesan!
> *Hoard*: Ha!
> *Kix*: Marry a strumpet!
> *Hoard*: Gentlemen!
> *Onesiphorus*: And Witgood's quean!

[153] Ian Fredrick Moulton's *Before Pornography* (2000), discusses the risks of female masculinity, specifically in widows (see esp. 27-32, and 159-61). Likewise, Mario DiGangi examines the "threat represented by the sexual and economic agency of urban working women" in *The Roaring Girl* (1607/10) (DiGangi 156).

Hoard: O! Nor lands nor living? . . . Speak!
Courtesan: Alas, you know, at first, sir. I told you I had nothing.
Hoard: Out, out! I am cheated . . .
A Dutch widow, a Dutch widow, a Dutch widow (5.2.78-90)!

Many of these terms, including "courtesan" and "strumpet" have not been used since act one, or have never yet been used in the text. Unlike the accusations leveled in act one, the audience and reader know something of the woman before them, and such charges do not light easily upon the Courtesan since all of the terms used to describe her contrast vastly with whom she is consistently portrayed throughout the text. "Dutch widow," for instance, was uttered only twice in the play-text prior to act five. Notably, the term Dutch widow appeared in act three scene three to describe the only other prostitute in the text, Florence. The name Florence and the term Dutch are alien references used to describe "English drabs," indicating a desire to distance oneself from the intimacy and direct sexual association indicated by courtesan (3.3.15). Foreignness is an underpinning anxiety throughout the text, as it is only through stranger eyes of country gentlemen in the city that the Courtesan is recalled into memory as Witgood's courtesan. This tension places weight both on her ability to alter due to geographic distance and on the fragile nature of social memory. Her exposure is especially ironic because it implicates the audience and reader who almost certainly find the terms leveled at the Courtesan in this scene ridiculous while knowing that they are at least somewhat accurate. Indeed, it would be difficult *not* to find the language ridiculous, since the repetition of "Dutch widow" three times fits with Hoard's verbal patterning. Throughout the text, Hoard repeats words or phrases three times whenever he is excited, nervous, or impassioned. As such, "Dutch widow" slots into a comedic verbal trope that comes at the end of a long string of

hyperbolic accusations emphasizing the verbosity of the accusation, launching the phrase into the realm of the absurd, especially when juxtaposed against the Courtesan's sincere and brutally truthful response: "alas, you know, at first, sir. I told you I had nothing." The consistency of Courtesan's character combined with such absurd lexicon undercuts the powerful regulatory sexual and social lexicon surrounding women's bodies by demonstrating the incongruity between the sign and its signifier.

Likewise, the term "quean," is utterly unconvincing, in part due to the subplot of *A Trick to Catch the Old One.* Quean delineates sexual difference by signaling either overt sexual access (prostitution), or more likely in this case, limited sexual access but an impudent "hussy"-like nature (meaning housewife) (Williams 252, "quean, n." *OED*).[154] The supposedly impudent housewife of *Trick to Catch* is Audrey. In the play's subplot Audrey, servant to the drunk lawyer Dampit, is hyperbolically cursed and verbally abused despite her honorable nature.[155] In act four scene five, shortly before the revelations of act five, Audrey helps a drunken Dampit to bed and acquires a "napkin" to help with his hangover when he strikes her with sudden accusations (3.4.27-8):

> *Dampit*: thou art a beggar, a quean, and
> a bawd . . . base drudge of infortunity, thou kitchen-stuff drab of beggary, roguery, and coxcombry, thou cavernesed quean of foolery (3.4.37-41).

[154] According to Gordon Williams, quean means "hussy, harlot" (Williams 252). For more on queans and the complex deployment of sexual language, see Mary Bly's *Queer Virgins and Virgin Queans on the Early Modern Stage*, Oxford University Press, 2000; "quean, n.," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2020, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/156192), accessed 8 September 2020; "hussy | huzzy, n.," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2020, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/89728), accessed 8 September 2020.
[155] For a useful reading of Dampit that extends notions of consumption, see Jonathan Gil Harris's *Sick Economies* (2004), pp.176-77. For more on linguistic Anglo-Dutch jumbling, see Marjorie Rubright's *Doppelgänger Dilemmas* (2014), pp. 38-55.

Later Dampit, drunk once more, flamboyantly roars: “you gernative quean, the mullipood of villainy, the spinner of concupiscency” (4.5.24-5)! As the vile and inventive terms used to describe Audrey begin to stack up (beggar, quean, bawd, drudge, drab), “quean” emerges three times as a favorite. While Audrey mostly maintains decorum, she does exclaim: “I never deceiv’d you in all my life!” (3.4.27, 34). The trajectory of Audrey, whose episodic presence punctuates the text up to act four scene five, works as a hyperbolized mirror alongside the Courtesan’s plight. The hard-working Audrey is consistently verbally abused with the terms of whoring and sexual promiscuity, despite her honorable nature. The verbal logorrhea of Dampit’s drunken abuse that is so clearly unfit to describe Audrey serves to dislocate terms such as “quean” and “bawd” from their traditional meanings and diminish the social impact of the terms themselves, essentially deadening the veracity of accusations of whorishness only moments before such accusations are leveled at the Courtesan in act five. This somewhat heavy-handed dislocation between sign and signifier intentionally clears space for new epistemological ways of seeing the whore as the play reaches act five: the moment where a tight grip on such terms could undercut the transformative undertaking of the Courtesan character.

Were dislocation and deconstruction of socially and sexually regulatory language not enough, Middleton uses the final scene, complete with pious redemption of both Witgood and the Courtesan, to imagine an elegantly muddled future of sexual, social, and familial statuses. When Hoard begrudgingly accepts the Courtesan as his wife stating “O my friends,/ I must embrace shame to be rid of shame,” she is bound to London life married to a gentleman. Witgood who has just married Hoard’s niece, Joyce, then jovially notes:

> *Witgood*: excepting but myself, I dare swear she's a virgin; and now by marrying your niece I have banish'd myself for ever from her. She's mine aunt now, by my faith, and there's no Meddling with mine aunt, you know, a sin against my nuncle (5.2.140-3).

The final moments of penance in the play could seem to solidify a pious retreat toward salvation; yet, the lexical reverberations of Witgood's speech that ends with the Courtesan's dramatic call for penance, destabilizes this notion. Witgood's speech explicitly underscores how lexicon stretches and transforms to exploit the sexualized nature of social and familial terms. Witgood does not try to establish sexual distance, as he does earlier in the scene: rather, he demonstrates proximity artfully through manipulation of lexical terms. "Aunt" and "Meddling" are, as Dawson argues, "part of the texture" of semantic slippage that occurs within the text (Dawson 382, 384). Meddling references both the fruit, and the practice of whoring, while aunt resurfaces in in direct reference to Lucre's earlier sentiment in act two scene one: "I need not say 'bawd,' for/ everyone knows what 'aunt' stands for in the last translation" (2.1.9-10). More than simply generating slippage and unfixing the meaning of terms, the use of "aunt" keeps energies that drove the "comic intrigue" afloat "through language that escapes from fixed meaning" (Dawson 382). More specifically, lexical slippage does not keep purely erotic avenues open, it holds the possibilities of sexual and social status in a new structure, a structure that generates surprising sexual and relational proximity and that simultaneously produces new sexual and relational dynamics (wife, husband, aunt, and more). The language here, is not so much semantically slipping, as it is transforming relational semantics socially and sexually, causing social confusion and cohesion simultaneously. By staging an act of penance, the final scene may seem like a centrifuge

attempting to punitively separate characters out into their clearly defined requisite groups, but the scene continues to do the uncomfortable, educative, and sometimes painful work of transforming, deconstructing, and mingling categories of belonging and of understanding. The resulting confusion is potently pedagogical: at the close of the play, the early modern audience member or reader is compelled to leave the theater, or put down the text, and leave with unresolved boundaries of meaning, with unsettling new logics, with complex new meanings, and with diverse new ways of understanding women's bodies, statuses, and sexual differences in the public theater of early modern London.

Conclusion

By exploring new ways of perceiving alien, foreign, or stranger characters in the form of sexual difference Chapter Two has built upon geographic and social transformation to better explore how female desire and sexual type work as indicators of sexual difference and sexual status. In doing so, Chapter Two has demonstrated the ways in which desire works relationally through interactions and negotiations as a catalyst for transformation that consistently breaks down, warps, or expands boundaries of belonging. These processes of transformation allow for a multidimensional bricolage of sexual typologies. As demonstrated by the dazzling variety of lexical terms, shifting semantic meaning, and transforming visual landscapes, Middleton communicates a paradoxical puzzle: the stronger the attempt to moor characters to specific types, ontologies, or statuses—sexual or otherwise—the more unstable and unmoored they become, as possibility, promiscuity, and proliferation tease the edges of identity in both threatening and desirable ways.

The capacity of lexical and sartorial transformation to increase proximity and disrupt boundaries between status groups (both sexual and social), and to engage new modes of understanding sexual identification manifest differently in Chapter Three titled: "Impairment is the Rule, and Normalcy is the Fantasy." In Chapter Three I look to one specific somatic and typological manifestation of somatic difference on the early modern stage—physical disability—in Thomas Heywood's *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607). The Cripple of *Fair Maid* represents disability as somatic difference and challenges ways of thinking about the body and desire on-stage. Exploring the role of the disabled body in relation to prosthetic extension, romantic agency, and love language, I work to explore new models for desire on the early modern stage. Much like desire, disabled bodies on the stage catalyze transformation, contributing to the theatrical project of questioning and rewriting epistemologies of bodily knowledge.

CHAPTER 3
IMPAIRMENT IS THE RULE, AND NORMALCY IS THE FANTASY

Crip theory, like queer theory, promises an oppositional critique of bodily normalcy by working within the very terms of opprobrium and stigma to which disability persons and queers have been subject.

- Davidson, *Concerto for the Left Hand*

What if disabled people were understood to be both subjects and objects of a multiplicity of erotic desires and practices?

- Mallow and McRuer, *Sex and Disability*

Early modern bodies were leaky vessels, emitting smells and fluids.[156] Their materiality could manifest contrarily, either as inner corruption signified through raised skin—buboes, a mole, a wart, an abscess, a devils' mark—or as inner morality through outward "Beauty's pride,/ And Nature's better part of workmanship," which reads the material body as testament to ontologies of natural balance and divine likeness (Heywood H3).[157] On the stage, bodies were dressed up, dissected, and metamorphized into representative characters and forms that could alter to accommodate, to mimic, and to pervert early modern expectations of somatic and social conformity. In this chapter I look to one specific somatic and typological manifestation of somatic difference on the early modern

[156] By referencing Gail Kern Paster's "Leaky Vessels," I aim to both invoke an early modern ontology of the body that viewed it as a porous site for cosmic and divine intervention and retribution and recall the explicitly gendered construction of somatic power. Gail Kern Paster, "Leaky Vessels: The Incontinent Women of City Comedy," *Renaissance Drama,* no. 18, University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 43-65, (doi.org/10.1086/rd.18.41917222), accessed Jan 22nd 2019; David M. Turner, "Introduction: Approaching Anomalous Bodies," *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity*, edited by David M. Turner and Kevin Stagg, Routledge, 2006, especially pp.1-16.
[157] Thomas Heywood, *The fayre mayde of the Exchange with the pleasant humours of the cripple of Fanchurch. Very delectable, and full of mirth.* London, 1607.

stage: physical disability.[158] I argue that disability as somatic difference challenges ways of thinking about the body and desire on-stage, first through the location of romantic agency within and sexual desire for the disabled body, then through the use of prosthetics to extend agency beyond a singular body, and lastly through the use of disability in love language, resulting in an epistemology of desire that is dependent upon the cripped body. Disabled bodies on the stage work to catalyze transformation, generate desire, and contribute to the theatrical project of questioning and rewriting epistemologies of bodily knowledge.

In this chapter, I extend a central argument of Chapter Two as I posit that desire catalyzes and participates in processes of unmaking and reconceptualizing somatic difference. Criticism from the past thirty years covers a wide variety of forms of early modern desire including excessive desire (Catherine Belsey), homosexual and homosocial desire (Bruce R. Smith, Marie H. Loughlin), erotics and social conflict (Jean E. Howard), lawlessness and desire (Kathleen McLuskie), artifice and disruptive desire (Susan Zimmerman), twins, doppelgängers, and sexual availability (Lisa Jardine, Marjorie Rubright), lesbian desire (Valerie Traub), and desire for the alien (Lloyd Edward Kermode, Natasha Korda), to name a few.[159] Sexual and social desires were far more fractious in this period than we assume. To be clear, disabled bodies historically have consistently been objects of desire, just as people with disabilities have always been

[158] I join Elizabeth Bearden in considering disability as a term that outlines "a social identity constructed by [the] limits and assumptions placed on impairment by culture" (Bearden 8). Bearden reorients this statement through Gleeson, stating "disability is what *may* become of impairment as each society produces itself socio-spatially: there is no *necessary* correspondence between impairment and disability" (Gleeson in Bearden, 25). Elizabeth B. Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability*, University of Michigan Press, 2019.
[159] For more texts on desire in early modern drama see Susan Zimmerman, ed, *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, Routledge, 1992; Marie H. Loughlin, ed, *Same-sex Desire in Early Modern England, 1550-1735: An Anthology of Literary Texts and Contexts*, Manchester University Press, 2014.

desiring subjects, but current histories of desire in early modern drama persistently focus on implicitly (or explicitly) able-bodied narratives in which specific kinds of bodies are privileged, leaving histories of disabled or cripped desire largely uncharted.[160] As Lindsay Row-Heyveld comments, there is a great deal more work to do when considering *why* "audiences enjoy[ed] seeing able-bodied characters counterfeit disability so much," or, to reframe the question, why audiences enjoyed seeing able-bodied characters woo one another while performing disability or deformity (Row-Heyveld 213).[161] I reorient this question to examine manifestations of disability, both counterfeit and genuine and ask how we can read for disability as participatory, formative, and necessary to manifestations of many kinds of desire in the period, including the desire for agency and romantic desire. Not only do I shift critical discourse to consider new modes of desiring disability, but I argue that physical difference is, in fact, an integral component of early modern desire writ large across many embodied states.[162] With this somatic, erotic, and desire-based topography in mind, processes of transformation in this chapter work to alter a whole host of relationships between player, character, and onstage/offstage observers.

While monstrosity as a term does not direct my inquiry, it is always present as a mode of thinking with disability in the early modern period and as a cultural descriptor for anomalous bodies.[163] Monstrosity, like various terms in the early modern period, had

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[160] Robert McRuer and Anna Mollow, Margrit Shildrick, and Alison Kafer all write on disability and desire, and critique ableist conceptions of disability as undesiring or undesirable. See Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, Indiana University Press, 2013; Margrit Shildrick, *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity and Sexuality*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; and Anna Mallow and Robert McRuer, *Sex and Disability*, 2012.
[161] Lindsey Row-Heyveld, *Dissembling Disability in Early Modern English Drama,* Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
[162] This is a position that carries over into my discussion of gender fluidity in Chapter Four.
[163] Elizabeth Bearden outlines the historical nuances of monstrosity from Aristotle and Pliny through to the early modern period in her innovative text *Monstrous* Kinds, 2019, esp. 7-16, 21-25, and 33-59.

fluctuating borders and encompassed many conflicting meanings, including "against nature" or "preternatural." Monstrosity also drew deeply from the supernatural, reading divinity, woeful portends, or declarations of moral depravity into a diverse array of different bodies (Morgan 11).[164] In the early modern period the concept of disability was "subsumed under other categories, notably deformity and monstrosity," which were not equivalent in early modern writings (Turner 4). Monstrosity provided a means for categorizing and interpreting many kinds of "defect," including "congenital birth defects deemed to be caused variously by 'excess' or 'lack' of the 'seed' thought to be ejaculated by men and women during conception" (Turner 4).[165] Religious moralists in London connected sin and "physical aberration" and pamphlet traditions that recorded monstrous births reduced the body to "bare description" as "a canvas" upon which to "inscribe significance" (Turner 4).[166] Julie Crawford's comprehensive work on monstrous births from the 1560s to 1660s compellingly illuminates the interpretive practices behind monstrosity, including those that celebrated monstrous births as signs of "divinity," those that pseudo-scientifically positioned pregnant women's bodies as moral crucibles whose product reflected their virtue (or lack thereof) in a "divine(ly) putative" fashion, and those

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[164] Luke Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden: The Grotesque and the Gigantic in Renaissance Landscape Design*, Pennsylvania University Press, 2016. Read Morgan for more on the proto-sublime ways of seeing, or the "period eye," that shaped monstrous installations and experiences within the Renaissance garden.

[165] For more on monstrous children and the construction of monstrosity in Montaigne's works, see Lawrence D. Kritzman, "Representing the Monster: Cognition, Cripples, and Other Limp Parts in Montaigne's 'Des Boyteux,'" *Monster Theory: Reading Culture,* ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

[166] Kevin Stagg also notes that, in monster texts, "narrative strategies were adopted to clearly equate bodily deformity with sin . . . [and] drew direct links between the nature of the deformity and sinfulness" (Stagg 27). Recent scholarship from Amy J. Rodgers turns the scope of the monstrous toward the audience, charting the development of the spectator and how, as a discursive category, the spectator shaped early modern viewing practices. Kevin Stagg, "Representing Physical Difference: The Materiality of the Monstrous," *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity*, ed. David M. Turner and Kevin Stagg, Routledge, 2006; Amy J. Rodgers, *A Monster with a Thousand Hands: The Discursive Spectator in Early Modern England,* University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.

that were used for ideological control, engendering new methods of "Protestant education, reflection, and repentance," and that made truth-claims regarding new doctrine and Protestant beliefs (Crawford 15-16, 25, 9).[167] Monsters, then, also acted as a meaningful social metaphor that provided both a means for "conceptualizing certain characteristics that would now be termed disability" and a means for critiquing issues related to religion, politics, and moral character (Turner 4). Deformity, as a category that sat both within and without definitions of the monstrous and was a category of somatic difference (rather than of stigmatization) that was interpreted differently based on "taste, class, and gender" (Turner 5).[168] Deformity could certainly be used to describe the monster, but it also indicated a range of somatic difficulties ranging from simple unpleasant affect or ugliness to functional impairment. Deformity also, importantly, encompassed those who were not born with functional impairments but developed them through injuries of mishap, illness, or war (Turner 5).[169] Furthermore, deformity was not as relationally bound to moral declarations of sinfulness. One could be labeled as deformed for things as simple as crooked teeth or as challenging as crooked limbs. The very elasticity of the two terms, "monstrosity" and "deformity," is vital to their function and key to their utility in disability studies today.

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[167] Julie Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England*, John Hopkins University Press, 2005. One particularly unusual theory of divine punishment was the "fashion monster," who was born to one who exhibited sartorial decadence (Crawford 27). This example especially shows how malleable monstrosity could be, as a love of clothing could propagate into a somatic monstrosity through childbirth.

[168] Lennard Davis notes the role of disability as a category of somatic difference rather than stigmatized identity that remains "on the side of impairment" (Davis in Williams 759). Katherine Schaap Williams, "Performing Disability and Theorizing Deformity," *English Studies,* vol. 94, no. 7, Routledge, 2013, pp. 757-772, (DOI: doi.org/10.1080/0013838X.2013.840125), accessed March 3rd 2019.

[169] Recently, scholars focusing on disability studies have found Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1908-1961) philosophy of embodiment useful as it closely links mind and body and broadly prioritizes sensory experience in his phenomenological definition of "incarnate subjectivity" (Bearden 19). For more on disability studies that engages with Merleau-Ponty's work and spends more time on the embodied experience of disability see Bearden's *Monstrous Kinds*, 2019, esp. 16-21.

In this chapter I do not work with moral, congenital, supernatural, or preternatural ideations of monstrosity; rather, I turn to the lexical and performative richness of deformity and explore the vital role of deformity in desire-based epistemologies of bodily knowledge.[170] Like Katherine Schaap Williams, I acknowledge the ambiguity of deformed bodies on the early modern stage.[171] Williams's argument highlights the unfixed state of the deformity in *Richard III* by exploring how Richard's shifting sense of deformity works as a performative force that informs the political and spectatorial progression of the play and that "produces disability as indistinction" (Williams, "Performing Disability" 759, 760). My argument dovetails neatly with Williams's analysis of *Richard III*, but aims to outline a tradition of mutable deformity that is not based solely on performed deformity but on wider theatrical practice and its deep relationship with the unknowable body. Deformity, then, diverges from monstrosity in the sense that it describes a somatic state that is shifting, often performative, and encompasses various levels of extremity. I focus on deformity as a theatrically prominent character type that participates in processes of transformation by engaging with diffusive conceptions of somatic difference.[172] This chapter explores how deformity takes various and (for the modern reader) unexpected forms on the stage and induces somatic speculation.

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[170] In the play-text, the word monstrous is used only once by Cripple in exposition, whereas the term deformed arises eight times, often at theatrically significant moments.

[171] Williams states that Shakespeare's *Richard III* offers "a complex negotiation of discourses of deformity and monstrosity as well as a relation to bodily contingency that reveals the instability of all bodies" (Williams *Enabling Richard* 1). Katherine Schaap Williams, "Enabling Richard: The Rhetoric of Disability in *Richard III*," *Disability Studies Quarterly,* vol. 29, no. 4, Ohio University Library Press, 2009, (dsq-sds.org/article/view/997/1181), accessed March 3rd 2020.

[172] I use deformity conservatively, using it primarily in direct correlation to its appearance in the play-text in order to retain the richness of the term and outline its specific use. At all other times I use the term disability.

In this chapter, speculative bodies undergird this analysis of transformation processes.[173] Ideologically speaking, the material body sits within (and without) discourses of somatic speculation, including early modern discourse on the monstrous, the deformed, the marvelous, and the strange.[174] In *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England* (2013), Allison P. Hobgood and David Houston Wood recognize the omission of disability as a critical lens for those studying selfhood and early modern subjectivities. Citing David Mitchell's and Sharon Snyder's call for a "new historicism," Hobgood and Wood look to the disabled body as a "cultural artifact produced by material, discursive, and aesthetic practices that interpret bodily variation" (Hobgood and Wood 7).[175] In doing so, their collection of essays reanimates conversations about difference by moving beyond misidentifications of disability to access a "historically remote cultural imagination of disability" (7). Within their work, the subfield of "disability aesthetics" (a term coined by Michael Davidson) describes "the extent to which the body becomes thinkable when its totality can no longer be taken for granted, when the social meanings attached to sensory and cognitive values cannot be assumed"

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[173] I deploy the term "speculative body" to describe the body as a site of somatic speculation that follows with disability studies scholars in re-thinking broad epistemologies of the natural and that defines some bodies as somatically different or strange. I posit that many bodies were less knowable than we assume on the early modern stage. I also examine processes that try to make the speculative body knowable, and how those processes are stymied, transformed or reshaped into more capacious conceptions of bodily knowledge.

[174] Of course, this is a limited list, and I deploy the term "strange" in its most generous meaning of odd, unusual, or different in some manner (see pages 31-35 in Chapter One for a fuller discussion of the term stranger). Some critics, including Row-Heyveld, Hobgood, and Wood have focused on discourses of monstrosity and the marvelous as having resulted unduly in discourses of early modern disability to be overlooked until more recently. I join them, and others like Elizabeth B. Bearden, in inverting that tradition by focusing on disability as present and dispersed across many former categorizations of strangeness, monstrosity, and opprobrium, as part of larger socially and spatially constructed subjectivity.

[175] Cited also is Rosemarie Garland-Thomson whose work in disability studies interrogates ways of seeing the disabled body in performance. See Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Beauty and the Freak," *Points of Contact: Disability, Art, and Culture*, eds. Susan Crutchfield and Marcy Epstein, University of Michigan Press, 2000, pp. 181-96.

(6). Davidson's focus on the thinkable body that "can no longer be taken for granted" in terms of sensory, cognitive, and visual norms, allows exploration of what he terms the "spectral body" of the other: a body that disability "brings to the fore, reminding us of the contingent, interdependent nature of bodies and their situated relationship to physical ideals" (Davidson 4, Hobgood and Wood 6). I posit that thinking with diverse but similar bodies—bodies that "crip" normative modes of imagining (or take for granted) bodily knowledge—also works to expose the cripped underlying epistemologies of type, identity, and sight, whose normative (or natural) framework is interrogated by such bodies on the early modern stage (Davidson 4).[176] The speculative body is the body that asks audiences to think kinesthetically as well as linguistically and it is a body that emboldens audiences to speculate somatically. Fresh analysis of physically disabled or deformed characters offers us more complex historical readings of the body and illuminates diverse epistemologies of somatic desire.

Looking to somatic speculation, I utilize crip theory, a part of the disability studies movement that builds upon theoretical frameworks in cultural studies. The term crip itself emerged from disability movements "as an appropriation and revaluation of the derogatory term 'cripple' and its positive valences are, at this point, multiple" (McRuer 210 fn5).[177] Crip theory works to question structures of power and order, asking "why [they are] constructed and naturalized; how [they are] embedded in complex economic,

[176] I take the lead from Michael Davidson, here, who posits that "[C]onsiderations of disability deconstruct or 'crip' discourses of compulsory able-bodiedness that underwrite epistemological claims" (Davidson 4). I also utilize the word "natural" rather than "normative" in order to acknowledge that prior to the nineteenth century the concept of the norm did not exist: as Elizabeth B. Bearden states, "before the norm, there was the natural" (Davidson 79). Michael Davidson, *Concerto for the Left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body*, University of Michigan, 2008; Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, Verso, 1995.
[177] Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*, New York UP, 2006.

social, and cultural relations; and how [such relations] might be changed" to acknowledge more expansive ideations of embodiment (McRuer 2).[178] I draw on Robert McRuer, whose significant work *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (2006) clearly demonstrates the "shared pathologized past of homosexuality and disability" that links modes of considering the body. While I do not focus on homosexuality specifically, McRuer's vital contribution posits that differences in disability and in sexual orientation and gender are historically located as similar categories of non-conformance based on compulsory able-bodiedness or heterosexuality (McRuer 2-3, 8-10). Acknowledging this interlinked somatic history enables narratives of transformation that allow for "imagining bodies and desires otherwise" (McRuer 32).[179] I contend that this transformative potential to imagine bodies and desire differently was explicitly at work on the early modern stage in performances of bodily difference through the encouragement of somatic speculation. By somatic speculation I specifically mean the encouragement of audiences to engage with curiosity around the body, including in discourse and debate (be it moral, medical, social, spatial, or otherwise) surrounding bodily difference. This also specifically addresses speculation on what lies beneath

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[178] For an excellent discussion of how crip theory intersects productively with queer theory, especially in terms of their join focus on radically disrupting notions of normalcy, see Carrie Sandahl's "Queering the Crip or Cripping The Queer?: Intersections of Queer and Crip Identities in Solo Autobiographical Performance," *Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies,* vol. 9, no. 1, Duke University Press, 2003, pp. 25-56, (DOI: doi.org/10.1215/10642684-9-1-2-25), accessed May 12th 2019.

[179] Mitchell and Snyder have also written about the tradition of associating physical or cognitive "inferiority" with deviancy as how this has "historically categorized the means by which bodies are constructed as deviant: the Victorian equation between femininity and hysteria; the biological racism that justified slavery and the social subordination of racial minorities; psychiatry's categorization of homosexuality as a pathological disorder" (Mitchell and Snyder 2). For a fuller history that discusses how criminals, women, disabled people, racial others & etc., are pathologized see Douglas C. Baynton, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. by Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, New York University Press, 2001, pp. 33-57; David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*, University of Michigan Press, 2000.

clothing, what physical deformities may present, what physical difference is present, what kinds of sexual activity are engaged in, and the manifestation and meaning of these differences.[180] Elizabeth Bearden looks to a plethora of Renaissance speculations on the body that result in the conflation of disabled bodies and the monstrously strange. Her focus on "wonder books," such as Ambroise Paré's *Des monstres et des prodiges* (*Of Monsters and Marvels*) (1573), demonstrates the ontological uncertainty around disability, monstrosity, and somatic difference:

> Paré's distinctions between monsters, marvels, and the maimed appear at first to have some coherence, but these categories overlap and bleed together. Moreover, in his listing of causes for monstrosity, he mixes the natural with the supernatural and the socially determined with the medicalized. His list of causes include "the glory of God" and "his wrath," incorrect "quantity of seed," "the imagination," "narrowness of smallness of the womb," "the indecent posture of the mother," "a fall, or blows struck against the womb," "hereditary or accidental illness," "rotten or corrupt seed," "mixture or mingling of seed," "the artifice" of "beggars" or "Demons and Devils" (Paré 33-4 in Bearden 16).

Here, Bearden draws out Paré's "mixing" of causes and the conflicting nature of many of them. These contrary considerations that span the religious, the medical, the accidental, and the imaginative, demonstrate a desire to "know" causality through reverse engineering either by generating logic systems or by relating visible or assumed physical deformity to the material body, its conditions, and its manifestations. But the unreliability of the somatic body itself troubles the coherence of Paré's goals, leading to "overlap and bleed[ing]" together of categorical typing. The disjunctive relationship between sight and

[180] Sexual desire oriented around the disabled body is foundational to Anna Mallow's theory of the disability drive in her chapter "Is Sex Disability?," *Sex and Disability*, ed. Anna Mallow and Robert McRuer, Duke University Press, 2012. See also Robert McRuer's "Fuck the Disabled: The Prequel" *Shakesqueer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Madhavi Menon, Duke University Press, 2011.

soma is also a central contention in disability and queer studies, as in each instance there is a bodily and a social tension. In terms of the body, Paré's description embeds and emphasizes a larger medicalized ideology of female "lack," including the Galenic one sex model that held that women were simply an inversion of the male sex with the same sexual organs inside of their bodies, which were unable to be "push out" due to "the coldness of their temperament" (Paré 32).[181] Imaginings of disability as a "lack" or "absence" directly metamorphizes women en masse into impaired objects that are inherently somatically limited (Davidson xxi).[182] On the early modern stage, being able to identify disability, strangeness, and difference, was both encouraged and troubled in order to question the boundaries and types that existed as seemingly clear and fixed forms, revealing that somatic intelligibility is itself constantly shifting around culturally defined centripetal points that always remain intensely charged with social meaning yet always in flux.

Part one of this chapter establishes a critical framework around prosthesis, the somatic body on-stage, sight, and the speculative body that supports exploration of our play. In this chapter, as in Chapters One and Two, the project of tracing processes of transformation is not invested in transformations toward a norm, a binary, or a teleological endpoint; rather, this study of transformational process asserts new ways of understanding and of grounding extant epistemologies of the body through characters that express themselves in unique, immutable, and strange ways. Part two looks to the

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[181] This "same sex" theory of the body is best presented in anatomy textbooks such as Helkiah Crooke's *Microcosmographia: A description of the body of man together with the controversies thereto* belonging, London, 1615, *Early English Books Online*, accessed December 12th 2017.

[182] The obfuscation of femininity or masculinity, the sexual organs, one's bodily ability, or of one's sex could fundamentally shift power into the hands of those considered "lacking" and as such, was met with hostility, much as it is today.

anonymous *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607) to demonstrate the power of the desiring disabled subject by examining how linguistic and somatic transformations can work prosthetically to extend will and to crip desire. Importantly, cripped/ing desire, does *not* mean hindered/ing desire: the terms give name to desires that are directly connected to disability, be it through a disabled subject/object, through the reluctant re-formation of desire, or through anomalous modes of desiring.[183] Lastly, in part three I extend the arguments of part two to argue that the pursuit of traditional romantic love takes on what I term "movements (or postures) of disability." Movements of disability are bodily demonstrations of love that necessarily invoke lameness, blindness, deafness, or other physical expressions of deformity thereby evidencing an intrinsic relational symbiosis between deformity and romantic pursuits of erotic desire. I further argue that the language of disability is fundamental to lexicons of love and desire in early modern literature and performance. By examining movements of disability as one of multiple processes of transformation, I foreground somatic transformation as a register that generates kaleidoscopic overlap between versions of embodiment that disrupt ontologies of the body and present new speculative modes of somatic knowing.

As foregrounded in the previous chapters, processes of transformation are often accompanied by changes in clothing, costume, and mannerisms. The instability of sight in the early modern period likewise works to destabilize ontological categorization, be it in relation to foreignness, class, sex, gender, or other kinds and types.[184] Processes of

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[183] I discuss each of these factors, which provide new ways of conceptualizing desire in part two.
[184] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's work on staring is especially useful for considering the act of looking and the power of concentrated attention. Her chapter on the body in particular discusses conceptions of "monstrosity" and disabled bodies. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look,* Oxford University Press, 2009, especially pp. 20-23, 161-82. Also see Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Dares to Stares: Disabled Women Performance Artists and the Dynamics of Staring," *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance.* Ed. Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander University of Michigan Press, 2005.

transformation in this chapter include lexical, prosthetic, and posture based. By looking to somatically different bodies as sites of generative potential, this chapter directs attention to the how the body processually transforms to destabilize characterological and scientific nature-based ontologies. Furthermore, this chapter contributes to *Stranger Compass's* larger project of reconceiving early modern ideations of difference as it works to relocate the deformed figure in the historical process that drama partakes in by highlighting narratives that demonstrate other ways to read the history of disability and transgressive somatic embodiment.

~ I ~

Unstable Sight and the Speculative Body

In the theater, the disabled body appears as a typology with porous boundaries and characters waver in and out of states of debilitation.[185] The stage often introduces new ways of conceptualizing the knowable body by disturbing sight through costuming, disguise, and bodily deformity. In his blockbuster 1583 text *The Anatomie of Abuses*

pp. 30-41. Michael Davidson discusses the expected performance of disability based on the able-bodied viewer's gaze in *Concerto for the Left Hand*, see especially pp. 18-20.

[185] As Lennard J. Davis indicates in the epigraph, disability is a provocatively unstable category that troubles identity politics. It is both "legitimate and counterfeit . . . innate and as incurred," and because "'disability' lacks internal coherence—people can fall in and out of disability (and disability identifications) at various points in their lives" (Hobgood and Wood 6, Davis 23). Elizabeth B. Bearden posits that disability is a social identity "constructed by the limits and assumptions placed on impairment by culture," and as such, disability is one of many social identities constructed around and predicated on assumptions about the physical body (Bearden 8). Lennard J. Davis, *Bending over Backwards: Disability, Dismodernism, and Other Difficult Positions*, New York University Press, 2006; Allison P Hobgood, and David Houston Wood, "Ethical Staring: Disabling the English Renaissance," *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England*, Ohio State University Press, 2013.

(reprinted four times before 1595), antitheatricalist and pamphleteer Phillip Stubbes focuses on the conception of visual disjunction, deformity, and deviance as the epitome of prideful wickedness (Stallybrass and Jones 4). Indeed, for Stubbes, the physical presence of clothes makes them powerfully dangerous:

> Pride is tripartite, namely, the pride of the heart, the pride of the mouth, and& the pride of apparel, which (unless I be deceived) offendeth God more than the other two. For as the pride of the heart and the mouth is not opposite to the eye, nor visible to the sight, and therefor entice not others to vanity and sin . . . so the pride of apparel, remaining in sight, as an exemplary of evil, induceth the whole man to wickedness and sin (Stubbes B6-B7v in Jones and Stallybrass 3).

Stubbes demonstrates that clothing or "apparel" offends God more than other sins due to its ability to remain "in sight, as an exemplary of evil." Due to its visibility, the nebulous sin of apparel (unattached to any enactor) is supposedly culpable for inducing men to sin. Stubbes's refusal to acknowledge the personal agency of men through the use of the term "induced" casts any male pursuit of sartorial or bodily desire as a bewitchment of the senses, essentially displacing all responsibility. In doing so, Stubbes speaks to the potent reality of a sartorial desire that obscures normative boundaries, that disturbs fundamental gender-based ontologies, and most alarmingly of all, that promises new sexual and social opportunities for those seeking social betterment. For Stubbes, clothing should recognizably assist in the social and economic placement of subjects and materialize identity for viewers and for the wearer. Yet, as Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones argue in *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (2001), the perceptibility and physical nature of clothing itself forces Stubbes to acknowledge what he abhors:

> that clothes are detachable, that they can move from body to body. That is precisely their danger and their value: they are bearers of identity, ritual, and

social memory, even as they confuse social categories (Stallybrass and Jones 5).

For Stubbes, new fashions "deform" rather than "adorn," making people "resemble savage beasts, and brutish monsters" rather than one's true, natural identity (Stubbes B4v).[186] He believed that clothing had the power to "transnatureth" the wearer—to alter the very nature (or underlying corporeal form) of the person.[187] Clothing, then, could culturally be seen as a version of deformity as it could alter one's physical nature and generate beasts of pride and vanity. While it may be tempting to deploy "transnatureth" as an early modern term that describes processes of transformation, the word retains a strong binarism rooted in nature and its imagined movement across or toward another (un)natural state. This binarism so permeates the term, that instead, I will slowly work through moments that Stubbes may identify as moments that transnatureth individuals and instead focus on the transformative process as a state of locomotion that diffusively moves beyond the male/female dichotomy, and that shifts around continually fluctuating forms of embodiment.

While the court and antitheatricalists alike perused ways to identify and categorize disabled bodies and persons, the means of doing so often occurred through performative disability—that is, the ability of the disabled person to prove their "lack" through performative means. As Robert Henke notes in *Poverty and Charity in Early Modern Theater and Performance* (2015), charity as an act was a kind of street-theater

[186] "At the very end of the sixteenth century, to 'fashion' acquired a new meaning: to counterfeit or pervert" (Stallybrass & Jones 1).

[187] As Stallybrass and Jones note, "On the streets of London, clothing was read somatically as reflective of personal identity within the matrix of the social body. While new fashions could disrupt common markers of difference—much to Phillip Stubbes' chagrin—fashion revised and invented new modes of expression that could . . . 'alter the very nature of the person' as gallants and citizens often demonstrated" (Stallybrass and Jones 2, 4).

articulated through the evaluation of a disabled person's performance. This performative disability hoped to elicit a financial response from an audience that was "tasked with evaluating" the performance (Henke in Row-Heyveld 13).[188] It is the "inherently theatrical quality of these encounters [that] made for a natural transfer to the stage" (Row-Heyveld 13).[189] Bodily difference manifested as disability or counterfeit disability partakes in the tradition of performed transformation, which activates speculation around the body and engages the audience in interrogations of identity construction. Importantly, in Row-Heyveld's writing, there is a focus on being able to *perceive* disability, both in early modern contemporaneous texts such as Michael Dalton's *The Country Justice* (1618), a handbook for Justices of the Peace that explicitly defined the "poor by impotency and defect" such as the "Idiot," the "Lunatic," the "Blind," and the "Lame," and the poor by "causality" such as the "casually disabled, or maimed in his body" (Row-Heyveld 8). Importantly, these definitions carefully stipulate the parameters of relief based on one's ability to work, one's ability to maintain one's children and wife, and one's ability to recover—to shift out of "temporary impairment" and the disabled status group (Row-Heyveld 8). Signifiers for disability themselves were sometimes in a state of flux as people shifted in and out of disability-based status groups.

What the handbook does *not* provide is parameters regarding how to assess ability, and after detailing these groups, Dalton says of determining need: "I leave that to better consideration" (Dalton I2v).[190] The very material presence of the handbook for

[188] Visual inspection of the body and its adornments in the form of prosthesis and props were often required to determine charitable status.
[189] For more on the theatrics of charity in the early modern period see Robert Henke, *Poverty and Charity in Early Modern Theater and* Performance, University of Iowa Press, 2015, especially pp. 12, 20-22.
[190] Dalton, Michael. *The [H]countrey iustice,* London, 1630, Early English Books Online, ProQuest, accessed September 21 2020.

Justices of the Peace indicates the assessment of physically different bodies was allocated to overseers who could define and police poverty through various assertions about physical and visual markers of deformity. In London, the accepted cultural narrative asserted that the "state must determine disability because impairment was open to interpretation, and, apparently, neither able-bodied citizens encountering disabled bodies nor the possessors of those disabled bodies themselves were trustworthy when it came to making correct interpretations" (Row-Heyveld 8-9). Even purveyors of law, then, tasked with perceiving disability, struggled to designate bodies and read somatic markers for physical ability.

There were methods of inspecting the body and determining deformity through the visual inspection of clothing, sexual organs, facial expression, hair, marks on the body, posture, or gestures, but these were often invasive or assumptive practices that acted as powerful exercises in the humiliation of non-normative bodies.[191] Most recorded bodily inspections unsurprisingly took place within the justice system as evidence for legal cases or in hospital (and mental hospital) admittance papers as authorities in London scrutinized people's bodies to determine innocence or guilt (Griffiths 254).[192] Paul Griffiths's generous study *Lost Londons* (2008), closely details the ways in which "outward appearance" could be considered a "window on the soul" by early modern London's vast municipalities, parishes, constabulary jurisdictions, and wards (254).

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[191] These inspections did not only impact vagabonds, whores, law-breakers, the sick, or the gender fluid; they impacted all who worked outside accepted social parameters and attracted visual notice. Inspection of the body was a valued and relied-upon tool in the period, and coupled with sight, it was privileged as an interpreter of the body and its signifiers, despite the fungibility of both sight and the body. See Giffiths's *Lost Londons*, especially pp. 213-331. Paul Griffiths, *Lost Londons: Change, Crime, and Control in the Capital City*, *1550-1660*, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

[192] As Griffiths notes, there was a surprising amount of overlap between prisons and hospitals and prisoners were often shuttled between the two spaces as they became ill or were designated unwell by prison workers. See *Lost Londons*, especially pp. 260-69.

Griffith pointedly states that "Governors combed bodies from head to toe for guilt marks on skin, in giveaway expressions, and clothes or hairstyles not in 'outward conformity' to status- and gender-codes" (Bolton in Griffiths 254).[193] Epistemologies of healthfulness, lawfulness, and social value depended for evaluators on a complex and conflatory mixture of somatic and cultural signifiers that permeated the body and transformed the seen individual.

> Margaret Williams, who was caught walking around midnight in 'very suspicious manner' with a man, was 'thought by her habit' to be 'a common enticer of men'. Alice Wickham was 'suspected' to be up to no good 'by reason of her fondness in attire' in 1575 . . . Anthony Tiffin was no beggar, Bridewell's bench said in 1617, because he dressed in 'good habit' like a 'scholar'. Rose Cornish was cleaned of theft by her 'outward covertures'. A charge that Jane Yeomans was a bad servant was dropped because 'she appeared to bee of civil carriage.' . . . Courts also put two and two together to make 'whore' or 'whoremonger' when skin was covered in tell-tale signs of the pox. A servant was soundly whipped in 1576 when it 'openly appeared' that he was 'a common whoremaster' 'for that he is filthily diseased with the pocks' (254-5).

The first four cases listed above are settled or prosecuted entirely on "habit," "attire," and "outward covertures." The fifth, Jane Yeomans, is settled based on her posture, and the sixth, a servant, is punished due to his body's display of pox. Skin, illness, clothing, and more could tell a whore or whoremongerer: the permeable body literally transformed in ways reflective of lived experience and provided "evidence" to help "police" the populace (257). In London, inspection of the body, no matter how insufficient it was to establish identity, could be cited when asserting knowledge of the body, especially sexual knowledge. Deformed or deviant bodies inhabited this broad category in early modern

[193] Quoting Edmund Bolton, *The Cities Advocate*, London, 1629, Facsimilie Edition Amsterdam and Norwood, 1975.

thought as they became subsumed by logics that palimpsestically wrote and re-wrote social and cultural logics onto them, imprinting supposedly fixed identity expectations on the most demonstrably mutable bodies. While legal and medical treatise asserted knowability of the body though physical examination, the only thing that can surely be asserted is the body's conformance or nonconformance to manufactured (supposedly natural) standards. Indeed, despite every effort, even explicit examination of an ultimately unknowable body failed to assert knowledge of the *self* that was contained within. Such authoritarian attachment to the tools of bodily inspection and sight indicates not only an unwillingness to recognize the weaknesses of those tools but also indicates a desperation to essentialize and make knowable the hidden body and so the self. Logics of knowability, circulated around notions of fixed, natural material signifiers; yet, simultaneously, the performative imagination of the stage demonstrated the fallibility of such logic systems and their inherent mutability: how posture or clothing can be manipulated, how prosthetic parts could extend the body beyond the bounds of the "natural," how signs of bodily illness could be misinterpreted, transferred, or mimicked. It is all the more powerful that city comedies like *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607) take up questions of identity and the body *as questions*.

Prosthesis and desire will help guide this chapter as we think through various systems of transformation that take place upon and around the speculative, physically different body in the anonymous city comedy *Fair Maid of The Exchange* (1607).[194] Like Genevieve Love, when I look to prosthesis, my interest is secured in "the conceptual

[194] Debate is contentious over authorship for *Fair Maid of the Exchange*, with Thomas Heywood being cited as its sole author for over twenty years. I use the current standard attribution [September 2020] of Anonymous.

stakes of particular instances of physical disability" and the "significance of the disabled figure on the early modern stage" (Love 8).[195] In short, I am less interested in crutches as prosthetic than I am interested in the constantly shifting relations between bodies, the extending bounds of the body through prosthesis, the transformative potential of disability, and the ways in which disability figured on the stage through prosthesis (Love 8). The speculative figuration of somatic possibility between personator and personated makes the renaissance stage a richly layered site for accessing modes of sexual and bodily signification. With the structure of prosthesis in mind, this chapter shifts to look at the physical body in order to draw closer to generative, intimate sites that formulate, negotiate, enforce, and elide notions of difference. Turning to *Fair Maid of the Exchange*, I demonstrate how looking to physical difference can transform the familiar body of the actor/ character, and the familiar body of disability-oriented criticism on the play.

~ II ~

Fair Maid of the Exchange (1607)

A variety of critics position Cripple, arguably the protagonist of *Fair Maid of the Exchange*, as outside of the social order. Jean Howard's extended analysis of *Fair Maid of the Exchange* characterizes Cripple as detached from the conventional social order, devoid of desire (erotic or otherwise), and notes that his "power" over others is

[195] Genevieve Love, *Early Modern Theatre and the Figure of Disability,* Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.

"uncanny" (Howard 65).[196] When discussing Cripple further, Howard frames his position as hero of the play by citing Charles Lamb, but curtails the notion of heroism by characterizing Cripple as "mysterious" and as an "outsider and somewhat monstrous" driving force (64, 66). Her reading of "monstrous" emanates from Cripple's self-described "huge deformity" and use of "four legs," alongside his later self-description of being "unworthy," "foul," and "base," and, more troublingly, Bowdler's excessive name-calling that describes Cripple as a "dog" a "filthy dog" and a "Jew" (66). While I would contend that Cripple hyperbolically named "Jew" and "dog" by Bowdler as part of the destabilization of Bowdler's status as a reliable narrator by demonstrating his linguistic ineptitude (a large factor in his difficulty in wooing), my larger concern is that Howard's conception of Cripple is incumbent on understanding deformity as monstrosity. This argument sidesteps Cripple's social and erotic investment within the text as exemplified when, in closing, Howard describes Cripple almost asexually as the "ambiguous genius of the Exchange, the spirit of the place . . . of mixed and vaguely sinister origins" (66).

Contrastingly, Juana Green more precisely locates Cripple's somatic characteristics as integral to the circulation of desire among other characters but does not acknowledge Cripple's own desires as integral to this circulation. Green, ameliorates Cripple's agential prowess and overlooks his manipulation of a vast array of characters

[196] Howard follows Richard Waswo, who similarly argues that Cripple is a "function" that stands outside of the social order to work as the "figure of the author and the Exchange market "personified" (Waswo 62-63). Katherine Schaap Williams, too, argues that Cripple's inability to disguise himself locates him outside of the able-bodied marketplace and ultimately revealing "disability as a fundamental inability to impersonate" (Williams 'More Legs' 493). See Jean E. Howard, *Theater of a City*, 2007; Richard Waswo, "Crises of Credit: Monetary and Erotic Economies in the Jacobean Theatre," *Plotting Early Modern London*, ed. Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock, and Anne-Julia Zwierlein, Ashgate, 2004; Katherine Schaap Williams, "More legs than nature gave thee": Performing the Cripple in The Fair Maid of the Exchange," *English Literary History*, vol. 82, no. 2, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015, pp. 491-519, (DOI: doi.org/10.1353/elh.2015.0019), accessed February 18th 2019.

by describing his motivations as stimulated by "discomfort . . . toward feminine desire" that initiate his "need to redirect women's desires" (Green, 1113-4).[197] In both Howard's and Green's work, a fundamental inability to locate the somatically different body as a site of erotic desire undergirds their analysis and weakens their ability to trace interpretive possibilities for the disabled body. Howard and Green do successful, pointed feminist readings of how *Fair Maid of the Exchange* undermines female agency, but also how, by reexamining the role of Cripple's desire/desire for Cripple's body, they were able to explore subversive readings of queered bodies and cripped desires.

Cripple's motivations and desires are not only present from the beginning of the text, but they undergird much of the play's action.[198] His desires may take a different form to the expected manifestation of sexual interest, yet Cripple's desires, both sexual and otherwise, remain in the foreground despite his explicit rejection of Phillis's marital aims. This section will follow Cripple's agential desires that remain removed from the erotic while also intersecting with intimacy, sexual attraction, and the body.

Fair Maid of the Exchange is far less generous than the texts covered in Chapter Two in the sense of female desire, as Phillis and Mall, who both attempt to assert their own sexual will, are respectively tricked into marrying different men. While the loss of

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[197] Green also summarizes Ian Frederick Moulton, who thinks that eroticism and deformity are conflated in texts like Shakespeare's *Richard III*, and who uses Michel de Montaigne and Francis Bacon to argue that the "defective hydraulics in the deformed body" lead to a number of issues including prevention of blood flow, and the redirection of erotic energy toward social energy that can "disrupt social order" (Green 1105). Green subsequently deploys Bacon to argue that Cripple's business in the exchange works "to distance himself from his own erotic desire and the desire of others" (Green 1105). I firmly disagree with readings of this kind that unimaginatively and unrealistically preclude the possibility of active desire for, and emanating from, the disabled body. Juana Green, "The Sempster's Wares: Merchandising and Marrying in the Fair Maid of the Exchange (1607)," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 4, University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 1084-1118.

[198] Cripple is similar in this capacity to Moll Cutpurse, who takes center stage in Chapter Four. Katherine Schaap Williams notes the unique role of Cripple by stating "the fiction invests Cripple's figure with desire and theatrical potential" (Williams *More Legs*, 511).

female agency in sexual matters proves problematic for feminist readings, the struggle to attain one's desire extends throughout the text, thwarting various sexual pursuits (both wanted and unwanted). First, the would-be rapists Scarlet and Bobbington fail in their attempt to rape Phillis and her friend Ursula, then Humfry Bowdler's bride is convinced to marry another and finally, Ferdinand Goulding and Anthony Goulding lose Phillis to their brother Frank. In all instances, alterations in the course of desire, emanate specifically from Cripple's labor. It is Cripple's ability to curate others' desire around his *own* desire for agency, that is central to the text; yet, by the play's end many critical examinations view Cripple as "eliminated from the play," as "a prime mover . . . [but] somewhat monstrous," as "finally shoulder[ing] the cost of the play's attempt to distinguish between permissible and illegitimate forms of imaginative self-representation," or as a figure that simply becomes "residual" (Love 65-6, Howard 65-66, Williams 512). The prominence of such readings, even from our most progressive and groundbreaking critics, is deeply problematic, and suggests a potentially ableist epistemology of desire that positions Cripple as fading into the background of a romantic narrative that he engenders, enlivens, and enacts.

Recent revisionist readings have asserted the structural integrity of Cripple's presence, his unique mobility and his centrality to "economic productivity and sociability in the play" (Williams 492). For instance, Row Heyveld argues that Cripple's overtly metatheatrical co-creation of a counterfeit version of himself in Frank helps generate a collaborative spectatorship that promotes complicity in the counterfeit disability tradition (Row-Heyveld 173-191). Genevieve Love's excellent work on *Fair Maid of the Exchange* emphasizes what she terms Cripple's "skillful locomotion" and claims that

prosthesis is also a locomotive activity—a "dynamic verbal and bodily system" (Love 30). My discussion of Cripple in this chapter is deeply indebted to Love's exploration of Cripple's locomotive verbs that demonstrate the "complex skill" of disabled prosthetic embodiment (68). Love's analysis closes in on Cripple's ability to disperse, "wafting" like the powder he draws with as a Master Drawer in the Royal Exchange. Such analysis reveals Cripple's mutability, and his refusal to evaporate or vanish at the end of the play. For Love, Cripple "does the work of oscillation, of movement between unique embodiment and curious disembodiment . . . , evoking competing conceptions of the disabled body" (41). Her emphasis on locomotion relies upon a need for movement between two points—an oscillation. However, as I explore in Chapters One and Two, oscillation between two points can limit conceptions of transformative shifting and this shifting can work to destabilize bodily identity. As such, I contend that Cripple does not oscillate between two points but rather that his expert locomotion draws attention to many conflicting elements, embodied and otherwise, that generatively stretch, overlap, and diffuse the qualities of one another, like overlapping layers of colored glass in kaleidoscope.

With this diffusive context for conceiving of the early modern staged body in mind, Love's interest in the mobility of Cripple, and her proof of his expert locomotion demonstrates how disability enables Cripple's social, imaginative, and geographic mobility. However, rather than physical dispersal and expertise in locomotion, I argue for Cripple's physical expansion through prosthesis, a physical extension that encompasses not only Cripple's crutches but also the somatic form of Frank Goulding. In doing so, I demonstrate the utility and unique manifestation of Frank as a 'counterfeit cripple,' who

prosthetically works as a cypher for Cripple, extending his action outside on the singular body and cultivating a wider range of cripped desires. Such use of prosthesis draws the specific attention of the audience as a force that can reimagine and revise traditional knowledge of the body. In part two of this chapter, I argue, that Cripple's desires are central, even in the closing scenes, as he works to curate desire and extend his body through prosthetic extension in Frank Goulding. This foregrounding of Cripple's desire allows us to re-see counterfeit disability and early modern depictions of on-stage disability as part of a continuum of transformations that enable queered, foreign, stranger, and in this case, disabled, bodies to inhabit if not dominate theatrical space/ imagination and assert their necessary difference.

In part three of my reading I expose a cripped early modern epistemology of desire. This third section of my analysis capitalizes on Love's move toward dissipation and the clear impetus it takes from Queer Studies' interest in capacious possibility. I look to early modern flexibility around terms that described disability such as deformed, blind, dumb, lame, crippled, and disabled, and how such terms are mobilized, dispersed, and embodied throughout *Fair Maid of the Exchange* in previously undiscussed ways that comprise a cripped epistemology of early modern desire.[199] In this context, the binary of able/disabled becomes porous and characters shift fluidly into and out of states of disability. As such, disability manifests as a symptom of various bodily and emotional states. By uncoupling disability from the biologized body, early modern disability

[199] Including through transformative deformity, lame posture, disguise, lovers' swears, the invocation of blind cupid, and self-inflicted harm.

becomes a commonality, affecting almost every individual to varying degrees at varying times.[200] No longer is disability the exception—it is the rule.

A Voluntary Motion of Delight: Prosthesis and Desire

In the anonymous *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607), the Cripple of Fenchurch, simply referred to as Cripple, arrives unexpectedly on stage in the midst of act one scene one to the "sound of ravishment" (1.1.91).[201] Two maids, including the titular Phillis Flower, are being attacked in the dark by rogues named Scarlet and Bobbington near Mile End Green. Just as Phillis and Ursula start crying for aid ("Help, help, murder, murder") Cripple utters his first words, which are directed at his crutches (1.1.82):

> Now you supporters of decrepit youth,
> That mount this substance twixt faire heaven and earth,
> Be strong to bear that huge deformity,
> And be my hands as nimble to direct them,
> As your desires to waft me hence to London (1.1.83-7).

The direction of Cripple's opening words to his crutches emphasizes his "huge deformity," his need for support, and the crutches function of "mounting" as he is "wafted" (carried over the land) to London.[202] Initially, Cripple seems to characterize

[200] I do not intend to imply that biological/medical work in early modern England did not explore disability from a physical standpoint. On the contrary, I present the concept of fluid disability as a parallel discourse running alongside many others, which coalesced to form the basis of the period's discursive framework for disability.
[201] Anonymous, *A Critical Edition of The Faire Maide of the Exchange by Thomas Heywood*, ed. Karl E. Snyder, Garland Publishing Inc., 1980.
[202] In addition to referring to the movement of smell, in 16th and 17th century London, waft was a maritime term meaning to guard while at sea, to convey across water, or simply to "carry over," or "to carry over-water" (Mainwaring, Wilkins). Henry Mainwaring, *Nomenclator Navalis (1620-1623)*, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed May 3rd 2019; John Wilkins, "Waft," *An Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* 1668, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed May 3rd 2019.

himself through his inability to walk without the aid of crutches. However, his words augment his description of deformity. The inclusion of "youth" in the first line refines the term decrepit, displacing its possible meaning of "feeble" from "old age" in favor of its secondary usage, "crooked" (Huloet "deformity").[203] Perhaps more importantly, the term "young" also positions Cripple as a younger man, who, regardless of some crookedness, is spirited and "nimble" handed enough to deftly navigate the nearly two and a half mile stretch between Mile End and London proper (Fenchurch Street in particular) at night, in the dark, and without aid or fear. Through his explicit description of deformity, Cripple's body is immediately the subject of speculative attention and it is also immediately put to a test of morality when he sees "Thieves full of lust beset virginity" (1.1.94). Despite foregrounding his crutches as necessary supports, Cripple, like many young gallant men would, immediately engages in direct, violent action against the would-be rapist assailants:

> Now stir thee, cripple, and of thy four legs
> Make use of one, to doe a virgin good.
> Hence ravening curs. What, are you at a prey?
> . . .
> I'll teach you prey on carrion.
> Pack damned ravishers, hence villains. *Fights & beat them away* (1.1.96-103).

Despite criticism asserting the sexual disinterest of Cripple in Phillis, his call to arms, which is his first interaction with her, deploys terms of sexual and bodily virility such as "stir thee," and "make use of one [leg], to doe a virgin good." While to "stir" and "make

[203] Deformity is defined in Richard Huloet's *Abecedarium Anglico Latinum* as "age decrepit or croked in lymmes." Richard Huloet, "deformity," *Abecedarium Anglico* Latinum, London, 1552, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed 3rd May 2019.

use of one" leg is certainly a motivational invocation to action, it also begs the question of *which* of Cripple's various limbs is stirring and encourages speculation about Cripple's body through the stimulation of a bawdy jest, which itself implicates Cripple's penis as an additional leg that is invested in proactively *moving* to "doe a virgin" sexual "good." While readings of this moment could vary from a bawdy pun to a subtle gesture toward sexual virility, I present and prioritize the sexual in order to challenge critical presumptions about the relationship between linguistic possibility and the physically disabled body. If one is *not* inclined to read this moment as indicative of bodily virility, it is worthwhile to take pause in order to consider why and how assumptions about Cripple's body might partake in our interpretive practice.[204] While it is clear later in the text that Cripple is not sexually driven to pursue Phillis, he does remain sexually invested in her and Frank Goulding.

Cripple's first speech additionally indicates agile bodily movement as he turns to directly address Bobbington and Scarlet, ("What, are you at a prey?") and successfully "fights & beat[s]" them away. Cripple's success seems especially unlikely after the audience's close contact with Scarlet who, at the scene's opening, declares that the night is "black as my thoughts, that harbor naught but death,/ Thefts, murders, rapes, and such like damned acts," and who is admiringly, if scurrilously, described as a "gallant blood,/ Whose bloody deeds are worthy memory" (1.1.9-10, 14-15). How then is Cripple so efficacious against the bloody deeds of Scarlet? Such speculative questioning undergirds the audiences first meeting with Cripple as he immediately arouses speculation regarding his bodily parts, their ability, their movement, their intent, and their sexual virility. Yet,

[204] In reframing this moment, I examine resistance to sexualized readings of Cripple and push future criticism to recognize the seeds of ableist logic in opposition to such readings.

within these speculative provocations is the decisive establishment of locomotion as key to Cripple's speculative body, since within the first few lines of his arrival the verbs "wafting" and "stirring" critically work to qualify his bodies' capacity for physical, sexual, and social movement.

Conflicting readings of Cripple's body continue amongst the onstage audience as he is simultaneously seen as weakened by his disability and dangerous due to his masculinity. First, Cripple's efficacious defense of virginity is put to the test when Bobbington and Scarlet regroup and realize Cripple's use of prosthesis. They plot to come "behind him, snatch away his crutches/ and then . . . he needs must fall to the ground" (1.1.121-2). As Bobbington confronts Cripple, Scarlet creeps up behind him:

> *Bobbington*: Stand, thou that hast more legs than nature gave thee.
> *Cripple*: Mongrel, I'll choose.
> *Scarlet*: [*Pulling away his crutches from behind.*] Then go
> to sir, you shall.
> *Phillis, Ursula, Cripple*: Murder, murder
> *Enter Franke Goulding*
> *Frank*: Stay there my horse.
> Whence comes this echo of extremity? . . .
> *Fight and drive them away.*
> *Cripple*: Hold, forbear.
> I came in rescue of Virginity.
> *Phillis*: He did, he did, and freed vs once from thrall
> But now the second time they wrought his fall (1.1.129-34, 40-43).

Bobbington's opening word "stand" invokes two meanings, both the halt or be delayed for the purposes of a fight and to literally stand, to which Cripple responds he will "choose." The jest again draws attention to Cripple's movement, be it standing, fighting, or falling and simultaneously couples his movement to the extension of his body beyond "nature's" limits through prosthetic limbs. When gallant Frank Goulding suddenly

emerges from the darkness Cripple must justify his position on the ground with the women whore are calling “murder.” Cripple calls for Frank to “hold, forbear,” indicating that Frank initially reads Cripple as a threatening male presence. Hero, villain, strong, agile, fallen, virile, young, crooked, weak, and honorable, Cripple emblematizes the mutability of his body, status, and identity markers. Conflicting readings of Cripple’s body generatively overlap, muddling how to conceive of Cripple’s body, and his identity. Indeed, these kaleidoscopic overlaps vitally establish that sexual virility and able-bodiedness are in no way mutually exclusive, and that disability does not mitigate sexual virility, competency, desire, or threat.

In an opening scene characterized by sudden violence and movement, Frank Goulding’s entrance notably mirrors Cripple’s language, sentiment, and action. Frank’s first words are the command “stay there my horse,” in an almost identical construction of Cripple’s “Now stir thee, Cripple,” nodding to Frank’s off-stage arrival on “more legs than nature gave” him, and linguistically associating it with Cripple’s arrival on crutches (1.1.134). Indeed, Frank mirrors Cripple in a multitude of ways, including by plainly emulating Cripple’s initial monologue by drawing attention to his multitude of prosthetic legs (“stay there my horse”), then overhearing an “echo of extremity,” much like Cripple’s “sound of ravishment,” before engaging physically to repeat Cripple’s action and drive off Bobbington and Scarlet (1.1.135, 91). Frank’s opening language, his reference to prosthetic support of a horse, his subsequent extension of Cripple’s noble action, and his later support of Cripple is the beginning of an accretive transformation process, undergirded by both Frank’s and Cripple’s physical desires. Rather than simply mirroring one another, I posit that such a concentrated and pronounced foiling, which

culminates in Frank's performance of counterfeit disability, directs the play's narrative development, and ultimately positions Frank as one of Cripple's prosthetic parts.

Desiring Motions & Prosthetic Parts

Desiring motions and prosthetic parts are both elements that are predicated on the animated, projecting parts of bodies. Frank Goulding states early in the text that love is "a voluntary motion of delight" (one that soon proves *in*voluntary for Frank), and as such, audience attention is drawn to the halting and flowing of desirous character's bodily movements throughout the text as possibly demonstrative of love (1.3.92). Cripple's character embodies the intersection of this propulsive sense of desire and prosthesis. He is conspicuously movement oriented, and by "mounting, beating, directing, wafting or standing," Cripple demonstrates complex, skillful movement that propels the play forward (Love 68). While his reliance upon prosthesis as a bodily extension also mirrors the timber framework of the theater, his crutches also serve as a vital piece of machinery that allows Cripple to exert his will.[205] I contend that Cripple extends his body and his will through a variety of prosthetic devices, including through his shop in the Royal Exchange, through his craft as a Master Drawer, and through an act of prosthetic fusion with Frank in act four scene five, which leads to Frank's deployment of counterfeit disability. Cripple's social and physical extension through prosthesis work as catalytic forces within the text to propel desire, they alter the desires of others through contact, and they extend Cripple's desire outside of the singular body to assert new forms of what I

[205] Love highlights this unique mimicry, which metaphorically and materially links Cripple's prosthetic crutch to the theatrical framework that he performs within, (Love 66-68).

term "cripped desire," demonstrating a theatrical dependence on his speculative body and his somatic difference.

The location of Cripple's shop in the Royal Exchange stands as a metaphorical and a literal locus for social, material, economic, and physical transformations throughout the text—much like the theater itself.[206] And, with a vibrant sense of metatheatricality, Cripple's shop narratively serves as a space of drawing and revision. Cripple's trade as a pattern-drawer describes his mastery in the ornate, artistic labor of tracing patterns, words, and images on fabric with fine powder for embroidery, after which the powder is blown away.[207] Cripple's shop serves as a space where the artful enterprise of similitude emerges, changes form, and disperses (Love 2-3, 66-68).[208] Movements of characters around, to, from, and within the space of Cripple's shop are suffused with desire, which entices them with promises of transformative gain (be it seducing a lover, collecting a newly designed handkerchief, repaying a loan, or humiliating a rival).[209] Each transformation within the text is predicated on the latent imaginative potential of Cripple's trade and shop space, which facilitate the tracing, drawing, and redrawing of these desires alongside the propulsive energy of Cripple who is the only character who

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[206] Five of the play's thirteen scenes take place around or inside Cripple's shop, one scene takes place in another shop in the exchange, three scenes take place on a London street, one takes place on a country lane, and three take place in the Flowers' home (parents of Phillis Flower). Cripple's shop also hosts almost every character in the text, save the two criminals, Scarlet and Bobadill, and the Flower parents.

[207] While the Master Drawer is mentioned in 1.2, Cripple is not revealed as the Master Drawer until five hundred and ninety-eight lines later in act two scene two, presumably in order to surprise the audience with his centrality and his skill level, and to complicate his position within early modern designations of disability.

[208] In the drawing stage of production, the drawer holds artistic power over the design which is characterized by its mutability, or as Genevieve Love notes, its "evanescent" ability to "waft" and be redrawn. See Love pp. 2-3 and pp. 66-68.

[209] Phillis and Mall, for instance, both work as sempsters on the upper floor of the Royal Exchange and use Cripple's shop to independently pursue their own erotic desires outside of the domestic regulation of their fathers. Juana Green eloquently explores Phillis's and Mall's erotic desire and their role as sempsters in "The Sempster's Wares," 2000.

“really comes alive,” and who retains the ability to “‘waft’ on in time and space” (Snyder 43, Love 66).[210] The space of the shop explicitly outlines a fundamental tenant of stage-craft by encouraging the questioning, reevaluation, and revision of the reality that plays out before the audience. As with his craft, Cripple is adept at exerting power over various manifestations of desire as he works consciously to shape and curate others’ desires in order to attain his own.

Cripple also maintains the unique ability to dislocate agency from desiring subjects, relocate it within himself, and so make one’s personal desires unfamiliar, thereby cripping others’ desires.[211] In the social locus of his shop and in his role as Drawer, Cripple observes, stimulates, and redraws social relationships before their formal cementation. In the subplot, Cripple’s two friends, Barnard and Bowdler, each bring their own desires to the shop and Cripple, somehow, becomes central to their fulfilment. Bowdler, a loutish, lovesick, gull of a gallant enters act two scene two exclaiming his interest in Mall Berry. Rather than finding an empathetic ear, Bowdler finds instruction on conduct and how to woo.

As Bowdler implicitly seeks Cripple’s approval he tells of his wooing of Mall and imagines a scene in which Cripple would have praised him “for a jester” (2.2.20-3). But Cripple’s response shifts focus from impressing Mall with good humor, to Bowdler’s foolishness and weak wit. Cripple describes Bowdler as the “absolutist jester,” a “gull,” and a man of “shallow wit”—in short, Bowdler’s desire for Mall is punted and redrawn in

[210] Love’s description of Cripple “wafting” like the dust he uses to create comes as a conclusive statement of his status at the close of the play. I contend that Cripple’s energetic capacity remains at the end of the text (a point that I argue for later in this section), but Love’s analysis remains both deft and accurate in terms of Cripple’s expert locomotive ability to move in ways that other characters simply cannot.
[211] There may be a temptation to consider unfamiliar desire a limitation, but Cripple reshapes desire, giving it new form.

favor of humiliating descriptors that undercut his ability to woo (2.2.25-7).[212] When Bowdler responds by promising to "cut out that/ venomous tongue of thine," Cripple again uses Bowdler's own phrasing against him by seizing the venom Bowdler assigns to him and retracing it onto Bowdler, promising to "crush the heart of/ thy wit till I have strained forth thy infectious humor to/ a drop yfaith" (2.2.28-9, 30-2). Using crushing force to strain forth Bowdler's behavioral "humor to/ a drop" describes the process of venom extraction and establishes that Cripple, regardless of his physical state, can overpower Bowdler linguistically. In each of the above exchanges, Cripple seizes a noun (jester, venom) and creatively tailors it to shift through multiple meanings and modify previous images in order to redraw the lines of witty combat to Bowdler's disadvantage.[213] Cripple's reorientation of the discussion from Bowdler's desire to his need for personal improvement indicates a level of declarative power that Cripple wields over his friend.

When Bowdler reappears in act four scene three, Cripple notes the great change in his demeanor after being fetched to caper (dance) at "a wedding in Gracious street" (2.2.105). He notes, "who would think this Gentleman yesterday's/ distemperature should breed such motions? I think it be restorative to activity" (4.3.10-12). Cripple's observation draws attention to Bowdler's physical movement and its ability to transform, restore, and purge Bowdler's "brain" (2.2.35).

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[212] It is no surprise when Cripple calls Bowdler a "gull." Of the fourteen occurrences of the term throughout the text, nine directly reference Bowdler and many of those derive from Bowdler incredulously repeating "you gull me not?" met with the sad, but telling response from his love interest, Mall, "no, no, poor Bowdler, thou dost gull thy self" (4.3.95-96).

[213] Bowdler is chastised a third time when Cripple critiques his "antic garment of/ ostentation" his "vanity," "absurdities," and his disposition as a "fool," to be shunned like "the pox or the pestilence" (2.2.94-99).

Indeed, Cripple serves as a kinesthetic dynamo within the text by unceasingly advocating for physical action from Bowdler and others. In act four scene three Cripple springs into action and pushes Bowdler to woo Mall, with whom he is "horribly in love," despite Bowdler's piteous protest that he would rather exchange blows with Hercules than "encounter . . . Mall Berry/ with words" (4.3.56-7). Cripple first attempts a series of clear, linear instructions: "zounds, to her, court/ her, win her, wear her, wed her, and bed her too" (4.3.64-5). The building verbs "court," "win," "wear," "wed," and "bed" all aim to provoke greater action, but Bowdler shies away. Cripple then suggests that Bowdler engage her in a simple social interaction: "ask her if/ she'll/ take a pipe of Tobacco" (4.3.70-1). Bowdler refuses, citing his (dubious) concern for propriety as the source of his inaction. Finally, Cripple identifies the source of Bowdler's weakness: language, "Do you not remember one pretty phrase/ To scale the walls of a fair wench's love? . . . / If you remember but a verse or two,/ I'll pawn my head, goods, lands, and all twill do (4.3.74-5, 78-9). The news that a verse or two would do seems to motivate Bowdler, at last, who exclaims: "why then, have at her" and proceeds to, loosely, recite parts of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) (4.3.80). Indeed, Cripple stays to coach Bowdler, and when Bowdler missteps by asking Mall to "alight thy steed," Cripple instructs him to "take heed, she's not on horseback" and to pick a more relevant passage (4.3.88-9). From the animated output required by Cripple in order to induce Bowdler's frenetic courtship, it is clear that, without extensive, energetic, movement-based encouragement, Bowdler simply would not act. Cripple's physical exertion and generative motions quite literally induce and facilitate romance between Bowdler and Mall. Yet, this new love that unites Bowdler and Mall in act five, which Cripple so clearly had a hand in generating, is

swiftly disrupted by non-other than Cripple and his personal impulse to curate the desire of others.

Despite having drawn out Mall's handkerchief for Bowdler and catalyzed the motions of wooing that propelled Bowdler's courting attempts, Cripple unexpectedly intervenes to prevent their union. The reason? His second gallant friend, Barnard. Running parallel in each scene to Bowdler and Mall's romance is the dilemma of Barnard, a merchant investor whose partner in enterprise "miscarried in the venture" and died, leaving Barnard with a huge debt that he had originally signed as "surety, not the principal," a debt that is owed, coincidentally, to Master Berry, Mall's father (2.2.140, 142). When Master Berry appears in act two scene two demanding repayment, Cripple is on hand to intervene, which he does, zealously. Frustrated with Barnard's inability to pay, Berry threatens to have Barnard imprisoned for debt and deploys a string of slanderous characterizations of Barnard's "crew" to bolster his refusal to forbear repayment. In return, Cripple not only verbally reprimands Berry for his parsimonious behavior but works to redraw the lines of relationality between Berry and Barnard.

Just as Bowdler's weakness was romantic language, Berry's weakness is his daughter, Mall. In his privileged position as a Master Drawer, Cripple has access to the artistic signifiers of love that appeal to Mall, since she is his customer. This intimate knowledge of Mall's desire and its previous artistic expressions position Cripple uniquely to redraw her patterns of love by deploying them in new configurations. Act four scene five sees Cripple's desire to help Barnard manifest through the curation of Mall's motions of desire. Mall, who secretly loved Bowdler all along ("my heart doth burn with hot desire./ O I do love him well what ere I say") and who vows to Bowdler "none but

you shall have my maiden-head," attends Cripple's shop in act five scene one with Bowdler to collect her newly drawn handkerchief and announce their betrothal on the way to seek her father's permission (5.1.262, 4.3.98-9, 5.1.267). After Bowdler's introduction of Mall as his "wife before God," and swift exit to ask for her hand in marriage, Cripple launches an unexpected campaign. Standing alone with Mall, he asks a question with no real precedent: "Hast thou forgotten Barnet? Thy thoughts were bent on him" (4.5.275). Mall's bafflement begins as a question "for what?" before swiftly becoming the assertion that she loves Bowdler and hates Barnard as she recognizes Cripple's aim to "move" her (4.5.276, 285).

> *Cripple*: thou dost love Barnard, and I can
> prove it . . .
> I heard thee in thy chamber praise his person,
> And say he is a proper little man,
> And pray that he would be suiter to thee?
> Have I not seen thee in the bay-window
> To sit cross-armed, take counsel of thy glass,
> And prune thyself to please young Barnard's eye?
> Sometimes rubbing thy filthy butter-teeth,
> Then pull the hairs from off thy beetle-brows.
> Painting the veins upon thy breast with blue,
> And hundred other tricks I saw thee use
> And all for Barnard.
> *Mall*: For Barnard! Twas for Bowdler (4.5.291-304).[214]

In order to "prove it," Cripple intricately and overwhelmingly dissects each movement, each detail, and each decoration of desire that Mall affected for Bowdler, from her praise of his person, to the alteration of her body, and reinscribes them forcefully onto Barnard.

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[214] This turn seems sufficiently confusing that Juana Green mistakenly asserts that Barnard was Mall's love interest all along, summarizing her opening flirtation with Bowdler thus: "Mall goes to the drawer's with her handkerchief, becomes prey for a gallant, Bowdler, when he finds her in the unattended shop; another gentleman, Barnard, enters and saves Mall from Bowdler's sexual advances" (Green, 1094).

Recalling her postures of love, from sitting “cross-armed,” to “pruning,” “pulling,” and “painting,” and calling for him in her sleep strikingly reminds Mall of her desire while simultaneously altering each image through association with Barnard’s name. After such an onslaught, Cripple invents the additional evidence that she “call[ed] upon Barnard/ twenty times over” in her sleep (4.5.305-8). Mall relents, bemused and weary, stating “I cannot tell, I may well be deceiv’d/ I think I might affect him in my sleep,” and is ultimately wed to Barnard (4.5.321-2). Wavering between benevolence toward Barnard and harassment toward Mall, Cripple revises somatic and imagined movements of female desire in order to prioritize and further his own desires. Cripple’s motivations may seem obscure, but they crystalize vividly when he states “Fie, fie, reclaim thy self;/ Embrace thy Barnard, take him for thy husband,/ and save his credit, who is else undone,/ by thy fathers hateful cruelty” (4.5.311-14). It becomes clear that even if Mall does not love Barnard, Cripple certainly does, as he values Barnard’s good credit above Mall’s autonomous desire. The entire subplot of the text that revolves around Bowdler, Mall, Barnard, and Berry hinges upon Cripple’s own arbitrary hierarchy of desire, his equipoise of interests, and his ability to redraw others’ desires to suit his needs, thereby cripping desire throughout the text.

Cripple’s desiring power is clear, but his ability to exert his will moves beyond the body of the singular. Returning to the notions of prosthesis and counterfeiting allows us to consider how Cripple extends agency beyond his body through the physical manifestation of his somatic “huge deformity,” and performance of disability. As the play gains momentum and turns toward its conclusion, counterfeiting takes on a vital role in Cripple’s constellation of prosthetic extensions. A seemingly insignificant moment early

in the text indicates the deliberate use of counterfeiting and Cripple's catalytic role.[215] Act one scene two opens with Mall Berry on her way to decorate her handkerchief for Bowdler at the Drawer's shop (1.1152). While the Drawer is in fact Cripple, as scene two begins his identity remains obscured and Mall muses on the seemingly trite but deeply resonant relationship between a thing and its counterfeit:

> *Mall*: But here's a question, whether my love or no
> Will seem content? I, there the game doth go.
> And yet I'll pawn my head he will applaud
> For what is he, loving a thing in heart,
> Loves not the counterfeit, though made by art?
> I cannot tell how others fancy stand,
> But I rejoice sometime to take in hand,
> The simile of that I love; and I protest,
> That pretty peascod likes my humor best.
> But I'll unto the Drawers, he'll counsel me
> . . .
> He's not within, now all my labor's lost.
> See, see, how forward love is ever crossed (1.2.14-27).

Mall's concern regarding her choice in imagery, the peascod and flower (the husk of a pea and its blossom), is key to this scene, but as Juana Greene notes, Mall's anxiety seems disingenuous when "read next to the extant English domestic embroidered textiles of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries" since the image was so common: indeed, "peascods adorn waistcoats or jackets, coifs, nightcaps, purses, cushion covers, 'pieces,' panels, and many other objects" (Green 1097). Green concludes that Mall's anxiety cannot be purely aesthetic and is erotically charged in that it extends from knowingly placing images common to hangings for the marriage bed—the peascod and

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[215] The tension between counterfeiting and prosthesis exists, in this text, without a clear resolution. Instead, this tension asks us to consider how it may tease out new relational meanings that impact the theatrical body.

the flower, which represent the phallus and female genitalia respectively—to a simple token of courtship. Her anxiety centers on the articulation of female desire (Green 1100).

I argue further, that throughout Mall's argument for decorating her handkerchief with a peascod and blossom rather than a gillyflower or a rose, her more philosophically demanding claim emerges: the likeness of a thing can illicit strong affection, and proximity to the thing itself furthers the "forward" motion of love, which is "crossed" by lack of momentum, by disruption of love's pursuit, or by loss of love's active "labors."[216] Harkening ahead to Frank's future counterfeiting of Cripple in act four scene five, Mall brings up a fundamental contention in the play that questions: are counterfeits the same? What qualities unite or divide them? Can love transfer to a counterfeit? And, most pertinently, can a counterfeit be considered a "thing" (subject) itself? These questions undergird the larger issue of whether proximation can become prosthesis through a transformative force and ask how or if one's self can be dispersed among many parallel, contiguous, or corresponding things. At first glance, Mall seems to whole-heartedly believe that counterfeits extend emotion outside of the body through material manifestations and that the transformative power of counterfeits, "though made by art," cannot help but provoke the same love of the "thing" itself, at least for those with love in their hearts. Indeed, she "rejoice [s]" in "the simile of that I love." Yet, the use of the term simile recognizes an inherent difference—a "thing-ness" and lack of sameness that accompanies the very similarity that unites the two things. Mall goes further, noting that her chosen counterfeit fits her lover because "that pretty peascod likes my humor best"; that is, the peascod prompts love because it suits *her* humor, it touches upon the markers

[216] In part three, I discuss in greater detail the "forward motion" of love and the early modern epistemology of movement-based love, including what I call the early modern cripped epistemology of desire.

of loving sentiment within herself. A concentration on her humor means that in order for the handkerchief to elicit love (in order for the handkerchief to successful transform into a counterfeit of the lover), it must include specific traits that stimulate images of the lover that Mall finds personally attractive and that will incite her desire for her lover.[217]

By Mall's logic, in act four scene five, when Frank dresses as the Cripple and mimics his bodily appearance and movements in order to convincingly woo Phillis, he does so only by virtue of his physical embodiment of Cripple. That is, while Frank seems to transfer Phillis's love to himself through counterfeiting Cripple's shape, he instead invokes Phillis's desire for Cripple through embodiment of Cripple's physical attributes, intensifying her love, acknowledging it, and offering her the fulfilment of love's "forward" motions by offering sexual, social, and lawful union. As Row-Heyveld notes, Frank's performance of Cripple is "conspicuously botch[ed]" as the version "he enacts is nothing like the person we see throughout the play" (Row-Heyveld 176). She goes on to detail Frank-as-Cripple's inability to perform the Drawer's artful labor, Frank's disinterest in labor in general, his reference to his weak body, and his cowering stance in relation to Phillis's merchant father, all of which stand in stark contrast to Cripple's artistic skill and devotion to his craft, his boldness in pushing back against ruthless, higher status authoritarian figures, and his refusal to relate his disability to *in*ability at any point in the text.[218] Frank-as-Cripple approximates the shape of the beloved but lacks all

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[217] Indeed, as previously described, Cripple later seizes upon and revises the patterns of desire that draw together Mall's loving images, movements, desires, and their object (Bowdler/ Barnard).
[218] "The real Cripple defines himself through productive labor as a skilled craftsman, but Frank literally cannot do his work . . . Further, the real Cripple constantly discusses his work . . . but Frank-as-Cripple seems pointedly uninterested in work, only mentioning it metaphorically when he uses the language or labor to betroth himself to Phillis. The real Cripple seems to devote himself to productive labor as a form of resistance; Frank-as-Cripple continuously presents himself as weak, sad, and pathetic. The real Cripple defies authority figures, boldly standing up to older, wealthier, able-bodied men, publicly calling out their hypocrisy, and covertly undermining their power. Frank-as-Cripple is ostentatiously obsequious, cowering

of Cripple's color, integrity, and character. He becomes, in essence, Mall's embroidered handkerchief—a counterfeit that concentrates the specific physical traits of Cripple that elicit Phillis's desire. Frank's success, then, is predicated on Phillis's active desire for Cripple's physical form, which is lent to Frank through intentional prosthetic extension.[219] Such prosthetic extension works differently to a handkerchief only in that Frank can extend and satisfy his *and* Cripple's intentions, desires, and somatic ends simultaneously as long as the prosthesis is in place. This reading of prosthesis is fundamental to understanding Cripple's desire, the cripped desire he generates around him, and the resolution of the text that is often misread as an affirmation of able-bodiedness through the rejection of Cripple.

What enlivens the transformative function of doubling and counterfeiting that provokes active desire throughout the text is Cripple. In order to remedy Cripple's disinterest in Phillis's desire, he not only moves prosthetically through his crutches, through his manipulation of images, and through his deployment of the poet's letters, but also through the somatic body of Frank Goulding, whose list of desires overlaps significantly with Cripple's. Act four scene five sees the apex of Cripple's active and intentional somatic extension as he and Frank Goulding join together in a deeply romantic, intensely homosocial, and visually metatheatrical process of prosthetic transformation.

Enter Cripple in his shop, and to him enters Frank

before Phillis's merchant father during his performance. The conspicuous difference . . . calls out to theatergoers, reminding them of the artificiality of Frank's performance even as they are asked to accept its effectiveness" (Row-Heyveld, 176).

[219] Row-Heyveld states in her expansive study, in which she identifies counterfeit disability in forty early modern plays "Frank's disguise as the Cripple notably is one of the few instances of dissembled disability where an able-bodied character pretends to be a specific disabled character; it is the only instance I have yet discovered where the disabled character authorizes and assists in that performance" (Row-Heyveld 176).

Frank: Mirror of kindness, extremities best friend,
While I breath, sweet blood, I am thine,
Intreat me, nay command thy Francis's heart,
That wilt not suffer my ensuing smart (4.5.1-4).

Upon Cripple's entrance, Frank is drawn to him and immediately espouses a cascade of effusive adoration that is only *barely* rivaled by several desirous soliloquies from Phillis's suitors. Frank addresses Cripple first, as "mirror of kindness," emphasizing Cripple's ability to reflect back and multiply his kindness by inspiring its reflection in others.[220] Extending this metaphor, Frank claims such ability is "extremities best friend," in reference to his own extreme circumstances and needs, but also as a descriptor for Cripple's own relationship with extremity; that is, Cripple has successfully encountered and overcome a series of challenges, including the play's opening fight scene as well as the extension of his bodily extremities through use of crutches. Frank, it seems, is praising Cripple's ability to work desire and action outside of traditional bodily and agential limits.

Frank also indicates a deep level of emotional devotion to Cripple, not just in terms of his heart or mind but the devotion of his person when he states, "while I breath, sweet blood, I am thine." Frank, in unexpectedly familiar terms, names calls Cripple "sweet blood," a phrase that explicitly positions Cripple as the animating life-blood that pleasingly enlivens Frank's breath and body. The intimacy of the image barely settles when Frank intensifies it by furtively self-editing his devoted phrasing by shifting from the wooing phrase "intreat me" (implore/ beg me) to the stalwartly adoring terms of

[220] "Mirror" could also harken to *The Mirror for Magistrates*, a series of poems that detail the lives of famous people and their exploits inspired by Giovanni Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (c.1355-74) and John Lydgete's *The Fall of Princes* (c.1431-8).

"command thy Francis's heart." At this key interlude, Frank is not merely supplicating to Cripple, but surrendering "command" of his heart's motions and body's actions to Cripple.[221] Neatly, Cripple's own desires match Frank's, so he accepts Frank's wish to be dominated and outlines the intricacies of *how* their desires come into contact, comingle, and create something new, together.

Unlike Cripple's desire for agency over other characters, Cripple's erotic desires are complex and difficult to exactly locate. Throughout the play Cripple retreats from Phillis's quest for his love without consistent and clear reasoning until act four scene five when Cripple melds his congruent desires with Frank's. Previously, Cripple's words might seem clear: "This Phillis bears me true affection,/ But I detest the humour of fond love" (2.2.278-9). Yet, in the same speech, Cripple undercuts himself. In the space of just twenty lines, Cripple offers up three separate and oddly disparate reasons for not loving Phillis, as though sketching and redrawing his own reasoning. Upon hearing Phillis's desired handkerchief design, which is replete with images of love, she recites a posy aimed at Cripple, stating: "love pities love, seeing true love in pain," and Cripple responds, "Sweet faire, I pity, yet no relief/ Harbors within the closet of my soul" (2.2.276-7). Contrarily, he both pities her, which according to her posy is equivalent to an admission of love, and yet asserts he can provide "no relief" for her desire. The muddling continues as Cripple goes on to note, "I detest the humour of fond love," before immediately admiring her enactment of the "true love enclosed in her heart," as she

[221] As the narrative of *Fair Maid of the Exchange* progresses, Frank Goulding becomes, in many ways, Cripple's prosthetic part. Frank is able to penetrate where Cripple will not (not cannot). Much like a crutch or modern wheelchair that extends the field of movement outside of the body, Frank is unable to attain his desire without Cripple's driving force, careful guidance, and bodily and intellectual stimulation. This developing relationship between Cripple and Frank draws them into a bond closer than simple mirroring, foiling, twinning, or doubling as they come to express the extended body of desire through Frank as a desiring instrument.

works like “a good scholar” to demonstrate her desire “through figures” and metaphor (2.2.278, 86, 84-5). While I do not intend to suggest that Cripple is sexually interested in Phillis, this swaying between rejecting “fancy” and admiring Phillis characterizes Cripple throughout the play. The growing variety of reasonings that Cripple offers for refusing love, or more specifically, the affection of Phillis, and the consistent praise of her character, intellect, disposition, and beauty clarifies only that Cripple finds Phillis’s character, conduct, and physicality attractive, yet she remains unequivocally undesirable to him in a structural, marital, and emotional sense.[222] Cripple’s confusing pattern emerges once more in act four scene five but finds fertile ground in Frank’s desires:

> *Cripple*: Now listen further, Frank,
> Not yet two hours expiration,
> Have taken final end, since Beauty’s pride,
> And nature’s better part of workmanship,
> Beauteous Phillis was with me consorted
> Where she ’mongst other pleasing conference
> Burst into terms of sweet affection
> And said, ere long she would converse with me
> In private at my shop, whose wounded soul
> Struck with loves golden arrow lives in dread
> Till she do hear the sentence of my love
> . . .
> Now since that gracious opportunity
> Thus smiles on me, I will resign the same
> To you my friend, knowing my unworthy self
> Too foul for such a beauty and too base
> To match in brightness with that sacred comet (4.5.14-30).

In this speech, Cripple commands Frank once more to “listen further,” as he seems to revel in retelling the “pleasing conference” full of “terms of sweet affection” that Cripple held with his “beauteous” consort Phillis. Cripple goes on to describe Phillis as “beauty’s

[222] Cripple recalls her virtues: “so beautiful a virgin as she is,/ Of such fair parentage; so virtuous/ So gentle, so kind, and wise as Phillis is” (4.1.19-21)

pride," "natures better part of workmanship," and as a "sacred comet," while also emphasizing the "opportunity" presented and his "resign[ation]" of her smiles for Frank's sake. As Cripple describes these elements in vociferous detail, he outlines Frank's own desires; to converse pleasingly with Phillis, to be showered in terms of sweet affection, to be loved by her, and to hold the power to issue a "sentence" over that love. In doing so, Cripple demonstrates the desirability of *his* position, as one who is the subject of Phillis's love. Shifting to describe his plan, Cripple states that he is personally "too foul for such a beauty," and "too base/ To match in brightness" with Phillis, the "sacred comet." This rare moment of self-reflection rings untrue and is swiftly proven so as Cripple's characterizations of himself as too "foul" and "base" for Phillis are directly contradicted by his plan for Frank to dress as Cripple himself and by Phillis's own words:

> *Cripple*: Wherefore I will immediately you take
> My crooked habit, and in that disguise
> Court her, yea win her, for she will be won,
> This will I do, to pleasure you, my friend.
> *Frank*: Which for my love to thee shall never end (4.5.33-7).

Be he referencing his clothing, his facial features, or even his use of crutches, Cripple's deployment of the term "foul" stands on feeble ground when moments later he declares his "crooked habit" as the disguise that is key to winning Phillis's heart. It is the somatic manifestation of Cripple, his physical appearance, that activates Phillis's deep attraction, and Cripple demonstrates an acute awareness of her desire through the proposal of his plan. Much like Mall's handkerchief, Cripple posits that the mimicry of his apparel will lead to an extension of Phillis's love. It is the visual impact of Cripple that matters, as he imagines her kindness extending to accommodate Frank: "She's kind to me, be she as

kind to you,/ What admiration will there then ensue" (4.5.42-3)? He hopes that should her kindness extend, perhaps her attraction might also. Yet Cripple's inability to follow this logic to a romantic conclusion, and his choice of the question "what . . . will there then ensue?" indicates the knowledge that such attraction may not extend beyond the physical disguise. Cripple's open acknowledgment and exploitation of Phillis's somatically-based desire in directing Frank to "take/ My crooked habit" is not remarkable in itself, aside from encouraging counterfeit disability. What is unique, is Cripple's statement that once Frank dresses as Cripple, "she will be won." His adamant use of the verb "will," outlines the manipulable parameters of Phillis's desire: that is, any indication of interest emanating from Cripple's body (crooked or not) will unquestionably be met with the fulfilment of romantic desire. Frank's supposed "counterfeiting" exposes the deeply somatic nature of Phillis's desire but also explicitly depends upon the knowledge base of cripped desire (desire enabled through prosthetic extension) that is established by the play from its outset through rescued maidens (Frank substituting Cripple), material items (Mall's handkerchief), subplot substitutions (Barnard for Bowdler), and through Cripple's and Frank's unified relationality.

What occurs between Cripple and Frank, however, is more encompassing than simple counterfeiting. A desire-based subtext of intensely romantic language permeates the exchange in act four scene five between Frank and Cripple as they work to triangulate their interlocking desires around Phillis. As previously mentioned, Frank surrenders to Cripple's command in deeply affectionate terms, which continue throughout the scene. For instance, when Cripple recommends that Frank take on his bodily appearance to win Phillis, he notes "This will I do, to pleasure you," to which Frank responds, "my love to

thee shall never end" (4.5.36-7). The closeness of their bond is undeniably homosocial and borders on the homoerotic as they grow ever closer in body and come to share one somatic representation and one extended body. As they draw together in motions of linked desire and bodily states, Cripple declares:

> *Cripple*: About it then, assume this shape of mine,
> Take what I have, for all I have is thine.
> Supply my place, to gain thy heart's desire,
> So may you quench two hearts that burn like fire.
> . . .
> I will leave thee, now be thou fortunate,
> That we with joy your loves may consummate (4.5.38-41, 44-5).

Cripple's first couplet takes the form of vows, echoing the form of marital vows, as he promises to share all that is his with Frank. Specifically rhyming "mine" and "thine" and equipoising the terms with rhythmic symmetry emphasizes Cripple's and Frank's comingling of desire and material signifiers (what was mine becomes yours) and draws Frank closer in emotional proximity. Throughout this sequence, Cripple doffs his clothing, and presumably his crutches, for Frank to use. With the unification of property comes the unification of Frank's and Cripple's bodies as they become one "shape," and the lines of identity and somatic individuation are redrawn in a strikingly literal illustration of marital metaphor. Still more, within his vows Cripple uses strong verbs to issue movement-based commands, telling Frank to go "about it," to "assume," to "take" and to "supply" in order to "quench" his heart's desire. These commands not only satiate Frank's wish to be directed by Cripple but demonstrate the unification of Frank's and Cripple's physical and desire-based motions of delight. Their somatic joining is further emphasized when Cripple states, "we with joy your loves may consummate," indicating

that he and Frank compose a “we.” Regardless of the anticipated marital union between Phillis and Frank, the activity that seals and sexually drives that union occurs between the “we:” between Cripple and Frank, who now move *together* to “consummate” the motions that compose love within the main plotline of the play-text. Any and all pacts of marriage between Phillis and Frank at the play’s close must be figured through the inseparability of Frank and Cripple’s bodies, the driving force of their unified desire, and prosthetic nature of Frank’s body in the sexual consummation of marriage. As Cripple’s and Frank’s desires begin to move together, so too do their bodies, as Frank’s motions of delight become Cripple’s and vice versa, generating new forms of bodily knowledge.

Cripple, a figure who curates the desires of others throughout the text, fulfils his own desires through the procurement of Frank’s body, a union that, while mutual, Cripple unequivocally governs. As commander of both Frank’s body and Phillis’s love, Cripple has the unique opportunity himself to derive pleasure from fulfilling Phillis’s love for him without having to marry her, while still evoking, capitalizing on, and emphasizing her desire for his somatic form. In act four scene five, Cripple’s desire emerges in a new shape, one that allows him to enjoy the love of Frank and Phillis through somatic extension. Cripple’s erotic investment in both Phillis and Frank manifests through his desire to see his somatic form—his doubled body—consummate desire outside of his active somatic involvement.[223] If impairment is indeed the rule and normalcy the fantasy,

[223] If thinking of desire through prosthetic extension rather than direct bodily interaction feels foreign, consider Christine Varnado’s detailing of the erotic prosthetics belonging to the protagonist of *The Roaring Girl* (1607/10) Moll Cutpurse: “the array of garments and props decorating the bodies onstage—Moll’s breeches, ruff, doublet, and hose; Mary’s breeches, doublet, and hose; the rapier Moll carries; and the father’s viol—become erotic prostheses that can be put on, borrowed, and used for the playing of different sexual “parts” (Varnado 39). See Varnado’s “‘Invisible Sex!,’” 2013, especially pp. 25–52.

as Lennard J. Davis claims in this chapter's opening epigraph, the fantasy here exposes normalcy (re: able-bodiedness) as willfully engaged in cripped erotic desire (Davis 31).

Should readers or spectators doubt Cripple's successful prosthetic extension through Frank for an instant, Phillis affirms its success when she emerges at the end of act four scene five and avows her physical desire for Cripple when she sees Frank-as-Cripple (in Cripple's shape) from afar:

> *Phillis*: Yea yonder sits the wonder of mine eye . . .
> Thou art the star whereby my course is led,
> Be gracious then, bright sun, or I am dead (4.5.56-62, 81-2).

Frank's embodiment of Cripple is credible despite his admitted lack of drawing skill ("A worser workman never any saw") (4.5.61). Phillis describes Frank-as-Cripple as "the wonder of mine eye," reasserting her somatically based desire for Cripple's form through ocular language. Phillis goes on to use oddly familiar terms of loving admiration, calling Cripple the "star" that leads her, and the "bright sun" that holds the power to bring her life or death. Recalling Cripple's words only twenty-five lines prior to her entrance, he considers himself lacking in "brightness" to match the "sacred comet" of Phillis. Such correlation in lexicon and mirroring in metaphors of desire draws Phillis and Cripple together as characters both enlivened by the other but each fearing desire for complex and contrary reasons. As act five approaches in which Phillis is tricked into a betrothal to Frank-as-Cripple, her desire for Cripple's person endures and Phillis continues to express her desire for exactly what Frank lacks—Cripple's honorable nature and his animating

spirit.[224] From these expositions of desire for Cripple, it is clear that Phillis's love cannot simply transfer to Frank through his somatic extension. Instead, Frank benefits from the initial love that Phillis holds for Cripple as it extends unwittingly to incorporate his speculative body that mitigates his own form in order to visually represent her lover. Frank, then, allows the exploration of extended, cripped desire for the speculative body. But in act five, it is Cripple's return to the stage that once more animates the forces of desire within the text.

Cripple's entrances and exits upon the stage are charged with theatrical momentum and a transformative impetus throughout the play. Act one stages Cripple's arrival to save Phillis, act two reveals Cripple's professional identity of pattern-drawing, act four stages the rupture of Bowdler's and Mall's love and the instigation of Frank's transformation, and act five stages Cripple's entrance by visually doubling Cripple to induce the play's resolution. Analysis of act five could easily concentrate on Frank's "transformation" back to his former shape and the repulsion that Phillis seems to voice upon seeing two embodiments of Cripple simultaneously. Genevieve Love, for instance, considers how Cripple is sidelined in the final scene, arguing that Frank's doffing of his disguise occurs "at the expense of and through the erasure of the Cripple," who ceases to speak for the last ninety lines of the play (Love 65). Indeed, when Frank abandons his prosthetic role, Love wonders if the fantasy "that doubleness can wholly and powerfully resolve to singleness" wins out—"a fantasy . . . that theater's power does *not* bank on the stirring tremor between actor and role," a tremor that she terms "the theater's crutch"

[224] In act two scene two, Phillis initially notes Cripples "many virtues are my true direction" (2.2.252). Act four scene four sees Phillis state frankly to the audience "there is another,/ of better worth, though not of half their wealth,/ what though deform'd, his virtue mends that miss;/ what though not rich, his wit doth better gold" (4.4.122-25).

(Love 65). Katherine Schaap Williams and Love agree that Cripple "finally shoulders the cost" of the text's work to make a value judgment regarding acceptable and "illegitimate forms" of self-representation (Williams, "More Legs" 512). Turning to the moment in question, Cripple enters onto a stage that already contains a representation of his body (Frank-as-Cripple) and seems to command proceedings, beginning with his dramatic entrance:

> *Enter Cripple, Ferdinand, Anthony, Bowdler.*
> *Cripple*: Gentlemen, sweet bloods, or brethren of
> familiarity,
> I would speak with Phillis, shall I have audience? . . .
> *Phillis*: This is some spirit, drive him from my sight . . .
> Hence foul deformity.
> Nor thou nor he, shall my companion be,
> If Cripple's dead, the living seem to haunt,
> I'll neither of either, therefore I say avaunt;
> Help me, father.
> *Frank*: Dear heart, revoke these words,
> Here are no spirits nor deformities,
> I am a counterfeit Cripple now no more,
> But young Frank Goulding as I was before.
> Amaze not, love, nor seem not discontent,
> Nor thee nor him shall ever this repent (5.1.298-313).

Cripple's seeming innocent inquiry are his final lines in the play, and they purposefully underplay a moment that energetically stimulates some of the play's greatest activity. The simplicity of Cripple's phrasing belies the intense somatic scrutiny encouraged by his doubling that emanates from both on-stage and off-stage audiences. Cripple begins by conjuring Frank's earlier term that united them in animating desirous endearment ("sweet bloods"). By addressing the men only ("gentlemen, sweet bloods, or brethren of familiarity"), he also acknowledges the extension of "familiarity" connecting himself and Frank-as-Cripple while also stating Phillis's name, so that regardless of her position on-

stage, her attention is called to participate and respond. The rhetorical question "may I have audience," comically highlights the most anticipated moment of act five—Cripple's appearance alongside Frank-as-Cripple—hyper-focusing theatrical attention on Cripple's presence and the motions that his entrance stirs on stage. Diverging from but supporting Love's structural focus on the fusion between Cripple, crutch, and theater, this moment draws attention to social and bodily interpretations of the union and extension that occurs between Frank and Cripple (Love 65-7). With two seemingly identical bodies resting on four crutches, the knowable body is definitively thrown into turmoil. Often moments of identity revelation that generate somatic speculation disrupts the knowable body while supposedly allowing the audience the satisfaction of knowing who is 'truly' in disguise and who is the 'real' Cripple.[225]

Yet act four scene five's deep intertwining of Frank and Cripple is not so easily undone. Indeed, Phillis's reaction is not typical. Rather than describing her confusion, falling silent, or recognizing that she has been duped, Phillis immediately believes Cripple is dead and that she is seeing "some spirit." To modern readers, her declarative banishment of "foul deformity" may seem to assert a previously hidden loathing regarding Cripple's physical impairment. However, Phillis has already asserted her position regarding Cripples deformity as well as his lack of wealth and dislike of her friends (all of which she gives equal consideration), stating "tut, I will bear with that" (4.5.112). Phillis's exclamation of "hence foul deformity" then, is almost certainly

[225] Transformations back and forth are often more complicated and less clearly defined than we describe. As noted frequently in relation to Cesario's transformation back to Viola in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1601-2), changing back is often less successful, less convincing, and more emotionally and socially complex than changing into someone else early in a play-text. In *Fair Maid of the Exchange,* Frank-as-Cripple, like Cesario, is quite unsuccessful in his "return" to Frank Goulding.

directed at the truly unexpected visual on-stage—the doubling of soma that, Phillis assumes, appears because Cripple has died and is moving beyond the bounds of the body to "haunt" her. Oddly, Phillis mistaking Cripple's and Frank' prosthetically grounded doubling for death reveals the element that disturbs her sense of the natural and forces her to consider the supernatural: Phillis perceives the movement of Cripple's intent, desire, and visual manifestation beyond the singularity of his/ the actor's body.

Cripped desire, however, cannot be escaped by Phillis or Frank as they are propelled into betrothal by the dynamic forward motion of Cripple's desire. Frank's futile attempt to "escape the taint of the uncanny" is almost comical in its ineffectiveness (Love 65).[226] He begins with the triumphant cry "I am a counterfeit Cripple now no more, But young Frank Goulding as I was before," yet he is immediately forced to follow jubilation with reassurance by asking Phillis to "Amaze not . . . nor seem not discontent," because neither she nor Cripple will "ever this repent." Asking Phillis to "seem not discontent" only serves to imply that her reaction is indeed one of discontent; an issue only made worse by Frank's decision to speak on Cripple's behalf, indicating an intimate knowledge of Cripple's desires and further cripping said desire through collapsing the fragile markers of identity and agency that separate Frank's desires from Cripple's. Despite doffing Cripple's clothing, Frank has merged with Cripple in a way that is not effortlessly revoked through the removal of habit and standing unaided. Williams determines that, "once engaged in borrowing Cripple's prostheses," or as I have argued, once the two join together bodily, Frank is unable to ever truly extricate himself from the "economy of disguise," and the speculation inducing extended body that the two have created together

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[226] One might imagine him throwing the crutches to the ground, or ripping off a wig, but his denial of his own prosthetic extension does nothing to mitigate his performed disability and connection to Cripple.

(Williams "More Legs" 511). In this final scene, the concept of counterfeiting inadequately expresses the complex generation of cripped desire that emanates from prosthetic extension.

Frank and Cripple draw very different lived experiences into contact, explore similitude, and extend the boundaries of the body and of embodied desire beyond the self. They diffuse and elide categories of physical differentiation in order to claim new bodily knowledges and assert a complex cripped desire. As much as preceding readers may see Cripple's silence as effectively eliminating him "from the play" with the retention of "ambivalent power" to "waft through space and time," it seems that his catalyzing, transgressive power emanates from his ability to embrace his own deviance as valuable (Love 66, Mitchell and Snyder 35). Cripple, like his predecessors in this dissertation, does not oscillate between two points, but rather expertly draws attention to the conflicting elements of character, of body, and of theatrical representation—embodied and otherwise—that generatively stretch, overlap, and diffuse the qualities of one another.

With this diffusive context for conceiving of the early modern staged body in mind, Love's interest in the mobility of Cripple and her proof of his expert locomotion demonstrates how disability enables Cripple's social, imaginative, and geographic mobility. However, rather than highlighting Cripple's expertise in locomotion, his dispersal, and his material connection to theatrical space, I have argued for Cripple's physical expansion through prosthesis, an extension that encompasses not only Cripple's crutches and a dead man's letters but also the somatic form of Frank Goulding. In doing so, I demonstrate the utility and unique manifestation of Frank as something more than a

counterfeit cripple, who prosthetically reveals theatrical and lived structures of identity building, and who facilitates the expansion of Cripple's actions and desires beyond the singular body, cultivating a wider range of cripped desires. Such use of prosthesis draws the specific attention of Phillis and of her audience as prosthesis becomes a theatrical force that can reimagine and revise traditional knowledge of the body. In part three of this chapter, I go on to explore how performances of cripped desire, like Frank's, are made possible by a diffusive conception of disability in the period. The language of disability, I argue, is fundamental to lexicons of love and desire in early modern literature and performance.

~ III ~

Struck blind or weak-kneed by desire, stumbling over a dizzying array of words and emotions, trembling, forgetting, or stammering with lovesickness, figurative motions of disability are even now deployed regularly in efforts to describe the indescribable and to express new sensory and emotional experiences that stretch the bounds the possible.[227] Yet, despite the rich metaphorical linguistic enmeshment of desire and disability, they are seldom thought with together in an embodied sense. As Anne Mallow and Robert McRuer note: "rarely are disabled people regarded as either desiring subjects or objects

[227] I mirror Mallow's list of desire-based inabilities that she underscores in her chapter "Is Sex Disability" in *Sex and Disability*, 2012.

of desire" (Mallow and McRuer 1).[228] As Lindsey Row-Heyveld notes in the final chapter of her book *Dissembling Disability in Early Modern English Drama* (2018), if we are "willing to acknowledge the desire of early modern people to break the boundaries of gender, race, and class identities through their use of disguise . . . we must accept that this desire extended to disability as well" (Row-Heyveld 214). In part two I posited that there was not only an early modern desire to break the boundaries of disabled identity, but that *Fair Maid of the Exchange* gave voice to the desiring agency of the disabled body. Part three extends this notion further by explicitly asserting an early modern way of thinking that circulates around physical disability and desire. This desire was not for a particular kind of fetishized body; rather, motions of disability became a way of expressing, thinking with, and attaining romantic and sexual desire. I look to how the language of disability and bodily vulnerability, when relationally deployed with love and desire, could go beyond metaphor to directly implicate the somatic and kinetic modalities that early modern disability encompasses.[229] My focus on love language and periodic disability disrupts the binary of able/disabled and recognizes all people as existing with varying degrees of ability.

[228] For more modern writing on disability, desire, and critiques of ableist conceptions of disability as undesiring or undesirable, see Alison Kafer's, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 2013; Margrit Shildrick, *Dangerous Discourses*, 2009; and Anna Mallow and Robert McRuer's *Sex and Disability*, 2012.

[229] Steven Mullaney resists the concept that "etiological theory of the passions could become the basis for a phenomenology of emotions" and reminds us that humoral theory was most directly "concerned with temperament than emotion" (Mullaney 21, 190). Thinking with Mullaney, I posit that the etiology of humoral theory or scientific, religious, or historic discourse in the period cannot tell us much about emotional experiences, just the history and development of ideas. While love may have been associated with melancholy, melancholy was not the only bodily expression through which love could be associated of expressed. It is at the intersection of embodied emotion and disability theory where my exploration of cripped motions gains traction. Stephen Mullaney, *The Reformation of Emotions in the Age of Shakespeare*, University of Chicago, 2015.

Looking to Shakespeare's Sonnets 78 and 83 and the anonymously authored *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607), I reveal how motions of disabled somatic experience can be explored as a fundamental epistemology of romantic desire in the period. London was a site of sprawling new networks of connectivity that specifically sought to explore, question, and often police disability. Yet, impairments of all kinds were not exceptions to a rule, in part, because norms were being actively negotiated in the period,[230] but also because disability was far more common due to the proliferation of illness, warfare, imprisonment, migration, fledgling surgical care, and the dangers of work, and childbearing (Hobgood and Wood 8). Disability was expected. While disability included congenital ("deriving from birth"), acquired ("secured during one's lifetime"), or periodic ("from which once phases in and out"), experiences of "stigmatized sensory, somatic, or cognitive impairment" in the period, I will be focusing primarily on the acquired and periodic, shifting away from examinations of the monstrous in order to examine a different form of quotidian experience, one that became intimately linked ways of thinking about desire (Wood 190).[231] If we consider disability (and physical identifiers of disability) as a porous category of "unableness" that "people can fall in and out of . . . at various points in their lives," we can begin to reexamine instances of disability within lexicons of desire that position characters or speakers as somatically disabled in part of an

[230] See Valerie Traub's current project exploration of normalizing race, class, sexuality, and gender, *Mapping Embodiment in the Early Modern West: A Prehistory of Normality*. Her earlier publication provides a brief prelude to her current study. See Valerie Traub, "The Nature of Norms in Early Modern England: Anatomy, Cartography, 'King Lear,'" *South Central Review*, vol. 26, no. 1/2, 2009, pp. 42–81; Valerie Traub, *Mapping Embodiment in the Early Modern West: A Prehistory of Normality*, Lecture, Mt. Holyoke College, September, 2015.
[231] David Houston Wood, "Shakespeare and Variant Embodiment," in *Shakespeare In Our Time: A Shakespeare Association of America Collection*, eds. Dympna Callaghan and Suzanne Gossett, Bloomsbury, 2016.

unexplored epistemology of cripped desire (Hobgood and Wood 6).[232] In short, desire itself becomes a form of disability in early modern thought.

Legitimacy of any given disability is not a question I intend to foreground or answer. As Lindsay Row-Heyveld has made abundantly clear, many plays depict counterfeit disability—characters in a play that pretend to be a disabled person. Importantly, I do not aim to destabilize Row-Heyveld's reading by arguing that some of those characters labeled counterfeits could be genuine, and I do not focus on instances of counterfeit vs legitimate disability. Instead I ask a pressing question—can a body be impaired by love in the early modern theatrical imagination? If so, this imagined periodic disability (whether possible to materially manifest off-stage or not) connects disability to larger cultural patterns of desire, and fundamentally destabilizes the binarized relationship that figures disability in opposition to ability.[233] The connection between disability with sexuality is described by Anna Mollow who argues that "in the cultural imagination (or unconscious), disability is fantasized in terms of a loss of self, of mastery, integrity, and control, a loss that, both desired and feared, is indissociable from sexuality" (Mollow 297). If loss is aligned with sexuality, other particular kinds of

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[232] By cripped desire, in this context, I mean desire manifested through or centered on the somatically/ kinetically impaired body. A number of dictionaries from 1598-1617 describe disability as "unableness" or "disableness." See John Florio, "Impotenza," *A World of Words* 1598, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, accessed May 28th 2020; Robert Cawdrey, "disabilitie," *A Table Alphabetical* 1604, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed October 1st 2019; Robert Cawdrey, "disabilitie," *A Table Alphabetical Containing and Teaching the Understanding of Hard Usual English Words* 1617, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed October 1st 2019.

[233] In urging us to recognize the early modern investment in recognizing able bodied and disabled bodies as part and parcel of one another I recall critics like Peter Coleridge or Lennard Davis who have both called for modern individuals to recognize themselves as the "not-yet-disabled," or the "[t]emporarily-[a]ble-[b]odied" (Coleridge 215, Davis 36). In the early modern period, the theatrical and literary imagination, if not the wider population of English people, enlivened tales that brought disability and impairment into everyday narratives of deep love and romantic conjunction. Peter Coleridge, *Disability, Liberation, and Development*, 1993, Oxfam Publishing, 2006.

motion are also enmeshed with both desire and disability. I argue that, in some instances, the pursuit of romantic love takes on cripped motions.

Elizabeth Bearden's work on early modern *sprezzatura* in Castiglione's *The Courtier* (1528) clarifies our understanding of renaissance attitudes toward cripped motions of desire. Castiglione's theory of *sprezzatura* "describes the action of making something difficult seem easy in order to improve a courtier's social standing" (Bearden 108). This theory presupposes that all humans are variable "from the norms that *mediocrità* enforces . . . and the regulation of these flaws involves not only moderation of behavior but of the body as well" (57). Specific motions and postures were considered "physical shortcomings" that should be concealed through *sprezzatura*, the effortless-seeming enaction of posture, athleticism, style, and more. This generated a "norming effect" (58-9). Bearden astutely notes that *sprezzatura* "functions both as a prosthetic technology and as a mode of passing" which can be worn like a "velvet glove that exhibits the contours of the [hand] it conceals . . . [and which] could be filled with wet clay" (Bearden 58, Berger Jr. in Bearden 57). Early moderns were schooled in the desirable motions of ability—the elegant pass, the prosthetic extension of the body, and the motions of grace that indicate desirable courtly behavior. So too were early moderns educated on the powerful non-normativity of cripped desire and the desirable motions of disability by poetic tradition and theatrical embodiment.

Lame, blind, deaf, dumb, deformed: Shakespeare's sonnets depend on the somatically different body.[234] Sonnet 78 opens by "invoking" the subject as muse to assist in "my verse/ As every alien pen hath got my use and under thee their poesy disperse" (78.2). The speaker focuses on the role of the beloved in dispersal of poesy and in the dispersal of her image as it becomes subject for "every alien pen" (78.3). A metaphorical and literal movement of her desired and parsed image through others' writing has profound effects, most notably a glance from "Thine eyes" have "taught the dumb on high to sing" (78.5). The beauty of the beloved's eyes, or, perhaps, desire stimulated by her eyes, elicit transformative motion, causing the disabled "dumb" reader or viewer to expel high "singing."[235] This transformation of a disabled body is the first of four praiseful transformations that the speaker describes. According to the speaker, the beloved also stimulates "heavy ignorance aloft to fly,/ Have added feathers to the learned's wing/ And given grace a double majesty" (78.6-8). That these transformations begin from a place of somatic disability in the form of dumbness is no mistake as each following construction mirrors a transformative alteration from lesser ability or inability toward greater kinetic ability through contact with the love object.

Sonnet 83, part of the same sequence as 78, inverts the relationship set up between desire and disability in sonnet 78. First the speaker cultivates the relationship

[234] Like Catullus's lyric verse and Petrarch's lyrics and sonnets that came before his, Shakespeare's sonnets are littered with the language of physical dis-ability, including "lameness" appearing in sonnets 37 and 89, "blindness" in sonnets 113, 136, 137, 148, 149, and 152 (to name a few), and the word "disabled" appearing in sonnet 66. This is a small sampling of terms that appear throughout the sonnets, a list that grows vastly longer if we are to consider verbs indicating hinderance of movement within the category of "dis-ability," or deformity. William Shakespeare, "Sonnets 37, 66, 89, 113, 136, 137, 148, 149, and 152," *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Booth, Yale University Press, 1977.

[235] Another reading of this moment could see dumb angels "on high" being compelled to sing. I take my reading of the reader's role from Stephen Booth's *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Yale University Press, 1977.

between movement and desire by implicating the imagined body of the speaker, who has sat inert, never "painting" or writing of his lover because simply by being "extant," her beauty reveals how the "modern quill doth come too short" (83.1, 6, 7). Here the speaker's inability to express the beloved's beauty (and his own desire) manifests as physical hinderance (not purely in rhetoric but also in ability to write with a "quill") and the speaker argues that this "dumb[ness]" and "mute[ness]" are in themselves acts of love (83.10-11). His transformation from poetic romantic to "mute" lover vitally illustrates the role of disability, just as the phrase "for I impair not beauty being mute" demonstrates the concept that falling "dumb" and "mute" are true somatic signifiers of unimpaired love (83.11).[236] That is to say, disabled embodiment demonstrates unhindered love surpassing those able-bodied counterparts who "would give life, and bring a tomb," essentially inverting the positive correlation sometimes implied between action and desire (83.12).[237] Transformative disability and desire are deeply linked in Shakespeare's sonnets, demonstrating a wider lexical relation between desire and disability in the early modern period. Shakespeare's Sonnets are not a rare example of disability as a form of loving embodiment and motion: rather, Sonnet 83 hits on a literary patterning that also appears throughout city comedy.[238] Turning to *Fair Maid of the Exchange*, this literary patterning

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[236] See Pierre de Ronsard's sonnets to Helen, whose gaze "dazzles" him, whose glance gives him "lasting fever," and whose acknowledgment "grants" him the vital impetus of "life" (*Sonnets Pour Helene* Book I: IX). Petrarch's work more closely aligns with Shakespeare's inability to write: "my pen cannot keep pace with my true will" (*Il Canzoniere*, 23). Francesco Petrarch, "Poem 23," *The Canzoniere or Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, trans. Mark Musa, Indiana University Press, 1996.
[237] That a previously able-bodied speaker could experience dumbness, or lameness (as in sonnet 89) may take a metaphorical leap in understanding and need to be interrogated as a leap based on a privileged subject position. But I again pause to ask, what if these descriptions of unableness are performances of genuine somatic experience—what does this link between disability and love tell us about early modern experiences of love?
[238] The formal constraints of sonnets vs. city comedy work somewhat differently to challenge ableist conceptions. Shakespeare's sonnets often work to present inversions of familiar terms and conceptions of desire, ability, and love. City comedy goes further thanks to its expansive dramatic range by enabling spectators to perceive networks of desire anew, to learn embodied forms of love as disability, and to place

indicates the presence of a prevalent cripped epistemology of desire in early modern drama.

Fair Maid of the Exchange likewise emphasizes physical motions and their relationship to desire. As previously discussed, the play circles around Phillis Flower's desire for Cripple, and the pursuit of the three Goulding brothers Ferdinand, Anthony, and Frank for her love. These three men spend the play unwittingly trying to measure up against Cripple, and by the play's close it is only the most cripped (literally and metaphorically) that wins Phillis, and not through gallantry but through transformation into the form of Cripple himself. While some may see the transformative motions of these brothers as simply the performance of disability by able-bodied people, I urge readers to recognize the performance of a deeply rooted cultural understanding that explicitly links disability and sexual desire. The movement of transforming bodies propels *Fair Maid of the Exchange* forward—be they sallied across the stage by crutches, or not—and so too, does desire. The propulsive energy of desire is described by Frank Goulding who, when asked by his brother, Anthony, to describe love, claims that love is "a voluntary motion of delight,/ Touching the superficies of the soul . . . / Which motion as it unbeseems a man,/ So by the soul and reason which adorn/ The life of man it is extinguished" (1.3.92-3, 98-100). While Frank and Anthony disagree about most elements of this description, including the superficial touch of love upon the "superficies" (outermost parts) of the soul, the ability of the soul and reason to salvage man from

themselves within the staged theatrics if they so desire. For an excellent reading of disability in sonnet 66, see Sujata Iyengar, "Introduction," *Disability, Health, and Happiness in the Shakespearean Body*, ed. Sujata Iyengar, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2014.

unrequited love and the “voluntary” or involuntary experience of love, they do find common ground in its desiring “motions.”

Echoing Lennard Davis’ notion that “all humans are ‘wounded,’” which positions impairment as “the rule and normalcy as the fantasy,” Ferdinand Goulding positions love as an impairing force, because “love did wound me with fair Phillis Flower” (Davis in Hobgood and Wood 6, Anon. 1.3.52). In being “wounded so deep,” Ferdinand and his brother, Anthony, who is his rival, both demonstrate impairment through desiring motions that transform their emotional and somatic mobility (1.349).[239] Notably, both Ferdinand and Anthony roam the places of the stage, appearing to be nowhere, in particular, perhaps a street, while they bemoan their state of loving impairment. Together, they lexically build the framework of cripped desire. Ferdinand expresses his alteration with the verbiage of being “immured” in woes that have “stop[ped] up” and “presseth[ed] down” his heart (1.3.9, 15, 36). Each term explicitly describes a disruption or alteration in emotional mobility.

Anthony builds upon his brother’s language, noting that he, too, has “felt the wound” that leads him to dream of “clasping” Phillis, “keep[ing] her” within his arms, only to find his “circling” of her is imagined and his arms unable to contain the living form of his beloved (1.3.69, 74, 76). His desire to encircle, keep, and save Phillis articulates his expectation of successful male desire as domination. Instead of this lusty dream, Anthony finds himself in “manacles” as he describes to his youngest brother how “free m[e]n” who are not in love do not understand the “storm” and “scalding ardour”

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[239] Further work could expand this research by looking to mental disabilities and the intersection of physical and mental disability in love language.

that "wounds" and "war[s]" within him (1.3.102-3, 105, 107).[240] Anthony invokes adjacent lexicons of uncertainty (storms), pain (scalding, wounds), and enslavement (manacles, free men) to describe his impairing experience of unfulfilled love. His brother, Frank, describes him most vividly when he asks the entering Phillis "know you yonder lump of melancholy,/ yonder bundle of sighs, yonder wad of groans?" (1.3.141-2). In doing so, he draws attention to Anthony's physicality—his lumpishness, his bundleness, his waddishness—in short, his differently formed body. While Ferdinand's and Anthony's loving motion is not explicitly physicalized yet, the anonymous author of the play makes the lexical framework that builds in this first sequence in order to metaphorize altered mobility explicitly physical in the third brother, Frank.

Frank, despite disdaining love, experiences an explicit alteration in his physical state that becomes theatrically and spatially central to the closing of the love scene. Unlike his brothers, whose experience of cripped desire is mostly metaphorical with subtle somatic indicators, Frank somatically embodies the wounding movements of love. After fielding his brothers' melancholic temperaments, he approaches Phillis to advocate for Anthony's love. The audience's first indication that something has changed in the stalwartly reason-based mind of Frank is his movement across the stage and inability to leave Anthony in "private conference" with Phillis (1.3.76). Frank upon declaring "no marvel, then, we say that love is blind,/ if it still revel in obscurity, I will depart, I will not hinder love,/ I'll wash my hands, fare well," not only fails to leave, but "*lingers at* [*the*] *side*" and sallies to-and-fro, returning to center stage three times to speak with his brother

[240] The building lexicon of desire as inability or altered ability is maintained throughout the text, as desire is embodied, experienced, and generated through physical, movement-based states, including "melting," "burning," "wasting" and "metamorphosing" (1.3.112, 3.1.182,3.1.182, 3.1.185).

and his later love interest Phillis (1.3.179-82, 1.3.83 sd.). Each time Frank returns for (quite literally) no reason at all. He asks, "did you not call me back?" and learns what the audience already knows: that Phillis did not call him back once, twice, or thrice (1.3.187-8). It becomes increasingly clear through this fractious and spatially dominant movement that Frank feels a physical hindrance in leaving and compulsion to return to Phillis, that he "Exit . . . then returns and lingers," "starts away again," and "Exit[s]" but "returns once more and lingers at stage rear," while simultaneously he calls, "I am in haste, pray urge me not to stay" (1.3.92-3, sd.). Each sudden movement, each dash across the stage, each moment of protracted loitering, and each failed attempt to leave draws theatrical attention to how Frank's altered embodiment tangibly communicates his desire for Phillis, culminating in Frank's exclamation: "what means my blood . . . / Is not my head a fire, my eyes nor heart?/ Ha art thou here? I feel thee, love, I faith" (1.3. 198-9, 201-2). Both through disrupted physical movement, and the blazon of Frank's affected parts, his blood, eyes, head, and heart, he belatedly concludes that he "feel[s]" love. Indeed, Phillis notes "two brothers drowned in love, aye, and the third/ for all his outward habit of neglect . . . / hath dipped his foot too in loves scalding stream" (1.3.221-4). Frank's impairment (in this case taking the form of his movement-based continual return to the stage) and altered constitution (habit) clearly and vividly communicates the transformative capacity of love to the audience and Phillis alike by altering the kinesthetic signature of the character on the stage.

Frank's embodiment takes on an altogether more performative motion of love-based impairment in his sudden, on-stage performed dishevelment. Prior to meeting Phillis, he jests that he should not be pitied but plagued, if he ever were to fall in love:

Frank: cross arm myself, study ay-mes,
defy my hat-band, tread beneath my feet
shoe-strings and garters, practice in my glass,
distressed looks, and dry my liver up
with sighs enough to win an argosy (1.3.116-20)

Yet moments after Phillis vacates the stage, Frank exclaims in lengthy soliloquy “I am not well, and yet I am not ill,/ I am—what am I? Not in love, I hope?/ In love! Let me examine myself,” essentially inviting the audience to “examine” his body and alteration in greater detail (1.3.227-9). The culmination of this examination is that he is indeed in love with Phillis and as such must fall to his desire “therefore, hat-band avaunt,/ ruff, regard yourself, garters, adieu, shoe-strings so and/ so; I am a poor enamorate, and enforced with the Poet . . . / I that love obey” (1.3.255-8). Such a conspicuous performance of cripped motions of desire exposes the representational mechanics of cripped desire itself on the early modern stage—as a catalytic force, Frank is propelled toward sexually acquiring Phillis by outperforming his brothers’ in displays of disabling desire.[241]

The continued focusing of the play upon disability as desirable and as desire manifested continues as the play progresses. Ferdinand and Anthony maintain their dejected roaming of the stage, scheming against one another with love letters and porters (Frank, in disguise). Frank, however, in his more embodied state of impairment, seeks the help of Cripple, stating “Cripple, thou once didst promise me thy love,/ when I did rescue

[241] This performance is repeated in a different form when Frank, in disguise as a porter, tells Phillis of his Frank’s fake bedridden sickness (a trope that emerges in the earliest city comedy, William Haughton’s *Englishmen for My Money*, 1598, when a suitor feigns illness, demonstrated only through physical lameness, to win the hand of a trader’s daughter).

thee . . . / now is the time, now let me have thy aid" (4.1.53-5). Going to Cripple holds three advantages, first, by asking for assistance, Frank signals the depths of his impairment and subsequent inability to thwart his brothers, second, Frank enlists the man that Phillis is in love with, and third, Cripple, as a person with a seemingly static (or at least consistent within the text) disability holds unique power to bestow his somatic form upon Frank, essentially enabling the further cripping of Frank's performed desire. Upon learning of Frank's predicament, Cripple martials his "skillfull locomotion" and "dynamic verbal and bodily system" to disrupt the Goulding brothers' pursuit and to afford Frank the "gracious opportunity" of taking on his "crooked habit" in which to court Phillis (Love, 30, 4.5.26).[242] The transformation happens on-stage between Frank and Cripple, as one undresses and the other assumes his "shape" and "suppl[ies Cripple's] place" in the love scene to follow (4.5.38, 40). By dressing Frank in his own clothing, giving Frank the use of his crutches, and placing Frank inside his shop in the Exchange, Cripple not only enables Frank's desire but demonstrates that Phillis's attraction is based, at least in part, upon his somatic "crooked" form. Her desire for his shape is confirmed upon her entrance when she states, "yea yonder sits the wonder of mine eye," noting the distinctly ocular site of her desire (4.5.62).

Beyond Phillis's motivations we see Frank's embodied performance of cripped desire as reflective of his loving motions and precisely of his desire. When Frank takes on Cripple's habit in order to woo Phillis, he stands apart for a moment and reflects happily on his embodied extension of Cripple:

[242] Moments like this could easily be termed "counterfeit" cripping by Lindsay Row-Heyveld. While her term is incredibly valuable, I posit that some forms of cripping, while counterfeit to our eyes, could demonstrate different modes of thinking that expand our conception of what disability could encompass in the period.

Frank: you, my elder brethren, . . . shall run through fire,
Before you touch one part of my desire.
Am I not like my self in this disguise,
Crooked in shape, and crooked in my thoughts?
Then am I a Cripple right (4.5.52-58)

Frank fuses his ambition of fulfilled "desire" with his disabled "disguise," muddling the depth of his desire with the embodied shape he takes. In doing so, Frank maps a clear logical pathway that unifies desire ("crooked in thought") and his disabled form ("crooked in shape") and linking movements of desire with impairment. This logical mapping implicitly guides spectators to consider disability as simultaneously manifesting metaphor, performance, and physical state that Frank has moved into (and may move out of) based expressly on the intensity of his loving desire. As the scene between Frank and Phillis progresses, Frank further highlights the relationship between desire and his performed disability. First, Frank rejects Phillis's advances by drawing attention to his (Frank-as-Cripple's) physical and social deficits "I am too base," "I am deform'd," in order to stimulate Phillis's return performance of unremitting love "my wealth shall raise thee up . . . / Tut, I will bear with that" (4.5.109-12).[243] In doing so, Frank leads the audience, once more, through the logic that motions of desire are manifestly married to impairment (be it financial of somatic). The joining of these two elements is characterized by Frank-as-Cripple who "employ[s] the virtue of my shape" to make Phillis sue for his love, before he yields by stating (4.5.115):

Frank: here I proffer all the humble service

[243] These terms are almost verbatim from Cripple when, just eighty lines earlier, he bestowed his "crooked habit" onto Frank.

> Your high prized love doth merit at my hands,
> Which I confess is more than I, unable,
> Can gratify (4.5.120-3).

It is quite literally Cripple's "crooked shape" that enables his virtuous acquiescence to Phillis's desire, complete with Frank-as-Cripple's confession that he is "unable" to serve her gratifyingly. As Phillis, of course, insists otherwise, she exclaims "Let us embrace like two united friends,/ Here love begins, and former hatred ends" (4.5.125-6, 130-1). Frank, in this moment, is not "in disguise," as such, but rather he is compelled into a state of performed disability that culminates in the adoption of Cripple's outward form as the strongest expression of desire. Their physical intertwining draws theatrical focus as the most explicit romantic interaction within the play thus far, focusing additional audience attention on the two figures clinging to one another at the height of their courtship.[244] It is at this moment of embrace that the audience are swiftly reminded of Frank's brothers—not only that—but of why, exactly, his brothers have failed in their pursuit of Phillis.

Ferdinand and Anthony enter "walking together," bemoaning that their letters to Phillis were returned with "poor" results (4.5.139). Seeing Phillis, the two ignore Frank-as-Cripple entirely in order to court her. Their frenetic industry sends them volleying across the stage as each brother attempts to thwart the other and court "in private" (4.5.147, 152, 160, 171sd.). Contrastingly, Frank-as-Cripple remains motionless and silent, triumphing not only in his recent private conference with Phillis but also in his physical demonstration of the principal that the most cripped in their desire loves most truly. This way of thinking is punctuated by Phillis's declaration of marriage to Frank-as-

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[244] We see Bowdler and Mall speaking intimately with one another, but no indication of passionate embraces or kissing precludes the wooing scene between Frank-as-Cripple and Phillis.

Cripple that begins “here sits my love,” as it staunchly juxtaposes his somatic form and his different motions of desire against Ferdinand’s and Anthony’s chaotic crusade. At this crux of desire and disabled embodiment, something quite startling happens. Phillis declares them married, and Frank-as-Cripple “seals” their affection (4.5.196). While some scholars see the final scene of the play as a blow to positive depictions of disabled embodiment, primarily due to Phillis’s exclamation of “hence foul deformity,” few discuss the on-stage marriage that takes place between Phillis and Frank-as-Cripple, complete with crutches, crooked habit, a ring, and a kiss “I give my hand, and with my hand, my heart,/ my self, and all to him; and with this ring/ I’ll wed myself” (4.5.192-4).[245] This wedding is performed not only before Ferdinand and Anthony “in sight of both you here present,” but also the wider pool of spectators who, regardless of Frank’s prior form, witness Phillis marrying the somatic embodiment of Cripple. Having already witnessed the marriage-like union between Frank and Cripple in 4.5, the audience are both reminded of that bond when Phillis recites marital vows and through the intermingled somatic signifiers of Cripple’s body with Franks voice. Drawing Phillis into the union further triangulates desire through the disabled form by actively rewarding diverse expressions of cripped desire, including Cripple’s desire to orchestrate the romantic interests of others, Phillis’s desire for Cripple’s body, Frank’s desire, which manifests as impairment, and Cripple’s and Frank’s desire-based somatic union.

[245] This reading of act five is something that I, and others like Genevieve Love and Lindsay Row-Heyveld, dispute.

Conclusion

Chapter Three's exploration of cripped desire opens up a wide field of meaning. Cripped desire encompasses prosthetic extension, desire articulated through impairment, desire curated through disabled figures, cripped motions, and performative cripping, all of which ask the audience, both early modern and present day, to reformulate their understanding of embodied desire. By paying attention to the lexicon of bodily impairment employed by all the male characters that circle Phillis, I have explored how a contingency of bodies impaired by love demonstrate a kind of periodic disability. While the Goulding brothers all attempt to reassert their will at the end of the text, the unsuccessful Ferdinand and Anthony both exit disgruntledly, stating "Impatience pulls me hence, for this disdain./ I am resolv'd never to love again" (5.364-5). In doing so they express a continuation of their unsatisfied cripped desires, for in vowing never to love, they add a new impairment to the list of loving protestations.[246] *Fair Maid of the Exchange* distributes bodily vulnerabilities differently (and unequally) among the male characters throughout the play, but each variation centralizes the clear intersection of desire and disability.

This chapter demonstrates how movements of disability and impairment are part of the processes of transformation catalyzed by desire that generate cripped desire and that foreground somatic transformation as a register for disrupting ontologies of the body and presenting different epistemologies of somatic knowing. Furthermore, this chapter

[246] As Mollow succinctly states, Frank's desire also remains cripped: "sex is disability" (Mollow 310). According to Mollow, "our culture's desexualization of disabled people functions to defend against a deeply rooted but seldom acknowledged awareness that all sex is incurably, and perhaps desirably, disabled" (Mollow 310). Thus, any future with desire in it, includes cripped motions.

establishes how the language of disability is fundamental to lexicons of love and desire in early modern literature and performance. By presenting Cripple as centrifuge, curator, and object of desire and Frank as a prosthetic extension of Cripple's body that enacts certain desiring motions, the play-text articulates a wider experiential field of desire that is deeply dependent on the disabled body and forms of impairment. Cripple's command of desire and the cripped lexicon of love throughout the text crafts a cripped epistemology that centralizes desire as disability and that acknowledges the power of disabled body to command desire and to desire others.

One might ask if the conclusion of the play, when Frank achieves his love object and reveals himself, reasserts an ableist idea of wholeness and completion. Yet, this question itself emerges from binarized logics of ability versus impairment. Disability, when considered in its diffusive, categorically transient incarnation can extend our perception of somatic experience in the early modern period and challenge our ableist notions today. Renaissance drama and literature recognizes disability as a state that all able-bodied people move in and out of to varying degrees, while demonstrating that the construction of able bodiedness is itself counterfeit and that people are people all differently able. If we, as critics, reorient our understanding of the body to think with impairment as the rule—if we think of bodily difference as ubiquitous—we move past limiting binaries and begin the process of excavating fresh early modern lexicons and epistemologies of desire. By broaching new conversations around the desiring disabled body and its various manifestations in theatrical space, we stand to better interrogate early modern bodily knowledge. Chapter Four brings the discussion of speculative bodies to the forum of gender fluidity, as I look to *The Roaring Girl* (1607-10). In "Queer

Timing & the Speculative Body," I argue that tension between linear experiences of viewership, and the dynamic non-linear collection of possible knowledges that circulate around Moll compound to enable diverse experiences of the play-text and facilitate wider interpretive possibilities.

CHAPTER 4
"MIXT-TOGETHER…LIKE SUN-SHINE IN WET WEATHER:" QUEER TIMING AND THE SPECULATIVE BODY

In early modern performance, on-stage and off-stage audience alike are asked to consider what lies beneath the garments covering specific bodies. Invitations to speculate about the body are the focus of Chapter Four. In the anonymously attributed *Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607)*,* one moment stands out as particularly concerned with the speculative body. Midway through the play, in a scene that seems unrelated to the main plot, Phillis Flower bustles about with new authority having been left in charge of the sempsters shop where she is employed in the Royal Exchange. From the outset, her body and its composition take center stage when a boy who works at the shop (and who bristles against Phillis's prideful "willfulness" for ordering him about) defies her command to stop cutting paper by loudly protesting: "I know you are short membered, but not so short/ of your remembrance, that this is news" (3.2.33-4). His argumentative refusal takes the form of a penis joke that not only implicates the body of Phillis as "short membered" (female), but also the body of the boy actor that resides beneath. For a brief moment, the potential layers of Phillis's body are revealed, a short penis, no penis, a clitoris, a "not so short" member, a "known" member. This glancing blow fractures into a variety of possibilities of somatic reality that lay, unresolved, like the boy's parchment while Phillis pushes past his "taunting humour" to get to work.

Just as Phillis and the boy reach a working silence, M. Richard Gardiner and M. William Bennet, enter "at one end of the stage" (3.2.27, s.d.42-3). Prior to entering Phillis's shop, the two men comment that they aim to capitalize on the Royal Exchange marketplace as a "beauteous gallant walk" where they can exercise their pleasure by

interacting with "the glorious virgins of this square." (3.2.55, 58) Upon seeing Phillis, the aptly named Dick, becomes mesmerized by her, escalating from "I never saw a fairer face then this," to "in thine eye all my desires I see," in the space of six lines (3.2.62, 68). Phillis, in full-blown sales mode, either sidesteps his desire, or assumes he is interested in her wares, which, in a bawdy sense, he is. Juana Green's excellent examination of this scene notes how Dick Gardiner uses "intimate types of 'ware,' shirts, sleeves, ruffs, and bands . . . [which] touch the body itself," which "foregrounds the action of wearing or wearing out in the word's sexual sense" (Green 1095). While shops in the exchange both produced and satiated desire for the objects they sold, as Green notes, that desire could "circulate almost uncontrollably from object to object, moving easily from the ware to the women who sell it" (1095). Despite the undisguised attempt to foist her body into the market economy of the exchange, both Phillis and the play at large resolutely insists upon her chastity and the distinction between her body and the shop (1095).[247]

Gardiner's desiring gaze aimed at commodities initially emerges as the predominant factor of desiring interest but his interest quickly moves beyond an initial conflation of Phillis with the wares of her shop.[248] Gardiner's desire for Phillis noticeably devolves from the possibility of love to a driven desire for her body when he states:

> *Gardiner*: Faith, virgin, in my days, I have worn and
> out-worn much . . .
> But such a gallant beauty, or such a form
> I never saw, nor never wore the like:

[247] For a focused reading of this scene that capitalizes on Phillis's work as a Sempstress, read Juana Green's "The Sempster's Wares" 2000. Green considers how, "into its web of productive relations, the play weaves elements of danger, mapping the culture's anxieties onto the women who work in this network of exchange and thereby questioning women's participation in London's market economy" (Green 1093-94).

[248] Gardiner's recurring phrase is "I never saw [such beauty]" emphasizing the way sight (rather than touch, which is what stimulates Frank Goulding) affects his desires.

> Faith, be not then unkind, but let me wear
> This shape of thine, although I buy it dear . . .
> Mistake not, sweet, your garment is the cover,
> That vails the shape and pleasures of a lover (3.2.74-9, 82-83).

Juxtaposing Gardiner's initial acknowledgment of Phillis' virginity against the bawdy pun of wearing her body through sexual intercourse and the commodifying notion of "buy[ing] it dear," places Phillis in the role of whore, rather than shopkeeper and sempstress. Yet it is Gardiner's note of her virginity that emphasizes his keen interest in the perfection of her "gallant beauty" and "form." Gardiner's final note that "your garment is the cover,/ That vails the shape and pleasures of a lover" further increases focus on her physical "form." The sudden shift from describing Phillis as wearable wares to explicitly describing her clothing as "the cover" and "vail" to the "shape" beneath refocuses attention on the physical form of Phillis's unknow body as the desired object that Gardiner hopes to enjoy. This marked derailment of Gardiner's larger metaphor holds theatrical tension around the nexus of Phillis's form/shape/body. Her response is to ask how, exactly, he can know her form: "you do not see my shape,/ How comes it then you are in love with it" (3.2.84-5)? The knowability of her form is assumed and imagined, a point that Gardiner concedes when he states:

> *Gardiner*: A garment made by cunning arts-men's skill,
> Hides all defects that Nature's swerving hand
> Hath done amiss, and makes the shape seem pure;
> If, then, it grace such lame deformity,
> It adds a greater grace to purity (3.2.86-90).

Tracing Gardiner's logic, clothing "hides all defects that Nature's swerving hand/ hath done amiss," essentially making any shape, with defect or without, "seem pure." His

conditional logic proceeds to state that, if "lame deformity" could seem graceful, then purity would seem to be of even "greater grace." This circular logic is maintained by Gardiner's own assertion that garments "hid[e] all defects," therefore all bodies must logically appear "greater" in "grace." Regardless of Gardiner's intent, he initiates a debate, not only about Phillis's commodification, but about the informative impact of vision/gaze/sight, and the knowability of any clothed body. His argumentation also underscores Phillis's confusion around precisely how desire is elicited when her body is not nakedly discernable. Gardiner alludes to her body through the "cunning" art of garment making, but the rest is imagined by the viewer, and that imagining is based on subjective judgments about purity, virtue, virginity, and grace. While Gardiner eventually leaves the shop, hurling curses and accusations about chastity once his desire is denied, this brief interlude becomes a deeply relevant moment regarding the unknowability of the body throughout the play.

Gardiner's desire to strip Phillis of clothing and examine her body, regardless of the clothing's concealment of purity or "lame deformity," is the same force of desire that propels other lovers toward somatic speculation within the text, including Phillis. Phillis, for instance wishes to embrace Cripple and imagines that, "though deformed, his virtue mends that miss" (his body) (4.4.125). Knowing and not knowing the contours of the body enlivens and catalyzes a vibrant eroticism that can become especially focused on unknowable characters.[249] A disconnected scene, apparently unrelated to the main plot

[249] Oftentimes "unknowable" simply means different, divergent, foreign, or other in some way. As this dissertation demonstrates, what is knowable or not alters based on who is looking and is based upon individual movement outside of whatever notion of normalcy currently dominates the cultural landscape of early modern London.

becomes a commentary on every character's somatic knowability as a central point of interrogation and desire.

It is the speculative body as an "unknown knowledge" and site of desire that drives this chapter forward.[250] Focusing on Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1607-10), I work to extend central tenants of chapters two and three as I posit that desire catalyzes and participates in processes of unmaking and re-interpreting the body and somatic knowledge. However, rather than focusing on prostitution or disability, I look to gender fluidity as the locus for somatic reinterpretation. The first two parts of this chapter build a critical framework around the "gallery" of Moll, with the goal of exploring how the various depictions of Moll articulate new interpretive possibilities. Part one surveys criticism to determine the uses of somatic speculation and demonstrate how manifold forms of desire are intentionally generated and circulate around the character of Moll. I depart from previous scholarship by focusing on the process of speculation and its various outcomes or "portraits." Here I introduce queer timing as a framework for reading *The Roaring Girl's* structure that allows for various ways of seeing, speculating, desiring, and imagining Moll that exist simultaneously as part of a gallery hung with images of people "mixt-together . . . like sun-shine in wet weather" (1.2.17-18). Part two addresses critical discussion around the body of Moll Cutpurse as an "ineffable" character and pays specific attention to the lexical superfluity that occurs as characters

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[250] I follow Ryan Singh Paul in deploying Slavoj Žižek's phrase "unknown knowledge" to describe knowledge that "presents itself but goes unacknowledged," thus "the unknown known serves as the epistemological foundation for the ideological subject, simultaneously incorporating ignorance within knowledge while repressing the presence of that ignorance; this repression produces as its remainder the symptom against which the anxious use of power is mobilized in the assertion of hegemonic subjectivity" (Paul 517). See Ryan Singh Paul, "The Power of Ignorance and 'The Roaring Girl,'" *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 43, no. 3, The University of Chicago Press, 2013, pp. 514-40, (www.jstor.org/stable/43607758), accessed April 22nd 2020.

attempt to name, define, and know Moll. This section, in particular, locates Moll as uniquely positioned to wield speculative attention as a tool of complication. Part three of this chapter mobilizes the framework of the speculative body and queer timing within *The Roaring Girl* text itself. I prove that the play asks its audience, both on and off the stage, to speculate about Moll through linguistic and somatic cues that generate diverse kinds of desire. By proffering such a variety of possible ways to see and desire Moll, the play presents a gallery full of different and conflicting images of the same figure, a gallery in which no singular representation can adequately represent Moll, thus generating new ways of comprehending and knowing physical, sexual, and social difference. Part four shifts from the gallery framework to focus on logics of transformation that encompass sartorial, semantic, and semiotic transformations within the play. Doing so explicitly draws out Moll's transformative capacities that implicate other characters and that, like parts one through three of this chapter, work to destabilize epistemologies of desire and the body. Part four demonstrates that Middleton and Dekker's interest in rewriting epistemologies of desire, bodily knowledge, and erotic engagement extends through structural, linguistic, and theatric modes within the play-text.

~ I ~

All who encounter Moll desire Moll.[251] Whether it is desire for Moll's clothing, desire to understand Moll's motivations, desire to know the body of the actor/imagined person beneath, or desire to reform or fix the issues presented by Moll, all who read or see the play find themselves, for one reason or another, desiring something that is directly related to or rendered through Moll.

It is almost laughable to ask the question "is *The Roaring Girl*'s*,* Moll Cutpurse, desirable?" when, since the late 1980s, Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* is one of the most written about early modern plays outside of Shakespeare's cannon (Stage 417). It seems that there is something inherently desirable to scholars, at the very least, in repeatedly, intensely, and animatedly interrogating the gender/sexual/social identity of the play's central figure with each new methodological practice we adopt. As queer theorist Mario DiGangi notes, "one of the pleasures of reading" the play, is "the proliferation of prurient rumors that circulate about Moll's anatomy, morality, and sexual habits" (DiGangi 124). When thinking with Moll, Kelly J. Stage, a specialist in early modern social practices and urban development, mindfully points out, "apparently, a woman in a Dutch slop cries out for attention, especially when she does not cross-dress to adopt disguise" (Stage 417). Audience members and scholars to this day continue to find Moll's "singularity" and "undeniable visibility" intriguing,

[251] Throughout this chapter and my dissertation at large, I do not use gendered pronouns to refer to Moll Cutpurse, I use Moll's name only. Pronouns, while used in the play-text occasionally, are far less common than the frequent use of Moll's name. Because pronouns support a binarized conception of gender they distract from readings that emphasize gender-based mutability. By using Moll's name only (rather than they/them), I aim to focus our attention on Moll as a thinkable (indeterminate, flexible) character that alters based on the application of key terms in specific moments. Doing so emphasizes the transformative power of language, and links specific linguistic choices to their theatrical moment, allowing me to chart more accurately the accretion of semantic and semiotic meaning.

"confounding," and "charismatic" as a figure that one could "even [be] attracted to," perhaps, in part, due to a desire "to know" and speculate about Moll's body, which has variously been characterized as in "drag," "queer," and "transvestite."[252] Christopher Clary's analysis of Moll's queer anatomy and fluid gender cautions critics to consider their "compulsion to decode the 'reality' of Moll's anatomical identity," but it seems few have curbed their enthusiasm for striving to decipher Moll or have paused to untangle their own desire from Moll's captivating stage presence. (Clary xxii, 100).[253] In performance, Moll's magnetism is unmistakable, and so too is it palpable on the critic's page.[254] Beyond thinking with Moll as a unique character, this chapter demonstrates

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[252] For clarity, Kelly Stage discusses Moll's "singularity" (Stage 418), Jennie Votava describes Moll's "undeniable visibility" (Votova 70), Viviana Comensoli describes Moll as "confounding" (Comensoli in Stage 432), Caroline Heaton describes Moll as "charismatic" and as a figure that one could "even [be] attracted to," (Heaton 1), Ryan Singh Paul discusses a desire "to know" Moll and describes her as "queer" (Paul 527, 530), Bryan Reynolds and Janna Segal see Moll as in "drag" (Reynolds and Segal 74), and both Votava and Susan Krantz describe Moll as part of the "transvestite" tradition (Votava 70, Krantz 17). For an excellent reading of Moll that focuses on her spatial and geographic difference (rather than embodied), see Kelly Stage's "'The Roaring Girl's' London Spaces," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, vol. 49, no. 2, John Hopkins University Press, 2009, pp. 417-36, (www.jstor.org/stable/40467496), accessed April 22nd 2019. Jennie Votava, "'The Voice That Will Drown All the City': Un-Gendering Noise in 'The Roaring Girl,'" *Renaissance Drama New Series,* vol. 39, University of Chicago Press, 2011 (https://www.jstor.org/stable/41917483), accessed April 22nd 2020; Caroline Heaton, "Review of Dekker and Middleton's The Roaring Girl (directed by Jo Davies for the Royal Shakespeare Company) at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 9 June 2014," *Shakespeare*, vol. 11 no. 3, Routledge, 2015, pp. 316-18, (www.shura.shu.ac.uk/12887/), accessed Sept 8th 2018; Bryan Reynolds, and Janna Segal, "The Reckoning of Moll Cutpurse: A Transversal Enterprise," *Rogues and Early Modern English Culture,* ed. Craig Dionne and Steve Mentz, University of Michigan Press, 2004, pp. 62-97, (www.jstor.com/stable/10.3998/mpub.17647.5), accessed March 22nd 2020; Ryan Singh Paul, "The Power of Ignorance," 2013; Susan E. Krantz, "The Sexual Identities of Moll Cutpurse in Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* and in London," *Renaissance and Reformation*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1995, pp. 5-20, accessed April 22nd 2020.

[253] Christopher Clary, "Moll's Queer Anatomy: The Roaring Girl and Queer Generation," *Staging Shakespeare for Performance: The Bear Stage*, eds. Catherine Loomis and Sid Ray, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016, pp. 91-102.

[254] Reviewers of the 2014 Royal Shakespeare Company performance of *The Roaring Girl* (directed by Jo Davies at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon) were generally underwhelmed by the production, but Simon Tavener noted: "There is no denying that Moll - the eponymous hero(ine) of the piece - is an intriguing character" (Tavener "The Roaring Girl"). Likewise, Caroline Heaton states: "Confounding social expectations by refusing to define her sexuality, Moll charmed, flirted, bantered, fought and quarreled her way through a series of encounters and conveyed a sense that many were tolerant of, and even attracted to, Moll's wit, charismatic individuality, and personal conviction" (Heaton "Review"). Tavener, Simon. "The Roaring Girl (Swan Theatre, RSC)," *What's On Stage,* April 16, 2014. www.whatsonstage.com/stratford-

precisely why Moll has come to mean quite so much, to so many, both on the stage and on the page.

As I argued in Chapter Three, somatic speculation occurs around thinkable bodies that "can no longer be taken for granted," for whatever reason, be it disability or another marked difference such as gender fluidity (Davidson 4). The speculative body, then, is one that asks the audience to think kinesthetically as well as linguistically, and that generates a specific kind of intensely saturated desire: a desire to "know" the unknown. As I examine somatic speculation through transforming performances of gender and moments of linguistic accretion, this chapter charts the variety of embodiments proposed for *The Roaring Girl*'s protagonist, Moll Cutpurse.[255] I posit that the play works as a series of portraits that temporally propel various exploratory narratives, and which build substantive erotic matter around the energetic character of Moll. The resulting gallery of many Molls, all coexisting simultaneously within one performative body, speaks to a transformative fluidity that illuminates unfamiliar early modern epistemologies of bodily knowledge and desire.

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upon-avon-theatre/reviews/the-roaring-girl-swan-theatre-rsc_34182.html. Accessed September 8th 2018; Heaton "Review," 2015.

[255] Marjorie Rubright succinctly notes that "If we settle on 'Moll' or 'the roaring girl' (or any other name for that matter) as that which we lend to a character 'one knows not how to name' (1.2.129), we must grapple with the extent to which our choice pre-conditions us to be less critically kaleidoscopic in our engagements with the play's gender-expansive figurations (and the erotic desires activated by way of those figurations)" (Rubright *Transgender Capacity* 48). In other words, in selecting the name Moll (as all critics of this play traditionally have) we risk unwittingly driving toward a critical conviction that our character is simply "a woman who dresses in masculine clothing, being played by a boy actor" (Rubright *Transgender Capacity* 49). I use the term Moll after careful consideration and, in order to dissuade such familiar gender logics, have decided to remove all pronoun usage regarding Moll from my own writing, leaving it in quotes from other critics (if necessary) or in the text itself. In doing so I hope to draw attention to the many spaces, significations, and identities that Moll takes up, and I emphasize the varied meaning of the name Moll itself. See Marjorie Rubright, "Transgender Capacity in Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*," Special Issue: Early Modern Trans Studies, eds. Simone Chess, Colby Gordon, and Will Fisher, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies,* vol. 19, no. 4, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019, pp. 45-74.

I use the term gender fluid rather than hermaphrodite, transvestite, or trans because it divorces the gender of the signifying subject from ontological notions of knowable sex.[256] Hermaphroditism and transvestism both emanate from conceptions of gender that are deeply rooted in the dual sexes and the adoptions of traits, behaviors, clothing, and accoutrements of the "opposite" sex.[257] As Paul notes on hermaphroditism and *The Roaring Girl,* "those critics who stress Moll's subversive attack on gender identity usually prioritize the 'one-sex' model as the dominant sexual ideology rather than seeing it as part of a complex, mutable, and often contradictory set of discourses on the sexed body" (Paul 538). While Hermaphroditism and transvestism are conceptual terms that were operative in early modern discussions of gender difference and thus are modes of thinking that arise in *The Roaring Girl*, here I illuminate, as I have done in previous chapters, new pathways of thinking that may be "invisible" to readers or that are

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[256] Gender-fluid is an adjective that *"*designates a person who does not identify with a single fixed gender; of or relating to a person having or expressing a fluid or unfixed gender identity (now the usual sense)." See "Gender, n. C3. Gender-fluid adj. (b)," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, (www.oed.com/view/Entry/77468), accessed 9 April 2020.

[257] I do not mean to minimize the complex and varied early modern understandings of the hermaphrodite. As Daston and Park note, the hermaphrodite could be associated with the breakdown of order and sexual ambiguity. The dichotomy between male and female can be seen in Randle Cotgrave's 1611 *A Dictionary of the French and English Tongues*, where he states that "androgyne, farson-fillette, Ian-femme, and male-female" were all variations on "a hermaphrodite; one that's both man and woman; or hath the privities of both." John Bullkar's 1616 *An English Expositor* states that Hermaphrodite means "Of both natures: which is both man and woman." And, notably in Robert Cawdrey's 1617 *A Table Alphabetical, Containing and Teaching the Understanding of Hard Usual English Words* who states, "hermaphrodite, both man and woman, one of both natures." Cawdrey and Cotgrave imply an intertwining of natures, but neither indicate understanding outside of the man/ woman dichotomy. Likewise, the term trans, while indicating process and possibility, also currently indicates (for some) the transition from male to female (M2F) or from female to male (F2M), whereby an individual alters their body, clothing, and hormonal balance, to align with the gender characteristics that they associate with. I eschew the term trans in this chapter's scholarship primarily to avoid confusion around the term's many meanings and to emphasize non-linear queer theory and non-binarized gender possibilities. Lorraine Daston, and Katherine Park, "The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature," *GLQ* 1, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 419-38; Randle Cotgrave, "Hermaphrodite," *A Dictionary of the French and English* Tongues 1611, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed March 3rd 2020; John Bullkar, "Hermaphrodite," *An English Expositor* 1616, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, accessed 3rd March 2020; Robert Cawdrey, "Hermaphrodite," *A Table Alphabetical, Containing and Teaching the Understanding of Hard Usual English Words* 1617, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, 2017, accessed March 3rd 2020.

being actively generated/ taught in the theater.[258] In doing so I do not intend to disregard the large and fruitful body of work on hermaphroditism in *The Roaring Girl*, rather, I explore new pathways that sit alongside this research.

Gender fluidity resists the heteronormative, polarized lexicon of cultural gender norms by positioning fluidity (a flexible category) as the defining principal.[259] More specifically, I deploy the term not to indicate a fluid state in one direction, or bidirectionally between the two fixed points of male and female, but to express the broader blending of coded traits that, like watercolor paints, or layers of glass in a kaleidoscope, intermingle, enmesh, and produce new meaning, while remaining subtly discrete. While *The Roaring Girl* toys with the language of binarized gender expressions, it also stoutly refuses to produce clear categories for interpreting gender. Instead, the play presents more expansive manifestations of the body and self through the interpretive portraits that display different ways of seeing the titular character and that serve to focus

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[258] Recalling the introduction to this project, Christine Varnado argues that eroticism in early modern drama works as "an invisible force . . . connecting bodies," and that many readings of implicit sexual acts need to be read through the lens of queer eroticism (possible sex, possible eroticism) "which was not explicitly named *as* sexual in the period" (Varnado 29, 28). Mining erotic desire in the spaces that it could possibly inhabit, Varnado positions eroticism as "a constitutive force on the same order as 'language,' and 'culture'—as the same kind of thoroughly constructed yet totally fundamental and pervasive structure through which . . . existence is experienced" (Varnado 29). While I use the term desire rather than eroticism, I explore the same constitutive force as Varnado and its stimulations, impulses, and sensory experiences.

[259] Social movements in the period that engender characters with such flexibility were often the subject of much debate as Elizabethan sumptuary laws demonstrate. On 15th June 1574, Queen Elizabeth I issued a proclamation in Greenwich to enforce statutes of apparel and regulate clothing. While sumptuary laws that regulated clothing based on social rank, title, income, profession, and perceived gender were established in the 1300s, they reached their legislative zenith in the early modern period, with laws restricting the wearing of fine fabrics and foreign wears (such as silk and fur) to the upper classes. Those charged with wearing clothing outside of their station could be fined or imprisoned. For instance, Moll Cutpurse, the nominal subject of *The Roaring Girl* (1607), is the stage embodiment of the famous Mary Frith (1584-1659), who was arrested "on Christmas day 1611 in Paul's Walk" for being "indecently dressed," and was sent to Bridewell prison. Griffiths, Paul. "Frith [*married name* Markham], Mary [*known as* Moll Cutpurse]," *Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2017, (https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10189), accessed October 19th 2020.

theatrical attention on the speculative body. In *The Roaring Girl,* gender fluidity becomes an active, participatory way of thinking with, engaging with, and experiencing desire.[260]

Staging the Body: Speculation and Desire

In early modern theater, all characters—female, male, gender fluid, disabled, aged, young, foreign, Jewish, Muslim, and others—are predicated on the material body of white, culturally Christian, able-bodied, male players, and each character is prosthetically imbued with readable signifiers/characteristics of gender, class, race, and identity. Layers of imaginative signification and the accretion of linguistic meaning build throughout the theatrical performance process to produce every staged manifestation of character. In the period, interrogation of the somatic register of performed signifiers and prosthetic parts such as clothing was both encouraged and expected as staged bodies were already composite overlaid with interchangeable prosthesis. This interrogation pressurized supposed ontologies of type and sort through their very enactment.[261] For spectators watching the gender fluid body**,** defamiliarization from ontological type is cued and

[260] Building from chapter three's discussion of embodied disability I suggest that disabled and gender fluid characters are both different embodied types that sit within similar constellations of ideological and theatrical significance. To be clear, at no point do I intend to equate gender fluidity with physical disability. Instead, I aim to recognize their uniquely related positions in narratives of somatic difference and epistemologies of sight. Making the invisible, visible, possible, and imaginable, is key to my use of the term gender fluid. Rather than outline an epistemology, I describe a catalytic embodiment of gender that spurred new ways of seeing, imagining, interpreting, and interacting through various forms of desire (not only via sexual desire). Moll spurs a number of desires, which include the desire to know Moll's body either in terms of fixed gender (a desire which is perpetually denied) or in terms of erotic exploration. Most vitally, the desire to see or understand Moll reflects audience attention back on itself, asking audience members to read themselves in the ineffable theatrical space Moll generates.
[261] Will Fisher argues that early modern gender was "prosthetic," which helps to explain why "malleable features" like hair, clothing, handkerchiefs, and beards "could be considered to be constitutive" (Fisher 17). Likewise, Genevieve Love notes "a bodily addition like theatrical paint that indexes blood or racial difference," is a "'stage prosthetic [that] announces rather than effaces its own theatricality'" (Love 167, Stevens in Love 167). Will Fisher, *Materializing gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

amplified by the spectacle of physical difference, which engages viewers in the exploration of "conspicuous features" (Garland-Thomson 9). Fixed ontologies of the body become dislocated and disorderly when thinking actively with the speculative body. On-stage disguise is one method that catalyzes active thinking and draws focus to fluctuating borders between costume, prosthesis, body, and identity. When the gender fluid body theatrically generates a desire to know the body (to settle ontologically based gender categories) then questions of knowledge about the body become more frequent, more stimulating, and more explicit. Gender fluidity powerfully saturates the audience/reader with further questions in addition those about costume, prosthesis, body and identity including inquiries about sex, sex acts, prosthetic extension, bodily interactions, somatic composition, and bodily discovery. The speculative body, then, becomes a rich site that enables sustained attention to blended bodies as powerful theatrical signifiers.[262] Throughout this chapter I endeavor to demonstrate the degree to which the renaissance spectator is encouraged to speculate about the body of the actor/character through linguistic accretion and transformative somatic performances. By teasing out these linguistic and somatic components, I will also explore how desire circulates around the gender fluid body, opening new channels for desiring and understanding the somatically and sartorially different body.

While I discussed prosthesis in relation to the extension of the body in Chapter Three, prosthesis also functions as a mode of navigating the speculative body. Prosthesis describes the social phenomenon of reading unfixed markers of gender as somatic fixity,

[262] I use the term blended to indicate creative techniques (as in painting) and to avoid terms that indicate confusion such as muddled, jumbled, etc. Terms of confusion may describe the experience of attempting to interpret such a body, but they do not adequately describe the purposeful curation of the body as a unique stimulus for reactive thought processes.

which addresses how desire generates around/for the speculative body. Prosthetic parts can include all manner of staged devices and accoutrement, but, as scholars such as Will Fisher, Ann Rosalind Jones, and Peter Stallybrass have demonstrated, gender too is prosthetically constructed through clothing and hair.[263]

Stallybrass and Jones work toward understanding a key question that I also foreground in my analysis of theatrical gender prosthesis: "what are we being asked to see and how are we being asked to think?" (Stallybrass and Jones 207). Considering how audience members are asked to engage with the body, Stallybrass and Jones focus on undressing scenes in renaissance tragedy "where attachable parts that constitute a gendered identity begin to detach," thus troubling the knowability of the body and portraying it as "permeable" and open to alteration (13). Likewise, I direct attention to the shifting signifiers of gender, both prosthetic and performed (207).[264]

Stallybrass and Jones expose a parallel aesthetic structure operating in the renaissance that reveals vital information about renaissance conceptions of the prosthetic body. First, that concealment of the body generates specifically sexual curiosity and desire. Second, the "art" of the body, such as clothing fashion, hair style, and other accoutrements, work to redirect attention and shift fixations to specific parts of the body

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[263] Will Fisher in particular demonstrates the prosthetic nature of gender within the cultural landscape of early modern London itself, whereas Stallybrass and Jones focus on the early modern stage by locating the act of undressing as the "intersection between spectatorship, the specular, and the speculative" (Stallybrass and Jones 207).

[264] Stallybrass's and Jones's analysis notably demonstrates how the removable nature of clothing, crutches, and other artifacts that signal identity both shapes and makes possible theatrical performance and stage invention, can also be simultaneously used to generate "contradictory fixations" on stage that deconstruct and destabilize the very theatrical foundation that imbues prosthetic parts with meaning (Stallybrass and Jones 207). They argue that the notion of fixated attention on particular items of clothing relies upon the cultural fantasy of sight—a fantasy that shifts back and forth between notions of "sexual difference (the undoing of any stable or given difference) as a site of indeterminacy, and sexual difference (and sexuality itself) as the production of contradictory fixations" (Stallybrass and Jones 207).

as a mode of *directing* desire. Importantly, this shifting attention can support "contradictory hypotheses" that comprehends multiple but differing fields of knowledge at the same time (218). Prosthetically constructed gender stimulates desire by fixating attention on difference. Directing desire through somatic signifiers can affect spectators both on and off the stage, augmenting off-stage audience reactions through on-stage amplification of expected engagement between observer, and object (218).[265] Such direction of desire that focuses on specific parts of the body works alongside language to encode the body of the actor/character with overlapping, accretive meanings that generate new ways of knowing and not knowing physical, sexual, and social difference.[266]

Ryan Singh Paul demonstrates that the social impact of clothing prefigured Freud's paradoxical logic of the fetish in Richard Brathwait's 1631 treatise *Gentlewomen*, where from a theological perspective, in the fallen world with "the sinful body beneath, clothes make one simultaneously cognizant and ignorant of the body's presence" (Paul 524). The contradictory expectation between concealment of and exhibition of the female body hits on what Paul calls a "fundamental paradox within the concept of 'woman'" that aligns goodness with concealment of the body as a sinful vessel (yet covering the body shows it to be a good, well-managed body), and aligns the display of the body as a deformity that indicates, "as the pamphleteer suggests, sexual activity" (while simultaneously disguising her sinfulness through "enticing beauty"). Importantly,

[265] Naming is also mentioned as part of prosthesis by Stallybrass and Jones. In Chapter Two I argue that naming has far more potential than as purely an agent of prosthesis, but they are both certainly agents of transformation, driving a breakdown of form in order to test and assert different epistemologies about the body, sexual knowledge, and difference on the renaissance stage.
[266] See *Stranger Compass's* Introduction for early modern antitheatricalist reactions to shifting semiotic markers of gender such as hair length and clothing.

regardless of concealing or revealing clothing, what the viewer sees “both does and does not match up to what could be beneath” (524).

Paul shows us how Brathwait directly links to an epistemological framework of knowledge/ non-knowledge and indicates how, by reframing texts like *The Roaring Girl*, one can understand how male anxiety around Moll’s character is part of a pattern of ignorance that allows Moll to occupy two contradictory positions: “Moll offers the potential of a transgressive performance that punctuates hegemonic power, demonstrating the possibility to fashion new selves against the dominant and oppressive norm . . . Yet she also becomes an epistemological threat and the potential object of repressive violence” (537). Moreover, Moll’s clothing “reveals a female body of polymorphous sexual activity out of (male) control and in need of rectification; in turn, Moll’s shadow extends even to the most meekly clothed woman, giving the lie to the idea that any woman can be truly and properly submissive” (537). Paul’s reading is groundbreaking in its ability to reconceive the dialectical operations of the text; however, his use of dichotomous language (male/female, ignorance/knowledge) and his reading of Moll as “a female body of polymorphous sexual activity” feels restrictive, even as Paul insists on Moll’s polysemy, ineffability, and the importance of “seeking out the unknown” (449-50). While Paul dexterously outlines a knowledge-based epistemology, I focus more closely on a speculative epistemology that asks, “what could be beneath,” and that recognizes the speculative body as a site of productive possibility and of desire on the early modern stage.

I argue that *The Roaring Girl*, rather than entrenched in patriarchal anxiety, revels in the non-linear, in the unenforceable, and in the ineffable body. The play uses the

"conspicuousness" of Moll to invite both on-stage audience's and off-stage audience's speculation and desire, and to play with ways of knowing Moll as a means of accessing desire and build new knowledges.[267] Rather than inciting anxiety, many of the calculated, meaning-laden slippages in Moll's knowability become evocative invitations to speculate, to think with, and to imagine with the body and its various performances.

Roaring Girl's Gallery: Queer Timing and a Gallery of Possibility

Queer studies, temporality, and desire go together. Many of the most significant works on queer studies have reimagined and reformulated how we comprehend time while paying close attention to how gender, race, and sexuality map out within logics of inexorable heterosexuality and chrononormativity. Coined by Elizabeth Freeman, "chrononormativity" refers to learned "hidden rhythms," such as watches, clocks, calendars, time zones, schedules, and alarms that inculcate and naturalize forms of temporal experience and privilege specific ways of living and experience (Freeman 3).[268] Freeman connects the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Judith Butler to these hidden rhythms, as Bourdieu's habitus organizes a kind of belonging where "rhythms of gesture, giving and withholding, play and humor, courtship and etiquette . . . establish similarities between strangers that seem to be inborn," and Butler's work on gender performativity

[267] A phrase I take from Mary Beth Rose's reading of Moll, as she notes that it is Moll's "conspicuousness," her attention-grabbing presence, that makes some so uncomfortable with her. See Mary Beth Rose, "Women in Men's Clothing: Apparel and Social Stability in the Roaring Girl," *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 14 no. 3, University of Chicago Press, 1984.
[268] Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Duke University Press, 2010.

likewise describes how "repetition engenders identity" and situates the body in a linear conception of gender (Freeman 18, 3).[269]

Chrononormativity sprang from Dana Luciano's conception of chronobiopolitics, which describes the "sexual arrangement" of the "time of life of entire populations." Chronobiopolitics sees the predominant logic of time as linear, unfolding "naturally," and dictating the goals and development of individuals "economical[ly], developmental[ly], political[ly], and sexual[ly]." (Freeman 3, Siefert 22).[270] Jack Halberstam argues against reproductive temporalities that centralize pregnancy, childbirth, and development, instead exploring possible new futures that resist heteronormative domination and explore self and community. Lee Edelman's work on reproductive futurity similarly exposes the relentless heterosexuality of linear reproductive logics as they align the imagined future exclusively with reproduction: the figure of the child, and the concept of incontrovertible goodness (Siefert 22). Queer theory works a great deal with questions of time with the goal of replacing reliance on "logics of repetition, linearity, periodicity, and teleology" (Moore et al. 2).[271] The idea that time is linear—that time is straight—is not entirely rejected by these critics (Boellstorff 23). Their intervention has more clearly to do with envisioning different possibilities for life courses and social histories that take the form of "retrogression, stoppage, and drag that interrupt straight time's smooth flow but still

[269] "In what Nietzsche calls 'monumental time,' or static existence outside of historical movement" (Freeman 4).
[270] Lewis C Seifert, "Queer Time in Charles Perrault's *Sleeping Beauty*," Wayne State University Press, 2015.
[271] Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore, "Introduction, Queer Disorientation: Four Turns and a Twist," *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, Fordham University Press, 2018, (www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1xhr6tw.3), accessed April 29th 2020.

operate in terms of its conceptual purview" (Boellstorff 23-4).[272] In doing so, queer time works to disorient our relationship to time and demonstrate that categories like future, present, and past are "no less culturally constructed, and no less intimately bound up with the (il)logics of desire and power" (Moore et al. 3). In addition to the groundbreaking work noted above, I follow anthropologist Tom Boellstorff in the assertion that:

> straight time has methodological and disciplinary ramifications; this temporality is shaped by a telos of the single orgasm co-occurring with ejaculation, a time whose tempo climaxes in production and reproduction. This logic equates male sexuality with penetration, female sexuality with lack, and transgender sexuality with unintelligibility . . . . Straight time, capable of portraying temporal relationships only in terms of anticipation or drag, limits the range . . . of queer critique (24).

Boellstorff pointedly moves us to think outside of rhythms of time that are limited to singular, linear, moments of heteronormative production and reproduction. In doing so, he demonstrates the possibilities of multiple climaxes, of queer satisfaction, and of reading texts, and depictions of life in a way that does not privilege repetition or endings, but rather celebrates and explores the various and multiple climactic moments as vital, as central, and as orienting. If we queer our way of reading the structure of *The Roaring Girl*, for instance, new possibilities open up. Instead of seeing the play as consisting of a main romantic plot with a series of sub-plots, some of which seem to end in dead ends (such as Trapdoor's pursuit to kill Moll, and Moll's attack on Laxton), I posit that the play works as a viewing gallery packed with distinct depictions of the same subject:

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[272] Tom Boellstorff, *A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer Studies, Indonesia*, Duke University Press, 2007. Elizabeth Freeman introduced the notion of temporal drag, meaning delay, pull of the past, and retrogression (Freeman 23).

Moll.[273] A gallery of sorts is, in fact, presented to us in act once scene two by Sir Alexander Wengrave, who states:

> Nay, when you look into my galleries
> How bravely they are trimmed up, you all shall swear
> You're highly pleased to see what's set down there:
> Stories of men and women, mixed together,
> Fair ones with foul, like sunshine in wet weather;
> Within one square a thousand heads are laid
> So close that all of heads the room seems made;
> As many faces there, filled with blithe looks,
> Show like promising titles of new books
> Writ merrily, the readers being their own eyes
> Which seem to move and give plaudities (1.2.14-23).

The dominant imagery in this speech calls upon the on-stage audience to look out into the "galleries" of the playhouse, and to examine the off-stage audience while Sir Alexander turns the metaphor upon the off-stage audience and the "many faces there" that show possibility, like the "promising titles of new books." In doing so, Sir Alexander positions the off-stage audience as "readers" that interpret using "their own eyes."[274] This formulation of the off-stage audience as, at once, observed and observers—as viewers of a particular kind of on-stage gallery—who can assess and bestow "plaudities" (applause), both awakens the audience's sense of interpretive self-awareness, while simultaneously connecting that sense of self to the concept of viewing "many faces" of artistic mixing. The stage itself becomes a gallery, with the audience invited to observe the many faces

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[273] Another term that could work, rather than gallery, is vignette. However, the term gallery arises from the play-text itself and enables clearer metaphorical imagery for charting the ways that the audience and reader are asked to see and speculate about the titular Moll Cutpurse.
[274] The audience the crowd of the Fortune Theater could easily surpass 1,000 people (Giddens 392 fn19). Eugene Giddens, "Notes and Glossary," *The Roaring Girl and Other City Comedies*, ed. James Knowles, Oxford University Press, 2001. It is difficult to ascertain if the stage of the Fortune was square, but the theater itself reportedly resembled The Globe Theater, but was square in shape rather than round. Whether metaphorizing the stage or the larger theater, the concept of framing theatrical presentation stands.

that appear. The gallery I propose, then, is embedded within the text itself, and brought to life in the first scenes of the text as audience and actors alike are asked to participate in the imaginative generation of artistic space and observation. Specifically, this gallery holds depictions of unclear gender expression and fluidity "men and women, mixed together,/ fair ones with foul like sunshine in wet weather," that is, depictions of people that are distinctively worth knowing *because* of their mixing. The changes that occur when sunlight hits the rain-soaked streets and structures of London, that are saturated with deeper color and vibrancy for their dampness are the same changes that are figured upon the stage when characters blend and are illuminated by differences in gender.

Skirting the limits of Sir Alexander's theatrical metaphor is the yet-to-be-seen but ubiquitous presence of Mad Moll, the roaring girl. If Sir Alexander's allusion to the eponymous Moll, as a one who is "mixed together," is not clear, he goes further, by figuring the possibility of a monstrous spectacle in which the audience is already imbricated: "Within one square a thousand heads are laid." Sir Alexander's description is interpreted by critic Eugene Giddens primarily as a "painting or tapestry of a crowd scene," which is the theater audience. Yet, Sir Alexander's "one square" also neatly describes the stage as a frame in which a monstrous figure with "a thousand heads" could emerge, mingle, mix, and become something other (Giddens 392 fn19). Moll, indeed, becomes a many-faced figure throughout the text through three theatrical processes: through a transforming somatic state and speculation around it, through the accretion of names and terms used to describe Moll, and through the gallery configuration that, I argue, specifically presents different ways of seeing Moll.[275]

[275] Marjorie Rubright discusses the linguistic accretion around Moll, especially in relation to Moll's naming throughout the play. See Marjorie Rubright's "Transgender Capacity," 2019.

Moll, who has already been described as a "strange . . . creature" begins to take up space in minds and metaphors of on-stage (and subsequently off-stage) audiences as the line "the whole city takes/ note of her name and person" begins to materialize (1.1.95-7). It is in this state of theatrical saturation, with his self-reflexive, observational, and speculative metaphor that Sir Alexander describes the interactions between an enthralled heap of listeners and a cutpurse:

> Thronged heaps do listen, [and] a cutpurse thrusts and leers
> With hawk's eyes for his prey: I need not show him,
> By a hanging villainous look yourselves may know him,
> The face is drawn so rarely (1.2.26-29).

The use of the term cutpurse recalls Moll (who is sometimes called Moll Cutpurse) but deploys male pronouns, further "mixing" "fair with foul" to partake in the blending process that continues throughout the play, where pronouns and names for Moll meander through signifiers of male and female, disturbing and accreting them (layering atop), so the character begins to be all at once, and neither too. As a character around which the marriage plot hinges, this initial speech from Sir Alexander centralizes his anxious obsession with "knowing" Moll, while actively requisitioning audience attention through an invitation to think *with* him "I need not show him . . . / yourselves may know him." As the audience activates their imagination to imagine the "villainous look" and face of a cutpurse, one of the first images of Moll, to be placed consciously in their collective gallery. This image is but one of many that the play proffers of Moll as the gallery gradually fills with conflicting but similar images of the same subject, morphing, transforming, and gender fluid, generating the particular beauty of "sunshine in wet weather."

Importantly, the gallery I propose is a place where all at once many images of the same subject are simultaneously viewable, but entirely distinct from one another, thus refusing a coherent sense of knowledge of the "personage" that is Moll. As each scene presents a new way of seeing (a new portrait) of Moll, the on-stage audience scrabble to "know her" while the off-stage audience see the assemblage of portraits and iterations but gain no stable sense of knowledge.[276] Recalling queer time, each way of seeing Moll presents the audience with different moments of desire and prolonged wanting. Rather than following the concept that the final scene will present the audience with romantic fulfillment and a singular (heteronormative) thematic and sexual climax in the form of a marriage plot's successful end, I see *The Roaring Girl* as presenting various moments of elongated desire that resist the linearity of traditional readings. Moll's unstable gender—Moll's fluidity—sits at the center of this metaphor, so it is vital to acknowledge that attempting to pin down a stable illustration of Moll is, indeed, impossible. The play occurs in time and is experienced by audience members a linear way, but the structure of the text enables a different viewing experience where linear and non-linear understandings of Moll exist in tension against one another. Rather than claiming that the play presents clear, distinct portraits, the gallery I propose presents portraits that give momentary form to the many possible ways of seeing Moll that emerge intermittently, elide, diverge, and overlap with one another, much like slivers of glass that overlap, enmesh, and produce new meaning, yet remain subtly distinct in the kaleidoscope.

[276] To clarify, I am not arguing that Moll Cutpurse is an "every person" figure; rather, I argue that Moll works as a distinct character with many possible ways of being understood, interpreted, and seen, while still being distinct in personage and character.

Other critics—those of queer theory in particular—already lean strongly toward the idea that the end of the play is not the focal point. This is also true of critics reading *The Roaring Girl*, most of whom do not explicitly cite queer time, but are instinctively drawn to different focal points offered by the text itself. For example, Marjorie Rubright notably focuses on the "triangulated kissing scene" in scene eight as a focal point for trans-erotics.[277] Christine Varnado likewise engages with the same scene, as a possible threesome that can be registered, or not, as a sex scene depending on the "assumption that a sex act definitionally involves two people" (Varnado 41).[278] In contrast, Susan E. Krantz spotlights Moll's confrontation with Laxton (scene five) to demonstrate that Moll is not situated "among womankind" (Krantz 9). Mario DiGangi follows the women implicated by Moll's presence throughout the text such as Mistress Openwork, who "ironically come[s] to resemble Moll" (DiGangi 153).[279] Even when working with scenes that do not actively include Moll, the presence of Moll's character permeates the text, as Moll's "shadow extends even to the most meekly clothed woman" and builds towards various divergent sequences of desire and audience investment (Paul 537).

Chrononormative linear time seems problematic to many critics, even if mentioned implicitly. Ryan Singh Paul, who feels the need to address the interpretive difficulties of the final scene, does so by focusing on the inadequacy of previous critic's readings and analysis of the scene that positions its message as the final word on characterological and narrative developments. Whether arguing for Moll's irreducibility as a rebellious figure, for Moll's reaffirmation of "the social order" as a facilitator of

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[277] Also known as the musical/sexual interaction between Mary, Sebastian, and Moll in scene eight. See Marjorie Rubright's "Transgender Capacity," 2019.
[278] See Varnardo's article "Invisible Sex!" in *Sex before Sex* (2013).
[279] Krantz "The Sexual Identities of Moll Cutpurse," 1995; Mario DiGangi *Sexual* Types, 2011.

heteronormative love and norms, or for Moll's function as "either a figure of female empowerment or as a means to stabilize the patriarchal culture," Paul notes that critics have ignored Moll's "polysemy and abstracted the play's narrative" in order to affirm traditional readings of renaissance comedy that "must ultimately" work to buttress the "status quo" (Paul 539).[280] What Paul highlights is that chrononormative readings bring us inevitably and invariably to a singular end and fail to apprehend the constellation of desires, which, for different onlookers, hold varying degrees of theatrical stimulation.

The end is never the end for Moll (as the prologue would suggest), who resists critical and ontological classification, and initiates a series of desires, both satisfiable and unsatisfiable, that linger far beyond the limits of the play-text.[281] Moll's portraits generate many ways of seeing Moll that elide and separate deftly to enable spectators to desire at will. Moll moves constantly; not just energetically and kinetically, but semiotically and socially too. Moll as a character, then, should be regarded as a process, as simultaneous, and as occurring. It is Moll's fractious coherence—Moll's perpetual possibility—that becomes a generative force, stimulating theatrical tension, catalyzing and acknowledging various forms of desire and ways of knowing the body, and contributing to the theatrical project of questioning and rewriting epistemologies of desire and of bodily knowledge.

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[280] For a sample of this varied criticism, see Krantz "The Sexual Identities of Moll Cutpurse," 1995; Steven Mullaney, "The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and England," University of Chicago Press, 1988; Jean Howard, "Sex and Social Conflict: The Erotics of the Roaring Girl," In *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman, Routledge, 1992; and Mary Beth Rose's "Women in Men's Clothing," 1984.

[281] Valerie Forman likewise argues that "Moll is not a coherent character . . . but is instead a locus of cultural fantasies," as does Ryan Singh Paul, who adds that she is "the product of multiple inter-woven and often conflicting discourses that cannot be resolved within a single act or figure." (Foreman 1542, Paul 518). Valerie Forman, "Marked Angels: Counterfeits, Commodities, and *The Roaring Girl*," *Renaissance Quarterly* vol. 54, no.4, Cambridge University Press, 2001; Ryan Singh Paul "The Power of Ignorance," 2013.

~ II ~

Clear Ineffability: Moll's Body and Linguistic Accretion

Much criticism on *The Roaring Girl* senses but does not focus on the massive dynamo of desire that Moll embodies. Current criticism shifts around the emerging market economy and Moll's various functions in disrupting economic (and thus sexual) expectations, conceptions of value based on exchange or equivalency and logics of consumption. Valerie Forman, for instance, reads Moll as a "compensatory fiction" that works to "both register and den[y] the loss of material guarantees" for value, legitimacy, and status in an emergent capitalist system (Foreman 1531, 1547). Moll's body, in Foreman's interpretation, is an illusion that serves to demonstrate the lack of material value that undergirds capitalist exchange. Mario DiGangi distinguishes his work by focusing on the threatening sexual and economic agency of urban working women, who's participation in the marriage economy does nothing to prevent constant elisions with Mad Moll (DiGangi 125-8, 154). Recently, Matthew Kendrick argues that "In an increasingly commercial London" Moll is "strangely impervious to the scrutiny of others, consistently defying efforts by members of elite society to label, categorize, and assign value to her body" (Kendrick 99).[282] Kendrick further argues that through Moll, the play actively acknowledges its own failure to meet mimetic realism in the face of diverse consumer desires. In doing so, he argues procedurally first for Moll's fetishism as Moll "is fashioned by the audience, appealing to its fascination with her otherness" (105), then

[282] Matthew Kendrick, "'So Strange in Quality': Perception, Realism, and Commodification in *The Roaring Girl*," *Criticism*, vol. 60, no. 1, Wayne State University Press, 2018, pp 99-121, (muse.jhu.edu/article/715831), accessed February 22nd 2020.

against Moll's fetishism as "Moll invites the public's consumerist gaze by presenting herself as spectacle, only so that she can exploit the power of that gaze in the service of her own economic agency" (106), and finally, he argues that Moll "continually dissolves the fetishistic appearance of life" (101). These three vying notions access the complexity of Moll's economic and theatrical functions but do little to explain the mechanism that produces this fluctuation within supposedly linear temporal logics of capitalism.

Kendrick, Forman, and DiGangi all acknowledge a form of desire circulating around Moll as a "disorderly woman," but allot it separately to "the frustration of consumer desire," "the circulation of money and commodities . . . with which Moll is explicitly associated," or "the proliferation of prurient rumors that circulate about Moll's anatomy, morality, and sexual habits" (DiGangi 124, Kendrick 105, Forman 1531-2, DiGangi 124). Kendrick approaches the issue of desire as he states that, "in contrast to the other commodities for sale at the market, Moll attracts the gaze of the consumer but she seems always to escape the actual act of consumption" (Kendrick 108).[283] This reading lands on the uncomfortable truth that, in some cases, the play "fails" to "satisfy" audience members but, rather than seeing issues of desire and satisfaction connected to "consuming," locating, or knowing Moll, Kendrick goes on to position this "failure" in the commercial logic of commodification processes, and Moll's refusal to "resolve the insurmountable parallax or gap between the stage . . . and the audience's desires and expectations" (105). Kendrick is right to note this frustration of desire, but wrong to imply that it is a singular frustration.

[283] For more on the consumption of the female body, see Chapter Two and Theodora Jankowski's book *Pure Resistance*, 2000.

The tension between social and economic dynamics, and Moll's embodiment is a constant site of inquiry. Queer theorists and critics working with gender have, until recently, argued for Moll's hermaphroditism with great utility and drawn on the complex ways that gender could materialize and work as a prosthetic part.[284] However, this body of work, despite efforts to discuss the deconstructive power of the hermaphrodite, has limitations and often result in scholars less specialized in gender and sexuality studies misusing hermaphroditic work, even if endeavoring not to, by inadvertently stressing the gender binary: "Moll Cutpurse dresses like a man, smokes like a man, and notably fights like a man" (Carter 88); "Moll's androgyny—sometimes evinced by her dressing as a man while perceiving herself as a woman and sometimes by her acting like a woman in a half-masculine, half-feminine outfit—creates an indistinct gender performance that serves as a central motif of the play" (Carter 88-9); and "Moll's transgressive ineffability points back to a lack in male subjectivity, a lack that is repeatedly figured in . . . terms of economic sterility and insufficiency" (Paul 518).[285] In these readings, regardless of how "indistinct" or "ineffable" Moll appears, Moll's gender fluidity is solidified into an overtly legible shuttling between the binarized positions of male and female.[286] The

[284] A brief selection of excellent work on hermaphroditism and transvestism in the period, see Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, "The Hermaphrodite and the Orders of Nature," 1995; Jenny Mann, "How to Look at a Hermaphrodite in Early Modern England," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 46, no. 1, John Hopkins University Press, 2006, pp. 67-91; Marjorie Garber, "The Logic of the Transvestite: The Roaring Girl (1608)," Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama, eds. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass, Routledge, 1991, pp. 221-34. For work on gender and the body beneath, see footnote 264 and 265 of this chapter.

[285] Matt Carter, "'Untruss a Point'—Interiority, Sword Combat, and Gender in *The Roaring Girl*," *Early Theatre: A Journal associated with the Records of Early English Drama*, vol. 21 no. 1, Routledge, 2018, pp. 87-106.

[286] These readings are not without merit especially as they trace some of the language used in the play by characters like Sir Alexander and Laxton. The larger body of work on transvestism is especially useful.

limited scope of binarized readings of gender fluidity are both frustrating to work with and confusing for critics who both recognize and resist the many iterations of Moll.

A more recent and refreshing reading of *The Roaring Girl* from Marjorie Rubright recognizes both the utility and the limitations of scholarly "evocations of hermaphroditism as an epistemological framework for characterizing" Moll (Rubright *Transgender Capacity* 62). Rubright pointedly notes that, while hermaphroditic readings are pervasive, Moll is not referred to as a hermaphrodite by anyone in the text, "in fact, the word is never used in the course of the play" (62).[287] This is a useful qualification, "not because ideas about hermaphroditism may not inform early modern and contemporary understandings" of Moll, but because the absence of the word draws "attention to the epistemic challenge" that Moll poses to systems of gender within the text (62). Importantly, Rubright's coining of the term "speculative philology" emphasizes the questions that are opened up (rather than resolved) by the etymological "splintering" of terms like "moll," which invite us to track the splintering of gendered meanings (the "soma-semantics of gender"), and note how a single word that holds many thinkable meanings at once "can queer characterological identity by confounding 'the notion of being at one with oneself'" (Rubright 51).[288] Rubright's "soma-semantics of gender," that

[287] Rubright footnotes her etymological recovery of the first instance in which the word hermaphrodite is deployed to characterize Moll, finding its origins in "James Caulfield's *Portraits, memoirs, and characters of remarkable persons, from the reign of Edward the Third, to the Revolution* (1794)" (Rubright *Transgender Capacity* 71).

[288] Unlike Rubright, rather than deploying trans theory, I work with gender fluidity. For more on why, see footnote 260 in this chapter. To see a visual chart of the lexical superfluity extant around Moll's character, look to the gender-expansive early modern wordscape she provides on page 46 of Rubright's "Transgender Capacity," 2019. Other critics similarly outline robust paradigms of resistance or indistinction, like the antiprogressive trajectory of *The Roaring Girl's* "sideways growth," in Melissa Welshans's argument, that positions Moll as opening "space for adolescent delay" (Welshans 80). Melissa Welshans, "Queer Time and 'Sideways Growth' in *The Roaring Girl*," *Queering Childhood in Early Modern English Drama and Culture*, ed. Jennifer Higginbotham and Mark Albert Johnston, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018; Valerie Traub's *Thinking Sex*, 2016.

is, the play's refusal "to produce classificatory clarifications regarding gender" at the semantic level, is vital to the ways in which Moll asks to be seen (45).[289] Together, the soma-semantics of the play's language and visual signifiers on-stage accrete to generate and augment the many portraits of Moll that the play offers.[290]

~ III ~

Contours of the Speculative Body: Spectatorship and Desirable Difference

Linguistic accretion begins instantly through the play's first descriptions of Moll, but each description not only accretes lexically, but aggregates imagined possibilities for Moll's character and physicality. What follows mobilizes the gallery framework to explore the multiple non-linear portraits that emerge and their generative potential, and also demonstrates how linguistic polysemy helps craft the contours of the speculative body. In scene four Sebastian muses in soliloquy that, though the "two leaved tongues of slander or of truth pronounce Moll loathsome," he will judge for himself by keeping his eyes "wide open" (4.10, 18). Keeping one's eyes open and paying particular attention to

[289] Ryan Singh Paul and Heather Hirschfeld likewise argue, albeit in more binarized language, that Moll "demonstrates the porous nature of the boundaries between 'male' and 'female'" and that "the repeated attempts by characters to define Moll signal an epistemological trauma" (Paul 515). Paul further notes that characters who are invested in the systems of patriarchy within the play are also those who "are most invested in securing the "truth" of sex and gender identities," as characters like Sir Alexander insist "upon the obvious truth of their designations for Moll" regardless of consistency or utility (Paul 515-16). For more see Heather Hirschfeld, "What Do Women Know? The Roaring Girl and the Wisdom of Tiresias," *Renaissance Drama* 32, University of Chicago Press, 2003.

[290] One point of contention I resist in Rubright's work is in relation to the "processual and temporally on-going nature of gender non-conformity" (Rubright *Transgender Capacity* 45). As I approach the text from the angle of queer time, I resist the concept of processual, linear, ongoing processes. while I agree Moll can be seen as a process, I find terms like "simultaneous" and "occurring" allow for the sense of process that Rubright accesses, without tethering it to a linear pattern of time.

Moll is something that the off-stage audience is asked to do many times over as the text teases out different gender expressions that circulate around Moll's character.

> A play expected long makes the audience look
> For wonders, that each scene should be a book
> Composed to all perfection. Each one comes
> And brings a play in's head with him; up he sums
> That he would of a roaring girl have writ,
> If that he finds not here, he mews at it . . .
> I see attention sets wide ope her gates
> Of hearing, and with covetous listening waits
> To know what this roaring girl should be,
> For of that tribe are many. (Prologue 1-6, 13-16)[291]

In this opening sequence, a roller-coaster of comprehension and confusion carries the listener/reader along, as the speaker taunts the spectator with shifting possibilities of what a roaring girl could signify. The prologue first speaks self-reflexively about audience expectation and considers how, when a play is long expected it "makes the audience look/ For wonders," and ventures that each spectator has mentally composed what they expect to see written about a roaring girl. In doing so, within seconds of the play's opening, the audience is asked to do just that—to speculate—if they had not already done so, about what a roaring girl could possibly entail. The prologue's speaker, noting that "attention sets wide ope her gates,/ of hearing," both acknowledges and cultivates the curiosity already garnered, characterizing the audience as "covetous" listeners who yearn to know what "tribe" their roaring girl belongs to.[292] Rhetorically on tenterhooks, the

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[291] Like all who read or see this play I start with the prologue, but I will immediately skip to the epilogue: pairing the theatrical bookends in order to emphasizes the way the play asks to be read crafts Moll as speculative and expresses theatrical tension between expectation (desire) and satisfaction.
[292] The plurality of the word tribe indicates that there are more like Moll and perhaps lightly nods to the term tribade, which, as Marjorie Rubright notes, may have been used in a similar way to the word moll at the time to indicate sexual transgressions (Rubright *Transgender Capacity* 50).

audience is presented with three short characterizations, “One is she/ That roars at midnight in deep tavern bowls . . . /Another roars i’th’ day-time, swears, stabs, gives braves . . . / Both of these are suburb roarers. Then there’s besides/ A civil, City-roaring girl” (Prologue 16-22). Yet, just as these characterizations take form, the audience is told that “none of these roaring girls is ours—she flies/ With wings more lofty” (28-9). The swift-moving series of possible characterizations for the roaring girl draws on known character typologies of a roaring girl but just as suddenly diverges entirely from known type: “her character lies.” But rather than becoming none of these roaring girls, the play’s roaring girl is opened up to possibility by the speaker who indicates that a “more lofty” variation has occurred (29). To spectators, then, theatrical tension continues to build through the assertion that they are unacquainted with a character that consumes the speaker’s (and thus their own) attention.

In the final lines of the prologue, Dekker and Middleton deploy their most heavy-handed rhetorical strategy, first indicating that the roaring girl’s presence is imminent by asking who “Is better than the person to express” such a character, then adding two rhetorical questions: “But would you know who ’tis? Would you hear her name?” (28-29). In the early modern theater, it is unlikely that these questions would be met with silence. Even a few voices ringing out amongst the one-thousand-plus strong crowd of the Fortune theater would signal engagement and serve to refocus other audience members on the speaker’s words. The reward for this engagement is the declarative naming of the elusive roaring girl: “She is called Mad Moll: her life our acts proclaim” (30)! Naming Moll as Mad Moll alongside “lofty” sounds incongruous for numerous reasons. In part, the word “mad” could mean furious, brain-sick, foolish, or frantic and

was synonymous with fantastical or enraging behavior.[293] Still more, Moll could mean "soft or mild," "an effeminate man," or a female "prostitute."[294] This final definition indicates that Moll was not simply a name, but also a "culturally emergent subject position" that implicates the physical body, either in softness/effeminacy, or in the bodily work of prostitution (Rubright 50).[295] Yet having already described a roaring girl who sells "her soul to the lust of fools and slaves" and set Mad Moll apart, meanings of the name Mad Moll chafe against the speakers previous words (Prologue 20).

The splintering of meaning that occurs in this final moment of the prologue dislocates a moment that is supposed to satisfy—the declaration of the roaring girl's name. By delivering such a range of possibility in the name, the audience reach the crest of the prologue's building wave of promise without clear fulfilment. So far, the audience has learned that they do not know what they thought they knew about the play, that the character they might have expected is not linked to static characterizations, and, most vitally, that if they pay attention to the character of "Mad Moll," they will be rewarded with new questions and curiosities to answer. While some might argue that the prologue

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[293] All definitions are from headwords and descriptions in Robert Cawdrey, *A Table Alphabetical*, 1604, (furious, maniacque), Cawdrey's later publication *A Table Alphabetical*, 1617, (franticke), and John Florio's, *A World of Words* (1598) (Infuriare, Imbizzarire, Bischencho). Robert Cawdrey, "furious, maniacque," *A Table Alphabetical* (1604). *Lexicons of Early Modern English*. Ed. Ian Lancashire. University of Toronto Press, 2017. Accessed May 28th 2020; Robert Cawdrey, "franticke," *A Table Alphabetical, Containing and Teaching the Understanding of Hard Usual English Words* 1617, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, accessed May 28th 2020; John Florio, "Infuriare, Imbizzarire, Bischencho," *A World of Words* 1598, *Lexicons of Early Modern English*, ed. Ian Lancashire, University of Toronto Press, accessed May 6th 2020.

[294] "moll, adj. and n.1," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, accessed 29th May 2020; "moll, n.2," *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2020, accessed 29th May 2020.

[295] Rubright notes that, "according to the OED, Thomas Middleton was instrumental" in introducing this slang that positions Moll as a prostitute: "OED Moll n2 cites Thomas Middleton's *The Ant and the Nightingale* (1604) as the first and only seventeenth century instance of 'Moll' meaning prostitute" (Rubright *Transgender Capacity* 50, 69). She also cautions against assuming a specific gender valence for the term moll, since "people of all genders could be prostitutes in early modern London, as Jennifer Panek's work on 'he-whores' has shown. So too, one could be "a moll" in this period with or without the

delays or disrupts audience satisfaction, I posit that the prologue artfully swaps out expected satisfaction with unexpected speculation—that is, the prolonging of want—which in itself can generate gratification.[296] While the audience may seem to know nothing of Moll, I contend that the first "portrait" has already been assembled and placed in the gallery of the stage: the mythical protagonist Mad Moll, who is both lofty and lowly, both known and unknown.[297]

In order to practice a non-linear tracing of Moll's portraiture, I look now to the epilogue. The words of the prologue speaker are affirmed at the plays close by the speaker of the epilogue, and most frequently critics assign this speech to the character of Moll.[298] The epilogue reaffirms the play's central logics via a dominant metaphor about a painter, who, attempting to please all, pleases no one:

> A painter having drawn with curious art
> The picture of a woman, every part,
> Limned to the life, hung out the piece to sell.
> People who passed along viewing it well,
> Gave several verdicts on it: some dispraised
> The hair, some said the brows too high were raised,
> Some hit her o'er the lips, misliked their colour,
> Some wished her nose were shorter, some, the eyes fuller;
> Others said roses on her cheeks should grow,
> Swearing they looked too pale, others cried no.
> The workman still as fault was found, did mend it,
> In hope to please all; but, this work being ended

[296] I resist the idea of satisfaction in part because of its teleological ending, and while some events may partly gratify I wish to reassert that Moll is never resolved, and thus resists the satisfaction of completion.
[297] You could call this opening "Mythic Moll" as a way of expressing the kind of artistic strokes that invoke Moll's image in the prologue.
[298] I bring the end to the beginning in keeping with my assertion that queer time weights all points of the text equally, and with the understanding that these portraits of Moll are given to the audience to be witnessed at once, mixed together, overlaid, and made satisfactory thorough our own hierarchies of desire (organization need not be linear). If we assume that the speaker of the epilogue is Moll, why not the speaker of the prologue? It could be any member of the cast (sans those playing Mary and Sebastian), true, but consider how the opening of the play could alter if Moll were to speak first, self-referentially (in costume or not). For instance, Kendrick states easily that "In the epilogue, Moll herself addresses" the conflict around consumer demand and thus the audience (Kendrick 104).

> And hung at open stall, it was so vile,
> So monstrous, and so ugly, all men did smile
> At the poor painters folly (Epilogue 1-15).

It is no mistake that the painter takes up the metaphor of portraiture to close the play. If Moll is "the picture of a woman . . . / Limned to the life" that passersby—both on-stage and in the audience—have "dispraised," "misliked," "wished" over, and dispensed "verdicts" upon, then Moll is the figure that, if "mended," would prove most "vile" and "monstrous." Each critique of the portrait neglects assessment of technique, skill, composition, texture, symbolism, or emotion. Instead, viewers consider the "hair," "brow," "lips," "nose, "eyes," and "cheeks," dissecting the painting in blazon style with the goal of making the painting (Moll) more attractive and aesthetically pleasing. This focus on somatic manifestation and its frequent alteration to please others is soundly rejected as "folly." The authors note a focus on product, not process, and call for audience members to value somatic difference over the desire to control, alter, or "mend" somatic difference. Moll remains unknowable and universally unsatisfying, while concurrently being discretely desirable, pleasurable, and satiating.

By posing the question of how artwork can be made accessible to every sensibility in an audience, the epilogue's metaphor also explicitly asks the audience to consider how they process the play-text by interrogating their critical perspective and its merits and limitations (Knapp 62).[299] While Jeffery Knapp contends that the stage, unlike the portrait, has "several heads on display, and bodies, too, all given to speaking, all disguised, and all in motion," many of these heads are the same one: Moll's, which reoccurs with new forms, new depths, and new subtleties (62). The request that the

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[299] I borrow this question from Jeffery Knapp, *Pleasing Everyone: Mass Entertainment in Renaissance London and Golden-Age Hollywood*, University of Oxford Press, 2017.

audience think about the many different desires (the dissected body parts) and how they clash, interact, and generate monstrosity if realized all at once, pushes the audience to surrender to their subjective desires and recognize nuanced knowledge of the body that emanates from individuals rather than from the desired object itself.[300] The epilogue, like the prologue "resists Sir Alexander's dehumanizing compression of playgoers into thronged heaps . . . Committed instead to acknowledging the diversity of judgment in its audience" (62). Each rhetorical move fragments audience attention as a theatrical force with the goal of reinforcing individual impetus and encouraging a new way of thinking. Yet, Middleton and Dekker still acknowledge that, like the painter, their message may go unheard:

> Some perhaps do flout
> The plot, sating 'tis too thin, too weak, too mean;
> Some for the person will revile the scene,
> And wonder that a creature of her being
> Should be the subject of a poet, seeing
> In the world's eye, none weighs so light; others look
> For all those base tricks published in a book,
> Foul as his brains they flowed from, of cutpurses,
> O nips and foists, nasty, obscene discourses
> As full of lies, as empty of worth and wit,
> For any honest ear or eye unfit (Epilogue 15-25).

The above critiques shift between extremes. The authors imagine (in Moll's voice) those who critique their writing as weak and who believe poets are bound to write of loftier things than the many portraits of Moll, "a creature" unworthy of being a "subject of a

[300] As Matteo Pangallo notes in *Playwriting, Playgoers in Early Modern Theater*, "the audience, animated by its many different perspectives, wields potentially destructive authority if its reception is permitted to result in active response . . . audience diversity necessitates audience passivity or else the audience will destroy the art" (Pangallo 36-37). Rather than consider the audience to be entirely passive, I see this as a moment where the audience is also urged to self-reflexively understand their own desire and its relationship to the play/person of Moll, differently.

poet," where others hope for "nasty, obscene discourses" made up of lies. Each possible critique is distinctly negative, and by emphasizing these imagined and somewhat hyperbolic issues Middleton and Dekker rhetorically prod the audience for a clamorous rebuttal—an endorsement of the play through applause. Having previously encouraged the splintering of audience's desires, the speaker subtly unites opinion and experiences of all kinds and degrees behind the rejection of Moll's naysayers:

> Yet for such faults, as either the writer's wit,
> Or negligence of the actors do commit,
> Both crave your pardons: if what both have done,
> Cannot full pay your expectation,
> The Roaring Girl herself, some few days hence,
> Shall on this stage, give larger recompense,—
> Which mirth that you may share in, herself does woe you,
> And craves this sign: your hands to beckon her to you (Epilogue 26-38).

Moll speaking the epilogue produces a strange but energetic tenor in the final lines. The writers and actors are metatheatrically summoned forward by Moll to crave the audience's pardon for not meeting "expectation—" for failing to satisfy. But, as much as Moll/the actor/the playwrights (the variety of voices blended and compounded through the use of "we" and the direct recognition of performativity) might apologize, they also claim that Moll is the curative to as well as the instigator of dissatisfaction. Many copies of the text and critical works note at the close of the epilogue that Moll might be referencing the real Mary Firth, who was arrested in 1611 for performing on the stage and speculate that the play may be referencing this infamous performance (Giddens, 411). Indeed, the prologue certainly provides yet another roaring girl to add to our gallery. Somewhat overlooked is the notion that the play could also be referencing a repeat performance of the play: the recapitulation of the self-same story. If this is the case, Moll

promises, in third person, to reappear, to “give larger recompense” and mirth, if “your hands . . . beckon her to you.” This metatheatrical devise indicates that the elusive Moll may yet bring satisfaction, reaffirming once more that spectator engagement and theatrical space can be stimulated to mediate and reformulate “expectation.” *The Roaring Girl* ends in a “potentiality” that leaves each spectator “full as uncertain” as Moll does Sir Alexander, waiting with a promise “some few days hence” to discover how they will finally be satisfied (Knapp 66, Middleton and Dekker 11.44). Just as each scene in the play provides us with new ways of viewing Moll, none of which are whole, and none of which align to create a satisfying ending, the epilogue leaves its audience by asking them to experience sitting with ongoing, appealing desire, and to invest their thoughts and time in quite literally (re)seeing “The Roaring Girl”: either as play or as historical figure Mary Frith. Indeed, the play ends with a final splintering.

My next sequence of analysis moves somewhat linearly through scenes one, two, and three. While seemingly contrary to my framework of queer time, I do so to demonstrate how Middleton and Dekker continue to abuse the audience’s expectation of linearity by refusing to pleasure them with one easy climax, instead generating various highs and lows of expectation and desire. Scene one could be called “the bait-and-switch.” [301] Anticipating Mad Moll, the first character to emerge onto the stage in act one

[301] After promising the imminent arrival of Mad Moll in the prologue, the audience is left waiting in a fashion similar to the anticipation of Sir Andrew Lethe’s first word in Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term* (1604) (for a full reading of *Michaelmas Term* and Sir Andrew Lethe’s similar stage presence to Moll, see Chapter One). However, the anticipation to hear Moll speak does not last seventy lines as it does with Lethe, rather, it elongates through the first three scenes of the eleven-scene text—some five hundred and eighteen lines—until Moll appears in the bustle of a marketplace. By the time Moll arrives on stage, the audience is primed to *want to look* at Moll, to expect otherness, and to relish the transgressive strangeness Moll is said to embody.

"disguised like a sempster, with a case for bands" is Mary (Moll) Fitzallard (s.d. 1.1).[302] Moll Fitzallard's interaction with the servingman, Neatfoot, immediately indicates that some plan is afoot:

> *Neatfoot*: The young gentleman, our young master, Sir Alexander's
> son, it is into his ears, sweet damsel, emblem of fragility you desire
> to have a message transported, or to be transcendent?
> *Mary*: A private word or two, sir, nothing else.
> *Neatfoot*: You shall fructify in that which you come for: your pleas-
> ure shall be satisfied to your full contentation. I will, fairest tree of
> generation, watch when our young master is erected, that is to say
> up, and deliver him this your most white hand . . .
> hath he notion of your name, I
> beseech your chastity?
> *Mary*: One, sir, of whom he bespake falling bands (1.1-8, 12-14).

Moll Fitzallard's responses are clipped and enigmatic as her sentences accentuate terms like "private" and "falling bands." Surrounded as they are by the effusive, hyper-gendered language of Neatfoot, Moll Fitzallard's words seem somewhat ambiguous and unmoving, as each time she maintains decorum, responds using the title "sir," and sidesteps Neatfoot's request for her name. In doing so, the audience see a skilled laborer (carrying her wares) who may or may not be Mad Moll being showered with the hyperbolic language of femininity: "sweet damsel," "emblem of fragility," and "fairest tree of generation." This language initially does not seem at all appropriate because of her

[302] I will refer to Mary Fitzallard as Moll Fitzallard, because she is not actively called Mary by anyone on-stage during the play. The name Mary Fitzallard is only notable to scholars or readers in the headings for speech and the stage directions. In order to emphasize the performed experience of watching *The Roaring Girl*, where both Moll Fitzallard and Mad Moll are referred to as Moll, I find it most powerful to use Moll as the name in which the two Mary/Moll's collide. Emphasizing the linguistic and semantic blending between Moll Fitzallard and Mad Moll is useful as a way of understanding how female characters in the wider play-text are crafted and relationally impacted by Mad Moll's characterization.

position as a sempster, but takes on new meaning when Neatfoot retreats off-stage and Moll Fitzallard finally speaks frankly:

> *Mary*: but that my bosom
> Is full of bitter sorrows, I could smile
> To see this formal ape play antic tricks:
> But in my breast a poisoned arrow sticks,
> And smiles cannot become me. Love woven slightly,
> Such as thy false heart makes, wears out as lightly,
> But love being truly bred i'th soul (like mine)
> Bleeds even to death, at the least wound it takes.
> The more we quench this, the less it slakes. O, me (1.25-33)!

The speech is deeply reminiscent of Frank's, Anthony's, and Ferdinand's individual speeches throughout *Fair Maid of the Exchange* that I examine in Chapter Three. In short, Moll Fitzallard's speech mirrors that of a romantic hero, measuring his strength of love against others once pierced by Cupid's arrow. What is immediately clear is that Moll Fitzallard is indeed not a fragile damsel, but a voyager, disguised and performing in order to attain some (as yet unknown) goal. Drawing attention to her "bosom," "breast," and bleeding "wound" partly feminizes this speech and calls attention to the prosthetics of costuming that indicate gender, asking the audience to speculate if this character is a woman or if the disguise alone is feminine, and if this character is, in fact, the anticipated Mad Moll. With the entrance of Sebastian, the audience is finally presented with a name for the figure before them: Moll.

> *Sebastian*: Ha! Life of my life, Sir Guy Fitzallard's daughter!
> What has transformed my love to this strange shape?
> Stay: make all sure [*checks both sides of the stage*]—so. Now speak and
> Be brief,
> Because the wolf's at door that lies in wait

> To prey upon us both. Albeit mine eyes
> Are blest by thing, yet this so strange disguise
> Holds me with fear and wonder.
>
> *Mary*: Mine's a loathed sight,
> Why from it are you banished else so long?
>
> *Sebastian*: I must cut short my speech: in broken language,
> This much, sweet Moll, I must thy company shun,
> I court another Moll, my thoughts must run,
> As a horse runs, that's blind, round in a mill,
> Out every step, yet keeping path still (1.55-68).

If, previously, the hyper-feminine language of Neatfoot did not seem appropriate as a descriptor for Moll Fitzallard, what we learn from Sebastian is that the hyper-feminine language that chaffed earlier, was applied to Sebastian's primary love interest and the daughter of a knight. Ordinarily, perhaps, this language would not have seemed inappropriate, and yet for this sempster it does not fit. The audience are expressly taught that this character, regardless of her theatrical and narrative position as a noble's daughter and the primary female marriage interest, should not be considered fragile, fertile, or as a tree of generation made to be penetrated. Instead, the audience is presented with vitality and intellect as "Moll" demands answers and alters her form to enact her will. Even if this Moll is not Mad Moll, the conjunction of Moll Fitzallard's unusual behavior and the anticipation of Mad Moll have already dislocated the conventions of city comedy by inflecting the traditional love interest with elements of Mad Moll's "tribe."

Sebastian's opening exclamation delivers a series of important information points to the audience: first, the figure before them is identified as a nobleman's daughter who "has transformed" into a "strange shape." Sebastian's insistence upon her strangeness indicates that she is disguised, and her alteration was both convincing and confounding. Trusting one's eyes to deliver truth, then, is marked as ill-advised by Sebastian's on-stage

performance of failed observation. Circulating, ever more prominently is the question of *who* this person is, exactly. The non-committal indication of relation to "Sir Guy Fitzallard" delivers no information about the lingering question: Is she Mad Moll? When Sebastian finally delivers Moll, as the name of the sempster, he does so "in broken language," as his "thoughts" run wildly "as a horse runs," giving the audience little time to process before confusingly declaring "I court another Moll," with little other detail. In the muddle, a dawning comprehension creeps steadily forward, that this Moll, is not "our" Mad Moll. Moll Fitzallard, then represents a doubling that calls speculative attention to her body, behavior, and language before thwarting expectation. Regardless of stage presence, Mad Moll's shadow stretches out, exploiting the linear thinking of the audience by implicating Moll Fitzallard's body as she resists traditional feminization through disguise and language. Our second portrait of "Moll," is a Moll doubled, one who is and is not Mad Moll, one who offers a particular way of seeing femininity and womanhood that is different from traditional city comedy, and one who heralds some of Moll's core tenants.

Previously curious about Moll Fitzallard's identity, the audience finds themselves intimately aligned with her in confusion as she attempts to disentangle herself from Sebastian's cryptic name-based declarations, stating "um! Must you shun my company? . . . what follows then, my shipwreck" (1.69, 89)? After Sebastian's explanation of his father's (Sir Alexander Wengrave's) avaricious objection to his marriage to Moll Fitzallard, he returns to the labyrinthine plan that will enable their marriage via "another Moll."

Sebastian: There's a wench

> Called Moll, mad Moll, or merry Moll, a creature
> So strange in quality, a whole city takes
> Note of her name and person. All that affection
> I owe to thee, on her in counterfeit passion
> I spend to mad my father. He believes
> I dote upon this roaring girl, and grieves
> As it becomes a father for a son
> That could be so bewitched: yet I'll go on
> This crookèd way . . . I must now,
> As men for fear, to a strange idol bow (1.94-103, 112-13).

Echoing the prologue, Sebastian reasserts that this new Moll is "mad," "merry," a "roaring girl," and one that the "whole city" (re: the audience) observes. The echoing of these terms precisely works to re-ignite the speculative energy of the audience, unmiring them from Moll Fitzallard and freeing the audience once more to think indulgently with Moll as "a creature" indescribably "strange in quality." Doing so implicitly promises that there is a "real," knowable Moll, while simultaneously indicating that Moll is quite impossible to know. Sebastian's deployment of the term "bewitched" directs speculative attention back to Moll through the light suggestion of witchcraft, which both implicates Moll as different and draws in Sir Alexander as anxiously fearful, since the audience is already aware that Sebastian's affections lie elsewhere.[303] Moll's fabled mystique is used here to refresh the speculative vitality engendered in the prologue to remind the audience (in a distinctly city comedy way) of what they lack, and to inculcate them into the group of storied citizens that know of the "mad" and "merry . . . creature" and who "take note of her name." The third portrait of Moll hangs impressionist-like, with soft strokes and

[303] This passage also mimics Frank's performed disability in *Fair Maid of the Exchange* as "counterfeit passion" and "crookèd" movements (metaphorical or not) enable Sebastian to succeed in his romantic enterprise.

hazy definitions as it makes the audience work to imagine and comprehend the shifting contours of Moll's character.

Multiple contrary images of Moll backed by competing claims of sexual, bodily, or social knowledge fill the theatrical space throughout the play. Shortly after Sebastian's pointed demonstration that we have yet to meet the "real" Moll, his father, Sir Alexander, waxes poetic about the gallery and audience. Here, as the second scene opens, Sir Alexander simultaneously directly addresses the audience as the "thronged heaps" listening while "a cutpurse thrusts and leers" and sets up the gallery in which to view the many versions of Moll, just as he views the multitude of faces before him (2.26). As scene two progresses, the charismatic Sir Alexander, who has already explicitly requested the assessment of the off-stage audience as theatrical spectators, performatively tells a story. Speaking to the "mess of gentlemen" friends around him, Sir Alexander tells the semi-fictive tale of an "agèd man" who is wealthy and whose good attributes include the lack of "that disease,/ Of which old men sicken, avarice" (2.59, 64, 96-7). Yet this man (a thinly veiled Sir Alexander) has a dreadful issue: "I have a son that's like a wedge doth cleave/ My very heart-root" (2.103-4). The asides throughout this tale from Sir Alexander's friends and son indicate that his role as a narrator is suspect. Whereas some, like Sir Davy, simply exclaim incredulously at everything Sir Alexander states, Laxton, upon hearing that the old man in the tale is not avaricious, notes "he means not himself, I'm sure" (2.99). Likewise, Sebastian, who has already taken the audience into his confidence alongside Moll Fitzallard in scene one, at the mention of a dastardly son notes "Now I do smell a fox strongly" (2.106). Finally, as Sir Alexander becomes ever more obvious in his dogged and public admonishment of his son's perceived desire for Mad

Moll, he comes to his description of the woman that shakes his "firm foundation" (2.116).

> *Sir Alexander*: a scurvy woman
> On whom the passionate old man swore he doted:
> A creature, saith he, nature hath brought forth
> To mock the sex of women. It is a thing
> One knows not how to name, her birth began
> Ere she was all made. 'Tis woman more than man,
> Man more than woman, and (which to none can hap)
> The sun gives her two shadows to one shape;
> Nay more, let this strange thing walk, stand, or sit,
> No blazing star draws more eyes after it.
> *Sir Davy*: A monster! 'Tis some monster (2.125-34)!

Climactically, the body of the mystery woman (Moll) is imaginatively produced, dissected, and examined through the lenses of monstrosity and gender difference. Moll's body is imagined as mocking, as unmoored to a specific gender, and as visible in its everyday motions as a "blazing star." The audience, like critics, could hardly not be enraptured and roused to speculation by such a description. Sir Alexander's speech is one of the more cited moments in this play, in part, because of the vivid nature of his language to describe Moll.[304] Yet, Sir Alexander approaches his subject in a number of ways: hyperbolically, physically, paranormally, and linguistically. First Sir Alexander

[304] See Baston and Miller who each discuss the public power of Moll who "draws more eyes" and her "scandalous visibility" as she behaves in public like "an actor on the stage" (Baston 327, Miller 16). See Paul who discusses Moll as a thing "outside all 'natural' categories" (Paul 526). See Forman who discusses the hyperbolic, fear inducing description and examines the "threat" that Moll embodies (Forman 1543). See Rubright who focuses on "two shadows to one shape" as she explores the lexicon of "both/and" as it creates a resistance to the "resolution" of a mixed, dual-sexed body (Rubright 58). These readings come from some of my central critical texts in this chapter and offer a range of interpretations.
Jane Baston, "Rehabilitating Moll's Subversion in The Roaring Girl," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, vol. 32, no. 7, John Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. 317-35, (www.jstor.org/stable/450836), accessed April 22nd 2020; Miller, Jo E. "Women and the Market in *The Roaring Girl*," *Renaissance and Reformation*. v. 14, n. 1, University of Toronto Press, 1990; Ryan Singh Paul, "The Power of Ignorance," 2013; Valerie Forman, "Marked Angels," 2001; Rubright, Marjorie. "Transgender Capacity," 2019.

hyperbolically draws up “a creature,” that mocks “the sex of women,” notes this creature’s physicality by stating “’Tis woman more than man,/ Man more than woman,” draws out its paranormal strangeness since “the sun gives her two shadows to one shape” and espouses the its ability to confound linguistically because “It is a thing/ One knows not how to name.” Sir Alexander implicates Moll as one that is monstrously born before “she was all made,” and as he draws to a close, dehumanizes Moll entirely by dropping all pronouns or gender descriptions, exclaiming: “Nay more . . . this strange thing” cannot “walk, stand, or sit” for drawing attention. In short, Sir Alexander paints the image of Moll as a monster. But how does the audience know that this is supposed to be a description of Moll? By answering this question, we can access a key component of this speech, the idea that it tells the audience more about Sir Alexander than about Moll.[305]

Sir Alexander’s anxiety is only one way to imagine and speculate about Moll, and one that, like Neatfoot’s characterization of Moll Fitzallard, hyperbolically undermines itself through its very mode of expression. Already cast as a fairytale, and already undermined as a partial truth that is biased in the telling, Sir Alexander’s hyperbolic turn towards a monstrous woman immediately implicates Moll by way of Sebastian’s increasingly frequent interjections. Shortly before Sir Alexander reaches his account of Moll, Sebastian notes “how finely, like a fencer, my father fetches his by-/ blows to hit me, but if I beat you not at your own weapon of/ subtlety—” (2.110-112). Sir Alexander’s tale then shifts focus for the off-stage audience as it takes on a clear role in

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[305] This speech delivers a great deal of information about Sir Alexander as a narrator, a performer, a spectator, and a character. The scene opens with Sir Alexander directly addressing the audience and aware of his performative position. The long faux-story itself demonstrates that Sir Alexander values being centralized in dramatic attention, while his exclamations and histrionic dichotomization of the old man and the woman show that he is egotistical and lacking in nuance. The subtle remarks emphasize his valuation of gold and wealth over much else, even as he attempts to prove the opposite, and his public shaming of Sebastian comes across as petty and venal as a method of discipline.

the main marriage plot: the castigating of Sebastian for showing interest in Mad Moll. The on-stage audience, however, remain rapt, creating a theatrical and reasoning-based disjunction between them and their off-stage counterparts. For the off-stage audience, the "passionate old man" becomes a crafty, "subtle" old man, and the "thing" he describes becomes the lofty "Moll" mentioned in the prologue. While the off-stage audience cannot decipher Sir Alexander's larger descriptive elements based on gender ("Tis woman more than man,/ Man more than woman") the audience is stimulated to greater speculation, not from fear, as Sir Davy comedically exclaims "a monster," but from consistent and prolonged desire to literally see Moll, agreeing, perhaps, with the final statement, that "No blazing star draws more eyes after it." Without ever having seen the star, all minds in the audience are trained upon the blazing trail of Moll that Dekker and Middleton have already burned through the characters, language, plot, and space of the stage.

Wielded as monstrous and as desired simultaneously the text delivers cues to pronouncedly jolt the audience into considering the way in which Sir Alexander imagines Moll, and why. In doing so, the audience is drawn once more to the question of their own curiosity and their own speculation about Moll's body, which, while stimulated by this speech is also curtailed by their mistrust of Sir Alexander as storyteller.[306] Both enlivened and subdued in this climactic moment, the audience become implicated by the

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[306] I pause here to recall Clary's call for critics to check their own "compulsion" to "decode the reality of Moll's body" (Clary xxii, 100). This chapter follows Clary but may seem to fail Clary too. I specifically resist reading Moll's body as definably gendered and resist interrogating the performed bodily reality of Moll as male, female, transvestite, or otherwise. Yet, this chapter does work to understand audience stimulation by tracking Moll's various bodily significations, which invariably means tracking patterns of the coded body. It is important to point out that throughout I resist any sense of a "reality" attached to Moll's body. Rather, I work to see the imaginative possibilities that fracture from speculative engagement with Moll and acknowledge that, while audience members may feel theatrically compelled to decode Moll, in doing so, they decode their own desires and intimate engagements with gender and the self.

performance of viewership alongside Sir Alexander.[307] Just as Moll's body in this moment resists distinction, so too do audience members begin to resist specific ways of reading the body through the development of distrust toward Sir Alexander. This speech, while painting the next portrait of Moll as an impenetrably strange (perhaps even monstrous) and unfixed doubled figure, also sees a competing image emerge of an intimidating, impressive, and matchless "blazing star." As metaphors go, Sir Alexander finishes with the least monstrous, the most nebulous, and the most lofty metaphor to describe both his own lack of power (over a natural entity out of reach in the night sky) as well as the star's innate bedazzling nature and fundamental power. What we learn of Moll, from Sir Alexander's perspective, is that Moll's difference is intensely powerful and influential—enough to make old nobility anxious. By finishing with the metaphor of a star, the imagined figure asks the audience to recognize the extremes of viewership, to recognize the manipulability of theatrical signifiers, and to recursively ask themselves how *they* hope to "know" Moll.

"Where the walls are flesh and blood": Reading Gender Fluidity as Potentiality

If Sir Alexander models one kind of anxious spectatorship, Laxton models another. Both men garner a great deal of critical attention because they provide clear approaches to knowing Moll that draw them into intimate situations with Moll, but that also primarily serve to expose each man's supposed knowledge as absurdity. Scene three opens with the marketplace full of sales-women and one male shop owner plying their wares. A gaggle of gallants arrive including Laxton, Goshawk, Greenwit, Jack Dapper, and Gull, all of

[307] Sir Alexander's anxiety around Moll and desire for control over her body through the pretense of knowledge about her body is heavily documented in criticism from Ryan Singh Paul.

whom swarm the shops as they discuss Laxton's supposed sexual conquest of Mistress Gallipot, the apothecary. As it turns out, Laxton regularly flirts with Mistress Gallipot in order to borrow money from her but spends that money on "other wenches" and "put[s] her off" sexually because, as he says "by this light, I hate her, but for/ means to keep me in fashion with gallants" (3.77-9). Before observing Moll, Laxton, himself is observed by his on-stage audience of gallants, and much like Sir Alexander, Laxton is viewed somewhat unfavorably, even by other gallants such as Goshawk, who notes "thou hast the cowardliest trick to come before a man's/ face and strangle him 'ere he be aware. I could find it in my heart to/ make a quarrel in earnest" (3.83-5). Condemnation from Goshawk, who is hardly ethical himself as one that goes to work swindling people "openly, with the tricks of the art," positions Laxton as especially depraved in his activities as he exhibits behaviors that are more morally reprehensible than criminal (3.24). Delivering this study of Laxton early in the scene positions him as our primary focus and deepens the audience's understanding of his motivations and characterological perspective.

The focus on Laxton seems arbitrary until Moll arrives, at last, on the stage. In this moment of climactic excitement for those waiting patiently to meet Moll, it is Laxton's luridly foolish eyes that the off-stage audience find themselves coupled with. In a scene of three hundred and eighty-one lines, Laxton speaks over one quarter of them, demonstrating the dominance of his voice and perspective. In contrast, the much-anticipated Moll, speaks briefly and curtly with just below one fifth of the scene's

lines.[308] As Moll enters on-stage in an explicitly climactic moment, Laxton becomes disoriented ("Moll? Which Moll?"), then captivated (3.159):

> *Enter Moll in a frieze jerkin and a black safeguard*
> *Goshawk*: Life, yonder's Moll.
> *Laxton*: Moll? Which Moll?
> *Goshawk*: Honest Moll.
> *Laxton*: Prithee, let's call her.—Moll!
> *All [Gallants]*: Moll, Moll, pist, Moll!
> *Moll*: How now, what's the matter?
> *Goshawk*: A pipe of good tobacco, Moll?
> *Moll*: I cannot stay.
> *Goshawk*: Nay, Moll,—pooh—prithee hark, but one word, i'faith.
> *Moll*: Well, what is't?
> *Greenwit*: Prithee come hither, sirrah.
> *Laxton*: [*aside*] Heart, I would give but too much money to be nib-
> bling with that wench. Life, sh' has the spirit of four great parishes,
> and a voice that will drown all the City. Methinks a brave captain
> might get all his soldiers upon her, and ne're be beholding to a
> company of Mile End milksops, if he could come on and come off
> quick enough. Such a Moll were a marrowbone before an Italian:
> he would cry *bona-roba* till his ribs were nothing but bone. I'll lay
> hard siege to her—money is that aquafortis that eats into many a
> maidenhead. Where the walls are flesh and blood, I'll ever pierce
> through with a golden auger.
> *Goshawk*: Now thy judgment, Moll, is't not good (3.158-179)?

Externalizing their climactic excitement at the entrance of Moll, gallants cluster and clamor as though swooning while they call out "Moll" ten times in nine lines in order to garner Moll's attention. Goshawk, who terms Moll "Honest Moll," begs "but one word, i'faith" and is met with Moll's curt and distracted response: "Well, what is't?" Moll's intriguing curtness, aloof demeanor, and obviously stimulating presence for those in the vicinity showcases Moll theatrically. In this moment, Moll is desirable simply because

[308] Laxton speaks 104 lines in this scene, which is 27% of all lines. Moll speaks 74 lines totaling 19% of all lines in the scene. The rest of the scene's lines are fragmented amongst various shopkeepers and gallants.

the on-stage audience desire Moll's attention so explicitly. The gallant's agitated energy bubbles over: it becomes exciting to hear Moll, exciting to see Moll, and exciting to perceive Moll. Moll draws the eye, regardless, wearing a woolen jacket worn by men, and a safeguard (an "outer skirt worn to protect clothing when riding") (f.n. Giddens 157). Both garments blend any clear sense of gender, in part because Moll clearly characterizes neither.

Laxton draws the audience aside to observe Moll as she interacts with others on stage. The moment of audience anticipation has yet to break, as they wait to hear more than a few syllables from Moll, and it is in this moment that they are asked to satisfy their desire by observing Moll alongside Laxton. Laxton's initial assessment of Moll is entirely unexpected given that the earlier description of Moll (from Sir Alexander) was monstrously and outlandishly comprised.[309] Sexual desire suffuses all aspects of Laxton's language. He begins by feminizing Moll as a "wench" to be nibbled at for money, like a common prostitute. Yet, as he goes on, Moll's gravity of "spirit" and of "voice" draws Laxton to think of a captain reproducing fine soldiers with Moll whose presumable strength would prevent the creation of weak "Mile End milksops" who were renowned for pitiable military performance. These two conceptions of female sexual service could not be more different, the first privileging sexual gratification, the other privileging reproductive resilience. Without pause, Laxton tumbles into a third imagined option that characterizes Moll as pure sexual stimulation. Moll is cast as a marrowbone (a substance used as an aphrodisiac), before an Italian (an ethnicity stereotyped in England in this

[309] This is why editors often place the stage direction "aside" next to this speech. Regardless of modern or early modern stage directions, the on-stage audience reaction tells us that Laxton speaks to himself and possibly to the off-stage audience, but not to his peers.

period as particularly lecherous) (Giddens fn174, 396-7). Laxton's building sexual excitement is evident in the cry "*bona-roba*" ("good stuff," when applied to women), as he launches into a determined plan to "lay hard siege" to Moll with "money."[310] Laxton commodifies Moll's body with the assumption that Moll will respond sexually to "money . . . that aquifortis that eats into many a/ maidenhead" as he reads his aggressively heterosexual lust awkwardly onto Moll's masculine-affecting body. His assertion that any walls of "flesh and blood" can be pierced by his "golden auger" emphasizes his building desire to penetrate and thus control Moll, either through money or by physical domination. Penetration, in this instance, encourages spectators to speculate about the penetrable orifices of Moll's body. Laxton's speech works both to draw attention to the somatic body that lies beneath Moll's clothing and to generate overwhelming gallant attention, where his sexual desire for Moll overcomes him. In feeling this way, he performs some of what the audience experiences in finally seeing Moll appear on-stage—an intense gratification found in visual confirmation, a freedom from mediation through others, and autonomy in unhindered somatic exploration of Moll's speculatively penetrable body. This sexualized view of Moll is both convincing in terms of its speaker, and unconvincing simultaneously—just as Sir Alexander's description of Moll's monstrosity was both compelling and unconvincing. Through Laxton's linguistic overlay, Dekker and Middleton underscore Moll's attractive strangeness and invite the audience to assess, for themselves, what genitalia and desires might drive the mysterious masculine-affecting, yet not-male-nor-female body that they see before them. Furthermore, the authors also safeguard the play's trajectory by mitigating any notion of repulsion or

[310] *Roba* literally means "things, stuff" when applied generally.

discomfort audience members might encounter by shifting them onto Laxton through his grotesque language.

From the first, the use of the term "wench" sits incongruously against the physical presence of Moll on-stage who appears in the masculine clothing of a "frieze jerkin and black safeguard" (s.d. 3.158). Laxton's obsession with sex, money, and power has already been divulged. With that in mind, his intense attention and building excitement paint one perplexing image of the stimulating "wench" Moll, who is formidable in spirit and voice yet penetrable through the rudimentary means of lust-driven desire. Laxton's perspective sits centrally as Moll navigates the marketplace and holds fragmented conversations with shop owners and gallants in-between Laxton's narration. When he finally approaches Moll himself, he indulgently applauds the way Moll hits a "Fellow" for being rude "t'other night in a/ tavern," stating: "Gallantly performed, i'faith, Moll, and manfully," before asking "Prithee, sweet, plump Moll, when shall you and I go out o' town/ together" to do "nothing but be merry and lie together" (3.227-8, 238, 248-9, 255). Placatingly acknowledging Moll's "gallant" and "manful" performance of force, Laxton awkwardly shifts between masculine and feminine lexicons to disjunctively describe Moll whorishly, once more feminizing Moll's body with the consumption-based modifiers of "plump" and "sweet," which harken back to his earlier visceral language of "nibbling" and "eating into" Moll's "maidenhead." Laxton's grossly misplaced consumptive desire joins with his overly feminized characterization of Moll's body and his masculine praise of her valor to complicate and confront another kind of desire that has built within the theater itself: the audience's desire to know Moll through clear, binarized gendered terms. It is no accident that Middleton and Dekker juxtapose the off-

stage audience's visual stimulation, renewed speculation, and somatic pleasure via Laxton's simultaneous, grotesque sexual build toward epistemological clarity. This theatrical synchronicity positions the audience to experience contrary sensorial and gender-based cues as they both revel in the pleasure of visually assessing Moll, while also enduring Laxton's heavily sexualized commentary.

Around Laxton's dominating voice, the on-stage audience also clamor with interpretations of Moll as both somatically and kinesthetically different:

> *Goshawk*: 'Tis the maddest, fantasticalest girl:—I never knew so much flesh and so much nimbleness put together!
> *Laxton*: She slips from one company to another like a fat eel between a Dutchman's fingers . . .
> *Mistress Gallipot*: Some will not stick to say she's a man, and some both man and woman.
> *Laxton*: That were excellent: She might first cuckold the husband and then make him do as much for the wife (3.185-92)!

Goshawk focuses on the fantastical elements of Moll's body, the greatness of flesh, and movement, while Mistress Gallipot focuses on the confused readings of Moll's gender. Both, despite having met and spoken with Moll, speculate explicitly about Moll's somatic body, Moll's sexual organs, Moll's movements, and Moll's flesh. Between Goshawk, Laxton, and Mistress Gallipot, a fantasy emerges as gender and the fleshy body become intertwined in their confusion. Collectively, somatic speculation transforms Moll first into a slippery "eel," then into a sexual cuckold maker, who can not only perform all sexual and physical roles, but who expresses gender and sexuality through the disruption of marital vows. In body, Moll is speculatively transformed into a slippery eel, drawing somatic speculation once more to Moll's sexual organs be they phallic or otherwise.

Moll's gender interlocks with speculation around Moll's body, as sexual fluidity and gender fluidity collapse. This imagined body of Moll's becomes embroiled in the desire of others and made to serve the sexual interests and appetites of those observing.[311]

Moll, while desirable, cannot be ordinarily desired through Laxton's channels of domination, financial excess, and physical gratification.[312] Moll's first speech directly to the audience comes two-hundred and eighty-five lines into the scene, after the key scenes in which Moll is observed by the gallants and shopkeepers alike. In soliloquy, Moll assesses gallants and women at the market as ethically anemic, "O, the/ gallants of these times are shallow lechers, they put not their court-/ ship home enough to a wench,—'tis impossible to know what/ woman is thoroughly honest because she's ne'er thoroughly tried" (3.289-92). This rebuttal implicates the on-stage audience in the market as weak-willed, be they male or female, and positions Moll's social fluidity and unique somatic expression as powerful.

Aside from desire-based imaginings, Laxton's reference to Dutchmen also pointedly examines Moll's difference. As Moll becomes the phallic "eel," a native creature of England that "slips from one company to another," Moll is linked to an alien

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[311] Marjorie Rubright's article "Going Dutch" argues that "language, religion, and culinary appetite are three variables" that represent Englishness and Dutchness as "troublingly proximate ethnicities" (Rubright *Going Dutch* 89-90). For more on appetite and difference, see Marjorie Rubright, "Going Dutch in London City Comedy: Economies of Sexual and Sacred Exchange in John Marston's *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605)," *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 40, no. 1, University of Chicago Press, 2010, pp. 88-112, (www.jstor.com/stable/43447682), accessed August 15th 2020.

[312] As especially demonstrated in scene five, where Moll dresses as a barrister and allots judgment to Laxton by defeating him with the sword and delivering Moll's famous "To teach thy base thoughts manners" speech (5.66). Moll also assists in the marital unification of Moll Fitzallard and Sebastian. Importantly, the imagined sexualized Moll and the performed moralizing Moll (also imagined) coexist, implicating one another throughout the play. Indeed, as Moll demonstrates in scene eleven, Moll neither supports nor denies the social structure of marriage, and most certainly feels removed from it as a possible future. The back and forth around marriage within the plot generates a unique sense of queer futurity as Moll's resistance provides alternative possibilities that seem "like doomsday" for Lord Noland and those who rely upon patriarchal structures of future-building (11.227).

population in London in a way that draws Moll's kinesthetic strangeness into familiarity and acknowledges how physical, movement-based difference can be drawn into an intricately latticed relationship with London culture. Moll is close, yet unknowable; native, yet infused with the alien.[313] To the on-stage audience, Moll seems simultaneously somatically phallic and somatically plump and penetrable. In being both and neither, in blending the two genders to generate something outside of both male and female that is still overwhelmingly desirable, Moll asserts the power of gender fluidity as it holds theatrical tension and space for different bodily speculations. In terms of the building gallery of images, this scene presents three (at least): the sexualized wench, the socially skilled eel, and the forthright moralizer. Each image in the gallery of the stage thus far stands referentially, blending, overlapping, yet remaining discrete. What the audience gains from seeing Moll in person at last is not cohesion, but an even greater splintering of somatic possibilities.

~ IV ~

Logics of Transformation: Somatic Speculation and the Theater

If, having met Moll, audience members expect somatic speculation to wane, they will be disappointed. Moll transforms sartorially at least four times during the course of the play. In scene four, Moll is faux-courted by Sebastian while being fitted for new clothing at a tailor's shop. The moment that is narrated by anxious Sir Alexander:

[313] Rubright discusses the semiotics of Dutchness in the English imagination and the infusion of native and alien in her introduction to *Doppelgänger Dilemmas* (2014), see pp. 14-27 in particular.

> *Tailor*: Mistress Moll, Mistress Moll! So ho ho, so ho!
> *Moll*: There boy, there boy. What does thou go a-hawking after me
> with a red clout on thy finger?
> *Tailor*: I forgot to take measure on you for your new breeches.
> *Sir Alexander*: [aside] Hoyda, breeches! What, will he marry a mon-
> ster with two trinkets? What age is this? If the wife go in breeches,
> the man must wear long coats like a fool.
> . . .
> Tailor: You change the fashion—you say you'll have the great Dutch
> slop, Mistress Mary (4.67-77)?

Speaking with the Tailor, Moll literally changes fashion by asking for a new cut of wide, baggy breech, the Dutch slop, that "will take up a yard more" fabric (4.79). Barely able to conceive of Moll's uncomplicated desire for an extra yard of fabric and affronted by Moll's foreign breeches, Sir Alexander once more summons the "monstrous" conception of multiple genitalia. Sir Alexander quite excitedly collapses sex into sartorial representations of gender as he goes on to imagine Moll's body formed by foreign parts including "a Dutch slop . . . a French doublet," and finally, a "codpiece" indicating that this "daughter" has male genitalia to dress (4.86-7). Gender fluidity, materializes once more, not as a fearsome trait, but one that circulates outside of the "age" of anxious men who fear "long coats" on sons and "codpiece daughters." Moll's difference, manifested through the sartorial alteration achieved by the cutting of fabric, positions Moll as a locus for somatic speculation and generatively catalyzes new sartorial and somatic possibilities.

Scene five demonstrates a similar but more drastic shift in sartorial representation as Moll arrives on-stage dressed "*like a man*" that Laxton mistakes for "some young barrister" (5.s.d.33, 43).[314] In this scene, particularly, Laxton's sexual logic for Moll

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[314] This is one rare instance where original stage directions indicate a gendered expression for Moll upon entering. See E3v. Middleton, Thomas. *The Roaring Girle. Or Moll Cut-Purse as it Hath Lately Beene Acted on the Fortune-Stage by the Prince His Players. Written by T. Middleton and T. Dekkar*. London, By

conflicts startlingly with the playwrights' transformative logic. The stage directions imply that Moll's scene three jerkin and safeguard was not intended to make Moll "like a man," despite being traditionally male clothing. In a barrister's likeness, Moll explicitly combats Laxton's misguided belief he can give Moll money in exchange for sex by challenging him to a duel.

> *Moll*: Come, are you ready, sir?
> *Laxton*: Ready for what, sir?
> *Moll*: do you ask that now, sir? Why was this meeting 'pointed?
> *Laxton*: I thought you mistook me, sir . . .
> *Moll*: [*removing her hat*] Then I must wake you, sir. Where stands the coach?
> *Laxton*: Who's this? Moll? Honest Moll? . . . I'll swear I knew thee not.
> *Moll*: I'll swear you did not: but you shall know me now (5.39-41, 46-48, 52-3).

On arrival, Moll moves quickly, speaking briefly to the audience before launching into a *tête-à-tête* with Laxton. This sudden appearance of Moll in disguise and the swift dialogue between Moll and Laxton position the audience at once in Moll's confidence and concurrently in Laxton's somewhat bemused shoes. The off-stage audience, having worked swiftly to confirm that it is Moll before them and to comprehend Moll's plan, suddenly see their own confusion play out in delayed motion through Laxton who is slowest to recognize Moll. This synchronous disjuncture between off-stage audience and on-stage audience (Laxton) is catalyzed by Moll's sartorially expressed gender fluidity. Through sartorial transformation, Moll explicitly tangles Laxton's whorish presumptions with gendered conceptions of power and sex by suddenly becoming sexually invisible to Laxton. Moll's disappearance in the form of a barrister demonstrates that behavior,

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Nicholas Okes] for Thomas Archer, and are to be sold at his shop in Popes head-pallace, neere the Royall Exchange, 1611. *Early English Books Online, ProQuest.* Accessed August 15th, 2020.

stature, and the somatic body beneath have no real impact on Laxton, indicating that his own longing engenders structures of desire around Moll's body. His incredulity upon realizing that Moll stands before him leads Laxton to exclaim "Honest Moll," a name that seems to acknowledge Moll's authenticity yet jars stunningly with Laxton's sexualized logic, and brings into question the meaning of honesty.[315] In brutally exposing the foundational disjunction between Laxton's desire and Moll's embodiment the playwrights steadily expose the same in the audience, asking once more for the off-stage audience to interrogate their own interest in Moll and what kind of knowledge they hope to attain about Moll's body: "why, good fisherman,/ am I thought meat for you, that never yet/ Had angling rod cast towards me?" (5.96-8). If all an audience do is "cast" rods of sight, focus, interest, attention, engagement, or speculation, what knowledge do they hope to catch and what is successfully reeled in?

In the final scene of the play a similar yet reversed interaction plays out as Moll and Sebastian play one final trick on Sir Alexander. Moll enters first presumably in breeches and more masculine affecting attire because Goshawk and Greenwit hail Moll as "Jack" and jest with the horrified Sir Alexander, "No priest will marry her, sir, for a women,/ Whiles that shape's on, and it was never known,/ Two men were married and conjoined in one" (11.106-8). Moll's especially masculine attire leads the gallants to view Moll and Sebastian as "two men," in "shape," and so two men in body. Moll leaves swiftly, only to return once more with Sebastian in a masked disguise as his new bride:

Enter Moll [*dressed as a woman*][316] *masked, in Sebastian's hand,*

[315] Honest, to Laxton, could mean anything but honest, much like Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello* (1604).
[316] I leave the editor's note here in brackets to highlight how editorial practice historically pushes for clarity. In an attempt to clarify how Moll could signify as a woman when masked (without a change in clothing, either), editors push for classificatory significations of gender where there are none. Marjorie

And [*Sir Guy*] *Fitzallard*
Sir Alexander: See were they come.
Goshawk: A proper lusty presence, sir.
Sir Alexander: Now has he pleased me right. I always counselled
him
To choose a goodly personable creature.
Just of her pitch was my first wife, his mother (s.d.131, 132-135).

In a reversal of Laxton's sexual disinterest and misrecognition, Sir Alexander and Goshawk see Moll as a "proper lusty presence," indicating that Moll is visually interpretable as "joyful," "beautiful," "pleasingly dressed," healthfully "vigorous," or "full of desire" (OED, Giddens fn132, 410).[317] Sir Alexander builds upon this understanding by explicitly isolating a particular physical trait that attracts him and puts him in mind of his "first wife," Moll's height. Interestingly, Moll may have transformed with the use of a mask, but Moll's height is a somatic constant. The compliment, then, applies to every manifestation of Moll that Sir Alexander has heavily critiqued. Even as Sir Alexander laments his ill fortune upon the removal of Moll's mask ("O, my reviving shame," 11.145), Moll again dislocates Sir Alexander's reading of gender by positing that he "should be proud of such a daughter" that is "as good a man as your son" (11.155-6). Collapsing the familial, gendered designation of daughter and the societal, sex-based designation of man into one another collapses Sir Alexander's social landscape. Recalling Moll's assertion to Laxton, "you did not [know me]: but you shall know me now," if we question what scene eleven and scene five helps us "know" about Moll, we also question what greater knowledge about personal desire and the speculative body do in the theater.

Rubright takes up this very issue, stating that such editorial interventions "posit an answer to what is productively opaque about both the mechanics and the erotics of this scene" (Rubright *Transgender Capacity* 70). See footnotes 255, 290, and 304 for more in Rubright's, "Transgender Capacity, 2019.
[317] "lusty, adj. 1.a, 2.a, b, 3. 5." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press 2020, accessed 24 June 2020.

Firstly, we learn new ways of knowing Moll's body outside of moral (Sir Alexander's), scientific (Mistress Gallipot's), or sexual (Laxton's) frameworks that attempt to assert that there is fixed gender and then insist that it is interpretable. Secondly, Laxton and Sir Alexander demonstrate that reading the body reflects the self rather than of the other. Finally, the collapsing boundaries between Moll's sartorial alteration and somatic manifestation demonstrates that gender itself is consistently transforming, which produces theatrical space for gender fluidity in social, sexual, cultural interactions.

In closing I explore the logics of transformation yet again, but this time examine how they inform queer erotic sex within the play.[318] As Christine Varnado skillfully summarizes, scene eight (sometimes known as the musician scene or the kissing scene) in *The Roaring Girl* "flouts all kinds of normative parameters for what looks like sex—not only in terms of the participants' sexes or genders but also in their number and relational dynamic" (Varnado 36). Marjorie Rubright adds that, "the trouble with this particular scene . . . to borrow Will Fisher's formulation, is that it is not at all clear where we should start our analysis of the materializations [of gender that are] underway" (55). The sheer number of sexual and gender fluid potentialities that splinter and migrate throughout scene eight demonstrates how gender fluidity's transformative logics can hyper-saturate theatrical space, forcing spectators to ingest and directly grapple with sexual and social possibility.

[318] James Bromley demonstrates how this scene in particular offers the audience a "queer fantasy" of "nonmonogamous pleasure" (Bromley 154). Ryan Singh Paul notes that Moll Fitzallard's transformations "defy masculine knowledge, expectations, and authority" (Paul 535). James M. Bromley, "'Quilted with Mighty Words to Lean Purpose': Clothing and Queer Style in *The Roaring Girl*," *Renaissance Drama,* vol. 43 no. 2, University of Chicago Press, 2015. pp. 143-72, (www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/683105), accessed April 22nd 2020.

This sexual ignition extends from a gender fluid three-way kiss that plays out amongst Sebastian, Moll, and Moll Fitzallard. Recently, Rubright charted the "logic of correspondence" that opens up through the three-way participation in the kiss as it fractures possibilities for desire, sex, and gender. Rubright contends that the naming of the titular character is key to what viewer's see in this scene (Rubright 52-3). Summoning just a few examples from her chapter, Rubright asks: "Do we see two women and a man: Moll-as-Mary [f], Mary Fitzallard [f], Sebastian [m]?" noting that if so, the viewer is required to see "both something the play never offers (Moll | Jack as a woman in a woman's clothes), and something the play in this moment is not showing us (Mary Fitzallard in woman's clothes)" (54). Another option presented by Rubright is "three 'boys' or men: Jack [m], a page boy [m], and Sebastian [m]" since the characters are all dressed as men and Moll remarks, "How strange this shows, one man to kiss another" (Rubright 54, Middleton and Dekker 8.1.45).

To cultivate these useful possibilities beyond the fixity of male/female language, I ask: do we see Moll as genderfluid, neither wholly masculine nor feminine but moving moment-to-moment amongst, around, and beyond these options? Do we see the complete mitigation of Moll Fitzallard's feminine cues? Or do we see Moll Fitzallard in drag, disguise, or as gender fluid, too, layering masculinity atop female characteristics? [319] And do we see Sebastian as queered himself? Is his masculine somatic affect altered, enhanced, or transformed by kissing another character in masculine clothing? Is

[319] By drag I mean wearing masculine clothing with the intention of performing masculinity, rather than disguise, where a character changes their appearance to obscure their identity, or gender fluidity where a character fluctuates around signifiers of gender representation without any sense of fixity.

Sebastian performing what Goshawk and Greenwit so staunchly deny a few scenes later "Two men [being] married and conjoined in one" (11.106-8)?

In this scene, identified by Varnardo as the "climax of Moll's unabashedly androgynous erotic agency in the play," Moll facilitates the romance between Sebastian and Moll Fitzallard by dressing her in clothing from Moll's own tailor before bringing her to meet Sebastian, secretly, in his father's study (Varnardo 38). Moll Fitzallard's particular transformation through the sartorial appropriation of Mad Moll's fashion splinters the scene into a variety of possibilities that shift and change with each new detail as audience attention is drawn to speculate once more. Having two Molls in Moll's clothing appear on-stage generates a level of somatic speculation that it spills over into a deeply erotic interchange. The three young people come together with Sebastian's observation that he has "time and opportunity," to kiss Moll Fitzallard. After kissing her, Moll Fitzallard exclaims how much the "hard venture" of disguise has excited her "desire" for him. Moll, suddenly in the position of spectator, states, "How strange this shows, one man to kiss another" (8.43-46). All at once, Moll points out the performance of theater (where only male actors can kiss male actors), the prosthetic performance of gender (where clothing, hair, and other male and female markers are proven irrelevant amid sexual desire), and the performance of kissing in front of others (where Moll participates simply through orchestration and observation).

Sebastian's response draws the observing Moll closer to his romantic interaction, as he states "I'd kiss such men to choose, Moll,/ Methinks a woman's lip tastes well in a doublet . . . / Troth I speak seriously" (47-8, 53). Sebastian's "serious" remark brings together the sartorial alteration of a "doublet," implies somatic alteration beneath the

clothing, as he would kiss “such men” and implicates both Moll’s and Moll Fitzallard’s “lips” in the physical sensation of sexual contact. Taste becomes the sensorial indicator of a transforming erotic web that engulfs all three characters, unmooring fixed notions of a readable sexed body or gendered body in favor of the pleasing sensations that such fluidity—across characters and fluid bodies—arouses.[320] Only fifty-three lines into a two-hundred and twenty line scene, it seems dubious that an audience member might keep pace aurally with the manifold sexual and gender-based meanings that fragment from each fresh line.[321] Yet, the plot and pacing of the scene does not deteriorate into bewilderment; rather, the sheer glut of meaning settles heavily over the stage, as Moll, Sebastian, and Moll Fitzallard generate new ways of exploring gender fluid desire. Watching these desires play out may stimulate any number of reciprocal responses from spectators, as Moll and Sir Alexander metatheatrically demonstrate through their diverse commentary. Although difficult to analyze, this scene actively contributes to the theatrical project of questioning and rewriting epistemologies of desire and of bodily knowledge through not one, but two characters that fractiously cohere, manifesting across and exceeding the bounds of gender semiotically, sartorially, and somatically to engender new possibilities for erotic engagement.

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[320] Modern editors added a comma before the name Moll in an attempt to clarify it as an address directed toward Mad Moll alone but early print editions of the play have no comma leaving the line as “I’d kiss such men to choose Moll.” In this context, Moll could mean Mad Moll or Moll Fitzallard, or both, or any combination equally. Rubright provides an excellent reading of the kiss itself and the many name-based possibilities opened up through Moll’s many names including Mary, Jack, Captain Jack, Merry or Mad Moll, Moll Cutpurse, etc. (Rubright *Transgender Capacity* 46, 52-53).

[321] As the scene progresses, the use of a prosthetic (a musical instrument) further challenges gender expectations and develops the narrative line that all three characters are engaged in polyamorous sexual possibility. Sebastian and Moll both directly touch the instrument. Sebastian takes the viol and hands it to Moll “here, take this viol, run upon the guts” (8.79). Moll plays the instrument, demonstrating mastery in “fingering” it, and when Sir Alexander arrives, the sexual innuendo of Sebastian’s language implicates Moll Fitzallard as having had sexual contact with Sebastian’s instrument when he describes listening to Moll play, and suggesting another Moll’s: “most delicate stroke” (8.176, 177).

Conclusion: "I please myself, and care not else who loves me" (10. 322-23)

In this chapter, I have highlighted the manifold shifts in theatrical tension and plot that occur within each scene in order to demonstrate the power of Moll's transforming character and the limitations of thinking teleologically. Through examining the playwrights' direct attention to the speculative body via an accretion of linguistic cues, the use of a gallery structure, and the presentation of new visual logics, I have demonstrated how Middleton's and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl* models different ways of knowing the gendered body through an interrogation of the spectator's desires and frustrations. Tension between the linear experience of viewership, and the dynamic non-linear collection of possible knowledges that circulate around Moll compound to enable diverse experiences of the play-text and facilitate wider interpretive possibilities. Moll's energetic, kinesthetic, semiotic, sartorial, and social cues are always ongoing, simultaneous, and occurring, as Moll forms, fractures, and coheres as perpetual possibility. Moll's variation in gender means "refusing to play a singular part and . . . remaining animated by their own process of continuous movement" (Rubright 56). Wielding the prosthetics of gender and character alike in unsettlingly unassignable ways, Moll generatively stimulates theatrical tension, catalyzing, acknowledging, and revising various forms of desire and of bodily knowledge.

In Moll, desire and knowledge are constantly re-catalyzed and become articulated anew through the performance of gender fluidity. Deploying Mikhail Bakhtin, one could argue that Moll represents "the rogue figure whose chronotope is concerned with being 'in life but not of it, life's perpetual spy and reflector.' By standing outside social norms, this figure can act as a 'third entity' oscillating between temporal regimes" (Bakhtin in

Boellstorff 28).[322] Critics such as Matthew Kendrick summon Bakhtin's notion of the polyphonic character who "cannot be reduced to a particular ideological position but instead gives voice to the dialogical constitution of human consciousness" (Kendrick 117).[323] In doing so Kendrick asks readers to re-conceptualize the prologue's many figurations of the roaring girl as one that defies definitions or labels, seeing these multiplicitous roaring girls as Bakhtin's "grotesque body, which is never finished" but "continually 'built and created'" as it grows "from within . . . to render *untrue* any externalizing and finalizing definition" (Kendrick 117). Rather than depending on Bakhtin's conception of the grotesque polyphonic body, I bring up this notion once more to close in on the wild possibility that Moll embodies. Rather than grotesque, Moll's body circulates, manifests, stimulates, and redirects desire. Rather than continually building toward a singular affirmation of gender or sex, Moll's body is consistently occurring: a body that is gratifying *and* frustrating, confusing and clear, pleasing and uncomfortable, constructing and deconstructing. Untethered to linear temporal logics of desire, gender, or embodiment, Moll is simultaneous, is ongoing, and is always queering the possible.

[322]A chronotope is how configurations of time and space are represented in language and discourse.
[323] For Kendrick's source text, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson, University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

CODA
THE MEANS THAT MAKE US STRANGERS

> If we *believe* that humanity may transcend tooth & claw, if we *believe* divers races & creeds can share this world as peaceably as the orphans share their candlenut tree, if we *believe* leaders must be just, violence muzzled, power accountable & the riches of the Earth & its Oceans shared equitably, such a world will come to pass. I am not deceived. It is the hardest of worlds to make real. Torturous advances won over generations can be lost by a single stroke of a myopic president's pen or a vainglorious general's sword . . . He who would do battle with the many-headed hydra of human nature must pay a world of pain & his family must pay it along with him! & only as you gasp your dying breath shall you understand, your life amounted to no more than one drop in a limitless ocean! Yet what is any ocean but a multitude of drops?
>
> - David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*

Transforming from actor to character, altering in material appearance, shifting between roles, articulating the language of the play-text, embodying emotional cadences, cultivating an audiences' ever shifting attention: early modern theater is synonymous with transformation from the most rudimentary level to the most complex. This dissertation's central line of questioning has traced the boundaries of many implicitly assumed differences: strangers close at hand, female sexuality, somatic difference and disability, and gender fluidity. Within the vast field of differences that range from the minute to the immense, four distinct theatrical figures who embody shifting notions of desire focus our inquiry: the stranger, the whore, the disabled character, and the gender fluid character. In tracing the transformative processes of these figures, I have attempted to break down established theatrical notions, such as type, in order to explore the possibilities of characters who elide, if not collapse, boundaries of difference through these processes of transformation. I have reckoned with the ability of a single character to

reveal the mechanisms of transformation and subsequently the mechanisms of social and cultural structures of power; I have relocated abject figures in the historical process that drama partakes in by highlighting other ways to read the history of disability and somatic embodiment; and I have revised how we read gender variance to work with and beyond the binary by exploring how theater rewrites epistemologies of desire and of bodily knowledge, engendering new possibilities for erotic engagement. Unsettling established logics about the stranger, the whore, the disabled character, and the gender fluid character generate more nuanced logics in their place. Looking to the minutia of how differences are processed, and working with scalable questions that hold desire, difference, and transformation in tension with spectatorship will prove useful for scholars working in similar fields where larger patterns of difference are underlaid by white, Christian, English conceptions of self and other.

The sheer volume of theatrical, scientific, legal, philological, and literary interest in the subject of differentiation in the renaissance is impossible to ignore. Many other plays from this period almost appeared in *Stranger Compass*, including William Haughton's *Englishman for my Money* (1598), John Marston's *The Malcontent* (1603) and *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605), Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613) and Thomas Dekker's, John Ford's, and William Rowley's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621). These plays clustered in the early days of city comedy and scattered outward to engage with similar questions of transformation, desire, and knowledge, but these topics are not restricted to city comedy. I could equally have written on history plays, romances, comedies, or tragedies and domestic tragedies. An interest in alteration, desire, and knowledge is symptomatic of the period itself. I have looked to early modern

drama as marking a cultural and social moment where theatrical interest in defining the self was not just about defining Englishness but about situating the self—sensing, navigating, establishing, and breaking down boundaries around the notion of "me" amongst others. This project is not unique to any particular time period or psyche: people always have and always will navigate questions that situate them within a society, family, or relationship. Yet, the revision of collective knowledges—of what is known about the body, language, sex, sexuality, or the self—that sits at the foundation of this dissertation is particular to the cultural and historical moment in that it helps us understand an England on the cusp of expansion, trade, slavery, and colonization. Just as England attempted to forge a national sense of self in order to subjugate others (what is nationalism, if not a tool for wielding one people against another), theater experimented, theater imagined, theater desired, and theater offered different epistemological possibilities.

Recalling Christine Varnardo's words on eroticism, desire is part of "a constitutive force on the same order as 'language,' and 'culture'—as the same kind of thoroughly constructed yet totally fundamental and pervasive structure through which . . . existence is experienced" (Varnardo 29). In the renaissance, as today, differences amongst people are mediated and navigated at a cultural and social level that is learned so early in life that many mistakenly believe their logical system to be innate, instinctive, or natural. In the words of my friend and colleague, Josephine Hardman, "many of us must be taught, as early modern theatergoers once were, to sit more comfortably with contradiction, paradox, and uncertainty, and to be willing to hold opposing perspectives in our minds without judgment and without fear" (Hardman 194). To echo my opening

epigraph from David Mitchell, I do not naïvely believe that this dissertation will amount to more than one drop in a limitless ocean, yet I remain hopeful that this one drop may contribute to a larger effort both in society and in the humanities that works to address the harmful ideologies of xenophobia, misogyny, racism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia.

As a key author of the plays featured in this dissertation, Thomas Middleton especially knew the power of assiduously thinking with difference when imagined theatrically. By understanding the way otherness is understood more intimately and how difference holds power as well as problems, we start to uncover a narrative not of the norm but of the extant, lived differences that manifested against the grain and that survived defiantly. Following the quietly powerful trails of desire and understanding its foundational role in shaping our reactions to people, to beliefs, and to ways of thinking has, in *Stranger Compass*, become one way of mining the early modern period for insights and opportunities—for its discarded ways of thinking found anew. Thinking with the early moderns' theatrical logics not only gives us insight into different historical epistemologies but also provides us with different ways of thinking from our own standpoint. As a foreigner myself, in a country currently struggling internally with ideological, institutional, symbolic, and social structures such as political bipartisanship, pandemic safety, and police brutality, I believe that it is all the more critical that we take every opportunity to learn, to grow beyond our present limitations, and to imagine new possibilities for a future. This is not a future that will culminate in a concrete form at an imagined end date, but one that is built each day through our actions, thoughts, and words.

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